

***RESILIENCE BASED  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING:  
ACTIVITIES for TEACHERS & PARENTS***



***William G. Nicoll, Ph.D.  
Monica A. Nicoll, Ph.D.***

***Resilience Counseling & Training Center***

***North Conway, New Hampshire USA  
[www.resiliencecounselingcenter.com](http://www.resiliencecounselingcenter.com)***

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24 Reporter Court –P.O. Box 1435  
North Conway, New Hampshire 03860



**Resilience  
Counseling  
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*Providing counseling, training and  
consulting services around the world.*



***“Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all”***

Aristotle

***“We must never forget, Education is NOT the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire!”***

W.B. Yeates

***“Above all it is expected that the attention of the instructors to the disposition of the minds and morals of the youth under their charge will exceed every other care; well considering that though goodness without knowledge is weak and feeble, yet knowledge without goodness is dangerous, and that both united form the noblest character and lay the sweet foundation of usefulness to mankind.”***

Dr. John Smith, Founder

,Phillips Exeter Academy, 1781 Mission Statement



# INTRODUCTION

## DEVELOPING RESILIENCE in YOUTH

Developing resilience in children and adolescents is a frequently heard phrase and widely accepted idea. But, what exactly is “Resilience” and how is it developed? Dr. Jonas Salk, discoverer of the polio vaccine, probably gave the best definition. When asked upon the 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his discovery, “*On what would you focus your his research today?*”; his response was, “*I’d still do immunization, but I’d do it psychologically rather than biologically*”. This is exactly what Resilience is all about; it’s a social vaccine!

Resilience involves the development of those psychological strengths which are associated with success, fulfilling lives, and social-emotional wellbeing. Simultaneously, these same strengths immunize us against the destructive effects of adversity and stress. Resilience incorporates personal qualities such as: character, grit, optimism, social-emotional intelligence, self-confidence, empathy, problem solving, aspirations, and both personal and social responsibility. One’s relative degree of ‘mental health’ can be thought of as your personal Resilience Quotient (**‘RQ’**). Studies indicate that it is one’s **RQ** (not IQ, GPA, Self-Esteem, Test Scores, etc.) which best predicts academic, career, family, and personal success.

Functioning much like a “psychosocial vaccine”, your **RQ** protects against the stressful effects of change, transitions, loss, failure, trauma and other adverse life experiences. People with a High **RQ** are less susceptible to mental health difficulties such as depression, anxiety, substance abuse, unfulfilled potential, and relationship problems. We all experience obstacles, setbacks and stressful circumstances in life. But, resilient individuals are better equipped to “bounce back up” from such adversity; they recover, adjust, adapt and then continue forward navigating through life in a positive, fulfilling direction.

Most important, your personal resilience (**RQ**) is not fixed or innate! It can be continually developed, nurtured, taught, enhanced and strengthened. Conversely, one’s **RQ** can also be systematically diminished. So, how then do we go about nurturing and developing resilience in youth? Research evidence now suggests there to be four primary **‘building blocks’** for developing a child or adolescent’s **RQ**:

1) ***Availability of supportive, nurturing social ecosystems (family, school & community).***

All living organisms require a supportive, nutrient-rich ecosystem for healthy growth. When plants, fish, or wildlife fail to thrive, we find the solution by increasing the needed nutrients and/or eliminating any toxins in their ecosystem. The same holds true for humans! Best outcomes occur when all three primary childhood ecosystems are positive and highly supportive: the family, the classroom/school, and the community.

2) ***Developing essential social-emotional competencies.***

Research evidence indicates social-emotional competence to be highly associated with both social and academic development even predicting future life success up to 70% better than intelligence (IQ). There are five categories of social-emotional competencies required for living a successful, fulfilling life. These are: Understanding Oneself (e.g., self-understanding and emotional self-regulation), Empathy for Others, Positive Communication, Cooperation, and Responsible Contribution (for self and to others). These competencies are taught by the significant entourage of adults in children’s lives (parents, teachers, coaches, etc.). They are taught both directly through planned learning experiences and indirectly via how children observe these same adults acting themselves.

3) ***Growth Mindset communication patterns in adult/child relationships.***

People understand their own and other’s abilities, talents, and success potential from either of two perspectives: the ‘Fixed Mindset’ or the “Growth Mindset”. The Fixed Mindset perspective assumes one possesses a fixed, innate degree of ability, talent, or intelligence (or disability and disorders) which, in turn, determines or limits one’s potential. The “Growth Mindset” perspective, characteristic of resilient individuals, assumes one is always

capable of improvement and growth through effort and hard work. Such an optimistic perspective has even been identified as a better predictor of college success than entrance exam scores (SAT, ACT, etc.). Most importantly, children's mindsets are primarily developed through the manner in which significant adults communicate with them (i.e., Fixed via praising, labeling, or criticizing; and Growth via believing in them as being capable and focusing on effort, progress, improvement).

**4) *Experiences that foster a Positive Self-Identity.***

Developing a child's **RQ** also requires providing ample opportunities to experience the four components of a positive self-identity: a) ***Connection/Inclusion*** with peers and adults in respectful-egalitarian relationships b) ***Personal Autonomy*** via control/responsibility for one's own life choices, c) ***Meaningful Contributions*** to others and, d) ***Competence*** in an area(s) of personal interest.

**NOTE:**

**Healthy organisms (e.g., fish, animals, plants and humans) only develop and thrive within healthy, supportive ecosystems which are free of toxins and abundant in needed nutrients!**

**Mental Health, Behavioral, and Social Adjustment difficulties are most likely to develop whenever opportunities to experience these four building blocks of RESILIENCE are not consistently available to youth within their "social ecosystems" of family, school, and community.**



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# Resilience Based Social Emotional Learning:

## Activities for the Home & the Classroom

The primary goal in the raising and educating of youth is to equip them with the knowledge and skills necessary for living successful, productive, and fulfilling lives. This involves two distinct categories of competencies: academic competence and social-emotional competence. Unfortunately, we have tended to mistakenly over-focus on the academic competencies (i.e., the 3 R's of 'Reading, wRiting and 'aRithmetic) at the expense of social-emotional competencies, an essential component of the 4<sup>th</sup> R, **Resilience**.

Research evidence clearly demonstrates that when parents and schools work together to develop children's skills in all four of the "R's" of education, improvement is realized in both social-emotional adjustment and academic achievement. After all, these are two sides of the same coin. We all need to have the academic knowledge and skills to perform well in our jobs and careers. But, we also need the skills to "*work and play well with others*" on the job, in our homes, and in our communities.

A synergic effect occurs when both academic and social-emotional competencies are entwined in the education of children. As the early 20<sup>th</sup> century psychologist, Alfred Adler (1929), stated almost 100 years ago, "*The teacher who takes the time to work on students' social development will find [his or her] job simultaneously amplified and simplified. It is unquestionably far simpler and more efficient to teach the well-adjusted, cooperative responsible child than it is to nag, prod and threaten along the maladjusted, uncooperative, irresponsible child.*" No teacher has ever refuted that simple statement! And, research now provides support for this by finding academic achievement increases by an average of 11% when comprehensive SEL program are introduced in schools.

These two areas of life competencies, academic and social-emotional, should not be considered as separate curricular areas. Rather, the Resilience Counseling & Training Center (RCTC) model advocates for the infusing of academic instruction with social-emotional learning. Moreover, the lessons are found to be **most effective when both teachers and parents actively collaborate** with one another in the development of children's social-emotional competencies, the fourth 'R' of Resilience, in youth. Therefore, all the following resilience building activities include a\_ a class SEL lesson plan, b) ideas for follow-up activities incorporating the lesson into academic instruction and c) suggested "family homework" activities. These "homework" activities serve to invite parents to collaborate with the teacher by engaging in similar social-emotional skills lessons as taught in class. Thus, this is homework for parents to do; not homework for the students per se!

While there are many models and ideas as to what constitutes important social-emotional competencies, we focus here on what research evidence suggests as being the essential social-emotional competency areas:

- **Understanding & Respecting Oneself**
- **Empathy: Understanding & Respecting Others**
- **Communication**
- **Cooperation**
- **Responsible Contribution**

The activities in this booklet are intended to serve as sample lesson plans and learning activities for building a comprehensive, resilience-based SEL program. The more typical model of pre-packaged, off-the-shelf, "one size fits all" programs is rejected here! This booklet merely provides the format and focus for developing further SEL activities, lessons and programs. These activities can be easily modified for the classroom or the home setting. Parents and teachers are encouraged to develop and expand upon these activities further by incorporating lessons from other programs and/or developing their own SEL learning activities. In so doing, you can better tailor SEL activities to meet the needs of your children/students based upon the unique needs and demographics of your school, your community, your family, and the ever changing issues over time.



Classroom teachers are strongly encouraged to include additional supplementary home activities for parents as well as to infuse the SEL topics with academic instructional lessons or topics whenever possible. Teachers are also encouraged to work collaboratively with their teacher colleagues in other subject specialty areas (e.g., music, art, physical education) so as to develop a well-integrated school-wide SEL program. The social-emotional competency of Responsible Contribution is particularly amenable to further development and expansion in a variety of directions depending upon the school's student population and curriculum requirements. Topics such as career development, substance abuse, conflict resolution, ethical decision making, sexuality education, problem solving, community service can all be easily included within this competency area.

It is highly advised that the SEL activities be organized in a spiral-like manner. That is, complete one or two activities in Understanding Oneself, then move on to a couple activities for Empathy for Others, and then continue onward through all five competency areas. After completing a couple activities in each of the five social-emotional competency areas, return to the first competency area once again (Understanding Oneself) and proceed through each competency area as before. The idea is to continually repeat SEL competency areas building resilience via depth and repetition and not employ a step-by-step sequence covering each competency completely before proceeding to the next one.

Best results are realized through experiential learning activities. It is also helpful to conclude each learning activity with a brief follow-up discussion. With younger children, the follow up discussion should be kept relatively short (maximum 10 minutes). As the age and grade level of children increases, the ratio of experiential activity to discussion moves increasingly closer to a 1:1 ratio.

Finally, an effective, comprehensive SEL program must include further components along with the teaching of essential social-emotional competencies. Such components include introducing positive classroom behavior management strategies (i.e., not reward/punishment based) to improve the classroom climate, and policies, practices and strategies for creating a more positive, inclusive school culture. As the author, Jim Collins (2010) concluded from his research on highly effective vs ineffective businesses and organizations, ***“culture eats strategy for breakfast!”***

Introducing these social-emotional learning activities offers significant benefits to schools, teachers and parents. SEL programs have been shown to not only improve academic achievement but also to improve student relationships with peers and staff, decrease bullying and disruptive behaviors, and improve family and classroom cohesion or sense of connectedness. Cohesion has consistently been identified as the #1 factor distinguishing happy, effective family cultures and highly effective school/classroom cultures.



# Understanding & Respecting Oneself

*“Know thyself”*

*Aristotle*

*“Through self-understanding, we find the capability to also understand others”*

*Eleesha*

*If you don't understand yourself, you don't understand anybody else”*

*Nikki Giovanni*



## *Understanding & Respecting Oneself*

# Conscious Breathing to Self-Calm

### Objective:

- Develop the social-emotional intelligence skill of emotional self-regulation
- Develop competence in self-calming when stressed or upset
- Train our central nervous system to calm and allow our brain to focus on the task without being overridden by emotions.

### Materials:

- Yoga mat or blanket

### SEL Activity:

- Briefly share with your child situations where you have each felt nervous, worried, anxious or upset. What did you do?
- Then ask if they know how elite athletes, first responders (firemen and police), and others in high pressure situations do to settle themselves and remain focused?
- Explain that our breathing helps us regulate our autonomic nervous system. When we get upset, our breathing rate increases and we tend to ‘hyperventilate’, overreact, or even faint. But, we can also learn to intentionally use our breathing rhythm to calm our body and mind just as athletes and first responders by a method called, “Conscious Breathing”.
- NOW, let’s practice this skill together. *Conscious Breathing is done by* breathing gently for about 10 breaths (ie., for about 1 minute) ... Breathe slowly, calmly, and deeply focusing on your breathing as it becomes more slow, calm, deep, and gentle. Be consciously aware of your bodily sensations as you feel the cool air coming into your nose and lungs, the expansion of your chest and stomach and breathing out with a longer exhale as warmer air flows out and your stomach and chest relax.

### Other Possible Family SEL Activities:

- Invite all family members to practice this skill each day at a set time (e.g. just before bedtime or in the morning before leaving for school/work).
- Share at dinner time examples of when you each used the Conscious Breathing method today (or should have used it!)
- Watch sporting events and observe how different athletes self-calm to gain better focus.
- Write to or interview first responders, athletes, public speakers, etc. as to what strategies they use to self-calm





## *Understanding & Respecting Oneself*

# Friendship Books

**Objective:** To assist children in recognizing the characteristics of good friends and relationships so as to develop their own friendship skills.

**Materials:** Newsprint, large sheet of paper, or computer & printer.

### **SEL Activity:**

Together, identify as many “Famous/Great Friendships” as you can. Make a list (e.g., ***Fictional Friends:*** Pooh & Piglet, Charlotte & Wilbur, Shrek & Donkey, Forrest Gump & Bubba, Tom Sawyer & Huck Finn and ***True Friendships:*** Thomas Edison & Henry Ford, Ben Affleck & Matt Damon, Helen Keller & Alexander Graham Bell, Joe Louis & Max Schmeling, etc.).

Now, brainstorm a list of what such good friends do for one another which makes them become such good friends. Read the book, watch the movie or research online as needed.

Review the “Friendship Quotes” below and make a short journal entry as to your favorite quote and what it means to you. (Have all family members contribute)

### **Other Possible Family “Homework” SEL Activities:**

- Both parents and children can write short journal entries about, “*Who is my best friend?*” and identify what that friend does that makes him/her special to you?
- Parents can write a short description of things their son/daughter has done to be a special friend to someone over the years.

### **Famous Friendship Quotes**

"A friend is a person with whom I may be sincere. Before him I may think aloud."	Ralph Waldo Emerson
"It is one of the blessings of old friends that you can afford to be stupid with them."	Ralph Waldo Emerson
"It is not so much our friends' help that helps us as the confident knowledge that they will help us."	Epicurus
"Anybody can sympathize with the sufferings of a friend, but it requires a very fine nature to sympathize with a friend's success."	Oscar Wilde
"Misfortune shows those who are not really friends."	Aristotle
"The best mirror is an old friend."	George Herbert
"My best friend is the one who brings out the best in me."	Henry Ford
"Walking with a friend in the dark is better than walking alone in the light."	Helen Keller
"Never injure a friend, even in jest."	Cicero
Go often to the house of thy friend, for weeds choke the unused path."	Ralph Waldo Emerson
"When we seek to discover the best in others, we somehow bring out the best in ourselves."	William Arthur Ward
"In the end, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friends."	Martin Luther King Jr.



## *Understanding & Respecting Oneself*

# Family Autobiographies

**Objective:** To assist children in learning about their family history and to better understand and appreciate one another better so as to build family cohesion/closeness.

**Materials:** Choose an autobiography or biography about someone that class is studying or they would find interesting. (a quick Google search can identify good books, or see sample list below).

**SEL Activity:** Read the book with your son/daughter or, read it with the entire family during an evening family time (read one chapter each night with longer books). Take a few minutes after reading each section or chapter to share what each student found interesting about this person or want to know more about and why.

### **Other Possible Family SEL “homework” Activities:**

- Ask each family member to write their own personal autobiography (parents, siblings, etc!!). Put the autobiographies in a 3-ring binder so all can look through at will and learn more about one another.
- Invite grandparents or other elderly friends, family and neighbors to write similar autobiographies focusing on how times were different (or similar) in their childhoods and how they experienced friendships, school, had fun, or important historical events (e.g. WWII, McCarthyism, Kennedy presidency and assassination, Civil Rights Movement and Segregation, Berlin Wall, Vietnam, Gulf War, Nixon and Watergate, etc.)

### **Some Recommended Books:**

#### ***Elementary Level (grades 1-4)***

*Life with Chimpanzees* - by Jane Goodall (also available as audio book in Jane Goodall's voice).

*Salt in His Shoes* - by Michael Jordan

*Who was Sacagawea* - by Judith Bloom Fraden & Dennis Brindell Franden.

*Who was Albert Einstein* - by Jess Brallier

*Who was Walt Disney* - by Whitney Stewart

#### ***Adolescent Level (grades 5 – 12)***

*A Long Way Gone: Memoirs of a boy soldier* -- Ishmael Beah

*Red Scarf Girl: Memoir of the cultural revolution* - by Ji Li Jiang

*I am Malala: the girl who stood up for education and was shot by the Taliban* - Malala Yousafzai

*The Upstairs Room* - by Joanna Reis... 10 year old's story of being hidden from Nazi's in Dutch farmhouse.

*I am Najood: Age 10 and Divorced* – by Najood Ali. Yemen girl's struggle to resist tribal tradition of arranged child marriages.

*Smile* – by Raina Telgemeier. - A girl's struggle to fit in during middle thru high school.

*Knots in my Yo-Yo String* - by Jerry Spinelli ... young boy's journey from childhood to HS graduation.

*The Glass Castle* – Jeannette Walls... how growing up in a flawed family with unconditional love bred her fiery determination to succeed in life.

*I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings* – by Maya Angelou

*Diary of Anne Frank* - by Anne Frank

*The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* - by Benjamin Franklin

*The Hiding Place* – by Corrie ten Boom ... a Dutch girl becomes a leader in WW2 Dutch underground.





## *Understanding & Respecting Oneself*

# Personal Coat-of-Arms

### Objective:

- Develop greater understanding and appreciation for one's family culture and history.
- Foster an appreciation for one's personal uniqueness within extended family connections.
- Develop greater sense of cohesion or "us-ness" with one's family

### Materials:

- Give each student a sheet of paper with a blank "Coat-of-Arms" (see next page)
- Colored pencils

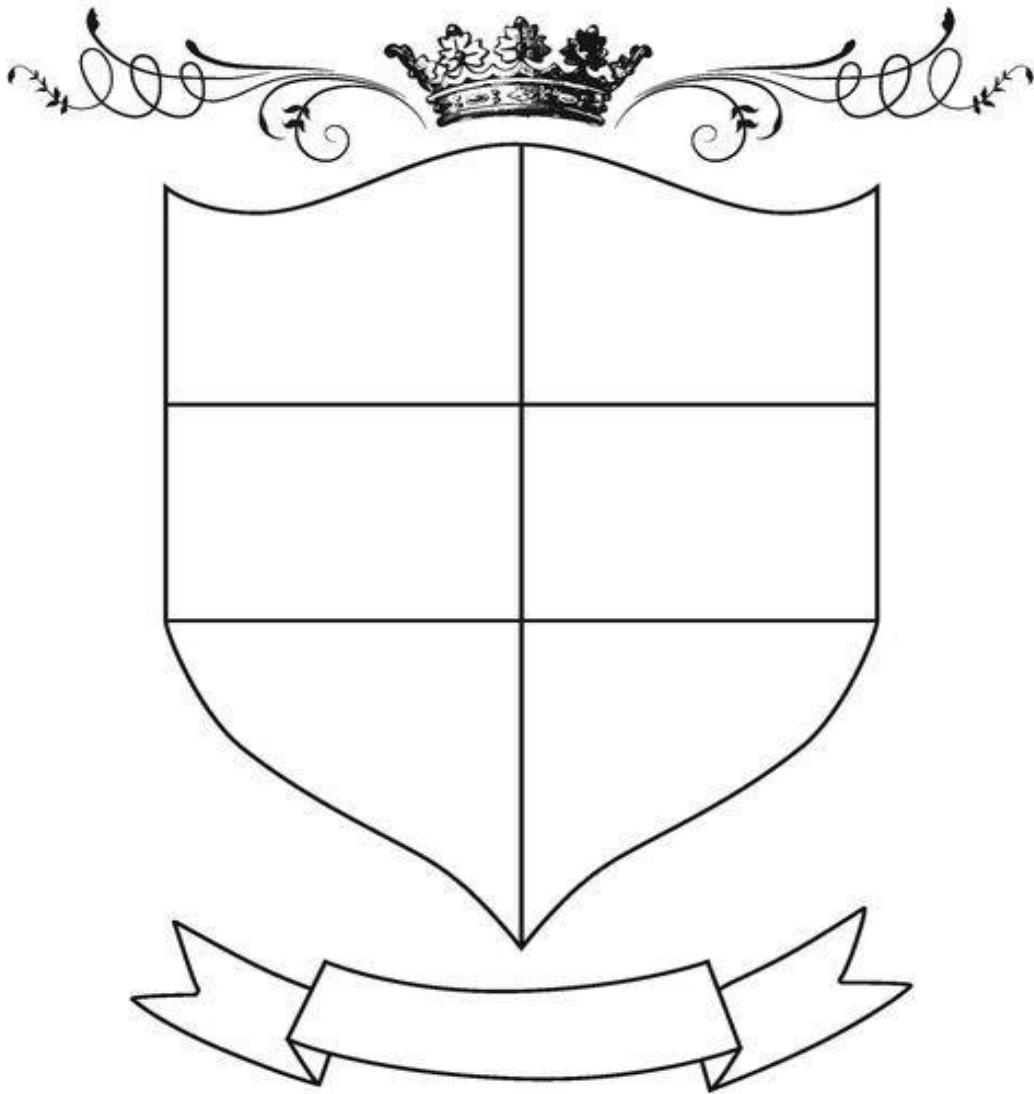
### SEL Activity:

- Read together the story of a medieval period King (King Arthur, King Richard, etc.)
- Use an internet search to up their coat-of-arms along with those of other royal families.
- Ask your students why families might have developed these family coats-of-arms.
- Explain the history: During medieval times local nobleman, kings, and so forth had armies but most "soldiers" were not professional military but rather people loyal to that king or nobleman. Often people identified more with a specific family clan or tribe. Battles were largely hand to hand combat and one could easily become disoriented. When sounding the signal to retreat and regroup, "soldiers" could easily get confused as to which side was who. Thus, the leader could hold up his shield with the coat of arms identifying who he was so soldiers retreated to group with their respective nobleman leader. Each leader developed his own unique coat of arms which reflected things about his family and to which king or clan he was loyal, along with something unique about his heritage.
- Together create your own Personal Coat-of-Arms. Use the shield on the page below as a guide that can be divided into 4-6 sections. Each section is to be completed in answer to each of the provided topic areas. Words are not allowed on the Coat-of-Arms; they are only used in the banner beneath. Finally, in the banner at the bottom of the coat of arms have the students write a motto they or their family tries to live by. Questions 1-3 are to be discussed and all family members reach consensus as to what you'll all draw for the same picture:
  - 1) Something special your family shares in common.
  - 2) What is most important or valued together by your family
  - 3) Something your family all enjoys doing together or your family's favorite place.Questions 4-6 are answered by each persona separately for themselves:
  - 4) Something special or unique about yourself.
  - 5) Something you would like to learn to do or to do better.
  - 6) What is one thing that makes you most happy or proud about yourself?

### Other Possible Family "homework" Activities:

- Together, complete a family tree or genogram going back to at least great grandparents and preferably further and include information on each ancestor (where lived, occupation, interesting experiences, etc.)
- Parents and grandparents can be invited to write a favorite family story they recall regarding a family ancestor. Then share in a "*Family History*" album.

## PERSONAL COAT OF ARMS







## *Understanding & Respecting Oneself*

# The Courage to Overcome Failure

### Objective:

- Increase awareness of how our shared “fear of failure” responses limit our success
- Encourage children to develop an optimistic, *growth mindset* when facing frustrations and failures.
- Increase children’s strategies for persevering, resilience and improvement or growth

### Materials:

- Download the free book, *The Book of Heroic Failures* @:  
<https://epdf.pub/queue/the-book-of-heroic-failures-the-official-handbook-of-the-not-terribly-good-club-f3db71a76a8e7e361b3ec3cb0717fcee39167.h>
- Worksheet of famous “*People Who Have Failed but Persevered*”
- Writing Journal

### SEL Activity:

- Begin by reading one or more short stories from “*The Book of Heroic Failures*”.
- Then share a story about a time in your life when you tried and failed including how you felt at that time. Invite your students to share a similar story from his/her own life in a journal entry.
- Ask, what would you do if you knew you could not fail? Then, brainstorm tactics we all use to avoid failing when in doubt of ourselves (e.g. stomach ache, decide you don’t like it, don’t try hard, etc. etc.)
- Complete the “*People Who Struggled and Failed*” worksheet (attached) and research each to see how many you guessed correctly and what may have led them to be resilient and continue.
- Discuss the meaning of the phrase:  
“*Resilience is when the belief in oneself exceeds the disbelief of others*”
- **Have the class** research together other people who have failed or been rejected before they succeeded and how they kept up the courage to bounce back and succeed.  
[e.g., Abraham Lincoln, Walt Disney JK Rowling, Theodore Seuss Geisel, Steven King, Oprah Winfrey, Lady Gaga, Charles Darwin, Vera Wang, Vincent Van Gogh, Madonna, Ang Lee, The Beatles, etc.]

### Other Possible Family “homework” SEL Activities:

- Send home a few stories from *The Book of Heroic Failures* each evening for family reading and fun.
- Invite other family members (e.g. siblings, parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, etc.) to share stories about times they tried and failed at something as well as what others did that was helpful and encouraging or hurtful and discouraging.

## People Who Failed at first but Persevered

**Match these students to their early school experiences.**

*Giacomo Puccini*  
*Albert Einstein*

*Michael Jordan*  
*Steven Spielberg,*

*Thomas Edison*  
*Sir Isaac Newton*

*Pablo Picasso*   *Henry Ford*   *James Watt*  
*Winston Churchill*   *Alfred Adler*

1. High school teacher told his father he did not have much potential as a student and would be better to quit school and learn to make/repair shoes (i.e. a shoe cobbler).
2. Last four generations of men in his family were highly distinguished musicians (maestros at a cathedral) and family decided he should follow in those footsteps. Early school years marked by frequent expulsions for behavior and parents told to 'give up' as he has no musical talent.
3. Tried out for his 8<sup>th</sup> grade school basketball team and cut as deemed 'not good enough'. Also cut from making the team in 9<sup>th</sup> grade. Each time he felt embarrassed and cried. As a high school sophomore (10<sup>th</sup> grade), he was the last pick for team of 15 on the junior varsity team.
4. Son of a prosperous farmer, he was born tiny and weak and not expected to live. His father, a prosperous farmer, died when he was three. Mother remarried and left him to be raised by his grandmother. Not a particularly strong student, his mother took him out of school at age 12 so he could become a farmer but he proved to be very bad at farming. Later resumed his schooling but only a mediocre student at best
5. A poor student who was always way behind his classmates in all subject areas. Particularly poor in spelling and grammar his whole life. Frequently punished (paddled) for misbehavior and not attending in class,. He overheard principal and teacher describe him at age 10 as "addled minded and would never amount to anything". He then ran away from school and refused to go back.
6. Health problems in childhood prevented him from attending school regularly so largely home schooled by his parents. Wanted to become a maker of mathematical instruments but was denied entry to the profession by the tradesman guild.
7. A poor student who disliked formal schooling but enjoyed art. At age 16, he enrolled in an art school but soon quite going to classes and dropped out.
8. A poor reader throughout his school years usually reading about 2 grade levels below his class. Consequently, he was often teased and bullied by his classmates in school. He dreaded going to school and feared having to read out loud in class. He did go to college but dropped out.
9. The son of a successful farmer, he was always a poor student who never learned to read or spell very well. He left school at age 15 to be an apprentice in a machine shop and worked odd jobs. Father gave him 40 acres to start his own farm but he disliked farming and soon quit.
10. Born into a wealthy family but did not get along with his parents. He maintained a very poor academic record throughout his school years and was considered quite rebellious by teachers. Also, he had speech problems and spoke with a stutter and lisp. Failed his entrance exams for college twice before barely passing on the third try.
11. Almost 5 years old before he learned to talk and still not fluent at age 9. A very poor student in school leaving teachers and parents feeling he might be mentally handicapped. He disliked school and was expelled by his secondary school teacher for having a "bad attitude" and told "you'll never amount to very much". Failing his entrance exams for college, he later got admitted and graduated. But a professor blocked him from getting the usual university assistantship so he had to get a job working as a clerk in a patent office.

## **ANSWERS**

<i>Giacomo Puccini</i>	<i>2</i>
<i>Michael Jordan</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>Thomas Edison</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>Pablo Picasso</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>Henry Ford</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>James Watt</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>Albert Einstein</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Steven Spielberg</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>Sir Isaac Newton</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Winston Churchill</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>Alfred Adler</i>	<i>1</i>





**SEL Competency Area:** *Understanding & Respecting Oneself*

**ACTIVITY TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives:**

**Materials:**

**SEL Activity:**

**Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:**

# **Empathy:**

## **Understanding & Respecting Others**

“Seeing with the eyes of another, listening with the ears of another and feeling with the heart of another” Alfred Adler

“Empathy is a quality of character that can change the world”  
Barack Obama

*“If there is one secret to success, it is the ability to get another person’s point of view and see things from his/her angle as well as your own.”*  
Henry Ford

*“Only the development of compassion and understanding of others can bring us the tranquility and happiness we all seek”*  
Dalai Lama XIV



## *Empathy*

# Empowering Others

### Objective:

- To develop skills in recognizing how others think and feel in different situations.
- To understand how we can positively or negatively impact others via our responses.

**Materials:** Worksheet : *“How would you feel, think & act?” (see below)*

### SEL Activity:

**Introduction:** Read the following:

A young 9 year old boy, Gilbert, is struggling in school both socially and academically. Gilbert is listless and unhappy at school putting little effort into his schoolwork. He seldom completes assignments and does minimal schoolwork. Rather large and obese he avoids sport activities and is socially unpopular /Gilbert is almost two years older than most of his classmates and tends to sit by himself. He seems oblivious to everything and everyone around him. Classmates often make fun of him and play pranks such as filling his coat pockets with snow and hen laughing at him.

Gilbert’s teachers consider him to be absent minded with a poor memory and not attentive to class lessons. He avoids both school work and interactions with his classmates. He is usually daydreaming or otherwise non-attentive and off-task during school. One of his teachers said to him in a moment of frustration, *“Gilbert if we could open your head, we would not find any brain but merely a lump of white fat”*.

#### **Step 1: Discuss:**

How do you think Gilbert thinks and feels about himself, school, his classmates?

How do you think Gilbert felt after his teacher’s comments?

What might he have then thought about himself, school work, his teachers and his classmates?

What might a classmate do or say to help Gilbert?

What might they do to make matters even worse for Gilbert?

**Step 2:** Complete the **“How would you Feel/Think/Act”** worksheet for Gilbert’s situation:

Then, together share times when someone said something hurtful or unkind to you or to someone else.

- How did you feel/think about that individual?
- What would you have preferred they had said or done to be helpful?
- How would you have felt/thought about them if they had done so?
- What happens if we don’t show people that we understand how they feel and think?”

**Step 3:** For each situation noted above, complete a worksheet what comments and actions by classmates would be most constructive and helpful in this situation.



**Closure:**

**Ask:** *Do you know what become of young Gilbert? It's a true story!!!*

His real name was Gilbert Keith Chesterton. Do you know who G.K. Chesterton was? Take a minute to search the internet about GK Chesterton (famous British author). He has been referred to as both 'the greatest writer of the 20<sup>th</sup> century' and "the most unjustly neglected writer of our times". GK Chesterton wrote a weekly column in London newspapers for 43 years, 100+ books, 5 plays, 5 novels, 200+ short stories (including the famous Father Brown series), and 100+ poems. He also debated many of the best known intellectuals of his time.

***So, what do you suppose turned his life around?***

**Answer:** In his pre-teen years, Gilbert was befriended by another classmate, Edmond Clerihew Bentley. They met one another while at a playground and initially started some "rough housing" play. Exhausted, they both stopped and rested. Tired, they began to talk and get to know one another better. The boys discovered they shared an interest in literature and books. From then on, they formed a close, lifetime friendship sharing their favorite writers, books and ideas. This friendship and sharing of their interests in books had the effect of encouraging Gilbert's love of literature. Both boys would later become famous authors. Edmund was a famous author and humorist in his own career publishing under the name of E.C. Bentley.

**Other Classroom "follow up" Learning Activities:**

- Research or read about individuals who have who displayed empathy and taken action to help others in situations that were unfair or dangerous to others such as: Nelson Mandela, Paul Robeson, John Adams (Attorney in Boston massacre trial), John Quincy Adams (Attorney in Armistad trial), Mahatma Ghandi, Harriet Tubman, Martin Luther King, and others.
- Research incidents in history of people who took empowering actions during the Holocaust of WW2 and made a difference in people's lives. Examples: Sir Nicholas Winton, Varian Fry, Kurt Gerstein, Wilm Hosenfeld, Berthold Beitz, Emile Schindler, Hans Hedtoft, Georg Duckwitz, Pinchas Tibor Rosenbaum, and other heroic bystanders of the holocaust.)

**Other Possible Family "homework" SELActivities:**

- Interview other family member regarding, "*Who in your life has encouraged you, lifted you up when you were down?*" Have them write a short story describing such encouraging incidents or persons from their life and share your stories together.
- Share a "family movie night assignment" in which the family is to watch together and discuss a movie involving caring, empowering acts: e.g., Rudy, Brian's Song, Finding Neverland, Play it Forward, Hotel Rwanda, Schindler's List, etc.
- Parents might write a short description of a time they observed their son/daughter acting in an understanding, caring, or empowering manner toward another person (e.g. friend, sibling, grandparent, neighbor, themselves, etc.).

## How would you Feel, Think, & Act?

**Describe the situation:**

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*How do you think this child might have felt at that moment?  
(List some of the possible emotions)*

*What might he/she have been thinking about his/herself and about others at that moment?  
(List some possible thoughts)*

*What did do you think he/she might do next when feeling and thinking this way?*

*What could YOU do or say that would be helpful in this situation?*



## *Empathy*

# Fractured Fairy Tales

### Objective:

- To develop skills in viewing situations from another's perspectives.
- To stimulate creative writing skills

### Materials:

- Any famous fairytale(s) book.
- Writing paper or computer for composing a story.

### SEL Activity:

**Introduction:** Read the story of “*Little Red Riding Hood*”. Then, read the Fractured Fairytale entitled, “*The Much Maligned Wolf*” (see below).

**Activity:** Have students choose another common fairy tale in which there are clear “*good guy*” and “*villain*” characters (e.g., Cinderella, Three Billy Goats Gruff, Hansel & Gretel, etc.).

Now, have each student write a creative “Fractured Fairy Tale” re-telling the story from the perspective of the “villain” as in the ‘*Maligned Wolf*’ story and what might be the other side of this story. Write your own “Fractured Fairy Tale” as well and share your stories.

Place all stories together into a family reading book for a free reading time activity.

**Closure:** Identify times when you’ve each felt misunderstood, wrongly accused, or felt nobody was willing to listen to your side of the story/conflict. Also explore incidents when you have observed others in a similar position. Explore together why it is important to hear both sides in a conflict”.

### Other Possible Family “homework” SEL Activities

- Have other family members write a story about a time when they felt misunderstood or not heard and how they handled the situation. Share and discuss together.
- Invite other family members (parent, siblings, grandparents, aunts/uncles, cousins....) to write their own “Fractured Fairy Tales”. Put all the stories into a three ring binder and share during family time (e.g., dinner, at bed time, or evenings)
- Find newspaper articles, news magazine stories, or watch television news stories regarding conflicts (between nations, political parties, labor/management, and so forth). Research via the internet the history behind the positions and issues on both sides of the issue. Write a brief synopsis together about the issue and the opposing perspectives and rationales for each position.



# The Maligned Wolf

[Author unknown]

Hello boys and girls. I came today to share with you my sad story. You see, I am not really the person you see standing before you this morning. Rather, I am in disguise. I have had to disguise my true identity for years; quite unfairly I might add. The secret is that I am actually the Wolf who used to live in a forest far, far away. But, due to a most unfortunate incident one day, I have been forced to live in hiding, disguised to protect my safety. Would you believe that today, young children are taught in schools and by their parents that I am a Bad Wolf, an evil Wolf; and it is simply not true! Let me tell you my story.

It all started one bright spring morning. It was my job, as the largest animal in the forest, to keep watch and make sure the forest remained a safe, peaceful place for all the smaller animals. On this particular morning, I was cleaning up a campsite. Some careless campers had left their campfire still smoldering which could have led to a forest fire. They also had left quite a lot of litter about their camping spot which was not good for the environment. So I set about putting dirt on the smoldering embers and picking up their carelessly left litter.

Suddenly, I caught a glimpse of a stranger coming up the pathway. I hid behind a tree to see who it might be and to make sure it was not someone up to, well.. “no good” if you know what I mean. After all, it is my job to protect the smaller, defenseless animals of the forest. This stranger seemed to be quite mysterious and acted as if he or she didn’t want to be recognized. This made me a bit concerned and a tad bit frightened I’m not afraid to admit. This person wore a long red cape with a big hood over the head so nobody could see who it was. And, this person was carrying a mysterious basket with a cloth covering it so as to hide whatever was in the basket. “A terrorist with a bomb” was my first thought. I had to do something, and quick.

So, in spite of my fears and without concern for my personal safety, I jumped out from behind the tree and stopped this “terrorist”. “Who are you? And where are do you think you’re going with that mysterious covered basket?” I asked.

Well, as it turns out, it was a young girl...maybe 12 or 13. She gave me some song and dance about going to her grandmother’s house at the other side of the forest. She said her grandmother was ill and she was bringing some goodies for her to eat. I checked the basket and sure enough it was full of tea, chicken soup and other goodies for her grandmother. I tried to explain to her that she needs to be more aware of how she acts and dresses when going through the forest. I told her she looked and acted like a terrorist up to some evil act and it would frighten the small, defenseless animals that lived here. But, this little girl seemed to not care less. She gave me an attitude, you know, rolling eyes, big sigh, etc., etc... And with that she went on her way.

I decided this little girl needs to be taught a lesson about being aware of her environment and how her behavior affected others. So I took a short cut through the forest and arrived at her grandmother’s house ahead of her. Her grandmother being a forest dweller herself, understood my position when I explained the situation to her. Together, we came up with the idea of playing a little trick on little miss red riding hood in order to teach her an important lesson.

So grandmother hid in the closet while I dressed up in her nightgown and nightcap and then laid in the bed pretending to me grandmother. Very soon, in came Little Miss Red Riding hood, (without even politely knocking on the door first, I might add). She said something about bringing some goodies to eat that her mother had prepared. But then, quickly added, “Oh grandma, what terribly big eyes you have”. Now, do you start to see what kind of girl she really was? Not two minutes into her sick grandmother’s house and she’s making nasty, critical comments about her grandmother’s eyes! Unbelievable! Well, I always was taught to “make lemonade from lemons” so I tried to nicely deflect this criticism by saying, “*All the better to see you with my dear*”. Not bad, eh?!

But, what did this little “*Deary*” do next? Why she just fired off yet a second insult at whom she thought was her poor, old, sick grandmother. “*What awfully big ears you have, grandma*” . Now, I think we are all seeing that this little girl was not such a nice, considerate person at all. Imagine, not two minutes in the door and twice insulting your own grandmother. But, again I tried to make this positive by replying, “*All the better to hear you with my dear*”. I thought surely this would be the end of her insults. But, no!!! The next words out of her mouth were yet a third insult. “*Oh, grandma, what big, ugly teeth you have!*”

Ok, now this is where I lost it. I know I should have handled this better and not blown my top. But this kid was so self-centered and insulting; even to whom she thought was her own sickly grandmother. You have to understand that I come from a very poor wolf family. My parents could not afford to take me to the orthodontist for braces, retainers and so forth when I was young. I’ve always been quite self-conscious about my large, uneven teeth. So this comment just hit me where it hurts the most. I jumped out of the bed and yelled, “*All the better to eat you with!!*”

Now, let’s face it. This is a dumb statement! Everyone knows wolves don’t eat people. But this kid just started screaming and throwing a right good “Hissy fit” right there in the cabin; running from room to room screaming. At this point, I calmed down and tried to explain to her what was really going on, but that just seemed to make matters worse and she only screamed louder.

Just then, the door burst open and this huge, burly lumberjack came flying into the room with his axe, screaming that he’d save her. Never, did he even bother to ask, “What’s the problem?” No, I knew right away I was in big trouble!! The girl screaming hysterically; me, a wolf, chasing her and this crazed, gung-ho lumberjack smashing his way through the door like some Rambo dude to save the day. I just knew this was not going to end well!

The lumberjack swung that axe and split me open across the middle. I fell to the floor and decided to act as if I were dead. When the lumberjack went over to calm the girl down, I slowly crept out the door and crawled back to my den. It took weeks to heal. And to this day, everyone is told that I am the bad guy, the Big Bad Wolf... Nobody has ever asked to hear my side of the story!! Has that ever happened to you??

By the way, I’ve still not forgiven that grandmother for staying in the closet. Why didn’t’ she come out when things went bad and help me? I still don’t understand her just standing there and “not getting involved”. If only she had stepped up and said something, this whole bad situation could have been avoided.

Well, that’s my story. To this day, I have to go around disguised as the person you see before you today. Children everywhere are taught that I’m a dangerous, evil person. Who knows what they’d do to me if they found out I was the much maligned wolf from the untrue story of Little Red Riding Hood. Thanks for listening to my sad tale; I appreciate your taking the time to listen to my side of the story.

**Nobody else ever has!**



## *Empathy*

# The Many Faces of Bullying

### Objective:

- To understand the various aspects of bullying and its effects
- To learn to identify the role bystanders play in bullying
- To develop strategies for bullying prevention in their school, classroom and communities

### Materials:

- Choose an appropriate book which involves bullying behavior among children of your students' age group.(see examples below or ask your librarian for recommendations)
- Handout or slide projection on "***Bullying/Abuse by Motivation and Degree***" (see below)
- T-Charts entitled "The Many Faces of Bullying" (attached)

### SEL Activity:

#### *Introduction:*

- Share your personal experiences of being bullied or picked upon or of observing others being bullied abused or mistreated (from your childhood or as an adult.
- Invite students to share their personal experiences with bully, teasing, etc.
- Discuss how you and others who saw this act responded to the bullying incident?" How did that feel?

#### *Activity:*

- Choose a book that deals with bullying (see sample list below or do an internet search for books). And read one chapter at a time.
- Discuss the information on bullying below entitled: **The Many Faces of Bullying** and *Understanding Bullying, Abuse & Maltreatment*.
- As you read the selected book, write on the "***Many Faces of Bullying***" worksheet the names of each book character and discuss what role they chose to take in response to the bullying.
- Discuss how each person felt and what options each had to respond differently.

#### *Closure:*

- Discuss how you each felt about every character's behavior and why they may have acted that way.

### Other Possible classroom follow-up SEL Activities:

- Develop "***Bullying Prevention Strategies Chart***" listing together all the options possible for::
  - a) Handling situations if you are being bullied yourself, and
  - b) Responding to situations when you see another person being bullied, abused or mistreated.

### Other Possible Family "homework" SEL Activities:

- Assign suggested Book Titles for parents to read at home with their child and discuss:

*The Bully of Barkham Street* by Mary Stolz (a classic)

*The Bully* by Paul Langdon

*Wonder* by AJ Palacio

*The Juice Box Bully* by Bob Sornson

*Stand Up For Yourself* by Patti K Chriswell

*Junior High Drama* by Louise Simonson

*The New Girls* by Katrina Kahler

*I Walk with Vanessa* by Kerascoet

*Crow Boy* by Taro Yahida

*Just Kidding* by Trudy Ludwig



# The Many Faces of Bullying

**Active Bully:** Person who actively mistreats, threatens, or hurts another physically, emotionally or verbally

**Vicarious Bully:** Person who observes the bullying and laughs, encourages or supports the active bully

**Passive Bystander:** Person who observes the bullying incident but says or does nothing and moves on their way.

**Upstander:** Person who steps in to stop the bullying or to offer support to the victim

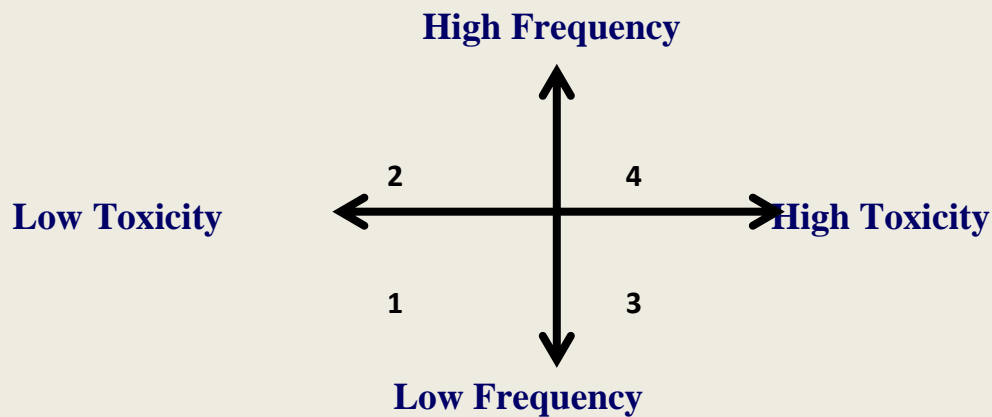
**Victim:** Person against whom the bully mistreats and abuses physically or via teasing, threats, name calling, etc..

**Character's Name:**      **Active Bully?**    **Vicarious Bully?**    **Passive Bystander?**    **Upstander?**

[illegible]

# Understanding Bullying, Abuse & Maltreatment

## Classification by Degree



**Frequency**

How often such incidents occur.

**Toxicity**

How painful each incident is to the victim

**Types of Bullying:**

Physical, Sexual, Verbal, Emotional/Psychological, Neglect/Marginalization,

## By Motivational Type

*There are 4 common motivational patterns in bullying or abusive incidents  
All of which result in some degree of harm to another person.*

1. **Deliberate/Intentional:** The premeditated and intentional infliction of harm, fear, or pain upon another.
2. **Reactive:** Impulsive responses due to stress, fatigue or inadequate social-emotional competencies such as emotional self-regulation, empathy, and so forth.
3. **Culturally Sanctioned:** Actions that are considered normal or acceptable in a given culture or social environment which inflict harm or adversely affect others.
4. **Neglect/Marginalizing:** Actions which deny another of their primary psychological need for feeling a sense of belonging, acceptance, caring, and respect.



## *Empathy*

# In My Shoes

### **Objectives:**

- Develop awareness and compassion for disabled individuals
- Develop understanding of how one's actions can help or hinder a disabled person
- Develop appreciation for the obstacles a disabled person must overcome in life.

### **Materials:**

- Invite a disabled person(s) to speak to your class (blind, deaf, paraplegic, cerebral palsy, etc.) e.g., by contacting a school for the blind, Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, seeing eye dog trainers, etc.
- List of people who were disabled and demonstrated resilience in succeeding despite their disability.(below)
- Blindfold, ear plugs, wheelchair

### **SEL Activity:**

- List the types of disabilities that people can have and what obstacles this creates to living the life of normal, healthy people. Then inform your child (students) that tomorrow a guest speaker will be coming in (or “we’ll be visiting”) to share the struggles they’ve had to overcome due to a disability.
- Make a list of all the questions to be asked such that we might learn more about the guest’s disability and how s/he has learned to adapt and compensate. Be sure to include questions as to what non-disabled people can do to be supportive and what do some people do that is unhelpful.
- After listening to your guest speaker (or visit). Have the children (students) ask their prepared questions as well as any new questions they would like answered.
- Following the Q&A session, invite students to volunteer to experience life as a disabled person e.g., be blindfolded and taken for a walk, spend part of a day in a wheelchair, wear earplugs, not use an arm for a little while, etc.
- Have your child (students) write a thank you letter to the guest speaker including what they most appreciated learning and found most interesting.

### **Other Possible classroom or “family homework” SEL Activities:**

- Provide an opportunity for your child (students) to volunteer or visit at a Special Olympics program, a class for special needs students, a hospital or other community program for disabled children or adults. Write a report on how they felt and what they learned during this experience.
- Research the stories of people who have succeeded despite their disability and write short reports on what people did that was most supportive and most uncaring and detrimental.  
[E.G., Ralph Blaun, Helen Keller, Sudha Chandran, Marla Runyan, Ludwig van Beethoven, Christy Brown, Stevie Wonder, Henry Winkler, Jean-Dominique Bauby, Stephen Hawkins, Marlee Matlin, Itzhak Perlman, Nick Vujicic, Jim Abbott, Esther Vergeer, Aaron Fotheringham, etc.].
- Watch a movie together about individuals dealing with the challenges of their disability and discuss your reactions (E.Q. Radio, Kings Speech, The Elephant Man, I am Sam, The Miracle Worker, Temple Grandin, My Left Foot, etc.)



**SEL Competency Area:**      ***Empathy***

**ACTIVITY TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives:**

**Materials:**

**SEL Activity:**

**Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:**



# Communication

*“Words are of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind”*  
Rudyard Kipling

*“The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice”*  
Peggy O’Mara

*“Communication, the human connection, is the key to personal  
and career success.”*  
Paul J. Meyer



## *Communication*

# Round Robin Stories

### Objective:

- Develop listening skills
- Learning to listen to, and build off, others ideas

### Materials:

- String or twine cut into pieces approximately 6 feet (2 meters) long
- Audio taping device (cell phone, recorder, etc.)

### SEL Activity:

Have three or more students sit in a circle. Each person is handed the end of one piece of string. The teacher (or a student leader) holds the other end of all the strings. Inform everyone that, after listening to the opening first two sentences of the story, the leader will pull on someone's string. That person must then add more to the story building on what has been said so far.. When the string is pulled a second time that person stops and another person's string is pulled and he/she will add to what was been said so far as well. Stress that it is important to listen closely to one another such that you will understand what direction the story is taking and can build upon it.

Turn on your recording device and begin the story with no more than two lines, e.g., "*Once there was a young girl who had just moved to a new town. On her first day at her new school ...*" now pull a child's string for him/her to finish this sentence and add two more line. Continue to randomly move back and forth or around the circle having different children or family members adding to the story until you have a finished your family Round Robin story.

Listen to your Round Robin Story together. Then, have someone type and print the story for anyone to read at any time they so choose. Do this activity several times with a different person serving as the leader and starting with a new story opening. [Save your stories in a binder as a "class heirloom" to be enjoyed in the future.

**Closure:** Ask everyone how it felt to do this activity. Did they have any difficulty making the connection between the previous ideas and the new one they wanted to add? How is this skill important when you work with others?

### Other Possible "Family Homework" SEL Activities:

- Have children's write the first paragraph for a creative story. Then have each family member in turn add to it by writing 3-4 lines more. Have each person put their initials beside their portion of the story until you've developed a "Family Round Robin Story". Add it to your family story binder.



## Communication

# Expressing Appreciation & Gratitude

### Objective:

- To learn to express appreciation to others for what they have done or meant to you.
- To learn how our actions and character are recognized and appreciated by others.

### Materials:

- Writing paper or, recording device

### SEL Activity:

Read the story of Mr. Samuels & Monika (below, it's a true story!). Then, share a story about someone who had an especially positive impact on your life; include what they did and why that meant so much to you.

Then, invite students to write a '*Letter of Appreciation*' to someone that has helped or supported them or has had some positive effect but to whom you have never truly told or acknowledged this important impact they've had in your life. (The letters should be at least two paragraphs).

Consider mailing your letters to these special people also.

### Example:

Dear, \_\_\_\_\_

I just wanted to take a moment to let you know how important you have been in my life. When, I...

Sincerely,

### Other Possible "family homework" SEL Activities:

- Invite parents to, write 'Thank you' notes with their child to friends, relatives, etc. for gifts or acts of kindness.
- Have family members share similar stories about people who have had a special impact on their lives (Can be a dinner table exercise or each person write a Letter of Appreciation' and then share the letters during dinner or a family time (share in class also if they so desire)

## Mr. Samuels & Monika

Mr. Samuels had been a teacher of high school science for 29 years and very much enjoyed his job. He had recently been promoted to Science Department Head and thought he had reached the peak of his career.

Then, one Sunday morning, Mr. Samuel's doorbell rang. When he opened the door, he found a former student standing on his doorstep; Monika. Her mother stood behind her on the front walk. Monika had been a student in Mr. Samuels' class about 8 years ago. She came from a poor family and neither of her parents had ever graduated from high school. Monika too struggled in class and often expressed her frustration with school saying, *"I'll never pass in Physics, I'm just not good for anything!"* Mr. Samuels would always just smile and reply, *"Monika, pluck up your courage, you will make it if only you try; I'm sure you will get a good grade!"*. When Monika graduated, Mr. Samuels signed her yearbook with this phrase, ***"If you wonder how to do a job, get started and then wonder how you did it!"***

Now, early on this Sunday morning, Monika and her mother stood smiling at his front door. Monika told Mr. Samuels that she had successfully gone on after high school and graduated from college with a B.Ed. degree (with Honors) and wanted to present him with a copy of her research thesis. It was a comprehensive study on the relationship between achievement and student socioeconomic background.

Monika told Mr. Samuels she wanted him to have a copy because. "I dedicated her thesis to you, Mr. Samuels!" He opened to the dedication page and read,

*"I dedicate this thesis to Mr. Samuels, one of my past high school teachers thanks to whom I started believing more in myself and consequently succeeded in education. Indeed, I will never forget his words, 'If you wonder how to do a job, get started and then wonder how you did it.'"*

Mr. Samuels would later say, *I had always thought that the past success of my students on their Physics exams was THE SATISFACTION of teaching. But, Monika's dedication message made me realize that I had not just taught Monika about Physics, but I had also taught her to believe in herself...to "light the fire in herself!"*

*"Now I realized that there is a more important side to teaching"*, Mr. Samuels said. Because of Monika's thesis dedication expressing her appreciation and gratitude, Mr. Samuels then realized he'd now truly reached the true peak of his teaching career. Thanks to Monika's expression of gratitude, Mr. Samuels dedicated himself from that day onward to focusing on this *"more important side"* to his teaching along with the imparting of knowledge in science to his students.





## *Communication*

# The Power of Encouragement

### Objective:

- To build awareness of the impact of both Negative/Destructive and Positive/Constructive Comments.
- To build awareness of we can encourage and support others in our daily interactions..
- To build supportive/encouraging communication patterns within the family

### Materials:

- The Story of Mark Eklund
- Paper with the names of each family member listed (include grandparents, etc.)
- Paper with the names of all your child's classmates listed

### SEL Activity:

**Introduction:** Ask, "Have you ever heard someone say something critical or hurtful about you?" How did you feel about yourself? the person who said it?"

This is called *Negative/Destructive Communication*.

Then, ask "Has anyone ever said something positive or encouraging to you? What did they say? How did you feel about yourself? About the person who made the comment?. This is called *Positive/Constructive Communication*.

Note that both types have very powerful effects on others and say a lot about the type of person we are ourselves.

We are going to read a true story about the power of positive/constructive communication.

**READ** the Mark Eklund story together (attached).

**Activity:** Provide a worksheet listing the names of each class member along the left column and then sufficient space for writing comments about each person. Along with your students, spend a few minutes writing something positive about each and every student focusing on something you admire, like, appreciate, or enjoy about that family member. i.e., "I like it when you..."; I appreciate it when you..." I like the way you...", "It means a lot to me when you..."!

When done, edit out any negative/destructive comments and discuss how the comments might be hurtful and replace with positive, encouraging comments. . When completed, place the lists in a notebook for all to see and read the comments.

**Closure:** Discuss how it felt to express positive/encouraging comments? How did it feel to read the comments about you ? How can we do this in our daily lives in our family?, in school? With our friends?

### Other Possible "family homework" SEL Activities:

- Parents can write a Letter of Encouragement to each of their children.(see format below)
- Have children write positive comments about each family member, extended family members and friends and send these notes to them.

## The Story of Mark: The power of encouragement

It was my first year teaching. And this young boy was in the first third grade class I taught at Saint Mary's School. All 34 of my students were dear to me, but Mark Eklund was one in a million. Very neat in appearance, but with that "happy-to-be-alive attitude that made even his occasional mischievousness delightful.

Mark talked incessantly. I had to remind him again and again that talking without permission was not acceptable. What impressed me so much though was his most sincere response every time I had to correct him for misbehaving. *"Thank you for correcting me, Ms. Jones"*.

I didn't know what to make of it at first, but before long I became accustomed to hearing those words many times each day.

One morning, my patience was growing thin. When Mark talked out once too often, I made a novice teacher's mistake. I looked at Mark and said, *"If you say one more word, I am going to tape your mouth shut!"* Of course, it wasn't ten seconds later when Chuck blurted out, *"Mark is talking again!"*. I hadn't asked any of the students to help me watch Mark, but since I had stated the punishment in front of the class, I felt I had to act on it.

I remember the scene as if it occurred only this morning. I walked to my desk, very deliberately opened my drawer and took out a roll of masking tape. Without saying a word, I proceeded to Mark's desk, tore off two pieces of tape and made a big X with them over his mouth. I then returned to the front of the room.

As I glanced at Mark to see how he was doing, he winked at me! That did it! I started laughing. The class cheered as I walked back to Mark's desk, removed the tape, and shrugged my shoulders. His first words were, *"Thank you for correcting me, Ms. Jones"*.

At the end of the year, I was asked to teach junior high math. The years flew by and before I knew it Mark was in my 9<sup>th</sup> grade classroom again. He had grown to be a handsome young man and just as polite as he was in third grade. Since he had to listen carefully to my instructions in beginning algebra, he did not talk as much in ninth grade as he had in third.

One Friday, things just didn't feel right. We had worked hard on a new concept all week, and I sensed that the students were frowning, frustrated with themselves and getting edgy with one another. I had to stop this crankiness before it got out of hand. So I asked them all to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper. They were to leave a space between each name. Then, I told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down.

It took the remainder of the class period to finish the assignment and as the students left the room, each one handed me their papers. Charlie smiled and Mark said, *"thank you for teaching me, Ms. Jones, have a good weekend!"*

That Saturday, I wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and I listed what everyone else had said about that individual. On Monday, I gave each student his or her list. Before long, the entire class was smiling, *"Really?"*, I heard whispered, *"I never knew that meant anything to anyone!"* or *"I didn't know others like me so much!"*.

The funny thing was, nobody ever mentioned those papers in class again. I never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn't matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another again. That group of students moved on to grade ten and then to graduation.

Several years later, after I returned from a vacation, my parents met me at the airport to drive me home. My mother asked me several questions about my trip, the weather and so forth. Then there was a lull in the conversation and I saw my Mother give my Dad a sideways glance and simply said, *"Dad?"*.

My father then cleared his throat as he always did just before saying something important. "The Eklunds called last night", he began.

"Really?", I said. *"I haven't heard from them in years. I wonder how Mark is doing?"* Dad responded quietly. *"Mark was killed in action in the war (Vietnam), he said. 'The funeral is tomorrow, and his parents would like it if you could attend.'"*

To this day, I can still point to the exact spot on the highway where Dad told me about Mark.

I had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. Mark looked so handsome, so mature. All I could think at that moment was, "Mark, I would give all the masking tape in the world if only you would talk to me once more."

The church was packed with Mark's old school buddies. Chuck's sister sang at the funeral. It was so difficult at the graveside. The pastor said the usual prayers, and the bugler played taps and there was a military gun salute. The Eklunds were presented the flag that draped over Mark's coffin. Then, one by one those who loved Mark took a last walk by the coffin and laid a flower upon it.

I was the last one to walk up to his coffin. As I stood there, one of the soldiers who has acted as a pallbearer came up to me and asked, *"Were you Mark's math teacher?"* I nodded as I continued to stare at the coffin. *"Mark talked about you a lot"* he said.

After the funeral, most of Mark's former classmates headed to Chuck's farmhouse for lunch. Mark's mother and father were there also, obviously waiting for me. *"We want to show you something"* his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket. *"They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it."*

Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times. I knew, without looking that the papers were the ones on which I had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him.

*"Thank you so much for doing that"* Marks' mother said. *"As you can see, Mark treasured it."*

Mark's classmates started to gather around us. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, *"I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home"*. Chuck's wife said, *"Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album" I have mine too, Marilyn said, it's in my diary"*. Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. *"I carry this with me at all time"* Vicki said without batting an eyelash. *"I think we all saved our lists"*.

That's when I finally sat down and cried. I cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again and for all those who would never again have the chance to let him know how much they liked him and how much they thought of him.

I write about this important experience as a teacher in order to encourage everyone to take the time to compliment and encourage one another, your friends, loved ones, family and all those you care about.

We too often tend to forget the importance of showing our affections, caring and appreciation of one another; and our love for those closest to us! Sometimes the smallest of things, mean the most to another person.

The days are full and many people come and go in our lives. We forget that the stages in our life will end one day as will life itself. So please, take the time each day to tell the people in your life what you like about them, that they are special and important to you. Tell them before it's too late. You never know when they might most need just that reassurance that others care!





**Mark's third grade class.  
With his teacher, Sister Helen Mroska**



**Mark Eklund**

*[Google 'Mark Eklund' for more information & photos of Mark Eklund, his teacher, and his class]*

## Sample A Letter of Encouragement

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

In the course of our busy day-to-day lives, I sometimes forget to let you know all the things you do that make me so proud and happy to have you as my \_\_\_\_\_. So I thought I'd take this moment to let you know some of the special things I enjoy about you and our relationship.





## *Empathy*

# Listening Designs

### Objectives:

- Increase students' attending skills
- Increase students' ability to express themselves clearly and precisely to others
- Increase students' awareness of how easily miscommunication takes place in our daily lives.

### Materials:

- Prepare a series of envelopes each filled with various shapes cut from colored construction paper. Include large and small: circles, triangles, squares, octagons, rectangles, etc. of all colors). Each envelope should consist of the identical set of colored shapes of various sizes.

### SEL Activity:

**Introduction:** Ask students, "How many think they communicate clearly to others?". Then ask, "How many have ever felt misunderstood by someone?". How is it that so many good communicators are so often misunderstood? Let's try an experiment in communicating clearly.

**Activity:** Students are paired with one another for the activity. Sitting back to back, one is designated as the communication "*sender*" and the other as the communication "*receiver*". Each child is given one of the identical envelopes of colored shapes. The "*sender*" begins by using his/her shapes to create a design on the floor in front of him/her. As s/he does so, s/he tells the "*receiver*" how to make the identical design. The receiver must attempt to make an identical design on the floor in front of him/her. However, the "*receiver*" is **NOT** allowed to speak (i.e. no questions, no clarification requests, etc).

After a few minutes, have the children stop and compare their designs. Are their designs exactly alike? If not, discuss what went wrong. Was miscommunication a problem? Ask for ideas on how they might possibly solve this problem? Then have them try again and see if they can improve their communication. Reverse roles so each child has the chance to be "*sender*" and "*receiver*".

Retry the activity but this time, allow receivers to ask clarifying questions of the sender to make sure he/she correctly understands how to proceed with the design.

**Closure:** Follow the standard closure questions regarding: "What happened?", "How did you each feel at each step?", "When have you encountered a situation in your own life when you misunderstood someone or, you were misunderstood? Discuss "How we could use this information to better handle such situations in the future?"

### Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:

- During dinner or in a class discussion, have everyone begin to speak only after repeating what the previous person/speaker said and asking if he/she had correctly understood. Then they can offer your own opinion, thoughts, stories, or idea, etc.
- Have children review current events in the newspaper for examples of people being misunderstood or the miscommunicating of their ideas. Include examples of deliberate misleading communication in advertising, politics, etc.
- Have children interview a parent, other family member (e.g. grandparent), or adult friend/neighbor about a time when they felt misunderstood. How did they handle it? What could they have done to make the situation work out better?



**SEL Competency Area:**      *Communication*

**ACTIVITY TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives:**

**Materials:**

**SEL Activity:**

**Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:**

# Cooperation

*“Only when all contribute their firewood can they build up a strong fire”*  
Chinese proverb

*“In the long history of humankind, those who learned to collaborate and improvise most effectively prevailed”*  
Charles Darwin

*“Only strength can cooperate.”*  
Dwight D. Eisenhower



## *Cooperation*

# Cooperative Art Projects

### Objective:

- To provide an opportunity for students to learn to cooperate on a single project
- Increase students' abilities to work cooperatively rather than competitively in the classroom.
- To help students learn to build on ideas of others and allow others to build on theirs

### Materials:

- Tables arranged such that 3 or more family members can stand around the table with each having his/her own large sheet of art paper (2'X2')
- One 2ft X 2ft sheet of art paper per person
- Paint brushes and various water color paints to share
- Paper towels and water dishes for each table
- One paint brush for each person
- Music on tape
- painting smocks

### SEL Activity:

We are going to experience the artist's version of the game, "Musical Chairs". When the music begins, begin your painting on the paper in front of you. But, no talking allowed during the game! And, you must stop painting as soon as the music stops.

After 1 minute, stop the music and inform everyone that they must now move to the painting on their right. Restart the music and have everyone now begin adding to that painting in front of them. Continue this process until each person has gone around and added to all the paintings at least one or two times and is back to their original painting.

**Closure:** Discuss how each person felt when they first had to move on to another painting?

What did you do? How did you feel as you proceeded thru the art activity?

How did you feel when you saw your original painting at the end?

Have you ever experienced something similar to this (others adding to your ideas, projects, etc.?). How did it go?

How can we use what we've learned here for handling projects more successfully at home, at school, or elsewhere in our lives?

### Other Possible "Family homework" SEL Activities:

- Brainstorm other ways in which this Musical Chairs Cooperative game be applied to daily household tasks and give each a try (e.g., cooking dinner, cleaning up after dinner, yard work, and so forth).





## *Cooperation*

# The Five Squares Puzzle

### Objective(s):

- Develop cooperation skills in problem solving tasks

### Materials:

- Five squares puzzle pieces in identical envelopes (see attached diagram)
- 5 chairs facing one another arranged around a table and five family members of any and all ages (extended family or friends can be invited to fill all seats)

### Lesson Plan:

**Introduction:** Share examples of times when you had to solve a problem or accomplish a difficult task as part of a team effort (e.g., in school, at work, in sports, etc.). Remind everyone that “teamwork” is one of the most important skills needed to be successful in all areas of our lives. So, today, we will practice our team problem solving skills.

**Activity:** Place students in the chairs around the table (groups of 5) and give each one of the prepared envelopes containing three puzzle pieces (see directions attached). Inform them that their task is to form five squares of equal size from these puzzle pieces. The group is not finished until each member has in front of him/her a perfect square of the same size as those in front of each of the other members of the group.

### GAME RULES:

- Participants **MAY NOT** speak at any time
- Participants **MAY NOT** ask for a puzzle piece or in any way signal to another person to give him/her a piece.
- Participants **MAY NOT** take a puzzle piece from another member.
- Participants **MAY NOT** assemble a square for another member.
- There is no time limit!!!
- Members **MAY GIVE** a puzzle piece to other members of the group but not indicate how it is to be used.
- Puzzle pieces **MAY BE GIVEN** to another player but cannot be placed in the center for anyone to take.

**Closure:** Follow up discussion can explore how each person felt at the beginning, middle, and end of the activity.

What did others do that was helpful?

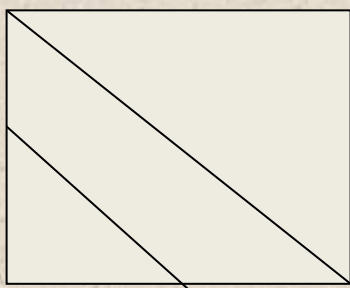
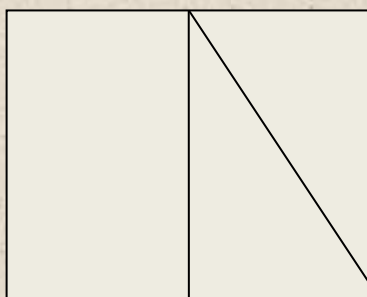
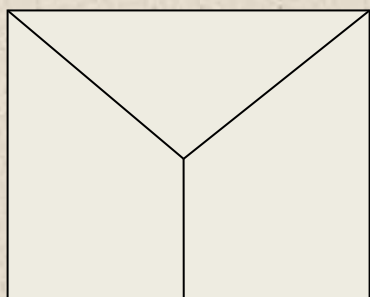
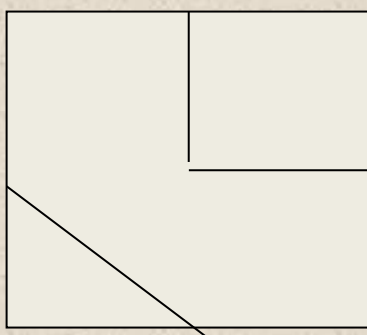
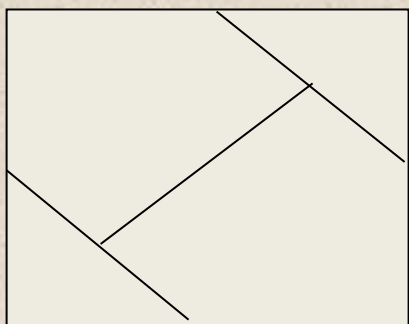
What did others do that was frustrating or problematic for the group?.

Share thoughts on situations where such cooperation is needed for all to be successful.

### Other Possible “family homework” SEL Activities:

- Make similar puzzles using complete sentences or math problems to be solved such that all are correct
- Parents can share (e.g., write a short note) describing how cooperation and problem solving occurs in their work place
- Make a list together of examples when group problem solving is required in sports, business, government, and other jobs or professions.

## **Five Squares Puzzle Pieces:**



### **DIRECTIONS**

For each design, use a 6-inch square piece of heavy paper. Mark the squares as above. Then, randomly mark each of the 16 puzzle pieces as either, A, B, C, D, or E. Cut out the puzzle pieces and place all A pieces in the “A” envelope, B pieces in the “B” envelope, etc. Place students in groups of 5 facing one another at a table and give each student one of the five envelopes with 3-4 pieces in each. Then, follow the instructions as on the previous page



## *Cooperation*

# The Balloon Bop Challenge

### Objective:

- Develop cooperation skills
- Develop problem solving abilities in a team effort

### Materials:

- Balloons (round shape)

### SEL Activity:

- Stand in a circle holding the hands of those on either side. Toss a balloon in the air. The goal is to see how many times the group can tap the balloon into the air before it touches the ground. [NOTE: the balloon may be tapped with hands, arms, heads, shoulders, chest or knees but NO feet!]. To succeed everyone has to work cooperatively with no letting go of any hands. All must move together as a team to make sure they do not lose connection of hands. If the balloon hits the ground or someone's foot, the game stops, the score is recorded and then re-start to beat your own record.
- Once proficient, add a second balloon and play to keep both balloons in the
- Introduce the mathematical equation for calculating the number of cooperative pairs in any group. Of  $Y^2 - Y$  divided by 2. (E.G., if five people are involved in a team task, it would be 5 squared minus 5 divided by 2 or  $25 - 5 = 20$  divided by 2 = 10 cooperative pairs). Note that in any team sport there are two teams. This means there is only 1 competitive pair (team A and team B). Now calculate how many cooperative pairs (teammates) are necessary on the field for each team to be successful (e.g. in soccer or American football it's 11 per team or  $121 - 11 = 110$  divided by 11 = 55 Cooperative teammate pairs)
- Discuss and explore how players on any team (pick various sports) must cooperate to be successful. What would happen if one or more players decided not to cooperate and did whatever they wanted instead of cooperating with the others?
- Calculate the number of cooperative pairs in your family. How do we cooperate? What would happen if some of us didn't cooperate? How is cooperation important in classroom?, school?, community?
- Create a list of ways in which we all have to cooperate to be successful in our lives (family, workplaces, schools, community, etc.).

### Other Possible "family homework" SEL Activities:

- Start a "Family Challenge" to see how many family members can join the game and succeed in keeping the balloon (or balloons) up. Create a chart indicating the "Family Record" with one, two or more balloons. From time to time, get everyone together to try to set a new Family Record.
- Have parents and their child co-interview various family members, friends, neighbors, etc. as to how people have to cooperate in their workplace in order for the business or organization to be successful.



## Cooperation

# The Group Sit

### Objectives:

- Develop cooperation skills
- Develop a family or classroom culture focused on cooperation and success by all rather than competition.
- Learn how one's own actions can impact the success or failure of others or a group/team.

### Materials:

- none needed

### SEL Activity:

**Introduction:** Ask who has ever played a team sport. Why do teammates have to learn to cooperate together if their team is to become “competitive”, i.e. able to win? Write the equation:

$X = Y^2 - Y/2$  on the board. Explain that this tells us how many cooperative pairs exist in any team or group effort. For example, a soccer team has 11 players so  $(11^2 - 11) = 110$  and, divided by 2 = 55 cooperative pairs on the field at any one time. Tell students that today we are going to practice how to make our class function like a “Winning team”.

**Activity:** Put students (include adults if needed) in groups of about 6-10 people per group. All stand in a circle. Tell everyone to turn to their right. The group's goal is for everyone to sit in the lap of the person behind them until the whole group is sitting without chairs and with our hands/arms extended over our heads. Remind them this means you must be careful to work as ONE, and to make sure you create a lap space for the person in front of you while sitting down yourself. Then, have the student put their hands on the waist of the person in front of them. Now take sideways step toward middle of the circle. Continue until each group is closely packed so the task is possible.

Have each group go half way down (do not sit yet) and make sure they keep backs straight so as to have a Lap behind them to sit on and make a lap for the classmate in front. Keep your backs straight to do this! When ready, instruct the groups to slowly go down and sit on lap of person behind you. When all seated, raise hands above heads to show they are sitting in a group without chairs.

If a group falls (domino style), have a brief discussion regarding what went wrong and how to correct the problem, then try again. Stress that the whole group succeeds or nobody succeeds in a cooperation game.

Once all are successful, challenge them to go for a “class/family/neighborhood record” with more people added per group until eventually they all can do the Group Sit together in one big circle.

**Closure:** Discuss using the standard format: Discuss how this is important in our Cooperative learning groups? How can we use these cooperation skills in class/in our family to make sure everyone in is successful mastering every subject or household task.

### Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:

- Have parents, siblings, or other family members/friends write a brief story about times when they have to work cooperatively at work, in school, or on a team and what problems have sometimes occurred with their “teamwork”.
- In a classroom, use a “J-curve” cooperative learning test format. Students take a test on Monday for a skill or information they will be covering in the coming weeks. Then count the total number of correct responses for the class combined. Graph on a wall chart with vertical line = total correct answers in class and horizontal = day of the week. Retest each day with the class goal of trying to achieve a classroom PR (performance record) i.e. largest total number of correct responses to date.... the curve should eventually follow a J-curve profile. Be sure to discuss how everyone can contribute to increasing the whole class score.





## *Cooperation*

### **ACTIVITY TITLE:**

**Objectives:**

**Materials:**

**SEL Activity:**

**Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:**

# Responsible Contribution

*“You are happiest while you’re making the greatest contribution”*

Robert F. Kennedy

*“The quality of your life will be determined by the quality of your contribution”*

Kurek Ashley

*“Every person has a longing to be significant, to make a contribution, to be a part of something noble and purposeful”*

John C. Maxwell



## *Responsible Contribution*

# Random Acts of Kindness

### Objective:

- To increase awareness of our responsibility to help others
- To foster an awareness of how ignoring a wrong is to condone its continuance
- To increase awareness of our opportunities for contributing to the lives of others

### Materials:

- The story of 'Kyle' (attached)
- Newsprint or several sheets of paper for brainstorming ideas
- Family Bulletin Board marked *"I Spied a Random Act of Kindness"*

### SEL Activity: Introduction:

Begin by reading the story of "Kyle".

Ask, "How do you feel toward the bullies? About the kids who just walked on and did/said nothing?"

How do you feel about the boy who stopped to help?

Discuss what the consequences of stopping to help Kyle versus walking on and doing nothing might have been.

Briefly watch the video clip below from the movie *Batman Begins* and discuss its meaning for us all. ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLTrHcbO\\_MU](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OLTrHcbO_MU)) and how it relates to the story of Kyle.

Together, brainstorm lists of things we can do as *"Random Acts of Kindness"* in our family, our school, with friends, with our neighbors, and so forth. Post your list on a bulletin board, refrigerator, or someplace in plain view to all. Add that more ideas can be added anytime.

**Closure:** Challenge all class members commit to engaging in at least one random act of kindness daily for the week ahead (or longer!). Whenever anyone observes another classmate commit a specific "act of kindness" they are to write what & who they saw on a 'sticky note' or pre-printed "Acts of Kindness slips" and post it on the class *"I Spied..."* Bulletin Board.

[NOTE: Teachers *should take the lead and become "talent scouts" by posting at least one act by every class member every day.*

**Start or end each day** in your class by reading and discussing together the new 'Random Acts of Kindness' posted in the past 24 hours.

### Other Possible "family homework" SEL Activities:

- Parents and children can each write/share a short story of a time they "stopped to help" someone in distress.
- Parents and children can each write/share a short story about a time someone stopped to help them and how you felt about it.

## *The Story of Kyle*

One day when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class walking home from school. His name was Kyle. It looked like he was carrying all his books home for the weekend. I remember thinking to myself, “Why in the world would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd”. I had quite a weekend planned a party that night and then a pickup football game with my friends Saturday morning. So, I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

As I was walking a bit further, I saw a bunch of kids running toward hi. They ran at him, knocked all his books out of his arms and tripped him so that he landed in the dirt; then walked off laughing with while taunting him with the comments, “Geek, Nerd”! His glasses went flying and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet away. As he looked up, I saw this terrible sadness and hopelessness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him and as he crawled around looking for his glasses, I could see a tear in his eye.

As I handed him his glasses, I said, “Those guys are just a bunch of jerks. They really should get lives!” He looked at me and said, “Hey thanks!” There was a big smile on his face; one of those smiles that shows genuine gratitude. I helped him pick up his books and asked him where he lived. As it turned out, he lived near me so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he’d gone to a private school before now and had just transferred to the public high school this fall to save his parents the high expense of tuition. Private school kids and public high school kids didn’t really hang out much with each other in our town. We talked all the way home and I helped him carry some of his books. He turned out to be a pretty neat kid so I asked him if he would like to play football on Saturday with me and my friends. He said, Yes

We hung out together all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle, the more I liked him. And my friends all thought the same. Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with that huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, “Dang boy, you are going to really build some serious muscle carrying this pile of books everyday!” He just laughed and handed me half the books.

Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends. When we were seniors, we began applying to colleges. Kyle decided to go to Georgetown University and I went to our state university. I knew that we would always be close friends and that the miles would never be a problem. Kyle was going to study pre-med and go on to medical school I had a football scholarship and planned to get a degree in business. Kyle was named valedictorian of our graduating class. I would tease him all the time about being such a book nerd. As valedictorian, Kyle had to prepare a speech for graduation, I was just glad it wasn’t me having to get up there and speak.

On graduation day, I saw Kyle. He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses. He even seemed to have more dates than me and all the girls loved him! Sometimes, I must admit I felt a bit jealous. And today was one of those days. I could see that he was really nervous about his speech. So, I smacked him on the back and said, “Hey, big guy don’t worry, you’ll do great!” he looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful kind like on that first day we met) and just smiled. “Thanks”, he said.

As he started his speech, Kyle cleared his throat and began, “Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your brothers and sisters, maybe a coach or neighbor but, mostly your friends! I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story.” I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the story of the first day we met. He had been planning to kill himself over the weekend. He talked of how he had cleaned out his locker so that his Mom wouldn’t have to do it later and that was why he was carrying all his stuff home. He looked right at me and gave me a little smile. “Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unthinkable”.

I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment when the teasing, bullying and loneliness seemed just too much bear. I saw his mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that very moment did I realize its depth.

**REMEMBER:** *Everyone you meet is fighting a battle inside that you know nothing about. So, be kind, ALWAYS! Never underestimate the power of your actions! With one small gesture you can change a person’s life, for better or for worse depending upon what you choose to do, or not to do. Stop and think about how you impact those around you; recognize what incredible potential we each have to make this a better place for ourselves and for others.*

[Original source unknown]





## *Responsible Contribution*

# Parachute Packing

### Objectives:

- Increase awareness of how important we each are in making the lives of others better.
- Improve awareness of how we can contribute to the betterment of one another's lives.

### Materials:

- The story of Captain Plumb (attached)
- Internet connection to listen to Capt. Plumb speaking
- Writing paper
- Small pieces of paper each with a picture of a opened parachute, pens and tape.

### SEL Activity:

**Read together** the true story of Captain Plumb. Discuss how we each can “pack one another’s parachute” every day our family.

**List** things we’ve heard people say or see them do that was like a “SAM” missile shooting someone down and hurting our or another’s feelings.

**Then, list** what we can say or do each day to help “pack” each other’s parachutes.

**Write a story** about a time you stopped to help or support someone in distress, upset or discouraged about something. Include what you did, how you felt, and how that person responded.

[NOTE: parents should write their own stories also and all share in one folder marked “*Our Family Packing Parachute Stories*”]

**Closure:** Agree that for the next week (or longer) you will each do things to pack one another’s parachutes. Keep a stack of the paper parachutes, a pen, and some tape next to a wall, refrigerator or bulletin board. Everyone is to write down daily something they did that day to pack someone’s parachute, **OR** something someone else do to pack my or somebody else’s parachute. At dinner or just before going to bed for the night take a moment to read and talk about each new parachute posted that day.

### Other Possible “family homework” SEL Activities:

- Have parents look through newspapers, magazines, and news reports with their child to find stories of people who demonstrated an act of caring and kindness. Share these news stories with one another in class.
- Ask parents to develop a collection of photos (from family albums or take photos yourselves) of relatives, friends and/or neighbors who have been caring and kind. Create a “*Parachute Packers Family Gallery*” by posting the photos on a sheet of poster board with a caption for each as to what act of caring and kindness each person has demonstrated. Share at home and in class.
- Together have parents and their children bake and decorate cookies or cupcakes and deliver to people who feel isolated or lonely such as children in hospitals, elderly in nursing homes /assisted living, group home for disabled adults, etc..

# Captain Charles Plumb's Story

[A true story]

**Captain Charles Plumb** was a US Navy jet pilot during the Vietnam War. He flew 74 successful missions off the aircraft carrier, Kitty Hawk. But, on the 75<sup>th</sup> mission his fighter jet was shot down by a surface-to-air missile. Plumb managed to eject from his plane and parachuted safely to the ground. There, he was quickly captured and spent the next 6 years as a North Vietnamese Prisoner of War.

Captain Plumb survived the ordeal and at the end of the war returned home to his wife and family. But one day many years later, Charles Plumb and his wife were sitting in a restaurant. He noticed a man at another table who kept looking at him. Eventually, that man came over to his table and said, *"You're Plumb, aren't you?! You flew jet fighters in Vietnam from the aircraft carrier Kitty Hawk. You were shot down!"*

*Plumb was shocked and surprised. "How in the world did you know that?" asked Plumb.*

*The man replied, "I packed your parachute".*

Plumb gasped in surprise and gratitude. The man shook his hand and said, *"Well, I guess it worked!"*. Plumb replied *"It sure did. If your chute hadn't worked, I wouldn't be here today."*

Plumb couldn't sleep that night, thinking about that man. Plumb would later say, *"I kept wondering what he might have looked like in a Navy uniform: a white hat, a bib in the back and bell-bottom trousers. I wonder how many times I might have seen him and not even said 'Good morning, how are you?' or anything, because, you see, I was an officer, a fighter pilot, and he was just a sailor."*

Plumb thought of all the man hours that sailor had spent on a long wooden table in the bowels of the ship, carefully weaving the shrouds and folding the silks of each chute Each time knowing that in his hands he held the possible fate of someone's life. Someone, he didn't even know.

Plumb also thought about how his survival had required many different kinds of parachutes. When his plane was shot down over enemy territory, he needed his physical parachute. But surviving six years as a POW also required his mental parachute, his emotional parachute and his spiritual parachute. He called on all these supports before reaching safety. These parachutes were "packed" by many people in his life such as his parents, family, wife, children, colleagues and friends. The people who supported him, made his life happy and fulfilling. Thinking of them gave him the strength to endure until he could get back home again.

## **So, who packs your parachute? And, whose parachutes do you pack?**

We all face our own "surface to air missiles" in our daily lives. Sometimes it's struggling against failure in a school subject, being rejected or overlooked by peers, criticism from others, and so forth. We can often feel as if we'd been "shot down"!

Sometimes in the course of our busy, challenging daily lives with all the tasks confronting us, we can all too easily miss what is really important. We may fail to say "hello," "please," or "thank you" or to congratulate someone on something wonderful that has happened to them. Just by giving a compliment, saying something kind or encouraging, or just doing something nice for no reason we are actually helping to pack their parachute just as that young sailor had done in the bottom levels of that aircraft carrier.

**Click here to listen to Capt. Plumb himself telling his story and sharing his message.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k2t0E-yaHNs>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qJWYEz2MDO8>



## *Responsible Contribution*

# Lean on Me

### Objective:

- Increase awareness of times we all face choices to either help or hurt others in need
- Increase awareness that “I’m not involved” is never really an option in life.
- Develop awareness of how we can contribute to the wellbeing of others

### Materials:

- Music and lyrics to the song, “Lean on Me” (see below)
- Choose a book dealing with a true life situation where an individual needed the help of others to survive. (see sample list below)

### SEL Activity:

- Begin by playing the song, “Lean on Me”. Discuss the meaning of the lyrics.
- Ask, “Who do you ‘lean on’ when you have a problem or are having a difficult time”? “Who has leaned on you for help or support”? “What was the situation and, What did you do”?
- Read together a book that deals with stepping in to help someone having a difficult time in life. (See the list below for younger children as well as older children/teens)
- Have students write or dictate a story about “A time when I let a friend ‘lean on me’” and “A time wit I needed a friend to lean on”.

### Other Possible “family homework” SEL Activities:

- Together families can identify local groups (e.g., homeless shelter, domestic abuse shelter for families, children’s group home, food bank, nursing home, elderly or disabled neighbor, etc.) who need a lending hand to help them survive and develop a plan for you all to provide support and assistance.
- Ask parents to arrange an opportunity for their family to participate in a volunteer activity to enrich the lives of those in need... (for more ideas see the book, by Friedman, J. & Roehlkepartain, J. (2010) “*Doing Good Together*”. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Press.).
- Together families can identify other songs that talk of the need we all have for support from others and create a family play list to listen to together [“Wind Beneath my Wings”, “You Raise me Up”, “You’ve Got a Friend” and so forth]

### Sample Books /videos for “Lean on Me”

#### *For Younger Children*

“*The Three Questions*” by Jon J. Muth

“*A Chair for my Mother*” by Vera Williams

“*Blizzard*” by John Rocco

“*Have you filled a bucket today*” by C. McCloud

“*The Invisible Boy*” by Patrice Barton

“*Lost and Found Cat*” by Doug Kuntz & Amy Shrodes

“*I Walk with Vanessa*” by Kerascoet

“*Each Kindness*” by Jacqueline Woodson

“*Those Shoes*” by Maribeth Boelts

#### *For Older Children*

**Books:** “*Human Kind*”: Changing the world one small act at a time” by Brad Aronson

Or, ask your librarian for suggestions

**Videos:** Georg Duckwitz @ [www.facinghistory.org/rescuers/georg-duckwitz](http://www.facinghistory.org/rescuers/georg-duckwitz)

Gino Bartali @ <https://www.facebook.com/HistoryBites/videos/1640624246198290/>

Sir Nicholas Winton: @ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c0aoifNziKQ>

**Internet Search:** James Harrison, Norman Borlaug, Christopher Catrambone, Irena Sendler, and other unsung heroes

# ***LEAN ON ME***

**by Bill Withers**

Sometimes in our lives  
we all have pain.  
We all have sorrow  
But if we are wise  
We know that there's always tomorrow.

Lean on me when you are not strong.  
And I'll be your friend I'll help you carry on  
For it won't be long, till I'm gonna need  
Somebody to lean on

Please swallow your pride,  
if I have things  
You need to borrow  
For no one can fill, those of your needs  
That you won't let show

You can call on me brother  
when you need a hand,  
We all need somebody to lean on  
I just might have a problem,  
that you'll understand.  
We all need somebody to lean on

Lean on me when you are not strong.  
And I'll be your friend I'll help you carry on  
For it won't be long, till I'm gonna need  
Somebody to lean on

You can call on me brother  
when you need a hand,  
We all need somebody to lean on  
I just might have a problem,  
that you'll understand.  
We all need somebody to lean on

If there is a road, you have to bear  
That you can't carry.  
I'm right up the road, I'll share your load.  
If you just call me,,,, call me  
If you need a friend,,,, call me  
If you need a friend,,,, call me  
If you ever need a friend,,,, call me  
Call me... call me...

**Listen to Bill Withers sing, "Lean on Me" at:**

[https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-adk-adk\\_sbnt&hsimp=yhs-adk\\_sbnt&hspart=adk&p=lean+on+me+lyrics#id=11&vid=154d5670b53144d3e47611667af7a057&action=view](https://video.search.yahoo.com/yhs/search?fr=yhs-adk-adk_sbnt&hsimp=yhs-adk_sbnt&hspart=adk&p=lean+on+me+lyrics#id=11&vid=154d5670b53144d3e47611667af7a057&action=view)





## *Responsible Contribution*

# Worriers vs. Solvers

### Objectives:

- Learn to identify common worries, fears and concerns we all experience
- Develop skills in identifying options for solving such worries, fears and concerns.
- Develop problem solving skills

### Materials:

- Blackboard or newsprint with markers

### SEL Activity:

**Introduction:** Ask, have you ever felt worried, stressed or fearful when faced with a new situation or experience? Share and list the various situations in which they've experienced these feelings. After some initial sharing, tell the students that today we are going to stage our own "Game Show": Worriers vs. Solver!

**Activity:** Divide into teams of 2-5 peoples each. Invite two of the teams to come to sit behind their respective 6 foot tables placed at the front of the room. Designate one team, "The Worriers" and the other team as, "The Solvers".

- The task of the Worrier team is to suggest things that might go wrong, or be scary for each situation identified by the game show host.
- The task of the Solver team is to suggest solutions to the problem posed by the Worrier team members. If the problem is one that has no solution over which one has control, then answers should focus on how one could make the best of such a bad situation.
- Team points will be marked on the board or newsprint. One point for each "worry" and one point for each "solution". Teams have ten seconds to answer (have a time keeper and a buzzer or bell to indicate time limit passed). If a team cannot come up with an answer within the time limit, the other team gets the point.
- Begin the game by stating one common situation in children's lives that could cause them to worry or be fearful or stressed, etc. (e.g., "first day at a new school", "important exam", "recital or band concert, etc.). Team collaboration is encouraged to suggest worries and solutions options.
- The first Worrier team member identifies something one might fear could go wrong. The first Solver team member then must identify a possible solution for that worry.
- After playing a round, switch teams until everyone has had the chance to play as both the Worriers and the Solvers.

**Possible Topics:** First day at new school; Having to read aloud or speak in front of the class; Moving to a new neighborhood, country, state; Choosing your wardrobe for the new school year; Taking an exam in class; Going someplace without your parents (school trip, camp, etc); Being confronted by a bully in school; Trying out for a new team, club or activity (soccer team, band, drama, etc); Asking someone to go out with you, to a dance/date, and so forth; include situations specific to your students and grade level.

**Closure:** Have the students briefly discuss which they found easier to do, worrying or solving problems?

Introduce the concept of the **3 F's** in responding to fear: **Fight, Flight or Freeze**. Discuss what experiences Each person has had in responding with one of these three fear response behaviors.

### Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:

- Research different animals and their typical response to fear, i.e. fight, flight or freeze and how/why this works for them (i.e. natural adaptation).
- Invite a classroom speaker who has faced extremely dangerous situations (e.g. soldier in combat, firefighter, policeman, pilot, etc.). Have them discuss the fears and how they dealt with it in their lives.
- Parents and complete a "Things I worry about in raising my son/daughter". In one column parents list their fears as a parent. In the second column they identify what they do to try to solve these concerns and fears



**Competency Area: *Responsible Contribution***

**ACTIVITY TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives:**

**Materials:**

**SEL Activity:**

**Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:**

# SEL ACTIVITY TEMPLATE

## *Developing your Resilience-Based SEL Plans*



***SEL Competency Area:*** \_\_\_\_\_

**ACTIVITY TITLE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives:**

**Materials:**

**SEL Activity:**

**Other Possible Family or Classroom Learning Activities:**



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### ***Resilience Counseling & Training Center***

**P.O. Box 1435**

**North Conway, New Hampshire 03860 USA**

**Tel: 603.730.5467**

**Email: [resiliencectc@aol.com](mailto:resiliencectc@aol.com)**

**Website: [www.resiliencecounselingcenter.com](http://www.resiliencecounselingcenter.com)**



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