

LESSON 1

The Benefits of Gratitude

Practicing gratitude helps me focus when I feel overwhelmed.

Student Objectives

- Define gratitude.
- Practice Gratitude Breaths (diaphragmatic breathing) and focused awareness.
- Practice Rest and Relax activities.
- Identify the benefits of practicing gratitude.
- Identify somatic response to feeling overwhelmed.
- Define the term “overwhelmed.”

Educator Preparation

- Prepare students’ Choose Love Journals.
- Write the word “gratitude” on a word wall or vocabulary list.
- Think of an example of a time you felt overwhelmed and used gratitude to feel better
- Prepare to share it with students as an example.
- Create a physical cue for gratitude. Physical cues help students remember and embody the lessons about courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion. Options include using American Sign Language (ASL), clapping chants, brief rhymes, or a full-body pose.
- If you have students who speak languages other than English, learn how to say “gratitude” in their native languages.

Focused Awareness

“Raise your hand if you remember how to use a Brave Breath. Today I feel excited because we’re going to learn a new breath. It’s called the Gratitude Breath. We use Gratitude Breaths to help us think of things we feel thankful for.” (Use your physical cue for gratitude when you say the word “gratitude” now and throughout the lessons.)

“Today, I feel thankful for...” (List two or three examples of things you feel grateful for using the template: “I feel grateful for _____ because _____.”)

“We say, ‘Thank you,’ when someone does something kind for us. Raise your hand if you can tell me a time when someone did something kind for you.” (Call on students to hear their responses.)

“When someone does something kind for us, we can feel thankful. Gratitude is when you feel thankful and want to do something kind or helpful in return. Saying ‘thank you’ is one way we can express our gratitude when someone does something helpful for us.”



“Now, let’s practice some Gratitude Breaths.”

“First, place one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly, just like with the Brave Breath. Take a slow, deep breath in and fill your belly with air. Then slowly breathe out.”

“Take another breath in, and this time imagine it’s a wave of warm air moving past your heart and down into your belly. When you breathe out, the warm air moves from your belly and back to your heart. Let’s do this again.”

“As you breathe the warm air in, think of one thing you feel thankful for. Maybe you feel thankful for your friends in class, or a family member. Maybe you feel grateful because someone did something kind for you.”

“Take one more Gratitude Breath, and let your face relax into a gentle smile. As you breathe out, imagine sharing that feeling of gratitude with the whole world.” (If students giggle, tell them that gratitude helps us feel happy, which sometimes causes us to giggle.)

“Great job learning our new breath, everyone. How do you feel after practicing our Gratitude Breaths?”

Discussion

“Today, we’re going to talk about the benefits of being grateful. People who practice gratitude are happier and healthier.”

“Gratitude helps us have positive relationships, helps us be more hopeful, and can help us sleep better. It gives us more energy, and even helps us live longer! There are many benefits to practicing gratitude.”

“Practicing gratitude can help us find encouragement if we feel overwhelmed, or become frustrated by criticism. When we learn to appreciate small successes, it can help us accomplish big goals. It can also help us build confidence and help us focus.”

“For example...” (Use your own example or the following one.) “...one time, I wanted to make holiday cards for all my friends and family. I wanted them to be colorful and have a personal message. I quickly felt overwhelmed and frustrated because I didn’t know where to start. It was a big project!”

“I knew I was starting to feel stressed because my jaw was tense, I couldn’t think clearly, my face was hot, and my heart started racing. I knew my lizard and numbat brains were trying to tell me something. I wanted to quit, but instead I took a Gratitude Breath to calm myself down.”

“After I calmed down, I asked a friend to help me make a list of everything I needed to do, so I could



do one thing at a time. That made it much easier to decide what to do next.”

“I focused on feeling grateful for my friends and family, for having the supplies I needed to make the cards, and for my friend who helped me. Soon, I was excited again and ready to start my project!

“We feel overwhelmed when we have too much to do, too many ideas, or too many feelings all at the same time. Has anyone here ever felt overwhelmed before?”

“How does your body let you know that you’re overwhelmed?”

“What kind of things do you feel overwhelmed about?” (Examples include: a big game, exams, parties, homework, etc.)

“It sounds like we all feel overwhelmed about different things. What are some things you can do for a friend if you can tell they feel overwhelmed?”

“Great ideas! Taking a Gratitude Breath is one thing you can do. Let’s practice another way to help if you feel overwhelmed.”

Activity

“Let’s practice Resting and Relaxing our bodies. We can practice feeling gratitude in our bodies as we relax! Let’s try!”

“Start by taking another Gratitude Breath. Now, choose one part of your body that you feel thankful for.”

“Maybe you feel thankful for your hands because they help you color, write, and play. Maybe you feel thankful for your ears because they help you listen to your friends, or your favorite song. You might feel thankful for your mind, which helps you think, problem-solve, and be creative. Or maybe you feel grateful for your heart because it helps bring blood to all your muscles and helps you feel so many different kinds of feelings. You can even feel thankful for your whole body.”

“Take one more, slow, deep Gratitude Breath to help you feel thankful, and to Rest and Relax.”

“How do you feel now, after practicing a Rest and Relax activity?”

“Remember that you can try this any time on your own.”

Transfer of Learning

Cue students to use Gratitude Breaths or Rest and Relax activities if they feel overwhelmed. Invite them to practice before learning a new activity or game.



LESSON 1

The Benefits of Forgiveness

Forgiveness can help me release anger.

Student Objectives

- Define forgiveness.
- Practice Forgiveness Breaths (diaphragmatic breathing) and focused awareness.
- Practice Rest and Relax activities.
- Identify the benefits of practicing forgiveness.
- Identify how anger feels in their bodies.
- Identify cues of anger in others.
- Define intention.
- Use imagination to creatively let go of anger.

Educator Preparation

- Ready students' Choose Love Journals.
- Think of an example of when you chose to let go of anger.
- Write the word "forgiveness" on a word wall or vocabulary list.
- Create a physical cue for forgiveness. This helps students remember and embody the lessons about courage, gratitude, forgiveness, and compassion. Options could include using ASL, a clapping chant, a brief rhyme, or a full-body pose.
- Compile a stack of books for the activity.

Focused Awareness

"I feel excited today because we're going to learn a new ingredient to choosing love. We learned about courage and gratitude. Now we're going to learn about forgiveness and how it helps us choose love, have fun, and get ready to learn." (Use your physical cue for forgiveness when you say the word "forgiveness" now and throughout the lessons.)

"First let's set an intention. An intention is a purpose, or a reason for doing something. For example, my intention in getting a snack is because I'm hungry and want the energy to continue playing. Setting an intention helps us focus on how or why we're doing something."

"An intention for today is: May my mind be open, focused, and clear as I learn about the power of forgiveness. Say that quietly to yourself. I will repeat it one more time: May my mind be open, focused, and clear as I learn about the power of forgiveness."

"Let's begin by learning a Forgiveness Breath. Close your eyes. Think quietly to yourself, 'May I be



open to learning about forgiveness today.”

“Place one hand on your heart and one hand on your belly. Take a slow, deep breath in...and slowly breathe out. Notice how when you breathe in deeply, your belly gets bigger.” (Continue breathing.)

“As we keep breathing, let’s Rest and Relax our bodies. Imagine a warm, gentle ocean wave. Every time you breathe in, it slowly comes toward you.” (Use hand motions to demonstrate.) “Every time you breathe out, it slowly fades away.” (Lead three more breaths.)

“When you’re breathing or relaxing, you can also relax your mind. We often think about things that happened in the past, or things that might happen in the future. When we use Forgiveness Breaths, we can focus on what is happening in the present moment.”

“Forgiveness Breaths help you remember that you’re safe and calm. We can use Forgiveness Breaths any time we need to calm down from strong feelings, let go of anger, or focus on choosing love.”

“Let’s reflect on how our bodies have changed since practicing some Forgiveness Breaths. How do you feel now that we practiced some Forgiveness Breaths?” (Students respond.) “Great! Now we’re ready to learn!”

Discussion

“Today we’ll learn about the third ingredient in choosing love: forgiveness. Forgiveness is when you choose to stop feeling angry at someone and decide not to act in a negative or harmful way toward that person.”

“All emotions are natural. Our feelings are very important because they help us learn, play, and have fun. Emotions help us make decisions about how we want to act, and how we want to treat other people.”

“Anger can be an uncomfortable emotion, and sometimes it can grow really big. Anger is important because it helps us know when something isn’t fair or isn’t right. It’s important for us to be able to recognize when we feel angry.”

“What cues does your body give you to let you know you feel angry?”

“How can you tell if someone else feels angry?”

“While feeling anger is natural, feeling too much of it can be unhealthy. When someone feels very angry, they might not think clearly, and might hurt another person. This is why it’s important to recognize when we feel angry, and learn how to express ourselves in positive ways.”

“Think of a time when you were angry about something, but then you stopped being angry.” (Pause for a minute to let students think, and then have them share some examples.)

“In those examples, you were able to let go of your anger over time.”



Activity

“When I feel angry my face gets hot, my muscles get tense, my heart beats faster, and I start replaying the same thoughts over and over in my head. My anger starts to make my body feel heavy. This makes it difficult to focus, learn, sleep, or have fun.”

“When I feel angry, worried, or stressed, I can even get a headache, feel tired, or get a stomach ache. It can feel like a burden—like I’m carrying around extra weight.”

(Demonstrate the following with a student...)

“Let’s say each of these books is an angry thought.” (Instruct a student to hold out their arms.) “If I kept adding more and more angry thoughts for you to carry around, it would become very difficult to play, learn, or have fun. You would spend all of your energy carrying the heavy books.”

“Can everyone remember a time when they felt that way? When playing, learning, and even everyday tasks felt ten times more difficult?”

“When we focus on anger and resentment, it triggers our lizard and numbat brains. They release stress hormones into our bodies, which can lead to poor decision-making. When we practice forgiveness, we choose to release ourselves from these uncomfortable feelings. We choose to let go of anger.”

“Using our imaginations can help us let go of anger. You can imagine your anger being burned away in a campfire, washed away by water, or blown away by the wind. You can imagine it floating away like balloons or flying away like butterflies. Be creative!”

“If there’s something or someone that I’m having strong feelings about, I might have to practice letting go of anger a few different times.”

“It takes practice to let go of stress, anger, frustration, worry, or resentment. But when we learn to let go, we can live happier, healthier lives. Letting go of anger benefits you in the long run.”

“Doctors believe that practicing forgiveness can help improve your relationships, decrease your anxiety, decrease your blood pressure, and help you build a stronger immune system!”

“Take a few minutes to draw a picture in your Choose Love Journal of how you imagine letting go of your anger.”

Transfer of Learning

Help students acknowledge when they’re angry, and cue them to practice Forgiveness Breaths.



POWER SURGE DAY 3 — THE PEARL

Educator Prep

- Make copies of the ‘Persevering for Pearls’ worksheet.

Activity

“We are going to begin today by talking about how something valuable and precious is formed. Does anyone know how a pearl is formed?”

“Actually, a pearl is formed when a foreign object or parasite of some sort finds its way into the oyster. This irritant gets stuck in the soft inner body where it can’t dislodge itself and the oyster can’t expel it. But the oyster has its own defense mechanism to try and protect itself from this irritant. The oyster will secrete a substance called nacre which coats the foreign object. The oyster will deposit layer after layer of nacre over the irritant. So many layers until that parasite is no longer a parasite, but it’s now a lustrous pearl. Pretty amazing, right? Something that is a nuisance and that is a discomfort to the oyster is turned into something beautiful, special and valuable.”

“It takes a lot of courage to face challenges, hardships and disappointments. It’s also hard to admit when you’ve failed or made a mistake. It takes even more courage to persevere in the face of failure, uncertainty, and difficulties. Perseverance is when you continue to work towards something in the face of failures, setbacks, or challenges. When you have perseverance, you have grit and determination. Kind of like that oyster that won’t stop working to get rid of that irritant. It’s that won’t quit attitude that will help you keep getting up, dusting off, and continuing on your journey. Perseverance makes the impossible possible. Perseverance is a very important form of courage that helps you turn cowardice into confidence, mistakes into masterpieces, setbacks into success.”

“It would be nice if life was easy all of the time...if the road was smooth. But that would be awfully boring. Life is an adventure full of ups and downs, twists and turns, bumps and bruises....but that makes it an exciting adventure. And it’s really in our struggles that we grow and learn. If everything was easy all of the time, there would no need and no opportunity for growth. Challenges test us and make us stronger....if we have the courage to persevere. Sometimes it seems we’re climbing a mountain and we’ll never reach the top because of all the bumps in the path, challenging circumstances and stumbles....but just wait till you see the view from up there. Remember, you can use your difficulties to become stronger and smarter...they can make you a better person. These problems and obstacles can be turned into opportunities and amazing things! Remember the oyster and the pearl. How can you transform your irritants and discomforts into your own ‘pearls’?”



“I am going to hand out a worksheet called, ‘Persevering for Pearls’. Reflect on your life and the challenges or problems you are facing. Then think how you can turn these into your own pearls. Finally, write down some places or people you could go to for advice or assistance. When difficulties enter your life, think of the oyster...think of the opportunity that’s there for you....and what pearls might you discover in the end!”

SEL Skills Taught

Self-awareness

Self-management

Responsible decision-making



PERSEVERING FOR PEARLS



What's in my Oyster Shell?

Write about some problems, challenges, and uncertainties you are dealing with right now in your life? What are your irritants or discomforts?



How can I create some Pearls?

What can I do to change these negatives into positives? What has helped me in the past? What have I learned in this unit that I can try? What 'Pearls of Wisdom' can I gain from these challenges?



Who can I turn to for advice or help?



Lesson 21:

TURNING NEGATIVE TO POSITIVE

Student Objectives

- Define and discuss self-compassion and self-love.
- Explore how negative self-talk can affect your thoughts, feelings, actions, and relationships.
- Practice changing negative messages into positive messages as a way to show self-compassion and self-love.

Educator Prep

- Draw a line down the center of the board. On one side write Negative Messages and on the other side write Positive Messages.

Activity

Mindful minute. **“Find a comfortable position to sit or stand. Close your eyes and focus your attention on a time you felt loved for one minute.”**

“Self-compassion means showing compassion to yourself, especially when you are down, when you have failed, when you are feeling like you don’t measure up to those around you, or when you are suffering in some way. It means treating yourself with kindness. It means practicing self-love, or caring about your own well-being and happiness. Some might think that having self-compassion or self-love is selfish, but it’s very hard to show love and compassion for others without first showing the same to ourselves. Having self-compassion and self-love helps us push through and overcome negative emotions and difficult situations to be confident and to be able to be our best self.

“One way to practice self-compassion is to get rid of negative self-talk. Every day we send ourselves messages that can either make us feel good about ourselves or feel bad about ourselves. These messages become our thoughts, our thoughts become our feelings, and our feelings affect how we act and how we treat others. If we are feeling bad about ourselves, it’s very difficult to be kind and compassionate towards others.”

“Today we are going to practice changing negative messages to positive messages. We will practice a few together and then you will write some on your own.” Write a few statements on the board such as: I’m not good enough, I don’t fit in., I can’t do anything right., I’m not good at anything,



I'm not pretty/handsome enough, I'll never learn how to do that., Nobody likes me., I'm a failure., etc.

“Let’s read the first statement altogether out loud. How does that make you feel? Write down the negative statement in your journal. Now let’s write a positive statement to replace the negative self-talk.” Change the negative message to a positive one and write it on the board. **“Let’s read the positive message aloud. How does that make you feel? Simply changing your self-talk can make you feel better and this is a way to practice self-compassion and self-love.”** Have students write several negative messages in their journal (either those you have listed on the board or those they wish to create) and have them practice changing them to positive messages. Ask for volunteers to share a few examples of changing self-talk messages. Discuss how simply changing your messages or self-talk can change the way you feel and how that might impact your choices, actions, and relationships. Encourage them to stand in a compassion, courage or gratitude pose when they are saying these positive messages to further the positive impact/effect.

Social Media Share

Find a song about self-love and self-compassion. Post it on your social media page.

SEL Skills Practiced

Self-management

Self-awareness

Reinforcing Learning

Model self-compassion in the classroom. When you notice students suffering (from a bad grade, losing a game, a breakup, etc.), encourage them and gently ask them if they need support practicing self-compassion. Perhaps they need to practice a brave, courage pose to strengthen them. Maybe they need to make a quick gratitude list to remind them of the good in them and in their lives. Or perhaps they just need a compassionate listener!

