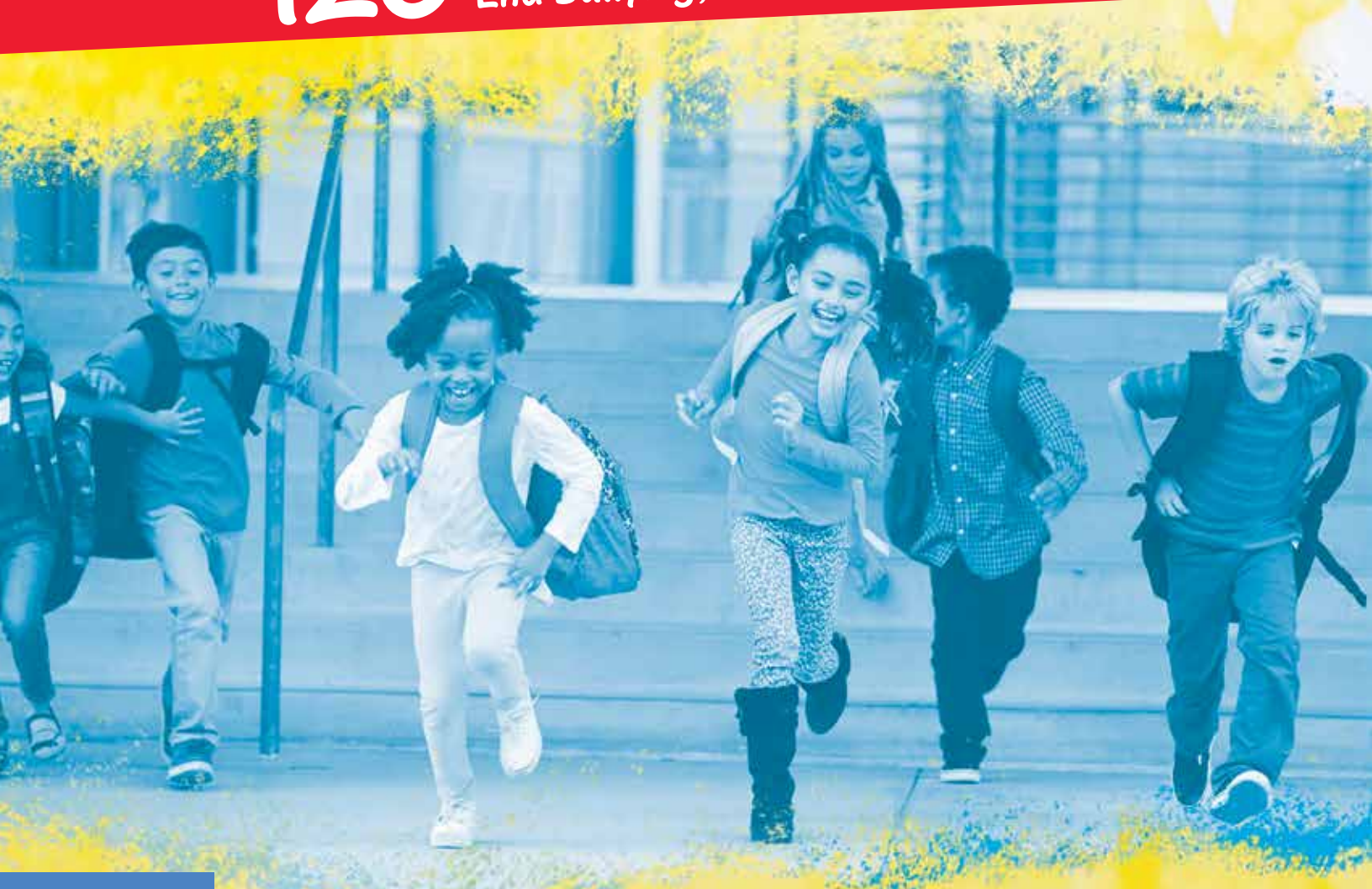


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Create a **CULTURE OF KINDNESS** in Elementary School

126 Lessons to Help Kids Manage Anger,
End Bullying, and Build Empathy



Create a
**CULTURE OF
KINDNESS**
in Elementary School

Grades 3–6

126 Lessons to Help Kids Manage Anger,
End Bullying, and Build Empathy

Naomi Drew, M.A.

free spirit
PUBLISHING®



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(612) 338-2068

help4kids@freespirit.com

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to educators everywhere. You create the future every single day. May this book help you foster a generation of upstanders who collectively become the solution to bullying.

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Foreword

by Stan Davis

In your hands, you hold an important book. In recent decades, we've seen a proliferation of resources about bullying and bullying prevention. Yet now more than ever, there is an urgent need to teach students the critical understandings you will find in *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School*.

One element that sets this book apart is its focus on increasing kind and inclusive behavior. The longer I work with young people, the more I am convinced that fostering positive actions by students is a crucial element of our work to reduce bullying and to reduce the harm that cruelty can do. My research with Dr. Charisse Nixon at Penn State University, Erie, for the Youth Voice Project reveals the importance of this focus. We found that bullied young people who reported that they felt they belonged at their schools, or that they felt valued and respected at their schools, were significantly less likely to report negative outcomes from the bullying they experienced than those young people who described themselves as not belonging or not feeling valued at school.

The students we surveyed also told us that the most helpful things adults did after bullying incidents were listening and giving emotional support, while the most helpful things peers did were including and encouraging the targeted students. Inclusion by peers led to significantly better outcomes for bullied students than any other intervention by peers. Dr. Abraham Maslow wrote that belonging is a fundamental human need, and that when we experience belonging, we are better able to learn, grow, and become our true selves. When we build belonging, we also foster resiliency and empower young people to overcome negative life events. This book contains many activities and practices that will increase students' sense of belonging, and will help them strengthen that sense in each other.

Skill building and practice make up another powerful focus of this book. We all need practical, useful skills—and teaching strategies that build students' applications of these skills. I learned many years ago from Dr. Steven Danish to make a distinction between teaching knowledge and teaching skills. Knowledge, he taught me, can be gained by reading or listening. Skills, on the other hand, need to be practiced over time, and with feedback, in order to be mastered. When we focus on increasing kind, inclusive behavior and reducing hurtful actions, we do best when we teach specific skills over time.

That's what this book will help you do. Within its pages, you will find practical activities to teach skills that lead to kind actions, inclusion, self-calming, and positive conflict resolution. You will find activities to help your students develop skills in anger management and to strengthen their ability to make positive choices in difficult situations. And of the book's many activities, you can choose the ones that meet your needs and the needs of your students. These activities are built on a foundation of showing and modeling respect for students. This foundation is crucial, because, as James Baldwin wrote, "Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them."

I thank Naomi Drew for her continuing work to improve children's lives, and I am confident that you will find *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School* a valuable addition to the work you do with young people every day.

Stan Davis has worked as a child and family therapist in residential treatment, community mental health, and private practice. Stan trains educators, parents, and students in effective bullying prevention. He is a certified Olweus bullying prevention consultant and a founding member of the International Bullying Prevention Association. Stan is the author of *Schools Where Everyone Belongs: Practical Strategies for Reducing Bullying and Empowering Bystanders in Bullying Prevention*, and he maintains stopbullyingnow.com, an informative website for parents and educators.

Introduction

Guiding students to navigate an increasingly complex and interconnected world is one of our most critical jobs as educators. It's more important now than ever before that we teach and model respect, acceptance, empathy, and other traits that can help kids interact peacefully and work out differences. Bullying, aggressive conflict, and other cruel behaviors can be prevented when we address them at their roots.

In *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School*, you'll find research and data showing how educators can best prevent bullying, confront cruelty, and build compassion. The purpose of the book is, as it has always been, to help teachers and kids by providing concrete ways to stop cruel behavior and strengthen prosocial attitudes and skills. And while the book's primary goal is to counteract bullying, its approach to doing so is broad. When we work to encourage kindness and respect, we plant the seeds of positive and lasting change.

We have many reasons to continue focusing on this important work. Past decreases in bullying have shown us that our efforts to promote acceptance, empathy, conflict resolution, and other bullying prevention strategies are paying off, but we still have much more work to do. Consider the words of students and teachers who were surveyed and interviewed for this book:

"They called me names because of the color of my skin."
—5th-grade girl

"This kid and his friends told me to go back to where I came from." —6th-grade boy

"Even though I knew what he said wasn't true, it killed me inside." —4th-grade boy

"Anger and bullying are among the major issues I see as a teacher." —4th-grade teacher

"How do you end the name-calling? This is a BIG problem. I have tried many things, and I have not found a way that really works." —3rd-grade teacher

Many students and teachers shared similar stories, questions, and concerns in the survey and face-to-face interviews my publisher and I conducted for the original edition of this book. The survey was administered to 2,171 third through sixth graders and 59 teachers across the United States and Canada and confirmed a truth that

we know continues to persist: Bullying is one of the greatest challenges kids face. Educators consistently reported being troubled by bullying, name-calling, and meanness among their students. Seventy-three percent of kids we surveyed said other kids are somewhat to very mean to each other. Forty-four percent said bullying happens often, every day, or all the time, and over forty percent said they see conflicts happening often or every day. Students also expressed, sometimes longingly and often poignantly, that they don't want to be hurt by bullying. Sixty-three percent of kids said they wanted to learn how to stay out of physical fights. Eighty percent said they wanted to learn ways to stop the bullying, avoid fighting, get along better with peers, and work out conflicts.

And while educators and others have made significant gains in their work to reduce and prevent bullying and cruelty, data shows that in 2015 and 2016, U.S. schools and communities experienced a sharp increase in the use of hate speech and in hate crimes against immigrants, people of color, LGBTQ people, non-Christians, and other marginalized groups.¹ The U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) defines hate crime as "the violence of intolerance and bigotry, intended to hurt and intimidate someone because of their race, ethnicity, national origin, religion, sexual orientation, or disability."² The DOJ also states, "Hate crimes have a devastating effect beyond the harm inflicted on any one victim. They reverberate through families, communities, and the entire nation, as others fear that they too could be threatened, attacked, or forced from their homes, because of what they look like, who they are, where they worship, whom they love, or whether they have a disability."³

In response to the spike in hate crimes, in 2016 the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) conducted an online survey of over 10,000 educators across the United States. Ninety percent reported that school climate had been negatively affected by hate speech, racist remarks, and negative actions, including many incidents specifically targeting immigrant children. Eighty percent described "heightened anxiety and concern" in their students. Respondents to the survey also reported seeing an increase in "verbal harassment, the use of slurs and derogatory language, and disturbing incidents involving swastikas, Nazi salutes, and Confederate flags." Additionally, four out of ten educators said they didn't believe their schools had action plans for dealing with incidents of hate and bias.

The SPLC urges all schools to seriously confront any actions that target or marginalize an individual or group and cautions that incidents of this nature tend to have “long-lasting impacts” and require long-term solutions.⁴ Such solutions are exactly what this book provides. A lesson addresses, head-on, the importance of combating hateful actions and words, including those that stem from prejudice and bias. Yet hate can’t be stamped out by a single lesson or discussion. Disentangling its roots requires steady attention, focus, and understanding. And every minute you invest will be worth your time.

Over my decades working with teachers and students across the United States and beyond, I have witnessed firsthand the self-efficacy and pride students gain when they learn how to stop and think before acting, and when they learn to handle disagreements respectfully by using deep breathing, self-calming, respectful listening, and conflict resolution skills. I have also seen the remarkable changes that occur when kids experience the power of compassion—both in giving and receiving it. Navigating the world in a decent, humane way requires understanding that respect is a fundamental human right. It requires remembering that inside every person is a heart that beats and a mind that feels pain when cruel words are spoken. It requires that we accept people and groups we perceive as different from ourselves, and that we choose to do the right thing even when no one is looking. These are the concepts and behaviors kids need to absorb in order to eliminate hatred and bullying and, ultimately, to lead healthy, rewarding lives. And when we teach these skills and concepts as part of every student’s daily routine, classrooms and schools transform. Instilling these attitudes and practices in your students is just as important as teaching academic skills, and by doing so, you can establish a peaceful classroom environment while giving kids the tools they need to have positive, respectful relationships throughout their lives.

Research on Bullying and Its Impact on Children’s Lives

Bullying: *deliberate, aggressive behavior intended to harm another person. It frequently involves an imbalance of power, is often repetitive, and can be done face to face or through electronic media.*

According to the 2015 “Indicators of School Crime and Safety” report from the U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 15.7 percent of public schools reported that bullying took place among students once a week or more.⁵ Additionally, the report stated that roughly one-third of students who said they were bullied at school reported being bullied “at least once or twice a month during the school year.” Among students who said they were cyberbullied, about

27 percent reported that the cyberbullying took place at least once or twice a month. Other research shows that, when it comes to cyberbullying, kids who are bullied at school are also bullied online, and kids who bully at school also bully online.⁶ Additionally, the Massachusetts Aggression Reduction Center surveyed over 11,000 kids in third through fifth grade and found that cyberbullying and in-person bullying both increased steadily between third and fifth grade.⁷

More data comes from the 2014 “Bullying in U.S. Schools” status report, which summarized surveys of students in grades three through twelve and found:⁸

- An average of 14 percent of students reported being bullied, and 5 percent reported bullying others.
- Bullying behavior was most common among third-grade students, with about one-quarter of kids reporting that they bullied, were bullied, or both.
- When students who are being bullied reach out to others about it, they are least likely to tell their teachers or other adults at school.
- Among boys in grades three through five, 25 percent didn’t tell anyone about being bullied. (Among boys in sixth through eighth grade, this number increases to 34 percent.) While girls are more likely to speak up than boys are, they are also less likely to confide in others about bullying as they get older.
- Regardless of grade level, girls are more likely to try to help a fellow student who is being bullied than boys are.

Gay and transgender students are particularly at risk for being bullied. According to the “2015 National School Climate Survey” of students by GLSEN (the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network), more than 50 percent of LGBTQ students said they heard homophobic language “often or frequently in their schools.” Additionally, “nearly three quarters of students reported being verbally harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; more than half were verbally harassed because of their gender expression.” Physical bullying is also problematic, as more than 25 percent of LGBTQ students said they’d been “physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation; one in five were physically harassed because of their gender expression.”⁹ Although this survey was conducted with students in grades six through twelve, younger students you’re teaching may well have had similar experiences. GLSEN also commissioned a study of students in grades three through six in more than 1,000 elementary schools across the United States, which revealed the following:¹⁰

- “Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are twice as likely as other students to say that other kids at school have spread mean rumors or lies about them . . . and three times as likely to report that another kid at school has used the internet to call them names, make fun of them, or post mean things about them.”

- “Students who do not conform to traditional gender norms are less likely than other students to feel very safe at school . . . and are more likely than others to agree that they sometimes do not want to go to school because they feel unsafe or afraid there.”
- Only 24 percent of teachers surveyed said that their schools’ anti-bullying policies made specific mention of sexual orientation and gender identity or expression. However, other studies (conducted in secondary schools) have shown that comprehensive anti-bullying policies that specify protections based on these and other personal characteristics are associated with “a lower incidence of name-calling, bullying, and harassment.”

Among all students, bullying and cruelty can create an undercurrent of fear and mistrust. They can also affect learning, development, and even a child’s future mental health. Whether bullying takes place in person or online, and whether it is verbal, relational, or physical, it takes a steep toll on kids and can contribute to problems ranging from depression to disengagement in school and, in rare cases, suicidal ideation. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), “victimized youth are at increased risk for depression, anxiety, sleep difficulties, and poor school adjustment.” Similarly, another study found that students victimized by their peers were 2.4 times more likely to report suicidal ideation than youth who reported not being bullied and 3.3 times more likely to report a suicide attempt.¹¹ And the risks are true not only for those who are targeted, but for those who target others as well. Kids who bully others are at an elevated risk for “substance abuse, academic problems, and violence later in adolescence and adulthood.”¹²

The negative impact of bullying goes beyond students who are bullied or who bully others, affecting those who see it take place as well. The CDC reports that kids who have observed bullying “report significantly more feelings of helplessness and less sense of connectedness and support from responsible adults” than those who haven’t been witnesses. Similarly, according to the American Psychological Association, research suggests that “students who watch as their peers endure the verbal or physical abuses of another student could become as psychologically distressed, if not more so, by the events than the victims themselves.”¹³

The children who suffer most are those who both bully and are bullied. They are at greater risk for mental and behavioral problems than students who only bully, or who are only bullied.¹⁴ The CDC notes, “Youth who report both being bullied and bullying others . . . have the highest rates of negative mental health outcomes, including depression, anxiety, and thinking about suicide.”¹⁵

And despite the severity of bullying’s impact, a survey conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics found that 20 to 30 percent of kids who were

bullied didn’t tell an adult what was going on.¹⁶ This has to change, since telling an adult is one of the most effective tools kids have against bullying. Through the understandings in this book, we hope kids will feel safer approaching teachers and more able to help each other. Too many kids are struggling, often in silence. We all have the capacity—and the responsibility—to help.

The Need to Foster Respect for Diversity

Day by day the world is becoming visibly more diverse. People from different cultures interact in schools, communities, workplaces, and online more than ever before. Schools strive to meet the needs of diverse students, including dual-language learners, students with learning differences and disorders, students with disabilities or behavioral challenges, students who identify as gender variant, and students whose families have recently immigrated.

“It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences.”
—Audre Lorde

An essential component of confronting bullying and building compassion is to weave the threads of kindness, respect, and acceptance into every interaction that takes place in our schools and classrooms, and to consistently and gently remind students—and ourselves—that our differences are our strengths. Our world’s vast diversity has helped shape musicians, artists, writers, doctors, scientists, teachers, builders, problem-solvers, and the many others who improve and sustain communities and societies. By embracing each other in all our variety, we support and nurture every one of us.

Yet the challenges are many. Racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, ableism, and other forms of bias and bigotry impact students on a daily basis. People who are not part of a society’s dominant group (or groups) may be subject to unfair treatment, restrictions on their rights, physical attacks, bias-motivated crimes, and more. And a study published in the *American Journal of Public Health* about the negative impact of bullying on kids concludes that “bias-based harassment is more strongly associated with compromised health than harassment.”¹⁷

Helping kids develop respect and appreciation for diversity decreases their likelihood of harming others due to perceived differences. Therefore, teaching students to respect and value differences—and modeling these attitudes for them—is a critical part of bullying prevention.

What Works in Preventing and Addressing Bullying?

A first step in preventing, reducing, and responding to bullying is to instill in students the understanding that everyone's actions matter. A National Institutes of Health (NIH) study shows a direct link between kids' mindsets and their willingness and ability to support peers who are mistreated. If students believe they can make a difference, and if they feel capable of doing so, they are more likely to take action when someone is being picked on.¹⁸

This is why it's so important to teach kids specific steps they can take to support peers who are mistreated—to serve as upstanders rather than looking on as bystanders. In addition, it's essential to provide frequent opportunities for kids to role-play what they're learning. This practice helps them take action. Making time for practice and reinforcement will help students feel more prepared, confident, and capable, and they will be more likely to apply these strategies where it matters most—in real life.

The NIH study also gave the following key actions that educators can use to foster upstander behavior:¹⁹

- *Clearly communicate* that kids are expected to include and support anyone who's mistreated.
- *Show kids how* to include, support, and encourage others so they feel confident doing so.
- *Encourage the understanding* that bullying is wrong and that helping others is the right thing to do.

Kids also have a lot to say about what works to prevent bullying based on their personal experiences. The Youth Voice Project survey looked at data from more than 13,000 students. While it focused on students in fifth through twelfth grades, its valuable findings on bullying and victimization can be applied to students of all ages. This study's conclusions challenge some long-held ideas and shed light on the strategies that work best. Here's some of what the survey revealed.²⁰

The single most helpful strategy for kids who are targets of bullying:

Seek support from an adult at school or from a friend. (Despite how helpful this strategy is, only 33 percent of the kids surveyed told an adult.)

Another highly effective strategy for kids who are targeted:

Don't think like a victim. Kids who told themselves that the bullying wasn't their fault, and that nothing was wrong with them, proved to be more resilient in the face of bullying.

The least helpful strategies for kids being targeted:

- Telling or asking the person bullying them to stop.
- Telling the person how they felt.

The most helpful things bystanders can do to support kids who are being bullied:

- Walk with them and spend time with them at school.
- Help them get away.
- Help them tell an adult.
- Distract the person or people bullying them.
- Give them advice and hope.
- Encourage them.
- Talk to them at school and show them that others care.
- Call them at home to give support.
- Hear their concerns without judgment.

The most important adult strategies to help kids who are bullied:

Kids surveyed by the Youth Voice Project also said that the three most helpful things any adult can do are:

- Listen to them.
- Encourage them.
- Check back later and over time to see if they're okay.

The least helpful things adults might do:

- Say, "You should have . . ."
- Tell a student that the bullying wouldn't have happened if he or she had acted differently.
- Tell a student to stop tattling. (This was the most harmful adult action.)

Other recommendations for adults:

- Reduce or eliminate the following messages in bullying prevention: "Stand up for yourself" and "Just pretend it doesn't bother you."
- Teach kids ways to support and include those who are being picked on or excluded, rather than to confront the person doing the bullying.
- Build a school climate that encourages inclusion and belonging for all.
- Give kids skills that foster connectedness and resilience. When kids feel connected to each other and to their school as a whole, bullying is less likely to occur, and kids are more likely to respond proactively when it does happen.

The lessons in this book will help you integrate all of these recommendations and tools. Communication, problem solving, and emotional management are just a few of the many prosocial skills you will find explored throughout the book.

Additional Data on What Impacts Kids Positively

Anyone who teaches knows how "contagious" emotions and behaviors are. If you've ever spent a year with a conflict-ridden class where bullying is prevalent, you probably know the feeling of throwing your hands up in frustration as bickering and meanness infected the atmosphere in your room.

But there's good news, too: Positive emotions and behaviors also are contagious. Dr. Nicholas A. Christakis, a researcher at Harvard Medical School, explains, "Emotions have a collective existence—they are not just an individual phenomenon." He goes on to say that how you feel depends "not just on your choices and actions, but also on the choices and actions of people . . . who are one, two, and three degrees removed from you."²¹

People one, two, and three degrees removed . . . as in a class. And when positive emotions and behaviors are sparked in a class, they spread. Christakis and his research partner, James Fowler, hypothesize that "behaviors spread partly through the subconscious social signals that we pick up from those around us, which serve as cues to what is considered normal behavior." Another likely cause of social contagions is mirror neurons in our brains, which cause us to mimic what we see in others.²²

We've all seen that mimicking effect as a mood or message spreads through a classroom or social group, often through seemingly small gestures such as facial expressions, looks exchanged between students, eye rolls, and other body language. When we create a school climate where positive interactions are the standard, and negative interactions the exception, kids benefit in a variety of ways. According to a report published in the *Harvard Educational Review*, there is "powerful evidence that school climate affects students' self-esteem." Kids both learn better and feel better about themselves in an atmosphere of safety and respect. The report stresses that positive school climate supports the acquisition of "essential academic and social skills, understanding, and dispositions."²³

Similarly, Search Institute in Minneapolis conducted a comprehensive review of studies on the impact of a caring educational environment on kids.²⁴ This review found that safe, supportive schools foster in students the following critical outcomes:

- higher grades
- higher engagement, attendance, expectations, and aspirations
- a sense of scholastic competence
- fewer school suspensions
- on-time progression through grades
- less anxiety, depression, and loneliness
- higher self-esteem and self-concept

These findings affirm the importance of making concerted efforts to build empathy, kindness, social skills, upstander behaviors, and conscience in students. Consider the following, as well:

- A 2013 review of school climate research concluded that "school climate has a profound impact on students' mental and physical health." This review also reported that "feeling safe in school powerfully promotes student learning and healthy development," and that schools with positive climates have less aggression and violence, as well as "reduced bullying behavior."²⁵

- A meta-analysis of school programs involving 270,034 students found that kids who were engaged in social-emotional learning "demonstrated significantly improved social and emotional skills, attitudes, behavior, and academic performance."²⁶

"How we behave matters because within human society everything is contagious—sadness and anger, yes, but also patience and generosity. Which means we all have more influence than we realize."

—Elizabeth Gilbert

By assiduously fostering empathy, conscience, and kindness along with teaching kids how to work out conflicts, deal with anger, and be upstanders for those who are bullied, I believe we can start reversing the trend of youth cruelty. At the same time, we can create a more peaceful atmosphere in our schools, ultimately setting the foundation for a healthier future for all of our children. Think of it as creating a contagion of kindness, compassion, and respect that spreads through your entire class and lasts all year—a contagion that dramatically reduces bullying and conflict.

About This Book

At the core of this book are 126 easy-to-use lessons that have been carefully designed to help you create an atmosphere free of bullying, where kids can learn and thrive. These twenty-minute activities require very little preparation and include key strategies to foster empathy and appreciation of differences, prevent bias-based bullying behaviors, and reinforce a culture of care and respect. The intent is to make it realistic and realizable for you to integrate bullying prevention, conflict resolution, and social-emotional skill building into your already busy school day.

How the Book Is Organized

"Conducting the Lessons and Working with Students" (pages 7–15) provides background information to help you use the book and instill its concepts and skills effectively. It includes information on how to help kids mediate conflicts, top ways of preventing bullying and conflict, and techniques for implementing the book's lessons into the daily routine.

Following that, the book is divided into two main parts:

Part One: Instilling "Get-Along" Skills and Attitudes. These fifteen Core Lessons are the cornerstone of *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School*. They introduce the concepts and skills that are the basis for all the other

lessons in the book. See page 8 for more information about the Core Lessons.

Part Two: Getting Along and Building Respect. Here you will find 107 lessons arranged in seven topic areas:

- Fostering Kindness, Compassion, and Empathy
- Managing Anger
- Preventing Conflict
- Responding to Conflict
- Addressing Name-Calling and Teasing
- Dealing with Bullying
- Accepting Differences

The structure for each lesson begins with a list of the key character traits and skills the lesson reinforces, a quick activity summary, and “Students will,” which highlights specific things students will learn. Each lesson also includes:

Materials. The materials you will need to conduct the lesson, including reproducible handouts, are listed here. Other materials are easily obtained, such as chart paper or drawing materials.

Preparation. This is included as needed.

The Lesson. Each lesson begins with an introduction followed by discussion, the main activity, and a wrap-up. The activities vary and may include role plays, large- or small-group tasks, writing, drawing and other creative arts, and learning new information.

Follow-Up. Most lessons include a follow-up activity or suggestion to reinforce and help you monitor how students are doing incorporating the skills and concepts.

Extensions. Many lessons include optional extensions. These are often activities that require more time and have students do creative projects, practice skills, or share what they are learning with others.

Reproducible Forms. Most activities include handouts. These are noted in the materials list and can be found at the end of each lesson; they are also included in the digital content for this book. Unless otherwise noted, you will need to print or copy a handout for each student prior to the lesson.

At the back of the book are several additional resources:

Review Lessons. Use these short lessons anytime to revisit and reinforce concepts from the other lessons.

Pre- and Post-Test. This brief assessment, also in the digital content, lets you measure students’ attitudes and use of skills before and after taking part in *Create a Culture of Kindness* lessons.

Survey About Conflicts. A blank form is provided so you can conduct your own survey with students in your class or school; the survey also is included in the digital content.

References and Resources. This is a selection of recommended books, websites, and other resources you may find helpful.

Index. With the index, you can look up a particular topic (such as calming strategies, gossiping, or physical bullying) or character trait (such as respect, collaboration, or self-control) and find lessons with that focus.

Digital Content. The digital content includes all of the reproducible forms from the book, additional resources for leading the lessons, and forms for sharing information with parents. The parent forms provide background about the concepts children are learning and suggestions for ways parents can support this at home. See page 291 for instructions on how to access the digital content.

Using the Book in Your Setting

Yours may be one of the many classrooms using the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program, Second Step, Responsive Classroom, or another social and emotional learning model. The activities in *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School* can easily be integrated with programs like these. If you’re not using any particular curriculum to build social skills, this book will be an important tool for introducing them.

Depending on your needs, you may use as many or as few lessons as you like. Use them as a full curriculum from start to finish or as a shorter unit. In the latter case, conduct the Core Lessons first and follow up by focusing on a particular section (such as Managing Anger) or by conducting several activities from each section. You can also turn to specific lessons when you have an incident of bullying, unkindness, or conflict you want to address promptly.

Using the lessons first thing in the morning is ideal. If you’re already doing morning meetings, you can weave these lessons in after the greeting. If another time of the day works better for you, that’s fine, too. The whole idea is to make the lessons work for you and your setting. Three times a week will give you maximum results. Even doing one lesson a week will make a big difference. The more you do, the better.

Although designed with a classroom in mind, this book can easily be used in other settings, including youth groups, faith-based programs, before- or after-school settings, counseling groups, scouting, camps, or any other environment where children are served. You will find the book useful if you are a classroom teacher, resource teacher, school counselor, youth group director, community program leader, camp counselor, religious educator, or parent.

Each lesson can be conducted in twenty minutes. You can spend more time if you wish, and reinforce concepts as time permits by using the follow-ups and extensions.

Several lessons in each section address similar topics in different ways, helping you reinforce important skills and practices. There are also review lessons, including “10-Minute Time Crunchers.”

Conducting the Lessons and Working with Students

Before you begin, acquaint yourself with the following seven tools to enhance the experience you and your students have with the *Create a Culture of Kindness* lessons:

Circle. The lessons in this book will be most effective if done in a circle. This helps with listening, focus, and empathy. One of the most basic ways people connect is by looking at each other’s faces when speaking. So many children spend hours each day behind a cell phone, computer screen, or video game; they’re often more connected to a screen than to each other. As a result, some kids may have become oblivious to each other’s feelings and may find face-to-face interactions awkward. By seating your students in a circle, you can get them used to looking at the person who is speaking. Coach them to look around the circle when it’s their turn to speak, and to wait to begin speaking until everyone is looking back at them.

Cueing kids to look at each other and tune in to what’s being said can drastically improve communication skills and develop a greater sense of connectedness. The good listening and respectful attitudes fostered in the circle can also spill over into the rest of the day and make it easier to teach.

Globe. For many lessons, I strongly recommend having a globe handy. If you can, pick up the soft kind that’s a cross between a ball and a pillow. You can order these through AAA, Amazon, or many other places online. Here are three ways to use your globe as you conduct the lessons:

1. Let it serve as a visual reminder that we are part of the larger world. Hold up the globe periodically to remind kids that our actions make a difference and everything we do affects the people around us. They can make the world a better place starting right in their own classroom. Peace begins with each person.
2. Use it as a “talking object” to pass in the circle when you do the activities in this book. The person holding the globe is the only one to speak. When he or she is finished, the globe is passed to the next person.
3. If you have a soft globe, you can use it as a ball to throw during review activities (for more on review activities, see the digital content), allowing you to review concepts easily and quickly.

Working in pairs. Many lessons in this book have children working in pairs and, in some cases, small groups. These interactions enable kids to immediately put into practice many cooperative behaviors they are learning: listening, compassion, kindness, openness to another’s ideas. Studies have shown that using pairs and cooperative learning in teaching situations improves students’ ability to learn new concepts.²⁷

My favorite way to get students into pairs is to prime them by saying, “In a moment we’re going to partner up. Your most important job is to make sure no one is left out. Look around and make sure everyone is included.” I always follow this up with immediate acknowledgment of kids who make sure no one is left out, especially if they forgo sitting with a friend to be a partner to someone who doesn’t have one. If I see students start rushing to be with friends instead of looking around to see if someone needs a partner, I stop the whole process and give a gentle reminder.

Assuming you have your kids in a circle, another way to get them to partner up is to randomly ask one child to raise his or her hand. After that, every second child raises a hand, alternating so half the students have hands raised. Kids with raised hands turn to the person on their right; this person becomes their partner. If there’s an odd number, have one group triple up, or have the extra child be your partner.

Once students are in pairs, whether in chairs or seated on the floor, have them sit “knee to knee”—directly facing one another with their knees facing but not touching. This enables good eye contact and less distraction.

Charts. Many activities include creating a chart for or with students. Among these, there are seven that I recommend laminating and keeping up all year long as a visual reminder of the most important bullying prevention concepts in this book:

- **Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom:** Keep this chart somewhere in the front of the room for easy reference, high enough for everyone to see, but not so high you can’t reach the agreements with a pointer. (This chart is introduced in Lesson 1.)
- **Respectful Listening:** This chart can be used all day long for every subject you teach. Display it where kids can’t miss seeing it. (Introduced in Lesson 2.)
- **Peace Pledge:** You’ll probably be using this every morning, so keep it in easy access for kids to view. You might want to have a different child lead the class in the pledge each day, so post it in a spot a student can stand next to. (Introduced in Lesson 6.)
- **Win/Win Guidelines for Working Out Conflicts and Rules for Using the Win/Win Guidelines:** Place these near your Peace Table or Peace Place (see page 9). Post them so they’re readily accessible when two students sit down together to work out a conflict. (Introduced in Lesson 8.)

- **Stop, Breathe, Chill:** This is another good chart for your Peace Table area, but if space is limited, any place in the room will do. (Introduced in Lesson 9.)
- **No More Hurtful Words:** This is a pledge for students to live by and for you to refer to whenever they need a reminder to be kind. (Introduced in Lesson 22.)
- **Ways to Chill:** This chart can go in any spot where it's easily seen, even up high at the top of a wall. It will serve as a constant reminder of all the things students can do to calm down when angry. (Introduced in Lesson 40.)

Other charts recommended in lessons throughout the book can be left up as long as you need them, whether that's a day or two after you've completed the lesson or longer as a reinforcement. If possible, save any charts you take down. They can serve as helpful reminders of concepts you might want or need to review as the year goes on.

Student journals. Journals are used throughout the lessons in a variety of ways: for responding to a topic, airing personal experiences, brainstorming ideas, and more.

Provide students with notebooks to use as their journals. Have students decorate and personalize the cover. Keep a journal yourself and do the same exercises your students do. This will broaden your own understanding of the concepts in this book and expand your ability to empathize with what kids are going through. If you choose to share any of your journal entries with your students, it may help them open up even more.

Automatic writing. Some of the lessons employ automatic writing, a technique that can spark spontaneous thought and release ideas. In automatic writing, students should let their words flow out freely and land on the paper like coins spilling out of a bag. Neatness, grammar, and spelling don't count. After stating the given prompt, direct students to "write, write, write" for about three minutes straight without lifting pencil from paper until you say "Stop."

Automatic writing is about the unfolding of what's inside. Let students know that sometimes they may be surprised at what comes out. Whether they keep what they write confidential or share it with you and others is always up to them.

Students who have difficulty writing can draw their response, speak their words into a recorder, or dictate their words to you, a classroom aide, or another student if this is comfortable for them.

Role plays. Role playing is a key learning strategy in *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School*. Role playing allows students to practice the bullying prevention and conflict resolution skills they are learning, making it easier to apply them in real-life situations.

Often the role plays provided are based on the Survey About Conflicts and interviews we conducted with

students. Your students' own experiences will also make good sources for role plays, so invite these wherever you feel it is appropriate.

Ask for volunteers to play the parts. If not enough students volunteer, take a part yourself. Do not have students act out aggressive behaviors or demonstrate the use of aggressive words, as acting out negative behaviors can reinforce them. Instead, describe what happened, then have students act out the resolution. The purpose of the role plays is to give students practice implementing the strategies they're learning.

If the actual situation being role-played resulted in a physical fight, allow only pantomimed movements.

Teach students these ground rules for role plays:

- Students who participate should never reveal personal information they're not comfortable sharing.
- No physical contact or swearing is allowed.
- Actors should not use real names.

If student actors get off track or start to act silly, stop the role play and remind them of its purpose and the ground rules.

Key Practices and Skills: The Core Lessons

The Core Lessons that make up Part 1 introduce the most critical skills and attitudes for creating a bully-free environment. Some of the strategies in Part 1 will be reintroduced in Part 2, but are included early on so you can start the year with them. The Core Lessons were designed to help you do the following:

- create agreements for a peaceful, "get-along" classroom
- foster empathy, kindness, and acceptance
- teach respectful listening
- build trust and collaboration
- introduce the Win/Win Guidelines for Working Out Conflicts
- introduce the anger-management strategy Stop, Breathe, Chill
- foster responsibility for one's actions

These initial lessons also include some important practices that will help you maintain an atmosphere of respect and kindness throughout the year: breathing for calmness, the process of visualization, a Peace Pledge to be recited each day, a ritual for setting aside upset feelings when entering the classroom, and the class Peace Table or Peace Place.

Deep Breathing

I recommend starting the activities in this book by leading students in a few rounds of deep breathing. Most kids like this practice. Taking a few deep breaths together is a ritual they learn to look forward to. Doing

so helps them focus and sets a tone of calmness. Research shows that six deep abdominal breaths can lower the blood pressure.²⁸

It's important that you get the feel of deep abdominal breathing before you teach it. See Lesson 4 (pages 28–29) for a thorough introduction to deep breathing. Practice so you're comfortable with the process.

Once you've taught it to your kids, you can use deep breathing throughout the day as a transition between lessons or as a way of lowering anxiety, tension, or nervous energy in your room. You can add visualization (see next section) to the breathing, especially as a way of calming before tests.

The Process of Visualization

A number of the lessons incorporate visualization. This is a highly effective tool to help kids mentally rehearse situations where they need to calm themselves, manage anger, talk out a conflict, resist bullying, or use other strategies taught in this book. According to psychology professor and researcher Dr. Barbara Fredrickson, "Visualization has been shown to activate the same brain areas as actually carrying out those same visualized actions. That's why visualization has been such a powerful tool for winning athletes. Mental practice can perhaps be just as effective as physical practice."²⁹

Students are introduced to visualization in Lesson 9. Lesson 37, pages 94–96, provides a more structured introduction along with a visualization script.

Leave It at the Door

We've all seen it happen. A child comes to school filled with anger, fear, or stress, then spends the day acting out. Leave It at the Door (Lesson 7) gives you a method you can use all year long to alleviate this. Many kids are under enormous stress. We don't always know which children in our classroom may be sitting with heavy burdens weighing on their hearts. The "Leave It at the Door" box is a place where kids can write down and discharge intense or difficult feelings the minute they walk into your classroom.

The purpose of this exercise is not to minimize or stuff down feelings, but to help students transition to the school day so they can get along with classmates and learn. If students choose to let you read what they wrote (which is always optional), you then have an added window into their lives. If a child reveals something that requires follow-up or additional intervention, you can get the student the needed help. Should a student reveal serious family issues, any kind of abuse, feelings of depression, or thoughts of harming oneself, talk to your school counselor, nurse, or principal.

Having a tool for processing and communicating what's going on can be the lifeline that pulls a child out of hidden hurt or sadness. By letting out what's troubling them, kids often are more able to learn, and more apt to get along with peers rather than bully them.

Note: Make sure the box is sealed and has only a narrow slit at the top so no one but you can take out what anyone else has written. Stress to students that everything they place in the "Leave It at the Door" box will be seen only by the teacher—no one else. Also, give your students the option of writing "Do not read" on their papers if they want to unload with absolute confidentiality. Emphasize that no one but the teacher is ever allowed to remove anything from the box. Place the box on a shelf in your clear view. If you have concerns that anyone in the class might try to take out something another child has written, keep the box on your desk instead of by the door.

Peace Table

A Peace Table gives students a place in the room where they can retrieve their grounding when angry or upset. It's also a place to talk out conflicts. Set up a Peace Table in a corner of your room. On and near it have objects kids can use to calm themselves and restore composure: a Koosh ball, headsets with soothing music, books, stuffed animals, writing paper, markers, pencils, clay, and more. Near the Peace Table, hang posters and drawings that nurture calmness. Post the Win/Win Guidelines for Working Out Conflicts and Rules for Using the Win/Win Guidelines (see page 36). Some teachers make flip cards with the Win/Win Guidelines for kids to hold when they're working out a conflict. Get students in the habit of going to the Peace Table to calm down and to talk things out when conflicts arise.

If space is an issue, create a Peace Place. Some teachers use a bean bag chair for this purpose. Put it in a corner and hang the Win/Win Guidelines and Rules nearby. Put together a Peace Box containing calming objects and place it next to the bean bag chair. A movable study carrel or screen is also a good idea if kids want privacy. "Quiet headphones" can block out noise for kids who tend to get overstimulated.

Physically moving away from the source can help kids "move" mentally and emotionally when they're angry or upset. Unhooking from the energy of anger, sadness, or frustration by squeezing a soft ball, listening to music, or writing in a journal helps kids learn that they have the ability to release and transform negative feelings in a healthy way. Giving kids the place and tools to do this helps make self-soothing and problem-solving intrinsic, rather than extrinsic. When we put the locus of control inside the child, we give the student a powerful tool to use throughout life.

Using the Win/Win Guidelines for Working Out Conflicts

Kids who know how to work out conflicts are less likely to bully. That's one of the many reasons why teaching conflict resolution is so important. The ultimate goal

is that kids will be able to use the Win/Win Guidelines independently when they have a conflict. However, it takes time to develop that comfort level. Many lessons in the Preventing Conflict and the Responding to Conflict sections of this book (pages 119–188) are devoted to role-playing conflicts real kids reported in the Survey About Conflicts and in interviews with students in schools. The more role plays they do, the more natural it will feel for your students to use the Win/Win Guidelines to resolve their own conflicts, rather than fighting, name-calling, or tattling.

You can help mediate students' conflicts using the Win/Win Guidelines. One caveat: be sure to teach the guidelines before using them as a mediation tool. The guidelines, described on this page, are introduced individually in Lessons 8–14, and reviewed as a process in Lesson 15. See pages 36 and 47.

Note: The Win/Win Guidelines should not be used in bullying situations. Putting a bullied child face-to-face with the child who bullied him or her can be overwhelming and can cause a sense of intimidation and fear. See pages 11–12 and the Dealing with Bullying lessons (pages 217–260) for ways to address bullying.

Mediating Kids' Conflicts with the Win/Win Guidelines

It is best to mediate with no more than two students at a time. If a conflict involves more than two people, try to determine the two who are at the heart of the conflict. Then help them begin to resolve it, following the six guidelines:

- 1. Cool off.** Separately, have each child take time out, get a drink of water, or do something physical to let off steam. Make sure both kids have cooled off completely before going to the next step. When it comes to conflicts, the number one mistake adults make is trying to get kids to talk out the problem while they're still mad. When tempers are calmer and tears are dried, sit down with the kids and go on to the second guideline.
- 2. Talk it over starting from "I," not "you."** Tell students they're both going to have a chance to say what's bothering them, but they're going to need to listen respectfully to each other without interrupting. Then ask each child to state what's on his or her mind, starting from "I," not "you." Example: "I'm mad 'cause you grabbed my pencil without asking" is a lot less inflammatory than "You're so mean. Give it back!"
- 3. Listen and say back what you heard.** Guide kids to do this for each other: "Justin, can you repeat back the main idea of what Mario just said?" Let them know that "saying back" doesn't indicate agreement, but shows respect, builds understanding, and makes it easier to work out the problem.

- 4. Take responsibility for your role in the conflict.** In the majority of conflicts, both people have some degree of responsibility. Ask each student, "How were you even a little bit responsible for what happened?" Stay neutral here. This part needs to come from them. If a student is unwilling to take any responsibility at all, try gently coaxing by saying, "Is there something really small that you might have done, too?" If this step starts to stymie the whole process, move on to the next step.
- 5. Come up with a solution that's fair to each of you.** Ask, "How can the two of you work out this conflict?" Or, "What can you do so this doesn't happen again?" Then wait. Don't give kids solutions. It's important that they come up with their own. If the conflict is a recurring or ongoing one, have them write down the solution and sign it.
- 6. Affirm, forgive, thank, or apologize.** Ask, "Is there anything you'd like to say to each other?" Or, "Would you like to shake hands?" If an apology is in order, ask, "Do you feel in your heart that you can give an apology?" If not, ask students to consider offering an apology at another time. Forcing apologies makes for inauthentic gestures and doesn't truly support the overarching goal of getting along better.

At the beginning of conflict resolution and throughout the process as needed, remind students of the Rules for Using the Win/Win Guidelines:

- 1.** Treat each other with respect. No blaming or put-downs.
- 2.** Attack the problem, not the person.
- 3.** No negative body language or facial expressions.
- 4.** Be willing to compromise.
- 5.** Be honest.

Incorporating and Reviewing "Get-Along" Classroom Agreements

In Lesson 1, Introducing the Concept of a "Get-Along" Classroom, you and your students will create a chart called "Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom." These agreements are a contract that everyone signs and promises to follow. They form a scaffold for the entire year and are a working document that you and your class should revisit every few weeks. Here are five ways you can review the agreements and keep them alive:

"How are we doing?" check-in. Direct students' attention to items you think they need to work on. For example, you might ask them, "How do you think you're doing on listening when someone speaks?" Encourage students to be honest. When there are areas of challenges, lead a brief discussion on ways to deal with them. Then hold students accountable. Check back

in a few days to see if suggested improvements have been followed through on.

“Pat on the back” check-in. Ask students where they have shown improvement individually or as a group. Acknowledge them for improvements made and for positive steps along the way. Have kids acknowledge each other, too.

Goal setting. Have students choose items on the “get-along” classroom agreements they want to improve on. Have them write the items in their journals. Talk about steps they can take to reach their goal. Goals can be for individuals or for the entire class. Encourage kids to be “support partners” for each other. For example, if Joey’s attention drifts a lot and his goal is to be a better listener, Amalia may agree to be his support partner, sitting next to him during lessons and giving him an agreed-upon silent signal when he loses focus. Support partners can also encourage and affirm when progress is made.

New student review. When a new child joins your class, have your students lead a complete review of your “get-along” classroom agreements, answering questions from the new student and talking about how the class is living the words of the agreements.

Share with family adults. As suggested in Lesson 1, copy the agreements from your wall chart and send them home with a cover letter. At your back-to-school open house, introduce your “Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom” and let parents know how you’re using them.

Four Critical Ways for Teachers to Prevent Bullying

1. Model, teach, and reinforce kindness, compassion, and empathy. By taking the time to teach kindness and compassion, you lay the foundation for a classroom free of bullying. Three sections of this book will help you do this:

- The Core Lessons (pages 19–47)
- Fostering Kindness, Compassion, and Empathy (pages 51–81)
- Accepting Differences (pages 261–278)

What you model is key. As Albert Schweitzer once said, “Example is not the main thing in influencing others, it is the only thing.” When he wrote these words, he had little idea that inside the human brain are millions of mirror neurons that cause us to mirror each other’s behaviors, emotions, and facial expressions. Neuroscientists have discovered that this is why we tend to smile back when someone smiles at us, or frown when we see someone frowning. Mirror neurons are the reason kids’ attitudes and behaviors are so contagious.³⁰

Mirror neurons are also among the reasons that teachers and other adults have even more influence than we

realize. Mirror neurons are functioning all day long. Plus, kids watch us for clues about how to behave, even when we think they’re not. There have been times I’ve heard kids say things like, “I know my teacher doesn’t like Mr. So-and-So. I see the look on her face every time he walks by.” This attests to the need to be mindful of our body language and facial expressions as well as our words.

For some kids, we may be the most influential role models they have, so we need to hold ourselves to a high standard. When we tell kids to treat others with respect and they see us doing this ourselves, we make a powerful impact for the good. Their mirror neurons are sparked to follow our lead.

2. Make kids part of the solution, and hold them accountable. When kids have a role in coming up with their own rules and agreements, they are far more motivated to abide by them. That’s why it’s important to start by having your students define the kind of atmosphere they want to have in the classroom, then come up with agreements for creating it (Lesson 1).

It’s also critical to hold students accountable. Kids can be good at parroting back the right answer when it comes to respect, kindness, and acceptance. They often “talk the talk,” but don’t “walk the walk.” Getting kids to “walk the walk” requires frequent check-ins on how they’re applying what they’re learning. For example, after you teach an anger management or assertiveness strategy, tell students you’re going to want to hear how they apply it in real life. Mark a date in your plan book, and make sure you take five to ten minutes to check in with kids when that date arrives. Reinforce skills and concepts by conducting additional role plays for a given lesson or for other lessons that have the same focus.

Be sure to tell family adults about the *Create a Culture of Kindness* program you are introducing in your classroom. Share information early in the year, and let parents know you’ll be contacting them from time to time to see how their kids are applying what they’ve learned. Then keep in touch via email, text, your class website, or by sending information home with students.

3. Teach kids concrete strategies they can use when they’re angry and in conflict. Giving kids acceptable ways to deal with conflict and anger can significantly cut back on bullying. A study by bullying researchers Justin Patchin and Sameer Hinduja found that kids who are angry and frustrated are much more likely to bully others and that in order to reduce bullying, we need to give kids positive, healthy ways of dealing with conflict and anger.³¹ Other research has shown that teaching kids how to regulate their emotions, control anger, and improve moral reasoning can decrease aggressive behaviors like bullying for the long-term.³²

Stop, Breathe, Chill (explained in Lesson 9) is one of the top strategies this book provides for managing anger. Many lessons that follow it show how to use

this strategy when conflicts arise. Using Stop, Breathe, Chill yourself and sharing some personal examples with students can make the practice come alive for kids. The more they hear about your real-life applications, the likelier they are to follow in your footsteps. Sharing how you handled challenges in angry situations can give your students the confidence to keep trying rather than give up when they meet challenges of their own. The journey to managing anger and conflict is never easy. It requires us to be mindful of our old patterns and willing to change them. The role modeling you provide in this regard will be invaluable to your kids.

In terms of helping kids resolve conflicts, the key strategy is the Win/Win Guidelines, introduced in the Core Lessons. Following this, the Responding to Conflict section has twelve detailed lessons designed to help kids apply the Win/Win Guidelines in their lives. There are lots of actual conflicts described by students from our survey for your students to role-play, discuss, and brainstorm solutions to.

4. Never look the other way when bullying takes place. Kids need to know that bullying and other acts of cruelty will not be tolerated. Sometimes adults downplay or dismiss the damage bullying can do, saying that bullying has always existed or that it's just part of life. But that doesn't make it acceptable. And over time, bullying has changed, becoming harder to detect and control since the advent of cyberbullying. Ignoring or minimizing bullying of any kind only allows it to grow. As educators, we must hold kids accountable for cruel behavior. Not doing so reinforces these actions by sending a silent signal that cruelty and bullying are okay.

Most schools have some system of consequences for misbehavior as well as bullying response protocols. In the digital content for this book, you will find information regarding using these protocols. Also see the References and Resources on pages 285–287 for sources of schoolwide bullying prevention programs.

The Dealing with Bullying section (pages 217–260) contains nineteen lessons that give specific ways to help kids recognize different forms of bullying. It also teaches kids what to do if they or others are bullied and shows how to be an upstander, as opposed to a bystander, when bullying takes place. If bullying is going on in your classroom, don't rely solely on this section; the lessons on kindness, compassion, and acceptance are equally important, if not more so.

In fact, research reveals that kids who are bullied have certain social challenges in common. *The Journal of Clinical Child and Adolescent Psychology* reports that these students often have difficulty in at least one of the following three areas: reading nonverbal cues, understanding the meaning of social cues, and coming up with options for resolving conflicts.³³ Lessons throughout

Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School are designed to help kids improve in all of these areas through role play, empathy building, and activities that require them to observe and respond to the reactions of others. Students with poor social skills can improve in these areas when provided with positive role models, effective strategies, and opportunities to practice social interactions.

Acknowledging and Affirming Students

John Milton once wrote, "Good, the more communicated, more abundant grows." One of the most powerful tools we have for making good things grow in our students is catching kids in the act of doing things right and affirming them for their positive acts. When you see students being kind, respectful, caring, or accepting, acknowledge it. Kindness is the antithesis of bullying. The more kind acts we can catch kids in the act of performing, the more we eliminate the roots of bullying.

Be like a detective on the lookout for kind words and actions. When you see kids cooling off when angry, talking out conflicts, or expressing compassion, acknowledge them. For students who feel embarrassed by compliments, make it private. Whisper your acknowledgment or jot it on a note. And make it specific: "Ahmed, I noticed how you helped Joe pick up his books when he dropped them. You didn't laugh, even though other kids did. That was a very kind thing to do. How did that feel for you?" By asking this question, you further reinforce the positive act.

Start and end lessons on a tone of affirmation by sincerely acknowledging individuals or the class as a whole for positives you've observed. Be sure to spread your acknowledgments out, so each child gets a chance to hear something positive at some point. It can be harder to find things to compliment with some kids than with others, so take note of progress made, moves in the right direction, sincere attempts to improve—the small, subtle things that often go unnoticed.

One of my favorite examples of positive change sparked by acknowledgment was with an intense fifth grader I'll call Miko. Miko was in a group I ran for at-risk kids who bullied and got into fights. He started the year angry, reactive, and quick with his fists. Although Miko constantly mumbled put-downs and gave nasty looks to other kids in the group, he had a lot of positive qualities. One day I took him aside and told him how much I enjoyed having him in the group—which I sincerely did—and shared all the positive things I saw in him: his intelligence, his strength, his vast potential. I asked him if he could try

to let go of his reactions when kids in the group said or did things that got on his nerves. I told him he had the power to react less, and I said, "I have faith in you." His face completely changed when he heard those words. He admitted to me that he didn't know how to control his temper, so I showed him how to use Stop, Breathe, Chill.

Initially it was hard for Miko to contain his reactions when someone got on his nerves, but he started trying. When something was said that would ordinarily push his buttons, I would notice him consciously looking away (as opposed to giving a look) and breathing deeply. Each time he did this I'd acknowledge him privately. "You're gaining more control over your reactions," I would tell him, or, "You're really making an effort, and it's working." Often, he'd nod in agreement and give me a little smile. Over time, with consistent support and acknowledgment, Miko turned around. At the end of the year, he wrote these words:

"I love our program because it helped me so much with handling my problems. It really helped me calm myself down when someone or something bothered me. It taught me respect. I'm sure it would help others like me, too."

Continuously catching Miko in the act of doing things right—even small steps and sincere attempts—helped Miko see his better self. He eventually learned that he had the ability to control himself, and when he did, he felt good. For kids who get in trouble all the time, this can be life-changing.

"It's not our job to toughen our children up to face a cruel and heartless world. It's our job to raise children who will make the world a little less cruel and heartless." —L.R. Knost

Also teach kids to acknowledge each other. Moment to moment, words and actions add up to the atmosphere that's created in our classrooms. If we're consistently affirming positive words and actions, our students often follow suit, noticing the positives in each other and affirming them.

You can prompt student-to-student affirmations fairly easily. "Is there something anyone would like to acknowledge someone for?" is a good question to ask when you complete activities in this book. Things you can prime your kids to notice are:

- kindness or respect in any form
- helpfulness
- patience
- listening attentively
- calming down when angry
- being an upstander

There are so many things worth acknowledging if our minds are primed to notice the positive. In the classroom, when we get in the habit of paying each other sincere compliments, something magical can take root. I've seen it happen over and over.

Anticipating Challenges

Confidentiality

Make sure students understand that they should not bring other people's personal information into group discussions or role plays. Remind students not to use real names when describing bullying or conflict situations. Coach them to say, "Someone I know," "This kid," "A person in our school," "Someone in my home," or "A relative of mine." This applies for writing assignments as well. Journals, too, need to be confidential. The only time a journal entry should be shared is when the writer chooses to share an entry with the teacher or the class during a lesson where optional sharing is designated.

What to Do If a "Red-Flag" Issue Comes Up

The lessons in this book may bring up some red-flag issues for kids. Bullying in and of itself can be one. Kids who are bullied can suffer from depression and even harbor suicidal thoughts. They may also have thoughts of harming someone else. If this or any other issue of major concern arises, talk to your school counselor, nurse, or principal. Discuss how to reach out supportively to the child's family adults and how to get further assistance for the child if need be. Sometimes just being there for the student yourself may be enough. I've known teachers who eat lunch with certain kids at least once a week, or invite them to help in the classroom and chat after school. Whatever avenue you take, consider the red flag a gift—this student is revealing that support is needed. Providing it can make all the difference in the world.

Finally, follow your school's policy for mandatory reporting of physical or sexual abuse.

Dealing with Disruptive Behavior

It's happened to all of us, and for some of us, it can happen every day: a student explodes, becomes defiant, or gets physical. What can we do? There's no magic formula, but there are some things that can help.

Calm yourself first. Immediately take deep abdominal breaths and silently say a calming statement (examples: "I can handle this," "Cool and steady," "I'll stay calm"). Then lower your voice instead of raising it. These steps will help lower your own stress and provide a model of calmness for the child who's acting out as well as for the rest of the class.

Convey the attitude, “I am on your side.” When students think we don’t support them, we lose the chance to connect and help correct their negative behavior. Kids, especially those who regularly get in trouble, need to believe we still care about them and believe in them even when they’ve lost control. Consequences can be given, but in the spirit of care and concern.

Let the student save face. Never back a disruptive child into a corner. If we threaten a child who’s acting out, we can almost guarantee that he or she will choose a defensive or aggressive way out. (“You want me to go to the office. Try and make me!”) Instead, phrase your response in a nonconfrontational way that doesn’t further escalate the problem. Here’s an example. Tina has just thrown an eraser at a student who made fun of her. You whisper to her: “Tina, I see you’re upset right now. Why don’t you take a break and get a drink of water?” If a consequence is in order, give it later, once Tina’s volatility has subsided.

Make the child part of the solution. Ask, “What can we do to solve this problem?” Then come up with a plan together. Here’s an example: Jessie always acts out during math lessons. After talking to him you discover that he doesn’t get the math concepts you’ve been working on and his acting out is a mask for his feelings of frustration and inadequacy. Ask him what would help; then make some compromises and adaptations. Maybe Jessie can work with a partner, or maybe he can complete the few problems he understands and leave the rest till you can help him. Coming up with solutions together will return control to him, removing the sense of powerlessness that precipitated his acting out.

Use preventive maintenance. For some kids, calling out their name in front of the class is enough to set them off. Anticipate the anger triggers of kids who easily become disruptive, and do your best to avoid them. For example, if you know that embarrassment leads to outbursts, direct corrective comments to the child privately, or use a previously agreed upon signal. Here, too, involve the child in the solution. If Charlie is always interrupting lessons with inappropriate comments, speak to him privately, create a plan together, let him know you have faith in his ability to follow it, and affirm him when he does so.

Defuse potentially explosive situations. Here are a few phrases you might use with a student who’s on the verge of a meltdown:

- “What do you need to do to take care of yourself right now?”
- “I can see you’re very upset. Is there someone you’d like to talk to?”

- “I’m depending on you to have a level head.”
- “Did that action help you or hurt you?”
- “How about taking a break.”

Put physical safety first. If a child gets physical and can’t be readily calmed down, follow your school’s policy for dealing with student violence and keeping all students safe.

“Gay” Name-Calling

It’s not uncommon for elementary-age kids to put each other down using homophobic terms. Many students who filled out our survey wrote about the heartache of having a homophobic label attached to them. This example came from an eleven-year-old boy:

*“It started at lunch when everybody decided I was gay. So that’s what they started calling me, and I’m not. They also called me freak because I don’t buy lunch, and a nerd because I get straight A’s. It’s not solved. About a month ago this kid calls me a nerd and other names. So I go tell my mom. The next day his best friend hits me in the face because I told on his friend. Then I got mad and I wanted to hit him back, but I didn’t. Now it’s the end of the school year. It’s like every day without crying is an accomplishment. Even some of my friends have turned on me. It just makes me want to die.”**

As this story painfully illustrates, students can be devastated by pejorative comments of this nature. Kids may use the term gay to label a child as homosexual. They may also use it as a kind of generic insult: “That’s so gay!” But kids on the receiving end almost always take it as an embarrassing put-down. To respond to or prevent such incidents in your classroom, you can take the following actions:

- *Never* look the other way when homophobic comments are made. Kids need to know that speaking like this is never okay. Lesson 110 will help you address this issue.
- Ask your school to provide professional development training to help staff gain greater comfort in addressing LGBTQ issues and answering related questions from students.
- Help your students understand the common humanity all people share, including those who seem different from them. Use books and literature in your classroom that include diverse characters and families.
- Model and expect acceptance of, respect for, and kindness toward all people.
- Be willing to entertain questions regarding LGBTQ issues and people.

* While the students’ surveys were anonymous, the teachers’ were not. When a student’s story indicated a critical need for help, every effort was made to alert the child’s teacher.

Integrating This Book's Understandings Throughout the Day

The lessons in this book will live in their application. For systemic change to happen, it's critical to integrate the concepts and strategies presented in the lessons throughout the entire day. Here's how:

- Keep referring back to charts, signs, and quotes from each lesson, particularly your "Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom." Use them as living documents, tying them in to real-life situations in the classroom. For example, if one of your get-along agreements is "Treat others with respect," and something disrespectful happens, gesture toward the line in the chart about respect. Ask, "Was that respectful or not?" Remind students that every word and action counts. Before long, many kids will get in the habit of referring back to the charts themselves, keeping each other on track.
- Once again, affirm your kids for positive acts you witness. Continuously encourage students to affirm each other, too.
- Ask students to be aware of acts of respect, kindness, integrity, acceptance, and conscience performed by people they are learning about at school, whether these people are fictional characters or figures from history or current events. Highlight acts of goodness, and ask students to comment on them.
- When students go to lunch, recess, classes in other rooms, or other activities, remind them to keep abiding by their get-along classroom agreements. When they return, take a few minutes to hear how the activity went. Acknowledge positives, remediate negatives.
- At dismissal, remind your students to continue living what they're learning with their families, friends, and anyone else whose paths they cross. Follow up by checking in with them often about this.
- Invite guest speakers who reflect the values you are teaching. Teens who have overcome bullying or have been upstanders for others make good guests. So do

people who've learned how to manage their anger and deal with conflict. Kids enjoy and respond to real-life anecdotes and experiences.

- Refer to current events and ask students to speculate on how the values of respect, kindness, and compassion—or their opposites—might have made an impact on specific events of the day.
- Have students be on the lookout for examples of respect, kindness, compassion, acceptance, or conscience in the news, in movies, and on TV. Ask them to share examples they've come across. Have them go to MyHero.com for examples of everyday people doing extraordinary things.
- Look at conflicts in the news and have students talk about how those conflicts could be worked out using the strategies and concepts you are teaching.

Just about every lesson in *Create a Culture of Kindness in Elementary School* zeros in on skills that not only help prevent bullying and conflict, but also help kids succeed in school. According to a survey of 8,000 teachers and parents by Dr. Stephen Elliott of Vanderbilt University, the following are among the top skills that help kids succeed in school:³⁴

- listening to others
- taking turns when talking
- getting along with others
- staying calm with others
- being responsible for one's own behavior

In the pages ahead, you will find a wealth of activities that foster all of these skills. As you use them, be sure to share what's working for you in your classroom with your colleagues. Ask what's working for them. Find out what parents are doing at home to encourage their kids to show respect and kindness, manage anger, and resolve conflicts.

I also invite you to share your successes, challenges, and ideas with me. Please contact me in care of my publisher: help4kids@freespirit.com. I would love to hear from you.

In peace,
Naomi Drew

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Part One

Instilling “Get Along” Skills and Attitudes

Congratulations on beginning! The activities you are about to start are the gateway to a classroom free of bullying. These fifteen lessons introduce the most fundamental concepts and strategies for creating an atmosphere of respect, compassion, and kindness. Once you have conducted them, your students will have the beginning information and skills they need to take part in any of the other activities in the book.

Specifically, the Core Lessons will help you:

- Work with students to create agreements for a peaceful, “get-along” classroom
- Foster students’ empathy, kindness, and acceptance
- Teach respectful listening and the use of I-messages
- Build trust and collaboration in your classroom
- Introduce the Win/Win Guidelines for Working Out Conflicts
- Introduce the anger-management strategy Stop, Breathe, Chill
- Foster students’ sense of personal responsibility for their actions

The Core Lessons

The Core Lessons that comprise Part 1 introduce the most critical skills and attitudes for creating an environment without teasing, meanness, or bullying. Some of the strategies in Part 1 will be reintroduced and expanded upon in Part 2 lessons, but they are included early on so students will have the basic understandings and tools they need to begin getting along better as a class and to get the most out of future lessons.

It is best, but not absolutely necessary, to do all of the Core Lessons in order. However, to be effective, lessons 8–15 should be conducted in sequence. They are key introductory lessons on conflict resolution, an essential skill for all students.

- 1.** Introducing the Concept of a “Get-Along” Classroom
- 2.** Respectful Listening
- 3.** Great Listeners in Our Lives
- 4.** Deep Breathing
- 5.** Integrity
- 6.** Peace Pledge
- 7.** Leave It at the Door
- 8.** Peace Table
- 9.** Stop, Breathe, Chill
- 10.** Introducing I-Messages
- 11.** Practicing I-Messages
- 12.** Reflective Listening
- 13.** Taking Responsibility in Conflicts
- 14.** Brainstorming Solutions to Conflicts
- 15.** Win-Win Guidelines for Working Out Conflicts

Lesson 1: Introducing the Concept of a “Get-Along” Classroom

respect • collaboration

Lesson 1 lays the groundwork for a “get-along” classroom that will last all year long.

Students will

- identify qualities of a “get-along” classroom
- recognize their responsibility for helping create a safe and supportive learning climate
- create and sign an “Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom” chart

Materials

- globe (see page 7)
- chart paper and markers
- handouts: “Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom” (page 21, one copy); parent letter (page 22)
- *optional*: art materials for a classroom display

Introduction. Welcome your students and express how pleased you are about being their teacher. Let them know that this is an important meeting, one that will help them start to create a peaceful year where they get along with each other and treat each other with kindness and respect.

Discussion. Ask students their number one hope for the coming year, months, or weeks. Briefly discuss.

Hold up the globe and tell students that just as we are connected to each other as members of the same classroom, community, neighborhood, and country, we’re also connected as members of the human family. By learning to get along and respect each other in the classroom, we’re preparing ourselves to get along with all kinds of people in all kinds of settings.

Ask: **What kind of world would you like to grow up in?** Students will likely say things like safe, peaceful, fun, and healthy. Write the words on the board.

Activity. Now ask: **How about here in our own classroom? How would you like it to be in here?**

On chart paper, write the title “*Qualities of a Get-Along Classroom.*” List what students say. As each child shares, pass the globe.

Next, ask: **What are things each of us can do to create a get-along classroom?** Have students pass the globe as they speak. On chart paper, write the title “*Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom.*” List the agreements they suggest, stating them in the affirmative where possible; for example, instead of “No hitting” write “Keep your hands to yourself.”

As you list the agreements, ask students to give specific examples for each. For example, if someone suggests, “Treat each other with respect,” ask what that means in terms of actions (avoid using put-downs even when you’re angry, refrain from rolling

eyes or laughing when someone makes a mistake or says something you disagree with, etc.).

Keep the list short (seven or eight agreements) and be sure to leave enough room at the bottom for everyone’s signature, including your own. When the chart is complete, ask several students to lead in reading it.

Explain what a contract is and let students know that this agreement is a special kind of contract. Ask students to sign their names to the bottom of the chart. You might say: **By signing a contract we give our word of honor. This means we promise to do everything in our power to live up to the agreements we are signing our name to.**

Wrap-Up. Affirm students for working together to come up with agreements they can use all year long. Hold up the globe and remind students that getting along with others and creating peaceful relationships starts with each of us. Say: **If we want our world to become a more peaceful place, it has to begin right here.**

Follow-Up. Laminate the “Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom” chart and hang it prominently in front of the room where you can refer to it every day. This is a living document to be continuously integrated into the daily life of your classroom.

Copy the agreements from the chart onto the “Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom” handout and make photocopies to send home with a parent letter. Use the letter on page 22 or write your own.

Extension. Have students create and decorate a classroom bulletin board display that includes the “Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom” chart. Use the display to incorporate other key classroom charts you make in future lessons.

Our Agreements for a Get-Along Classroom

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

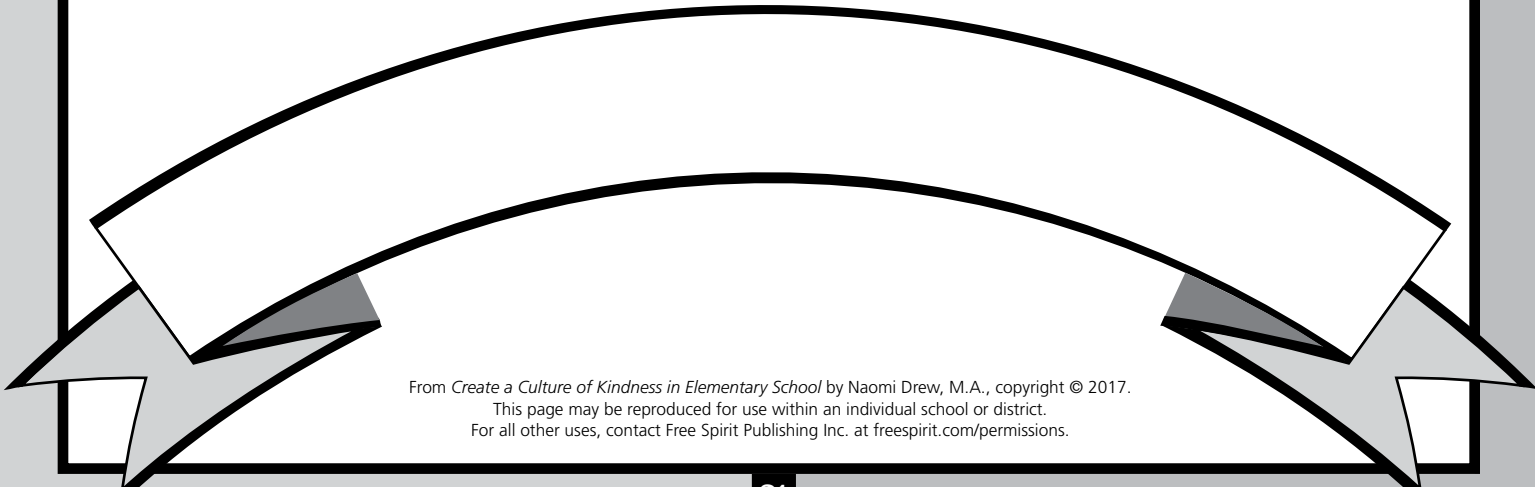
4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

8. _____



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Date: _____

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Our class is committed to creating a classroom filled with peace, respect, kindness, and compassion: a “get-along” classroom. Attached are agreements we came up with together to help us do this all year long. Please ask your child to tell you about these agreements and why they’re so important.

Many parents are looking for ways to reinforce respect, kindness, compassion, and peace at home, so periodically I’ll be sending you information to help with this. You are an important part of the peaceful community we’re working to create this year, and I welcome your involvement.

Thank you for your support. If you have questions or suggestions, please feel free to contact me at any time.

Sincerely,

Contact me at: _____

Lesson 2: Respectful Listening

respect • personal responsibility

Lesson 2 helps students understand the value of listening respectfully to others.

Students will

- recognize the differences between disrespectful and respectful listening
- learn guidelines for respectful listening
- practice listening respectfully

Materials

- chart paper and marker
- handout: "Respectful Listening" (page 24)

Preparation. On a piece of chart paper, copy the "Respectful Listening" guidelines from the handout.

Introduction. Invite a student to come to the center of the circle to role-play a scenario with you. (In your role, you will be demonstrating disrespectful listening, so be sure to choose a student who won't become upset by this.) Ask: **What's your favorite thing about school?** As soon as the student responds, act distracted, fidget, avoid eye contact, interrupt, and then take over the conversation and make it about yourself. After the role play, ask the student you role-played with how she or he felt about the way you were listening.

Now, ask the class to verbally list all the things you did as a not-so-respectful listener.

Next, start the role play over again with the same question. This time play the part of a respectful, attentive listener. Ask the same question as before, and when the student answers, show interest by leaning in, nodding, making eye contact, and staying focused. Paraphrase something she or he says and follow up with a relevant question. At the end, ask the student you role-played with how she or he felt this time.

Discussion. Ask the class to identify everything they observed you doing as a respectful listener. List these things on the board. Now show the chart you've prepared. Ask: **Is there anything we should add to this chart?**

Activity. Have students practice respectful listening in pairs, one partner as the Speaker and one as the Listener. Tell partners to sit directly across from one another looking at each other's faces. The Listener should ask the Speaker to describe his or her favorite things about school. The Listener then listens respectfully in the way that was modeled. Remind students to listen to each other as though no one else is in the room, giving their full attention to what's being said. After a few minutes, have students reverse roles.

Wrap-Up. Ask students to share what this experience was like for them. As each person shares, remind the student to look around the circle to see if everyone's listening before beginning to speak. Acknowledge respectful listening as it takes place. Pass out the "Respectful Listening" handout as a reminder of good listening habits.

Follow-Up. Laminate the "Respectful Listening" chart and hang it in a prominent place in the room. Refer back to it throughout the rest of the day, and use it daily.

Extension. Designate a day as "Respectful Listening Day." At the end of the day, do a brief check-in with the class to talk about how respectful listening affected their day.

Respectful Listening

Look at the person who is speaking.

Keep your body still, and focus your mind on what's being said.

Wait your turn to speak.

Listen with an open mind.

Take a deep breath if you have the urge to interrupt. Then focus your mind back on the speaker.



Lesson 3: Great Listeners in Our Lives

respect • personal responsibility

Lesson 3 helps students examine the impact great listeners have on others and honestly assess their own listening skills.

Students will

- share and discuss what makes a great listener
- recognize the role effective listening plays in helping people get along
- take inventory of their own listening strengths and weaknesses

Materials

- “Respectful Listening” chart from Lesson 2
- handouts: “A Great Listener in My Life” (page 26); “Check Your Listening” (page 27)
- student journals

Preparation. Prior to this lesson, pass out copies of the “A Great Listener in My Life” handout and have students complete it.

Introduction. Tell students that listening is the most fundamental way we show respect for others. Ask students how they feel when someone truly listens to them and cares about what they have to say. Share your own experience briefly.

Discussion. Ask students to take out their completed “A Great Listener in My Life” handouts. Have students pair up and share what they’ve written. Refer to the “Respectful Listening” chart, and remind students to use good listening as their partners share what they observed about great listeners in their lives.

Next, ask students to reconvene in the large circle and describe what the great listeners they observed do. Ask: **How does their respectful listening make other people feel?**

Activity. Pass out copies of the “Check Your Listening” handout and have students take a few minutes to assess their own listening habits. Encourage them to answer honestly. Then ask: **Which things on the list are you already good at? Which things do you need to work on?** Afterward, ask students to choose one or two listening goals to work on throughout the week. Have them write down their listening goals in their journals.

Ask: **How can being a good listener help people get along better?** Hold up or point to a globe and ask how our world would be different if people all over truly listened to what others had to say.

Wrap-Up. Close by reminding students that we each have the power to improve our listening, and when we do, our lives and relationships with others often get better.

Follow-Up. Be sure to revisit this activity at a later time so students can assess how they’re doing with their listening goals.

A Great Listener in My Life

A person who is a great listener is: _____.

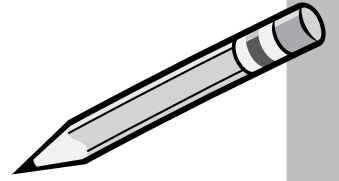
Here are some things I notice _____ doing when he or she listens to me or someone else:

This is how I feel when I'm talking with this person:

Here's what I plan to do to become a better listener:

Check Your Listening

Take this self-test about your listening skills.
For each statement:



Check the box if it is **true most of the time**.

If a statement is **usually not true** for you, leave the box blank.

- 1. I make eye contact with the person who is speaking.
- 2. I wait until the other person is finished before I start talking.
- 3. I focus on what the other person is saying instead of just thinking about what I'm going to say.
- 4. I let the other person speak without taking over the conversation and making it about me.
- 5. I care about what the other person has to say.
- 6. I try to understand what the other person is feeling.
- 7. When I have a conflict with someone, I try to listen to his or her side of the story.
- 8. I work on being a good listener in all my conversations.

How did you do?

If you checked at least 4 of the statements, you already have some good listening skills.

If not, you are not alone. Many people have not yet learned how to listen. The good news is that everyone can learn to be a better listener. It just takes practice. Be part of the solution by really listening to what other people have to say!



Lesson 4: Deep Breathing

personal responsibility • compassion

Lesson 4 shows students how to become calm and focused through deep abdominal breathing.

Note: This is a basic and essential strategy for fostering calmness. Use it with your students at the start of each day and as often as needed throughout. It also works well as a transition between activities.

Students will

- understand that feeling peaceful and calm inside helps them be more peaceful with others
- learn and practice deep breathing as a way to feel calm and peaceful

Materials

- handout: “Deep Breathing Instructions” (page 29)

Introduction and Discussion. Ask: What does it mean to be a peaceful person? If you want to be peaceful with others, where does it have to start? Discuss briefly, emphasizing that being peaceful with others starts by being peaceful inside ourselves.

Ask students if they ever find it hard to feel peaceful inside. Discuss. Then ask: **What do you do to calm yourself when you feel upset, angry, scared, or stressed?**

Activity. Tell students you’re going to teach them an important strategy that’s easy to do, yet powerful in its impact. Say: **This is a strategy professional athletes and performers use to feel calm, focused, confident, and peaceful before a performance or game. It’s called deep abdominal breathing.**

1. Have students sit up tall without tensing, hands on lower abdominal muscles just below the navel.
2. Have them imagine a balloon in the lower abdomen that fills with air as they inhale. (Make sure no one has anything in their mouths before beginning. Food, gum, or another object could cause them to choke.)

Together, take a slow, deep breath all the way down into the imaginary balloon. Together, hold the breath in gently for a few seconds. (This should be a gentle, quiet breath, not the kind kids take when they’re about to swim under water.)

3. Now have students slowly, quietly, and gently breathe out, “deflating” the imaginary balloon as they exhale.

Repeat three times, extending the length of each exhalation. (If kids giggle, tell them that this sometimes happens at first. Encourage them to do the breathing in a “mature” way, as an athlete or

a performer would. Remind them that learning to do abdominal breathing will help whenever they feel tense about anything, including tests.)

4. After three deep breaths, have students remove their hands from the lower abdominal area and take two more slow, deep breaths with their hands resting in their laps.
5. Now have them take a few regular cleansing breaths, rolling shoulders and neck to release any areas of tension.

Wrap-Up. Ask students how they feel. Discuss. For those who might have felt dizzy, tell them not to inhale quite as deeply next time. Kids with asthma may be especially prone to dizziness.

Affirm students for any positive behavior you observed during this lesson. Pass out the “Deep Breathing Instructions” handout and ask students to practice deep breathing when they go to bed tonight and when they wake up in the morning.

Follow-Up. When students next arrive at school, start the day with deep breathing. Consider starting every day with this exercise and using it during transition times, too—it’s a very effective way to help kids refocus.

Extension. In his book *Peace Is Every Step*, Nobel nominee Thich Naht Hanh suggests using the following words with deep breathing: “I breathe in and I calm my body. I breathe out and I smile.” Share these words with your students. They’re comforting to say before beginning deep breathing. The smile that comes afterward helps set a tone of warmth and connection.

Deep Breathing Instructions

1. Sit up tall with your hands resting on the lower abdominal muscles, just below the navel.
2. Imagine a balloon in your lower abdomen that will fill with air as you breathe in. Take in a slow, deep breath, breathing all the way down into the imaginary balloon. Hold the breath gently for a few seconds.
3. Slowly, quietly, and gently breathe out, “deflating” the imaginary balloon as you exhale.



Repeat this process of deep breathing three times. Each time, exhale a little more slowly.



4. After three deep breaths, remove your hands from your lower abdomen and place them in your lap. Take two more deep breaths.
5. Finish with a few regular “cleansing” breaths. Roll your neck and shoulders to help release tension.

