

HIGH SCHOOL

UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

Skill Sheet for Educators

High school is a time of transition. Teenagers become more independent, and turn towards their friends and peers for guidance and support. They also start to explore larger questions like what they want to do in the future. It's an exciting time that also comes with complicated, wonderful, confusing and big emotions.

Sometimes these emotions may be uncomfortable but feeling them is healthy and important because emotions provide teens with information about themselves and their environment and help them to connect to other people. Learning how to notice, label, and express their feelings helps teens to feel more in control.

Summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Label and name feelings to increase emotional vocabulary AND reinforce that you can feel more than one emotion at a time.
- Notice body sensations that are attached to different emotions and provide clues for what we are feeling. Sometimes it's easier to notice physical symptoms first.
- Rate the feeling of emotions on a scale of 1 to 10 to capture that we feel emotions in different amounts or intensities.

Practice skills

- Make time to check in with your students and explicitly ask how they are feeling. Start by listening, reflecting back, and validating your students' emotions. This may sound like:
 - “It seems like you're feeling sad today. Is there anything you want to talk about?”
 - “You had a really frustrating experience. That sounds really hard.”
 - “I hear that you're excited, but maybe also feeling nervous about the future.”
- Provide opportunities in the classroom setting for students to reflect on or express how they are feeling, how much of that emotion they are feeling, and what physical sensations they may be feeling with that emotion.
- Bring emotions into academic work. When reading books or learning about historical events, help students gain perspective into other people's experiences and emotions. For example:



“How do you think the character in the book we’re reading felt in that situation?”

“What do you imagine it was like to be alive at that time or have that experience?”

“When you were reading it, how did it make you feel?”

- Discuss and label how you feel, how your body reacts to that feeling, and how much you feel it. Sharing your experiences is a great way to normalize all feelings and send the message that feelings are important.

Start with this →

- Emotional validation is a foundational skill that educators can try in the classroom that will help their high schoolers to increase emotional awareness.
- Listening, reflecting, and connecting helps to increase your student’s awareness of their emotional experience and helps them to know that it’s okay to feel all emotions.
- Be mindful of the do’s and don’ts below when it comes to validation as you encourage your students to tell you how they’re feeling.

DO

Listen

Give your full attention.

Reflect

Say back what the emotion was that they shared. For example: “I hear that it was super frustrating.”

Connect

Tell them you understand. For example: “I can understand why you would feel that way.”

DON'T

Minimize Feelings

Avoid telling your student they shouldn’t feel a certain way. For example: “Don’t worry about it! It will be fine!”

Shame

Avoid using language that can lead to embarrassment for feeling a certain way. For example: “Why do you feel sad about that? You know better.”

Fix right away

Avoid jumping in with solutions. For example: “I’ll handle the issue with that other student. Don’t worry.”

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your students or post in your classroom to reinforce and practice the different skills for understanding feelings.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Emotion Monitoring

Being able to monitor and track your mood is an effective skill for helping to increase your emotional awareness. It can also help provide information about the things you may need and help you communicate that need. For this week, pick three emotions you will monitor. Track the intensity, physical sensation, and what was happening at the time you felt each emotion.

Emotion: _____	Emotion: _____	Emotion: _____
Rate intensity:	Rate intensity:	Rate intensity:
Physical sensations:	Physical sensations:	Physical sensations:
What was going on:	What was going on:	What as going on:

Follow-Up

When you rate your feelings, you're gathering data about your experiences over the past week. If there are emotions that you're hoping to feel more or less, the skills reviewed in the additional videos and worksheets of this curriculum will help. You can use worksheets like this one each week to track your progress and figure out how the skills might be affecting your feelings.

HIGH SCHOOL

RELAXATION SKILLS

Skill Sheet for Educators

High schoolers manage a lot. Many days they juggle schoolwork, extracurricular activities, jobs, and relationships with friends and family. They also grapple with larger issues like forming their identity, gaining independence, and preparing for the future.

In this video, teens learn that the stress, anxiety and frustration that often come with these experiences produce uncomfortable physical sensations due to our fight, flight, or freeze response. Effective relaxation skills, like paced belly breathing, help to calm the body and turn down the intensity of these unpleasant feelings.

Summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Paced belly breathing is breathing slowly and deeply at a steady pace. By slowing their inhales and extending their exhales, your students can use their breath to harness control of their emotions.
- Paced belly breathing balances out the carbon dioxide and oxygen in students' bodies, cutting off their fight, flight, or freeze response. It returns their mind and body to a calmer state.

Practice skills

- When you notice that a student is feeling anxious, frustrated, or worried, pull them aside and encourage them to stop what they are doing and take a few minutes to practice taking paced belly breaths.
- Encourage your students to practice belly breathing when they are calm. They will be more prepared to use the skill in the moment they need it if they have practiced it beforehand.
- Paced belly breathing for relaxation is different than the breathing teens do without thinking about it. If your students say, "I've tried that," encourage them to give it another try. Providing some information about why belly breathing helps may increase their willingness to try.

Start with this →

- Post the paced belly breathing instructions in your classroom as a reminder to students for how to calm down from difficult emotions.
- Practice as a class. Using a few minutes of class time for your students to relax their bodies and calm their minds may ultimately save you time. Students will be better prepared for learning when their emotions are calm and their bodies are relaxed.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your students or post in your classroom to reinforce and practice paced belly breathing.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Paced Belly Breathing

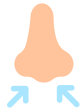
Breathing deeply into your belly helps to tell your body that you are safe and calm. Follow the instructions below and practice paced belly breathing when you are feeling calm and when you are feeling stressed or anxious.



- 1 Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor either cross-legged or on your shins.



- 2 Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest.



- 3 Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds and feel your belly expand.



- 4 Slowly breathe out for 5 seconds through your mouth, letting the air gently leave your body.



- 5 Repeat 3-5 times, or for as long as you want.

Keep a log to plan when you will use relaxation skills.
Plan self-care activities, too.

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

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HIGH SCHOOL

UNDERSTANDING THOUGHTS

Skill Sheet for Educators

High school students have a lot on their minds. Thoughts, feelings and behaviors are all connected, and it's common for everyone to fall into unhelpful thinking patterns where their thoughts make them feel overwhelmed, anxious, sad or frustrated.

The good news is that teens can learn to manage their thoughts. By recognizing how their thoughts make them feel, asking themselves how helpful or realistic their thoughts are, and reframing unhelpful or unrealistic thoughts into ones that are more helpful or realistic, teens can decrease uncomfortable emotions and better manage difficult situations.

Summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Thoughts are not always facts and are temporary.
- Thoughts can be either helpful or unhelpful.
- You can practice changing unhelpful thoughts to thoughts that are more realistic or helpful.

Practice skills

- Help your students notice and practice thinking about their thoughts. This is called *metacognition*.
- Listen to what your student says. If you hear them express an unhelpful or unrealistic thought, ask them how it makes them feel. Then encourage them to replace that thought with a more helpful or realistic one.
- You can utilize academics to highlight ways of thinking about all possibilities, ways to consider different perspectives, or moments where a character or figure in history engaged in unhelpful thinking.
- Use positive feedback when you recognize that your students have paused to consider their thinking.

Start with this →

- Ask your students the following questions to get them to be more aware of their thinking:



What thought are you having? Or: What were you thinking in that situation?

How is this thought making you feel?

Do you think this thought is helpful or unhelpful?

- Share some ways they can question their thoughts:



What are the facts about the situation?

What is the evidence that this thought is true or false?

What is the worst that could happen? If it does happen, what can you do to handle it?

Is this thought kind to you? If not, how can you be fair to yourself?

- Remember that recognizing and changing unhelpful thoughts takes practice.

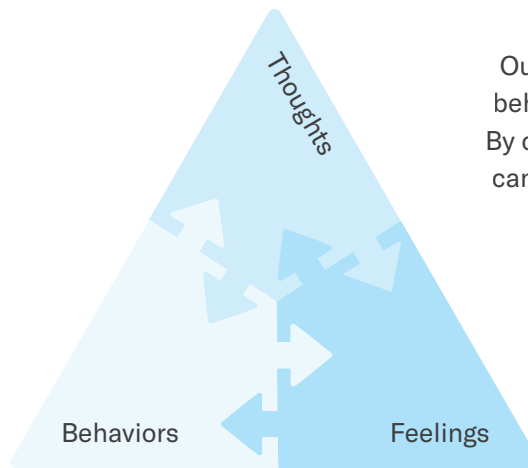
On the next page is an activity that you can share with your students to help practice understanding and changing thoughts.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Understanding Thoughts

Remember thoughts are not facts, and sometimes thoughts are unhelpful to us. One way of practicing understanding your thoughts is by keeping track of them when you notice uncomfortable feelings. Below is a thought log. Practice identifying what was happening at the time, what your thought was, how you felt, and what you did. If you notice that the thought was unhelpful, try to change it to a more realistic or helpful thought, and then see if that would change your feelings and behaviors.



Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are all connected. By changing our thoughts, we can change how we feel and how we behave.

Event	Unhelpful Thought	Feeling	Alternative/Helpful Thought

Here are some things you can ask yourself when trying to change your thoughts:

- What is the likelihood that this will happen?
- Is this realistic?
- What is the evidence that this is true?
- Is there another way I can think about this?

Follow Up

When you notice how your thoughts are connected to how you feel, you're gathering data about yourself. If you notice that certain ways of thinking are not all that helpful or lead to uncomfortable feelings, remember that you have the power to slow down and consider when there might be other ways of thinking about the situation. The skills reviewed in the additional videos and worksheets of this curriculum can also help!

HIGH SCHOOL

MANAGING INTENSE EMOTIONS

Skill Sheet for Educators

It is not uncommon for teens to experience their emotions very intensely. As highlighted in the video, when emotions become intense, there is often an urge to do something connected with that feeling. Sometimes the urge might be to do something that ultimately makes them continue feeling overwhelmed or makes their problems bigger.

It's important for teens to know that intense emotions and the urges that come with them are common, and they do not last forever. Teens can ride out intense feelings and urges by utilizing their five senses and different activities to ground them in the present and help them tolerate how they feel. Waiting for the intensity to pass also allows for greater control in choosing what they do next.

Summary of the **KEY POINTS** from the video.

- Everyone feels big and intense emotions sometimes.
- Everyone has urges to act that are caused by big, intense, and uncomfortable emotions. The key is riding out the urge and waiting for big feelings to lessen.
- Teens can ride the wave by utilizing their five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) and by engaging in healthy distracting activities and being active (e.g., taking a walk, talking with friends, reading, journaling).

Practice Skills

- Validate emotions! Show that you're listening to your students and that you empathize with how they feel. This helps them feel understood.
- Provide space and opportunity for students to calm down in your classroom or in the school. This can include space that provides self-soothing materials like calming pictures to look at, stress balls and other materials that help students utilize their five senses.
- Have an understanding that students can journal or draw or do other quiet activities in the classroom if they need to calm down.
- Include visuals around your classroom and reference healthy ways to tolerate intense emotions.
- Notice and provide positive feedback for students' efforts in utilizing healthy strategies to ride out intense emotions.
- Lastly, model opportunities when you utilize healthy strategies to tolerate intense emotions.

Start with this →

- Practice those validation skills! As an educator, when you feel the pull to help your student solve a problem in order to make their intense emotions go away, start with validation instead to help them to tolerate those emotions and know they can get through them.
- Encourage students to use effective calming strategies that work for them, in addition to healthy activities such as going for walks, reaching out to friends, and being active.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your students to help them plan ahead and create a self-soothe kit that they can use to tolerate intense emotions.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Self-Soothe Kit

You can use your five senses to self-soothe and help tolerate intense emotions. Use the guide below to create your own self-soothe kit.

You can carry this self-soothe kit with you so you always have what you need to tolerate intense feelings.

5 Senses	One thing that makes me calm and relaxed is:	Stumped on what to pick? Here are some suggestions:
See		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Calming colors• A relaxing scene• Small picture of my favorite person, family member, athlete; or place to visit
Hear		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen to rainstorm or ocean sounds• Recordings of funny jokes or comedians• Happy or soothing music
Smell		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Good-smelling hand lotion• Small perfume bottle• A scented candle
Taste		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pieces of your favorite candy or other treat like gum or a mint• Tea
Touch		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Satin ribbon or soft fabric• A small pompom or pouf• A small feather• A stress ball• Slime

HIGH SCHOOL

MINDFULNESS

Skill Sheet for Educators

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention on purpose to the present moment, without judging or trying to change your experience. The practice of mindfulness can help students to increase their self-awareness, self-control, and attention. It can also reduce their emotional suffering and increase compassion for themselves and others. Practicing mindfulness allows students to see reality more accurately and without judgement. Regular practice will help to foster an increased sense of well-being for your students.

Summary of **KEY POINTS** in the video.

- Mindfulness is an ongoing practice, just like daily physical exercise.
- There are three mindfulness skills to focus on with your students.
 - Observe: Notice, without words, what is going on in the environment or in their body
 - Describe: Name what they notice using descriptive and non-judgmental language
 - Participate: Throw themselves fully into an activity or experience

Practice skills

- Engage in daily mindfulness practice activities to help build your students' mindfulness muscle. Activities can include:
 - Take one minute each morning to focus on what students observe with their five senses. Engage in a classroom discussion about observations.
 - Practice paced belly breathing. Every time the mind starts to wander to a thought, consider it an opportunity to practice mindfulness and bring your attention back to the breath.
 - Listen to a guided body scan. Remind your students to focus on their breathing and follow the guided meditation.
 - Set up mindfulness reminders around the classroom. Place sticky notes around the room and teach your students that when they see one, they should follow the instructions. Ideas include:



Take three slow breaths

Notice your surroundings

Pay attention to your heartbeat for one minute

- Fully participate and engage in mindfulness practice with your students. Practicing together creates connection and validates the importance of these exercises.
- It can be helpful to utilize mindfulness-based apps, including Headspace, Calm, Shine, and others, to provide different guided activities. You can also encourage your students to utilize these tools for their ongoing practice.

Start with this →

- When it comes to mindfulness practice, everything that is taught has to be lived. Start by setting one minute of mindfulness practice before the start of a class.
- Protecting that one minute of mindfulness practice communicates to your students the importance of the practice and sets a mindful intention each day.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your students or even place somewhere in your classroom as a reminder to engage in mindfulness practice.

Activity

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

Mindfulness Skills & Activities

The more you practice mindfulness the more it will help our mental muscles to have better focus, attention, and awareness. You can choose from many activities below to practice the skills of mindfulness.



Observe
Skill



Describe
Skill



Participate Fully
Skill

Counting Breaths

Paced belly breathing

Listening to music and paying attention to one instrument

Going for a walk and naming what you see

Mindfully eating your favorite food

Playing an instrument

Journaling

Dancing

Using recommended apps to guide you:

- Calm
- Headspace
- Shine
- Mindfulness for Children
- Thrive for Alexa: Amazon
- Take a Chill
- OMG | Can Meditate