

UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

Skill Sheet for Educators

Students experience all the same complicated, wonderful, confusing, and big emotions that adults do. It's okay to feel all emotions, including feelings that are pleasant and uncomfortable.

As your students learned from our hedgehogs friends, emotions are important because they provide us with information about ourselves and our environment, and they help us connect with one another. Learning how to notice, label, and express their feelings helps children feel more in control of their emotional experience.

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

- Use check-ins to ask how your students are feeling and how much of that emotion they are feeling on a rating scale. You can use number scales or color scales for visual support.
- Listen to and validate your students' emotions. For example:
 - “I see that you're feeling sad, and that's okay.”
 - “I hear you feel angry and sad at the same time. That happens.”
 - “It makes sense to feel excited and nervous!”
- Use specific positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your students identify feelings. For example:
 - “Great job recognizing that you feel nervous. Thank you for letting me know.”
 - “_____, very nice job noticing you are feeling frustrated.”

- During read alouds or story time help students identify where they feel emotions in their bodies by identifying with the characters in the story. For example:



“How do you think Jaila is feeling in this picture?”

“What is Jaila doing that makes you think she is feeling mad?”

“Where do you feel mad in your body?”

- Discuss how you feel and how your body reacts to that feeling. It is a great way to normalize uncomfortable feelings and model what to do.

Start with this →

- Emotional validation is a foundational skill that educators can try in the classroom that will help students 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 child 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 child. Don’t worry.”

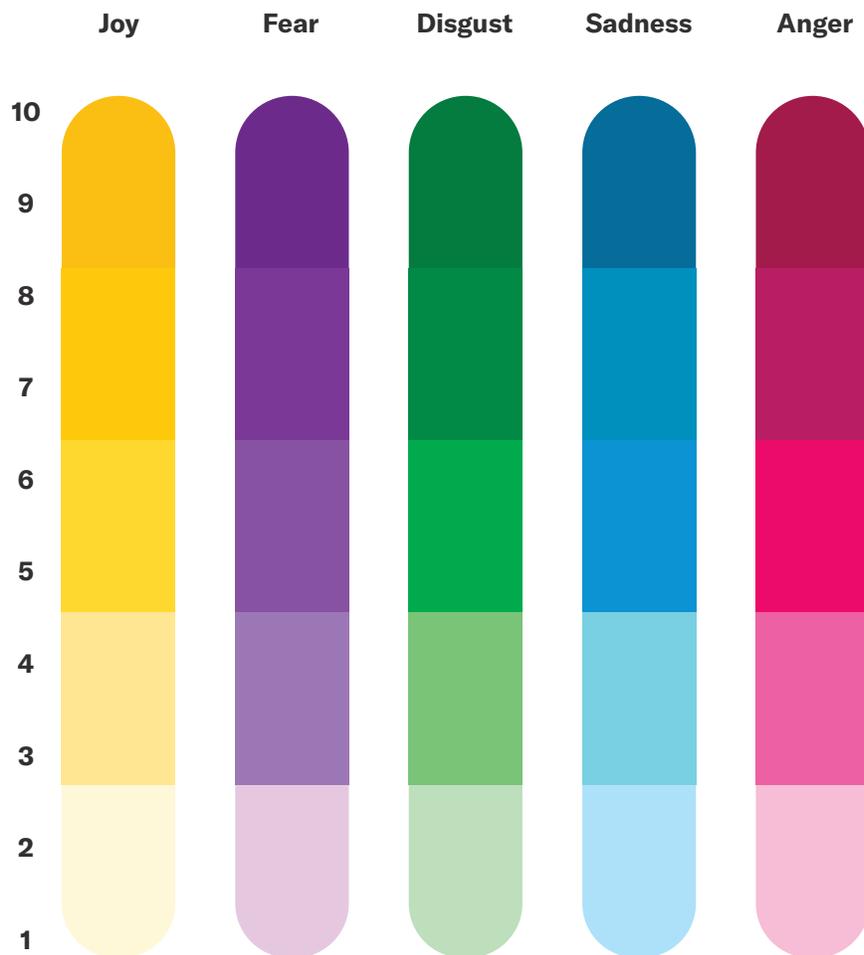
On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your students as a class activity to help reinforce and practice the different skills for understanding feelings.

Activity

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

Directions

Look at the scales below and pick a shade for each feeling that best matches how much you felt that feeling today. A light shade means feeling a little of that feeling and a dark shade means feeling a lot of that feeling.



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.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

RELAXATION SKILLS

Skill Sheet for Educators

Stress and anxiety are connected to physical sensations in our bodies. The relaxation skill of paced belly breathing helps us turn down these unpleasant physical sensations, which helps us to feel calm and in control.

In the video, the hedgehog friend was feeling nervous during her dance competition. She felt many unpleasant physical sensations in her body. Thanks to her friend the turtle, she used paced belly breathing to calm her body and turn down her nervousness so she could complete the competition.

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

- Belly breathing is breathing slowly and deeply at a steady pace. By slowing their inhaleds and extending their exhaleds, your students can use their breath to harness control of their emotions.
- 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

- Post visual reminders of the paced belly breathing skill around your classroom for your students to reference.
- Model and practice relaxation strategies with your students proactively. For example:



“I sometimes get nervous before tests, so I am going to take five belly breaths to calm down. Take five belly breaths with me.”

- Use specific positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your students utilize paced belly breathing. For example:



“Nice job taking belly breaths before reading in front of the class!”

“_____, I noticed you used paced belly breathing when you were starting to feel angry. Great choice!”

Start with this →

- Use paced belly breathing to help ground yourself and your students after exciting activities, like recess or a class transition.
- You can also practice and model this skill as a way to help navigate challenging emotions like feeling scared or angry.

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

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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.

When can you practice paced belly breathing?



Draw your own

UNDERSTANDING THOUGHTS

Skill Sheet for Educators

Our thoughts can be overwhelming at times and can cause us to feel stressed and anxious. Our hedgehog friend in the video taught us that it can be easy to overthink and get stuck thinking unhelpful thoughts that may not be true. That's why it's important to take the time to pause and remember that thoughts are not facts and that we have the power to change them. Changing our thoughts can help us reduce our uncomfortable emotions and navigate challenging situations better.

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 to practice identifying unhelpful and helpful thoughts and describing how their thoughts make them feel.
- If you recognize that a student is expressing an unhelpful thought, encourage them to replace the thought with a more helpful or realistic thought. Here are some examples where this may be helpful:
 - “ Your student states that their best friend doesn't like them anymore because the best friend was playing with someone else at recess. You can ask your student, “What could be another reason your friend was playing with someone else?”
Your student states, “I'm so stupid” after receiving a low grade on an assessment. You can ask your student, “What is another reason you may have received a low grade on the test?”
- Use specific positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your students change their unhelpful thoughts (whether it is independent or prompted). You might say, “Great job staying calm and thinking of all the possibilities!”
- Utilize academic opportunities to promote different thinking, including highlighting what a character in a book is thinking and how events might have been different if that character thought differently.

Start with this →

- Ask your students the following questions to get them to be more aware of their thinking:
 - “ What were you thinking in that situation? Or: What is your brain saying?
How is this thought making you feel?
Do you think this thought is helpful or unhelpful?
- Remind your students: “It’s just a thought, and it does not mean it’s important or that it’s true.”
- Remember that recognizing your thinking takes practice.

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

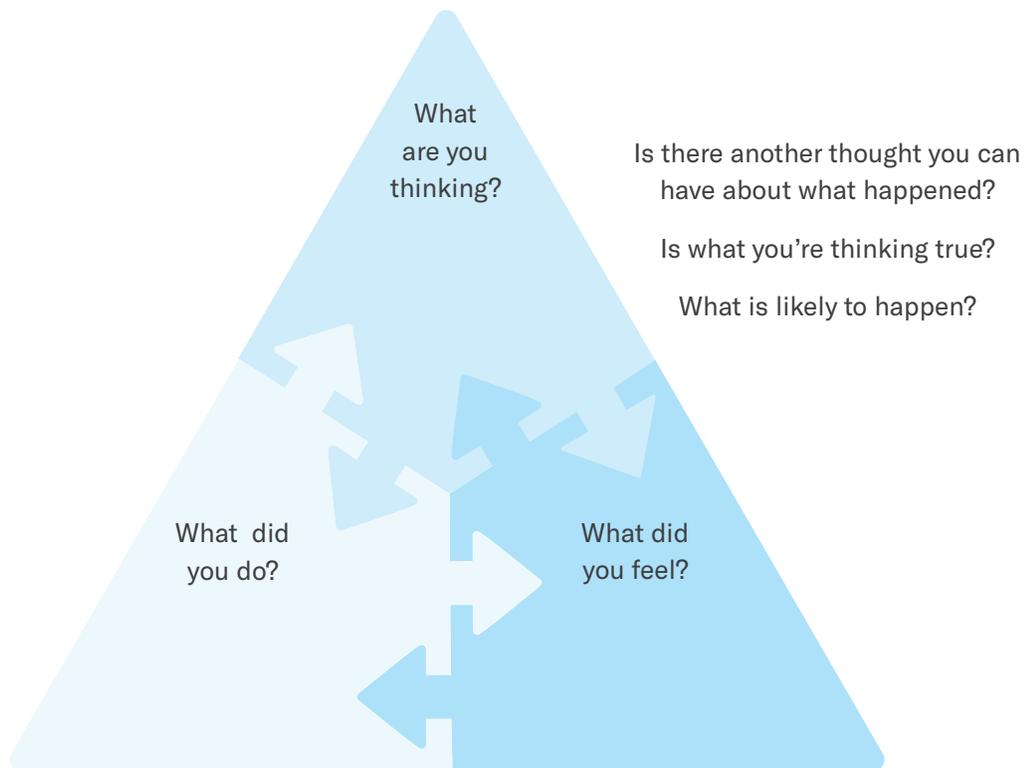
Activity

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Understanding Thoughts

Recognizing and changing unhelpful thoughts takes practice. You can support your students by helping them to identify when they are experiencing an unhelpful thought and encouraging them to practice changing that thought into one that is more realistic or helpful. You can begin with the below activity to practice noticing the thoughts, emotions, and behaviors associated with a specific event:

What Happened?



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!

MANAGING INTENSE EMOTIONS

Skill Sheet for Educators

Every emotion we experience can become intense at times, which makes us want to act in certain ways. Our hedgehog friend was feeling a lot of anger and sadness, he ran away and started crying. However, he learned that when these big emotions take over, the best thing we can do is grab something calming, like the items in the hedgehog's self-care backpack, to help us feel better. These calming items can help bring us back to the present moment. After our intense emotions pass we will be better able to choose how to handle challenging moments.

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.
- You can ride out big feelings by using your five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) to ground to the present.

Practice Skills

- Include visuals around your room that reference ways to ride out big and uncomfortable feelings.
- Model opportunities when you utilize a strategy to ride out a big feeling. Create your own self-soothe kit that you can show to your students and use in the classroom.
- Provide calm-down strategies in your classroom, such as creating a self-soothe kit utilizing the five senses for students to use.
- When students are starting to feel big emotions, you can direct them to self-soothing opportunities in the classroom first before trying to problem-solve the situation.
- Use specific positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your students utilize a strategy to ride out a big emotion and impulse. Using specific positive feedback is the best way to shape behaviors you want to see. You might say:



“I see you were feeling overwhelmed, and I love how you’re working on riding out those big feelings.”

“I love how you’re using your stress ball to help with big feelings.”

Start with this →

- Create time and space in the classroom for sensory breaks where students can utilize their five senses for calming moments.
- In addition to using their five senses for calming, provide your students movement breaks where they can feel connected to their bodies.
- Each student can create their own self-soothe kit that can be utilized in the classroom as a “go to” for when they are feeling intense emotions.

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your students as a class activity to create self-soothe kits that can help when big feelings occur during the school day.

Activity

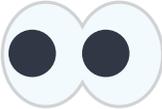
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What Is in Your Self-Soothe Kit?

Brainstorm a self-soothe kit. Come up with ideas for what might be soothing in each category and then collect the items from around your house.

Remember that feeling intense emotions is normal and can make us feel like we need to do something. Using the five senses can help us ride out that wave of intensity and help us choose what to do next.

- 1 Find a small, portable bag that can fit in your backpack (for example, a small pouch, pencil case, or Ziploc bag).
- 2 Select one or more favorite items from each of the five senses to put in your kit (or something that is close by and you have easy access to).

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

ELEMENTARY 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. As we learn with our hedgehog friend, 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 their 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 after lunch. 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

- Remember, mindfulness can also be practiced through engagement in games and other activities that get students to move their bodies. This may be helpful for younger students to encourage them to be in the moment and focused on an activity.
- Fully participate and engage in mindfulness practice with your students. Practicing together creates connection and validates the importance of these exercises.

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. Below are the skills of mindfulness to practice. You can choose from many activities below to practice the skills of mindfulness.



Notice it
(Observe)
Skill



Say Something About It
(Describe)
Skill



Do It
(Participate Fully)
Skill

1-2-3

Counting Breaths



Mindfully eating your favorite treat



Playing a game



Listen to music and paying attention to one instrument



Dancing



Color



Going for a walk and naming what you see



Playing an instrument



Blow bubbles