



Child Mind
Institute

The California
**Healthy Minds,
Thriving Kids**
Project

Educator Implementation Guide

Elementary School



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The California Healthy Minds, Thriving Kids Project is a collaborative initiative with Governor and First Partner Newsom to make preventive mental health skills accessible to every child in the State of California.

The resources available through this project seek to:

- Teach skills students can use for the rest of their lives
- Normalize conversations about mental wellbeing
- Reflect the diversity of our communities

The evidence-based video series for elementary school students is comprised of 5 videos along with this Educator Implementation Guide. Skill videos are centered around the following 5 areas:

 **Understanding Feelings**
Building a foundation for healthy coping

 **Relaxation Skills**
Skills for stressful situations

 **Understanding Thoughts**
How thoughts impact feelings and behavior

 **Managing Intense Emotions**
Skills for coping with uncomfortable feelings

 **Mindfulness**
Improving self-awareness and decision-making

Developmentally, 5th grade is a transitional year for students preparing for middle school. Therefore, educators may want to explore the middle school version of this video series to utilize with their 5th grade students.

Elementary School

Implementation Options

Option 1

Whole School or Grade-Level Assembly

This video series can be shown to large groups of students in one session. This option has the benefit of reaching many students at once with less of a time commitment. With this option, follow-up is essential since it is unlikely that students will fully absorb all skills in a single session, and the opportunity to process and practice skills one at a time is something that can hopefully be integrated in brief doses over the ensuing days/weeks. Here are a few suggestions for how to make this delivery option effective:

A. Show all 5 videos in sequence over a period of approximately 45 minutes. Afterward, in individual classrooms, educators can provide students with opportunity to discuss.

- Possible Discussion Questions

“What did you like about the videos?”

“Which story did you like the most?”

“What is one thing you learned from the characters in the videos about feelings?”

“What can we practice in school that will be helpful?”

- Additionally, educators can utilize the 5 activity sheets included at the conclusion of this Implementation Guide to help reinforce skills shown. For example:

Understanding Feelings activity sheet helps students to label their emotions and rate the intensity using a feelings scale.

Relaxation activity sheet helps students practice paced belly breathing and plan for when to use it.

Understanding Thoughts activity sheet helps students to be mindful of their thinking, recognize when it’s unhelpful, and practice alternative ways of thinking that can help improve how they are feeling and what they will do.

Managing Intense Emotions helps students utilize their five senses and create a self-soothe kit help tolerate intense emotions.

Mindfulness activity sheet provides students with different activities for how to practice three core areas of mindfulness.

B. When showing the video series, educators can pause after each of the 5 videos to ask students to practice a skill or reflect on what they have just learned. For example:

- After watching **Understanding Feelings**, just like the hedgehog friends in the video, educators can ask students to label all the emotions they feel in that very moment and direct their awareness to where they are feeling these emotions in their body.
- After watching **Relaxation Skills**, educators can request that students take 30 seconds to practice paced belly breathing just like it was taught by the turtle friend in the video.
- After watching **Understanding Thoughts**, educators can lead students in discussing unhelpful thoughts they might have had, like those of the hedgehog friend in the video.
- After watching **Managing Intense Emotions**, educators can help students reflect on what items they would place in their own self-care backpack, like the hedgehog friend in the video.
- After watching **Mindfulness**, educators can facilitate students' practice of a 30-second mindfulness activity. Just like the hedgehog in the video, students can focus on being aware of their surroundings by naming 5 things they see, 4 things they hear, 3 things they feel, 2 things they smell, and 1 thing they taste.

Option 2

Delivery of the Curriculum in Smaller Groups Over Time

This video series can easily be viewed in individual classrooms or with small groups. This option has the benefit of ensuring that students engage with the material and provides space for discussion and practice. Here are a few suggestions for how to make this delivery option effective:

A. Utilizing one class period each day of a week to show one content area of the video series.

- With this option, students would be able to view and discuss the full curriculum in one week. After each video, educators would have the ability to facilitate discussion and utilize the activity sheet or suggestions in the above as a way of practicing skills learned. Characters and their stories can be utilized as a reference point and a way to remember specific skills.

B. Utilizing one class period each week to show one content area of the video series.

- With this option, students would be able to view and discuss the full curriculum in 5 weeks. After each video, educators would have the ability to facilitate discussion and utilize the activity sheet or suggestions in the above as a way of practicing skills learned. Educators would also be able to utilize the week in between new content videos to reinforce skill practice.

C. Utilize one class period each month to show one content are of the video series.

- With this option, students would be able to view and discuss the full curriculum over a period of 5 months. After each video, educators would have the ability to facilitate discussion and utilize the activity sheet or suggestions in the above as a way of practicing skills learned. This provides educators and students with the opportunity to deeply reflect on how to integrate the skill learned into daily or weekly practices over the full month. Schools can also create themes around the topic and integrate skills through the school day.

Option 3

Caregiver Guided Viewing with In-School Discussion

This video series can be assigned to students as an activity to complete outside of school, framed as a caregiver-guided opportunity to engage with the materials at students' own pace. The benefit of this option is that it does not require as much time during school hours, caregivers are provided the opportunity to learn skills with their children, and some students may feel more comfortable engaging with the material at home.

Because video content is watched outside of school with caregivers, teachers can assign activity sheet practice for homework after watching video content and utilize class time for reflection and discussion of skills. This provides an opportunity for skills to be generalized at home with caregiver involvement. Students can be assigned one content area per day, per week, or per month, with educators continuing to reinforce skill discussion, integration, and practice at school.

Integration Guide

The California Healthy Minds, Thriving Kids Project is designed to be fully accessible to students as a resource that can be completed independently. Educators still play an important role in helping students with the continued practice of these skills. This guide provides helpful tips for reinforcing the content and skills from each video in your classrooms along with suggestions for continued implementation.

The student-teacher relationship and climate of the school is paramount in setting the foundation for students' mental health and wellness. This is especially important during students' formative years as it sets the tone for their continued experience at school. Students thrive when educators provide a space where students feel comfortable, accepted, and validated. By practicing the skills in this curriculum together, we can make our communities more healthy, thriving, and vibrant.



Understanding Feelings

KEY POINTS

- All emotions are normal, healthy, and important because they provide children with information about themselves and their environment and help them to connect to other people.
- Students learn to label emotions, notice physical sensations associated with emotions, and rate the intensity of their emotions.

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- Emotional validation is a foundational skill educators can use in their classrooms to help students increase their emotional awareness. Example:
“I see that you’re feeling sad, and that’s okay”
- Give your full attention (**Listen**), repeat back what the emotion was that they shared (**Reflect**), and connect with them by saying you understand (**Connect**).
- Bring emotions into academic work and label what characters in stories may be feeling.
- Model sharing your feelings as a way to normalize emotions.



Relaxation Skills

KEY POINTS

- Kids learn that stress, anxiety, and frustration can produce uncomfortable physical sensations due to the fight, flight, or freeze response. Relaxation skills help to calm the body and turn down the intensity of these unpleasant feelings.
- Paced belly breathing is a foundational relaxation skill that involves breathing slowly and deeply at a steady pace to return their mind and body to a calmer state.

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- Encourage students to practice paced belly breathing when they are calm or before engaging in a stressful activity.
- Practice as a class by taking a few minutes before starting work to set the tone for the rest of the class.
- Use specific positive feedback frequently, immediately, and consistently when your students utilize paced belly breathing. For example:
“_____, I noticed you used paced belly breathing when you were starting to feel angry. Great choice!”
- Post the steps of paced belly breathing from the activity sheet in your class as a reminder to take a moment to breathe.

Understanding Thoughts

KEY POINTS

- How we think has an impact on what we do and how we feel. It's common to fall into unhelpful thinking patterns that can cause overwhelmed and anxious feelings.
- Recognizing and reframing unhelpful thoughts is a skill that can decrease uncomfortable emotions and help to manage difficult situations
- Remember, thoughts are not facts; they are temporary; they can be helpful or unhelpful, and you can practice changing your thinking.

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- You can use different subject areas like science to highlight thinking about all possibilities and ways to consider different perspectives. You can also utilize moments during story time to consider characters and whether they have engaged in helpful or unhelpful thinking.
- Use positive feedback when you notice students pausing and recognizing their thinking patterns.
- Reinforce awareness of thinking by asking questions like:
“What was your brain saying in that situation?”
“How is that thought making you feel?”
- To help challenge unhelpful thoughts you can ask students:
“Is what you’re thinking true?”
“Is there another thought you can have about what happened?”

Managing Intense Emotions

KEY POINTS

- Everyone experiences intense emotions and the urges that come with them, and it's important to know that the intensity of emotions does not last forever.
- Children can ride out intense feelings and urges by utilizing their 5 senses and different activities to ground them in the present and to help them tolerate how they feel.
- Waiting for the intensity to pass allows for greater control in choosing what they do next.

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- Validate emotions by showing students that you're listening and that you empathize with how they feel.
- Provide space for students to calm down and use self-soothing materials to help with intensity of feelings.
- Allow for healthy coping options, such as drawing, that students might be able to utilize in your classroom.
- Provide positive feedback as you notice students utilizing healthy strategies to tolerate emotions.
- Model opportunities when you might use healthy strategies to ride out the wave of intense emotions.

KEY POINTS

- 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 increase their self-awareness and self-control, reduce their emotional suffering, and increase compassion for themselves and others.
- Regular practice of mindfulness skills will help to foster an increased sense of well-being:

Notice it: Notice, without words, what is going on in the environment.

Say something about it: Name what you notice using descriptive and nonjudgmental language.

Do it: Throw yourself fully into an activity or experience.

TIPS FOR REINFORCING

- 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 class. This can include:
 - One minute of observing with their five senses.
 - Paced Belly Breathing
 - Mindful coloring
- Protecting that one minute of mindfulness practice communicates to your students the importance of the practice and sets a mindful intention each day.
- You can create a mindful corner in the classroom where students can choose to engage in activities to help practice mindfulness.

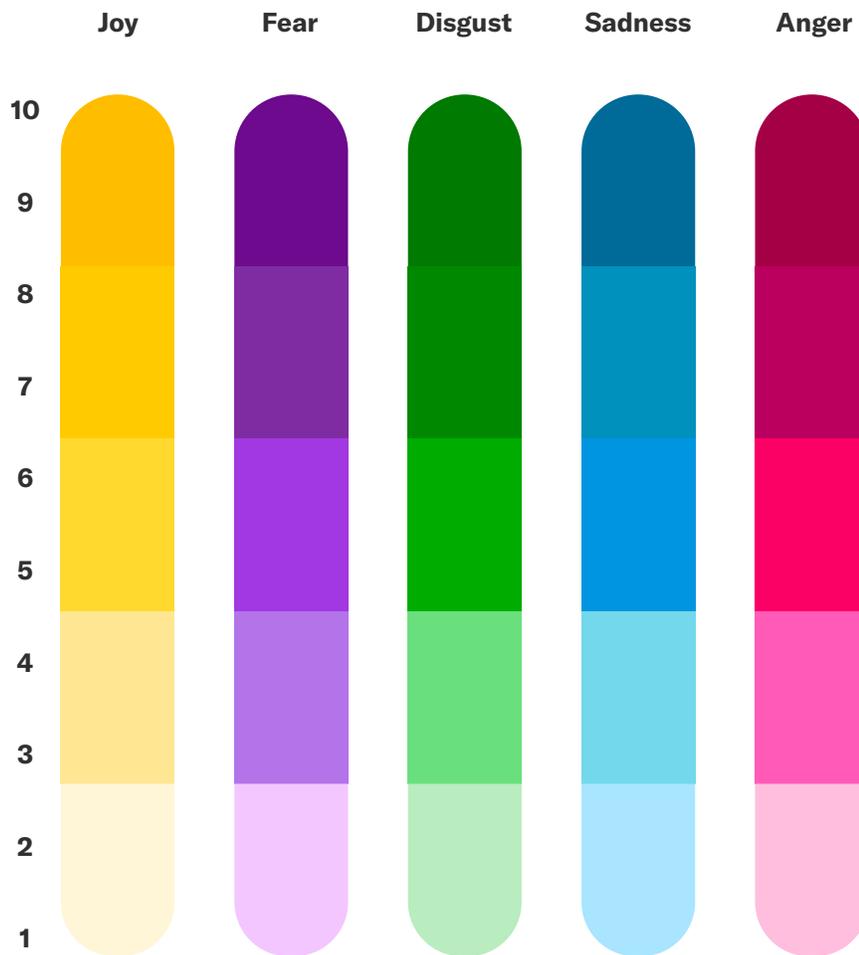
Activity Sheets

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



Feeling Scales

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.

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.

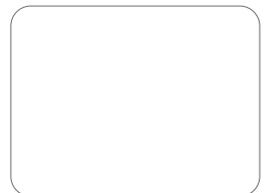


4 Slowly breathe out for 5 seconds through your mouth, letting the air gently leave your body.



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

When can you practice paced belly breathing?



Draw your own



Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

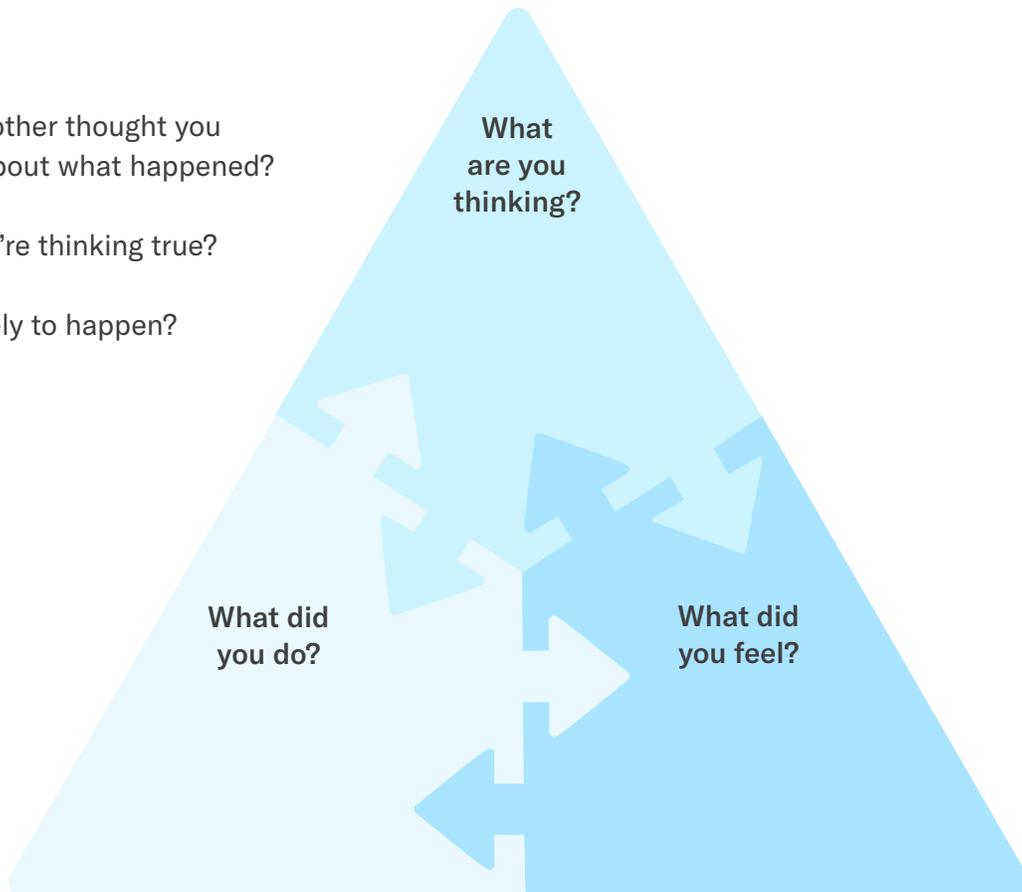
Recognizing and changing unhelpful thoughts takes practice. You can support your students by helping them to identify when they are experiencing an unhelpful thought and encouraging them to practice changing that thought into one that is more realistic or helpful. You can begin with the below activity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

What Happened?

Is there another thought you can have about what happened?

Is what you're thinking true?

What is likely to happen?



Follow-Up

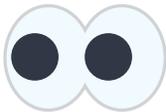
When you notice how your thoughts are connected to how you feel, you're gathering data about yourself. If you notice that certain ways of thinking are not all that helpful or lead to uncomfortable feelings, remember that you have the power to slow down and consider when there might be other ways of thinking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

What Is in Your Self-Soothe Kit?

Help your students brainstorm a self-soothe kit. Collect items from around the house and take some time to allow your students to share ideas about what might be soothing in each category.

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

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



Listen to music and paying attention to one instrument



Dancing



Going for a walk and naming what you see



Playing an instrument



Playing a game



Color



Blow bubbles