



Child Mind
Institute

Mental Health Fitness

Educator Resources

Elementary School

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.



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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 five videos in sequence over a period of approximately 45 minutes. Afterward, in individual classrooms, educators can provide students with an 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 five skills sheets included at the conclusion of this guide to help reinforce skills shown. For example:

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

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

Understanding Thoughts skills 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 skills sheet helps students utilize their five senses and create a self-soothe kit to help them tolerate intense emotions.

Mindfulness skills 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 video 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 five things they see, four things they hear, three things they feel, two things they smell, and one 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. Utilize 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 skills sheet or suggestions 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. Utilize 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 five weeks. After each video, educators would have the ability to facilitate discussion and utilize the skills sheet or suggestions 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 area of the video series.

- With this option, students would be able to view and discuss the full curriculum over a period of five months. After each video, educators would have the ability to facilitate discussion and utilize the skills sheet or suggestions 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 throughout 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. There are several benefits to this option: 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 skills sheets for homework and utilize class time for reflection and discussion of skills. Students can be assigned one content area per day, per week, or per month, with educators continuing to reinforce skills discussion, integration, and practice at school.

Classroom Integration Tips

The student-teacher relationship and climate of the school are paramount to students' mental health and wellness. These are especially important during students' formative years. 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 healthier and more vibrant.

This guide provides helpful tips for reinforcing the content and skills from each video in your classrooms along with suggestions for continued implementation.

Understanding Feelings

Key Points

- All emotions are normal and important — they provide information about ourselves and help us connect with others.
- Students learn to label emotions, notice physical sensations, and rate intensity on a 1–10 scale.

Tips for Reinforcing

- Emotional validation: Listen, reflect back the emotion, connect. *“I hear you had a frustrating experience. That sounds difficult.”*
- Bring emotions into academic work — ask what characters or historical figures might be feeling.
- Model sharing your own feelings to normalize emotions for students.
- Use specific positive feedback when students name their emotions.

Relaxation Skills

Key Points

- Stress and anxiety produce uncomfortable physical sensations due to the fight, flight, or freeze response.
- Paced belly breathing calms the body by rebalancing oxygen and carbon dioxide.

Tips for Reinforcing

- Practice paced belly breathing as a class before starting work — even one minute sets a calmer tone.
- Encourage practice when calm, not only in stressful moments.
- Post the breathing steps from the activity sheet somewhere visible in the classroom.
- Use specific positive feedback when you notice a student using paced breathing.

Understanding Thoughts

Key Points

- How we think impacts how we feel and what we do.
- Thoughts are not facts — they are temporary and can be changed with practice.

Tips for Reinforcing

- Use academics to highlight unhelpful thinking — discuss when characters engaged in distorted thinking.
- Reinforce awareness: *“What thoughts are you having?”* and *“How is that thought making you feel?”*
- Help challenge thoughts: *“What are the facts here?”* and *“Is this thought kind to you?”*
- Use positive feedback when students pause to reconsider a thought.

Managing Intense Emotions

Key Points

- Everyone experiences intense emotions and the urges that come with them. The intensity does not last forever.
- Students can ride out intense feelings using their five senses and grounding activities.

Tips for Reinforcing

- Validate emotions before trying to solve the problem.
- Provide space to calm down. Allow healthy coping like journaling or drawing.
- Model healthy strategies for riding out intense emotions when opportunities arise.
- Use positive feedback when students use healthy strategies.

Mindfulness

Key Points

- Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention on purpose to the present moment, without judgment.
- Three core skills: **Observe** (notice without words), **Describe** (name what you notice), **Participate** (engage fully).

Tips for Reinforcing

- Start class with one minute of mindfulness practice — five-senses observation, paced breathing, or mindful coloring.
- Protecting that one minute communicates to students that the practice matters.
- When it comes to mindfulness, everything taught has to be lived — model your own practice.

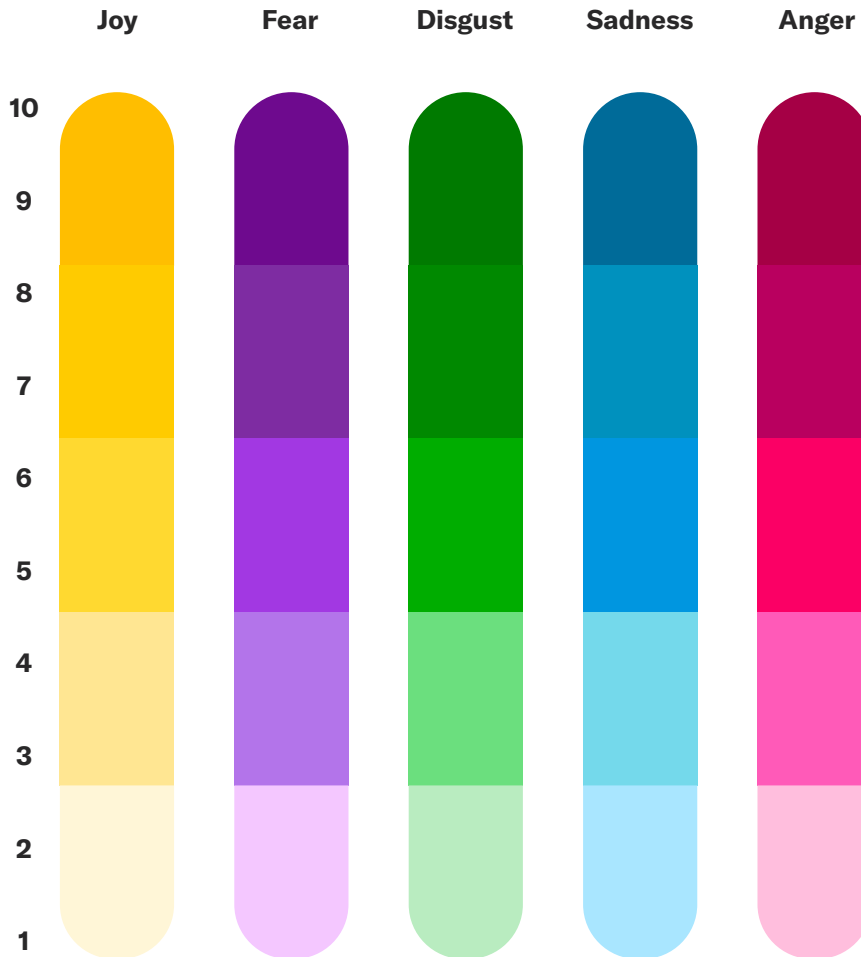
Elementary School

Skills Sheets

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

Feelings 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.

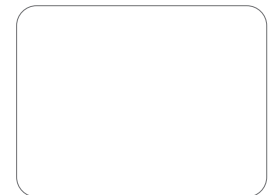


4 Slowly breathe out for 5 seconds through your mouth, letting the air gently leave your body.



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?

What are you thinking?

What did you do?

What did you feel?

Follow-Up

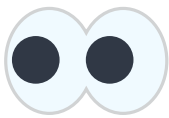




When you notice how your thoughts are connected to how you feel, you're gathering data about yourself. If you notice that certain ways of thinking are not all that helpful or lead to uncomfortable feelings, remember that you have the power to slow down and consider when there might be other ways of thinking 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?

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

Mindfulness Skills & Activities

The more you practice mindfulness the more it will help your mental muscles to have better focus, attention, and awareness. Below are the skills of mindfulness to practice:

Notice It

(Observe Skill)

Say Something About It

(Describe Skill)

Do It

(Participate Fully Skill)

You can choose from many activities below to practice the skills of mindfulness:

1...2...3...

Counting breaths



Listening to music and paying attention to one instrument



Going for a walk and naming what you see



Mindfully eating your favorite treat



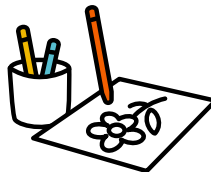
Dancing



Playing an instrument



Playing a game



Coloring



Blowing bubbles