

How To Teach Social-Emotional Skills 25

[How To Teach Social-Emotional Skills Module](#)

Introduction To Facilitating The Development of Social-Emotional Skills:

Unlike other curricula that focus on teaching and learning major concepts, skills, and knowledge of the discipline, the social-emotional learning experiences and projects on this website primarily facilitate the development of student self-awareness, self-insight, and self-knowledge, as well as proficiency in using social-emotional skills. Students are, in fact, the focus and subject matter of these learning experiences. As teachers of social-emotional skills, we are facilitators and coaches (guides on the side, not sages on the stage). This process involves the teacher/facilitator asking students questions, both verbally and in writing, about themselves. We ask them to become self-aware to better understand their situation, their feelings about it, alternative modes of behavior, and the risks and consequences involved in new and old behaviors. We ask them to become more effective at self-management, decision-making, and personal problem-solving, as well as more proficient at communicating and working through misunderstandings and conflicts in relationships. The process is successful when students understand who they are, how they are, and how they would like to be in the future; formulate a plan of action for future behavior; set the plan in place; later assess their progress; and become proficient in using social-emotional skills. As a result, they become emotionally and socially healthier.

Many people are not self- and socially aware, are not effective decision-makers or personal problem solvers, and lack the skills to self-manage and succeed in relationships. We are not born with these skills. They are either learned from others in our lives who model them or taught to us. Emotional and social skills, like most skills (e.g., playing a musical instrument, athletic skills), are complex and not easily learned or mastered. If students are given ample opportunity to learn, role-play, and practice these skills in class, receive feedback, reflect on and analyze their performance, and apply them in their lives outside the classroom, they can master these skills, and their use can become natural, automatic, and fully integrated into their behavioral repertoire.

Outlined Below:

1. [How To Teach Social-Emotional Skills: The Steps in Teaching Skills](#)
2. [The Classroom Climate and the Characteristics of Teachers](#)
3. [The Small Group Format & Teacher as Facilitator and Coach](#)
4. [A Seating Arrangement to Create a Sense of Group](#)
5. [Establishing Classroom Rules and Expectations](#)
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How To Teach Social-Emotional Skills

The Steps In Teaching Social-Emotional Skills

Below are the steps in teaching a skill outlined by the social psychologist David Johnson in his book Cooperation in the Classroom.

1. Helping Students See the Need for the Skill

Providing students with a rationale for learning a new skill and relating it to their past, present, or future experiences can help them see a need to learn it. We must help students see why they need to learn a new skill. It would be best for them to have a sense that their lives would be better if they learned the skill. For many students, understanding the usefulness or relevance of what they are being asked to learn makes a big difference in their level of motivation. Students who believe that learning something is important to them will be more motivated to learn, in this case, to master the skills. Readings that provide background information about the importance of the concepts and skills addressed are included for all major concepts and skills. In addition, many learning experiences have students explore how using and not using the skills have impacted them and their potential impact on their futures. All readings are found in the module where the skill is primarily addressed, as well as in the [Readings Module](#).

2. Ensuring Students Understand What the Skill Is

To learn and master any skill, we need to understand it. Skills need to be specific, observable, and describable. Effective communication, for example, comprises numerous skills, including listening (passive and active), asking genuine inquiry questions, self-awareness of what one is feeling and thinking and why one feels and thinks that way, using I statements, and interpersonal conflict resolution skills. Each of these skills has multiple components. Teachers must clearly define and describe what these skills look and sound like so students know what to say and do as they practice them in class and apply them in real life. Like a coach, teachers must demonstrate the skill so students understand how to use it. Skill Cards clearly define each skill and provide examples of what one needs to do and say when using it. All skill cards are found in the module where the skill is primarily addressed, as well as in the [Skill Cards Module](#).

3. Setting Up Repetitive Practice Sessions

Students need to practice skills to develop proficiency. Like coaches, we need to structure opportunities for practice so skills become automatic. The steps for each skill should be practiced in sequence, with the least difficult situations practiced first. Role-playing situations need to be used to allow students to practice the skill. It may be helpful for students to learn skills -such as active listening, I statements, assertive responses, and interpersonal conflict resolution if they write their responses to the various role-play situations before the actual role-play begins. See the Role Playing, Coaching, Observing, & Giving Feedback Reading ([Readings Module](#)) for how to set up role-playing situations that use students as coaches and observers (who provide feedback).

4. Processing: Ensuring That Students Receive Feedback, Reflect On & Analyze What They Did Well & What They Need to Do to Improve

Ensuring That Students Receive Feedback

Practicing and role-playing skills in class is not enough. Students must be given feedback on their use of the skill. If students role-play in groups of four, one student role-plays the skill, one student is the recipient of the skill, one of the group members is a coach, and the other student is an observer who provides feedback (based on an observation /feedback form) to the student who is role-playing the skill. It is important to use student observers because they can collect more information and provide more feedback than teachers. In addition, when students observe skills using an observation/feedback form, they learn how to use the skill as they observe, and then provide feedback using the skill's definition. It is important to rotate the coaching and observing/giving feedback roles, as students who have observed/given feedback and coached others are better at using the skill than those who have not. When students work in small groups, the teacher can circulate, observe, and coach. See the Role Playing, Coaching, Observing, & Giving Feedback Reading & Process ([Readings Module](#)) for detailed information on setting up and teaching role-playing that uses students as coaches and observers (who provide feedback). In addition, see the Observing Giving Feedback Skill Card ([Readings Module](#)).

Reflecting On & Analyzing What Was Done Well & What Needs to Be Done to Improve

When students receive feedback, they must be given time to reflect on and analyze what they did well and what they need to do to improve. Likert Scales can be used after students receive feedback to self-assess their use of a skill or its components.

Self-assessment is essential when students do not have the opportunity to receive feedback from others (e.g., when student observers who provide feedback are not used). Likert Scales and Rubrics can be used for student self-assessment. As part of the self-assessment process, students need to identify which aspects of a skill they used effectively and which they need to work on to improve. Reflecting on and analyzing one's use of a skill helps one become more effective and understand and internalize its components. All SES projects and most learning experiences focused on skill development ask students to reflect on and analyze their use of the skill.

Teacher as Observer

While small groups are role-playing, teachers can circulate to gather information about students' competency. When walking around, you can intervene to improve effectiveness, correct misunderstandings and misconceptions about skill use, and reinforce appropriate, competent use of the skills. You will need to decide whether to intervene with a specific group or wait and process with the entire class. The information you gather will help you determine whether you need to reteach and role-play the skill or whether a simple reminder will suffice.

Processing as a Whole Class

After students have practiced the skill in their groups, the teacher needs to bring the whole class back together to reflect on and process how they did. Teachers can ask for general impressions, which skill each group used most effectively, and which skill each group had the most difficulty with. You can also ask volunteers to share which skills they used well and which skills or parts of skills they need to improve. See Processing Learning Experiences: Having Students Reflect On, Analyze, & Share What They Have Learned questions below.

The Benefits of Role-Playing, Observing, Reflecting/Analyzing & Setting Goals

Having students role-play, observe/give feedback, reflect on and analyze their use of the skills, set and implement goals, and apply the skills in real-life situations will help them better understand and internalize skills. This process also increases self-awareness, self-management, decision-making, personal problem-solving, mastery of the skills, increases self-efficacy, and facilitates a growth mindset,

5. Apply The Skills In Real-Life Situations, Set Goals, Keep Records of the Use of the Skills, and Persevere in Using the Skills in Real-Life Situations

It is not enough to only have students role-play, reflect on, and analyze their use of the skills in class. They must be given opportunities to apply real-life skills outside of class. SES Projects were developed to facilitate competency in using SES in real-life situations. Using skills in real-life situations, processing the results, and modifying their responses are necessary and must be continuous and ongoing.

Behavior change projects can be very simple or complex, as can their assessments. The simplest behavior change project involves using the My Goals Log, in which students set a goal and evaluate their progress at the midpoint and again at the end of the project. More complex projects involve students developing and implementing a plan to change their behavior, monitoring their progress over time using self-monitoring charts, and self-assessing their effort, progress, and/or the extent to which they completed the project. Student and teacher evaluation can also assess the extent to which students reflected on and analyzed their use of the skills in these real-life situations, and the degree to which their answers were supported and demonstrated self-insight and self-understanding. The projects, which are found in the [Social-Emotional Skills Projects Module](#), include:

1. Self-Disclosure Project
2. Focusing Project
3. Managing My Feelings Project
4. Coping in Healthier Ways Project
5. Managing My Anger Project
6. Managing My Unrealistic Thinking Project
7. Managing My Unhealthy Assumptions Project
8. A Decision I Need To Make Project
9. Healthy Relationships Project

10. Listening & Inquiry Project
11. I Statements Project
12. Assertively Saying No Project
13. How to Apologize Project
14. Initiating, Maintaining, & Ending Conversations Project
15. My Styles of Expressing Feelings Project
16. Parent Communication Project
17. Parent Conflict Resolution Project

In addition, these projects may be used as models for developing additional projects.

6. Ensure That Students Understand the Stages of Learning a New Skill

It is helpful for students to understand that learning social-emotional skills is not easy and that they will go through different stages in the process. The stages in learning a new skill include:

1. Feeling self-conscious and awkward when using the skill.
2. Feeling phony while engaging in the skill. You may hear something like: “No one talks like this.”
3. Their use becomes more skilled, but it is still mechanical.
4. They master the skill, and its use becomes natural, automatic, and fully integrated into their behavioral repertoire.

For additional information and teaching strategies on the steps in teaching and processing skills, see Chapter 5: Teaching Students Cooperative Skills and Chapter 6: Processing For Effective Cooperation in Cooperation in the Classroom by David W. Johnson, Roger T. Johnson, and Edythe Johnson Holubec.

The Classroom Climate and Characteristics of Teachers

Emotional and social learning occurs in a healthy environment through experiences in relationships. Thus, the teacher and the environment they create are most essential in this process. If a specific type of relationship is provided, students will discover within themselves the capacity to use that relationship for emotional and social growth, change, and personal development, provided they are motivated to do so. The following characteristics are important in the helping relationship.

Teacher As Role Model and Learner

Teachers need to be skillful in the emotional and social skills they are teaching and model them whenever possible. We must also be learners in our classrooms, interested in our emotional, social, and physical well-being and growth. It may be that the most effective teachers of social-emotional skills are those who are interested in their social-emotional learning. For example, if we want our students to become more aware of what they are feeling and why they feel that way, to self-disclose in class, and to take action when their behavior is ineffective, we must be willing to share and thus model these skills with our students. How can we ask our students to share their feelings, why they feel that way, and how they could be more effective if we are unwilling to do the same? Sharing our feelings and why we feel that way, actively listening to students, using “I Statements”, and being assertive are just some of the social-emotional skills we can regularly use in our classrooms. As teachers, we do not need to be perfect. If we struggle with specific skills and share that with our students, we give them permission to struggle and not be perfect.

Congruence

The more genuine teachers are in their relationships with students, the better role models they will be. This means we need to be aware of who we are and how we are, and be willing to express this in our words and behavior. Only by being seen as real and genuine people in our roles as educators will we help students become their real selves.

Unconditional Positive Regard

Unconditional positive regard implies having warm, caring feelings for our students. It involves accepting and caring for them as separate and unique individuals, with the right to their own emotions, experiences, and the meaning they find in them.

An Empathic Understanding

As teachers, we need to develop an accurate, empathic understanding of our students’ world as seen from the inside. When we actively listen to our students and ask appropriate, genuine inquiry questions, we communicate that we understand and accept them and their experiences. Acceptance means little until it involves understanding, and understanding develops through active listening.

Perceived Congruence, Positive Regard, and Empathy

Students need to experience or perceive their teachers' congruence, acceptance, and empathy. It is not enough that these conditions exist in us; they must, to some degree, have been successfully communicated to them.

Other Characteristics and Behaviors of Teachers That Establish Healthy Relationships With Students

Students find several traits important in teachers that foster more personal regard for the teacher. These traits can be the basis of good interpersonal relationships with students. These traits include acknowledging, valuing, respecting, demonstrating fairness, exhibiting realness, being open to humor, and having fun. Students who like and respect their teachers are less likely to be discipline problems and are more likely to be motivated to do high-quality work. See Chapter 13: Personal Relationship Building in The Skillful Teacher: Building Your Teaching Skills by Jon Saphier, Mary Ann Haley Specia, and Robert Gower for additional information on these traits and how they look and sound in the classroom. In addition, see Chapter 14: Classroom Climate for strategies for building a climate of inclusion, risk-taking, and personal efficacy.

The Small Group Format and Teacher as Facilitator and Coach

To be an effective teacher of social-emotional skills, we need to be facilitators and coaches (guides on the side, not sages on the stage). If we want students to be self-aware, we need to ask them what they are feeling and why, and to self-disclose in class. If we want students to learn to manage their feelings effectively, we need to help them identify their current methods of managing their emotions and how they make situations and relationships better or worse for them. This process involves the teacher/facilitator asking students these questions and having them share their answers in class to better understand their situation, their feelings about it, alternative modes of behavior, and the risks and consequences of new and old behaviors. The process is a success when students have a more complete understanding of who and how they are and how they wish to become, and have formulated a plan of action for future behavior. In essence, students become the subject through which the skills are taught, practiced, and mastered. Treating the class like a group makes it easier for students to learn about themselves and others. The group format makes it easier for trust to develop and for students to self-disclose and test new ways of being. Self-disclosure in a group environment also promotes awareness of how they are both similar and unique, fostering self-acceptance. See the Self-Disclosure Reading for additional information on this essential concept and skill.

In addition to fostering self-awareness, the group process enables the development and communication of knowledge and concepts while minimizing “talking at students.” For example, in the Conflict Resolution Reading, there is a section outlining why we refrain from initiating conversations about conflicts and an outline of the problems with keeping things in and not addressing conflicts. Teachers can distribute the reading and/or have a PowerPoint discussion. However, since students already have some understanding of why they and others avoid initiating conversations about conflict, we can ask them to brainstorm reasons and create a class- and/or grade-level list. Anytime we can have them generate the concepts we want them to understand, the greater the likelihood they will understand and retain them.

A Seating Arrangement to Create a Sense of Group

There are better arrangements than having students sit in traditional rows when teaching social-emotional skills. It does not create a sense of group. Ideally, classes would be small enough to seat students in a circle when teaching social and emotional concepts and skills. My health education classes were hardly ever small enough to have students sit in a circle. Depending on the classroom, I arranged the desks in a 3-sided rectangle, with my desk at the top with the whiteboard behind it. With classes of more than 25, I needed to have a small row in front of the 3-sided rectangle. This was not ideal, as the students in the small row could not see those sitting behind them. I usually sat on my desk during class discussions and when processing the learning experiences (which was most of the time), unless students were working in groups. The advantage of this configuration was that I could see all the students, and they could see one another. This arrangement also made it easy to reconfigure their desks to work in groups of 3-4 or in pairs with the person sitting next to them. I always sat students alphabetically because it was easier to take attendance, because they were more likely to be effective and productive when not working in groups with their friends, and because they were less likely to carry on side conversations.

Establishing Classroom Rules and Expectations

We will ask our students to self-disclose who they are, how they are, and how they wish to become. We will ask them to share their feelings, why they feel that way, and how effectively they manage them. We will ask them to be vulnerable, take healthy risks within and outside the classroom, and learn new social-emotional skills. Because we will be asking students to self-disclose who they are, we need to establish classroom rules that will facilitate the development and maintenance of trust and the willingness to self-disclose. We need to create an environment where they feel safe.

Depending on the situation, I have had students develop classroom rules; at times, I have developed the rules. In my last teaching experience (middle school), I had one rule: “Only 1 person is to be talking at a time.” It addressed most of the rules and norms that my students had developed in the past, and because there was only one rule, it was easy to reinforce. If students were having a side conversation with their neighbor while I was talking, it would usually only require that I stop talking. The silence and my look were usually enough for the student to get the point without me needing to say anything. If the problem was chronic, I would use an “I Statement.” If a student talked while another student was sharing, I would ask that student to pause what they were saying and say something like: “Megan, I am sorry to interrupt. I need to listen to what you are saying, but I cannot hear what you are saying because Tom is talking”. The silence that followed was usually enough, but if it wasn’t, I would use an “I Statement.” For example: “Tom, I feel frustrated that you are talking to Sally because I cannot hear what Megan is saying. I’d appreciate it if you would not talk while someone else is sharing. Are you willing to do that?” I also found that the seating arrangement discussed above also made it less likely that students would talk with a neighbor, probably because they felt more exposed than in a traditional classroom seating arrangement and because in most cases they were not sitting next to a close friend.

Facilitating Self-Efficacy and a Growth Mindset

To facilitate self-efficacy and a growth mindset, it is vital that students develop goals and periodically reflect on and analyze the extent to which they are successful. This will also help determine what, if anything, they need to do to be more successful. It is also helpful if you, the teacher, develop and share goals. By sharing your goals, you are acting as a social role model. By sharing their goals and struggles to meet them, students also act as social role models for one another. Students also become aware that they are not the only ones facing problems and concerns, and can take comfort in knowing that others share similar issues and concerns. They learn that others also want to make changes in their life, and they will discover others have the same or similar goals. When students see others similar to them struggle to meet their goals, it raises their belief that they can be successful. Mastery provides evidence that they can be successful. If they successfully meet their goals, it is important for them to understand what contributed to their success so they can use these processes and skills in the future. If students are not successful in meeting their goals, it is essential to have them evaluate why they were not successful and what they need to do to be more successful, and to provide them with another opportunity to continue working toward the goal. By focusing on the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating goals and not merely on the outcome, we can help students develop a growth mindset. Not meeting goals should not be considered a failure but an opportunity to learn how to be more successful in the future. Positive verbal feedback should be provided when students are successful and when they continue to struggle to find more effective ways to succeed. We want students to be inspired to take healthy risks, knowing they will occasionally fail and then try again.

Using Beginning and Ending Minutes Well

As you know, the class's beginning and ending minutes are very important. Ending minutes can be used to process learning experiences, with specific questions designed for each experience. Questions can also be asked to help diagnose students' level of understanding and to decide whether something needs to be retaught, whether more time needs to be spent practicing a skill, or whether to continue with a new concept or skill at the beginning of the next class. The Debrief Chart is a way to have students reflect on and analyze what they learned that day and how it relates to their lives. The Debrief Chart may also be used to have students develop small goals or record them in their My Goals Log. If there is time, students can be asked to share their reflections and goals with a neighbor or the entire class. While students are completing their Debrief Chart, you will have the opportunity to connect with individual students who have been absent, have not turned in an assignment, return assignments, and handle other housekeeping duties. The Debrief Chart is found in the [Assessment & Grading Module](#). The My Goals Log LE and the My Goals Log are found in the [Social-Emotional Skills Projects Module](#).

Beginning minutes can be used to have students review (and share) their answers on their Debriefing Chart from the previous class. Students can evaluate the extent to which they are meeting their established goals and determine what, if anything, they need to do to be more successful. If several days have passed since the previous class, reviewing the Debrief Chart from the prior class serves as a reminder of the concepts and skills addressed.

Assessing, Evaluating, and Grading Social Emotional Skills Learning Experiences and Projects

Unlike other curricula that primarily focus on conceptual understanding, the social-emotional learning experiences and projects on this website focus on facilitating the development of student self-awareness, self-insight, and self-knowledge, as well as proficiency in using SES skills. Facilitating the development of self-awareness, self-management, decision-making, personal problem-solving, relationship skills, and conflict-resolution skills usually occurs within schools. Thus, we need to hold students accountable for the quality of their work, and grades are generally required. As our outcomes are different than those of most courses, so are our assessment and grading procedures. See the [Assessment & Grading Module](#) for an introduction to assessing and grading SES learning experiences and projects, and examples of generic and specific rubrics for assessing and grading self-knowledge & insight, effort, progress, and conceptual understanding.

Integrating Skills Into Minute-to-Minute Classroom Life

An important variable in helping students master emotional and social health skills is to integrate them into the minute-to-minute process of classroom life. Emotional and social health skills are not something to be covered briefly in the fall and then forgotten. Students master these skills when they become integral to classroom life, preferably across multiple disciplines. Many teachable moments occur in classrooms and can be used to promote self- and social awareness, self-management, responsible decision-making, and relationship skills. Stories, plays, events in the community and country, and classroom situations can be used to discuss the characters' feelings, attitudes, values, beliefs, goals, behaviors, and why they felt and acted as they did. The risks and consequences of actions, as well as possible alternative behaviors, can also be explored. Problem-solving and conflict resolution can be employed to determine how a character or a student might have acted more responsibly and effectively. The discussion might then lead to similar problems and feelings the students experienced in similar situations, and how they dealt with or would deal with them. In addition, teachers and students could select a pleasant and/or unpleasant feeling of the week to discuss.

Emotionally Reconnecting With Students After a Break

All teachers can emotionally reconnect with students at the beginning of class after a long weekend or a school vacation. I always asked my students to share the pleasant feelings they had experienced during their vacation and why they felt that way. After everyone had the opportunity to share, I asked everyone to share an unpleasant feeling they experienced during the break and why they felt that way. If I had time, I would also ask them how they reacted to the unpleasant feeling, whether their action made the situation better or worse, and what, if anything, they wished they had done differently. Like with all personal sharing, students have the right to pass.

For Teachers of Physical Education

Using adventure activities, new games, or other activities that generate strong feelings and situations that arise from class competitions can provide multiple opportunities to teach and reinforce all social-emotional skills.

Processing Learning Experiences: Having Students Reflect On, Analyze, & Share What They Have Learned

Only completing learning experiences, even those that have students practice/role-play the skills, is not sufficient. Time must be set aside to process each learning experience. Students must be allowed to reflect on and analyze what they have learned. For some learning experiences, students must determine what they did well and what they need to do to be more effective in the future. After completing some learning experiences, students will be asked to develop and implement goals (and eventually evaluate how well they meet them). Having students reflect on and analyze what they learned, determine what they did well and what they need to do to be more effective, and set goals helps them develop and internalize the skills of self-awareness, self-management, decision-making/problem-solving/goal setting, and be able to communicate effectively and resolve misunderstandings and conflicts in relationships. Having students reflect on, analyze, and share what they have learned also helps facilitate self-efficacy and a growth mindset.

Many of the learning experiences include specific processing questions. Outlined below are generic process questions.

Feelings and Self-Management Questions: What to Ask About Current Feelings

1. What are you feeling?
2. Why are you feeling this way?
3. What led to these feelings?
4. If the feelings are unpleasant, how do you want to cope with these feelings?
5. What, if anything, do you want to do to improve the situation, event, or relationships?

Feelings and Self-Management Questions: What to Ask About Past Feelings and Behavior

1. What did you feel?
2. Why did you feel this way?
3. If the feelings were unpleasant, how did you cope with these feelings?
4. Did your actions make the situation better, worse, or have no impact?
5. What, if anything, do you want to do to improve the situation, event, or relationships?
6. How do you want to cope with your unpleasant feelings in the future to make situations and relationships better?

Questions to Ask When Having Trouble Identifying Feelings, Problems, and Dilemmas

1. Why don't you feel wonderful right now? What is bugging you on this particular day? Make a mental or written list of everything keeping you from feeling wonderful right now. Take some time to make your list. Don't try to answer the questions with your thoughts or thinking brain. Allow your answers to come from the place where you feel.
2. Keep listing the problems until you hear something within you say, *"Yes, except for those, I'm fine."*
3. Which problem feels the worst right now?
4. What is the crux (main part) of this problem? What is the worst of it? What is the main thing in it that is making you feel bad?
5. What would it be like, and how would you feel if everything in this situation was okay?
6. What, if anything, do you want to do to make the situation better?

For more information on this process and examples of its use, see the [Focusing LE](#) and the [Focusing Short Form](#) in the [Self-Awareness Module](#).

Thinking and Self-Management Questions: What to Ask Regarding Feelings Caused by Their Thinking

1. How do you feel about this past, current, or future event, situation, relationship, or about yourself, and why do you feel this way?
2. What interpretations and assumptions are you making about this past, current, or future event, situation, relationship, or yourself?
3. Describe the evidence you have that your interpretations and assumptions are accurate, realistic, and/or rational.
4. If the assumptions or interpretations are not accurate, realistic, and/or rational, or the situation is not as bad as you first thought, what are accurate, realistic, and rational assumptions, and why is the situation not as bad as you originally thought?
5. If your assumptions and/or interpretations are accurate, realistic, and/or rational, what is the worst of it? What's so bad about this? What's the main thing that is making you feel bad? What is the worst of this situation?
6. What, if anything, do you need to do to change the situation or the relationship, to change your interpretations and assumptions, and/or how you feel about yourself?

See the [Reality Checking Learning Experience](#) in the [Self-Management Skills Module](#) for a complete list of the questions and processes for dealing with inaccurate, unrealistic, and/or irrational interpretations and assumptions.

Questions To Consider When Working Through a Problem, Issue, Choice, or Dilemma

1. What is the problem, issue, choice, or dilemma?
2. What are you thinking and feeling about it? Why do you feel and think this way?
3. What are the best three alternatives/choices for solving the problem?
4. What are the possible positive and negative consequences for each of the three alternatives/choices for you and others?
5. Which of the alternatives best solves the problem, is consistent with your short—and long-term goals, your values, rules, and family values, ethical and legal, healthy for you and others, consistent with all the facts, and feels like the best choice?
6. What steps, including actions to overcome barriers, must you take to implement the plan and successfully reach your goal?
7. How successful were you in reaching your goal?
8. If you were not successful, what do you need to do to be successful?

See the [Decision-Making Skill Card](#) and the [D.E.C.I.D.E. Decision-Making Model](#) in the [Decision Making & Personal Problem Solving Module](#) for a complete list of the questions and processes for making decisions and solving problems, and additional information on developing and meeting goals.

Processing The Extent to Which Students Meet Their Goals to Facilitate Self-Efficacy and a Growth Mindset

To facilitate self-efficacy and a growth mindset, students must develop goals, periodically reflect on and analyze the extent to which they are successful, and determine what, if anything, they need to do to be more successful. It is also helpful if you, the teacher, develop and share goals. By sharing your goals, you are acting as a social role model. By sharing their goals and struggles to meet them, students also act as social role models for one another. Students also become aware that they are not the only ones facing problems and concerns, and can take comfort in knowing that others share similar issues and concerns. They learn that others also want to make changes in their lives, and they discover that others have the same or similar goals. When students see others similar to them struggle to meet their goals, it raises their belief that they can be successful. If they are successful, experiencing mastery provides evidence that they can be successful. If they successfully meet their goals, they need to understand what contributed to their success so they can use these processes and skills in the future. If students are not successful in meeting their goals, it is essential to have them evaluate why and what they need to do to be more

successful and to provide them with another opportunity to continue to work on meeting the goal. By focusing on the process of developing, implementing, and evaluating goals and not merely on the outcome, we can help students develop a growth mindset. Not meeting goals should not be considered a failure but an opportunity to learn how to be more successful in the future. Positive verbal feedback should be provided when students are successful and when they continue to struggle to find more effective ways to succeed. We want students to be inspired to take healthy risks, knowing they will occasionally fail and then try again.

Questions To Ask At The End of Class:

1. What were the main points of the lesson today?
2. What big ideas/skills/healthy behaviors did we focus on today?
3. What were your strongest feelings today, and why did you feel that way?
4. What were your primary attitudes today, and why did you think this?
5. What did you do well today?
6. What did you learn or relearn today?
7. What, if anything, are you confused about today?
8. What, if anything, were you surprised about?
9. What, if anything, do you want to reaffirm about yourself as a result of what we did today?
10. What, if anything, do you want to change or do differently as a result of what we did today?

See the Debrief Chart, which students can use to record their daily reflections. It is located in the **Assessment & Grading** module [Assessment & Grading Module](#).

Processing Non-Verbally:
Non-Verbal Self-Disclosing Techniques:
Are You Someone Who?
Thumb O Meter

Are You Someone Who?

Have students stand in a circle as you read a series of questions. If their answer is “yes,” they step forward for 2 seconds, then step back before you read the next question. The process can be used with icebreakers (getting-to-know-one-another questions) or after specific learning experiences, when you want students to share but they might be reluctant to do so verbally. An example of its use with icebreakers includes finding out some things about one another during the first week of class by asking questions about what they did during the summer. For example, if you traveled by plane this summer, step forward. After 2 seconds, ask them to step back if they have not already done so. Next, if you went to a musical performance this summer, step forward, etc. Students can see how they are similar to one another and how they may be unique. After going through a series of questions, you could follow up by asking them to verbally share their highlight of the summer and what was most disappointing.

An example of using “Are You Someone Who” is after the My Styles of Resolving Conflict Learning Experience, in which students identified their primary and secondary styles for resolving interpersonal conflict. For each conflict-resolution style, ask students to step forward for 2 seconds if they use that style as their primary approach. For example, step forward if you use “avoiding” as your primary conflict resolution style. After 2 seconds, ask them to step back if they have not already done so. Then ask them to step forward if they use “avoiding” as their secondary conflict-resolution style. For example, step forward if you use “avoiding” as your secondary conflict-resolution style. After going through the different styles of resolving conflicts, you could have a more extensive discussion of the impact of their primary and secondary styles on successfully resolving interpersonal conflicts, and what, if anything, they want to do in the future to be more successful.

Thumb O Meter

Another nonverbal technique is the “Thumb O’ Meter.” This technique is best used if students sit in a circle so that everyone can see one another, or you could have them stand in a circle. Here is an example from the How to Apologize Learning Experience: Begin by asking students whether they apologize when they are wrong or when they say or do something hurtful. “If you always apologize when you are wrong or say or do something hurtful, put your thumb straight up and turn it in a circle. If you almost always apologize when you are wrong or say or do something hurtful, put your thumb straight up. If you only apologize sometimes, place your palm parallel to the ground. If you hardly ever apologize, put your thumb down; if you never apologize, put your thumb down and turn it in a circle. After they respond, you can ask for volunteers to share. For those who always or almost always apologize, you could ask them why. For those who don’t apologize or hardly ever apologize, you could ask them why they don’t. For those who apologize some of the time, you could ask them why they apologize some of the time but not others.

Sharing why they apologize and why they don't can lead to a robust conversation about people's inaccurate attitudes about apologizing. For example, some students believe that apologizing is a sign of weakness. After asking the class if it is a sign of weakness, they may conclude that it is not a sign of weakness but a sign of strength. Instead of us telling them that apologizing is a sign of strength, they come to their own conclusion. In addition, the impact of apologizing and not apologizing on relationships can be discussed.

These two techniques can be used when students might feel reluctant or embarrassed to self-disclose, believing they are the only ones who feel this way, have this problem or concern, or cope with situations in this way. Once they see that others share similar feelings, concerns, problems, and coping strategies (because others have stepped into the circle with them), they may feel more comfortable sharing verbally.