

SOCIAL
EMOTIONAL
HEALTH
LESSONS
Early Childhood

What is Social Emotional Health?

Social emotional health is the ability to manage one’s emotions, reactions and relationships.

Children with strong social emotional health demonstrate self-control, communicate well, problem solve, are empathetic, respectful, grateful, gritty and optimistic — traits we admire in the people with whom we want to work and maintain friendships.

The four lessons included here will help children learn about important social emotional health skills including understanding their emotions, building compassion and empathy, and identifying and building their own strengths.



Table of Contents

1. Settle Your Glitter	1
2. Friendly Wishes	5
3. My Shield	8
4. Happy Memories	11

1. SETTLE YOUR GLITTER

Description

This lesson teaches students how using a glitter jar can be a metaphor for emotions and a tool to calm down.

Objectives

1. Students will understand that sometimes we experience strong emotions and need a way to settle them down.
2. Students will learn that when the glitter is shaken up, our emotions are in charge.
3. Students will learn that when the glitter is settled, we are able to think clearly.
4. Students will learn that in order to solve problems and learn, we need to have our glitter settled.

It's important to learn this because...

Knowing how to calm ourselves down makes us feel happier.

Vocabulary

"Settle Your Glitter"

Emotions

Calm

Materials Needed

Glitter ball or glitter jar
(instructions on the following page)
Handout (page 4)



If you don't have a glitter ball, you can make a glitter jar using the following ingredients:

Small clear jar, such as a spice jar (plastic is best for young kids)

Glitter glue (red or blue show up best)

Loose, fine glitter, in the same color as the glitter glue

Water

To make a glitter jar, fill it almost to the top with water. Add glitter glue by squeezing for about 4 seconds. Next, add a small amount of glitter – just about half a teaspoon. You may have to experiment to get the right ratio of glitter to glue. Too much of either and the glitter will never settle! Once you've perfected the ratio, make sure the lid is on securely. You may wish to use glue inside the lid to keep it from becoming loose and leaking.

You can make one glitter jar for the class, or you may wish to have students make their own. You'll need adult volunteers to help if you decide to let students make them.

The Lesson

Very young children often have difficulty regulating their emotions. It can be hard for a child to calm himself down when he's excited, scared or overwhelmed! Young students may be learning about self-regulation for the first time.

You may wish to say:

Has anyone here ever been told to calm down? What does it mean to be calm? What does it look like in our body when we're calm?

Hold up the glitter ball or glitter jar with all of the glitter settled at the bottom. Explain that this is what our brain looks like when we're calm. We're able to think clearly and make good decisions.

Explain that you'll teach them a technique they can use to calm themselves down, called "settle your glitter."

Shake the glitter ball or jar vigorously. Explain that this is our brain when we're feeling a big emotion, like scared, excited, frustrated or angry. Ask students if they've ever felt that way before.

You may wish to say:

Wow! Look at all that glitter! This is what our brain looks like when our feelings are in charge. Do you think we can make good decisions when our brain is like this? We need to settle our glitter so that we can think clearly again.

Set the glitter ball or jar down on a flat surface where all of the students can see it. As the glitter slowly falls to the bottom, tell students that you will take a few deep breaths while you watch it settle. As the glitter falls, the water becomes clearer.

Once the glitter is settled, explain to students that the glitter is still there at the bottom. Whatever the problem or big feeling was, it didn't go away. We still have to deal with it. But now our brain is focused and we're able to make good decisions.

Place the glitter ball or glitter jar(s) in a place where students can access it any time they feel a big emotion and need to settle their glitter. Continue to practice it periodically during calm times or for easy transitions during the day. Practicing it while calm makes it easier to use the technique when needed during a difficult time.

Name: _____

My Glitter Ball

Sometimes my ball is full of glitter! Here's what it looks like:



Here are ways I can help settle my glitter:

1.

2.

3.

2. FRIENDLY WISHES

Description

This lesson gives students an awareness of others and builds a sense of connection to others in the community through fostering empathy.

Objectives

1. Students will learn that thinking about others is a compassionate act.
2. Students will learn that they can send positivity into the world through small acts.
3. Students will learn that they can send friendly wishes for people they know and people they do not know.

It's important to learn this because...

Thinking of others is a way to build compassion and empathy.

Vocabulary

Friendly wishes
Compassion

Materials Needed

Handout (page 7)

The Lesson

Have students sit with their backs straight, hands in their laps and eyes closed or looking down. Lead them through three deep breaths.

Explain that you will be helping them send good thoughts to people, starting with themselves.

You may wish to say:

I'd like you to think about yourself. As you breathe, repeat in your mind these words: "May I be safe. May I be happy. May I be well."

Next, encourage them to think about someone they love – maybe a parent, sibling, friend or pet. As they breathe, have them say the same mantra about the person they're thinking of. May he be safe. May he be happy. May he be well.

Next, invite them to think about the class and everyone in it. As they breathe, ask them to picture the class in their mind. Have them say the same mantra about the class: May you be safe. May you be happy. May you be well.

Continue to broaden the circle of who is included in the friendly wishes. You can have them send friendly wishes to the whole school, the city, the country, and ultimately end with friendly wishes for the whole world.

If a particular crisis has occurred in the world, such as a natural disaster or an act of violence, that can be brought into the friendly wishes practice as appropriate for different age groups.

Note: Depending on the age of your students, it might be possible to extend friendly wishes to someone who they don't like. Sending friendly wishes to someone we struggle with doesn't mean that we are asking them to change the way they feel about that person or spend time with that person. But it can be a powerful practice and begin to break down some of the "us vs. them" thinking.

You can also send friendly wishes to students who are absent. Talk about why the student might be absent, consider some possibilities, then have students close their eyes and wrap their arms around themselves like a hug, then throw their arms into the air and say, "We wish you well!"

Name: _____

Friendly wishes for:

Myself:



My Family:



My Classroom:



My School:



My Community:



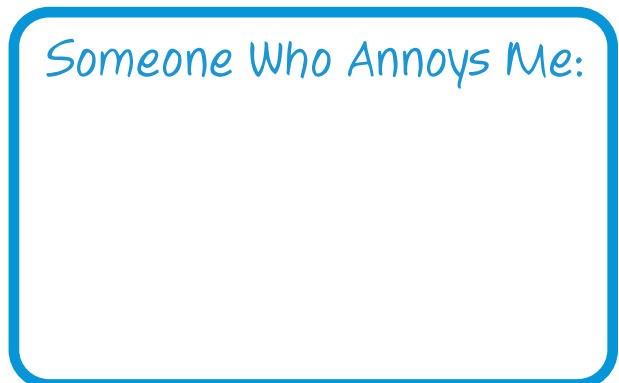
My Country:



The World:



Someone Who Annoys Me:



3. MY SHIELD

Description

This lesson helps students identify and connect with their strengths.

Objectives

1. Students will identify what they are good at.
2. Students will learn that their strengths can help them face obstacles with courage.
3. Students will learn that they can be brave when things are challenging.

It's important to learn this because...

Courage helps students overcome obstacles.

Vocabulary

Strengths
Courage

Materials Needed

A toy shield, or one made out of cardboard (optional)
Handout (page 10)

The Lesson

Tell students that each person has special gifts that belong to them. Some people are good at math, others at reading. Some people are good at talking to new people, and others are good at observing the environment around them. These are called strengths. We all have strengths, and no two people have the exact same strengths.

Hold up your toy shield (if you're using one) and explain that shields protect your body from harm. Show students how a shield keeps their body safe by blocking objects that might try to hurt them. You may wish to display images of popular superheroes who use shields, such as Captain America and Wonder Woman. If students are familiar with these references, ask them to describe how the shields protect the superheroes. Then explain that sometimes when we have a shield it makes us feel brave, because we're not as worried about getting hurt.

Explain that their strengths are like a shield that protects them. When they face an obstacle in life, they can use their shield to feel brave and help them overcome the obstacle.

Instruct the students to create their own shields. Strengths might include things such as, "I'm really good at making friends." "I have a positive attitude." "I am good at solving problems." "I can think creatively."

You may wish to say:

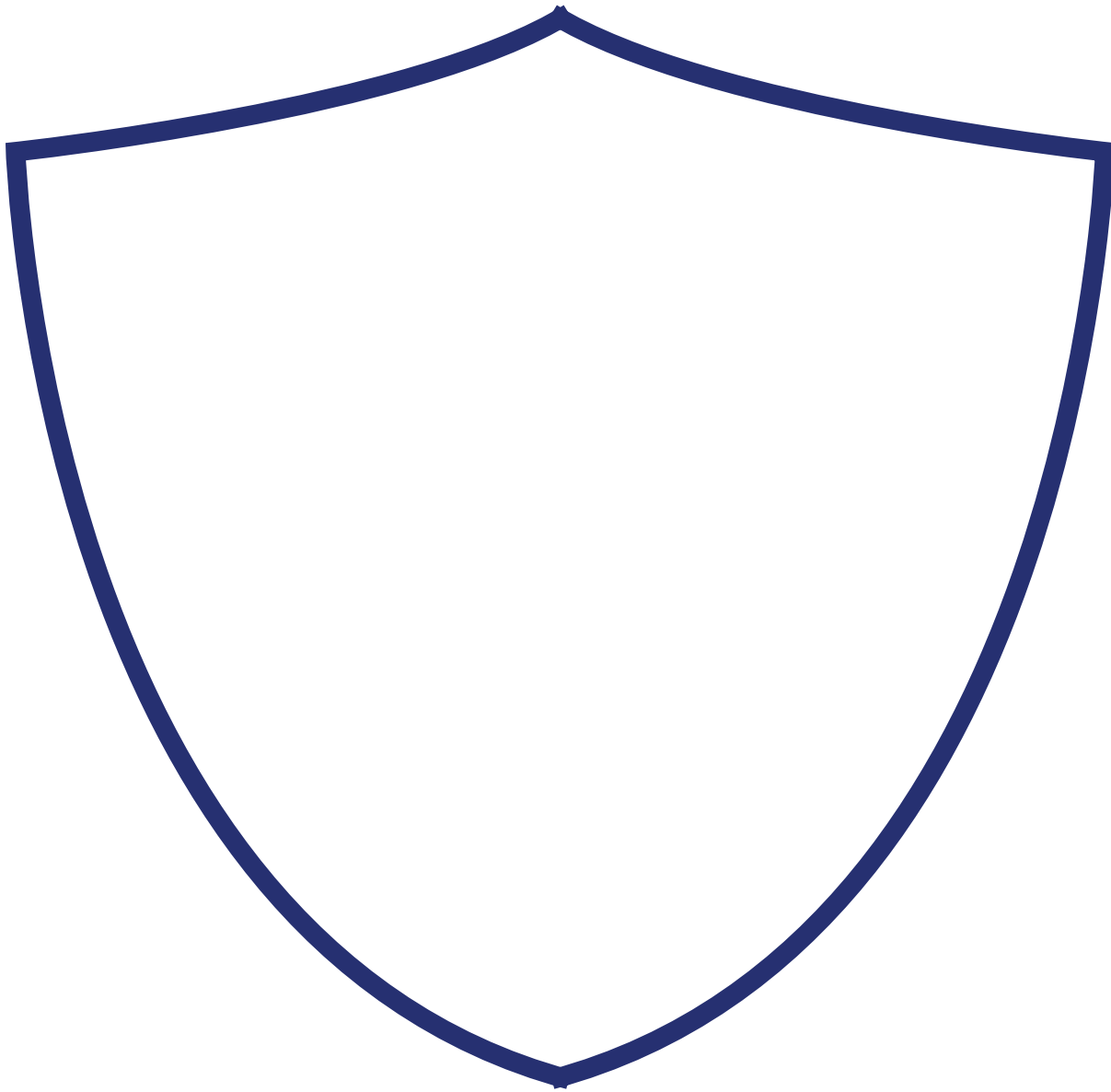
What are you good at? What helps you when you need to feel strong? Draw a picture of some of your strengths on your shield.

Help students by writing words next to the drawings that reflect the strengths they identified.

Name: _____

My Shield

My strengths can protect me! I can be strong and brave when things get tough.



4. HAPPY MEMORIES

Description

This lesson helps students reflect on happy memories, which helps students feel happier.

Objectives

1. Students will learn that it is important to remember happy experiences.
2. Students will be able to identify several happy experiences.
3. Students will learn that when they are struggling with something, they can think about a happy memory.

It's important to learn this because...

Recalling happy experiences triggers the same release of dopamine in the brain as the actual experience. Basically – remembering happy moments actually makes us feel happier!

Vocabulary

Memories
Treasure chest

Materials Needed

Handout (page 13)

The Lesson

Have the students sit up straight and close their eyes or look down at the floor. Ask them to think about a happy memory.

You may wish to say:

Today I want you to think back on something you did that made you feel happy. Maybe you went to the park, or you visited your grandma, or maybe you went to a fun birthday party. Try and think of something you experienced that made you feel happy.

Give students a brief moment to think of a happy experience and then solicit responses from a couple of students. Ask students to name the feelings they experienced during these happy memories. Try to encourage feelings beyond “happy” – feelings like: excited, proud, relaxed, joyful, or thankful.

Next, explain to students what a treasure chest is. Tell them that a treasure chest is something that holds someone’s most valuable possessions. Then tell them that you will be giving them a sheet with a treasure chest that they can fill up. But their treasure chest won’t be filled with jewels and gold coins. Their treasure chest is going to be filled with happy memories.

You may wish to say:

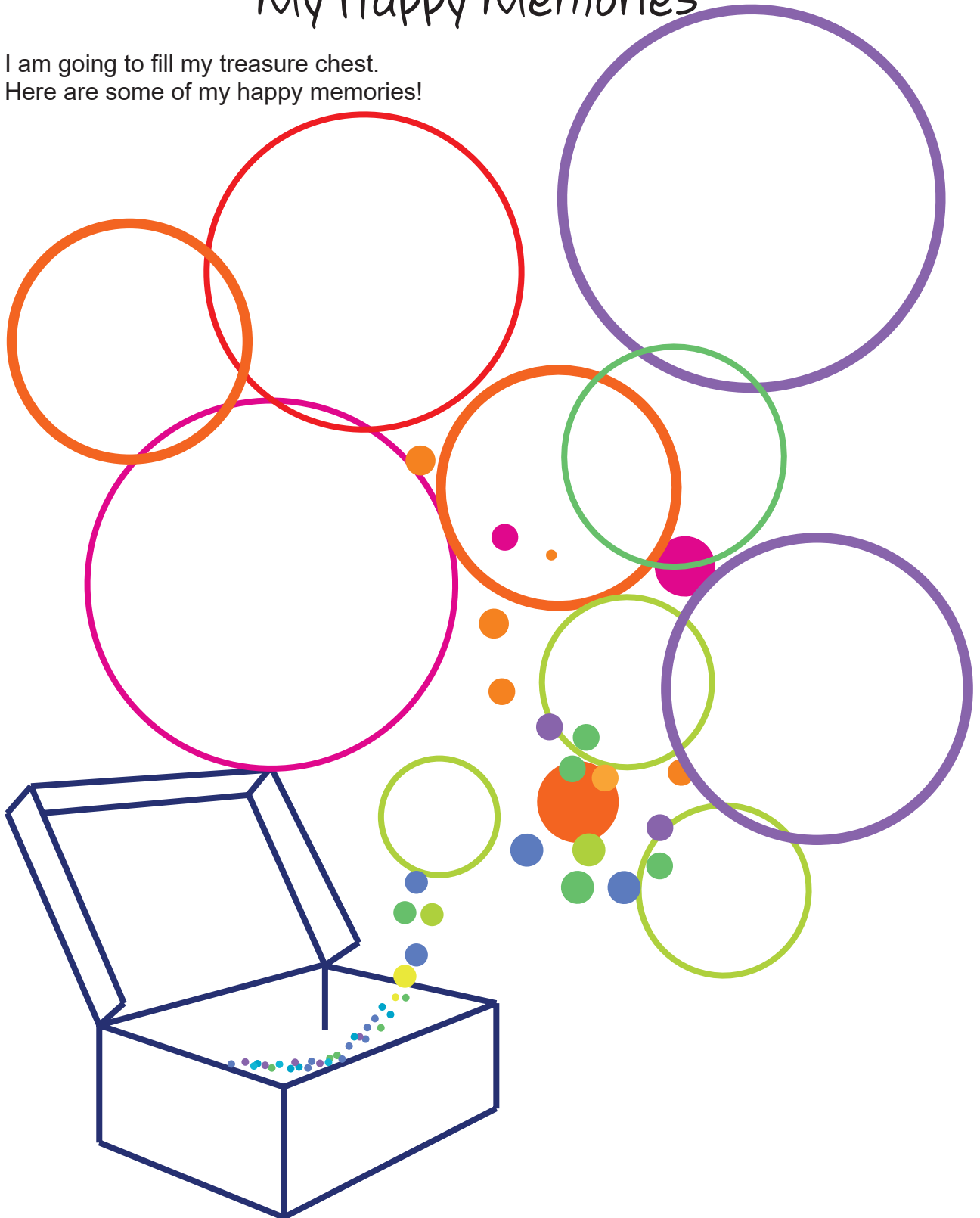
This treasure chest will be so important! Remember all of those feelings we talked about when we shared our happy memories? Did you know that when we remember the happy times, we actually feel happy again? Our brain remembers what it felt like and it creates those same happy feelings again! We are going to fill up our treasure chest with happy memories so that any time we need to feel happy, we can look at it.

Have students complete the treasure chest worksheet by writing or drawing happy memories into the bubbles. You may need to help students dictate their drawings. Throughout the year, recall the happy memories. You may wish to put them on display or keep them somewhere students can look at them easily. Encourage them to add to the treasure chest when they experience something new they want to remember.

Name: _____

My Happy Memories

I am going to fill my treasure chest.
Here are some of my happy memories!



About Momentous Institute

Momentous Institute, owned and operated by Salesmanship Club of Dallas, has been building and repairing social emotional health in children for over 95 years. Since 1968, the AT&T Byron Nelson golf tournament has been its primary fundraiser. The organization serves 6,000 children and family members each year through Therapeutic Services and Momentous School. Building on this direct work with kids and families, the organization invests in training and research, and shares strategies nationwide to reach far more children than could ever be served directly. In hopes of infusing new, exciting ideas throughout the community, Momentous Institute hosts its annual Changing the Odds conference for educators, mental health professionals and decision makers. The combined support of Salesmanship Club of Dallas, the AT&T Byron Nelson, corporations, individuals and foundations enables these efforts and truly changes the odds for kids in our community and beyond.

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