



SEE Learning

Social, Emotional, and
Ethical Learning

A Curriculum for Educating the Heart and Mind

MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 2

Building Resiliency

Introduction to the Chapter

Chapter 1 explored the concepts of compassion and happiness and what they mean for us when we are together in the form of class agreements. Chapter 2 explores the important role that our bodies, and in particular our nervous systems, play in our happiness and well-being. It does so by exploring a few key concepts and practices:

The Resilient Zone

A way of describing when the nervous system is regulated (in homeostasis) and neither hyper-aroused (stuck in the high zone) nor hypo-aroused (stuck in the low zone). You can also refer to this as the “OK zone” or “zone of well-being.”

Sensations

A physical feeling or perception within the body or using the five senses, as distinct from emotions and non-physical feelings (like feeling happy or sad).

Tracking

Noticing and attending to sensations in the body in order to build up body awareness or “body literacy.”

Personal Resources

Things one likes and associates with greater safety and well-being that can be brought to mind to return to or stay in one’s resilient zone.

Grounding

Attending to the contact of one’s body with objects or the ground in order to return to or stay in the resilient zone.

Help Now! Strategies

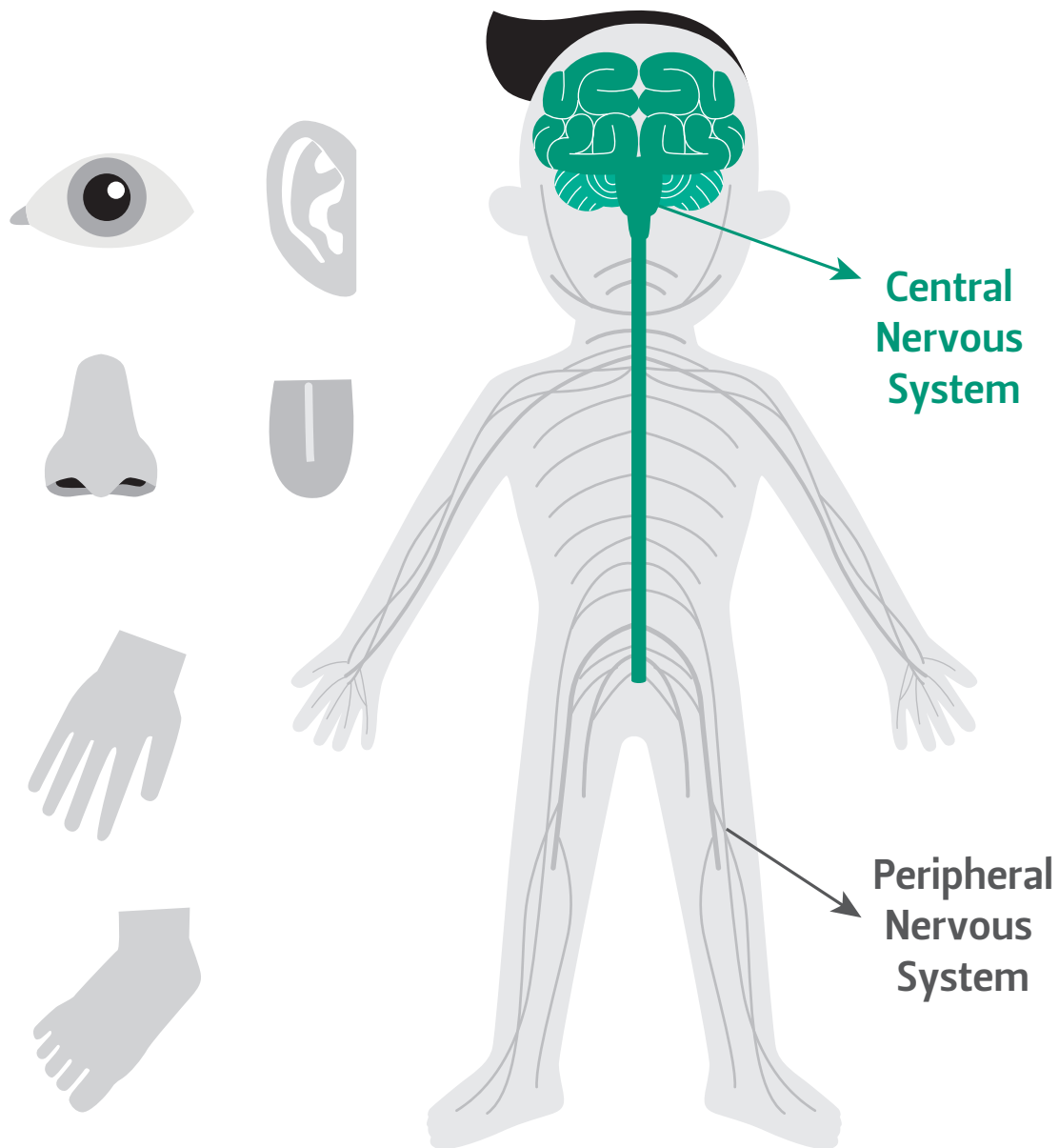
Simple and immediate techniques for helping students return to their resilient zone when they get “bumped out” of that zone.

The Nervous System

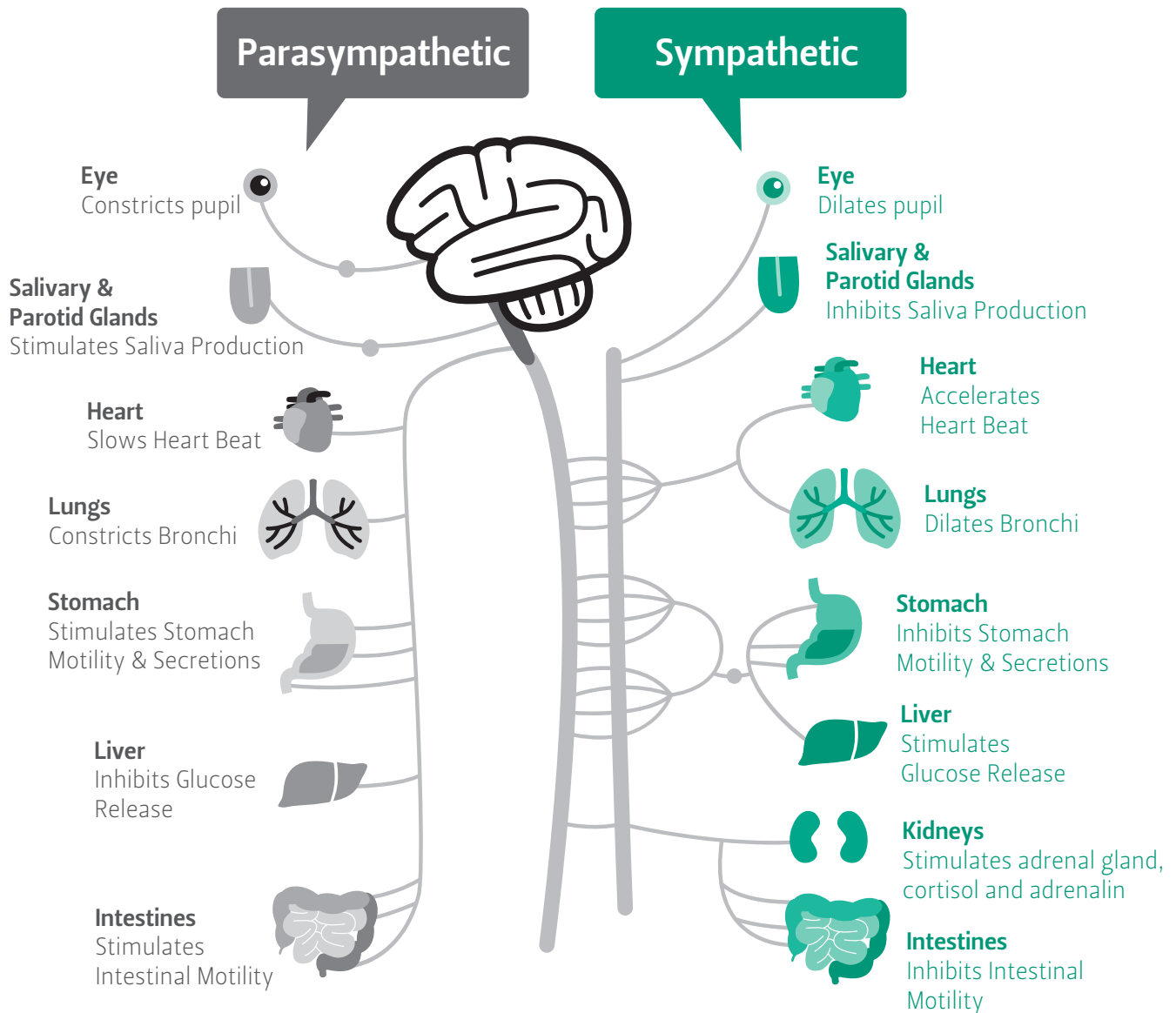
Our nervous system is an essential part of our body, and understanding it can be enormously helpful for enhancing our well-being, particularly as the nervous system is so intimately related to how we handle and process stress. Our nervous system is made up of our brain and our spinal cord (called the central nervous system) and the network of nerves that connect our brain and spinal cord to the rest of our body, including our internal organs and our senses (called the peripheral nervous system). This chapter focuses on teaching your students about the nervous system both through basic science (objective knowledge) and through their own personal experience of gaining body awareness or body literacy (subjective, first-person knowledge). The combination of these two can help your students learn to regulate their bodies and nervous systems more effectively on their own over time.

The Nervous System

The Central and the Peripheral



The Autonomic Nervous System



A part of our nervous system runs automatically, without the need for conscious control: this is called the autonomic (literally, “self-governing”) nervous system (ANS). Our ANS regulates many body processes necessary for survival, including our heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, and digestion. It also regulates our internal organs such as our stomach, liver, kidneys, bladder, lungs, and salivary glands.

Since our nervous system’s chief function is to help keep us alive, it reacts very quickly to perceived threats or to perceived safety. Our autonomic nervous system has two pathways that activate based on whether our bodies perceive danger (the “fight or flight” response) or safety (the “rest and digest” response). The fight or flight response triggers our sympathetic nervous system, turning off systems of digestion and growth and preparing the body for action and possible injury (by doing things like triggering inflammation, for example). Often the perception of threat or danger by our bodies is not consciously accessible to us (such as when our body detects a bacterial infection). This means that our body may have perceived a threat that we are not yet consciously aware of. Ordinary introspection therefore will not yield a full picture of the state of our nervous system. However, if we pay attention to sensations within the body using interoception (the sensing of things inside the body), this can give us a clue as to what is going on in our nervous system.

In contrast, the rest and digest response triggers our parasympathetic nervous system, relaxing the body and allowing for functions like growth, digestion and so on to resume. This is why when we sense danger and have a fight or flight response, we may notice changes in our heart rate, breathing, blood pressure, pupil dilation and our internal organs. Then when we sense that the danger has passed and we are safe again, we may notice changes in these same organs, for example even noticing noises in the stomach as digestion starts up again.

In modern life, our bodies sometimes react to danger when there is no real threat to our survival, or hold on to a sense of danger after the threat has passed. This leads to a dysregulation of the autonomic nervous system, meaning that its regular alternation between parasympathetic and sympathetic activation is disrupted. This nervous system dysregulation in turns can lead to inflammation, which in turn can even affect the expression of our DNA (by changing a process called methylation), making us more prone to a number of chronic illnesses. This is one of the main reasons why chronic stress is so damaging to our health and well-being. While our bodies are designed to react to short term stressors so that we have the energy to overcome possible dangers, we are not designed to deal with chronic stress, and it takes a significant toll on our mental and physical well-being.

Fortunately, we can learn skills to better regulate our nervous system and enhance our in-born resiliency. Since our nervous system is what senses things both on the inside (such as tension, relaxation, heat, cold, pain, and so on) and on the outside through the five senses, it is giving us constant information about the state of our body. This chapter focuses on the information and skills necessary to further develop this type of self-care.

Sensations

The first Learning Experience, “Exploring Sensations,” helps students build a vocabulary of sensations as a guide to notice the state of their nervous systems. Sensations (warmth, coldness, heat, tingling, tightness, etc.) are physical, and are to be distinguished from emotions (sad, angry, happy, jealous), which will be explored later in SEE Learning. Although feelings will be explored later, it is important to note that feelings, thoughts, and beliefs have a corresponding sensation or set of sensations within the body. Learning about sensations helps introduce another portal of understanding to ourselves and our students.

Help Now! Strategies

Learning Experience 1 then moves into Help Now! strategies. These are easy actions that can be practiced to quickly return our bodies and minds to the present moment, and thus function as useful ways to bring our bodies back to a place of balance if we get bumped into our high or low zones (states of hyper-arousal or hypo-arousal). Once the Help Now! Strategies are posted in your classroom, feel free to encourage students to practice them repeatedly.

Resourcing

Unique to each person, personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that bring about a greater sense of well-being, safety, or happiness when brought to present moment awareness. When we think of a personal resource (a wonderful memory, a favorite place, a loved one, a joyful activity, a comforting thought), this often brings about pleasant sensations in the body. If we then attend to those sensations consciously and give them a bit of space and time, they can deepen. This increases our nervous system’s sense of safety and brings about an ever greater sense of well-being and relaxation in the body.

Tracking

Noticing sensations and keeping one’s attention on them is called “tracking.” We “track” or “read” sensations, since sensations are the “language” of the nervous system. This leads to body literacy: our understanding of our own body and how it responds to stress and safety. Although we all share the same basic structure of having a nervous system, our bodies react to stress and safety in slightly different ways. We may become tense in different parts of our body. We may also respond to well-being in different ways. We may experience a pleasant warmth in our chest or an opening and loosening in our facial muscles. Learning to track the sensations of our own body helps us understand when we are feeling relaxed, safe, and happy, or if we are having a stress response. This ability opens up “choice” so when we are distressed, we can choose to bring our awareness to a sensation of well-being or neutrality within the body. This awareness can increase the sense and feeling of well-being.

Note that sensations are not inherently pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral for everyone or at all times: warmth, for example, can be experienced as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral at different times. This is why it’s important to ask whether the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral.

Since tracking can lead to awareness of unpleasant sensations, which can then be triggering, tracking is always done in conjunction with resourcing, grounding or a Help Now! strategy. The following strategy of “shift and stay” is also important to teach when introducing tracking.

Shift and Stay

Part of tracking is noticing if the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. If we find pleasant or neutral sensations, resting our attention on that part of the body can sometimes allow the sensation to deepen and allow the body to relax and return to the resilient zone. However, if instead we become aware of an unpleasant sensation, we can “shift and stay.” This means to scan our body to find a place that feels better (either neutral or pleasant) and then rest our attention on that new location.

The Resource Kit and Resource Stone

Learning Experience 3, “Creating a Resource Kit,” builds on previous experiences by helping the students build up a personal “resource kit” of resources that can be called upon whenever necessary. It then reinforces the skills of resourcing and tracking.

Grounding

Learning Experience 4 “Grounding” introduces the practice of grounding. Grounding is noticing the physical contact our body has with things, including things we touch or how we are standing or sitting. Grounding can be a very helpful tool for calming the body and mind. Typically, we have already unconsciously developed a number of grounding techniques that help us feel relaxed, secure, safe, and better. These may include things like sitting in a certain way, folding our arms in a certain way, holding objects we like, lying a certain way on a couch or in bed, and so on. However, we may not be aware of intentionally using these to calm our bodies and return to our resilient zone. Practicing grounding introduces new techniques and makes conscious ones that we have already developed, thereby making them more accessible when we need them.

The Resilient Zone

Learning Experience 5, “The Resilient Zone,” introduces the “three zones” as a way of understanding how our body (and specifically our autonomic nervous system) operates. The three zones are the high zone, the low zone, and the resilient zone (or zone of well-being). Understanding this model can be very helpful for both teachers and students.

In this model, we can be in one of three zones. Our resilient zone is our zone of well-being, where we feel calm and alert, and where we feel more in control and better able to make good decisions. Although we can go up and down in this zone and may feel a bit excited or have slightly less energy, our judgment is not impaired and our body is not in a state of harmful stress. Here our autonomic nervous system is in homeostasis, which can be defined as a stable physiological equilibrium. It is able to alternate between sympathetic and parasympathetic activation properly.

Sometimes we get bumped out of our resilient zone by life events. When this happens, our autonomic nervous system becomes dysregulated. If we get stuck in our high zone, we are in a state of hyper-arousal. We may feel anxious, angry, nervous, agitated, afraid, manic, frustrated, “amped up,” or otherwise out of control. Physiologically we may experience shaking, rapid and shallow breathing, headaches, nausea, tightness in our muscles, indigestion, and changes to vision and hearing.

If we get stuck in the low zone, we experience the effects of hypo-arousal. This can have us feeling lethargic, exhausted, lacking in energy, and not wanting to get out of bed or be active. We may feel isolated or lonely, numb, checked out, unmotivated, lacking in optimism, or uninterested in activities that we would normally enjoy. It’s important to note that since the high zone and low zone are both states of dysregulation, they are not opposites of each other: they may share physiological characteristics and when we are dysregulated we may bounce between high and low zones.

In Learning Experience 6, “Exploring the Resilient Zone through Scenarios,” students will learn about these three zones through scenarios and then will give advice to each other on how to return to their resilient zone, based on the skills they have already learned (resourcing, grounding, tracking, and the Help Now! strategies).

Being able to monitor the state of our body is essential to our well-being and happiness because our autonomic nervous system can short-circuit other parts of our brain (harming decision making and bypassing executive function). When we learn to remain in our resilient zone there are many health benefits for our body, including being able to maintain peace of mind and greater control over our behavior and our emotional reactions.

Learning Experience 7, “How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body” connects this chapter back to Chapter 1 and the themes of happiness, kindness, and the class agreements. Now that students know about the important role that their bodies play in their well-being and happiness, they can better understand why it is important to show kindness and consideration to one another. They begin to learn that being mean or inconsiderate of one another leads to stress and our bodies respond to that stress in unpleasant ways, hindering our ability to be happy. Here it can be very helpful to introduce the idea to students that as social beings, our nervous system treats social threats (rejection, isolation, exclusion, etc) just as seriously as physical threats, and responds accordingly with stress. Students can explore the idea that since we are constantly relating to one another and share the same space, we can play a positive role in helping each other remain in our resiliency zones, or return to them if we become out of balance.

In some cases, the activities in this chapter may not instantly yield the results and insights you wish. Don’t be discouraged, as it is often hard even for adults to notice and describe sensations at first. It may take repeating some of the activities a few times before your students are able to describe sensations, notice if they are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral, and use the skills of resourcing and grounding. Even if they do gain insights quickly, repetition is key in order for the skills to become embodied. Eventually, some of the students may begin practicing the skills spontaneously, particularly when facing challenging or stressful circumstances.

Many of these skills were developed through trauma and resiliency work and they are based on a significant body of clinical and scientific research. It is possible that while exploring sensations of the body with your students, some of them will have difficult experiences that you may not be able to deal with sufficiently on your own, especially if they have suffered or are suffering from trauma. Help Now! Strategies can be suggested to the child in the immediate aftermath of an unexpected reaction. If you have counselors or school psychologists, or a wise administrator or colleague, we encourage you to seek assistance and further counsel as necessary. However, the approach taken in SEE Learning is a resiliency-based approach that focuses on the strengths of individual students, not on treating trauma. These are general wellness skills that can be beneficial to anyone, regardless of their level of experience of trauma. Students will be in a good position to explore the next elements of SEE Learning – cultivating attention and developing emotional awareness – when they have more of an ability to regulate their nervous systems.

Check-ins and Repeated Practice

From Chapter 2 onwards, the importance of practice becomes even more important in SEE Learning. You will note that the check-ins for this chapter build, each incorporating skills and material covered in preceding learning experiences. Feel free to select which check-ins work best for your class and then use them on a regular basis even when you are not doing a full session of SEE Learning. Although the learning experiences include “Reflective Practice” sections for developing embodied understanding, the repetition of the check-ins and the repetition of insight activities (with modifications as you see fit) will greatly aid this process of helping students internalize what they are learning to the point where it becomes second-nature.

Time and Pacing

Each learning experience is designed to be a minimum of 30 minutes. It is recommended that you take longer than this if time allows and if your students are capable of it, spending more time on the activities and reflective practices especially. If you have less than 30 minutes, you can choose to only do one of the activities or a part of the activity, and finish the learning experience in the following session. However, remember that Check-ins and Insight Activities are important to include regardless of time.

Student Personal Practice

This is the stage in SEE Learning where it’s important to recognize that your students may be beginning their own personal practice, even in an informal way. As you support them in this, it’s helpful to recognize that each student is different, and that images, sounds, and activities that may be calming for some students can be activating for others. Even things such as the sound of a bell, an image of a cute animal, yoga postures, long moments of silence, or sitting and taking long breaths may be experienced as unpleasant by some of your students and may actually hinder their ability to be calm rather than promote it. You’ll come to know this by watching your students and by asking them what they like, and then by giving them options so that they can develop a personal practice around what works best for them.

Teacher Personal Practice

Naturally, teaching your students these practices will be strengthened by your own familiarity with them. It is recommended that, if possible, you first try these practices on your own and with colleagues, friends, and family as you are able. The more experiential knowledge you have, the easier it will be to do these exercises with your students. All the practices suggested in this chapter can also be done with older children and adults.

Further Reading and Resources

Content for the learning experiences in this chapter has been adapted from the work of Elaine Miller-Karas and the Trauma Resource Institute with their kind permission. Teachers interested in learning more about the content and skills presented in this chapter are encouraged to read the book *Building Resilience to Trauma: The Trauma and Community Resiliency Models* (2015) by Elaine Miller-Karas, and to visit www.traumaresourceinstitute.com

Also recommended is Bessel van der Kolk's book *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma* (2015).

CHAPTER 2

Building Resiliency

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

1

Exploring Sensations

PURPOSE

This first learning experience explores sensations and helps students build a vocabulary to describe them, since sensations tell us most directly about the state of our nervous system. Students will also learn Help Now! strategies, most of which involve sensing things around the room. Help Now! strategies (developed by Elaine Miller-Karas and the Trauma Resource Institute) are immediate tools to help students return to a regulated body state if they are stuck in a dysregulated state, such as being overly agitated. They also are a great way

to introduce the concept of sensations and practice attending to them.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience include: just as we can sense things on the outside with our five senses, we can pay attention to sensations inside our bodies also; sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral; there are simple strategies we can use to help our bodies become calmer and feel safer.

FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 29–31.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

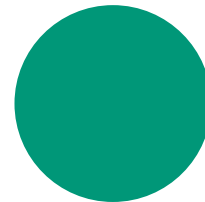
Students will:

- Develop and list vocabulary of words that describe various sensations.
- Practice attending to external sensations while learning Help Now! strategies for regulating the body.

LENGTH

30 minutes

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Awareness
(1A)

ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A piece of chart paper or a board for creating a list of words that describe sensations

Exploring Sensations

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Welcome. As you think about this whole day until now – from when you first woke up to being in class right now, raise your hand if you can think of something kind that you experienced or did for someone. Would anyone like to share?”*
- *Who has been practicing compassion by using the class agreements? Which agreements have you used? What did that feel like?*
- *Have you seen anyone else practice one of the agreements, in here or elsewhere? Describe it. What did it feel like to see that?*
- *What do you think might happen if we keep practicing compassion with each other?”*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

What Are Sensations?

Overview

In this presentation you will help your students understand what a sensation is and then have them come up with a list of words that describe sensations, thereby building a shared vocabulary of sensation words. A sensation is a physical feeling that arises in the body, such as warm, cold, tingling, loosening, tightening, heaviness, lightness, openness, and so on. Physical sensation words are to be differentiated from general feeling words like good, bad, stressed, relieved, and so on, and they are also different from emotion words like happy, sad, afraid, excited, and so on. Helping your students come up with a list of sensation words will help them recognize sensations in the body, which in turn will help them monitor the state of their bodies.

If you feel comfortable doing so, it is also recommended that you introduce your students

to the role of the **nervous system**: the part of our body that allows us to feel sensations on the inside as well as sense things on the outside (through our five senses, for example) and that keeps us alive by regulating our breathing, our heart rate, blood flow, digestion, and other important functions. This whole chapter involves coming to understand the nervous system (specifically the autonomic nervous system). You can teach the content and skills without naming the nervous system specifically. Instead, use the general term “the body.” If you are able to bring in additional information about the autonomic nervous system gradually, this will likely enrich your students’ overall understanding.

Sample script

- *“We’ve been exploring compassion and happiness. Today we’re going to learn about how about how our senses can help us know what our bodies are feeling.*
- *What are the five senses that we have? Who can name one?*
- *These are for feeling things on the outside: we can see, hear, smell, touch, and taste things.*
- *What are things we can sense on the outside through our five senses? Let’s think about one of our senses --hearing -- let’s take a moment of silence and notice what sounds we can hear during a minute of silence. What did you hear? Can anyone share what you are sensing right now using one of the other senses? What about seeing? Touch? Smell?*
- *There is a part of our bodies that help us sense these things on the outside of our bodies and also inside our bodies. Does anyone know what it’s called? You may have heard of it. [Allow students to guess]*

- We call it the nervous system. It is called the nervous system because our body is full of nerves that send information from different parts of our bodies to and from our brain. We're going to be learning some interesting things about our nervous system that can help us be happier and healthier together.
- So, our senses help us feel things on the outside of our bodies like a sound or smell. Let's notice if we can feel anything inside our bodies. If you feel comfortable doing so, put one hand on our heart and the other hand on our belly and let's close our eyes for a moment and notice if we can feel anything inside our body.
- Sometimes we can feel something in our bodies like whether we are feeling hot or cold. Does anyone know what we might call that feeling inside our bodies? [Allow students to guess] Have you ever heard of the word "sensation"? What does it mean?
- We call things like that sensations. That's because we sense them.
- Sensing something is feeling something with our body. Sensations are just things we can feel or sense with our body. Our body tells us what we are sensing.
- Let's think of things we can sense on the outside. We will make a list of sensations together. We can use describing words, like adjectives, to talk about sensations.
 - When you touch your desk, what sensation do you have? Is it hard? Is it soft? Is the temperature warm or cool?
 - If you touch your clothing, what sensation do you have? Is it soft? Scratchy? Smooth? Something else?
 - Take out your pencil/crayon/pen, as you touch it, what sensation do you have? Is it round? Flat? Warm? Cool? Sharp? Something else?
 - Is there something else on your desk/near you that you want to describe with sensation words?
- Now let's think about what we sense on the inside. An example would be if we are standing in the sun, our senses may let us know it is too hot, and we take action to move into the shade to cool down. In the beginning, we sense the warmth or the heat on the inside and when we move to the shade, we sense a cooling down on the inside. Let's think together about other sensations we experience on the inside.
- Let's see how many we can come up with. If you say something but we're maybe not sure if it's a sensation, I'm going to write it separately over here."
- (Some students may need further prompting to understand sensations. Hence asking questions like the following may help:) What do you feel on the inside when you're sleepy? What part of your body tells you that you are sleepy? How about when you're hungry? What do you feel like when you are having fun? What do you feel on the inside when you're happy? If you play a sport, what do you feel like on the inside? What do you feel on the inside when you're excited? Where in your body do you feel that? (It may be helpful if you give a personal example, such as when I'm thinking about having fun, I sense warmth in my shoulders and cheeks.)

Make a list of sensation words with the students. If they say things like "I feel good!" which is a feeling but not a specific sensation, then encourage them to put that into sensation words by asking, "And what does good feel like in the body?" or "Where in the body do you sense that?" It is all

Exploring Sensations

right if some of the words they come up with are not precisely sensation words, as the activities that follow will help them further develop their understanding of what a sensation is.

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes Sensing on the Outside and Inside*

Overview

This activity is to help students continue to recognize that we can sense things on the outside (using our five senses) and on the inside (turning our awareness inside, noticing and naming what sensations we find inside the body). The Community Resiliency Model, designed by the Trauma Resource Institute, provides several activities called “Help Now!” strategies. These all involve doing an easy cognitive task or directing our attention to sensations. It has been found that when the nervous system is agitated, directing attention to sensations by doing activities like these can have an immediate calming effect on the body. This insight activity works through the individual Help Now! strategies and also lays the foundation for cultivating attention as a skill (which is further developed later in SEE Learning), since all the Help Now! strategies involve paying attention.

As students explore the effects of these strategies on their bodies, it is important that they also learn to notice whether the sensations they experience are pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. As this vocabulary (pleasant, unpleasant, and neutral) and the ability to connect these terms to sensations in the body will be important for all learning experiences in this chapter, it is worth checking in occasionally with your students to deepen their understanding of noticing sensations in this three-fold way. Note that sensations are not inherently pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral for

everyone or at all times: warmth, for example, can be experienced as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral at different times.

Help Now! strategies can be used to help the body return to its resilient zone (a topic explored later in this chapter). The asterisk denotes that this activity is one that you may wish to practice multiple times in order to build activities and also gradually work your way through the various Help Now! strategies.

Note that not every Help Now! strategy will work for every student. Some may prefer to push against a wall, some may prefer to lean against a wall. Some may like touching pieces of furniture around them, some may not. An important part of the process here is for each student to learn what works for himself or herself, while you as the teacher also learn what works for each individual student. This is the building of body literacy—a knowledge of one’s own body and how it experiences well-being and distress. Even something that works one time may not be effective another time, so learning a variety of strategies is best.

Here is a list of the Help Now! strategies and below is a sample script of how you can lead the activity to explore a few of them at a time.

- Notice sounds in the room, and then outside of the room.
- Name the colors in the room.
- Touch a piece of furniture near you. Notice its temperature and texture (is it hot, cold, or warm; is it smooth, rough, or something else?).
- Push against a wall with your hands or your back and notice how your muscles feel.
- Count backwards from 10.

Sample script

- *“Remember we said we want to feel happy and we want to experience kindness.*
- *Our bodies can feel happy or unhappy too. What do you think that means? (Call on individual students to share ideas).*
- *If we pay attention to our bodies, we can do things that feel kind to our bodies.*
- *We’re going to try a few sensing activities and see if we notice anything happening to our bodies.*
- *We’ll start with sensing things on the outside.*
- *Let’s all listen and see if we can hear three things inside this room. Listen and then raise your hand when you have three things that you heard inside this room. (Wait until all or most of the students have raised their hand.)*
- *Let’s share now. What three things did you notice? (Call on individual students to share).*
- *Now let’s see if we can hear three things outside of this room. Raise your hand when you’ve got three things that you heard outside this room. (Note: This exercise can also be accomplished with music. You can play music and ask the students what happens on the inside as they listen to music.)*
- *(When most or all students have raised their hands, allow them to share.)*
- *What happened to our bodies when we all listened for sounds inside and outside the room? What did you notice? (Allow for sharing. You may notice that when you are all listening for sounds, you become quieter and more still.)*
- *Now we’re going to notice what happens inside our bodies when we do this.*
- *Our sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. There are no right or wrong sensations. Sensations exist to give us information like I am too hot in the sun, I need to walk to that shade to cool down. Let’s review these words: What does pleasant mean? How about unpleasant? What about neutral? (Call on individual students to share).*
- *Neutral means in-between. It means that the sensation isn’t pleasant, but it isn’t unpleasant either.*
- *Let’s listen for things inside or outside this classroom that we didn’t notice before. [Pause.]*
- *When we’re doing this, what do you notice on the inside of your body as you’re listening? Do you notice any sensations inside your body right now? Raise your hand if you notice a sensation inside your body.*
- *What do you notice? Where is it? Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? [Allow other students to share.]*
- *Now let’s see if we can find things of a certain color in the room. Let’s start with red.*
- *Look around the room and see if you can find three red things in this room.*
- *Notice what you’re feeling on the inside as you find the color red. Does anyone notice any sensations in their bodies? Raise your hand if you noticed one.*
- *What is it? Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?”*

Use this format to explore the various Help Now! strategies as you have time, and repeat this activity as necessary.

Exploring Sensations

You can also have students explore the Help Now! strategies as stations around the room. Use the handouts provided in the following section or make your own and post them around the room. Have your students pair up and then walk around the room until they find a Help Now! station that they want to try. Then they can do the Help Now! skill together as a pair and share what they experience. After everyone has had a chance to try

two or more stations, bring them back together as a class and ask them to share which stations they did and what they experienced.

Once your students have had some familiarity practicing Help Now! strategies, you can also have them illustrate their own Help Now! stations and place them around the room.

Strategy	What Sensations Do You Notice in Your Body?	Are the Sensations Pleasant, Unpleasant, or Neutral?
Name six colors you notice in the room.		
Count backwards from 10.		
Notice different 3 sounds in the room and 3 outside of the room.		
Slowly drink a glass of water. Feel it in your mouth and throat.		
Spend a minute walking around the room. Notice the feeling of your feet on the ground.		
Press your palms together firmly or rub your palms together until they get warm.		
Touch a piece of furniture or a surface near you. Notice its temperature and texture.		
Slowly push against a wall with your hands or your back and notice any feelings in your muscles.		
Look around the room and notice what catches your attention.		

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *“What are some things you learned today about sensations?”*
- *What are some words that describe sensations?*
- *How can knowing a little more about the idea of sensations help us be happier and kinder? When do you think it might be useful to use one of these Help Now! activities?*
- *Let’s remember what we’ve learned and see if we can use it together next time.”*

Help Now! Strategy

Station 1



**Slowly drink a glass of water.
Feel it in your mouth and throat.**

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

Station 2



Name six colors you see.

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

Station 3



Look around the room and notice what catches your attention.

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

Station 4



Count backwards from 10 as you walk around the room.

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

Station 5



Touch a piece of furniture or a surface near you. Notice its temperature and texture.

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

Station 6



Press your palms together firmly or rub your palms together until they get warm.

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

Station 7



**Notice the 3 sounds within the room
and 3 sounds outside.**

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

Station 8



**Walk around the room.
Notice the feeling of your feet on the ground.**

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

Help Now! Strategy

Station 9



**Slowly push your hands or back
against a wall or door.**

**What do you notice on the inside?
Is it pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?**

CHAPTER 2

Building Resiliency

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

2

Resourcing

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to help students explore the use of a personal resource (in this case, the compassion drawings created in Chapter 1) to bring about greater well-being in the body. Personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that serve to bring about sensations of greater well-being in the body. They are unique to each person.

When we notice these sensations (tracking) and then focus upon pleasant or neutral sensations, the body tends to relax and return to its resiliency zone (which students will learn about later). Both resourcing and tracking are skills that develop over time and lead to what can be called *body literacy*, since we are learning about our own bodies and how they respond to stress and well-being.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Discover how to use a personal resource to relax and calm the body.
- Develop greater skill in identifying and tracking sensations in the body.

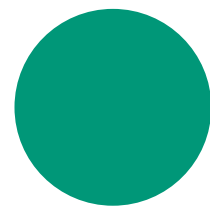
FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 40–42.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The drawings of compassion that students created in Chapter 1. If you do not have those drawings, you can have them create new ones, but this will take additional time.
- The following questions written on the board or chart paper:
 - *What do you notice on the inside right now as you remember that moment of compassion?*
 - *Are there any sensations you notice in your body?*
 - *Is that sensation you just told me about pleasant, unpleasant, or in between?*
 - *What other sensations do you notice in your body as you remember the moment of compassion?*
 - *Would anyone like to share?*

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation
(1E)

ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **1E.1:** Balancing the Body

LENGTH

30 minutes

Resourcing

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s practice some of the Help Now! activities that we learned last time. (You may wish to have pictures of the Help Now! activities up to allow students to pick one of them.) I’ll talk us through the exercises and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *Let’s listen and see if we can hear three things inside this room.*
- *Now let’s listen and see if we can hear three things outside this room.*
- *What’s one thing you hear? What do we notice on the inside as we do that? Do you notice a pleasant or neutral sensation? Remember, neutral means in-between.*
- *Look around the room, and see what catches your attention that is pleasant or neutral, it could be an object, a color, a favorite friend, or something else.*
- *Now let’s check in with our bodies as something catches our attention. What do you notice on the inside? Can you find a pleasant or neutral sensation in your body?*
- *Is there anyone that can’t find a pleasant or neutral sensation? If so, raise your hand. (If some students raise their hands, help them shift to a place in their body that feels better.)*
- *Once you’ve found a pleasant or neutral sensation, let’s just pay attention to that place quietly for a moment. See if the sensation changes or if it stays the same.*
- *How was that? What can you share with the group? (Allow students to share.)”*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes**Using the compassion Drawing as a Personal Resource****Overview**

Students will share their drawing and then notice sensations in their body, paying particular attention to pleasant and neutral sensations. Bringing to mind something that evokes greater well-being, safety, or security is called “resourcing.” The object that one brings to mind is called a personal resource. Noticing the sensations that arise is called “tracking” the sensations or “reading” them (you can use whichever term you prefer). When a pleasant or neutral sensation is found through tracking, we can keep our attention on that sensation for several moments and observe the sensation, seeing if it stays the same or changes. This tends to deepen the sensation and lead to greater relaxation in the body.

Although we all have nervous systems, there can be great variety in terms of what functions as a personal resource for us and what sensations arise in us related to well-being or stress. If tracking leads us to noticing unpleasant sensations, we can try to find a place in the body that feels better, and focus on that instead. This is called “shift and stay.” When we do find a pleasant or neutral sensation in the body through tracking, we can keep our attention on it for a few moments. As noted, this silent attention tends to deepen the experience and signals to the body that we are safe, and the body typically responds with relaxation.

The critical insights aimed at in this activity are as follows: sensations can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral; the same sensation (such as warmth) could be any of these three; when we focus on pleasant or neutral sensations, our bodies tend to relax; we can use resources and attention to sensations to relax our bodies.

Sample script

- *“We’re going to explore how looking at or thinking about something we like can lead to sensations in the body.*
- *Does anyone remember what we call the part of our body that senses things and sends information to our brain? That’s right – the nervous system. We’re going to learn more about that now.*
- *Let’s review – we said that sensations can be described in three ways – what were they?*
- *What does neutral mean?*
- *That’s right: in between.*
- *What sensations do you think could be pleasant or unpleasant or in-between?*
- *How about warmth? What’s it like when it’s pleasant? Unpleasant? In-between?*
- *Or coolness?*
- *Or having lots of energy and movement inside our bodies? What’s it like when we have that and it’s pleasant? Have you ever felt that but it was unpleasant? Could it be in-between and neutral?*
- *Now let’s take out our compassion drawing that we made.*
- *Take a moment to look at your compassion drawing. Remember what it was about.*
- *If you like, see what catches your eye on your drawing, and touch the part that catches your eye. Notice what happens on the inside.*
- *Are the sensations pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral? Is there a difference between looking and touching your compassion drawing?*

- *Turn to a partner on your left or right and share your drawing and the sensations you had. Then we’ll come back together as a group to discuss.*
- *Who would like to share their compassion drawing with the rest of us?*
- *It’s important that when one of us shares, everyone else is going to listen and watch quietly.”* (Reference the relevant group agreement here.)

As a large group, allow one person at a time to share. After the person has shared, ask them immediately (waiting too long will allow the sensations to pass):

- *“What do you notice on the inside right now as you remember that moment of compassion?*
- *Are there any sensations you notice in your body?*
- *Is that sensation you just told me about pleasant, unpleasant, or in between?*
- *What other sensations do you notice in your body as you remember the moment of compassion?*
- *Would anyone like to share?”*

As an option, you can allow them to share other things that make them feel happy, safe, or good, besides their compassion drawing.

- *“If you’d rather choose something else to think of instead of your compassion drawing, you can think of a person, place, an animal, a thing, or memory that makes you feel good and share that.”*

It’s possible that the student will share sensations that are coming from things other than the compassion drawing. For example, the student may feel nervous speaking up and may describe

Resourcing

sensations related to that. If that happens, you can redirect the student back to the compassion drawing and see if that evokes any pleasant or neutral sensations. If the student does report a pleasant sensation, then ask them to pause for a moment and just notice that sensation. It is this pausing and staying aware of the pleasant or neutral sensation that allows the body to relax and deepen into an experience of safety. If the student reports unpleasant sensations, ask if there is somewhere else in the body that feels better, then allow them to pause and notice that place that feels better.

Allow a few students to share and go through the same process with each one. It's possible that as one student shares and experiences pleasant sensations, there may be noticeable changes in their body associated with relaxation. Other students may notice this. If they do, allow them to share what physical changes they noticed.

Note: A single sensation (like warmth, for example) can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral. Coolness similarly can be pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral, so it is helpful to ask the students specifically whether the sensation is pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral so that they begin to learn the skill of tracking in this way. Also note that the nervous system responds to stimuli very quickly. If you wait too long when the student sharing their compassion drawing, their attention will have moved on to something else, and they will no longer be experiencing sensations related to recalling a moment of compassion. The timing of this will become more apparent to you with practice.

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

- *“What did we discover about personal resources and sensations?”*
- *What kinds of sensations came when we looked at our personal resources?*
- *Where in our bodies did we feel those sensations?*
- *Do you think we could come up with more personal resources in the future?*
- *If you ever feel unpleasant, do you think you could use one of your personal resources to help your body feel better?”*

Creating a Resource Kit

PURPOSE

This learning experience builds on the last activity by helping students create a “resource kit” (or “tool kit” or “treasure chest” as elementary students may call it) of personal resources. Personal resources are internal, external, or imagined things that serve to bring about sensations of greater well-being in the body. They are unique to each person. Thinking about a personal resource tends to bring sensations of well-being to the body. It is good to have more than one resource, because a particular resource might not work all the time. For example, some resources might serve to energize us when we

are feeling down, while others might calm us when we’re feeling hyperactive. It is important to practice resourcing along with tracking, since it is the tracking skill that builds body literacy.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience include: we can develop and use a variety of resources to help the body feel calmer and safer; our nervous systems respond when we think of things we like and enjoy or things that make us feel safer; some resources may work better at certain times than others; resourcing can become easier with practice.

FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 40–42.

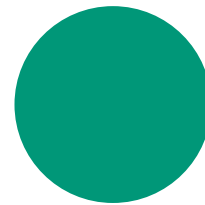
MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Colored or white blank 4"x6" cards (or paper cut to a similar size) and colored pens or markers for each student
- A small box, pouch, or a large colored envelope to serve as the “resource kit” for each student to store their drawings of personal resources in
- A box of small colored rocks, stones, crystals or other similar objects (optional)
- Art supplies for decorating the resource kit (optional)
- The compassion drawings from Chapter 1

LENGTH

30 minutes (40 with optional activity)

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation
(1E)

ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **1E.1:** Balancing the Body

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Create a resource kit of personal resources that they can use to calm themselves when stressed.
- Discover how to use their personal resources to relax and calm the body.
- Develop greater skill in identifying and tracking sensations in the body.

Creating a Resource Kit

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

Distribute the compassion drawings from the previous learning experience to each student.

- *“Let’s take a moment to get comfortable as we take out the compassion drawings we did last time. I’ll talk us through the exercise and then you can share out loud at the end.”*
- *Look around the room, and see what catches your attention that is pleasant or neutral, it could be an object, a color, a favorite friend, or something else.*
- *Bring your attention to a place on the inside that feels pleasant or neutral.*
- *Now let’s think of our moment of compassion or the drawing of a resource. (Pause.) Take a look at your drawing and see if you can remember what the moment of compassion or resource was that you drew, where you were, or who you were with.*
- *When you think about this moment of compassion or resource, what do you notice happening the inside your body? (If students share pleasant or neutral sensations, allow them to sit with their attention on those sensations. If they share unpleasant sensations, encourage them to shift and stay, or to choose one of the Help Now! activities.*
- *As we do this, we’re learning about our bodies and how to calm them and make them feel okay.*
 - *How was that? What can you share with the group?” (Allow students to share.)*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY #1 | 15 minutes

Creating a Resource Kit*

Overview

In this activity students will come to understand what a personal resource is: something specific to them that makes them feel good or better when they think of it. They will then create a set of personal resources for themselves, drawing each one on a piece of paper and then labeling it. The pieces of paper can be smaller than full-size US Letter or A4 pages so that they can be folded and placed in a box (or colored envelope) which will serve as a kit of the student’s personal resources. If you or your students prefer, you can call this a “tool kit,” “treasure chest,” “treasure pouch,” “pouch of resources,” “tool box,” or some other name that you and your students come up with. At the end of this learning experience, each student will have a resource kit with a few personal resources. As the year goes on, they can add to their resource kit and they can pull resources from it when they need to.

The critical insight aimed at here is students identifying what serves as a personal resource for them; that is, recognizing the value of something in their life as a resource that makes them feel good or better. Although we all have things in our lives (people, places, activities, memories, hopes, etc.) that make us feel better, we sometimes take them for granted or don’t recognize them as having this special value.

Note: Personal resources can be quite simple; they do not have to be something incredibly wonderful. Personal resources are also unique to the individual; what works for one person will often not work for someone else. To keep the range as broad as possible at first, use a variety of words to describe what a personal resource can be rather than a single word like “happiness,” “safety,”

“joy,” etc. That will make it easier for your students to find something that works for them.

Sample script

- *“Today we’re going to create a resource kit. It’s like a tool kit.*
- *What’s a tool kit for? What kind of things do you find in a tool kit?*
- *In this kit we’re going to put reminders of our personal resources: things that make us feel better, things that make us feel safer, or things we like.*
- *We call these things personal resources. A resource means something that is useful, just like a tool. It’s personal because our resource is something special to us. It doesn’t have to be special to other people.*
- *Personal resources are things that make us feel better, happier, or safer.*
- *They can be things we like to do. They can be things we find relaxing or fun. They can be people we like. They can even be things about ourselves – things we’re proud of or happy about.*
- *Is there someone you like who makes you feel safer and happier when you think of them?*
- *Is there a place you like that makes you feel better when you go there or think about it?*
- *Is there something you really like to do that is fun?*
- *These are all personal resources. It can be anything that makes you feel good or makes you feel better when you’re not feeling good.*

- *It can even be something that you imagine that makes you feel better or happier when you think of it.*
- *Let’s take a moment to think of a personal resource for ourselves; maybe you can think of more than one.*
- *Now let’s take a moment to draw our resource or resources. Remember, this is not a drawing competition and we’re not going to judge each others’ ability to draw. It’s just to help you remember that moment.*
- *Let’s write down the name of our resource on the drawing so we can remember what we drew later.”*

Allow the students time to draw resources. When they have drawn or selected a few resources each, allow them to share with each other in pairs or with the class as a whole.

- *“Now we’ve created a few personal resources. Each one is like a treasure. It’s valuable. Each one is also like a tool – it’s useful. We can save it for later, and we can use it when we want to.*
- *We can keep our resources in our resource kits. Let’s write our names on our resource kits.*
- *Turn to a partner on your left or right and share one of your resources. Then we’ll come back together as a group to discuss.*
- *Let’s share what we made with each other. Who would like to share one of your resources and why it is a resource for you?*
- *It’s important that when one of us shares, everyone else is going to listen and watch quietly.”* (Reference the relevant group agreement here.)

Creating a Resource Kit

You may wish to repeat this activity to create more resources. Also, you can set aside time for your students to decorate and personalize their resource kit thereby making it individualized. In this way, their resource kit itself may come to serve as a resource for them. You can also use the following supplemental insight activity (“resource stone”) to add to the resource kit.

INSIGHT ACTIVITY #2 | 10 minutes Resource Stone (Optional)

Overview

This is an optional supplemental insight activity that can go along with the resource kit activity. You may not have time to do both activities in one lesson, so you can always do this later. In this activity, you invite the students to form a circle and choose a small stone, crystal, or other object from a bag or box. They then think of something they are thankful for, and the stone or object comes to represent that thing. They then add the object to their resource kit.

Leading the Activity

Invite the students to join you in a circle. Give each student a small crystal, stone, or other small item or invite them to choose one they like from a box or bag. They should choose.

- *“This is a special treasure for your tool kit.*
- *It is a stone (or crystal) that can help remind you how to feel calm, safe, and peaceful. We’ll call it a resource stone, since we will use it to remind us of a resource.*
- *But, before it can do that, we have to practice something new.*
- *Take a moment and think of something that you are thankful for.*

- *It can be one of your personal resources or something new.*
- *We can feel thankful for little things, like a someone giving you a smile, or big things like special people in our lives.*
- *Let’s all take a moment and think about something we feel thankful for: a place, a person, an object, or something else.*
- *It could be an adult in your life, a pet, a favorite park. Whatever it is, take a moment to picture it in your mind.*
- *As you think about this special thing, give your stone a gentle squeeze. You can rub it with your fingers too.*
- *Notice what sensations you feel on the inside as you hold your stone and think of what you’re thankful for.*
- *Now, we’ll go around the circle and share what we’re thankful for. It’s ok to pass.*
- *I’ll start: “I’m thankful for... (the trees that I see outside, my walk home, my good friends, my cat).”*

Go around the circle until everyone has shared.

- *“Notice how you feel on the inside now that we’ve all expressed thanks for something special to us.*
- *Does anyone notice any sensations on the inside? What do you notice?*
- *Now you can return to your desks (tables) and place your special stone inside your resource kit.*
- *We can write a note and put it in our resource kit also, so that we remember what it is we were thankful for.”*

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 7 minutes

Practicing Resourcing and Tracking*

Overview

In this reflective practice, students will choose one of their personal resources and sit with it for a moment, seeing if they can notice sensations in the body and identify them as pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral (in-between).

Sample script

- *“Now we’re going to notice sensations in our bodies. (Review what a sensation is with examples if necessary).*
- *Let’s take a moment and choose one of your favorite resources.*
- *Make yourself comfortable and place the drawing of your resource in front of you.*
- *If you feel that you are distracted, move to a place where you are less distracted.*
- *Let’s take a moment and be still and just look at our resource and think about it.*
- *What does it feel like on the inside when we look at and think about our resource?*
- *Do you notice any pleasant sensations? If you don’t, that’s okay.*
- *If you notice unpleasant sensations, then just shift and find another part of your body that feels better. Stay with the place that feels better.*
- *Once we’ve found a pleasant sensation, or just an in-between sensation, then we can stay there and just feel that sensation. (Pause.)*
- *It’s like we’re reading our body and its sensations. We call this tracking. Tracking means to follow something closely. When we notice the sensations in the body and pay attention to them, we are tracking.*

- *Would anyone like to share a sensation that they notice in their body?*
- *What does it feel like when you just pay attention to that sensation?”*

Note that if students share unpleasant sensations, remind them that they can shift to a place in their body that feels better or even just neutral. This skill is called “shift and stay.” Also, remember that you are helping them to learn what a sensation is, so if they say things like “It feels good” or “It feels bad,” ask them things like, “What does good feel like? Can you describe the sensation?” You can use the sensation word list that you created with them in the previous learning experience.

Resourcing is a skill that will take time to develop. It is suggested that you repeat this activity a few times until students gain some direct experience with pleasant sensations in the body while thinking of their personal resource. After such critical insight is born, further practice will then lead to an embodied understanding of the way their own nervous system experiences and expresses stress and well-being.

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *These resource kits are for you to use to help you whenever you need to feel more safe, calm, and peaceful.*
- *Whenever you feel you need some help feeling calmer, you can take a few moments and touch your stone quietly, and remember something you’re thankful for. Or look at your pictures of your resources.*
- *What kinds of sensations came when we looked at our personal resources?*

Creating a Resource Kit

- *Do you think we could come up with more personal resources in the future?*
- *When might you want to use your resource kit?*

CHAPTER 2

Building Resiliency

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

4

Grounding

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to explore the skill of grounding as a way of returning to and staying within the resiliency zone/OK zone. Grounding refers to attending to the physical contact of one's body with an object. Grounding is always practiced with tracking (attending to sensations in the body), as these two together build body literacy. As there are many ways to do grounding, and each student will likely find methods that work best for him or her, it is recommended that you repeat some of the activities in this learning experience a few times.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience are: our nervous system responds to the physical contact of our bodies with objects and surfaces; attention to pleasant or neutral sensations in the body when grounding can lead to relaxation; we each have specific grounding techniques that will work best for us; practicing grounding can make it easier and more effective over time.

FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 40–42.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

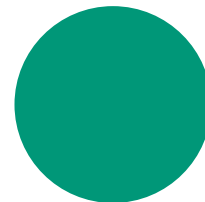
Students will:

- Increase awareness of how our bodies feel when we move them in certain ways.
- Gain proficiency in the practice of grounding through various postures.
- Gain proficiency in the practice of grounding through holding an object.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- A grab bag of objects for students to hold such as stuffed animals/soft toys, articles of clothing, pendants, watches, toys (If you prefer, or if it is difficult to arrange these items, you can ask students beforehand to bring something that they feel they might enjoy using for this activity)

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation
(1E)

ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **1E.1:** Balancing the Body

LENGTH

30 minutes

Grounding

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s take out our tool kits and see if there’s something in there we’d like to use. I’ll talk us through the exercise and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *Pick one of your personal resources and hold it in your hands or place it in front of you.*
- *Let your eyes rest on it, or close your eyes and feel it carefully with your hands.*
- *Let’s take a few moments to really give our attention to our drawing or objects. (Pause) As you do that, try to notice the sensations inside your body. You might feel warmer or cooler, lighter or heavier, perhaps tingling, maybe you notice your breathing, just be curious. If you don’t notice any sensations, that’s okay and just notice that you’re not feeling any sensations at the moment. You can still just sit and enjoy your object. [Pause for several seconds – however much time you feel your group is ready for.]*
- *How was that? What can you share with the group?”* (Allow students to share.)

INSIGHT ACTIVITY #1 | 12 minutes

Grounding with One’s Stance*

Overview

In this activity students will practice the skill of grounding by trying out different stances and seeing which ones bring about the greatest sense of well-being in their bodies. You may need to prepare the space first to allow for students to push down on a desk as well as push and lean against a wall. Explain that you will be learning a skill called “grounding” which is to help the body feel better, safer, more secure, and more stable. In that sense it is quite like resourcing, but instead of thinking of a resource, it involves moving your

body until it is most comfortable. Because our nervous systems constantly monitor the posture of our bodies and the contact of our bodies with objects (including what is supporting us, such as the floor, beds, or chairs), simply changing our stance can help the nervous system regulate itself better.

Lead your students through different postures (standing, sitting, pushing down on their desk, leaning against the wall, pushing against the wall), pausing briefly during each posture to allow them to track their sensations, and then allowing them to share what sensations (if any) they notice. Tracking allows a deepening of the experience and the building of body literacy. Conclude by allowing them to practice the stance or posture that they like best, and note that they can use stances and postures like this when they need to calm down or help their bodies feel better.

Sample script

- *“We can use the sense of touch to practice a skill called “grounding.”*
- *We are going to try a little experiment and see if we feel differently depending on what our body is doing.*
- *Who remembers what a sensation is?*
- *That’s right – Sensations are just things we can feel or sense with our body.*
- *Since we’re all sitting now, let’s notice the sensations in our bodies that come from sitting. Feel free to change your way of sitting to one that is most comfortable for you. Now let’s track our sensations by paying attention to them. [Pause.]*
- *Now let’s all stand. Stand in the way that is most comfortable for you.*

- *Let's track what sensations we notice in our body now that we're standing. Let's see what we're feeling on the inside.*[Pause.]
- *Who would like to share?* [Allow for student comments on what they are sensing.]
- *Raise your hand if you feel better standing. Raise your hand if you felt better sitting.*
- *That's interesting, isn't it? Tracking helps us know which feels better for us. It is different for each of us.*
- *What we're doing is called "grounding."*
- *We use grounding to help our bodies feel more safe, strong, secure, or happy.*
- *That's because our nervous system always pays attention to the position of our bodies and what we're touching. It senses what position we are in and it responds to that. It can feel better or not so good depending on how we're standing or what we're touching.*
- *Now that we are paying attention to sensations, we can see if the way we hold our body changes those sensations.*
- *Sometimes by changing the way we are standing or sitting can help us feel better.*
- *Let's try something different. Let's push down on the table with our hands. It doesn't have to be too hard. And let's track what sensations we feel on the inside.* [Pause.] *(If students are sitting in a circle away from tables, they can place their hands on the bench or floor and push hard to lift themselves up off their seat, feeling the contact and also the pressure in their arms.)*
- *What sensations do you notice on the inside?* [Allow students to share.]
- *Let's try a different thing. Let's push against the wall with our hands. While we're doing that, let's do tracking. Let's notice what sensations are in our body when we push like this and where in our body we feel those sensations.* [Pause.]
- *What sensations are you noticing?* [Allow students to share.] *Are they pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?*
- *Let's try leaning against the walls with our backs. And let's track while we do this, paying attention to our sensations on the inside.* [Pause.]
- *What sensations are you noticing now?* [Allow students to share.] *Are they pleasant, unpleasant, or neutral?*
- *Raise your hand if you felt better pushing against the wall. Raise your hand if you feel better leaning against the wall. Raise your hand if you felt better pushing down on the table or seat.*
- *Now let's each do what we prefer. If you want to sit, do that. Or you can stand, you can push down on the table, you can lean against the wall, or you can push against the wall. Let's all do the one we like best.*
- *Now let's pay attention to the sensations inside our body by tracking. You might like to close your eyes to help you feel the sensations.*
- *What do you notice? Do we all like the same things?*
- *Did you find one that made you feel better?*
- *When we do this, we learn what feels best for us. We can use this practice of grounding to help our body be calmer if it isn't feeling calm."*

Grounding

If you like you can add other postures as well, even including lying down or sitting with one's back against the wall. Arm positions can also be used, such as folding one's arms. Remember to encourage them to use tracking to notice the sensations in their bodies, as this will help them see which postures are most helpful.

INSIGHT ACTIVITY #2 | 10 minutes Grounding with an Object*

Overview

Grounding is the physical contact of our body with an object or surface. This can include the ground, a chair, or the wall, as in the previous activity. But it can also involve holding an object. When we enjoy the sensations that arise from holding an object, attention to those sensations can also help us relax. In this activity, you will allow your students to choose an object they like from a selection that you provide (or ask them to bring objects of their own) and they will practice holding a few of the objects and noticing what sensations arise in their bodies when they do this. You may wish to have a variety of soft objects or objects with nice textures as well as some hard objects like wooden objects or stones. Students can also use their resource stone from the previous learning experience. If you will not have enough objects for them, you can ask them to bring in something from home prior to doing this activity.

Sample script

- *"We can do grounding by holding or touching things also.*
- *Here are some things we can use to practice grounding. You can each choose something you think you might enjoy holding.*
- *Let's sit and hold our object. You can feel it with your hands or place it on your lap.*

- *Notice how it feels.*
- *Who can describe their object using sensation words? What does it feel like?*
- *Now let's do tracking. We're going to pay attention to the sensations in our body as we hold our object.*
- *Let's be silent for a moment and notice any sensations in our body as we hold our object.*
[Pause.]
- *What did you notice? Where did you notice it in the body?*
- *Let's be silent again and do some more tracking.*
[Pause.]
- *What did you notice this time?*
- *Would anyone like to change their object?*
[Repeat once allowing students to pick a different object if they didn't particularly like their first one.]
- *This is also grounding."*

After you do this a few times, you may find that some students like particular objects especially and can use them for grounding. If this is the case, you may wish to leave some of these objects in the classroom to allow students to use them for grounding when they feel the need to as suits your classroom.

INSIGHT ACTIVITY #3 | 10 minutes Grounding with a Part of the Body*

Overview

This activity is an extension of further ways students can use grounding, in this case by becoming aware of their feet and hands while lightly pressing down on a table, leaning against

the wall, sitting, or standing. As in other grounding activities, what is important is to combine grounding with tracking (awareness of sensations in the body).

Sample script

- *“We can do grounding by becoming aware of a part of our body in relationship to a surface.*
 - *Let’s try placing our hand(s) against a table, a wall or the floor.*
 - *Let’s try paying attention to our feet and how they are positioned on the ground.*
 - *Now let’s do tracking. We are going to pay attention to the sensations in our body.*
 - *Feel free to move or shift at any time to make yourself more comfortable.*
 - *Let’s be silent for a moment and notice any sensations in our body. [Pause.]*
 - *What did you notice? Where do you notice it in the body?*
 - *Let’s be silent again and do some more tracking. [Pause.]*
 - *What did you notice this time?*
 - *Did you like paying attention to your hands, your feet or both?*
 - *This is also grounding.”*
-

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *“What did we discover about grounding?*
- *Does anyone remember a sensation that they felt or heard someone else share?*
- *When do you think you could use grounding?”*

The Resilient Zone

PURPOSE

The purpose of this learning experience is to introduce students to the concept of the resilient zone, which you can also call the “OK zone” or “zone of well-being,” using stories and charts. The resilient zone refers to when our mind and body are in a state of well-being. When we are in our resilient zone we can handle the stresses that happen during the day and react with the best part of ourselves. Stress can bump us out of our resilient zone into our high or low zone. When we are stuck in the high zone we may feel anxious, agitated, nervous, angry, stressed out, and so on. Our body is dysregulated, making it hard for us to concentrate, learn new information, or make good decisions. When we are stuck in the low zone, we may feel tired, lacking in energy, unexcited

about things we normally like, unmotivated, and deflated.

The critical insights aimed at here are: stressors can knock us out of our resilient zone; all people experience being stuck in the high zone or stuck in the low zone; when we are stuck in one of those two zones, we tend not to make the best decisions and we don’t feel good; there are specific practices we can do to return to the resilient zone; once in the resilient zone, we experience more well-being, our bodies are healthier, we are kinder to ourselves and others, and we make better decisions. Don’t be concerned if your students do not reach these critical insights right away, as they are reinforced in the following two learning experiences also.

FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 29–31.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

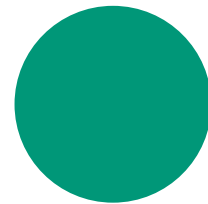
Students will:

- Understand our three zones.
- Develop the skill of recognizing which zone they are in at any given moment through tracking.
- Develop the skill of returning to the resilient zone using resourcing and grounding.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The resilient zone pre-drawn out on chart paper/ white board
- Enough copies of the provided story to distribute to pairs or trios.
- For optional insight activity: another story to diagram

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation
(1E)

ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- 1A.1: Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- 1E.1: Balancing the Body

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“I’ll talk us through the check-in and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *Take a moment to give your attention to the sensations inside your body. You might want to check how much energy you have, whether you are feeling heavier or lighter, warmer, or cooler, relaxed and soft, or tight and jumpy. I invite you to notice what’s going on.*
- *Last time we talked about grounding – using our body and senses to help us calm down and feel better. Can you remember something you tried that felt pleasant or neutral to you? [Take enough responses to feel that most strategies have been represented.] Is anyone having trouble remembering these? [If so, you might want to make a list to post in the classroom.]*
- *Is there one form of grounding you would like to try right now? You may get up and move silently now if you wish. [Allow some time for individual choice and exploration, or you may want to choose one experience for the whole group to try.]*
- *How do you feel now? Can you tell whether that exercise was helpful to you? Do you notice any differences in your body?” [Allow students to share.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

The Resilient Zone

Overview

Here you will present and discuss the concept of the resilient zone, the high zone, and the low zone, using a story and charts to facilitate understanding and set up for the next activity, which goes through the day of a child (“Nelson”) and how that child experiences the day in his body and nervous system.

A note on safety: When teaching about the three zones, it is safest to use a proxy at first (such as the puppet, pictures, or emojis) to represent being stuck in the high or low zones and to ask students about what they think that proxy is feeling or sensing. This is a way of teaching the three zones indirectly at first. It is not recommended to ask students direct questions such as, “What do you feel like when you’re stuck in your high zone?” or “What is it like for us to be stuck in the high zone?” or “Do you remember a time when you were stuck in your high zone?” Doing so could inadvertently cause a student to experience a traumatic flashback or to describe the worst thing that ever happened to them. Similarly, it is best to avoid creating scenarios to teach this material that involve students directly simulating being stuck in their high zone or low zone, rather than through a proxy or a role play.

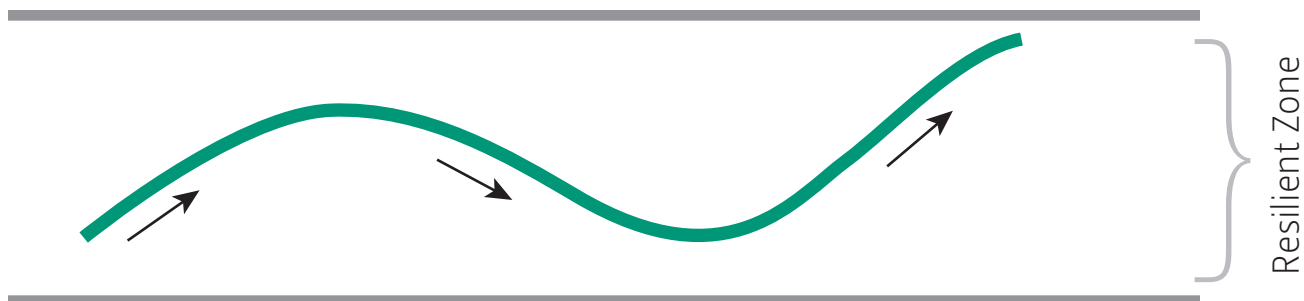
Leading the Activity

Explain that you are going to read a story together about a character named Nelson and that you are going to talk about Nelson’s day and ask them to think about what Nelson might be feeling as he goes about his day. In order to do this, explain that you will be using a chart that shows different zones or different ways Nelson could be feeling in his body.

Show a chart of the resilient zone or draw one on the board or a piece of chart paper. Your drawing should have two horizontal lines and a wavy line between them inside it going up and down.

The Resilient Zone

THE RESILIENT ZONE



(c) Trauma Resource Institute

Graphic adapted from an original graphic of Peter Levine/Heller, original slide design by Genie Everett

Explain that this drawing shows how our bodies, and specifically our nervous systems, go throughout the day: sometimes getting more excited or even upset, sometimes feeling more tired or low in energy.

Explain that the middle zone is the “resilient zone” (or “OK zone” or “zone of well-being” or another name your class can come up with.) This is where we’ll put Nelson when he’s feeling OK. He could be experiencing a range of emotions and feelings in this zone, but his body is still healthy and he can make good decisions. He can be OK sad or OK mad and still be in his resilient zone/OK zone.

You can explain that “resilient” means the ability to deal with and handle difficulties; the ability to bounce back; inner strength, fortitude, or toughness.

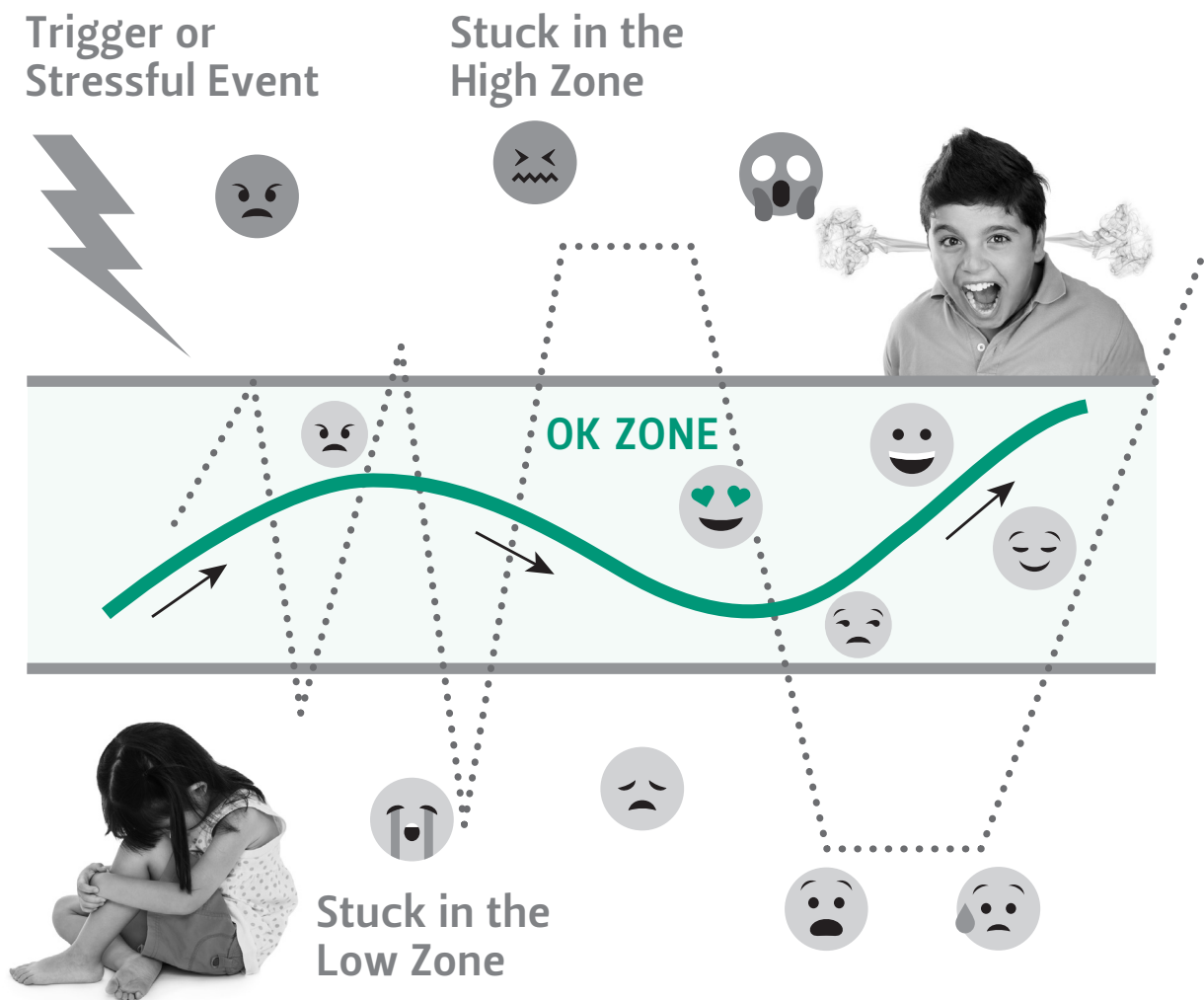
Draw the lightning bolt symbol (or some other symbol) to represent the stressor or trigger. Explain that sometimes things happen that upset

Nelson or make him feel less safe. If we come across something like this in the story, we can use a lightning bolt to indicate that something might be stressing Nelson. This might even knock Nelson out of his resilient zone. If that happens, he could get stuck in the high or low zone.

Now add two pictures that represent a child being stuck in the high zone or low zone, such as the ones provided in the graphic. (You may print out the accompanying graphic and use that instead.)

Ask your students what they think the boy in the high zone is feeling – really angry, upset nervous, anxious? If Nelson gets stuck in the high zone, what might he sense on the inside?

You may need to provide examples first. Write down the words they give you, using a different color (such as red) for sensation words. Then repeat this with the low zone. What do they think the girl in the low zone is feeling–sad, tired, alone? If Nelson were to get stuck in the low zone, what



might he sense on the inside? Write down the words they give you, using a different color for sensation words.

Then tell the story of Nelson included in the sample script below, pausing to check (a) what the students think Nelson might be sensing in his body; (b) where he might be on the resilient zone chart; (c) what he could do to get back to the resilient zone or stay there.

Make sure to conclude the discussion by reminding the students that we have already learned a lot

of skills that we can use to return to our resilient zone. Invite them to resource and/or ground as you end the discussion.

Sample script

- *“We’ve been learning about our bodies and in particular our nervous system.*
- *What have we learned that our nervous system does?*
- *We’ve been paying attention to our sensations. And we’ve learned how to calm ourselves using resourcing, grounding and Help Now! strategies.*

The Resilient Zone

- We're going to read a story together about a character named Nelson.
- Nelson is the same age as most of you. He also goes to a school like you, and we're going to work to understand the nervous system better by thinking about what Nelson goes through in a day.
- To do that we're going to use a picture that is helpful for understanding our nervous system. This picture shows us what Nelson's nervous system is doing as he goes about his day.
- This middle part is called our resilient zone [or OK zone or zone of well-being.] That's because in the middle here, Nelson's body is feeling resilient.
- Has anyone heard the word "resilient"? Who can take a guess at what the meaning is? [Allow students to share.]
- Resilient means we are strong on the inside, we are in control and we can handle any difficulties. Even if difficult things happen, since we are resilient, we can bounce back and be in control again.
- When we're in our resilient zone, we might have some difficulties, but we can deal with them because we have inner strength. We are not super stressed-out or super troubled because we have learned how to get our bodies and minds into a better place that helps us feel better.
- How do you think Nelson feels in his body when he's here in this zone?
- Through the day we might go up and down [draw a wavy line in the resilient zone]. The line going up means we might get excited and have lots of energy, or the line going down means we might get sleepy or be a bit low in energy. But we can still do that in our resilient zone.
- But then something scary happens or something we don't like [draw or point to the lightning bolt]. And it knocks us out of our resilient zone. And we might get stuck in our high zone.
- How do you think this boy [on the graphic] feels when he gets stuck in his high zone? [Allow responses.]
- Yes, many of you noted what it feels like to be stuck in the high zone – he doesn't like it. He feels anxious and scared. He also might feel angry and upset! He feels out of control, like he doesn't know what he's going to do. He feels a lot of stress in the high zone. And sometimes feeling a lot of stress can make him go to the low zone as well.
- How do you think that girl who is stuck in the low zone is feeling? [Allow responses.]
- Yes, many of you noted what it feels like in the low zone – she might feel low in energy and sad. She just doesn't feel like doing things. She doesn't feel like playing the games she usually likes; she's just not interested. She may just want to be alone. She may feel lonely, even if other people are around. She thinks it feels bad to be stuck in the low zone and she feels better when she can get back to the resilient zone."

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 12 minutes

Nelson's Day

Overview

The purpose of this activity is to go through Nelson's day, which is a typical day in the life of a child roughly the same age your students. A sample script is provided for you, but before doing this activity you should feel free to change it to fit the typical experiences your own students might have so that they can best relate to what Nelson is going through.

[Note that once you go through this exercise once with your students, they should be able to do a similar exercise with any story that you read to them or tell them: that is, they will be able to tell you what the character(s) is feeling in his or her body and where they might be in their resilient zone (or out of it).]

As you read the story of Nelson's day together, you will let the students guide the process by asking them where Nelson is on the resilient zone chart. Invite students to share in the job of the read-aloud if they like. An asterisk is placed at each point in the story where you can pause and ask your students to guide you as to what Nelson might be feeling and where he is on the resilient zone chart. Ask, "What sensations do you think Nelson is feeling right now in his body?" After they've shared that, ask, "Where is Nelson in his three zones?" Ask them to be specific—if he's in the resilient zone, is he in the middle or the upper part of it or the lower part of it? Or has he been bumped out of his resilient zone? If so, he is stuck on high, and if so how high? As they give you the answers, you will be drawing a wavy line from left to right that chronicles Nelson's day and where he is on the chart based on what they say. Or, invite your students to help you draw the diagram.

At some points the students may feel something stressful has happened that knocks Nelson out of his resilient zone. At those times you can ask, "Should we put a lightning bolt here? Should it be a big lightning bolt or a small one?" If your students think these bump Nelson out of his resilient zone, you will draw the line accordingly to show that. Or, invite your students to help you draw the diagram.

Also when you see an asterisk in the story and pause, you can ask your students to recommend things Nelson could do to calm himself or make himself feel better. As Nelson does those things, they may decide

that he returns to his resilient zone. Note that you do not need to adhere rigidly to every time an asterisk appears in the story. These are just suggested moments when you can pause and check-in. Invite students to suggest other points to pause and check-in. Most likely, your interaction with the students will be more fluid than this and you may wish to pause more or less frequently depending on how they are participating in the activity. (Let them know you will be pausing at the asterisks, and possibly elsewhere, since they will be reading along.)

At the end, you will ask them to look at the whole picture and share what they notice. Lastly, explore the idea that if Nelson thinks about his day, and knows when stressful things tend to happen, might he be able to prepare in advance for those things so that they have less of a chance of bumping him out of his resilient zone?

End with an opportunity for them to practice resourcing and grounding themselves.

Nelson's Story

Nelson wakes up. It's so early! He doesn't have to leave for school until 8am, but for some reason he's very excited and he woke up earlier than usual. Why?*

Nelson's mother comes into his bedroom. "Nelson! You're up early. Why don't you brush your teeth and get dressed." She begins to open his closet and say, "Would you like me to get your clothes out for you?"

"No! I can do it myself!" Nelson says.*

"Okay, that's great," Nelson's mother says.

Nelson searches his closet and the clothes hamper for his favorite jeans and t-shirt until he finds them. The jeans are soft in all the right places, and he likes

The Resilient Zone

the way he looks in the shirt. Then he looks for his favorite sneakers, and he finds them in the bathroom where he puts them on. He looks at himself in the long mirror and thinks, “I look good.”*

Nelson brushes his teeth and goes downstairs. His mother is preparing breakfast for him. It’s eggs and roast potatoes, his favorite. “Yay!” he says as he settles down to eat.*

“Nelson, you’re going to be late,” says his mother. “Hurry up and finish your food. Do you have your book bag?”

“No, it’s upstairs,” Nelson says as he’s eating.

“Go and get it,” says his mother. “And don’t forget to put your homework assignment in it.”

“But I’m still eating!” says Nelson. He is enjoying his food so much.

“You have to go and get it now or you’ll be late,” says his mother. “Go now.”*

Nelson has to take a bus to school. He almost misses the bus! But he gets out just in time to catch it. When he finally gets on the bus and sits down next to his friend Arya, he says, “Phew! I just made it!”*

Nelson arrives at school and goes to his classroom. The teacher comes in and has all the students sit in a circle.

“Now it’s time for us to show our assignments,” the teacher says. “Remember I gave you some homework to do?”

Nelson suddenly remembers that the teacher gave them some homework to do, but he didn’t do it.

“Oh no,” he thinks. “How did I forget about that again?”

“Let’s go in a circle,” the teacher says. One by one, each student shows their homework. Nelson knows it’s going to be his turn soon.

“Now it’s your turn, Nelson,” says the teacher and points at him.*

“I didn’t do it,” said Nelson. “I’m sorry.”

“Don’t worry,” says the teacher and smiles at him kindly. “You can bring it tomorrow.”*

Nelson sees that a few other students also didn’t do their homework, and the teacher tells them that they too can bring theirs tomorrow.*

At lunchtime, Nelson is so happy because it’s his favorite food: pizza!*

Nelson goes outside to play for recess after lunch, when they always have a little time to play before coming back to class. He sees some other kids playing kickball. “I love kickball!” Nelson thinks.

But when he goes over to play with them, they don’t let him play. “You can’t play with us!” they shout. “You’re no good!”

Nelson is surprised and sad. He goes off by himself and stands at the edge of the playground. Suddenly he doesn’t feel like playing with anyone any more. His whole body suddenly feels very heavy.*

Then Nelson’s friend Theresa comes over to him.

“Hey, Nelson,” she says, “we’re playing kickball too. Won’t you come and play with us? We’d love to have you on our team!”

“Really?” says Nelson. “Okay!”*

He runs over and plays kickball with Theresa and the other students until recess is over.

At the end of the school day Nelson goes home. He does his homework, has dinner with his family, and then crawls into bed. He’s so tired and his legs hurt a bit from playing so much kickball, but the soft pillows feel so good under his head.*

The End

OPTIONAL INSIGHT ACTIVITY #2 | 15 minutes

Practicing Naming Sensations and Zones with Stories*

Overview

This activity offers a way for small groups of students to practice noticing and naming sensations and zones through the use of stories. Select a story for your class to read – it can be almost any story or you could write it yourself. It could just be part of a story, enough to give them something to diagram.

Sample Script

- *“In pairs or trios, your group is going to read a story together and chart a character’s experiences with the three zones.*
- *Together, your group will create a chart like the one we made together in a large group.*
- *When you are finished, we will share out as a whole group.”*

DEBRIEF | 4 minutes

- *“Who would like to explain a part of what the drawing of the resilient zone means?*
- *How do you think we’d know if someone else was in their high zone?*
- *What about their low zone?*
- *What do you think are other words we could use to explain to someone what resilient means?*
- *Do you think most people have been stuck in the high zone some time? What about the low zone?*
- *What did you learn today that you want to remember because you feel it might be helpful sometime?”*

CHAPTER 2

Building Resiliency

LEARNING EXPERIENCE

6

Exploring the Resilient Zone Through Scenarios

PURPOSE

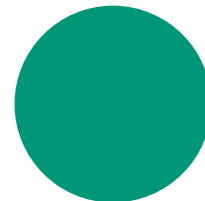
The purpose of this learning experience is to build off of Learning Experience 5, “Exploring the Resilient Zone through Stories,” by allowing students to move on a map of the three zones on the ground according to how they feel the characters in specific scenarios might be feeling. This helps them to further embody their understanding of resiliency and the nervous system, while still maintaining an indirect approach, in that you are not asking them what it is like when they themselves are stuck in their high or low zones, but rather you are exploring this through characters in a scenario.

This learning experience aims at the same critical insights as the previous, but also supports embodied understanding through repeated practice. Gradually, practicing these skills can expand your students’ resilient zones, making it harder for them to be bumped out into the high or low zones by stressors and making it easier for them to return to their resilient zone if they are bumped out.

FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 29–31.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



Self-Regulation
(1E)

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Understand our three zones.
- Develop the skill of recognizing which zone they are in at any given moment through tracking.
- Develop the skill of returning to the resilient zone using resourcing and grounding.

ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **1E.1:** Balancing the Body

LENGTH

30 minutes

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The chart(s) of the resilient zone and nervous system to put up for students to see
- Colored tape to place on the floor to create the three zones

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

- *“I’ll talk us through the check-in and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *Take a moment to give your attention to the sensations inside your body. You might want to check how much energy you have, whether you are feeling heavier or lighter, warmer or cooler, relaxed and soft, or tight and jumpy. I invite you to notice what’s going on.*
- *Last time we talked about grounding – using our body and senses to help us calm down and feel better. Can you remember something you tried that felt pleasant or neutral to you? [Take enough responses to feel that most strategies have been represented.] Is anyone having trouble remembering these? [If so, you might want to make a list to post in the classroom.]*
- *Is there one form of grounding you would like to try right now? You may get up and move silently now if you wish. [Allow some time for individual choice and exploration, or you may want to choose one experience for the whole group to try.]*
- *How do you feel now? Can you tell whether that exercise was helpful to you? Do you notice any differences in your body.” [Allow students to share.]*

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

Exploring the Three Zones through Scenarios*

Overview

In this activity, you will provide different scenarios and the students will stand along a line or diagram on the ground that shows the three zones, indicating where they think the character would be in their bodies based on that scenario. They will share what it’s like to be in those zones. Then they will suggest

to each other what the character could do to return to their resilient zone. Those stuck in a high or low zone will then do the practices suggested, and can move if they find themselves returning to the resilient zone. This is an activity you may wish to repeat multiple times.

Leading the Activity

Draw a visual representation on the ground of the three zones, which will be your “zone map.” An easy way to do this is to use colored tape and simply draw two parallel lines, thereby creating the three zones. The resilient zone will be the space between the two lines, the high zone will be above the top line, and the low zone will be below the bottom line. If you like you can also put signs on the ground that say “High,” “Resilient” (or “Well-Being,”) and “Low.”

Review the zones and the word “resilient.” If you feel it would be helpful, because your students don’t quite have a firm grasp on the word “resilient,” you can also write the word “resilient” on the board or on chart paper and ask students to name other words that are like resilient, creating a word map.

Next ask for 2–4 volunteers who will stand on the zone map based on a scenario you read. Explain that everyone else will be an observer. You will then read out a scenario from the samples below (or make up your own) and ask these volunteers to stand where they think the character(s) in the story would be. Tell them that the three zones are a continuum: for example, they can be in the resilient zone but towards the high end of it (for example, if they are energetic or excited, but not stressed out), just into the high zone (slightly stressed), or very far high in the high zone (highly stressed out).

Exploring the Resilient Zone Through Scenarios

After they've found their positions, ask the volunteers to share why they are standing where they are standing (they do not all have to agree or stand in the same place), and ask them to share what they might be sensing in their bodies.

Then ask the rest of the class (the observers) for suggestions as to what the character(s) could do to feel better. They should suggest some of the skills (Help Now! skills, resourcing or grounding, or other activities.) Ask the volunteers (and observers if you like) if they would like to practice what has been suggested. Those who wish to can then do the skill. Then ask them how the character would now be feeling, and if they'd like to move to a place that better describes where the character would be now.

Repeat with a new scenario and new volunteers.

Once students understand the process, using scenarios that have actually happened in your class or between students can very effective: this helps develop the important skills of empathy, perspective-taking, and conflict transformation that are more fully explored later in SEE Learning.

Note that this activity is a soft way of exploring the zones and the practices due to the fact that you are using scenarios rather than asking students directly where they are in their bodies. Because our nervous systems are constantly reacting to circumstances, however, it is very likely that you will in fact have students who may be stuck in a high zone or low zone. Our nervous systems also react to thoughts and imagination as if they were real. Therefore, the practice combines imagination with reality, and it is good for you as the teacher to be aware of this and see that activation of the nervous system is going to happen, and that the

practices the students use can help them regulate their bodies in the moment.

Sample Scenarios

These scenarios are offered only as examples. Please feel free to change the names of the characters to be appropriate for your class or to choose situations more appropriate for your class. Take care to choose names that are not names that your students have. While you can allow students to be wherever they feel they should be and explain why, some suggestions of typical responses are provided in brackets.

Here are the questions to use as a jumping off point for each scenario:

- *“How do you think X is feeling? Does anyone think X might be feeling something different? What are some sensations X may be feeling?”*

Scenarios

- *“Stanley is a student your age, and he has to perform in front of the whole school. [He might be stressed out, and stuck in the high zone or low zone if he is scared of public speaking. He may be excited but in the resilient zone because he likes public speaking.]*
- *Keiko is in bed at home. She can't sleep because tomorrow is her birthday and she knows she's going to be getting some wonderful presents. [She might be excited but not stressed, and therefore probably not stuck in the high zone.]*
- *Jasmine goes to sit with her friends at lunch, but none of them saved her a seat. Instead, they all spread out at the table so there isn't room for her. She's left holding her tray with nowhere to sit. [Probably stuck in the low zone, or in the lower part of the resilient zone. Alternatively, she could get angry and be stuck in the high zone or in the higher part of her resilient zone.]*

- *Cameron shows up for school and is asked by his teacher for his homework. But he didn't do any of it.*
- *Steven is at home one evening. He hears his older brother fighting with his mother and both of them are shouting.*
- *Claire is at home with her parents on the weekend. They say, "We're going out and you are going to watch your two brothers." This is the first time she will babysit at night with no adults in the house.*
- *Aliyah is out at the mall with her parents, but they've allowed her to shop on her own for an hour. When she shows up at their meeting place, her parents aren't there. Fifteen minutes pass, and they don't answer her texts. [You can also ask where her parents may be since they are running late.]*
- *Kiara comes to school to find that her class has thrown her a surprise birthday party!*
- *Tyler and Santiago are at a haunted house. "Let's go in! It will be fun!" says Tyler. "I don't want to go," says Santiago. "No, let's go!" says Tyler and he pulls Santiago inside." [Have some students show where they think Tyler would be and some Santiago.]*

You may wish to repeat this activity a few times. Use these examples to come up with your own scenarios, developing ones that will be closer to situations your students might encounter.

DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

- *"Let's take a moment to bring to mind one of our resources. You can take one out of your resource kit if you like and touch it or hold it.*
- *Let's pay attention to our resource for a moment and notice any sensations that arise in the body.*
- *If you notice a pleasant or neutral sensation, let's stay with that for a few moments. If you notice an unpleasant sensation, let's find a place that feels better in the body and then rest there.*
- *What do you notice?*
- *What did you learn today that you want to remember because you feel it might be helpful sometime?"*

CHAPTER 2**Building Resiliency****LEARNING
EXPERIENCE****7**

How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body

PURPOSE

The purpose of this final learning experience in Chapter 2 is to return to the foundational concepts of compassion, happiness and safety explored in chapter 1 and tie in what has been learned in Chapter 2. Now that the students have a greater understanding of their bodies, how to calm them, and the resiliency zone, they can connect this with what they learned about happiness, compassion, and the value of class agreements. Stress and a sense of threat can knock us out of our resilient zone, making us feel uncomfortable and actually releasing chemicals in our bodies and dysregulating our nervous system in ways that are unhealthy and can even cause long-term damage. Since students now have first-person experience exploring how we can get bumped out of our resiliency zones,

and how uncomfortable that can feel, and also know that we can help each other return to our resiliency zones through compassion, they can understand the importance of compassion and their class agreements on a deeper level. They are helping each other to be happy and healthy, and are even helping each others' bodies to be happy and healthy.

The critical insights aimed at in this learning experience include: experience a lack of compassion can make us feel stressed and unsafe and knock us out of our resilient zone; experiencing compassion can help us feel safe; having less stress is healthy for our bodies; by being compassionate and respecting others, we can help others feel safer, happier, and more healthy.

FRAMEWORK

For more context on the concepts behind this learning experience, please see the Framework, p. 39–40.

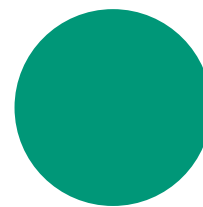
LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Synthesize the class agreements with their understanding of how the body experiences compassion, safety and happiness.
- Recognize the relationship between nervous system dysregulation and physical health.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- The chart of class agreements and the chart of helping actions that were created in Chapter 1
- The resilient zone chart

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS

Interpersonal Awareness
(2A)

ENDURING CAPABILITIES

- **1A.1:** Attending to Our Body and Sensations
- **2C.2:** Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion

LENGTH

30 minutes

CHECK-IN | 4 minutes

- *“Let’s take out our tool kits and see if there’s something in there we’d like to use. Or if you’d rather do grounding, you can find a comfortable way to sit, stand or lean.*
- *I’ll talk us through the check-in and then you can share out loud at the end.*
- *If you’re resourcing, then pick one of your personal resources and hold it in your hands or place it in front of you. Let your eyes rest on it, or close your eyes and feel it carefully with your hands.*
- *If you’re grounding, just bring your attention to your body and what it is in contact with.*
- *Let’s now take a few moments to do tracking and pay attention to the sensations inside our bodies. [Pause.]*
- *If you find a pleasant or neutral sensation just pay attention to that and watch it. See if it changes or stays the same.*
- *If you haven’t found a pleasant or neutral sensation, see if you can shift to another part of your body to find a place that feels better. [Pause.]*
- *What did you notice?” [Allow students to share.]*

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 8+ minutes

Happiness, Compassion, and the Body

Overview

The point of this discussion is to help your students understand that what they have been experiencing in the body has implications for health and happiness overall. Our nervous systems are designed to keep us alive, and as such respond to perceived threats or the need to mobilize with activation of the sympathetic

nervous system. This stress response releases chemicals in our bodies and increases inflammation as the body prepares for potential danger. This is not a problem in the short term, but chronic inflammation and stress gradually weakens our bodies and makes us susceptible to a whole range of physical and mental illnesses.

This means that when we feel safer, calmer, and/or happier, our bodies are physically healthier and can do things like learn, grow, develop, rest, digest, regenerate, and heal. When we are feeling unsafe and unhappy, our bodies shut down the systems that allow us to do those things, instead preparing us for danger. It’s important to recognize here that since we are social beings, our nervous system experiences social threats (such as the danger of social rejection, social exclusion, or social isolation) as just as potent as physical danger.

When we understand this, we can realize that how we treat each other matters deeply. Being mean to someone presents them with a social threat, and is likely to cause them to feel stress and a lack of safety, making their bodies less healthy and contributing to illness. Being compassionate to someone is the opposite: it helps them feel safe, making their bodies more healthy. Since we want health and happiness for ourselves, we want others to treat us with compassion and we want to feel safe around them. It makes sense therefore to show to others what we want for ourselves: kindness and compassion.

Sample script

- *“We’ve been exploring the sensations in our body. When we pay attention to them, we learn if we’re feeling good, happy and safe, or if we’re feeling a bit nervous, unsafe, or unhappy.*

How Compassion and Safety Affect the Body

- We've also learned what we can do to make ourselves feel happier, calmer, and safer in our bodies. What are some of the things we've learned to do for that?" [Allow for just enough sharing that students are connecting with the last lessons.]

Show students the resiliency zone chart again.

- "When we are in the resilient zone, can someone show us what that may feel like in your body? Why?"
- What do you think happens inside our bodies when we are in our resilient zone? Do you think it's healthy for our bodies to be in our resilient zone? Why or why not?
- What do you think happens inside our bodies when we get stuck in the high zone a lot? Do you think it's healthy for our bodies to be stuck in the high zone? Why or why not?
- What about the low zone? Why?
- Let's take a moment to look at something in our tool kit, think of a resource, or ground. Be aware of what happens inside.

For this next section, if you like, you can show a picture of the human body showing the autonomic nervous system and/or the organs inside the body.

- Scientists have discovered that when we are feeling unsafe or when we are stuck in our high or low zones for a long time, it is not healthy for our bodies.
- We get stressed, and our nervous systems release a lot of chemicals in our bodies that could make us sick if we're not careful.

- What are some things we need our nervous system to do? It's the part of the body inside that controls our inner organs, like our stomach, our heart, our lungs. It helps us digest things when we eat. It helps us sleep and rest. It even helps us grow our body to be bigger and stronger. It has to keep our heart beating and our lungs breathing and our blood flowing.
- It's the nervous system that does all these things. When we're in the resilient zone, then it can do all these things just fine. It also protects us properly against germs, diseases, and illness.
- But when we're stuck in the high zone or low zone, our nervous system has a hard time doing these things. Instead, it gets ready for danger and it stops doing things we need to be doing to be healthy.
- That's okay if there's a real danger, and we need to run fast or do something quickly. But if there's no real danger, then it doesn't need to be ready like that.
- Science also suggests that we often experience social threats in a similar way to physical threats. Fear of rejection or exclusion can be worse than fear of physical pain. Does that sound right to you?
- When we're stuck in the high or low zone, what do you think happens to our heart? To our breathing? To our ability to digest food? To our ability to rest?
- If we can't digest our food properly, or if we can't rest properly, or if we can't grow properly, then that's a problem, isn't it?
- If we are not in danger and our nervous system does not need to take action to keep us safer, in which zone would we want to be?

- *Would we want to make each other feel unsafe and bump each other into their high zone or low zone? What might we do that could bump someone into the high zone or low zone?* [Allow sharing.]
 - *What might we do that could help someone stay in the resiliency zone/OK zone or get back into the resilient zone if they were bumped out?"* [Allow sharing.]
-

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 13+ minutes

Acting Out the Class Agreements with Tracking

In this practice, students will work together to create little skits. If you have the ability to do so, you can video record these skits and tell your class that you'll be making a short movie.

Using the class agreements and the helping actions they created in Chapter 1, explain that they will create stories based on these agreements being followed or broken and then will act these stories out (and make a movie, if you have the ability to do so). When creating stories, be sure to use made-up names for characters that are not the actual names of students in your class. It may work to have one student pretend to be in need and have one or two other students see that need and engage in helping actions.

After a story has been created, ask for volunteers to act it out. Explain that when you say "Go!" they will start the story and everyone else will be quiet and watch. When you say "Slow Motion!" they will slow down their actions and take a moment to notice sensations in their body (tracking). You might also first ask the observing students what they think the characters in the story might be sensing in their bodies, and which zone they might be in. When you say "Go!" again, the acting students will continue the

story. When you say "The End!" they can stop acting out the story.

After the scenario has been acted out, which may only take a minute, allow both those who volunteered, and then those who observed, to share what they saw and felt. Then ask the observers what helping actions they might have done had they been in the story.

When this debrief is completed, have your students create another story if there is time.

You can repeat this reflective practice several times, each time emphasizing different class agreements or activities. You can also draw from actual scenarios that have happened in class, seeing how they relate to the class agreements and walking students through the scenario while having them pay attention to their sensations and prompting them to suggest what skills or actions could be helpful.

You can expand on this activity by having your students explore some of the specific ways stress affects the body, and there are many opportunities for infusing this material in learning about human biology and physiology. Understanding the ways stress, and in particular chronic stress, can be detrimental to health can serve as an impetus to get better at practices of self-regulation and to treat others with kindness and compassion. As you do so, however, it is recommended that you maintain a focus on resiliency, since students will not be able to overcome all the stress in their lives, and you do not wish to make them fear stress or become unduly worried about the negative impact of stress on their health. Emphasize their natural resilience and their ability to use the practices they are learning to minimize over time the harmful effects of stress on themselves and others.

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DEBRIEF | 5 minutes

Acting Out the Class Agreements with Tracking

- *“What did you learn today about our class agreements?”*
- *How do our class agreements affect our bodies?*
- *Is happiness something we feel inside the body? How do we know that? What about compassion?*
- *Is there anything you think we should add to the class agreements after what we did today?*
- *Is there anything you learned or practiced about compassion that you might like to use again sometime?”*