

Habits of a System's Thinker: Considering Impact

PURPOSE

In this learning experience, students will continue to examine a system/issue of their choice. Students will continue to engage in systems thinking by practicing ethical discernment when considering the impact of personal and group choice and responsibility within a system. Students will consider both short- and long-term consequences of actions, identifying possible root causes of a problem, noticing unintended consequences and devising possible solutions to the problem. The final reflection will prompt them to investigate the downsides of not engaging in systems thinking and the benefits of being a systems thinker.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Engage in systems thinking when considering both short- and long-term consequences of actions, identifying a possible root cause of a problem, and notice unintended consequences.
- Practice ethical discernment when considering the impact and responsibility of an individual or group choice.
- Cultivate a sense of connection to others and a sense of purpose to support their wellbeing just as they support yours.

PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



**Appreciating
Interdependence**



**Recognizing
Common Humanity**

MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Chart paper and markers
- Completed Exploring Complex Issues or Achievements handout in Chapter 7, Learning Experience 4
- Cell Phone Issues Example
- Negative Self-talk Example
- Impacts and Solutions handout

LENGTH

45 minutes

CHECK-IN | 5 minutes

[PAUSE]s can be up to 10 seconds each

Grounding Practice

Guiding Language

- **"Let's do grounding practice together. If at any time you feel uncomfortable, feel free to do a resourcing practice instead."**
- **Let's take a comfortable posture. Check in to see if you are aware of any sensations in your body. If you notice tension or discomfort, shift your posture or take a few deep breaths to ease that tension.**
- **Let's see if we can notice any pleasant sensations in our body, especially in parts of the body that are in touch with a surface, and place our attention there. Stay with any pleasant or neutral sensation for 10-15 seconds. [PAUSE]**
- **If the stability of the chair gives you comfort, let that be your grounding point. [PAUSE]**
- **Let's focus on the pleasant sensation for a while. [PAUSE]**
- **If the sensation is or becomes unpleasant, try to shift your attention to another sensation that is more pleasant.**
- **How did that feel?"**

PRESENTATION/DISCUSSION | 10 minutes

Overview

Thinking about impacts and consequences is an important habit of a systems thinker. Reflecting on consequences of one's choices, decisions, and actions, be it short-term effects or long-term, could help students connect their actions with consequences and thus develop an ethical discernment.

Instructions and Guiding Language

After defining impact, use the prompts to engage the class in discussion:

"What is impact?

- **When we impact something we cause a direct effect on it. Our everyday choices can have short- and long-term impacts on the systems we are a part of.**
- **Considering the impact of one's decisions and actions is an important habit of a systems thinker. When we consider impact and allow it to guide our actions we are practicing ethics.**

When we engage in ethical discernment or value-based decision making, we can ponder the following questions:

- **What choices do I have related to this decision?**
- **What are some likely outcomes of those choices?**
- **Which course of action will most likely yield long-term benefits for oneself and others?**

- **What is my motivation? Am I concerned with the well-being of others?"**

Engage the class in a discussion by using the following prompts and questions:

- **"How do our personal choices impact the greater systems we are a part of? Let's consider this question by looking at emotional intelligence. Can we make choices to increase our emotional intelligence? What are they? Our overall health and well-being? Our interactions with others and our relationships? Our success at work?**
- **We each have a choice as to how we care for our nervous system. Intentionally increasing our emotional intelligence impacts our own health and well-being and our ability to have positive and meaningful interactions with others. All people experience challenges and emotions. Many people notice and are able to describe times when they feel happy, sad or angry. Some people have grown their ability to recognize a wide range of emotions and are skilled at knowing what may contribute to feeling that way.**
- **And some people have practiced being able to consistently recognize their feelings in the moment, name them and pause (stop before acting), in a way that helps them take care of themselves and interact with others in healthy and productive ways. Everyone has the potential to do this. How does the way we care for our nervous system and choosing to support growing**

our emotional intelligence influence systems? Personal? Local?

- **The choices we make every day impact personal, local and global systems. If a person chooses to increase their emotional intelligence might they be practicing ethical discernment? Why or why not?**

Teaching Tip

Emotional intelligence is being able to notice and choose to impact your emotional state. One's emotional state includes emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, hope, loneliness, joy, and compassion.

Regulation of one's emotional state is essential for a healthy life and healthy interactions with others. The following strategies can help return you to your well-being zone: grounding, resourcing, and self-compassion.

INSIGHT ACTIVITY | 20 minutes

Activity Overview

In this insight activity, students will further explore the issue they have identified in the last two lessons and analyze the impacts of our choices on the issue and evaluate possible solutions to the problem.

Instructions and Guiding Language

If possible, allow students to be in the same groups as in the previous lesson. Introduce the Impacts and Solutions document. Model the process by reviewing the document with one

example, Impacts and Solutions together as a class and then ask students to return to their groups to complete the document.

The document has two parts: Part A asks students to consider the impacts of our choices on the issue and Part B asks students to devise possible solutions to the problem. Part A will have 10 minutes and B will have 10 minutes.

"Return to your small groups and let's further examine the issue or problem we identified in our last two lessons.

Today we are going to discuss the impact that we and other people have on the issue we are exploring.

When looking at the choices that have affected this system, let's consider them through a lens of ethical discernment and active compassion.

As a group, you will reflect on the problem and then devise a possible solution to the problem using your lens of ethical discernment."

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE | 10 minutes

Instructions and Guiding Language

Students select one question to discuss within a small group and share out with the whole class.

This reflection engages students in a small and then whole group discussion. The aim of this reflection is for students to see the downsides and benefits of being a systems thinker through the lens of relationships and feelings of connection with others.

Through their discussion, students should identify that a lack of systems thinking can lead people to experience loneliness which can lead to an erosion of trust towards others and suspicion of intentions. This hinders our ability to trust others and work collaboratively with them.

Whereas being a systems thinker reminds us of the connections we have with others and cultivates both a sense of appreciation and gratitude towards others.

Having developed our understanding of ethical discernment and having gained experience with it, we can begin to apply it throughout our life. We can also embrace the insights garnered from being a systems thinking as we foster gratitude, appreciation, and a sense of connection to others.

In small groups please respond to the following prompts:

- 1. How does being a systems thinker help us to address the incorrect outlook that believes we are self-made and that we don't need to rely on others?**
- 2. What are some of the pitfalls or downsides of thinking or feeling we are not connected to others?**
- 3. How does systems thinking lead to compassionate responses towards others?**
- 4. How will you work to apply the skills of systems thinking in your life?"**

Example

Cell Phone Issues

Directions:

Complete the graphic organizer below to devise a solution to the issue your group is exploring.

Issue Description: _____ Cell Phone Issues _____

Part 1: Considering Impact

Discuss the following questions as a group. Write down ideas and insights.

1. Name and describe the issue in detail.

The issue we are looking at is the use of social media on cell phones and other personal devices. We consider this to be an issue because cell phones and social media are very distracting, you can miss out on important information or social interactions when you are distracted by your phone. Phones also give us a false sense of connection. Some people look to their cell-phones as a way to connect with others and this can cause isolation and lack of in-person exchanges. When we are connected on cell phones there can be many misconceptions because we can't hear each other's tone or read each other's body language through text messaging. It is also easier to say harmful things when you are communicating over a device. We also have new fears like FOMO, fear of missing out. Cell phones and social media can be addicting.

2. Who or what may have contributed to the issue? What are some possible causes for this issue?

Some studies show that teenagers spend so much time on social media for the following reasons:

- a. the fear of missing out if not on social media
- b. social media strengthens connections and makes them feel less lonely, and
- c. social media is a fun way of passing time.

3. Identify some choices that have impacted this issue. Who made these choices?

Viewing social media as a safer way to interact, seeing it as providing us more control, mirroring what adults are doing.

Example

Cell Phone Issues

(continued)

Part 2: Devise a Plan to Improve the System/Issue or Solve the Issue

Devise a possible solution(s) to the identified issues. Consider the short and long term consequences of the solution.

Possible Solution(s) and Action Steps	Short-term & Long-term Consequences	Possible Unintended Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set time limits for myself• Be intentional about what I am using my cell phone• Erase apps that I find do not contribute to my well-being <p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Have cell phone-free mornings• Plug my cell phone away from my bedroom and do not sleep near it• Use my cell phone for communication and research and limit my social media time• Take Snapchat off my cell phone	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling better about my relationship with technology• Setting boundaries• Being present and available in my immediate environment• Better management of time	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Less stress

Example

Negative Self-talk

Directions:

Complete the graphic organizer below to devise a solution to the issue your group is exploring.

Issue Description: _____ Negative Self Talk _____

Part 1: Considering Impact

Discuss the following questions as a group. Write down ideas and insights.

1. Name and describe the issue in detail.

- The issue is negative self-talk
- Individual choices around responding to a perceived “failure” like failing a test.
- Individual choices of lack of preparing for a test.
- Norms and perspectives related to how grades impact self-worth

2. Who or what may have contributed to the issue? What are some possible causes for this issue?

- Our tendency to be self-critical
- Negative bias: We tend to get hooked on negative aspects more easily
- The motivation could have been to use negative self-talk as a way to improve or do better next time

3. Identify some choices that have impacted this issue. Who made these choices?

- Choosing the negative inner critic instead of the positive one
- One’s choice to view oneself negatively and comparing one’s performance with others’

Example

Negative Self-talk

(continued)

Part 2: Devise a Plan to Improve the System/Issue or Solve the Issue

Devise a possible solution(s) to the identified issues. Consider the short and long term consequences of the solution.

Possible Solution(s)	Short-term & Long-term Consequences	Possible Unintended Consequences
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Use of resilience practices• Talk to a trusted person• Be intentional about positive self-talk <p>Action Steps</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do a few minutes of resourcing and grounding once a day• Seek out a trusted friend or adult and ask for support and solutions• Say positive things to myself when I am in my personal “Zone of Resiliency”• When I am up against a struggle, I can talk to myself as if I am speaking with and supporting a friend.	<p>Short-term Consequences</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feeling regulated• Successfully work through challenging thoughts and emotions• Increasing my level of presence and awareness• Developing and maintaining meaningful relationships• Practicing kindness and compassion	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Better

Graphic Organizer

Impacts and Solutions

Directions:

Complete the graphic organizer below to devise a solution to the issue your group is exploring.

Issue or Problem: _____

Part 1: Considering Impact (10 minutes)

Discuss the following questions as a group. Write down ideas and insights.

1. Name and describe the issue in detail.
2. Who or what may have contributed to the issue? What are some possible causes for this issue?
3. Identify some choices that have impacted this issue. Who made these choices?

Graphic Organizer

Impacts and Solutions

(continued)

Part 2: Devise a Plan to Improve the System/Issue or Solve the Issue (10 minutes)

Devise a possible solution(s) to the identified issues. Consider the short and long term consequences of the solution.

Possible Solution(s) and Action Steps	Short-term & Long-term Consequences	Possible Unintended Consequences

Enduring Capabilities

1. Attention and Self-Awareness



- a. **Attending to Our Body and Sensations:** Notice and describe sensations in the body, and understand how they relate to stress and well-being.
- b. **Attending to Emotions:** Attend to and identify one's emotions in type and intensity as they arise.
- c. **Map of the Mind:** Categorize emotions in relation to one's own experience and to existing emotion models.

2. Self-Compassion



- a. **Understanding Emotions in Context:** Understand how emotions arise within the context of underlying needs, perceptions, attitudes, and situations.
- b. **Self-Acceptance:** Accept oneself and one's emotions by understanding their context, allowing for a relaxation of self-judgment.

3. Self-Regulation



- a. **Balancing the Body:** Regulate the body and nervous system to optimize well-being, especially when affected by stress.
- b. **Cognitive and Impulse Control:** Direct and sustain attention on chosen objects, tasks, or experiences, avoiding distraction.
- c. **Navigating Emotions:** Respond constructively to impulses and emotions and cultivate the behaviors and attitudes that facilitate one's long-term well-being.

4. Interpersonal Awareness



- a. **Attending to Our Social Reality:** Recognize our inherently social nature and attend to the presence of others and the roles they play in our lives.
- b. **Attending to Our Shared Reality with Others:** Appreciate what we share with others on a fundamental level, such as wanting to experience happiness and avoid hardships, having emotions and body states, and other common experiences.
- c. **Appreciating Diversity and Difference:** Appreciate that part of our shared reality is the diversity, uniqueness, and difference of individuals and groups, learning to respect those differences and the way they add to our collective life.

Enduring Capabilities

(continued)

5. Compassion for Others

- a. **Understanding Others' Feelings and Emotions in Context:** Understand others' feelings and reactions in relation to the situations in which they occur, and understand that, like oneself, others have feelings caused by needs.
- b. **Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion:** Value the benefits of kindness and compassion and purposefully nourish them as a disposition.
- c. **Appreciating and Cultivating Other Ethical Dispositions:** Value and foster development of ethical dispositions and prosocial emotions such as forgiveness, patience, contentment, generosity, and humility.



6. Relationship Skills

- a. **Empathetic Listening:** Listen attentively with the purpose of more fully understanding others and their needs.
- b. **Communication Skills:** Communicate compassionately in a way that empowers self and others.
- c. **Helping Others:** Offer help to others according to their needs and proportionate to one's ability.
- d. **Conflict Transformation:** Respond constructively to conflict and facilitate collaboration, reconciliation, and peaceful relations.



7. Appreciating Interdependence

- a. **Understanding Interdependent Systems:** Comprehend the interrelated nature of our world and the methods of systems thinking.
- b. **Individuals within a Systems Context:** Recognize how all individuals exist within a systems context, and how they affect and are affected by that context.



8. Recognizing Common Humanity

- a. **Appreciating the Fundamental Equality of All:** Extend the realization of fundamental equality and common humanity to those outside one's immediate community and ultimately to the world.
- b. **Appreciating How Systems Affect Well-Being:** Recognize how systems can promote or compromise well-being on cultural and structural levels, such as by promoting positive values or perpetuating problematic beliefs and inequities.



Enduring Capabilities

(continued)

9. Community and Global Engagement



- a. **Exploring One's Potential for Effecting Positive Change in Community and World:** Recognize one's own capacity to individually or collaboratively effect positive change based on one's abilities and opportunities.
- b. **Engaging in Communal and Global Solutions:** Explore and reflect on creative and collaborative solutions to issues affecting one's community or the world.

The SEE Learning Framework: Enduring Capabilities

		DIMENSIONS		
		AWARENESS	COMPASSION	ENGAGEMENT
DOMAINS	PERSONAL			
	SOCIAL			
	SYSTEMS			