

## Kindness as an Inner Quality

## PURPOSE

The focus of this fourth learning experience is to go further into the idea of kindness by exploring whether it is just outer actions or also something inside one's heart and mind. We easily associate kindness with external activities, like giving someone food or money, saying sweet words to someone, or helping someone up when they fall. But if the intention behind those actions and words is to take advantage of the other person, then we do not see that as real or genuine kindness; nor do we see it as genuine help. For students

to understand how to cultivate kindness as a disposition, which lies at the heart of SEE Learning, they will be aided by understanding that kindness goes deeper than just external actions but also refers to a state of mind and heart: one's intention to bring help and happiness to another person.

\*The asterisk by a practice denotes that it can be repeated multiple times (with or without modifications).

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

Students will:

- Explore kindness in the context of outer actions and inner intentions and motivations.
- Recognize the distinction between real (inner, genuine) kindness and apparent kindness.
- Develop their own definition of kindness.
- Provide examples of actions that might seem unkind, but are really kind, and vice versa.

## LENGTH

30 minutes

## PRIMARY CORE COMPONENTS



## Compassion for Others

## MATERIALS REQUIRED

- Chart paper with "kindness" written in the middle of each, enough for 1 piece per small group; markers
- Students' SEE Learning journals; writing utensils
- The story provided below
- The kindness drawings made in Learning Experience 2

### CHECK-IN | 3 minutes

- *"Last time we talked about how we could create a kind, caring classroom and we created some classroom agreements. Does anybody remember some of the things we talked about and put on our list? [Allow time for sharing.]*
  - *Today we are going to think about how can we practice kindness."*
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### INSIGHT ACTIVITY 1 | 10 minutes

#### The Two Brothers and the Baby Swan

##### Overview

In this activity, you will read a story to the students that shows how we all naturally prefer kindness, because kindness makes us feel safe and secure. A story is provided for you here that has an element that shows that kindness relates to our intentions also, and is an inner quality. If someone pretends to be kind, but really intends to take advantage of someone, then we do not see that as genuine kindness. If students come to understand that kindness is an inner quality, not just actions, then they will realize that to cultivate kindness, we need to cultivate that inner quality, not just act outwardly in a particular way.

##### Content/Insights to be Explored

- We all prefer kindness and want to move towards kindness and away from meanness.
- Kindness makes us feel safer and more secure.
- Kindness is an inner quality.

- Pretend kindness (outward actions without a good intention) is not genuine kindness.

##### Materials Required

Story provided below

##### Instructions

- Read the story to your students.
- Facilitate a discussion. Sample questions are provided within the script for your use.

##### Teaching Tips

- The sample discussion questions listed in the script can help you have a discussion and encourage the students to explore the story and its various dimensions. Feel free to add your own questions and respond to the flow of the discussion.
- Allow them to share openly and remember that there are no right or wrong answers, but also keep in mind the critical insights (listed above) that you are orienting them towards. These insights have to come naturally, and it's all right if not all the students reach all the insights at once, since they will be returned to continuously in future learning experiences.

##### Sample script

- *"We are going to read a story together that has to do with kindness. Sometimes people do things that look kind, but in their heart, they are not actually kind and compassionate. While I read this story, think about who is truly kind in this story and who is pretending."*

- [Read the story below.]
- *"Now we're going to talk about that story a little bit.*
- *What happened in the story? What are some of the things you noticed?*
- *How do you think the different people in the story were feeling?*
- *If the baby swan could talk to us, what are some things she would say? What else?*
- *Why do you think the swan went to the younger brother?*
- *Remember when the older brother was saying sweet things to the swan? What happened after that?*
- *Was the older brother being kind when he was saying those things? Why or why not?*
- *How is kindness like helping?*
- *If someone pretends to be kind, but inside they don't really want to help the other person, is that really kindness? Explain your thinking.*
- *Is kindness just the outer action, like sweet words, or is it also something inside us? An inner quality? Explain your thinking.*
- *Could something that looks unkind at first, really be kind? Like if a parent says "No" to their child, is that always unkind or could it be kind? What if the child was going to do something dangerous and the parent said "No." What do you think?"*

## **STORY** | The Two Brothers and the Baby Swan

*"Two brothers were playing in a park one day and when they saw a beautiful little baby swan. The older brother thought, "Oh, what a pretty bird!" and he wanted to capture the bird for himself, so he threw a stick at it. The baby swan got scared and tried to run away, but since it couldn't fly very well yet, it had to move on its legs. The younger brother said, "Stop! Don't hurt the bird! It's only a baby!" and he went to go and help the swan and protect it. When he reached the swan, he petted it and offered it some food. But the older brother got angry and kept trying to chase the swan and catch it.*

*Then their mother came by and said, "What's going on?"*

*"That bird is mine," said the older brother, who wanted to capture the bird. "Make him give it to me!"*

*"No, don't give her to him," said the younger brother. "He tried to hurt her."*

*"I don't know what happened because I wasn't here to see it," said the mother. "Maybe we should let the bird decide."*

*She placed the baby swan between the two boys and said to her, "Who would you like to be with?"*

*The older brother who had tried to hurt and capture the swan tried to call to her sweetly. "Please come to me little bird! I will take good care of you!"*

*But the baby swan didn't go to him. She went over to the younger brother, who had tried to protect her.*

*"Look, the bird prefers you," said their mother. "You should be the one to keep her."*

*So she gave the baby swan to the younger brother, who fed it and took care of it and kept it safe."*

[The End.]

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## **REFLECTIVE PRACTICE** | 15 minutes

### **Making and Reflecting on a Definition of Kindness**

#### **Overview**

In this reflective practice, students will make a word map of the word "kindness." This will be used to develop a simple definition of kindness (one or two sentences) for use in the classroom. The students will take moments for silent reflection during the making of this definition and after making it, to allow this wider understanding of kindness to deepen in them.

#### **Content/Insights to be Explored**

- We all prefer kindness and want to move towards kindness and away from meanness.
- Kindness makes us feel safer and more secure.
- Kindness is an inner quality.
- Pretend kindness (outward actions without a good intention) is not genuine kindness.

#### **Materials Required**

- Chart paper with "kindness" written in the middle of each (1 piece per small group)
- Markers
- Students' SEE Learning journals
- Writing utensils;
- The kindness drawings made in Learning Experience 2

#### **Instructions**

- Ask students to silently think about the story and the discussion.
- Ask them to think about the word kindness and what it means to them. Next, divide them into small groups.
- Pass out chart paper with "kindness" written in the middle - one per group. In small groups, students will come up with ideas and words that explain kindness. Tell them to write their ideas around the chart paper.
- After 5-7 minutes, regroup all together. Have a big piece of chart paper with "kindness" written in the middle.
- Ask students to share some of their ideas and add them to the poster. New ideas may come up as they share.
- When you feel like enough has been shared (this can be done on a different day), ask students to move to sit on their own and take out their SEE Learning journal. Ask them to write one sentence that defines kindness.

- Students can share their sentences at the end of this activity or at a later point.

### Teaching Tips

- Note: Many of the reflective practices in SEE Learning involve moments of silent reflection for students to think, ponder, and internalize their insights. How long these moments should be will depend on the classroom environment and your students. They can be as short as 15 seconds or can be as long as a few minutes. You will be the best judge of the appropriate amount of time. You may find that with practice, the students will get more comfortable and familiar with these moments, and that you can prolong them for longer periods of time.
- You may consider asking students to do this small group portion of the activity in silence as a challenge - maybe for just a few minutes or half the time allotted.
- You may want to display their definitions of kindness in some way in your room as reference points - for example, students could make sentence strips of their definitions and they could be placed on the walls.
- *I'm going to divide you into small groups. Your group is going to get a piece of paper with the word kindness in the middle. You and your group will come up words that are like kindness that we can use to explain what kindness is. You may look at your kindness drawings to help you.*
- [Allow students to work in small groups for 5-7 minutes.]
- *Let's hear from each group. What shall we add to our classroom kindness chart?*
- *We have lots of good ideas up here. Now, as a last step is to come up with a definition of kindness. You are going to go back to your spot, with your SEE journal and write one sentence that defines kindness. You can even start the sentence with "kindness means..."*
- [Allow students to work in small groups for 3-5 minutes. If time allows, ask students to share their sentences.]

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### DEBRIEF | 2 minutes

*"What is something you learned about kindness today?"*

### Sample script

- *"I wonder if we could come up with one sentence to explain what kindness is so that if someone asked us "What does kindness mean?" we can tell them.*
- *Let's take a quiet moment to think about the story and our discussion about it.*