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A Better Me, A Better Community!

A Practical SEL Activity Guide for Teachers
Ages 11–15

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Teacher Guide Structure

Each activity follows the same teacher-friendly format: goal, steps and resources.

Use flexibly	Reflect often	Make it visible
Use during advisory, counselling, homeroom, English, civic education, or project time.	End every activity with a brief reflection so students connect action to emotion and behaviour.	Use posters, Padlet, class boards, jars, and journals to make progress visible.

Activity Overview

No.	Activity	SEL focus
1	New Year Resolutions - A Better Me	Self-awareness, self-management, responsibility
2	Random Acts of Kindness Campaign	Kindness, empathy, community belonging
3	How Do You Fill Your Bucket?	Empathy, positive behaviour, relationship skills
4	Emotion Detectives	Emotional literacy, self-awareness, empathy
5	My Emotional Thermometer	Self-management, regulation, emotional awareness
6	The Wrinkled Heart - Anti-Bullying	Respect, empathy, responsible choices
7	Know Yourself - Identity Map	Self-awareness, confidence, belonging
8	Kindness Challenge	Prosocial behaviour, friendship, classroom culture
9	New Year, Better Me - Goal Setting	Growth mindset, planning, perseverance
10	Walk in My Shoes	Empathy, perspective-taking, social awareness
11	Conflict Resolution Circle	Communication, problem-solving, responsible decision-making
12	Gratitude Jar	Positive thinking, wellbeing, appreciation

Teacher note: The activities align with the CASEL domains of self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

1

New Year Resolutions - A Better Me

Self-awareness, self-management, responsibility

1

New Year Resolutions - A Better Me

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● **Reflect**

● **Discuss**

● **Create**



Goal: To develop pupils' self-reflection and responsibility by helping them identify areas for improvement and define specific actions they can take.

Steps

1. Introduce the idea of a resolution: a promise to practise a useful change, not a perfect result.
2. Ask students to list possible resolutions in three areas: wellbeing, relationships, and school/work.
3. Students choose one important resolution for each area and rewrite it as a clear, realistic action.
4. In pairs, students discuss what steps they can take, what support they need, and what obstacles may appear.
5. Students post their chosen resolutions on a shared Padlet or class board. They may add a drawing, photo, or symbol.
6. Hold short monthly check-ins and a March reflection discussion on progress, effort, and next steps.

Resources:

- [NASA/USDA 4-H - Setting SMART Goals lesson plan](#)
- [Social Cipher - SMART Goals lesson plan and activity](#)

2

Random Acts of Kindness Campaign

Kindness, empathy, community belonging

2

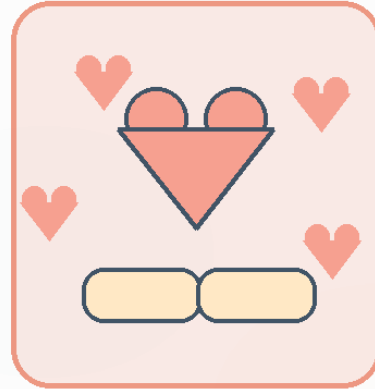
Random Acts of Kindness Campaign

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● **Reflect**

● **Discuss**

● **Create**



Goal: To promote small acts of generosity and help students notice how kindness changes the classroom atmosphere.

Steps

1. Introduce random acts of kindness as thoughtful actions done without expecting a reward.
2. Create a shared class list of ideas, such as helping a classmate, leaving a positive note, sharing materials, or encouraging a colleague.
3. Each student chooses one to three acts to complete during the campaign and records them in a short kindness journal.
4. Students document what they noticed on post-its: person initials, action, and emotion felt. Display the notes on a board.
5. Use Mentimeter, Padlet, or a class circle to reflect on the most common acts and changes in classroom mood.
6. Each class creates a digital poster or short Canva product to share the campaign results.

Resources:

- [Random Acts of Kindness - Grade 6-8 curriculum](#)
- [Random Acts of Kindness - printable kindness calendar](#)

3 How Do You Fill Your Bucket?

Empathy, positive behaviour, relationship skills

3 How Do You Fill Your Bucket?

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● Reflect

● Discuss

● Create



Fill it up

Goal: To help students understand that words and actions can fill or empty someone's emotional bucket.

Steps

1. Introduce the bucket metaphor: everyone carries an invisible bucket of feelings and belonging.
2. Ask students to sort examples into bucket fillers and bucket dippers, using everyday classroom situations.
3. Students write kind actions, compliments, or supportive phrases on paper drops, hearts, or slips.
4. Create a shared class bucket poster and add the drops throughout the week.
5. Invite students to notice when someone filled their bucket and privately thank that person.
6. End with a weekly reflection: Which actions filled our class bucket most often?

Resources:

- [Bucket Fillers 101 - free resources](#)
- [Ripple Kindness - bucket filler activities](#)

4 Emotion Detectives

Emotional literacy, self-awareness, empathy

4

Emotion Detectives

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● Reflect

● Discuss

● Create



Goal: To help students identify and name emotions by observing facial expressions, body language, tone, and context clues.

Steps

1. Show short scenarios, still images, or teacher-created role cards that include emotional clues.
2. Students act as detectives and guess the emotion, giving evidence for their answer.
3. Discuss how body language, facial expression, tone, and situation can change our interpretation.
4. Students share a safe personal example of a time when someone misunderstood their feelings.
5. Create a class emotion chart with emotion names, body clues, possible triggers, and helpful responses.
6. Finish with an exit ticket: One emotion I can recognise better now is...

Resources:

- [Everyday Speech - emotional recognition lesson and worksheet](#)
- [Kids Mental Health Foundation - noticing emotions](#)

5 My Emotional Thermometer

Self-management, regulation, emotional awareness

5 My Emotional Thermometer

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● Reflect

● Discuss

● Create



Goal: To help students understand that emotions have different levels of intensity and to identify strategies for calming down before they feel overwhelmed.

Steps

1. Introduce the emotional thermometer: calm, alert, frustrated, angry, and overwhelmed.
2. Students draw their own thermometer and label each level with words, colours, or symbols.
3. For each level, students identify common triggers, body signals, and thoughts.
4. Brainstorm coping strategies for each level, such as breathing, movement, asking for help, or taking a pause.
5. Students choose two strategies they are willing to practise this week.
6. Use a quiet check-in: Where am I today on my thermometer, and what do I need?

Resources:

- [Therapist Aid - Emotion Thermometers worksheet](#)
- [Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health - Feelings Thermometer](#)

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The Wrinkled Heart - Anti-Bullying

Respect, empathy, responsible choices

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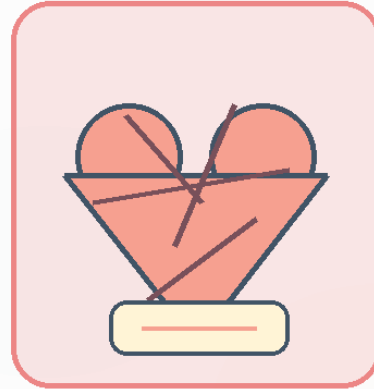
The Wrinkled Heart - Anti-Bullying

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● **Reflect**

● **Discuss**

● **Create**



Goal: To help students understand the emotional impact of hurtful words and behaviours and practise choosing respectful alternatives.

Steps

1. Give each student a paper heart, or use one large class heart at the front.
2. Read or say short hurtful statements. After each one, students gently crumple part of the heart.
3. Ask students to smooth the heart back out and notice that wrinkles remain.
4. Discuss how words and actions can leave emotional marks even after an apology.
5. Students rewrite hurtful statements as respectful alternatives and add them as bandages to the heart.
6. Close with a commitment: one way I will protect other people's hearts this week.

Resources:

- [PACER Center - A Wrinkled Heart activity](#)
- [Ripple Kindness - crumpled paper / wrinkled heart lesson](#)

7 Know Yourself - Identity Map

Self-awareness, confidence, belonging

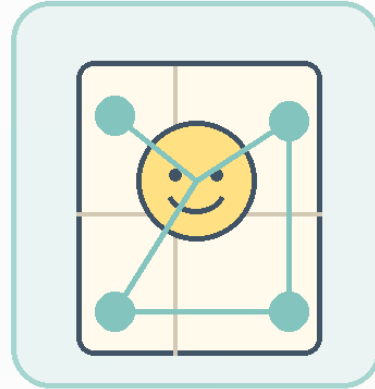
7 Know Yourself - Identity Map

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● **Reflect**

● **Discuss**

● **Create**



Goal: To increase self-awareness and build a positive self-image by helping students explore strengths, interests, values, and what makes them unique.

Steps

1. Explain that identity includes many parts: strengths, interests, values, languages, roles, memories, and hopes.
2. Students draw a map of themselves with the word Me in the centre.
3. They add branches or zones for strengths, interests, important people, values, and things they are proud of.
4. Students add one area they are still developing, using growth language such as I am learning to...
5. In pairs, students share only the parts of the map they feel comfortable sharing.
6. End with a gallery walk or silent appreciation notes focused on similarities, differences, and respect.

Resources:

- [Facing History - Identity Charts teaching strategy](#)
- [Facing History - Identity Chart printable template](#)

8

Kindness Challenge

Prosocial behaviour, friendship, classroom culture

8

Kindness Challenge

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● **Reflect**

● **Discuss**

● **Create**



Goal: To encourage students to practise kindness consistently and reflect on the effect of small helpful actions.

Steps

1. Brainstorm kind actions students can complete at school, at home, and online.
2. Create a seven-day class challenge list with one small action for each day.
3. Students complete the tasks and tick them off privately or on a shared tracker.
4. Invite students to record one sentence each day: What did I do, and how did it affect someone?
5. Hold a circle sharing session, allowing students to pass if they prefer not to speak.
6. Reflect on which actions were easiest to continue and choose one class kindness habit for the next month.

Resources:

- [Random Acts of Kindness - kindness ideas](#)
- [School of Kindness - random acts of kindness for kids](#)

9

New Year, Better Me - Goal Setting

Growth mindset, planning, perseverance

9

New Year, Better Me - Goal Setting

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● Reflect

● Discuss

● Create



Goal: To develop goal-setting skills and encourage personal growth by turning hopes into achievable steps.

Steps

1. Discuss the difference between a wish and a goal, then introduce SMART goals in student-friendly language.
2. Students write two or three personal goals connected to learning, wellbeing, or relationships.
3. They break each goal into small steps, deadlines, and possible support people.
4. Students create a visual goal poster, ladder, or mountain showing the steps to success.
5. Pair students as accountability partners for gentle check-ins and encouragement.
6. Use a monthly check-in to revise goals and celebrate effort, not only final results.

Resources:

- [Mindset Kit - Growth Mindset lesson plan](#)
- [Everyday Speech - middle school goal-setting worksheet](#)

10 Walk in My Shoes

Empathy, perspective-taking, social awareness

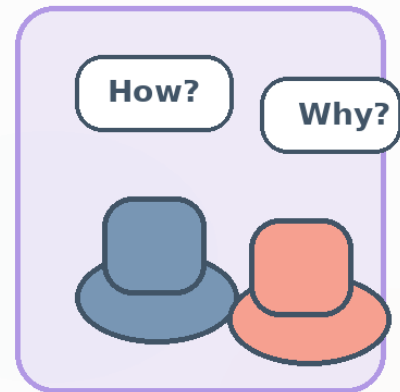
10 Walk in My Shoes

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● Reflect

● Discuss

● Create



Goal: To build empathy by helping students consider how a situation may feel from another person's perspective.

Steps

1. Present short real-life scenarios involving friendship, exclusion, misunderstanding, or peer pressure.
2. Assign roles or perspectives to small groups: the speaker, the listener, the bystander, and the person affected.
3. Students act out or discuss the situation from their assigned perspective.
4. Each group answers: What might this person think, feel, say, and need?
5. Students suggest one action that would show empathy and one action that would make the situation worse.
6. Reflect individually: What would I change if I were in this situation?

Resources:

- [School Mental Health Ontario - Walking in Your Shoes](#)
- [The SEED - Put Yourself in Someone Else's Shoes activity sheets](#)

11 Conflict Resolution Circle

Communication, problem-solving, responsible decision-making

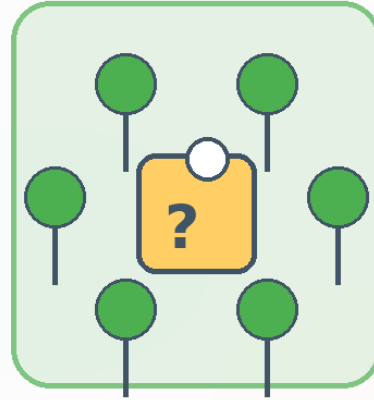
11 Conflict Resolution Circle

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● Reflect

● Discuss

● Create



Goal: To develop communication skills and practise solving conflicts through listening, perspective-taking, and shared agreements.

Steps

1. Present a realistic conflict scenario, or invite students to use a fictional example rather than a personal one.
2. Students sit in a circle and agree on ground rules: listen, speak respectfully, use I-statements, and pass if needed.
3. Use a talking object so each person can share a perspective without interruption.
4. The group identifies needs, feelings, and what harm or misunderstanding occurred.
5. Students propose possible solutions and evaluate which ones are fair, safe, and realistic.
6. Agree on the best resolution and finish with a short reflection on what helped the conversation move forward.

Resources:

- [Empowering Education - Conflict Resolution: Restorative Questions](#)
- [Edutopia - A Blueprint for Restorative Conversations](#)

12 Gratitude Jar

Positive thinking, wellbeing, appreciation

12 Gratitude Jar

SEL activity for ages 11-15

● **Reflect**

● **Discuss**

● **Create**



Goal: To foster positive thinking and improve emotional wellbeing by helping students notice and express gratitude.

Steps

1. Introduce gratitude as noticing and appreciating people, moments, places, and actions that help us.
2. Give students small slips of paper and invite them to write or draw one thing they are grateful for each day.
3. Students add their notes to a class jar, box, envelope, or digital board.
4. Once a week, read a few anonymous notes aloud and discuss patterns in what students appreciated.
5. Students write a private reflection on whether gratitude changed their mood or attention during the week.
6. At the end of the month, create a gratitude display or class poem using selected anonymous notes.

Resources:

- [Greater Good Science Center - gratitude activities for the classroom](#)
- [On Our Sleeves - Gratitude Jar activity](#)

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