



REFLECTING ON SEL SKILLS

"We do not learn from experience ... We learn from reflecting on experience."

— John Dewey

OVERVIEW

Students are led in a debriefing conversation reflecting on SEL skills touched upon during the activity in which they have just participated.

PLANNING FOR IT

WHEN YOU MIGHT USE THIS PRACTICE

- To debrief an activity or game
- To deepen students' understanding, awareness, and practice of SEL skills

TIME REQUIRED

- <15 minutes

LEVEL

- PreK/Lower Elementary
- Upper Elementary
- Middle School

MATERIALS

- None

LEARNING OBJECTIVE

Students will:

- Strengthen the skill of reflection
- Strengthen the skill of being present in the moment (mindfulness)
- Use reflective practice to make connections to prior learning

SEL COMPETENCIES

- Self-Awareness
- Social Awareness

HOW TO DO IT

REFLECTION BEFORE THE PRACTICE

Take a moment to reflect on a SEL skill that you used today. What was the situation and which skill did you use? What went well? What might you change next time?

INSTRUCTIONS

To help students make the connection between specific SEL skills and activities, it is recommended that educators facilitate a conversation using some of the prompts and questions below after the students have completed an activity related to a particular SEL skill they have previously been explicitly taught. Questions and prompts are to be used in a group setting.

Note: Depending on the range of academic abilities within a group, adaptations may need to be made so that everyone can participate.

REFLECTION PROMPTS AND QUESTIONS

- Take a moment to pause and check in with yourself. Notice your breathing and any feelings and thoughts you might have.
- How did it feel to participate in this activity? What was happening to cause you to feel that way?
- Who else felt the same way? Who may have felt differently?
- What were some of the things you noticed about yourself while doing the activity?
- What were some things you noticed going on in our group during the activity that were helpful?
- What SEL skills did we use during this activity?
- What are some times during the school day when you may also need to use these skills?
- What were some things you noticed going on in our group that might have been challenging?
- What might we do next time to make it better?

REFLECTION AFTER THE PRACTICE

How did students respond to this reflection practice? Do students demonstrate more awareness and practice of SEL skills both in and out of class, as a result?

THE RESEARCH BEHIND THE PRACTICE

EVIDENCE THAT IT WORKS

Metacognitive reflection, or the ability to monitor and think deeply about one's own thoughts and behavior, has been [linked](#) to the development of self-awareness, self-regulation, executive functions, and decision-making--all key SEL skills.

Researchers suggest that [discussing our experiences](#) with others might actually [enhance our metacognition](#) by unearthing our introspective blindspots. Indeed, one [study](#) found that humans are better at determining the causes of others' behavior than their own. This sort of "social metacognition" can ultimately help us to develop a more accurate view of ourselves and the world.

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Helping students make connections is a critical component in learning and applying SEL skills. Taking just a few moments at the end of an activity to guide students through reflective thinking and discussion about their experience can deepen students' understanding of SEL skills, and also reinforce the concept that SEL skills have relevance, use, and purpose outside of the classroom setting. In addition, these conversations can increase levels of trust, empathy, and an overall sense of community amongst group members.

SOURCE

Open Circle provides evidence-based social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum and professional development for elementary schools. This innovative program proactively develops children's skills for recognizing and managing emotions, empathy, positive relationships and problem solving. Open Circle helps schools build communities where students feel safe, cared for and engaged in learning. For more information please visit us at <https://www.open-circle.org>