



California Social Emotional
Learning Modules

Professional Learning Toolkit

7.3 KINDNESS and
COMPASSION for Educators
8.3 KINDNESS and
COMPASSION for Students

Topic and Module Overview


Caring for Ourselves: The Science of Emotional Resilience	MOD 1.1	Understanding Your Emotions
	MOD 1.2	Navigating Your Emotions
	MOD 1.3	How to Be Kind to Yourself
	MOD 1.4	How to Be Compassionate Without Suffering So Much
	MOD 1.5	Self-Awareness, Emotional Resilience, and Equity
Safety & Belonging in Classrooms and Schools	MOD 2.1	Why Belonging Matters
	MOD 2.2	Knowing Ourselves First: Surfacing Our Beliefs About Social and Emotional Well-Being and Belonging in Schools
	MOD 2.3	The Questions of Belonging: Interventions to Help Students Feel Like They Belong
	MOD 2.4	Meeting Students' Psychological Needs to Help Them Feel Like They Belong
	MOD 2.5	Cultivating Belonging Through Teacher-Student and Peer Relationships
	MOD 2.6	Building a Belonging School Through Trust and Psychological Safety
Teaching for Social, Emotional, and Academic Development	MOD 3.1	Preparing to Support SEL in Classrooms
	MOD 3.2	Explicit SEL Instruction
	MOD 3.3	Planning for Social-Emotional-Academic Development
	MOD 3.4	Integrating SEL into Learning
Committing to Racial Equity and Cultural Responsiveness	MOD 4.1	Unpacking Our Identities: Addressing Identity, Power, and Privilege
	MOD 4.2	Engaging in Meaningful Conversations about Race and Equity
	MOD 4.3	SEL Instruction Through a Culturally Responsive Lens
	MOD 4.4	Elevating Student Voices
	MOD 4.5	Evaluating Our Systems, Policies, and Procedures
Addressing Trauma and Adversity: Supporting Student Mental Health	MOD 5.1	Defining and Understanding Trauma and Adversity
	MOD 5.2	Recognizing the Signs of Childhood Trauma and Adversity
	MOD 5.3	Creating Healing-Centered Environments
	MOD 5.4	Developmental and Other Strategies for Healing
	MOD 5.5	Mental Health Crisis Intervention: Steps and Strategies
Supporting SEL through Family and Community Engagement	MOD 6.1	Exploring Family and Community Engagement with an SEL Lens
	MOD 6.2	Building Partnerships with and Honoring the Contributions of Diverse Families
	MOD 6.3	Listening and Communicating Effectively with Families
	MOD 6.4	Expanded Learning and SEL: Collaborating Across In-School and OST Contexts
	MOD 6.5	Aligning around SEL Through Community Partnerships

Topic and Module Overview

Mindfulness and Well-Being for Educators	MOD 7.1	Purpose for Educators
	MOD 7.2	Self-Compassion for Educators
	MOD 7.3	Kindness and Compassion for Educators
	MOD 7.4	Gratitude for Educators
	MOD 7.5	Awe for Educators
	MOD 7.6	Courage for Educators
	MOD 7.7	Empathy for Educators
	MOD 7.8	Mindfulness for Educators
	MOD 7.9	Humility for Educators
	MOD 7.10	Forgiveness for Educators
	MOD 7.11	Hope for Educators
Mindfulness and Well-Being for Students	MOD 8.1	Purpose for Students
	MOD 8.2	Self-Compassion for Students
	MOD 8.3	Kindness and Compassion for Students
	MOD 8.4	Gratitude for Students
	MOD 8.5	Awe for Students
	MOD 8.6	Courage for Students
	MOD 8.7	Empathy for Students
	MOD 8.8	Mindfulness for Students
	MOD 8.9	Humility for Students
	MOD 8.10	Forgiveness for Students
	MOD 8.11	Hope for Students

Learning Objectives

TOPICS 7.3 and 8.3: KINDNESS and COMPASSION for Educators and Students

Module	7.3 Kindness and Compassion for Educators	8.3 Kindness and Compassion for Students
Learning Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define kindness, compassion, and related terms Explore the benefits of kindness and compassion for educator well-being and relationships Explore the benefits of cultivating your own kindness and compassion for your students and classrooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define kindness, compassion, and altruism Explore the research behind kindness and compassion Explore the development of kindness in children and adolescents Identify the benefits of compassion/kindness on well-being and education Explore compassion that fights for the rights and freedom of all Identify ways to foster students' compassion and kindness
California Standards for Teaching Profession (CSTPs) 2024 CSTPs (full pdf) 	<p>CSTP 1: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning 1A: Focus on Students (1A-5); 1B: Knowledge of Students (1B-5); 1C: Student Backgrounds and Family (1C-4); 1D: Diversity and Equity (1D-1)</p> <p>CSTP 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning 2A: Learning Environment (2A-1); 2B: Student Behavior (2B-4); 2D: Inclusive Environment (2D-4)</p> <p>CSTP 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Students 3A: Knowledge of Subject Matter and Pedagogy (3A-4); 3D Content and Skills across Subjects (3D-5)</p> <p>CSTP 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students 4A: Planning Instruction for Student Learning (4A-2); 4B: Designing and Developing Instruction for Student Learning (4B-5)</p> <p>CSTP 5: Assessing Students for Learning 5A: Understanding and Using Assessments (5A-3)</p> <p>CSTP 6: Developing as a Professional Educator 6A: Reflection on Practice (6A-2); 6B: Focused Professional Learning (6B-5); 6C: Collaboration with Colleagues: (6C-1); 6D: Collaboration with Families, Guardians, and the Community (6D-1); 6E: Ethical Conduct and Professional: (6E-2); 6F: Activating Access and Equity (6F-4); 6G: Personal Growth and Well-Being (6G-3)</p>	
CA TSEL Guidelines Sourced from CDE (July 2023)	Link Objectives to Developmental Indicators in California Transformative SEL Competencies . The California Department of Education (CDE) aims to support and advance the efforts of educators across California who are working to fully integrate systemic SEL and equity by building on the promise of T-SEL as a concept.	

Additional Resources

TOPICS 7.3 and 8.3: **KINDNESS** and **COMPASSION** for Educators and Students

Articles (Adult-Oriented)

[Six Tips for Loving Your Enemies](#) Choosing love over hate can be difficult, but ultimately it may be the path to healing for ourselves and our society.

[Random Acts of Kindness \(List of 99+ ideas and examples\)](#) What are random acts of kindness and how might you practice them in your life? Get tons of ideas for how to use random acts of kindness (and boost your well-being). (from Berkeley Well-Being Institute)

[How to Start a Kindness Revolution](#) A new book explains how to boost kindness in the world, and why that would make life better for us all.

[How Kindness Spreads in a Community](#) A new study finds that when we witness kindness, we're inspired to be kind ourselves.

[How Kindness Fits Into a Happy Life](#) A new analysis of decades of research shows that when we are kind to others, we are healthier and happier.

Articles (Student-Oriented)

[Three Ways for Schools to Help Kids Cultivate Kindness](#) Research shows that the spark of kindness resides in everyone, and even small school actions can fan that spark into a flame.

[What if Schools Taught Kindness?](#) Laura Pinger and Lisa Flook share their lessons from creating a "kindness curriculum" for young students.

Podcasts and Happiness Breaks

[Science of Happiness: Making Kindness Contagious](#) [18:12] Nipun Mehta talks about his experience doing five random acts of kindness in one day.

[Science of Happiness: 24 Hours of Kindness](#) [18:35] Why should you be nice? Our guest explores how small, daily acts of kindness can produce meaningful life changes.

[Science of Happiness: Trying Compassion on Capitol Hill](#) [16:28] Can you extend compassion toward a difficult person in your life? Congressman Tim Ryan tries a practice to help him reach across the aisle.

[Happiness Break: Wrap Yourself in Kindness, with Jack Kornfield](#) [9:06] When we treat ourselves with kindness and gratitude, research shows we feel more motivated and less self-critical. Meditation teacher Jack Kornfield leads in a practice where we gently turn inward.

Videos

[Kindness is My Superpower](#) by Alicia Ortego [8:49] A read aloud of a book about a boy who learns to be kind.

[Train Your Brain to be Kinder](#) [1:46] "Boost your kindness by sending kind thoughts to someone you love— and to someone you don't get along with— with a little guidance from these students."

[We Are Built to Be Kind](#) [4:36] "Human nature is often portrayed as selfish and power hungry, but research by UC Berkeley's Dacher Keltner finds that we are hard-wired to be kind."

Additional Resources

TOPICS 7.3 and 8.3: **KINDNESS and COMPASSION** for Educators and Students

Customizable Slides for Students

[What are Kindness and Compassion?](#)

Download and customize these slides to teach students about kindness and compassion

PRACTICES

Elementary (in order of duration)

[Encouraging Kindness in Kids](#) How to praise students in ways that make them more kind. (less than 5 minutes)

[What Does a Kind Teacher Look or Act Like?](#) A worksheet to gather insight from students on what they think kind teachers are like. (less than 5 minutes)

[Behind Your Back](#) A student or staff member stands with their back to a small group of three to five people, each of whom take turns sharing their appreciation of that person. (less than 15 minutes)

Feelings Circle for [K](#), [1](#), [2](#), [3](#), [4](#), [5](#), or [6](#) In a group meeting, students share their feelings while also building their feelings vocabulary and emotion knowledge. (less than 15 minutes)

[Generosity Stories for Kids](#) Encourage young children to be giving by reading inspiring books. (less than 15 minutes)

[Kindness Art for Kids](#) Students will identify examples of kindness and create art that reflects those examples. (less than 15 minutes)

[Music to Inspire Kindness](#) Students will make music with others (e.g., classmates, teachers, larger school) to encourage generosity and helping behavior. (less than 15 minutes)

[Acts of Kindness](#) Students think of ways they have acted with kindness towards others and then draw and write about it. (less than 30 minutes)

[Kindness Buddy](#) Students get a secret kindness buddy to do a kind act for during the week. At the end of the week, they reveal their buddies and reflect on how it felt to be kind. (less than 30 minutes)

[Noticing Kindness](#) Students reflect and write about ways they have been kind to other people. (less than 30 minutes)

[Caring Intentions: Being Kind to Others](#) Students consider the intentions of characters in a story who are kind to others. (less than 1 hour)

[Prosocial Teaching Strategies](#) Pedagogical methods that promote social-emotional development and prosocial goals. (time varies)

Additional Resources

TOPICS 7.3 and 8.3: **KINDNESS and COMPASSION** for Educators and Students

Practices

Middle and High School (in order of duration)

[What Does a Kind Teacher Look or Act Like?](#) A worksheet to gather insight from students on what they think kind teachers are like. (less than 5 minutes)

[Behind Your Back](#) A student or staff member stands with their back to a small group of three to five people, each of whom take turns sharing their appreciation of that person. (less than 15 minutes)

[Feeling Connected for Students](#) Students write about a time when they felt connected to someone and consider why they experienced that sense of closeness. (less than 15 minutes)

[Kindness Steps](#) A worksheet to help students plan intentional acts of kindness. (less than 15 minutes)

[Who Deserves Compassion?](#) A compassion game that helps students explore their own limits to compassion. (less than 30 minutes)

[From Sympathy to Action](#) Students reflect on readings and engage in discussions about the responsibilities they have to address suffering and injustice in larger society. (less than 1 hour)

[Earthrise: Cultivating Global Citizenship](#) Students watch the film *Earthrise* and learn how the Earthrise photograph provided a context for what it means to be a global citizen. (multiple sessions)

[Listening with Compassion](#) Students practice five listening skills and reflect on their experience. (multiple sessions)

Additional Resources

TOPICS 7.3 and 8.3: **KINDNESS and COMPASSION** for Educators and Students

Practices

Adult (in order of duration)

[A Connected Moment](#) A reflection worksheet to identify a moment of connection with another person, which can help increase our feelings of connectedness and compassion. (less than 5 minutes)

[I See You. Everyone Matters.](#) Members of the classroom or meeting stand and respectfully acknowledge each person in the group. (less than 5 minutes)

[Eliciting Altruism](#) Choose from three strategies that are effective at overcoming barriers to kindness in yourself and others. (1 time per month for less than 10 minutes)

[Random Acts of Kindness](#) One day this week, perform five acts of kindness—all on the same day. Then, for more of a happiness boost, write down how these acts made you feel. (less than 10 minutes for 5 times in one day)

[Happiness Break: Wrap Yourself in Kindness, With Jack Kornfield](#) When we treat ourselves with kindness and gratitude, research shows we feel more motivated and less self-critical. Meditation teacher Jack Kornfield leads in a practice where we gently turn inward. [9:55]

[Common Humanity Meditation](#) A mindfulness practice that builds compassion and interconnection by seeing your similarities with others. (10 minutes)

[Active Listening for School Staff](#) School staff members practice listening to each other with empathy and understanding. (less than 15 minutes)

[Feeling Supported](#) Recall how others have comforted you to bring out compassion in ourselves. (15 minutes)

[Assessing Your School Climate](#) Teachers identify and reflect on the attitudes and behaviors that members of the school community are exposed to every day at school, potential impacts on these members, and actions they can engage in to mitigate any harm (less than 30 minutes)

[Questions for Connectedness](#) A worksheet with multiple questions for pairs of colleagues to ask one another in order to deepen their sense of connection with each other. (less than 45 minutes— can be shortened to even five minutes)

Module 7.3

KINDNESS and COMPASSION for Educators



TAKE IT DEEPER: 1 of 3

Questions for Connectedness

Ask your students to brainstorm— what is kindness to them? What does a kind teacher look like? How do they act?

Consider doing this activity anonymously so students feel more comfortable responding honestly. You can also frame it so they are not talking about you specifically, but rather teachers in general. For younger students, use some of these prompts below.

A teacher shows kindness by _____

Teachers are kind when they _____

My teachers are kind because _____

My teachers show me compassion by _____

A teacher can show kindness by _____

What are ____ [pick a number] things teachers do to show they care?

A Connected Moment

Research has shown that when we reflect on or write about times we felt a connection with someone else, it actually increases our feelings of connectedness and concern for others.

Take a moment to reflect on a time you felt really connected to a student or group of students or to your colleagues. Write about it in as much detail as you can. Write about the events that happened but also how it made you feel and the emotions you noticed in the students or your colleagues.

Reflection: How did it feel to reflect on this moment of connection? How might you make space for more moments like this in your day?

Research suggests that spending just 45 minutes engaging in self-disclosure with someone can dramatically increase feelings of connection between the two of you. Studies have also found that asking someone questions about themselves makes them feel seen and increases their feeling of belonging.

Practice adapted from [Feeling Connected for Adults](#)



Module 7.3

KINDNESS and COMPASSION for Educators



TAKE IT DEEPER: 2 of 3

Questions for Connectedness

You can use this activity at a staff meeting or retreat to increase bonding among colleagues.

Instructions

Before answering these questions, make sure both you and your partner are comfortable with sharing personal thoughts and feelings with each other. Choose two questions from Set I below. If you are leading a group in this exercise, you might choose the questions ahead of time.

If you have more time (and for the exercise to be more effective), choose more questions. Take turns asking one another the questions. Each person should answer each question, but in an alternating order, so that a different person goes first each time.

If time permits, choose more questions to ask each other from Set I, Set II, or Set III. (Note: Each set of questions is designed to be more probing than the previous one.)

Set I

1. Given the choice of anyone in the world, whom would you want as a dinner guest?
2. Would you like to be famous? In what way?
3. Before making a telephone call, do you ever rehearse what you are going to say? Why?
4. What would constitute a "perfect" day for you?
5. When did you last sing to yourself? To someone else?
6. If you were able to live to the age of 90 and retain either the mind or body of a 30-year-old for the last 60 years of your life, which would you want?
7. Do you have a secret hunch about how you will die?
8. Name three things you and your partner appear to have in common.
9. For what in your life do you feel most grateful?
10. If you could change anything about the way you were raised, what would it be?
11. Take four minutes and tell your partner your life story in as much detail as possible.
12. If you could wake up tomorrow having gained any one quality or ability, what would it be?

Set II

13. If a crystal ball could tell you the truth about yourself, your life, the future, or anything else, what would you want to know?
14. Is there something that you've dreamed of doing for a long time? Why haven't you done it?
15. What is the greatest accomplishment of your life?
16. What do you value most in a friendship?



Module 7.3

KINDNESS and COMPASSION for Educators



TAKE IT DEEPER: 3 of 3 Questions for Connectedness

17. What is your most treasured memory?
18. What is your most terrible memory?
19. If you knew that in one year you would die suddenly, would you change anything about the way you are now living? Why?
20. What does friendship mean to you?
21. What roles do love and affection play in your life?
22. Alternate sharing something you consider a positive characteristic of your partner. Share a total of five items.
23. How close and warm is your family? Do you feel your childhood was happier than most other people's?
24. How do you feel about your relationship with your mother?

Set III

25. Make three true "we" statements each. For instance, "We are both in this room feeling..."
26. Complete this sentence: "I wish I had someone with whom I could share..."
27. If you were going to become a close friend with your partner, please share what would be important for him or her to know.
28. Tell your partner what you like about them; be very honest this time, saying things that you might not say to someone you've just met.
29. Share with your partner an embarrassing moment in your life.
30. When did you last cry in front of another person? By yourself?
31. Tell your partner something that you like about them (already).
32. What, if anything, is too serious to be joked about?
33. If you were to die this evening with no opportunity to communicate with anyone, what would you most regret not having told someone? Why haven't you told them yet?
34. Your house, containing everything you own, catches fire. After saving your loved ones and pets, you have time to safely make a final dash to save any one item. What would it be? Why?
35. Of all the people in your family, whose death would you find most disturbing? Why?
36. Share a personal problem and ask your partner's advice on how he or she might handle it. Also, ask your partner to reflect back to you how you seem to be feeling about the problem you have chosen.

You can try this practice with different colleagues you want to develop a connection with—but if your answers start to feel routine, consider making up your own list of questions that become increasingly more personal.

Practice adapted from [36 Questions to Increase Connectedness at School](#)



Module 8.3

KINDNESS and COMPASSION for Students



TAKE IT DEEPER:

Quiet and Loud Kindness Worksheet

Sometimes students may think they always need to be doing the big gestures of kindness. But compassion doesn't have to be big or obvious. Even the small, quiet, unnoticed moments of kindness are equally as impactful and important. Indeed, they might be even more important— because they demonstrate that the person has internalized the importance of kindness. How might we more intentionally encourage these unseen moments of compassion and kindness?

Use the following template to brainstorm quiet AND loud acts of kindness with your students.

Loud/Big Kindness	Quiet Kindness
Kindness that is more obvious; that you can see other people do	Kind things you do that people might not notice or acknowledge; sometimes it's something you didn't do, out of kindness
Example: Helping a classmate who fell and got hurt on the playground	Example: Choosing not to laugh along with a joke that might be hurtful to someone

Discussion Questions:

Was it hard to come up with quiet kindness examples? Have you ever thought of kindness in this way before?

Does kindness always need to be acknowledged? What internal feelings do we get when we are quietly kind— even when no one else notices?



Module 8.3

KINDNESS and COMPASSION for Students



TAKE IT DEEPER:

Kindness Steps Worksheet

Dr. Ty Binfet, a leader in kindness research, has identified some effective steps for Intentional Kindness — as he says “the not-so-random” acts of kindness (Binfet, 2015). You can use these steps as an activity for planning out some kindness acts with your students.

Create recipient bank
(who will receive the kind acts?)

Plan acts
(what will you do?)

Verification of acts (by teacher)
(check the appropriateness and feasibility of kind acts proposed by your students)

Timeline
(plan when will you do it)

Enact kindness
(do it!)

Reflect upon kindness
(how did that go?)

Discussion questions (for reflection step):

- How did it feel to do your kind acts? What emotions or thoughts did you notice in yourself?
- Did you notice a change in anyone you did a kind act for? Change in mood? Behavior?
- Were any of your kind acts hard to do? What made them challenging?



Module 8.3

KINDNESS and COMPASSION for Students



TAKE IT DEEPER:

Who Deserves Compassion: The Compassion Continuum

When talking to students about compassion, we can explore the questions: Does everyone deserve compassion? What about people who commit crimes? Or people who are not so kind themselves? The following activity can spark this discussion.

Create a “Compassion continuum” on the floor, with markers from “No compassion” to “A lot of compassion”.

Pose these scenarios/people to your students and have them stand along the continuum to represent how much compassion they feel this person deserves.

- A classmate who forgot their lunch today
- A friend at school who was being bullied
- A bully who failed their math test
- A person who is a friend of your aunt who is on trial for theft
- A president of a company who cheats on their taxes and goes to jail
- An infant who bit their brother

After each example, pose some of the following questions (for students to discuss out loud or write quietly to themselves):

- Why do you think this person deserves or does not deserve compassion (depending where they stood)?
- Can you think of any reasons this person did what they did?
- Does that make you change your mind about how much compassion we should show them?
- Could this person do anything to earn more compassion, in your mind? Does a person have to “earn” compassion, or are we all deserving of it regardless of what we’ve done in our lives?

Some Discussion points for the end of the activity:

Compassion for someone's humanity is not the same as “letting them off the hook” or approving of their actions. In the classroom in particular, we can allow all members of a conflict to have a voice and offer compassion for their own suffering that may have led them to their actions— but still hold students accountable for their actions. We can also allow space for people to do better next time.

