

California Social Emotional  
Learning Modules

# Professional Learning Toolkit

7.5 AWE for Educators  
8.5 AWE 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
	<b>MOD 7.5</b>	<b>Awe for Educators</b>
	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
	<b>MOD 8.5</b>	<b>Awe for Students</b>
	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 7.5 and 8.5: AWE for Educators and Students

Module	7.5 Awe for Educators	8.5 Awe for Students
<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define awe and explore the various ways it can be sparked</li> <li>• Explore the benefits of seeking and experiencing awe</li> <li>• Explore the potential role of awe for educators' wellbeing, relationships, and satisfaction at work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Define awe and explore the various ways it can be sparked</li> <li>• Explore the benefits of seeking and experiencing awe for young people</li> <li>• Explore the potential role of awe for students' wellbeing, relationships, and thriving at school</li> </ul>
<b>California Standards for Teaching Profession (CSTPs)</b> <a href="#">2024 CSTPs (full pdf)</a> 	<p><b>CSTP 1: Engaging and Supporting All Students in Learning</b>            1A: Focus on Students <b>(1A-1)</b>; 1B: Knowledge of Students <b>(1B-2)</b>; 1D: Diversity and Equity <b>(1D-1)</b></p> <p><b>CSTP 2: Creating and Maintaining Effective Environments for Student Learning</b>            2A: Learning Environment <b>(2A-3)</b>; 2B: Student Behavior <b>(2B-4)</b>; 2D: Inclusive Environment <b>(2D-3)</b></p> <p><b>CSTP 3: Understanding and Organizing Subject Matter for Students</b>            3A: Knowledge of Subject Matter and Pedagogy <b>(3A-3)</b>; 3B: Connecting Subject Matter to Real-World Contexts <b>(3B-1)</b>; 3D: Content and Skills across Subjects <b>(3D-3)</b>; 3E: Curriculum Materials and Resources <b>(3E-4)</b></p> <p><b>CSTP 4: Planning Instruction and Designing Learning Experiences for All Students</b>            4A: Planning Instruction for Student Learning <b>(4A-2)</b></p> <p><b>CSTP 6: Developing as a Professional Educator</b>            6A: Reflection on Practice <b>(6A-1)</b>; 6B: Focused Professional Learning <b>(6B-3)</b>; 6E: Ethical Conduct and Professional <b>(6E-2)</b>; 6G: Personal Growth and Well-Being <b>(6G-1)</b></p>	
<b>CA TSEL Guidelines</b> Sourced from CDE (July 2023)	Link Objectives to Developmental Indicators in <a href="#">California Transformative SEL Competencies</a> . The <a href="#">California Department of Education (CDE)</a> 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 7.5 and 8.5: **AWE** for Educators and Students

#### Articles (Adult-oriented)

[8 Reasons Why Awe Makes Your Life Better](#) Research suggests that awe can make you happier, healthier, more humble, and more connected to the people around you.

[Why Do We Feel Awe?](#) According to Dacher Keltner, there are important evolutionary reasons: It's good for our minds, bodies, and social connections.

[How Awe Makes Us Generous](#) A new study finds that feeling small in nature makes us more generous to other humans.

[How Awe Brings People Together](#) A series of experiments suggest that awe causes us to have a smaller sense of self, which shapes our social networks in positive ways.

[Do We Need God to Feel Awe?](#) New studies are exploring the scientific basis for feelings of reverence and wonder.

[How Awe Can Help Us Through the Tough Times](#) A new study suggests that feeling connected to something larger than ourselves can help us to find meaning, even in suffering.

[Can a Sense of Awe Improve Our Arguments?](#) Feeling awe can make us more humble and tolerant toward political opponents, a new study suggests.

[How a Sense of Awe Can Inspire Us to Confront Threats to Humanity](#) New research shows that awe helps us feel more connected to a global community.

#### Articles (Student-oriented)

[How Awe Sharpens Our Brains](#) According to emerging research, we're better thinkers when we're feeling awe.

[How Awe Can Help Students Develop Purpose](#) Research suggests that inducing awe in the classroom might inspire kids to find a sense of purpose in life.

[How Awe Walks Helped My Students Slow Down](#) Students at San Domenico School in California are finding wonder, peace, and inspiration in nature.

[What Makes a Class Memorable? Moments of Awe](#) We can create learning environments that students remember forever if we open up our classrooms to awe and wonder.

[An Awesome Way to Make Kids Less Self-Absorbed](#) Research suggests that experiencing awe helps kids focus less on themselves and more on the world around them.

[Can Awe Help Students Cope with Climate Change?](#) Climate education that focuses on natural disasters and catastrophes can overwhelm students. One educator tried focusing on awe instead.

[How the Science of Awe Shaped Pixar's "Soul"](#) A scientist and an artist explain how the new animated film uses visual and music to bring awe to life.

[Feeling Awe Might Help Kids Be More Generous](#) A new study finds that awe makes children more giving toward refugees—and more calm.

#### Customizable Slides for Students

[What is Awe?](#)

Download and customize these slides to teach students about awe.



## Additional Resources

### TOPICS 7.5 and 8.5: AWE for Educators and Students

#### Podcasts & Happiness Breaks

[Scheduling Time to Feel Awe\(some\)](#) (20:43) Feeling awe can boost your mood and make you feel more connected with others. Comedian Chris Duffy learns how to tap into it.

[Why We Should Look Up at the Sky](#) (20:06) When did you last take a moment to really look up at the sky? Shifting our gaze upward is linked to more creativity, capacity to focus—and it's a gateway to awe.

[How Music Evokes Awe](#) (20:19) Why do some songs send chills down your spine or give you goosebumps? We explore the science of how music induces awe—and how that affects our well-being.

[Can You Find Wonder in the Ordinary?](#) (17:13) When was the last time you felt connected to something bigger than yourself? Award-winning Yumi Kendall looks, and listens, for moments of awe.

[Finding Awe in Every Step](#) (21:54) How can we feel connected to the world around us? Singer Diana Gamos tries to cultivate a sense of awe in the most unlikely of places.

[Happiness Break: A Meditation on Cultivating Awe Through Colors](#) (6:21) Experiencing awe can help us slow down and connect to the world around us. So how can we harness the power of this feeling? Host Dacher Keltner leads us in a colorful meditation to bring about awe.

[Happiness Break: Awe in Impermanence](#) (8:06) Take a few minutes to develop your sense of awe for the circle of life in this meditation with Dacher Keltner.

[Happiness Break: Feeling the Awe of Nature From Anywhere, With Dacher](#) (7:03) Host Dacher Keltner leads us through an exercise in feeling the serenity and wonder that nature brings us, no matter where we are.

[Happiness Break: Awe for Others, With Dacher](#) (8:43) The communities we create are one of the most awe-inspiring parts of our lives. Host Dacher Keltner guides us in a meditation on awe and togetherness in this week's Happiness Break.

#### Quiz

Take the [Greater Good Awe Quiz](#) to discover if your life could be more awesome.

#### Videos

[Why Awe - With Educators](#) (4:15) Three educators share their “why” for bringing awe into the classroom.

[How Culture Shapes the Experience of Awe](#) (17:38) Jennifer Stellar, an assistant professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of Toronto, explains what is universal about the emotion of awe in cultures around the world—and what is different.



## Additional Resources

### TOPICS 7.5 and 8.5: AWE for Educators and Students

#### PRACTICES for Students

##### Awe and Transcendence/Meaning

[Transforming Challenges into Meaningful Pursuits](#) (Middle School—College) Students reflect on a community challenge, and then think of solutions after experiencing an “awe” moment. (less than 1 hour)

[Finding Awe in Collective Acts of Kindness](#) (Upper elementary—High school) Students watch an awe-inspiring video of animals moving together in unison, reflect on their experience of collective effervescence, and plan and carry out a collective act of kindness. (multiple sessions)

[Awe-Inspiring Affirmations](#) (Upper elementary—High school) Students watch an awe-inspiring video, then build on the positive emotions they experience by writing a personal affirmation. (less than 30 minutes)

[Finding Meaning Through Awe](#) (Middle school—College) Students interview each other about an experience of awe, reflect on what that experience reveals is meaningful to them, and consider how to connect that meaning to their learning. (less than 30 minutes)

[Movies to Nurture Kindness in Kids](#) (All ages) Foster generosity in kids through awe-inspiring movies. (variable)

##### Awe and Big Ideas

[An AWE-some Mind-Map Practice](#) (Upper elementary—College) Students create mind-maps of a current academic concept, before and after experiencing an awe moment. (less than 1 hour)

[Contemplating Awe-Inspiring Systems](#) (Middle school—College) Students create a systems map of a favorite topic and contemplate the vast interconnectedness revealed through the map. (less than 1 hour)

[Sparking Discovery Through Awe](#) (Upper elementary—High school) Students consider questions that allow them to find awe and wonder in various topics and to consider the connections between specific topics/skills and larger ideas. (less than 30 minutes)

[Seeking Connection to Vastness](#) (Upper elementary—Adult) Students watch a short video about humans' connection to the universe, then reflect on the magnitude of the universe and their place in it. (less than 30 minutes)

[Encouraging Awe and Wonder Through Questioning](#) (PreK—High School) Students ask questions about a topic or skill—ones that may or may not be answerable—opening their minds to the awe and wonder of life. (less than 30 minutes)

[Nurturing Students' Wonder and Curiosity](#) (PreK/Lower elementary) Activities that help educators tap into students' questions and encourage them to wonder about the world around them. (less than 30 minutes)

##### Awe and Music

[In Harmony with Sound](#) (PreK—College) Students experiment with listening and collectively creating sounds that can be awe-inducing. (less than 30 minutes)

[Letting Music Shape You](#) (Upper elementary—High school) Students reflect on an experience of music that elicited awe for them and connect with their peers through the sharing of awe-eliciting music. (less than 15 minutes)



## Additional Resources

### TOPICS 7.5 and 8.5: AWE for Educators and Students

#### PRACTICES for Students

##### Awe and Nature

[Mindfully Finding Awe In Nature](#) (Upper elementary—High school) Students mindfully engage with an image, sound, smell, or tactile experience from nature, and experience an awe moment. Then, they creatively imagine a dialogue they might have with that component of nature, fostering a sense of meaning and connection to nature. (less than 30 minutes)

[A Nature Awe Journal](#) (Middle school—Adult) Staff or students complete a daily awe journal for one week. (less than 15 minutes)

[Earthrise: Fostering Awe](#) (Middle school—College) Students watch the film Earthrise and learn how the emotion of awe felt by the Apollo 8 astronauts and the world helped them to experience the world as a shared home. (multiple sessions)

[Be Like Nature: Mindfulness for Young Children](#) (PreK/Lower elementary) A script for educators that helps young students see their bodies as trees, their breath as wind, and their kindness and warmth as reflections of the sun. (less than 15 minutes)

[Barefoot Walk: A Mindful Movement Practice](#) (PreK—Upper elementary) Lead children in a mountain pose, invite them to simulate different animal movements—and to feel the sensations in their toes and feet as they walk. (less than 15 minutes)

[Look Up Vibe \(LUV Moment\)](#) (High school—College) Students step outside, take a pause, and gently look up to experience the interconnected nature of life. (less than 30 minutes)

[Finding Awe Through Our Senses](#) (Upper elementary—High school) Students practice using one or more of their five senses to experience awe and reflect on the experience. (less than 30 minutes)

[Inspiring Awe](#) (Upper elementary—College) Students watch a video of “awesome” nature and discuss whether the experience changed how they think and feel. (less than 15 minutes)

##### Awe and Collective Effervescence

[The Beauty of Collective Effervescence](#) (PreK—High School) Students learn about collective effervescence, and either reflect on a time they experienced it or try it in the classroom. (less than 15 minutes)

[We Are Better \(Dancing\) Together](#) (PreK—Middle school) Students watch a brief dance sequence or flash mob and then mimic or collectively create a dance sequence, experiencing collective effervescence through movement. (less than 30 minutes)

##### Awe and Moral Beauty

[Inspiring Virtue with Moral Beauty](#) (Upper elementary—High school) Students identify and reflect on the experience and display of moral beauty, and consider the importance of moral beauty in their lives. (less than 30 minutes)

[Finding Awe In Everyday Moral Beauty](#) (Middle—high school) Help students explore the everyday acts of kindness and courage, experience an “awe” moment, and feel more hopeful, connected, and inspired to be prosocial. (less than 1 hour)





## Additional Resources

### TOPICS 7.5 and 8.5: AWE for Educators and Students

#### PRACTICES for Students

##### Awe and Visual Design

[Finding Wonder through Art in Community](#) (High school—College) Students walk in their neighborhood and capture an image of a visual design that inspires awe. (less than 30 minutes)

[Finding Awe in Visual Design](#) (Upper elementary—High school) Students choose an art image, appreciate its awe-inspiring qualities, and reflect on their emotional experience. (less than 30 minutes)

[Awe Is All Around Us](#) (PreK—Middle school) Students learn about and create mandalas as a way to experience the awe of visual design. (less than 30 minutes)

##### Awe and Life Cycles

[Life is a Gift](#) (High school—Adult) Students watch a video about the human life cycle to gain a greater sense of perspective and shared humanity. (less than 30 minutes)

[Wabi-Sabi: Finding Beauty in the Cycles of Life](#) (Middle—High School) Students learn about wabi-sabi, research a life cycle of a natural object, and reflect on the experience of wabi-sabi within that life cycle. (less than 1 hour)

#### PRACTICES for Adults

[My Story of Meaning](#) (College—Adult) Create a timeline of the turning points of your life. Next, reflect on who you want to become moving forward and set a personally meaningful goal that contributes to the world. Close by pondering your awe-inspiring life journey so far. (less than 1 hour)

[Discovering Meaning Through Awe](#) (Adult) Staff members write about a time they experienced awe, reflect on what this experience revealed about what is most meaningful to them, and consider ways to bring this meaning into their daily lives. (less than 1 hour)

[Bring Inspiration to Staff Meetings](#) (Adult) Staff members watch a video of “awesome” nature and share their physical, emotional, and/or mental responses to the video. (less than 15 minutes)

[Seeking Connection to Vastness](#) (Adult) Students watch a short video about humans’ connection to the universe, then reflect on the magnitude of the universe and their place in it. (less than 30 minutes)

[Stories of Moral Beauty](#) (Adult) At the start or end of staff meetings, staff members notice and acknowledge acts of moral beauty performed by students and staff, promoting an awe-inspiring atmosphere and building a positive school culture. (less than 15 minutes)

[A Nature Awe Journal](#) (Adult) Staff member complete a daily awe journal for one week. (less than 15 minutes)

[Awe Outing](#) (Adult) Take an “awe walk” to find wonder and inspiration in the world outside. (15 minutes)

[Awe Story](#) (Adult) Read a story that will inspire awe. (10 minutes)

[Awe Narrative](#) (Adult) A writing exercise that makes you feel awesome. (15 minutes)



## MODULE 7.5

### AWE for Educators



## TAKE IT DEEPER: An Awe Reflection

Let's take a brief moment to reflect on a time you felt awe.

Can you think of a time you felt a sense of awe? Try to recall the details of this moment.

What were you doing? Where were you? Was there anyone else around?

How did it feel in your body? What thoughts did you have?

Do you remember having any shifts in your thoughts or emotions?  
Did this experience have a significant impact on you in any way?





**TAKE IT DEEPER:**  
**Integrating Awe Into a Lesson**

Choose a classroom lesson that lends itself to awe. For example, the amazing human body or quantum entanglement or the distance between planets and the size of the universe. Fractals, insects, mixing paints, lichen, slime molds, eclipses, the Chorus of a Greek drama, why we don't feel dizzy on our spinning Earth, field trips to sacred sites, glitter bottles, the magic of literature, hummingbirds...the list is endless!

Next, take a few minutes to reflect on how you might integrate an awe experience into the lesson.

What is "awe-inspiring" in the lesson topic?

How might you share this "awe" with students? Video, music, art, movement— or even just how you deliver the content?

How might you ensure that this moment of awe is safe for all students to experience? And how will you validate all students' responses, whether they feel awe or not?

