

SOCIAL EMOTIONAL LEARNING

SOCIAL SKILLS LESSON PLAN

CASEL COMPETENCY: SELF-AWARENESS

SOCIAL SKILL: BEING MINDFUL

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BOOK INFORMATION

Book title: What does it mean to be present?

Author: Rana DiOrio

Illustrator: Eliza Wheeler

Publisher and date of publication: Little Pickle Press, 2010

ISBN: 978-0-9840806-8-7

Number of pages: 25

Reading level: 1-2

Interest level: K-6

BOOK SYNOPSIS

The author asks “What does it mean to be present” and then provides common guesses that are inaccurate, such as ‘showing up in class.” The author then gives multiple examples of how to be present, such as listening carefully when others are speaking, focusing on what is happening now instead of next, noticing others need help and giving that help, and understanding that mistakes help us learn. The book also explains that allowing the rhythm of your breath to make you feel peaceful, and realizing that tomorrow is a mystery, yesterday is history, and today is a gift, which is why we call it the present.

This book could be used to address mindfulness as it addresses what mindfulness is not, and what it is. It provides concrete examples that can be practiced in a school setting.

LESSON OBJECTIVE

The goal of this lesson is for students to understand what it means to be present, know when they can practice it, and to gain some experience practicing it.

KEY VOCABULARY AND CONCEPTS

Briny: salty

Mindfulness: awareness in the present moment. Acknowledges feelings, thoughts, and bodily sensations

Meditation: (3-6 grade) To focus on the present moment as a method of relaxation

PRE-READING ACTIVITY

Show the students the front of the book and the title. Ask them if they know what it means to be present? Explain that the book has some of their ideas, but it also teaches other ways of being present that they may be less familiar with. Ask them to pay attention to what the book says about being present.

READ THE BOOK

POST READING DISCUSSION

Ask students how many of them paid attention to what the book says. Explain that this is what being present means: really noticing what is happening right now. Explain that this can look different in different situations. Ask the students why being grateful is a way to be present? Being patient? Noticing someone needs something and then helping them? Cuddling with a pet? Ask the students if there were other ways of being present that stood out to them? With each response, ask the class when they can practice these ways of being present.

Ask the students what it means by "Tomorrow is a mystery. Yesterday is history. Today is a gift- That's why we call it the present." Explain that when we regret yesterday or fear tomorrow, we can focus on the present and enjoy it like the gift it is.

POST READING ACTIVITY

K-2: Have students make "rain" with their hands. Explain that being present means that you pay attention to how your body responds, including what you hear and what you feel. Explain that they will be asked to do a few things with their hands, some of which may be difficult. Let them know to just try their best and not think too much about it, as their focus should be on what they feel and what they hear. Ask them not to talk, especially when they are struggling. Then begin. First have all the students, and the teacher, rub their hands together, so as to mimic the sound of a light rain. Then have students snap their fingers, to change the quality of the sound. Eventually they should do the following: snap fingers, clap hands, slap thighs, stomp feet, slap thighs, clap hands, snap fingers.

3-6: Have students practice meditation. Explain that this may be new, but what it requires is to not think about the past or the future but just to pay attention to right now.

Use the following script: Close your eyes and take in a very slow, deep breath. Continue breathing deeply and feel the cool air come in through your nose and flow all the way down to your belly. Feel your belly expand out as you breathe deeply...Notice how the breath feels as it softly flows in through your nose, into your throat, and further and further down it goes. Make sure your belly is moving slowly up and down as you inhale and exhale...Isn't it nice to feel this calm and quiet after

the wonderful active day you've had?...Now for this moment, just listen very carefully to all the quiet sounds outside of you and all around you. You may hear outside noises. You may hear cars, birds, or perhaps something else. It's perfectly okay. We're just learning to pay attention... so just listen...Now, turn your focus inward. Listen very carefully and quietly to what you hear happening within your body. Can you hear your heart beating?...Can you hear your breath as you breathe slowly and calmly in and out?...Maybe your tummy is making noises; maybe everything is very, very quiet. Whatever is going on inside, just take the time to listen very carefully and notice everything that's going on, on the inside...Paying attention to the sound of your breath, it's almost magical. You're whole body is alive and feels so good!

CLOSURE

Being present takes practice, but it is worth it. We can practice being present in so many areas: at home, at lunch, recess, and in the classroom. When we focus on the present, we do not have to focus on the past or the future. We can be present by paying attention to how our body feels.



“Tomorrow is a mystery.
Yesterday is history. Today is a
gift. That’s why we call it
the present.”

- Anonymous