



CARING AND COMMUNICATING ABOUT CHALLENGING CONCERNS

GRADES 3-5

Caring and Communicating about Challenging Concerns

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Introduction

Welcome to the **Caring and Communicating about Challenging Concerns** unit for grades 3-5. This unit is one of a three-unit series on suicide prevention. There are additional units for middle and high school. We encourage you to consider also including the Mental Health Literacy unit for grades 3-5, which can be found on the [Mental Health Literacy and Wellness Education webpage](#).

This is a five-lesson unit inclusive of a lesson which serves as the summative assessment for the unit. The unit is meant to be taught once, in its entirety, in grades 3, 4, or 5. Activities may need to be modified to be developmentally appropriate and to meet the needs of your students. You may also need to take more time on some activities based on student interest, engagement, and need.

This unit is designed as a Tier 1 intervention. We have provided Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies and some ideas for modifications for certain activities, but these do not replace accommodations. The modifications are included to help meet the needs of a range of learners.

Before teaching this unit, provided are some important information and context that will support unit implementation. If you need additional support or have questions, please contact dpisspw@dpi.wi.gov or (608) 266-8960.



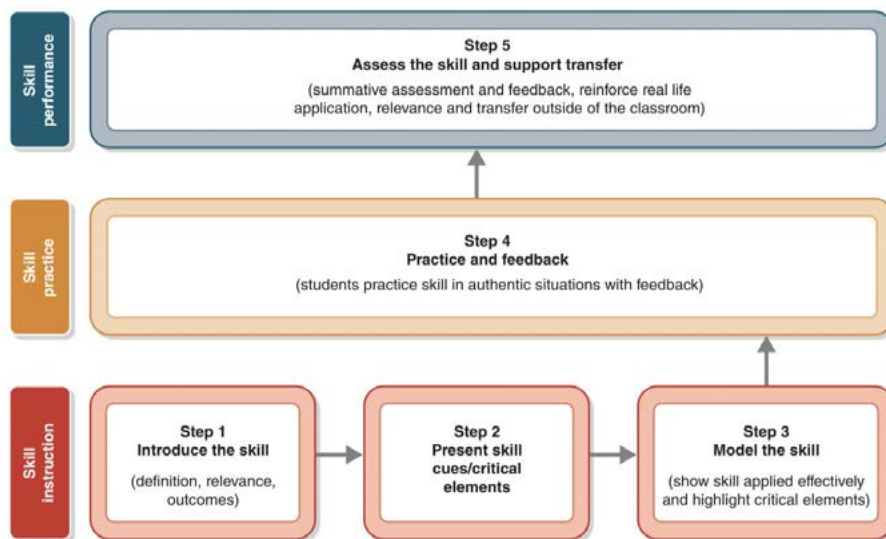
The Mental Health Literacy Units are aligned and serve as a great companion curriculum to reinforce skills and knowledge.

Educator Preparation Before the Delivery of Mental Health Curriculum

SKILL DEVELOPMENT

This unit is designed to support skill development. The skill in this unit is **interpersonal communication**, which is the National [Health Education Standard](#) and [Wisconsin Standards for Health Education](#) Standard 4 (DPI 2011). The content that serves as the context for developing this skill is mental and emotional health, with a developmentally appropriate focus on suicide prevention.

Here is a visual representation of the five steps of the skill development model:



Reprinted by permission from S. Benes and H. Alperin, *Essentials of Teaching Health Education: Curriculum, Instruction and Assessment*, 2nd ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2022), 100.

All steps of the skill development model are included throughout the unit with steps one, two, and three being addressed in lesson 1 and step four addressed in lessons 2-4. Step five is addressed in the authentic, summative assessment, and in lesson 5. To effectively support skill development, all five steps must be included with the most time spent on skill practice and providing students feedback (step four). This is why three of the five lessons focus on skill practice with opportunities to provide feedback.

Another key aspect of the skill development model is step two, “Present skill cues/critical elements.” When developing skills, it is useful to have a clear understanding of the key components that make up that skill. It is also important to note that these skill cues could be used any time you are building the skill of interpersonal communication, including if you are teaching this skill with other topic areas. Using the same skill cues in multiple topics and potentially in multiple grades will also help support retention and will aid in positive transfer whereby students will be able to use the skill in new and novel situations. A final point here; use skill cues that work for your students and are consistent with other school models. We offer a set of skill cues here that teachers have found helpful, but they should be modified as needed to support **your** students. If modified, be sure that all critical elements of the skill are reflected in the revised skill cues.

LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Creating a safe, supportive, positive learning environment is especially important when implementing a unit on mental and emotional health. Be sure that you review expectations and agreements that will create an inclusive and affirming space for each student. SHAPE America’s [Appropriate Practices in School-Based Health Education](#) may be a useful resource along with the section on “[Minimizing Threats and Distractions](#)” for the UDL guidelines and the Department of Public Instruction’s (DPI’s) [Inclusive Learning Communities Practice Profile](#).

You might want to consider having the following classroom norms:

- Challenge by choice.
- Pass (being able to pass on sharing).
- Self-care (taking care of needs and protecting their well-being).
- Intent and impact (recognizing that even if someone means well, they can say things that can negatively impact others; it is important to be mindful in our communication).
- Acknowledge different experiences (students are reminded that everyone has different experiences, comfort, and ability to discuss this topic).
- Anonymous question box (or can use technology options here for students to be able to submit questions or comments that they would rather not ask in class).

As these topics may be difficult for students and some students may need support, it is important to be aware of internal and external resources, including the designated referral pathway determined by your school/district. Be aware of and have resources available in and outside of the school setting. 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and other mental health and suicide crisis lines should be available and posted visually.


THE TEAM APPROACH

For any topics that deal with the potential for other- or self-directed harm (e.g., mental health, suicide, child abuse, bullying), the DPI believes it is important for school staff and student services to be notified. Students should be introduced to student service staff to facilitate connections, should support be needed during or following a lesson. It is recommended to co-teach this unit with another educator, if feasible, to allow one professional to lead the learning, while the other observes for student concerns and assists students in need. Both the educator and the student services professional should look for non-verbal cues, as well as verbal responses of any student that may warrant contact with the student outside of the classroom. It is important for the student services professional to share with students at the beginning of the unit that they are willing to help with any concerns, including those related to the topics covered in this unit.

Families and caregivers should be notified in advance of teaching this unit to provide an opportunity to review the curriculum, increase awareness of the knowledge and skills students are learning, ask questions, and have the opportunity to share information specific to their child that will assist in providing a trauma sensitive approach. If an educator becomes aware that a student could be at risk for suicide by report from the student, the student's peers, or school staff at any point before, during, or after the unit, the parent or guardian must be notified by following the district's protocol.

SYSTEMATIC DELIVERY

Mental health and suicide prevention are critical health issues; and therefore, it is of great value to share the knowledge and skills presented in this unit with school staff and community agencies connected to youth mental health promotion, suicide prevention, and intervention services. It is critical that everyone working in a school understands the content knowledge and skills students will be learning. Mental health promotion and suicide prevention can be enhanced through common language, effective intervention strategies, and community commitment from all people/groups invested in the process.



Consultation and collaboration regarding sensitive and serious topics is best practice and an ethical obligation of professionals. Consult and collaborate early and often.

SCHEDULING AND TIMING OF SUICIDE PREVENTION CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION

Intentional planning for the timing and scheduling of the suicide prevention curriculum is important, along with flexibility to adjust the implementation timeline or content delivery, as necessary. Some factors to consider as you plan include:

- Foundational knowledge or skill development beneficial to students (e.g., mental health literacy, school counseling curriculum topics).
- Student availability to ensure all students receive instruction.
- Vacation or breaks – do not conclude lessons or cover ‘sensitive’ material right before extended out-of-school time.
- Anniversaries of known suicides or student suicide attempts.
- Recovery from any community crisis that also affects the school community (environmental or weather-related, criminal, etc.).
- Cultural considerations (holidays, faith-based events, etc.).

If the curriculum is in the implementation process and a crisis occurs in the school, district, or community, review upcoming lessons to determine whether adjustments to the lesson schedule, content delivery, or additional support are needed.

STUDENTS PLACED AT INCREASED RISK OF SUICIDE

We know from data related to suicide attempts and deaths (including data from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and the Youth Risk Behavior Survey) that students in some groups are statistically at higher risk for suicide than other students.

These groups include, but are not limited to:

- students with mental illness;
- students who have previously attempted suicide or who know someone who completed a suicide;
- ¶ victims of harassment, abuse, or victimization (including bullying);
- ¶ students who experience discrimination, are discriminated against, or are bullied because they are gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or questioning their sexual orientation or gender identity (especially if their families are not accepting of them);
- ¶ perfectionists;

- students with marginalized racial identities including Black youth and Indigenous youth;
- students at-risk of not graduating from high school;
- students who are highly aggressive or impulsive;
- students who self-harm; and
- students who abuse alcohol or other drugs.

You may know students in your classroom that fall into one or more of these groups, but it is likely that some are unknown to you. These students may withdraw from class discussions or make sarcastic or off topic comments about suicide. Through trauma-informed and responsive practice, prior discussion with and participation by a member of your student services staff, you can be prepared for a range of student responses. It is important to refer a student who seems upset or angry to an appropriate student services professional.

STUDENT CARE

Encourage students to seek help and connect with a trusted adult during the class and engage in self-care, as needed. When discussing class agreements, consider setting up a system for students to discreetly notify you if they need support during the unit and have an agreement that encourages students to engage in appropriate self-care (e.g., getting up to go for a walk, getting a drink of water). An example of this could include a thumbs up if they are leaving and OK, a thumbs down to show they are leaving because they need support. Another example could be that students pick up a blue pass if they are leaving and are OK or a yellow pass if they are leaving and need support. Create a system that works for both teacher and students, then have a plan in place to follow up with students as needed.

EDUCATOR PREPARATION

It is important to acknowledge your own experiences and comfort with the topic of mental and emotional health. We encourage you to reflect on your strengths relative to this topic, and areas for growth or gaps in knowledge and experience that may impact your ability to teach effectively. We also encourage you to find support for areas of growth or improvement as you teach this unit. Educators are strongly encouraged to complete gatekeeper training prior to utilizing DPI's curriculum. More information about the suicide prevention training, strategies, and resources is available on the [Youth Suicide Prevention webpage](#), including DPI's free [Gatekeeper Training Module](#). It is also important to be prepared for how to respond if a student shares suicidal ideation or intention. The "[Responding to Student](#)

[Disclosure of Emotional Pain, Trauma or Mental Illness](#)” document provides more information and resources. Self-care should always be a priority. Ensure you are taking care of yourself and seeking support while helping students take care of themselves in this unit.

LANGUAGE MATTERS


A note about language in the unit. We avoid using the language of “warning signs” to discuss signs and symptoms of mental illness. The phrase warning signs reinforces the stigma that mental illness is “bad”, and we do not use similar language when discussing signs and symptoms of physical conditions. Using the terms “signs and symptoms” or “things to notice” is more accurate and less judgmental. You will still see warning signs used frequently, so be mindful when using other resources, you may need to point this out to students if using outside resources. Additional information about preferred language usage related to suicide can be found on the [Language Matters Infographic](#) from the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). Consider also broader language use that can reduce stigma and support individuals with mental health including person first language (e.g., a person who lives with depression) and avoiding stigmatizing language (e.g., “It drives me crazy”, can be replaced by “It bothers/annoys/frustrates me”). You can find more information from the [Mental Health Commission of Canada](#).

MEETING THE NEEDS OF DIVERSE LEARNERS

As noted above, suggestions are included in the modifications section of the lesson plans to support the needs of a range of learners. In addition, you are strongly encouraged to reach out to school staff who can offer additional guidance and ideas to support students in your classes, as well as getting input from students directly.

CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE AND SUSTAINING PEDAGOGY

This student-centered unit provides many opportunities for student ownership of their learning. Designing units that focus on students supports culturally responsive and sustaining pedagogy. Being student-centered, however, is only one aspect of culturally responsive and sustaining practice in which students’ identities and cultures are affirmed and valued, thus creating spaces where students can be fully human. We provide a few additional strategies here and encourage you to learn more and continue developing your skills as a culturally responsive and sustaining educator.



Using the terms “signs and symptoms” is more accurate and less judgmental. Language matters in reducing stigma and supporting individuals with mental health.

Strategies to get you started:


- Affirm all students' experiences.
- Build meaningful relationships with students and their families.
- Engage families in meaningful and respectful ways.
- Implement strengths-based approaches.
- Ensure appropriate representation.
- Lift up voices, examples, experiences, and cultures of communities of color.
- Critically examine your curriculum and instruction.

TRAUMA-INFORMED AND RESPONSIVE APPROACHES

It is important to recognize that individuals may be experiencing or have experienced trauma or adversity. These experiences can impact classroom behavior and engagement in learning. We encourage you to engage in further learning and skill building as needed. The Wisconsin DPI has a number of resources on the [Trauma Sensitive Schools Online Professional Development webpage](#).

Strategies to get you started:

- Recognize how trauma affects learning and how it might show up in the classroom.
- Acknowledge that trauma-responsive practice should be rooted in equity.
- Build meaningful relationships with students and their families.
- When making teaching decisions, focus on these four priorities to embed trauma-informed approaches into your thought processes: predictability, flexibility, empowerment, and connection (Venet 2021).
- Develop clear norms and expectations.
- Explain predictable classroom routines and adult behaviors.



Learn more and continue developing your skills as a culturally responsive and sustaining educator using [Culturally Responsive Problem Solving and Equity: Wisconsin's Model to Inform Culturally Responsive Practices](#).

STUDENT LEARNING TARGETS AND OBJECTIVES

The learning objectives included in the lesson plans are aligned with standards and are written for the educator. Include “student-friendly” learning targets and share these with students. In the lessons, language is included that summarizes the learning objectives, but you may need to modify further to meet the needs of your students. It may also be helpful to have a visual reference of the objectives for students.

RESOURCES

There are several high-quality resources available to support school-based suicide prevention, some of these include:

[DPI Suicide Prevention Webpage](#)

[Wisconsin Safe and Healthy Schools \(WISH\) Center Webpage](#)

[Suicide Prevention Resource Center](#)

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration](#)

[American Association of Suicidology](#)

[Means Matter](#)

[American Psychological Associate Teen Suicide](#)

[American Counseling Association Teen Suicide](#)

[Trevor Project](#)

[American Academy of Pediatrics - Suicide Prevention](#)



Unit Objectives

Based on the WI Health Standards (WI), Mental and Emotional Health Standards (MEH), and Health Behavior Outcomes (HBO).

By the end of the unit, students will be able to:

SKILL OBJECTIVES:

- Identify ways to express needs, wants, emotions and feelings (modified WI 4:1:A1).
- Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health (WI 4:2:A1).
- Demonstrate the ability to ask for assistance (modified WI 4:1:A1).
- Describe when it is important to seek health care (WI 1:2:B1).
- Demonstrate care and empathy for self and others.

FUNCTIONAL KNOWLEDGE OBJECTIVES:

- List the skill cues for effective communication.
- List self- and emotional-regulation skills.
- MEH1.5.1 Identify internal and external signs that one is experiencing different feelings or emotions (Health Behavior Outcome [HBO] 1, 4, 5, 6).
- MEH1.5.2 Describe how emotions can change throughout the day (HBO 1, 3, 4).
- MEH1.5.4 Describe the relationship between feelings, emotions, and behavior (HBO 1, 2, 3, 4).
- MEH1.5.6 Describe how the expression of emotions or feelings can help or hurt oneself or others (HBO 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).
- MEH1.5.16 Describe self-control and how it can benefit mental and emotional health (HBO 3, 4, 5).
- MEH1.5.17 Identify a parent, caregiver, or trusted adult to talk with about feelings (HBO 1, 2, 3, 4, 6).
- MEH1.5.18 Explain the importance of talking with parents and other trusted adults about feelings (HBO 1, 2, 4, 6, 9).
- MEH1.5.21 Identify strategies for effectively communicating feelings to family members, trusted adults, and peers (HBO 8, 9).

- Modified MEH1.5.24 Describe what empathy and compassion are and why they are important (HBO 1, 2, 3, 7, 8).
- MEH1.5.31 Identify the warning signs when a person may be at risk for harming themselves and when to seek help (HBO 1, 4, 6).

UNIT ASSESSMENT

I Am a Caring Communicator

For this project, you are going to tap into your Caring Communicator skills to help a friend in need. You will use the [Project Planning worksheet](#) to help you!


You will choose a scenario in which one of your friends needs help related to managing feelings and emotions.

You need to use your Caring Communicator skills to create a video where you use your Caring Communicator skills to help your friend. Each person in the group needs to show how they would help in this situation. You will post your video on Seesaw (or whatever technology is appropriate).

NOTE: You could have students create and present skits or write out role plays if technology for videos is not available. The practice of expressing feelings and asking for help is key to the assessment and is a key skill of the unit; if you need to have students write out role plays, provide an extra opportunity for students to practice asking for help in class.

Don't forget the key parts of the skill - **Pause, Think and Talk, Connect and Care (PTTCC)**:

- **Pause:** Think about how you are feeling and how other people in the situation might be feeling. Use strategies to manage emotions.
- **Think and Talk:** Determine how you can help and tell your feelings, thoughts, and ideas to a trusted adult when needed.
- **Connect and Care:** Connect by listening and showing you care for the person.



The practice of expressing feelings and asking for help is key to the assessment. Role-plays can be substituted for the video creation. The rubric can be used for either option.

RUBRIC

Knowledge or Skill	Demonstrating	Approaching	Needs Improvement
Your video explains how you would feel in the situation, how you think other people in the situation are feeling. (Pause)			
Your video explains strategies to manage emotions that are appropriate for the situation. (Pause)			
Your video explains the best way to help in the situation and includes at least one trusted adult that could help. (Think)			
In your video, you show what you would say and how you would say it to respond to the situation with your friend. (Talk)			
In your video, you show how you would connect with the person in the situation and show that you care. (Connect and Care)			

LESSON OBJECTIVES

Skill objectives are italicized in the table. Objectives with the Mental and Emotional Health (MEH) designation are from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's [Health Education Curriculum Analysis Tool](#). (CDC 2021)

Lesson 1 - I Can Communicate!

- List the skill cues for effective communication.
- *Identify ways to express needs, wants, and feelings (WI 4:1:A1).*

Lesson 2 - Exploring Feelings and Emotions

- Demonstrate care and compassion for self and others.
- MEH1.5.1 Identify internal and external signs that one is experiencing different feelings or emotions (HBO 1, 4, 5, 6).
- MEH1.5.2 Describe how emotions can change throughout the day (HBO 1, 3, 4).
- Modified MEH1.5.24 Describe what empathy [is] . . . and why they are important (HBO 1, 2, 3, 7, 8).

Lesson 3 - Managing Feelings and Emotions

- Demonstrate care and empathy for self and others.
- Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health (WI 4:2:A1).
- List self- and emotional-regulation skills.
- MEH1.5.4 Describe the relationship between feelings, emotions, and behavior (HBO 1, 2, 3, 4).
- MEH1.5.6 Describe how the expression of emotions or feelings can help or hurt oneself or others (HBO 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).
- MEH1.5.16 Describe self-control and how it can benefit mental and emotional health (HBO 3, 4, 5).

Lesson 4 - Circles of Safety and Getting Help

- Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health (WI 4:2:A1).
- Demonstrate the ability to ask for assistance (modified WI 4:1:A1).
- Demonstrate care and compassion for self and others.
- Demonstrate how to effectively communicate empathy and support for others.
- Describe when it is important to seek health care (WI 1:2:B1).
- Modified MEH1.5.31 Identify the signs and symptoms when a person may be at risk for harming themselves and when to seek help (HBO 1, 4, 6).
- MEH1.5.17 Identify a parent, caregiver, or trusted adult to talk with about feelings (HBO 1, 2, 3, 4, 6).
- MEH1.5.18 Explain the importance of talking with parents, caregivers, and other trusted adults about feelings (HBO 1, 2, 4, 6, 9).
- MEH 1.5.21 Identify strategies for effectively communicating feelings to family members, trusted adults, and peers (HBO 8, 9).

Lesson 5 - I Am a Caring Communicator

- Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health (WI 4:2:A1)
- Demonstrate care and compassion for self and others.
- Demonstrate how to effectively communicate empathy and support for others.



LESSON 1

I Can Communicate!



LESSON OVERVIEW

Time: 40 minutes

Focus (step of skill development model or functional information):

- Step 1: Skill Introduction
- Step 2: Steps of the Skill
- Step 3: Skill Modeling

Materials:

- *Do you speak fish?* By DJ Corchin and illustrated by Dan Dougherty.
- Technology to show the movie clip.
- [Inside Out Movie Clip Worksheet](#).
- [Lesson 1 Exit Ticket](#).

Skill Objectives: N/A, focus is on functional information.

Knowledge Objectives:

- List the skill cues for effective communication.
- Identify ways to express needs, wants, and feelings (WI 4:1:A1).

LESSON 1 | LEARNING PLAN

Introduction: (15 minutes)

Do Now

Once students are settled, let them know that you are starting a new unit. Invite students to think about what skill they think will be the focus of the unit based on the story.

Read, *Do you speak fish?* By DJ Corchin and illustrated by Dan Dougherty.

NOTE: Consider working with your librarian or school mental health staff to determine a book that meets the needs of your students. We recognize that different classrooms may want to use different books or may have access to different books. The focus of the book should be communication and should have some connections to the skill cues of PTTCC (described below). You may also consider using a video clip or other form of media for this activity.

Invite student ideas about the skill of the unit. Affirm positive responses. (Step 1: Introduce the skill)

UDL Strategies:

- Provide the text in accessible versions (in students' home language, have a copy for students to follow along with).
- Highlight key ideas by connecting to the pictures in the text and repeating key words.

Main Activities: (20 minutes)

Activity 1: Discussion (ten minutes):

Ask students: Why do you think communication helps our health? Affirm positive responses. (Step 1: Introduce the skill)

Let students know that they will be learning how to be a Caring Communicator in this unit and that, at the end of the unit, they will show how they can use this skill to help others. (Step 1: Introduce the skill)

Tell students: In order to be a caring communicator, you need to practice PTTCC: (Step 2: Present steps of the skill)

- **Pause:** Think about how you are feeling and how other people in the situation might be feeling. Use strategies to manage emotions.
- **Think and Talk:** Determine how you can help and tell your feelings, thoughts, and ideas. Tell a trusted adult when needed.
- **Connect and Care:** Connect by listening and showing you care for the person.



Do you Speak Fish
as a read aloud
is available on
[Youtube](#).



Post on the board for students to see what will be discussed. Provide students with the guided notes sheet to fill in as it is being discussed. Make connections to where these skill cues showed up in the story (holding the book up again and showing students).

UDL Strategies:

- Provide skill cues in students' home language.
- Provide a more scaffolded guided notes sheet with less to fill in.

Activity 2: Modeling (ten minutes): (Step 3: Model the skill)

Tell students: We are going to watch a short video clip, as you are watching it, write down if you see the characters using PTTCC. Provide a worksheet for students.

Show [this clip](#) from the movie *Inside Out*.

Have students turn and talk to a partner for one-to-two minutes to discuss how the skill cues showed up in the video. Discuss as a whole group, inviting partners to share ideas. Be sure to discuss how we cannot “see” the “Pause” and invite students to share how they think all the characters might have been feeling and how they tried to help. Discuss how Joy was not as helpful as Sadness and how Sadness could really **connect** with Bing Bong and how she showed **caring**.

NOTE: As above, if you have a different video clip that you would like to use to connect to the skill cues, especially if you feel one would be more relevant for your students, feel free to use it. You can still use the worksheet provided.

UDL Strategies:

- Play the video with closed captions.
- Provide the worksheet in students' home languages.
- Have students identify the skill cue from options from the video (or to check off as they see them or to match to the skill cue).

Conclusion: (five minutes)

Have students complete the provided [Exit Ticket](#) to review the skill cues.

UDL Strategies:

- Provide the prompt in students' home languages.
- Students could use notes from class if needed.



LESSON 2

Examining Feelings and Emotions



LESSON OVERVIEW

Time: 40 minutes

Focus (step of skill development model or functional information):

- Functional Information
- Step 4: Practice and Feedback

Materials:

- Pieces of paper of each color of the rainbow for each student (large enough for them to write one word in) and poster paper to post the papers (see below). You could also use different color post-it notes.
- [Scenarios](#).
- [Practicing the PAUSE Worksheets](#).
- *Optional:* A link for [“Stop and Think Power” SEL Practices](#) that could support the lesson.

Skill Objectives:

- Demonstrate care and empathy for self and others.

Knowledge Objectives:

- MEH1.5.1 Identify internal and external signs that one is experiencing different feelings or emotions (HBO 1, 4, 5, 6).
- MEH1.5.2 Describe how emotions can change throughout the day (HBO 1, 3, 4).
- *Modified* MEH1.5.24 Describe what empathy [is] ... and why they are important (HBO 1, 2, 3, 7, 8).

LESSON 2 | LEARNING PLAN



Introduction: (five minutes)

Do Now

As students enter, provide them with one piece of paper of each color of the rainbow. Ask students to write an emotion or a feeling that they think matches the color. Remind students that there are no right or wrong answers!

UDL Strategies:

- Provide a word bank of emotions projected for students to see or provide as a handout.
- Provide students an opportunity to write feeling words in their home languages and/or to draw the feeling and emotion rather than writing it.

Review lesson objectives.



Main Activities: (30 minutes)

Activity 1: Activity/Discussion (15 minutes): (Step 4: Practice and feedback)

Have students bring their colors to a space in the classroom. Students put their reds with other reds, oranges with other oranges, etc. Have them do this in the form of a rainbow.

NOTE: Consider having them glue these onto a poster paper to hang in the room. This could also be done after the class and then posted in the classroom. This could be a good opportunity for a cross-disciplinary lesson with the art teacher. This could also expand lessons and deepen understanding about and connections between emotions, feelings and art.

Invite students to look at the rainbow and share their observations. You may use the following prompts:

- What do you notice?
- What do you wonder?
- What do you think this tells us about feelings and emotions?

Highlight key points that *should* be illustrated from this activity:

- We experience many similar emotions.
- Not everyone describes or experiences emotions in the same way.
- We experience a lot of different emotions.

Tell students: *One of the aspects of being a caring communicator is the “Pause”, where we think about how we are feeling and how others might be feeling. When we can understand and connect to the feelings of other people, that is **empathy**. Having empathy is critical for caring communication. Make connections back to the book from Lesson 1. Tell students that in the next activity they will have a chance to practice empathy.*

UDL Strategies:

- Provide a handout with the word and definition in students’ home languages.
- Write the word empathy on the board or have a visual for reference.

Activity 2: Practicing the Pause (15 minutes): (Step 4: Practice and feedback)

Tell students: For this activity, you will be practicing the **PAUSE** part of Caring Communication. Each group will get a set of scenarios. One person from the group will read the scenario. Everyone in the group will use [their worksheet](#) to write down how YOU would feel in the situation and how the other person might be feeling in the situation. Each person does this **on their own**. Students are invited to share out with the group how they would feel and how they think the other person might feel. If two or more people have the same emotion for the other person, your group gets a check. Model this briefly for students.

NOTE: At this age, youths’ brains are still developing the ability to stop and think (pause) and this development will happen at different rates for students. This means that some students may find this practice more difficult and may need additional scaffolding and support (Icenogle & Cauffman 2021; Hartley & Somerville 2015).

Put students into groups and [provide scenarios](#). Give each group three scenarios and the worksheet.

Provide ten minutes for students to complete the activity in their groups. Bring everyone together to debrief the activity. Possible debrief questions include:

- What did you learn about feelings and emotions from this activity?
- What did you learn about **empathy**?
- How many checks did your group get? Was it hard or easy to get checks? Why?

Tell students: Remember that, while it is important to be able to think about how someone else might be feeling in a situation, you want to connect with the person and find out from them how they are feeling!



Discuss empathy and share or solicit examples - Empathy means understanding how someone else feels, like if your friend is sad because they lost their favorite toy, you can imagine how they feel and try to cheer them up.

UDL Strategies:

- If possible, have peers in groups who can help translate scenarios and discussion to students.
- Provide scenarios and the worksheets in students' home languages.

Conclusion: (five minutes)

As an Exit Ticket, ask students to write down two ways that someone can have empathy for another person.

UDL Strategies:

- Provide sentence stems for students.
- Provide examples and have students circle which ones they would use.



LESSON 3

Managing Feelings and Emotions



LESSON OVERVIEW

Time: 40 minutes

Focus (step of skill development model or functional information):

- Functional Information
- Step 4: Practice and Feedback

Materials:


- Emotion cards (for the *Do Now*).
- *B is for Breathe: The ABCs of Coping with Fussy and Frustrating Feelings* by Melissa Munro Boyd.
- [“Strategies I Can Try” Worksheet.](#)
- [Do Now Worksheet.](#)
- Flip chart/whiteboard and markers.
- Visual of the PTTCC skill cues.

Skill Objectives:

- Demonstrate care and empathy for self and others.
- Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health (WI 4:2:A1).
- Demonstrate self- and emotional-regulation skills.

Knowledge Objectives:

- MEH1.5.4 Describe the relationship between feelings, emotions, and behavior (HBO 1, 2, 3, 4).
- MEH1.5.6 Describe how the expression of emotions or feelings can help or hurt oneself or others (HBO 5, 6, 7, 8, 9).
- MEH1.5.16 Describe self-control and how it can benefit mental and emotional health (HBO 3, 4, 5).



A read aloud is available on Youtube for [B is for Breathe](#) (2:22).

LESSON 3 | LEARNING PLAN



Introduction: (five minutes)

Do Now

As students enter, provide each student with a card or a piece of paper that has one of the following big emotions on it: worry, anxiety, fear, frustration, anger, sadness, feeling hurt, and feeling jealous. Also provide them with the [Do Now worksheet](#).

Provide a few minutes for students to respond to the prompt.

Review lesson objectives.

UDL Strategies:

- Provide the emotions and worksheet in students' home languages.
- Provide questions to help prompt student thinking.
- Provide sentence stems, fill in the blanks, or options to choose from to respond to the prompts in the Do Now worksheet.
- Students could draw responses or write in their home languages.



Main Activities: (30 minutes)

Activity 1: Discussion (15 minutes): (Functional Information)

Have students bring their *Do Now* worksheets and find their other group members who have the same emotion. Provide each group with a flipchart paper or a place to record ideas on the whiteboard.

Tell students: *Share your ideas for each of the questions in the Do Now. Write down your group's responses for the prompts on the flip chart or board. Remember that it is OK if people have different ideas! You want to learn how other people experience emotions, others' ideas about how to manage them, and to see if you can agree on strategies that are health-promoting, but that can look different for people. Try to see if you can list strategies that would not cause harm to self or others and that could help manage the emotion.*

NOTE: Invite each group to share out (focusing on just strategies for time purposes) and record the ideas on the board.

If it does not arise through discussion, use this as an opportunity to bring up the issue of students saying things like “I want to kill myself” or “I just want to die” as a response to experiencing intense emotions without actually having that intention. Specifically, discuss ways that someone could **manage and communicate** strong and intense emotions without

using that language (using the PTTCC cues). There is one scenario in the provided scenarios that could be used to model this with students.

Here are some suggested talking points:

- Sometimes, when we are feeling really strong and intense emotions, it can cause us to express ourselves in ways that aren't always how we really feel. For example, when feeling really upset or embarrassed about something, some people might say: "I just want to kill myself" even though they don't actually mean it; this is what some people may say when they don't know how to or are struggling to express big emotions. But, sometimes people do mean it, so it is important that we use language that communicates what we are really feeling or thinking, because other people will be able to better understand and help us.
- When someone makes a comment like this, we need to get help from a trusted adult right away!
- Here is a way that you can use our skill cues to help express yourself when experiencing big emotions:
 - **Pause:** Think about how you are feeling. What do you feel in your body? What are your emotions? Notice that there are intense feelings and try a strategy such as taking a deep breath, counting to ten or picturing something positive to help calm your body and mind.
 - **Think and Talk:** Think about how to best describe how you are feeling. Make observations about how you are feeling: I notice that I am feeling really upset, I notice that I am having really negative thoughts, etc. Tell a trusted adult!
 - **Connect and Care:** Treat yourself like you would treat your best friend who was feeling like you are!



Consider the developmental level of your students, your context and setting, and school policies and practices when determining if or how you address this talking point.

UDL Strategies:

- Place students in groups with a peer who can translate.
- Provide an opportunity for students to write in their home languages and/or draw responses.
- Provide an “idea bank” for each group to choose strategies from.

Activity 2: Activity/Read Aloud (15 minutes): (Step 4: Practice and feedback)


Let students know that you are going to read a book that has a lot of different strategies for dealing with big emotions. Tell students: *As we read the book, we will look for strategies that you brainstormed as well as any new ones that we learn from the book. Think about which ones you already use and which ones you might try.*

Read *B is for Breathe: The ABCs of Coping with Fussy and Frustrating Feelings* by Melissa Munro Boyd. Have the skill cues posted during this activity (read aloud and discuss).

NOTE: Consider working with your librarian or school mental health staff to determine a book that meets the needs of your students. We recognize that different classrooms may want to use different books or may have access to different books. The focus of the book should be communication and should have some connections to the skill cues of PTTCC (described above). You may also consider using a video clip or other form of media for this activity.

If students used flip chart paper, they can stay in their groups and raise their hands when one of their strategies shows up in the book. They could also check them off, circle them or otherwise note them on the paper. They could also add new ones that they learn from the book. If students wrote on the board, you could be the one to check them off and add them. If possible (for example with breathing exercises), try some out as you are reading about them!

After reading the book, ask students: *Which of our PTTCC skill cues do these strategies help us with?* Affirm positive responses that helps with both the **Pause** (managing one’s own emotions), **Think** (it might give you ideas to tell the other person to try), and **Connect and Care** (you can show care and connect better if you are managing your own emotions and you can connect by trying some strategies together or just being able to tell them these ideas).



Pause and try some strategies out as you are discussing them (e.g. B - breathing, C- count to 10, P - positive self-statements)

UDL Strategies:

- Provide the text in accessible versions (in students' home languages, have a copy for students to follow along with).
- Highlight key ideas by connecting to the pictures in the text and repeating key words.
- Use this [read aloud video](#) with closed captions.
- Include an idea bank of coping activities ([Pediatric Coping Strategies](#)).

Conclusion: (five minutes)

Provide students with the "[Strategies I Can Try](#)" worksheet and have them complete as much as they can with the remaining time. Encourage students to share these with caregivers at home.

UDL Strategies:

- Provide sentence stems for students.
- Provide examples and have students circle which ones they would use.
- Translate the worksheet in students' home languages.



LESSON 4

Circles of Safety and Getting Help



LESSON OVERVIEW

Time: 40 minutes

Focus (step of skill development model or functional information):

- Functional Information
- Step 4: Practice and Feedback

Materials:

- [Scenarios](#)
- [Asking for Help Prep Worksheet](#)
- [“Who Are My Trusted Adults?” Worksheet](#)

Skill Objectives:

- Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health (WI 4:2:A1).
- Demonstrate the ability to ask for assistance (modified WI 4:1:A1).
- Demonstrate care and compassion for self and others.
- Demonstrate how to effectively communicate empathy and support for others.
- Describe when it is important to seek health care (WI 1:2:B1).

Knowledge Objectives:

- *Modified* MEH1.5.31 Identify the signs and symptoms when a person may be at risk for harming themselves and when to seek help (HBO 1, 4, 6).
- MEH1.5.17 Identify a parent, caregiver, or trusted adult to talk with about feelings (HBO 1, 2, 3, 4, 6).
- MEH1.5.18 Explain the importance of talking with parents and other trusted adults about feelings (HBO 1, 2, 4, 6, 9).
- MEH 1.5.21 Identify strategies for effectively communicating feelings to family members, trusted adults, and peers (HBO 8, 9).

LESSON 4 | LEARNING PLAN



Introduction: (five minutes)

Do Now

After students are settled, read the following poem, “Kind Hearts Are the Gardens” from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

Kind hearts are the gardens,
Kind thoughts are the roots,
Kind words are the flowers,
Kind deeds are the fruits.
Take care of your garden,
And keep out the weeds,
Fill it with sunshine;
Kind words and kind deeds.

Invite students to turn and talk to a partner about how they think this poem relates to the unit. Ask some students to share out. Affirm ideas (there really are no wrong answers). You may want to highlight the following connections:

- Being kind is part of being a Caring Communicator.
- When we are being a Caring Communicator we are using kind words and doing a kind deed, we are filling the other person with sunshine.
- Being a Caring Communicator can help others with their kind hearts.

UDL Strategies:

- Provide the text in accessible versions (in students’ home languages, have a copy for students to follow along with).
- Pair students with a peer who can translate or discuss in the same language.

Main Activities: (30 minutes)

Activity 1: Discussion (15 minutes) (Functional Information)

Tell students: One of our jobs as a Caring Communicator is to get help from trusted adults when we need it for ourselves or for someone else. This helps keep our “garden” growing and is an act of kindness even if it can feel hard sometimes. How do we know if someone is a trusted adult? Invite student responses and record key ideas on the board.

Draw three circles on the board inside each other and label each (starting with the inner circle): Family, School, and Community.

Extension Activity:

Draw a group garden using large butcher paper in the shape of a heart. Students can draw roots, flowers, fruit, sunshine, and add kind words and deeds to the picture.



Ask students to share ideas of trusted adults at each of the levels, starting with family. Record ideas on the board.

Tell students: Now that we have some ideas for who we can go to when we need help, let's discuss how we know when help is needed. Review the following key ideas with students:

- Not doing things you love or enjoy.
- Feeling really sad most of the time.
- Talking about hurting themselves.
- Sharing lots of negative things about themselves.
- Not hanging out with friends as much.
- Often worrying that bad things will happen.
- Feeling not wanted or in the way.
- Saying that things will never get better.
- Often feeling angry, annoyed, or mad.
- Being in a difficult situation that you don't know how to handle or need help handling.

Tell students: The last thing we need to know is how to ask for help. This can look different depending on the person and the situation, but when we are asking for help for ourselves or someone else, we want to remember three important things:

- **Explain why:** We need to tell the trusted adult why you are concerned and what you have seen or heard that made you feel that you needed to reach out for help.
- **Share feelings:** We need to tell the trusted adult how we are feeling and if we need help with the situation (if we are asking about someone else).
- **Everyone needs help:** EVERYONE needs help sometimes! It is a sign of strength to ask for help for yourself or someone else - even when it feels hard or scary.

Have a visual for the three things to remember on the board that stays up while students are completing the next activity.

Remind students that this connects to the **Tell** skill cue and that when we ask a trusted adult for help, they are using all of the PTTCC skill cues - they are being a Caring Communicator.

UDL Strategies:

- Provide notes in students' home languages.
- Provide notes that have ideas for each question that students could use to prompt their thinking.

Activity 2: Practice (15 minutes): (Step 4: Practice and feedback)

Place students in small groups.

Explain to the groups that each group will get one [scenario](#) and one ["Asking for Help" Prep worksheet](#). One person should be the reader and one person the writer (be thoughtful about your grouping to ensure you have stronger readers and writers in each group who can support the activity). Read the scenario and complete the Prep worksheet. Then practice asking for help. Each group will be asked to share ONE example of asking for help with the large group. Put the following on the board: 1) Read the scenario, 2) Work together to complete the Prep worksheet, 3) Practice asking for help. Also have the PTTCC skill cues posted as a reminder.

Provide about ten minutes for working in groups and about five minutes for sharing out.

UDL Strategies:


- Provide the scenarios and worksheets in the students' home language.
- Pair students with a peer who can translate or discuss in the same language.
- Provide an opportunity for students to respond in their home language.

Conclusion: (three minutes)

Have students complete the ["Who Are My Trusted Adults?" worksheet](#). Have them submit for your review so you can connect with students who may have struggled with this activity or who were not able to list many adults. Talk to your school mental health professionals about any student concerns. Hand the worksheets back to students to keep with them.

UDL Strategies:

- Translate the worksheet in students' home languages.



This activity can also be done in a large group. Read a scenario, ask students to "turn and talk" to a partner before asking for ideas to be shared with the whole group.



LESSON 5

I Am a Caring Communicator



LESSON OVERVIEW

Time: 40 minutes

Focus (step of skill development model or functional info):

- Step 5: Assessment and Transfer

Materials:

- Technology for recording videos.
- Assessment scenarios (can use the [provided scenarios](#) or create new ones).
- [Project Planning Worksheet](#).

Skill Objectives:

- Demonstrate effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health (WI 4:2:A1).
- Demonstrate care and compassion for self and others.
- Demonstrate how to effectively communicate empathy and support for others.

Knowledge Objectives:

- Students will apply relevant functional information in the assessment.

LESSON 5 | LEARNING PLAN



Introduction: (five minutes)

Do now

As students enter the classroom, have them respond (via writing, drawing, etc.) to the following prompt: *How does being a Caring Communicator help your health? How can it help other people?*

UDL Strategies:

- Provide sentence stems or sample answers.
- Provide the prompt in students' home languages.

Review lesson objectives.

Invite students to share their ideas from the *Do Now*. Discuss any important points not addressed such as:

- Getting help when we need it, supports our health.
- Getting help for others, supports other's health and can help our own health (supporting relationships).
- Showing care for other people helps relationships, which improves our health.
- Being a caring communicator can help build relationships, which aids health.
- Remind students that one of the reasons getting help is also helpful for them is because they do not need to worry about another person on their own.
- Getting help early can help people get better and experience less negative outcomes.

Main Activities: (32 minutes)

Activity 1: Assessment (32 minutes) (Step 5: Assessment and transfer)

Explain the assessment and provide the scenarios to students.

Provide time for students to complete the "Project Plan" and then record their video.

NOTE: Have students submit the project plan along with the video or have students complete the project plan in advance. Provide feedback and then have students record. This may take two lessons. You can also have students perform role plays during class if technology access is an issue.



Remember, the assessment and rubric are on pages 11 and 12 of this curriculum.

Share out some of the videos in future opportunities with the class or save strong examples to use as a model when presenting the lesson in the future.

UDL Strategies:

- Provide instructions and [Project Planning worksheet](#) in students' home languages.
- Provide examples for each criteria in the rubric to help scaffold the assessment.
- Provide alternatives for the assessment (e.g., completing the project one-on-one during a free block or after school, completing the project with a peer for support, etc.).

Conclusion: (three minutes)

On an Exit Ticket, have students respond to the following prompt:
What is the most important thing you learned during the unit? Why?

UDL Strategies:

- Provide sentence stems or sample answers.
- Provide the prompt in students' home language.



List of Curriculum Resources

LESSON 1

Suggested Resource: *Do you speak fish?* By DJ Corchin and illustrated by Dan Dougherty

Topic(s): Communication

LESSON 3

Suggested Resource: [B is for Breathe: The ABCs of Coping with Fussy and Frustrating Feelings](#) by Melissa Munro Boyd

Topic(s): Coping strategies, managing emotions, self-management.

LESSON 4

Suggested Resource: “*Kind Hearts Are the Gardens*” by Longfellow

Topic(s): Caring, kindness, love.

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Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction • Jill K. Underly, PhD, State Superintendent