



FREE PRINTABLE RESOURCE

SEL Essentials

Social-Emotional Learning for Grades 3-5

What's inside

Four ready-to-teach lessons for upper elementary: sizing a feeling before you react, coping skills that actually lower stress, solving conflicts with I-statements, and setting a goal you can measure. Each lesson has teacher notes, a student worksheet, and a complete answer key. Print and teach - no prep required.

Standards. Aligned to the CASEL 5 core competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision-Making.

Format: 4 complete lessons | Print & digital | Teacher notes + worksheets + answer keys

How to Use This Unit

- Each lesson is designed for a short 20-30 minute block - morning meeting, a content block, advisory, or another flexible lesson window.
- Open with the Warm-Up. The prompts can be read aloud or adapted to reduce reading barriers and support different learners.
- Use the Teaching Points as your talking script. Say them in your own words.
- Hand out the Student Worksheet for guided practice. For younger readers or students who need support, read each question aloud and let them draw as well as write.
- Check quickly with the Answer Key. Many answers are open-ended - the key tells you what a good answer looks like.
- Finish with the Extension when you want to carry the skill through the week.
- Everything is print-and-go. You may print the PDF for personal, homeschool, or classroom use. Do not resell or redistribute it as a paid product.

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LESSON 1

Match Responses to Situations

Objective. Students will distinguish situation urgency from feeling intensity, then choose a safe and helpful response.

Key Vocabulary

Emotion	A feeling such as anger, worry, joy, or disappointment.
Trigger	The event that starts a feeling.
Intensity	How big or strong a feeling is.
Response	What you choose to do after noticing a feeling or situation.
Self-awareness	Noticing what you feel and why, while it is happening.

Warm-Up (Bell-Ringer)

Rate how urgent each situation is from 1 to 5, where 5 means someone needs immediate adult help: a broken pencil, a lost jacket, a classmate who is hurt. Feelings can be strong at any number; the scale is for choosing a response.

Teaching Points

- The number describes how urgent the situation is, not whether a feeling is valid. A small, fixable problem can still bring a strong feeling.
- Ask two questions before acting: Is anyone unsafe? What is the next helpful step?
- Every feeling has a trigger. Naming the trigger can make the next choice clearer: 'I got angry when I lost the game.'
- A strong reaction does not make someone a bad kid. Pause, name the feeling, and practice choosing a response that is safe and helpful.
- A level-5 situation - someone is hurt, threatened, or unsafe - needs an adult right away. Reporting a safety concern is not tattling.

Extension / Take It Further

Keep a three-day reflection log: what happened, what you felt, how urgent the situation was, and which response helped.

LESSON 1 • STUDENT WORKSHEET

Match Responses to Situations

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rate how urgent each situation is from 1 (small and fixable) to 5 (needs immediate adult help). Then choose a helpful response.

1. Rate the urgency from 1 to 5: your pencil breaks during a test. What is one helpful next step?

2. Rate the situation urgency from 1 to 5: you are left out of a game at recess. Explain your rating.

3. Rate the situation urgency from 1 to 5: a classmate falls and cannot get up. What should you do next?

4. Write about a time you had a very strong feeling during a low-urgency situation. What was the trigger?

5. A fixable situation brings a very strong feeling. What could the student do before acting?

6. Why should you tell an adult right away when someone is hurt or unsafe?

LESSON 2

Coping Skills to Practice

Objective. Students will practice four coping skills and choose the one that fits a given situation.

Key Vocabulary

Cope	To handle something difficult without making it worse.
Coping skill	A specific action that can help you manage a strong feeling or stressful moment.
Stress	The tight, rushed feeling you get when something feels like too much.
Box breathing	Breathe in 4, hold 4, out 4, hold 4 - like tracing a square.
Reset	A short pause that lets you start again.

Warm-Up (Bell-Ringer)

When you feel stressed, what do you already do? Write it down. Later we will think about when that response helps, when it does not, and what else you could try.

Teaching Points

- Different strategies help in different situations. A coping skill may help you settle, solve a problem, or get support; a short distraction can also be useful when it is safe and temporary.
- Skill 1, paced breathing: breathe slowly and comfortably. Box breathing is one option; students who find breath holds uncomfortable can simply use a gentle inhale and a slightly longer exhale.
- Skill 2, move: when the setting allows it, a short walk, stretch, or other movement break can help some students reset attention and release physical tension.
- Skill 3, name the feeling and the situation: 'I feel worried about the test.' Putting the experience into specific words can make it easier to choose a next step or ask for help.
- Skill 4, talk to someone. Saying it out loud to a trusted person is a skill, not a weakness.
- Match the skill to the setting. You cannot do jumping jacks during a test, but you can box breathe at your desk.

Extension / Take It Further

Make a personal Coping Card with the four skills you will actually use, and tape it inside your desk.

LESSON 2 • STUDENT WORKSHEET

Coping Skills to Practice

Name: _____ Date: _____

Try each skill with your class, then answer.

1. You notice your heart racing right before a test. Name one quiet strategy you could try, and explain why it fits the setting.

2. You feel very angry after recess. Name one safe strategy you could try before the next activity, and explain why it might help.

3. Try four comfortable rounds of paced breathing. What, if anything, do you notice afterward?

4. Write one sentence that names a worry you have this week: I feel _____ about _____.

5. How can a coping skill and a short distraction be different?

6. Name one trusted adult at school you could talk to.

LESSON 3

Solving Problems with I-Statements

Objective. Students will rewrite a blaming statement as an I-statement and list the steps for solving a conflict.

Key Vocabulary

Conflict	A disagreement between two or more people.
I-statement	A sentence that describes your own feeling instead of blaming: 'I feel ____ when ____ because ____.'
Blame	Saying the problem is entirely someone else's fault.
Compromise	A solution where each person gives up a little so both get something.
Perspective	How the situation looks from the other person's side.

Warm-Up (Bell-Ringer)

Which sentence makes you want to argue back: 'You ALWAYS cut in line!' or 'I feel frustrated when I lose my spot in line'? Why?

Teaching Points

- Blaming or absolute 'you' statements can make a conflict more defensive. Describing your own feeling, the specific situation, and what you need can make the message easier to hear.
- The I-statement formula: I feel ____ when ____ because _____. What I need is _____.
- The five conflict steps: 1) Cool down. 2) Say your I-statement. 3) Listen to their side. 4) Find a compromise. 5) Check back later.
- If either person is too upset to listen or stay respectful, pause first and return to the conversation when both people can participate safely.
- Listening does not mean agreeing. You can understand someone's side and still disagree with it.

Extension / Take It Further

Role-play in pairs: one person says a blaming sentence, then you rewrite it together as an I-statement.

LESSON 3 • STUDENT WORKSHEET

Solving Problems with I-Statements

Name: _____ Date: _____

Rewrite each blaming sentence, then answer the questions.

1. Rewrite as an I-statement: 'You always take the good markers!'

2. Rewrite as an I-statement: 'You never let me play!'

3. List the 5 conflict steps in order.

4. Two students both want the last basketball. Write one compromise.

5. Why is cooling down the FIRST step?

6. What does it mean to see the other person's perspective?

LESSON 4

Goals, Effort and Growth Mindset

Objective. Students will write one specific, measurable goal with effort steps and a plan for one obstacle.

Key Vocabulary

Goal	Something you decide to work toward.
Specific	Clear enough that anyone could tell whether you did it.
Measurable	You can count it or check it off.
Obstacle	Something that could get in the way.
Growth mindset	Believing that ability grows with effort and better strategies.

Warm-Up (Bell-Ringer)

Which goal is easier to reach: 'get better at reading' or 'read 15 minutes every night for two weeks'? Why?

Teaching Points

- A vague goal can be hard to track. Making it specific and measurable gives you a clearer way to notice progress.
- Add effort steps: what will you actually DO, how often, and when?
- Name a likely obstacle in advance. An 'If ____, then ____' backup plan can make it easier to continue when the original plan does not fit the day.
- A growth-oriented response includes trying useful strategies, using feedback, asking for help, and adjusting the plan when the current approach is not working.
- Progress is not a straight line. A bad day is information, not proof that you cannot do it.

Extension / Take It Further

Track the goal for two weeks on a simple checklist, then write two sentences about what worked and what you changed.

LESSON 4 • STUDENT WORKSHEET

Goals, Effort and Growth Mindset

Name: _____ Date: _____

Build one real goal you will actually work on for two weeks.

1. Rewrite this goal so it is specific and measurable: 'Do better at math.'

2. Write one goal of your own. Make it specific and measurable.

3. List two effort steps you will take for that goal.

4. Name one obstacle. Write an 'If _____, then _____' plan for it.

5. You practice for two weeks and are still stuck. What does a growth mindset say to do?

6. What kind of feedback is most useful after hard work?

Answer Keys

For teacher use. Print student worksheet pages separately to keep these hidden from students.

LESSON 1 Match Responses to Situations

1. Rate the urgency from 1 to 5: your pencil breaks during a test. What is one helpful next step?
Answer: Usually 1 or 2; for example, ask for another pencil. A strong feeling is still okay.
2. Rate the situation urgency from 1 to 5: you are left out of a game at recess. Explain your rating.
Answer: A reasonable low-to-moderate urgency rating with an explanation. Feeling very upset is still valid, and a student may seek support.
3. Rate the situation urgency from 1 to 5: a classmate falls and cannot get up. What should you do next?
Answer: 5 - get an adult right away and follow school safety procedures.
4. Write about a time you had a very strong feeling during a low-urgency situation. What was the trigger?
Answer: Any honest example that names the event that started the feeling.
5. A fixable situation brings a very strong feeling. What could the student do before acting?
Answer: Pause, name the feeling, check whether anyone is unsafe, and choose one helpful next step.
6. Why should you tell an adult right away when someone is hurt or unsafe?
Answer: Because an adult can help protect safety and get the right help quickly.

LESSON 2 Coping Skills to Practice

1. You notice your heart racing right before a test. Name one quiet strategy you could try, and explain why it fits the setting.
Answer: For example, gentle paced breathing, naming the feeling, or asking for appropriate support. The strategy should be safe and workable while seated.
2. You feel very angry after recess. Name one safe strategy you could try before the next activity, and explain why it might help.
Answer: For example, an allowed movement break, gentle paced breathing, naming the feeling, or talking with a trusted adult. Different strategies fit different students and settings.
3. Try four comfortable rounds of paced breathing. What, if anything, do you notice afterward?
Answer: Any honest observation, including feeling calmer, noticing a physical change, or noticing no clear change. Students should stop if the exercise feels uncomfortable.
4. Write one sentence that names a worry you have this week: I feel _____ about _____.
Answer: Any complete sentence naming a feeling and a specific worry.
5. How can a coping skill and a short distraction be different?
Answer: A coping skill is chosen to manage the feeling, solve part of the problem, or get support. A short distraction shifts attention for a while and may help when used intentionally.
6. Name one trusted adult at school you could talk to.
Answer: Any specific adult, by name or by role.

LESSON 3 Solving Problems with I-Statements

1. Rewrite as an I-statement: 'You always take the good markers.'
Answer: 'I feel frustrated when the markers are gone because I cannot finish. What I need is a turn.'

2. Rewrite as an I-statement: 'You never let me play!'

Answer: 'I feel left out when I am not asked to play because I want to join. What I need is a turn in the game.'

3. List the 5 conflict steps in order.

Answer: 1) Cool down 2) I-statement 3) Listen 4) Compromise 5) Check back later.

4. Two students both want the last basketball. Write one compromise.

Answer: Any fair split: take turns on a timer, play together, or one today and the other tomorrow.

5. Why is cooling down the FIRST step?

Answer: Cooling down can make it easier to listen, think through options, and speak respectfully before returning to the conflict.

6. What does it mean to see the other person's perspective?

Answer: To picture the situation from their side and understand why they felt that way.

LESSON 4 Goals, Effort and Growth Mindset

1. Rewrite this goal so it is specific and measurable: 'Do better at math.'

Answer: For example: 'Practice multiplication facts 10 minutes, 4 nights a week, for 3 weeks.'

2. Write one goal of your own. Make it specific and measurable.

Answer: Any goal a reader could check off as done or not done.

3. List two effort steps you will take for that goal.

Answer: Two concrete, repeatable actions with a time or an amount.

4. Name one obstacle. Write an 'If _____, then _____' plan for it.

Answer: Any realistic obstacle with a specific backup plan.

5. You practice for two weeks and are still stuck. What does a growth mindset say to do?

Answer: Change the strategy or ask for help - not quit. Effort plus a better method.

6. What kind of feedback is most useful after hard work?

Answer: Specific feedback about the strategy, progress, effort, or help used - for example, noticing that the student checked an error and tried a new method.