

The SEL Blueprint: Practical Interventions for Nurturing Young Minds

Social Emotional Learning for Counselors

Social Emotional Learning Best Practices and Interventions for MFLC

Social emotional learning helps children **build social skills, form healthy relationships, and manage their emotions**. So, what, exactly, does social emotional learning include?

Social-emotional learning (SEL) helps improve kids' academic performance, curtail bullying, reduce dropout rates, and build character. Well-implemented SEL interventions positively affect students' success in school and sets up children for building lifelong resilience.

Military families must cope with deployments, relocation, and the other demands of military life. These demands are especially difficult for children who may have to attend new schools, with little to no control over where they go. The objectives of CYB MFLC services are to ensure military dependents (children and youth) increase their ability to develop strong relationships, solve problems, and adequately express and manage their emotions to increase school readiness and lifelong success. **Helping Military connected children build Social Emotional Learning Skills are a great way to meet these MFLC Objectives.**



► 5 Core Social Emotional Learning Goals



Self-Awareness

- Recognizing emotions and thoughts
- Understanding how they influence behavior
- Assessing personal strengths and weaknesses



Self-Management

- Regulating thoughts, emotions, and behaviors
- Setting goals
- Controlling impulses and managing stress



Social Awareness

- Understanding the perspective of others
- Showing empathy for diverse groups of people
- Finding support through family, school & community relationships



Relationship Skills

- Communicating and cooperating
- Resisting negative pressure and offering help to others
- Building and maintaining health relationships



Responsible Decision Making

- Making ethical and respectful choices about personal behavior
- Making ethical and respectful choices about relationships
- Evaluating the consequences of decisions

▶ Social Emotional Learning to Consider for Counselors

Supporting the Development of Emotional Intelligence

Counselors can help children develop the skills to become more emotionally intelligent.

- Emotional intelligence is the ability for one to recognize, understand and manage their own emotions as well as acknowledge and understand other's emotions and emotional state.
- When possible, facilitate groups so children and youth feel less isolated, discuss feelings, and create connections to offset the disruptions.



▶ Activities to Consider or Suggest

1

Self Awareness Activity

Art is a fantastic way for students of all ages to relieve stress and express their emotions in a positive, healthy way.

Start by picking a piece of music (or even a poem or story) for students to react to. Ask them to use art supplies to react, providing prompts like:

- How did it make you feel?
- Is this music happy or sad?
- What colors did the music remind you of?

2

Self Management Activity

Help students make a journal or goal tracker. A big part of social emotional learning is cultivating a growth mindset and a way to do this is by setting goals.

Make goal setting a regular part of your routine, whether you:

- Give feedback on a project — What did students do well? What should they focus on next time?

3

Social & Self Awareness Activities

The best social emotional learning strategies are incorporated into regular classroom instruction.

Try this simple craft:

- Hand out paper plates and have students draw faces that represent simple emotions — happy, sad, angry, and confused can be good places to start.
- Attach the plates to popsicle sticks and use them as masks during read-aloud. While you are reading a story, ask your students how they think the characters are feeling.
- You can even use the masks as a quick morning check-in to understand student emotions at the beginning of the day.



► Mindfulness and Social Emotional Learning

Why Mindfulness?

By helping students become aware of and then embody the connection between their emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations, students are better able to regulate their emotions, which then impacts things such as their behavior, stress levels, relationships, and ability to focus.

In short, mindfulness practices connect students' inner and outer experiences and help them see the congruence between the two, helping them build a bridge between mind and body, improving Self Awareness and Self Management skills.



► Mindfulness Activities for SEL

Mindfulness Activities for Self Awareness & Self Management

Counselors can present or use favorite mindfulness activities:

- **Teach a mindful breathing activity.**
Example: All right, let us pause.
 - » Breathe in, and out.
 - » Lower your shoulders and sit up straight.
 - » Does that feel better/different?
- **Mindfulness breaks** can help students of all ages learn how to identify and regulate their emotions when they are sad, scared or stressed.
- **Take a minute in your classroom and try some of the activities below.**
- **Teach students to STOP** when they encounter an emotional situation. Roleplay some stressful situations and teach students to:
 - » Stop
 - » Take a breath to calm down
 - » Observe the situation
 - » Proceed with a solution
- Ask students to identify where they are holding stress in their bodies. This can be tense shoulders, a frown or even a bouncing leg.
- Guide them through releasing stress for a more balanced body using progressive muscle relaxation

techniques.

- **Pay attention to the senses.**

Paying attention to the senses helps students with self regulation in their bodies and shifts from overactive thoughts and ruminations.

Ask students to identify:

- » Five things they can see
- » Four things they can touch
- » Three things they can hear
- » Two things they can smell
- » One thing they can taste

Support the Development of Emotional Intelligence by understanding difficult emotions:

- Help children recognize their feelings, label, and identify emotions. Using mindful moments of pause to identify feelings in the body after any of these mindfulness activities.
- Support children as they appropriately express and process their emotions at all stages of development. Guide children to come up with ideas to move through and process their feelings once identified.
- Help child understand and develop age-appropriate problem-solving skills to use independently. Teaching children that they learn best when calm, mindful activities can be used before problem solving.



► Social Emotional Learning Interventions

Creating a Calm Down Space/Corner for Self Awareness & Self Management

Being at school can be stressful! create a calm-down corner to help students deal with hard emotions. A calm-down corner looks different in every classroom, but try adding:

- Books, Fidgets, Flexible seating, Calm-down jars, Pictures, Comfortable blankets, Pillows, Calming sounds.

Have students use the area to the calm-down when they need some quiet time alone and encourage students to pay attention to their own emotions and use the resources on their own.

Relationship Skill Building Activity:

Build connections between students with a fun game of bingo! Hand out cards to students and ask them to find classmates that match the description on each square.

Use bingo card grid to customize your set with descriptions to show similar and different things about their classmates like:

- Plays soccer
- Likes spinach
- Has two or more siblings
- Likes cats better than dogs
- Speaks more than one language
- Likes pancakes more than waffles
- Is military connected

Relationship Skill Building Activity:

Classrooms are a busy place, and there is a lot happening. Keep it organized with a chart that encourages students to take responsibility and complete simple, age-appropriate classroom tasks like:

- Watering plants
- Sharpening pencils
- Erasing the chalkboard
- Keeping track of timed activities
- Delivering attendance to the office
- Keeping the classroom library organized
- Turning the lights on and off in the classroom

