

Welcome to Being My Best Self!

Grades 3-5

Dear Parent, Guardian, or Caretaker,

We are beginning the Being My Best Self unit of Harmony SEL, our social and emotional learning program. In this unit, students will learn to recognize their emotions, as well as the emotions of others, and to direct their emotional responses into positive and useful actions. Students will also learn the importance of helpful self-talk and calming strategies when they experience strong emotions. Important ideas from each lesson include:

Recognizing Emotions

- Naming emotions as pleasant or unpleasant, mild or strong can help us understand how we feel in situations.
- Physical clues like body language, facial expressions, and voice help us notice emotions in ourselves and in others.

Linking Emotions and Thoughts

- Emotions influence our thoughts, and our thoughts influence our emotions.
- Helpful self-talk helps train our brains to be optimistic and look for opportunities.

Connecting Emotions, Thoughts, and Actions

- We act in response to our emotions and thoughts.
- We can respond to the same situation in different ways.
- If we change our thoughts and emotions, we can choose more helpful actions.

Understanding What I Can and Cannot Control

- Our first emotions from a situation or thought are automatic, but we can change how we think and feel by using calming strategies.
- We can use calming strategies when we have very strong emotions, helping us think more clearly and make useful choices.

Growth Mindset

- A growth mindset means thoughts that help us realize that we can use mistakes and challenges to be our best selves through learning, growth, and effort.
- We can change a fixed mindset (that we stay the same) into a growth mindset (that we can grow) by changing our thinking about challenges, helping us reach our goals.

An important part of *Harmony SEL* is for students to talk about and practice concepts outside the classroom. See the Home-to-School Connections: Home Activities (on next page) for ways to practice skills needed to be our best selves at home.

Thank you for your continued support of *Harmony SEL*. Please contact me if you have any questions about the program. You are welcome to review all materials in the Harmony Online Learning Portal. You can register at no cost at online.harmonysel.org.

Sincerely,

Home-to-School Connections: Home Activities

Your child is learning how to recognize emotions and use calming strategies when they have very strong emotions. These activities provide fun ways to practice these skills at home. The ideas below will reinforce what we are learning in school—there are activities to play, topics to discuss, and behaviors to support. These activities are all designed to fit into your daily routine and provide ways to further connect with your child.

- Talk with your child how they recognize and identify emotions in themselves, as well as in friends and family. Talk about the outward cues that help us identify emotions—anger, surprise, joy, fear, loneliness, calmness, and sadness, for example. You could make this into a game of Charades where you take turns acting out an emotion while the other person guesses what it is.
- Ask your child to explain self-talk to you. Help them practice helpful self-talk. Supporting your child's use of positive self-talk can help them reach their goals and can lead to improved self-confidence and happiness. Encourage your child to engage in specific positive self-talk with the following sentence starters:
 - I believe that I can.....
 - I am kind to myself by.....
 - I am grateful for.....
 - I am proud that I can.....
- Use role-play to help your child think back on and ahead to reactions when they experience very strong emotions. For example, say, "How would you react if someone splashed mud on you? How would you react if you opened the door, and there was a surprise birthday party for you? How would you react if your best friend moved away?" Take turns so that you can model that everyone may react differently to the same situation.
- Go over with your child the three steps in regulating very strong emotions. Ask them to explain why it is important not to skip any of the steps.
 - **Stop:** Notice—What is happening in my body? What are my emotions?
 - **Think: Process**—How strong is my emotional reaction?
 - **Cool Off: Get calm**—What strategy should I use to calm my reaction?
- When talking about events, stories, or watching videos with your child, discuss the emotions that different people/characters may be feeling, why they have those feelings, and what actions they take as a result. Talk about how their actions might be different if they had or hadn't stopped, thought, and cooled off first.
- Help your child practice changing fixed mindset statements ("I can't beat you in checkers") to growth mindset statements or statements that reflect we can all grow and learn, it may just take effort and making mistakes along the way ("I can't beat you in checkers, YET").
- Look for opportunities to talk about whether people or characters are using growth or fixed mindsets.
- Use SEL vocabulary when speaking with your child. For example, *emotion* (a feeling such as calm, happy, or sad) and *mindful* (noticing what is happening inside of you or around you; paying close attention). It's also helpful to increase their emotional vocabulary by often using words to label and describe the different emotions we all experience.