

Welcome to Being My Best Self!

Grades K-2

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 and name emotions and to understand that emotions, thoughts, and actions are connected. Students will also learn how to use calming strategies when they have strong emotions and learn about the importance of persistence and effort in reaching their goals. Important ideas from each lesson include:

Recognizing Emotions

- We all have emotions that can be pleasant or unpleasant, mild, or strong.
- We feel our emotions in our bodies, faces, and tone of voice.

Linking Emotions and Thoughts

- Thoughts and emotions work together.
- What happens to us and around us affects our thoughts and emotions.
- We can swap unhelpful thoughts for helpful ones.

Connecting Emotions, Thoughts, and Actions

- Our actions are also connected to our thoughts and emotions.
- We may not always respond to the same situation in the same way.
- Others can respond to the same situations in different ways.

Understanding What I Can and Cannot Control

- We cannot choose the first emotions we feel. They come naturally.
- We can use strategies to get calm when our emotions are very strong.

Growth Mindset

- “Caterpillar thoughts” or a growth mindset is the idea that mistakes and challenges can help us grow and reach our goals, whereas “worm thoughts” or a fixed mindset is the idea that people generally stay the same.
- We have the ability to change a fixed mindset (“worm thoughts”) into a growth mindset.

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 self 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 designed to fit into your daily routine and provide ways to further connect with your child.

- Talk about emotions with your child. Act out together what it looks, feels, and sounds like when they experience one emotion versus another. Talk about what they can look for to tell how other people feel. Practice looking for clues to people's feelings by having your child guess what emotion you are acting out.
- Talk with your child about situations where they may get angry, sad, happy, afraid, excited, calm, shy, and other emotions you can think of.
 - Encourage your child to explain why they may feel that way in that situation.
 - Have your child describe the action they usually take in response to the emotion.
 - Explain that all emotions are valid, but talk about how the way we act in response to those emotions can be helpful or unhelpful. Use examples from your lives.
- Notice and label when your child recognizes their emotions, the strength of their emotions, and how those emotions influence their thoughts and actions. For example, "You are feeling ____? Thank you for telling me." "You thought/did ____ because you were feeling ____? Let's talk about it." Talk with your child about "self-talk" or our voice we have in our head. Have them think about whether the voice gives helpful or unhelpful messages.
- Go over the two steps to get calm when we have very strong emotions in response to situations.
 - **Stop:** Notice—What is happening in my body? What are my emotions? How strong are they?
 - **Cool Off: Get calm**—What calming strategy should I use to bring my reaction down?
- Ask your child what it means to have worm thoughts (fixed or thinking that people can't change) like "I'm the worst/best at this," or caterpillar thoughts (growth or thinking that people improve) like "There's still more for me to learn." Talk about why caterpillar thoughts are important and can help us grow.
- Take opportunities during activities, such as reading stories or watching videos, to help your child:
 - Name the emotions characters are feeling.
 - Identify the situations that cause the emotions.
 - Describe how the characters react to the emotions.
 - Suggest calming strategies the characters might use.
- Use SEL vocabulary when speaking with your child. Two vocabulary words you might use from this unit are *situation* (something that happens) and *emotion* (a feeling such as calm, happy, or sad).