

# Soft vs. Rough

This lesson will explore the difference between kind and hurtful words and how it takes Courage to choose kind words, even when you are upset. Students will use textures to identify kind (soft) and hurtful (rough) words/phrases and then create their own kind responses to hurtful comments.

**Kindness Concept(s)**

Courage, Kindness,

**Lesson Timeframe**

35-40 minutes

**Required Materials**

- ☐ Cotton balls
- ☐ Sandpaper (or another rough/scratchy material)

**Standards Map**

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



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AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM  
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.  
See last page for details.

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Discuss ways to show courage toward others through their word choice.
- Identify both kind and hurtful words/phrases.
- Practice creating kind responses to hurtful comments.

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

It takes courage to be kind first and without notice. This week, try to spread some kindness to your colleagues in small ways. A kind note, taking on recess duty, giving them a bathroom break - your choice.

### Tips for Diverse Learners

- Pair up students so one can be the writer and the other can be the presenter
- Give options for the presentation piece, allowing students to role play if they wish or to practice other presentation skills; be sensitive to students who are too scared to present but give them an opportunity to stand next to the presenters and begin seeing what it's like to be in front of a group of peers.



## Share

5-7 minutes

When we think of Courage, we often think of being strong and brave. However, doing things that are new or scary also takes courage.

**Ask:**

- What is something new or scary you recently tried?

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- How did it feel afterwards? Were you ready to try it again or happy it was over?
- Even if we try something new or scary and it doesn't work out the way we wanted, it still took COURAGE.



## Inspire

5-7 minutes

### What is Courage?

Courage means that you are brave when facing new or difficult circumstances. In this lesson, we are going to talk about Courage through Kindness to Others.

**Kindness to Others:** Sometimes it can be very difficult to treat others with kindness. You can be brave and use courage to focus your words and actions on kindness in any situation. Even if others are mean, you can choose to show courage through kindness. You may be surprised to see just how quickly other's change when you shower them with kindness!

*We are going to do a quick experiment to feel the difference between kind and hurtful words.*

Divide students into pairs and give each pair some cotton balls and a piece of sandpaper.

- Invite them to rub each along their arm.

#### Ask:

- How does it feel when you rub the cotton ball along your arm? (soft, fuzzy, etc.)
- How does it make you feel on the inside when you are rubbing the cotton ball on your skin? (happy, soothing, nice, etc.)

The cotton ball represents KIND WORDS. When we speak kind words we are like a nice, soft cotton ball. When someone speaks kind words to us, we feel happy and calm, the same way you described feeling with your cotton ball.

#### Ask:

- How does it feel when you rub the sandpaper along your arm? (rough, painful, etc.)
- How does it make you feel on the inside when you are rubbing the sandpaper on your skin? (upset, irritated, angry, etc.)

The sandpaper represents HURTFUL WORDS. When we speak hurtful words, we are like rough, abrasive sandpaper. When someone speaks hurtful words to us, we feel upset and angry, the same way you described with your sandpaper.



## Empower

15-20 minutes

Now, read the following phrases and ask students to tell you if they are KIND like a cotton ball or HURTFUL like sandpaper.

- You always interrupt me, it's annoying.
- Thank you for being there for me when I was scared.
- Let's play together during recess!
- My friends don't like you, so I can't sit by you on the bus.
- I love your glasses, are they new?

Words have power and yours can either feel nice (like a soft cotton ball) or mean (like rough sandpaper). Now you and your partner will create a kind response to this sentence prompt. Remember, your words need to feel nice (like a cotton ball) even though this is a difficult situation. It takes Courage to speak kindly in all situations.

**Sentence prompt-** Why are you on the swings? You know it's my favorite thing to do at recess. (Sample answer- we can all share the swings.)

Write/Draw your kind response on the index card provided.



## Reflect

5 minutes

Let's share some of our kind responses to the recess bully. Remember, it can be difficult to choose kindness when others are mean. However, if you use Courage, you can always be kind, even when hurtful words are spoken to you. Sometimes, when you set the example of kind words, others follow along as well. Every time you do something kind for someone else, which takes courage, they feel good. Good about themselves, about you, about their surroundings, and about the situation. Be brave when it comes to showing kindness to others. The more you do this, the easier it will become!



## Extension Ideas

- Create a role play out of each pairs' answer to the sentence prompt.



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The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>

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