

Forming Courageous Responses Using I-Statements

This lesson gives students strategies for responding to others in courageous and kind ways. Students will role play common scenarios they experience at school where someone says something unkind without thinking about how it will make the other person feel. Students practice responding to these situations using I-statements.

Kindness Sub-Concept(s)

Vulnerability, Humility

Lesson Timeframe

30-40 minutes

Required Materials

❑ Scenarios (in lesson)

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.

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Discuss personal boundaries when responding to others.
- Use I-statements to give courageous and kind responses to others.

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

- Adjust the scenarios to best suit your group of students.
- Use props to help act things out if appropriate or beneficial for your group of students.
- Determine ahead of time if asking for volunteers or assigning roles is better suited for your students.

**Share**

5-7 minutes

Play 'Desert Island Picks'.

If you had to spend one week on a deserted island, what 3 things would you bring with you?

Invite student responses.

Notice how all of our responses reflected our personal preferences. It takes courage to be yourself, no matter what others think.



Inspire

5-7 minutes

We've talked about how it takes courage to be ourselves sometimes.

Courage is being brave when facing new or difficult circumstances.

Today we are going to talk about the courage to be kind to others. This might sound funny. Why would it take courage to be kind to others?

Invite student response.

Sometimes it is hard to be kind when someone treats you poorly. We might be tempted to be unkind back to that person. We might also be tempted to be unkind to someone who thinks, looks, or believes differently than we do. Sometimes we fear or dislike or are suspicious of things we don't know or understand. It takes courage to respond in a way that keeps us calm, focused, and mindful of the other person, and be kind to them and to ourselves.



Empower

15-20 minutes

Now we are going to practice having courage to respond to others in ways that are respectful of them and respectful for ourselves. These are situations where we are not being threatened or harmed physically; these are everyday situations where someone might have said something unkind or without thinking, and we have to respond. We always have two choices: 1) We can choose to respond with kindness and respect. Or, 2) We can choose to respond with a negative or sarcastic or unkind attitude.

Sometimes it doesn't feel like we have a choice, though, does it? Sometimes it feels like the only option is to get mad. Eleanor Roosevelt, former First Lady of the United States of America, once said, "No one can make you feel inferior without your consent." Does anyone know what this means?

Invite student response.

Good! This means that we always have a choice. No one gets to make us feel bad or upset unless we give them permission or power to do that. That doesn't mean that it is wrong to get upset or to feel angry or to feel sad. That is part of being human. But we can choose how we let those feelings affect how we respond to others. It can take a lot of courage to respond with kindness and respect when we don't feel that kindness and respect are being shown to us. It also takes practice, so that is what we are going to do now.

We are going to role play several different situations where one person says something to another person and the other person needs to respond. Here is how I want our responses to start. "I..." - Okay? Begin your response with "I."

We are going to practice using "I" statements which helps keep our response focused on ourselves and on our feelings and ideas and not on blaming the other person.

- Examples include: “I feel...,” or “I disagree...,” or “I think...,” and then continue on.
- Using I-statements is a powerful way to let the person you are speaking with know that you are still in control of your mind, emotions, and body.

Call for a student volunteer and hand them a role play scenario. Do not show the student the scenario ahead of time. Practice the example with the teacher as the antagonist.

Example Scenario:

Antagonist: [To the protagonist] What did you bring for lunch? It looks disgusting!

Protagonist (example I-statement response): I really enjoy my lunch. I know it might be different from what you eat. I can explain the ingredients if you are interested.

Follow-up questions:

- What was the unkind word or action?
- What was kind or unkind about the response?
- What, if anything, could have been done differently or more kindly?

Ask for two student volunteers for each scenario. Remember, responses should be in the form of I- statements. Complete as many as you can.

Scenario 1:

Antagonist: [To the protagonist] Why are you wearing that? You look ridiculous!

Protagonist: **Insert response**

Follow-up questions:

- What was the unkind word or action from the antagonist?
- What was kind or unkind about the protagonist’s response?
- What, if anything, could have been done differently or more kindly?

Scenario 2:

Antagonist: [To the protagonist] You got a C on that? That was so easy! My little sister could’ve aced it!

Protagonist: **Insert response**

Follow-up questions:

- What was the unkind word or action from the antagonist?
- What was kind or unkind about the protagonist’s response?
- What, if anything, could have been done differently or more kindly?

Scenario 3:

Antagonist: [To the protagonist] I heard you didn't make the team. Loser!! Guess that means you're on the little kid squad!

Protagonist: **Insert response**

Follow-up questions:

- What was the unkind word or action from the antagonist?
- What was kind or unkind about the protagonist's response?
- What, if anything, could have been done differently or more kindly?

Scenario 4:

Antagonist: [To the protagonist] Why do you have to go read out in the hallway with Ms. Baker. Don't you know how to read?

Protagonist: **Insert response**

Follow-up questions:

- What was the unkind word or action from the antagonist?
- What was kind or unkind about the protagonist's response?
- What, if anything, could have been done differently or more kindly?



Reflect

5-7 minutes

How did you feel when someone said something unkind? How did it feel to respond using I-statements? It takes courage to stand up for yourself while also remaining respectful and kind.

Remind students of the Roosevelt quote; ask students to explain it again and ask if they have a new understanding of the quote. Let students know you will be looking to observe courageous responses to others in the coming week!



Extension Ideas

- Send the Roosevelt quote home with students and ask them to explain the meaning to their parents/guardians. Have parents/guardians write down their student's explanation and sign it, and then ask students to return the slip by a certain date as either part of a morning meeting or for some kind of reward or prize.



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AS A RECOMMENDED
PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

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/>

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS
FOUNDATION®

**“No one can make you feel
Inferior without your consent.”**

—Eleanor Roosevelt, Former First Lady of the United States

Student explanation:

Parent / Caregiver / Guardian Signature