

Kindness Curriculum: Adaptations and suggestions for lessons

These suggestions come from teachers and coaches who have taught the Kindness Curriculum. Remember you can modify any lesson! If your kids aren't paying attention, then choose a few pieces that might interest them. If your class is large, then simplify certain activities. As a teacher, you can model flexibility, awareness, and kindness for your classroom—and you know your class best. Shorten, elongate, break into smaller segments, repeat, or change any lesson.

Supplementary resources

Breathing ball (also called Hoberman Sphere), *ABCs of Kindness* by Patricia Hegarty, *Breathe Like a Bear* by Kira Willey, *Alphabreaths: The ABCs of Mindful Breathing* by Christopher Willard & Daniel Rechtschaffen, *Good Morning Yoga* and *Good Night Yoga* by Mariam Gates

Lesson 1: Mindful bodies and awareness of attention and breath

- The bell practice is included in every lesson of the curriculum. At first, children might not understand the exercise or they'll blurt out observations. That's normal! Eventually, all kids recognize the bell as a time to get quiet and listen.
- The idea of paying attention on “the inside” and on “the outside” is a new concept for kids. They might not understand initially (and that's okay). Repetition will help.
- If the “A for Attention” poster relates to other classroom expectations (e.g., “Give me 5” or “Be helpful, safe, and kind”), then make those connections.
- You can include additional breathing practices. For example, “Smell the flower, blow out the candle.”
- *After this lesson, you send home “Parent Letter #1.”*

Lesson 2: Growing seeds

- For ease of materials, sometimes a few bulbs are given to an entire classroom (rather than every child planting their own seed). This makes the planting easier but doesn't provide enough “jobs” for the kids. Some variations: Break into two groups, allowing all kids to touch the bulb and cover it with a handful of dirt; decorate pots in which to plant the bulbs; create another “job” for kids while they wait.
- Teachers mention wanting more materials for this lesson. This is a conversation you can have with your director. Within these lessons, there's a balance between practical ease (buying materials and organizing them in the classroom) and engaging all the kids.
- Some children won't know what a flower needs to grow. You can add a book into this lesson (e.g., *The Very Best Pumpkin* by Mark Kimball Moulton).

Lesson 3: Growing friendship with kindness

- The book, *Sumi's First Day of School Ever*, is out of print. (Though you can find used copies of it on Amazon.) A great alternative book: *I'm New Here* by Anne Sibley O'Brien.
- When you introduce the kindness garden, the kids will love the stickers. To encourage generosity, you can ask the children, "What's something kind that a friend has done for you?" rather than "What's something kind that you or a friend have done?" (The kids love to share their kind acts because they get a sticker.)
- It might be helpful to include visuals of kindness (e.g., sharing, cleaning up, helping a hurt friend) next to the kindness garden.
- The sign-language descriptions in the booklet are not accurate and have some typos. A short, easy-to-follow video is included [on its own page](#) in the *Teacher Resources*.
- To include more movement in the lesson, you can have the kids stand up to learn the Growing Friendship Wish (GFW).
- Just like the bell, the GFW is included in every lesson. The first time will be confusing for the kids. This is a wonderful chance to model curiosity and play (and show that making mistakes is okay).
- This is a long lesson, so you might not have time for the "Follow Me" game. Remember the flexibility of this curriculum: Shorten lessons, made additions, or spread out a lesson over many days. You can use the "Follow Me" game at a different time or a different day.

Lesson 4: Quiet emotions on the inside

- The book, *A Quiet Place*, is beautiful but long. Kids often stop paying attention. Three alternatives: Read the first two pages, then "picture walk" the other pages, asking kids what they see, and finish by reading the last page; read the book during a different time of the day and then reference it in the KC lesson; re-read the book (for yourself) and then summarize the story for the kids, while showing the pictures.
- If you use stones for the belly buddies, it might be difficult for the children to differentiate the rocks. If you're feeling creative, you could have the kids decorate the rocks in some way, so they're easier to distinguish.
- In some classes, the rocks don't work well as belly buddies, especially if there are behavior issues (e.g., possibility of a rock being thrown). Some teachers use bean-bag or stuffed animals, as that's more comforting for the kids (and they're soft).
- This is a good lesson to tie in with the "safe place" you already have in your classroom. For many kids, the concept of a "quiet place on the inside" might be too abstract, but it can still be mentioned.
- The CD, *Calm Down Boogie*, is no longer in print, so it's not part of the materials moving forward. The most important song (which is used in this lesson) is "Breathing In, Breathing out." The song is included [on its own page](#) in the *Teacher Resources*.

Lesson 5: I can notice things when I'm quiet on the inside

- The book, *The Listening Walk*, is long. Shorten the book, only choosing certain sounds. You needn't read all the words but focus more on the sounds: you can do a call and response with the kids (you make the sound, then they make the sound) or you can ask them "what sound does a [fill in the blank] make?" or just choose certain pages to read.
- Before doing a listening walk, you can begin by having children listen to sounds in the room.
- The "Sounds on the Farm" song (as referenced in the booklet) is not included with your materials. You can find a replacement on YouTube (e.g., farm sounds or animal actions by Greg and Steve) or you can use our 2-minute audio, which includes the bell sounds. Our version of "Sounds on the Farm" is included [on its own page](#) in the *Teacher Resources*.

Lesson 6: Different emotions feel differently on the inside

- Children seem to like the book *Quick as a Cricket*, and they enjoy moving like the animals. The emphasis on kindness and emotions fits nicely with the Pyramid Model—feel free to use your own language to bring things together.
- Regarding the belly buddies and the "Breathing In, Breathing Out" song, look back at the tips for Lesson 4.

Lesson 7: Emotions on the inside show on the outside

- It's hard for the kids to stay quiet during charades. If your class seems restless, you can show a picture and have all the kids mimic the emotion. This is a way for the entire class to participate at the same time.
- Some of the emotions are difficult for children to recognize. You might want to choose the easiest, most accessible Emotion Cards and work with those.
- If you want to break up the sitting time, play an emotion movement song. This allows kids to feel emotions on the inside and outside while moving their bodies.

Lesson 8: Working with emotions in a kind and friendly way

- The line "I win. I'm the best" is repeated often. Some teachers found it an unfortunate take-away message for the kids, so they say the line a few times (skipping the rest). Reword the book so you feel comfortable reading it to the kids. You know your class best! You might choose to read the book as-is and that's great.
- The "script" for role playing is meant as a loose outline. Make changes, if needed, to create a more meaningful, comfortable role-play situation. (The kids love watching teachers role play!)

- If there's only one teacher available, you could: 1) role play with one of the children, or 2) postpone the lesson to another day.
- The Peace Wands—"Speaking from the Heart" and "Star Listener"—fit nicely with the "solution cards" from the Pyramid Model. Feel free to use both methods—more ways for the kids to communicate.

Lesson 9: Emotions change many times each day

- The book, *Dogger*, is enjoyed by kids, but it's too long to read during the lesson. It's good for one-on-one story time. Two alternative books: *Knuffle Bunny* by Mo Willems; *On Monday When It Rained* by Cheryl Kachenmeister
- Some teachers add more animal movements to this lesson, asking the kids to relate the movements to emotions.
- The concept of "hugging their own feelings" is difficult for young children. Still, if they are told their stuffed animal is sad or angry or upset, they naturally want to hug and care for it. You can mention the connection to their own emotions, but don't worry if kids have difficulty with the bigger concept. Often, hugging the stuffed animal is enough.
- The CD, *Calm Down Boogie*, is no longer in print, so it's not part of the materials moving forward. Hence, you can't play the "Caring" song. But that's okay! The "song" doesn't need to be sung. It can be spoken as a phrase. This allows you and the children to say the words more slowly and include the signs.
- The sign-language descriptions in the booklet are not accurate and have some typos. A short, easy-to-follow video is included [on its own page](#) in the *Teacher Resources*.

Lesson 10: Busy mind and clear mind

- Some teachers don't like the book, *Moody Cow Meditates*, because it describes behaviors they don't want encouraged in the classroom. Plus, the book is long (too long for young kids). One positive of the book is that it nicely demonstrates the concept of a mind jar. Two alternatives: Re-read the book (for yourself), then summarize the story, showing pictures, and replacing any words or actions that are inappropriate (focusing on the last few pages); or choose a different book (e.g., *Mouse was Mad* by Linda Urban, *Calm-Down Time* by Elizabeth Verdick).
- Children might not understand the concept that their thoughts equate to the glitter in the jar. That's okay! Simply watching the glitter settle can relax kids when they're upset.
- This is a long lesson. Likely, you won't have time for everything. You can shorten the lesson based on the personality of your class (especially on a given day), or you can break up the lesson into two sessions.

Lesson 11: Making mind jars and practicing using them

- Kids love the mind jars! They show them to their parents/guardians. They explain how to use the jar. They're excited for this lesson.
- Because the children are excited, it's even more difficult to wait. Making the mind jars can be a stressful event for teachers. Some suggestions: invite in parent volunteers on mind-jar day; work in small groups; incorporate the mind-jar making into play or work time (rather than during the lesson); pre-mix glitter in packets; find plastic bottles/jars with wide mouths.
- *After this lesson, you send home "Parent Letter #2."*

Mind Jar Recipe

Experiment with this recipe. It's not an exact science. Add more glycerin/clear-glue if you want the glitter to settle slowly; add less glycerin/clear-glue if you want the glitter to settle quickly. Try different colors and kinds of glitter. Let yourself and the kids play and experiment.

Ingredients

- Clear plastic bottle/jar, 5-10 ounces (shop around at craft stores or save Gatorade or water bottles)
- Glitter: regular glitter, white or iridescent glitter (for extra shimmer), and/or extra-fine colored glitter
- Vegetable glycerin (in craft stores or on Amazon); alternatively, you can use clear glue
- Clear liquid dish soap (helps the glitter settle)
- Super glue

Instructions

- Fill jar 1/4 full with glycerin or clear glue.
- Add 1 heaping tsp. course/regular glitter, 1/2 tsp. white glitter, 1 tsp. extra fine glitter (use more glitter if using a bottle larger than 5 ounces). It's fine to change the amounts based on the glitter you choose.
- Add water to the top. (Warm water is helpful, if you use clear glue, as it keeps the glitter from clumping.)
- Add 1-2 drops of dish soap.
- Put the cap on the bottle and shake it up. Add more glitter as needed.
- Use super glue around the rim to seal the cap. (Include the child's name or initials on the top.)

Lesson 12: What else can we do when we are upset?

- This lesson overlaps heavily with the "safe space" and tools used with the Pyramid Model. If your classroom's safe space is already established, you can use group time to remind kids about tools and activities within the Kindness Curriculum.

Lesson 13: Mindful movement

- It's not obvious in the Curriculum booklet, but this is your chance to *add flowers to the Kindness Garden* (do this before the kids arrive for school). Then you can ask, "Are things growing in our garden?" and talk about kind acts and growing friendships.
- If you don't have animal cards in your classroom, you can print out clip art of all the animals mentioned in the lesson. It's helpful for the kids to have a visual to accompany the animal movements.
- If you're not sure how to do an animal movement, that's okay! Choose the movements with which you're comfortable or add new ones.
- The "Animal Action 1" song (as referenced in the booklet) is not included with your materials. You can find a replacement on YouTube or skip the song portion of the lesson.
- After so much movement, it might be difficult for kids to lie on the floor and breathe. One teacher used belly buddies at the beginning of this lesson. Other teachers skipped the belly buddies. Do what feels best in your classroom.

Lesson 14: Forgiving myself

- The book, *Down the Road*, is beautiful but long. Though it's a long book, the setting is different from what most kids know and it's a story of parents offering forgiveness. Because the book is spread over two lessons, it's possible to picture-walk the story and review the next time. Alternatively, you can choose a different book (e.g., *I Am Human: A Book of Empathy* by Susan Verde).
- Forgiveness is a big concept (for both adults and kids!). The children might not fully understand forgiveness, but they can relate to making a mistake or having an accident (e.g., "little problem" in Pyramid Model language).

Lesson 15: Forgiving others

- Kids enjoy the egg pass. If you have a large group (and enough teachers), you can break into smaller groups, so the egg pass flows more smoothly.
- The Peace Wands return in this lesson. They can be difficult for small children to understand and use, yet sometimes kids surprise us! Choose what feels most helpful for your classroom and your group of kids in any given year.

Lesson 16: Gratitude for people or things in my life

- Many teachers skip sharing with an "elbow partner," allowing for full group sharing.
- The CD, *Calm Down Boogie*, is no longer in print, so it's not part of the materials moving forward. You can choose a different song to play during the period when kids are drawing.

Lesson 17: Gratitude for my body

- The book, *All of Me!*, is no longer in print. You can choose a different book about gratitude for your body (e.g., *I Like Me!* By Nancy Carlson), or you can lead your own practice of gratitude for body parts—asking the kids to participate. Be creative and flexible with the lesson.
- Generally, the kids enjoy this lesson. Still, predictable issues can arise: impatience with waiting to eat, not wanting to eat certain foods, eating too quickly. Some teachers suggest choosing more exotic foods (so the children are surprised and interested); other teachers suggest simplicity. Do what feels right for you and your classroom.
- This topic of this lesson can be extended into lunch or snack time, which is often a stressful time for teachers.

Lesson 18: Gratitude for other people

- This lesson is challenging for younger kids, who aren't familiar with "jobs." Still, the children like to do the role playing, even if they don't fully understand.
- The book, *What's my Job?*, is out of print. You can choose a different book that shows jobs or community helpers (e.g., *Whose Tools are These?* By Sharon Katz Cooper). Be creative and flexible with the lesson.
- This is another chance to use the Caring phrase. Remember, it doesn't need to be sung. You can speak the words slowly, so the sign language is easier to absorb (May you be happy; may you be peaceful; may you be filled with love). After all the activity in this lesson, it might be difficult for the kids to sit quietly. At the end, you can stand in a circle and say the Caring phrase.

Lesson 19: People around the world want peace

- The concept of people living on other places on earth (and pointing at the globe) won't register with all kids, but they enjoy seeing pictures of different places and different people, and they love saying the word "peace" in different languages. As in other lessons, the big concept might not be grasped but the smaller ideas are fun for and helpful to the children.
- The Caring phrase is heavily used during this last section of the Kindness Curriculum. If it feels like you're packing too much in each lesson, replace the Growing Friendship Wish with the Caring phrase.
- *After this lesson, you send home "Parent Letter #3."*

Lesson 20: Connections with others

- This lesson contains two books. The suggestion is to read both books ahead of time, which might not be realistic given your daily schedule. Teachers report that *How Kind!* is a very engaging book and the kids love it. The second book, *Somewhere Today*, can be used during story time, as a review of the Kindness Curriculum once you've finished teaching all the lessons, or you can "picture walk" the second book and focus on *How Kind!* Again, be flexible and make changes based on your classroom.

Lesson 21: Caring for animals and insects

- Children seem to love all parts of this lesson. That said, there's a lot of material to cover in one time period. Some teachers break up the lesson into two pieces. Other teachers "picture read" the book or delete other pieces, depending on the mood of the classroom.
- If you have animals or insects in your room (e.g., ant farm, hamster), use them within this lesson. Or if you have a planned classroom visit from someone who works with animals, you can save this lesson to coordinate with that visit.

Lesson 22: Gratitude and caring for our world

- Without prompting, it's often difficult for children to know how to "take care of the earth with our hands/hearts." Modify the questions or start with your own suggestions. Adjust for the kids in your classroom.

Lesson 23: Bringing it all together

- Bracelets can be difficult to make with young children and require many supplies. Some teachers make door-knob hangers instead of bracelets. Others review the A-G letters and then give the kids a pre-made bracelet. *Some teachers embrace the bracelet and love the activity!* Depending on your supplies and your classroom, make adjustments. Be flexible and creative with this lesson.

Lesson 24: Wrap-up

- It's difficult for the kids to remember all the different Kindness-Curriculum activities. Ahead of the lesson, try to gather the books and resources, so kids have visuals to remind them.
- Based on the "favorites" chosen by kids in your classroom, **please revisit** certain lessons, books, and activities that you think will benefit their learning and mindfulness skills. This allows the curriculum to extend all year.
- *After this lesson, you send home "Parent Letter #4."*