



Beyond Our Neighbors

*A Curriculum for
Expanding Empathy
& Compassion to “Others”*



MAKING
CARING
COMMON
PROJECT

Beyond Our Neighbors:

A Curriculum for Expanding Empathy & Compassion to “Others”

How can we empower the next generation to live thoughtful, caring, generous lives? How can we encourage them to share concern and respect with all people—including those who are different from them?

Bullying, tribalism, and social isolation are challenging issues in communities across the United States. Although children – like adults – instinctively sort the world into “like me” and “not like me” groups, it is possible to expand their understanding of who is in their “like me” circles and to build respect and appreciation for those who are in their “unlike me” circles. Caring and compassion are vital, teachable skills with the power to promote tolerance and inclusiveness in our schools, communities, and neighborhoods. This simple set of lessons has been designed to inspire and empower children to be ambassadors for good beyond their close social groups.

ABOUT THE SERIES

This is a three-part curriculum produced through the collaboration of Doing Good Together and Making Caring Common, a project at the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Doing Good Together and Making Caring Common contributed core concepts, educational activities and prompts, and strategies for empathy-building to this curriculum. **The goal is to give kids a more empathetic and interconnected understanding of our diverse community – and to empower them to become change makers.** These lessons are geared to schools, after-school clubs, faith groups, neighborhood groups, and even individual families – all those committed to strengthening children’s capacity for compassion and inclusion.

This series was developed with elementary school students in mind, though slight adaptations to the group discussion prompts may help experienced educators engage a younger or older audience with these materials.

SERIES OBJECTIVES

The conversations, assigned books, on-the-spot activities, and take-home projects described here will enable young participants to:

- Identify concrete ways to empathize and reach out beyond their immediate social circle.
- Recognize the interconnected and richly diverse nature of “community.”
- Identify groups or individuals likely to experience social isolation or bullying.
- Develop an understanding of the value and impact of kindness and compassion in everyday interactions—including with those who they see as “different.”
- Identify common social conflicts and reliable ways to diffuse them.
- Encourage families to spend time together and do kind things for others.

ABOUT DOING GOOD TOGETHER™ (DGT™)

[Doing Good Together™ \(DoingGoodTogether.org\)](http://DoingGoodTogether.org) is a Minneapolis-based organization that empowers families to raise compassionate, engaged children by providing opportunities for them to practice kindness and serve others together. DGT’s goal is to help make empathy and “giving back” a natural part of life’s early lessons.

Through creative partnerships and committed donor support, Doing Good Together offers a wide array of innovative activities, service project ideas, book recommendations, and other research-based resources to families, schools, and youth groups around the country interested in raising the next generation to live generously.

ABOUT MAKING CARING COMMON (MCC)

[Making Caring Common \(mcc.gse.harvard.edu\)](http://mcc.gse.harvard.edu), a project of the Harvard Graduate School of Education, strives to help educators, parents, and communities raise children who are caring, responsible to their communities, and committed to justice. MCC develops strategies for promoting in children caring and a commitment to the greater good, to influence the national conversation about raising and educating caring, ethical children, and to develop partnerships that further these goals.

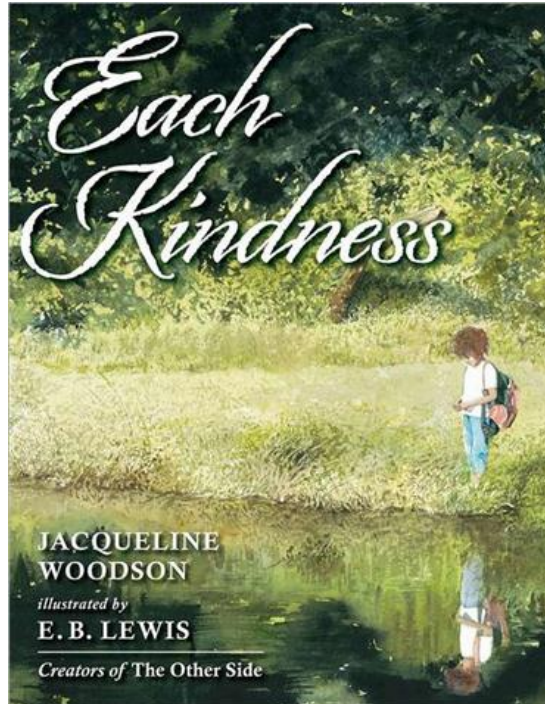
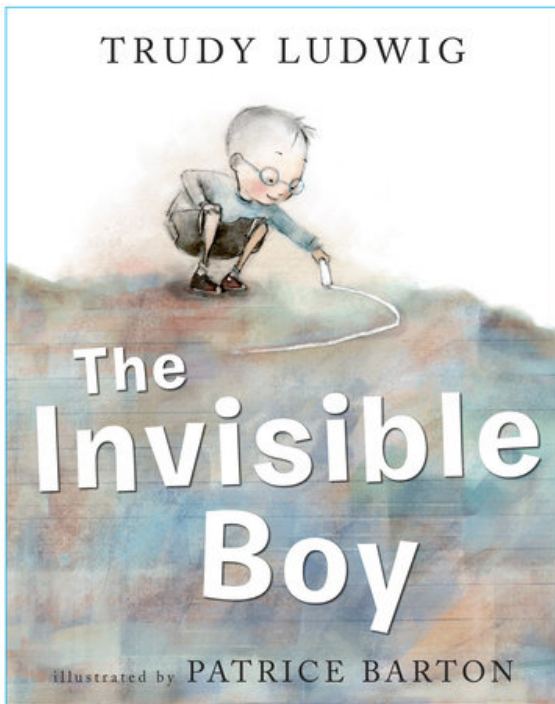
In collaboration with like-minded organizations such as Doing Good Together, MCC seeks to help develop and deliver key messages and evidence-based interventions.

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Beyond Our Neighbors:

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Lesson 1

Who is in your circle?

Lesson 1: Who is in your circle?

Overview

This lesson will help kids recognize their immediate social circle and to think more inclusively about other groups of people beyond that circle. Included are simple reflection activities and projects that encourage them to thoughtfully consider who they already have empathy and compassion for: namely, who is in what we call their Circle of Concern, and how they might expand that Circle.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- ✓ Conversation Cards for the featured books: *The Invisible Boy* by Tracy Ludwig (grades K-2) and *Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson (grades 3-6)
- ✓ “Map a Bigger Circle” template (one copy per table, to be shared)
- ✓ Big-Hearted Bingo take-home project and instruction sheet (one copy of each per child)
- ✓ Easel or whiteboard and markers
- ✓ Construction paper (5 multi-colored sheets per child or group of children)
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Glue sticks
- ✓ Pencils, markers, or crayons
- ✓ Hole punch
- ✓ Yarn

TIME REQUIRED:

65 – 95 minutes (depending on size of group and time allowed for discussion)

- **1A - Group Discussion: Who is in your circle?**
20 - 30 minutes
- **1B - Book with Conversation Starters: *The Invisible Boy* or *Each Kindness***
20 - 30 minutes
- **1C - Group Activity: Map a Bigger Circle**
20 - 30 minutes
- **1D - Take-Home Activity Introduction: Big-Hearted Bingo**
5 minutes

If time is short, the lesson can be divided into any combination of its three component parts. The next lesson should begin with a review of ideas covered previously, so you’ll want to keep an example of the finished activity handy!

Lesson 1: Who is in your circle?

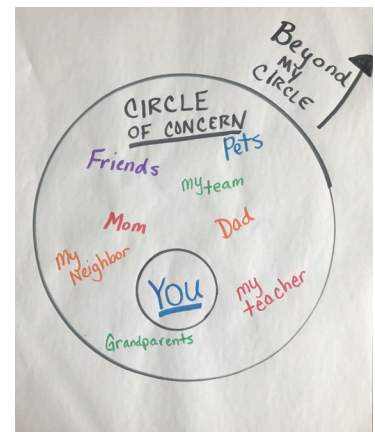
1A - Group Discussion

1. Gather participants for a group conversation about kindness basics. Group leader prompts are in bold.
 - **I'm going to ask you a few questions. If you have an answer or idea to share, raise your hand please. Did you share an act of kindness or make someone smile in the last week or so?**
Call on a few kids to share something kind. Ask who they helped and why.
 - **How did you know these people could use a little kindness or cheering up?**
Help kids think through their answers. For example, if a child made a "welcome back" card for a classmate who had been home sick, ask how they knew what to write in their card. Remind everyone that we know how our friends feel in those situations because we have probably been in the same boat: disappointed that we're sick, left out of the usual school activities, and happy that someone is glad we're back. Note, identifying the feelings involved reinforces empathy.
 - **Who has helped you or shared kindness with you in the last week or so?**
Encourage kids to brainstorm ways they've been helped. Prompt them with common examples, like carpooling to sporting events or having a neighbor support their school fundraiser.

Conclude with: **These are all great examples. Now let's try a simple activity to think a little more deeply about who we're helping and why.**

2. Use the easel or whiteboard to illustrate the Circle of Concern concept.

- Draw a small circle in the center of your space, saying: **Let's think of this small circle as YOU.** Label the circle, "YOU." **It may sound silly in a lesson on kindness, but the first person you are really concerned about is yourself. When you were very young, you cried for help when you were hungry or tired. Now that you are older, you know when you need rest or a snack. You can help take care of yourself, so that YOU are ready and able to do all of the things you need to do.**
- Draw a larger circle around the YOU circle, saying: **This next circle is something we call your CIRCLE OF CONCERN.** Label the circle,



“Circle of Concern.” **A Circle of Concern is the group of people we think about, care about, and interact with in ways that are kind and thoughtful. Without using specific names, throw out some ideas about who may be included in your Circle of Concern.** Encourage kids to brainstorm categories like friends, family, parents, pets, close neighbors, etc. Jot down these ideas in the white space between the large and small circle.

- Gesture to the white space beyond the Circle of Concern: **We could think of everything and everybody outside of this circle as beyond our concern.** Write “Beyond my concern” with an outward arrow as shown. **If we’re not paying attention, it’s easy to keep our Circle of Concern small and close. It’s easy to care about our friends and family because we know them well, we see them all time. We often know how they are feeling and we know what we have in common, right?**
- **When we look beyond our circle, it’s easy to think about our differences. It’s easy to overlook how much we have in common. It’s tempting to lump everyone outside our circle into groups that we think of as “not like me.”** **Groups like...** Jot a few generic out-group ideas outside of the Circle of Concern. Ideas might include older kids, younger kids, people from other states or countries, kids who eat broccoli, kids who don’t like video games, etc. **It’s easy to make a quick decision about who is like us and who is not. But, this makes it harder to be kind. Especially if we forget how our differences make life more interesting. Life is simply more fun when we celebrate our differences – different hobbies, different foods, different music – while also remembering how much we have in common.**

Lesson 1: Who is in your circle?

1B - Book with Conversation Starters

1. Introduce and read your selected story aloud.

- ***The Invisible Boy* by Tracy Ludwig** is wonderful for younger children (grades K-2). This is a charming story about a boy who feels overlooked until a new friend welcomes him into his circle.
- ***Each Kindness* by Jacqueline Woodson** may speak more deeply to older students (grades 3-6). Unlike most children's books, this award-winning story does not have a happy ending. When Chloe and her friends reject the new girl, Chloe learns a valuable lesson about accepting people. She also discovers the regret of missing an opportunity to share kindness.

2. After reading, pull out the book's Conversation Cards. You have three options:

- Read the questions aloud and brainstorm together using a whiteboard.
- Pass out the cards and invite children to take turns leading each discussion.
- Break into smaller groups and assign each group to answer a single question. After a few minutes, ask groups to share what they discussed.

The Invisible Boy

Great stories, GOOD ideas

Have you ever felt invisible, like Brian? What was that like? If you have never felt invisible, can you imagine what it would be like?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. The Invisible Boy
by Tracy Ludwig

In the future, if you notice someone being treated like Brian, as if they were invisible, what are some things you could do to help that person feel valued and appreciated?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. The Invisible Boy
by Tracy Ludwig

Can you name a special skill or quality that you admire in someone you don't know well? Have you ever complimented that person about it?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. The Invisible Boy
by Tracy Ludwig

Do you know a new student at your school? Or a student that could use a new friend? What could you do to reach out and make that student feel welcome?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. The Invisible Boy
by Tracy Ludwig

The Invisible Boy

Great stories, GOOD ideas

Did you like
this book?
Why or why not?



The Invisible Boy
by Tracy Ludwig

If you came into a
classroom for the
first time, what do
you think students
might observe
about you?



The Invisible Boy
by Tracy Ludwig

What do you think
about Brian's
question,
*Is it worse to be
invisible or
laughed at?*



The Invisible Boy
by Tracy Ludwig

Whose Circle of
Concern is Brian in
at the beginning of
the story? Why?
Whose Circle of
Concern is Brian in
at the end? Why?



The Invisible Boy
by Tracy Ludwig

Each Kindness

Great stories, GOOD ideas

What are we afraid of when we are reluctant to reach out to others?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Each Kindness
by Jacqueline Woodson

On that first day, Maya smiled at Chloe, who is telling the story. Share some ideas of how the story might have changed if Chloe had simply smiled back. Think of at least three possibilities.

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Each Kindness
by Jacqueline Woodson

At the end of the story, how does Chloe feel when it's her turn to toss a stone into the water? How about when she decides to be kind to Maya? How about when she discovers that Maya has moved?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Each Kindness
by Jacqueline Woodson

We're often told to think about how one act of kindness leads to another, rippling out like waves on water. Have you ever considered the ripple effects of unkind acts? What does this story teach us about our actions each day?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Each Kindness
by Jacqueline Woodson

Each Kindness

Great stories, GOOD ideas

If you came into a classroom for the first time, what do you think students might observe about you?



Each Kindness
by Jacqueline Woodson

What do you know about Maya, based on the whole story? Share both physical and personality details if you can.



Each Kindness
by Jacqueline Woodson

Have you ever said “no” when someone has asked you to play? Why?



Each Kindness
by Jacqueline Woodson

Chloe tells us that she and her friends laughed about the ways Maya was different – her clothes, her toys, her lunch. Instead, let’s think of some ways our differences make life more interesting and wonderful.



Each Kindness
by Jacqueline Woodson

Lesson 1: Who is in your circle?

1C - Group Activity: Map a Bigger Circle

Earlier we talked about a tiny circle – YOU – and a larger circle – your CIRCLE OF CONCERN, which includes your friends and family. Outside of these two circles was the whole rest of the world. Do you think it might be important to share kindness with people beyond your immediate circle? Why?

Using basic supplies, kids will create a multi-tiered set of Circles of Concern.

What you'll need:

- ✓ “Map a Bigger Circle” template – print and cut one copy per table or group of students
- ✓ 5 pieces of different colors of paper per participant (*Note: if you have younger children or need to save time, the five graduated circles can be pre-cut for each participant.*)
- ✓ Pencils, markers, or crayons
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Hole punch
- ✓ Yarn



Instructions:

- Pass out supplies.
- If not completed prior to class, have students trace each of these 5 circles on a different color of paper. Then cut them out.
- **Now, let's write or draw in the center of each circle:** Take a few minutes to help kids fill in names of people or groups of people that fit into the following categories, using the prompts below. Invite younger children to draw their ideas, even just one drawing in each circle will help expand their awareness of other people.
 - Tiny Circle = You
You will be at the center, as we discussed earlier.
 - Small Circle = Friends + Family
You can write or draw your friends and family members here.
 - Medium Circle = School + Neighborhood
Let's fill this circle with the people you see and interact with regularly but may not know super well (like coaches, teachers, neighbors, custodians, students in other classrooms, etc.).

- Large Circle = Larger Community
This circle is full of people you don't see regularly or know, but whose lives touch yours in some way. These could include mail carriers, grocery store clerks, fire fighters, restaurant servers, etc.
- Extra Large Circle = The Planet + Its People
This circle represents the broader world. You might include people from other countries and cultures, sports teams, personal heroes, bands, artists, or even natural wonders.
- Stack the circles. Line them up along one edge, and help students use the hole punch to put a hole through all of the nested circles. Poke a 4-inch piece of yarn through the hole and tie it in a knot, leaving enough room to swivel the circles.

Discussion questions:

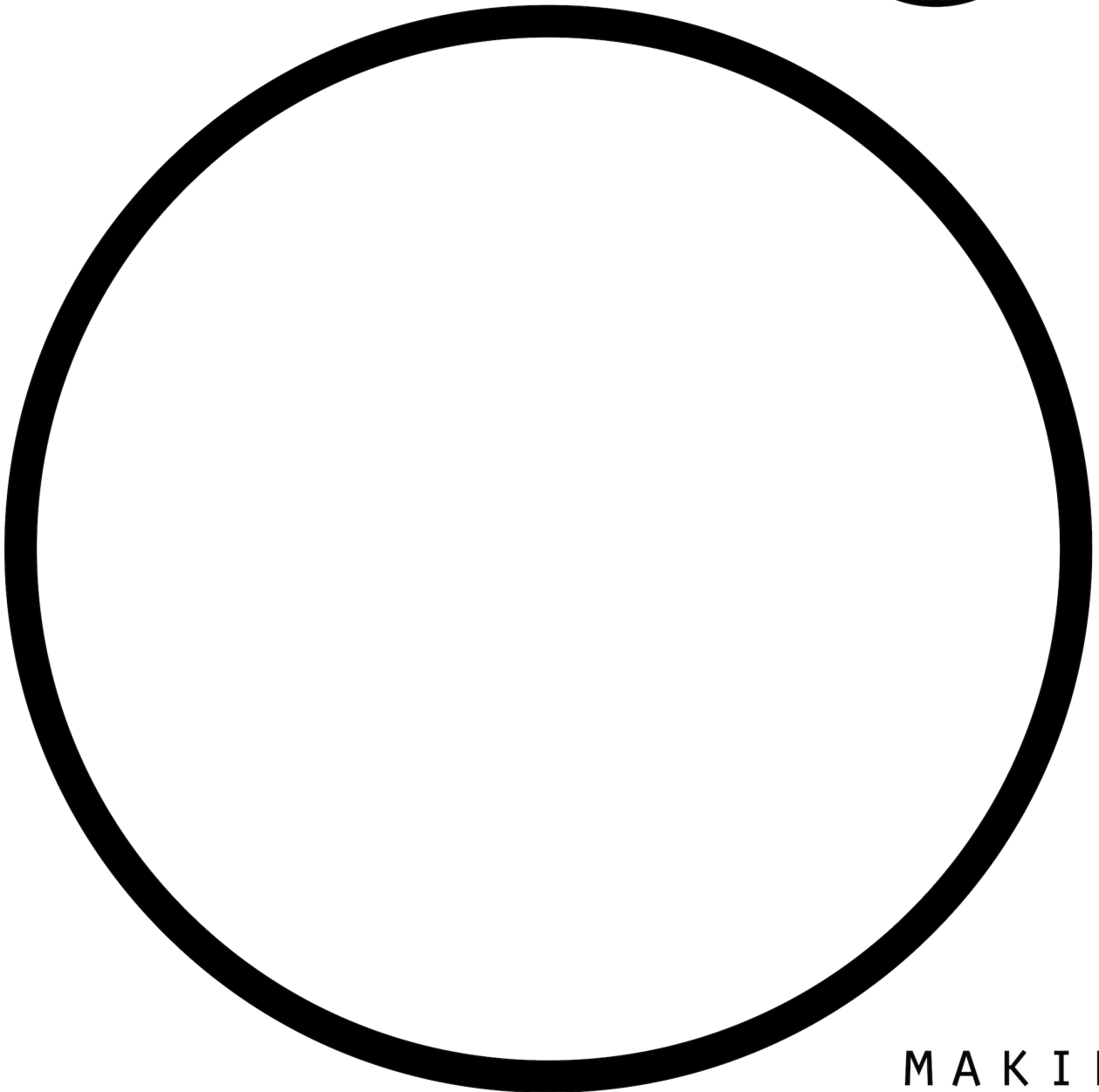
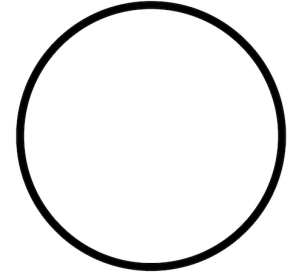
- What do you think people in all of these circles have in common? Can you imagine how they might be different from one another?
- How do you think you would feel if someone from one of your larger circles showed kindness to you?
- How would you know if a good friend needed help or a little kindness?
- How would we know if a stranger was having a bad day and needed a little kindness?
- What are some safe and simple ways to show kindness to someone you don't know?
- Let's make a list together: what can we do to share concern and thoughtfulness in each of our circles? Use a whiteboard or easel to gather ideas from the classroom. You may want to use some of these ideas to fill in the blank spaces on the bingo card I'm about to hand out. Some ideas might include:
 - Hold the door open for someone.
 - Spend quality time with your pet.
 - Pay the bill for the person behind you in line at the drive through.
 - Bring flowers to someone you know who is having a tough day.
 - Put your shopping cart away.
 - Leave microwave popcorn bags next to a movie vending machine.
 - Buy a lottery ticket and give it to the person behind you in a busy market line.
 - Each time you get a new article of clothing, give one away.

In the next two lessons, we'll talk about how to spend more of our time and attention thinking about how to cross into the two or three outer circles.

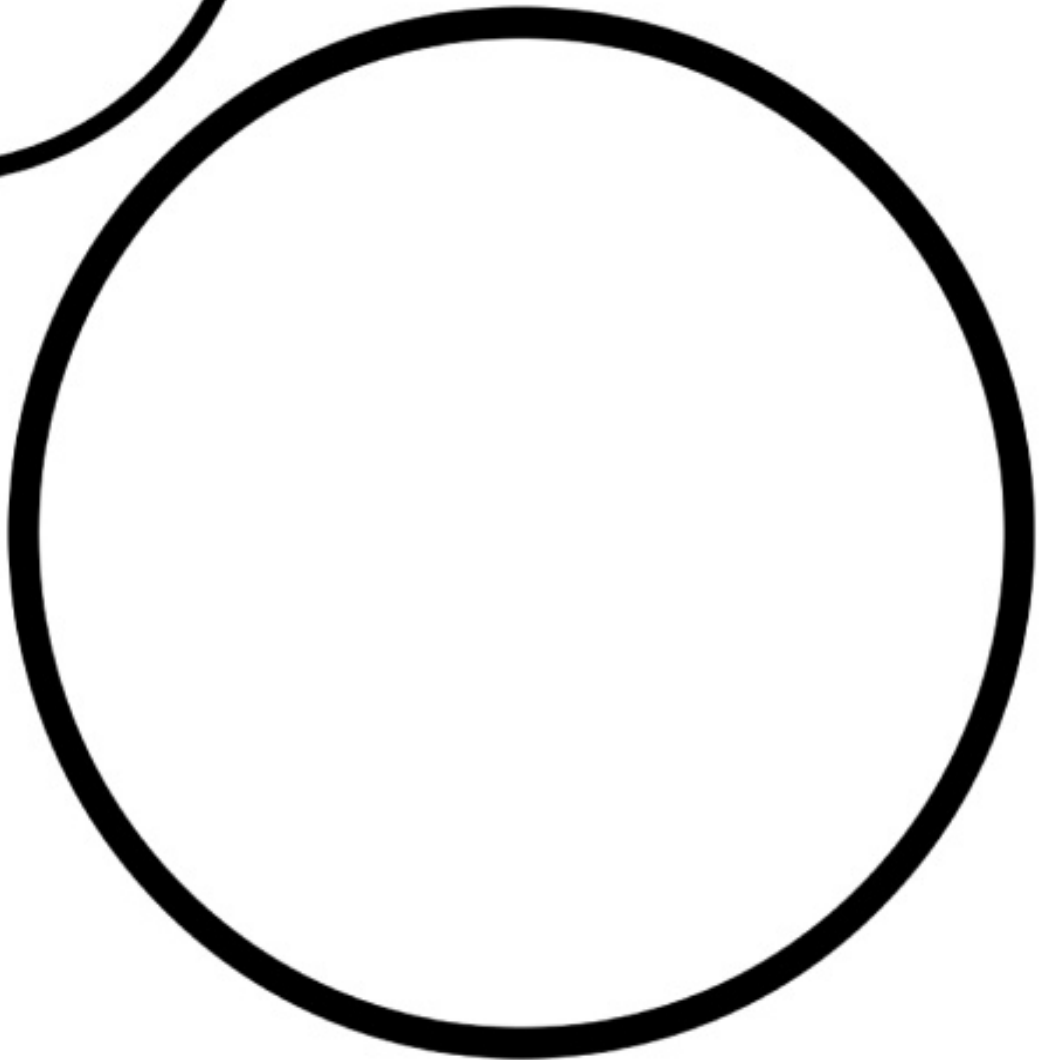
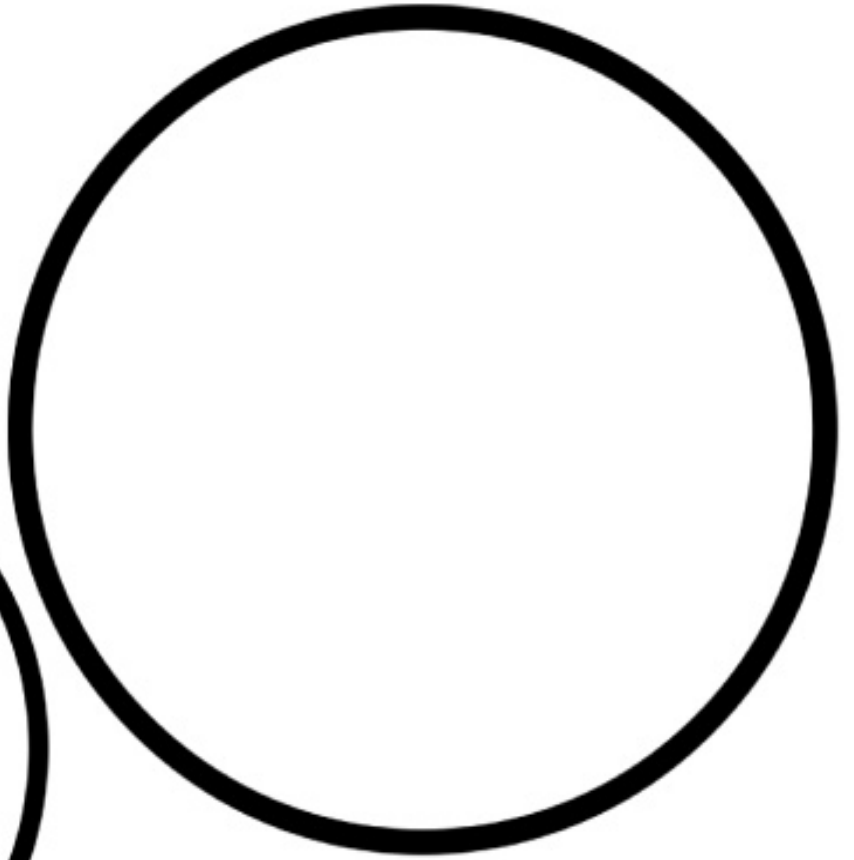
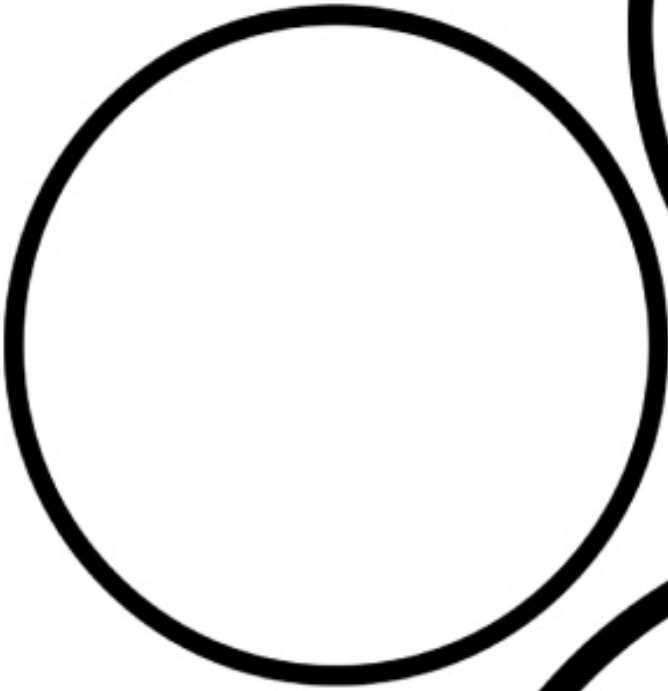
Don't forget to introduce the take home project before concluding the lesson.



Map a Bigger Circle Template



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TOGETHER™



Lesson 1: Who is in your circle?

1D - Take-Home Activity Introduction

After the group project is completed, introduce the take-home project.

- Distribute the Big-Hearted Bingo instruction sheet and bingo card.
- **I have a job for you to complete between now and the next time we meet. Inspire your family to do this fun, take home activity with you.**
- **Does everyone know how to play bingo? You will need to complete five activities in a row on this sheet. These can be up and down. Across. Diagonal.**
- **Every activity on the bingo card will help you grow your Circle of Concern. Every activity will help you think about, care about, and share kindness with more people.** Let students know they can use what they learned in class to help their families fill in the blank spaces.
- If possible, consider offering a small prize (stickers, erasers, stamps, etc.) at the next meeting for anyone who completes a row on their bingo card.

Lesson 1: Who is in your circle?

Take-Home Activity: Big-Hearted Bingo

We've been learning and thinking about our Circle of Concern, which is the group of people we think about, care about, and interact with in ways that are kind and thoughtful. This project will help us think intentionally about expanding our circle to include not just our friends and family but also people in our schools and neighborhoods, our community, and our world.

What You'll **NEED**:

- ✓ Big-Hearted Bingo take-home sheet.
- ✓ A few minutes each week as a family to complete an action or make a plan to complete an action.

How it **WORKS**:

1. Fill in the blank bingo spaces with your own ideas. How can you share a kindness or engage thoughtfully beyond your smallest circle?
2. Make a plan to complete five in a row.
3. Select one task from the game that is appealing to your whole family.
4. Complete that task as a family.
5. Talk about what you've learned using the questions below.

TALK about it:

A NOTE TO PARENTS: Reflecting on everyday actions, books, and experiences teaches us how to ask big questions and make earnest observations. Here are questions to chat about during or after this activity.

- How did this activity make you feel?
- Did this activity impact others? If so, in what way?
- Does this activity make you curious about other questions or ideas?
- Where do you think this activity falls in the Circles of Concern project you made?



Big-Hearted Bingo

Practice compassion one square at a time.

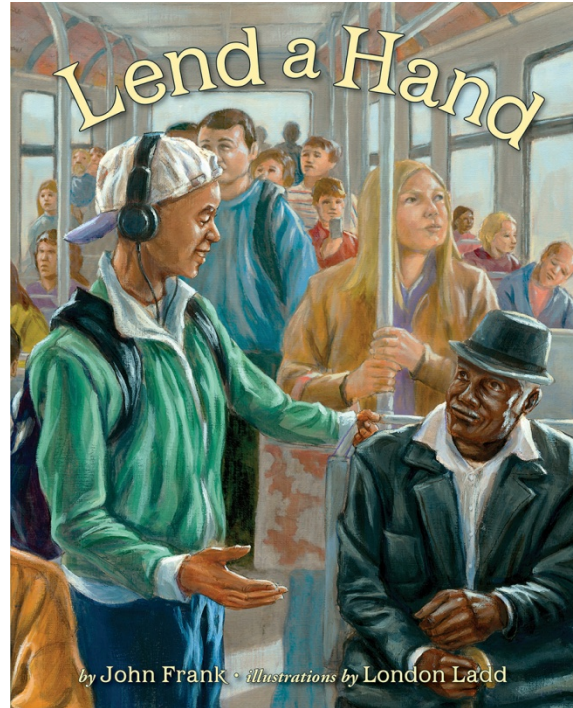
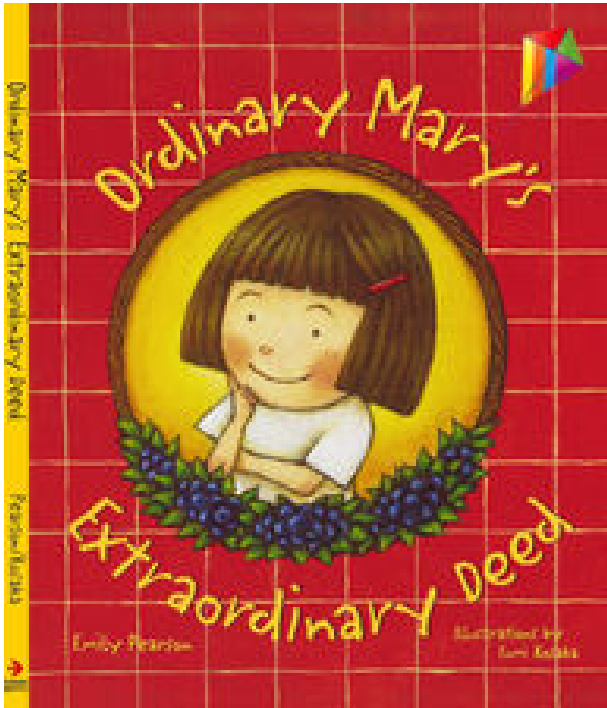


1. Fill blank spaces with your own ideas.
2. Complete 5 in a row.

Discuss who you could reach out to for help if you were feeling lonely, bullied, or scared.	Reach out to a new student with a welcome note or an invitation to play.	Make a meal or visit a restaurant from another culture. Then find it on a map and learn more about it.	Share a treat and/or a thank-you note with your mail carrier or delivery person.	Read & discuss <i>Stepping Stones</i> by <i>Margriet Ruurs</i> or any book about an immigrant or refugee family.
At recess, rally your friends to start a game for lots of students and invite anyone to play, like tag!	Talk to someone who has lived in another country. Ask them how it is the same and how it is different from living here.	Share a treat and thank-you note with your bus or carpool driver.		Discuss: What do ALL people have in common? What makes each of us unique?
Watch & discuss a foreign family movie. Try <i>Like Stars on Earth (Taare Zameen Par)</i>	Google the website Cards for Hospitalized Kids and create a cheerful card for a child who is ill. Ask: What would it feel like to be sick for a long time?		Make a thorough list of people who make a difference for your family. What surprises you about this list?	Volunteer or make a donation to an organization that helps new immigrants.
Who deserves our respect? Make a list of different ways you can show others respect.		"Be Kind. Everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle." How does this quote make you think of those around you differently?	Learn about and celebrate another culture's holiday, with food, music, and a book.	Discuss: How can we recognize when someone around us needs help or support?
Reach out to a neighbor you don't know well with treats and a conversation.	Share a sincere compliment with three students you don't often talk to.	Discuss: How is our family already making a difference in our community?	Make a donation through Kiva.org , and read the inspiring stories of global entrepreneurship.	Talk about your family's history. What is their story? What challenges did they face?

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Lesson 2

How does kindness make a difference?

Lesson 2: How does kindness make a difference?

Overview

This lesson will help kids recognize the importance of showing kindness outside of their immediate Circle of Concern. The creative reflection tools will inspire kids to brainstorm real-life examples of how reaching out with kindness can make our schools, communities, and world a better place. The take-home activity will empower children and their families to share their concern and thoughtfulness with others.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- ✓ Conversation Cards for the featured books: *Ordinary Mary’s Extraordinary Deed* by Emily Pearson (grades K-2) and *Lend a Hand* by John Frank (grades 3-6)
- ✓ “Spiral Kindness Game” template (one copy per student)
- ✓ “Choose Your Next Act of Kindness” list (one copy per student)
- ✓ Paper plates – unwaxed (one per student)
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Glue sticks
- ✓ Pencils, markers, or crayons
- ✓ Hole punch
- ✓ Yarn
- ✓ Clothespins (one per student)

TIME REQUIRED:

65 – 95 minutes (depending on size of group and time allowed for discussion)

- **2A - Group Discussion: How does kindness make a difference?**
20 - 30 minutes
- **2B - Book and Conversation Starters: *Ordinary Mary’s Extraordinary Day* or *Lend a Hand***
20 - 30 minutes
- **2C - Group Activity: Spiral Kindness Game**
20 - 30 minutes
- **2D - Take-Home Activity Introduction: Choose Your Next Act of Kindness**
5 minutes

If time is short, the lesson can be divided into any combination of its three component parts. You’ll want to remind students of ideas covered in the previous session when you reconvene.

Lesson 2: How does kindness make a difference?

2A - GROUP DISCUSSION

1. Gather participants for a group conversation. Group leader prompts are in bold. Begin by saying: **Do we have any successful BINGOs since our last meeting? Who would like to share their experience doing an activity with their family?** (Distribute rewards such as stickers if you choose to award them.)

2. As a group, talk about a few surprising facts about the impact of kindness. **Last week we talked about our Circle of Concern, the idea that we share kindness and compassion with the circle of people around us. Then we tried to Map a Bigger Circle together, expanding our compassion to include more than just our friends and family. Did that conversation, along with our bingo activity, help you think in new ways about people farther from the center of your circle?**
 - **Today we're going to talk about how and why we should make an effort to share kindness with people in all of our circles.** Hold up a Map a Bigger Circle activity example from last time as you introduce each of the next ideas. Refer to the Map a Bigger Circle Activity as you complete the conversation below.

 - **Do you think being kind to yourself can make a difference for the world? How might that be so?** Prompt kids to consider that when we are feeling healthy and strong and hopeful, we are better able to share caring and kindness with the people around us. When we're afraid or angry or sad, it's much harder to think about others. **What are some ways we can be kind to ourselves?** Consider writing ideas on a whiteboard or easel paper. Possible prompts: get enough sleep, eat healthy snacks, let people close to you know if you're feeling sad.

 - **How do you think being kind to your friends and family can make a difference for our community and our world?** Prompt kids to consider that when we are taking care of those we love, they are better able to share kindness with the world. **How can we show our friends and family kindness?** Possible prompts: set the table, be a good listener, hug your pet, hold the door, pick up something that dropped on the floor. **By helping out our friends and family, we are making a difference within our closest circle of concern.**

 - **How do you think being kind and compassionate in our schools and neighborhoods can make a difference?** Help kids recognize that kindness – even to kids they don't know well – can set the tone in their schools and neighborhoods. **What kind of community do you want to be part of? The kind**

that bullies and leaves people out? The kind that judges kids based on what they're wearing and teases them about what they eat for lunch? Or the kind that welcomes, includes, and supports one another? Let students know that schools filled with kindness, inclusion, and respect are ones where students learn more and tend to be happier. And these kinds of schools help build strong relationships between kids, and between children and grown-ups at those schools. **How can we show kindness, concern, and respect for others at school and in our neighborhood?** Possible prompts: welcome classmates you don't know well to play or sit with you at lunch if they look lonely, share sincere compliments, thank bus drivers or custodians for the good work they do. **By helping people in our schools and neighborhoods, we are showing kindness to an even bigger circle of people.**

- **How do you think sharing kindness in your city or even across our country can make a difference?** Prompt kids to consider that when our community is taking care of one another, we all do better. For example, in communities with more volunteers and more service organizations, hard times – like losing a job or trying to find a place to live – aren't as difficult to get through. The people who live in such communities tend to be happier and healthier too. **How can we share kindness with those who need it in our city, even if we don't know them? Or even across our country?** Possible prompts: saying thank you to service and public safety workers, ask your parents to help you bring food to the local food pantry, volunteer with your family to help at a soup kitchen, or reach out to people that have served in our military. **By helping people in our city and country, we are sharing kindness with an even bigger circle of people.**
- **Finally, how do you think we can make a difference for people around the world?** Possible prompts: read books about different people all over the world – to better understand what we have in common and how we are unique; protect the earth by recycling or buying less stuff – to protect earth's resources; raise money for organizations like UNICEF that support the health and education of kids around the globe.
- **If we look at the world this way, is there anyone who is *not* in our circle? How do you think that looking at the world this way might change the way you think about strangers you pass or people you read about or hear about on the news?**

Lesson 2: How does kindness make a difference?

2B - Book with Conversation Starters

1. Introduce and read your selected story aloud.
 - ***Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed* by Emily Pearson** is perfect for younger children (grades K-2). This lyrical circle story demonstrates the astonishing ripple effects of one act of kindness.
 - ***Lend a Hand* by John Frank** may speak more deeply to older students (grades 3-6). This unique and elegant collection of poems explores the emotional and practical impacts of giving.

2. After reading, pull out the book's Conversation Cards. You have three options:
 - Read the questions aloud and brainstorm together using a whiteboard.
 - Pass out the cards and invite children to take turns leading each discussion.
 - Break into smaller groups and assign each group to answer a single question. After a few minutes, ask groups to share what they discussed.

3. With your story in mind, take a moment to walk in someone else's shoes.
 - **Our book helps us see how kindness and caring ripple out. We saw how small acts of thoughtfulness and concern can have a big impact on our communities.** Guide students in doing a "180," or looking at the world from someone else's perspective. First choose a specific character from the story [or a poem].
 - Say: **Who can tell me their most memorable act of kindness [or poem] from our book? Why did you choose that one?** Then imagine together what the characters were feeling, why they did what they did, and how the students might have reacted in their place. Say: **I wonder what it was like to be that person in that moment. How were they feeling? Why did they do what they did? How would you have felt or reacted in their place?** Encourage kids to approach others with this sort of compassionate curiosity every day. **Being curious about how other people are doing – for example, by taking a moment to ask yourself, "I wonder what it's like to be them" - is a big part of being a kind kid.**

Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed

Great stories, GOOD ideas

Can you think of a kindness someone has shared with you?



Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed by Emily Pearson

Why do you think the people in our story all reach out to others with kindness?
When someone is kind to you, do you feel inspired to pass it on?



Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed by Emily Pearson

Would any of the kind acts in our story make you feel nervous or uncomfortable?
If so, why?



Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed by Emily Pearson

Think of a small kindness you've shared recently. Can you imagine the ripple effects it might have?



Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed by Emily Pearson

Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary Deed

Great stories, GOOD ideas

What does
ordinary
mean?
What does
extraordinary
mean?



Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary
Deed by Emily Pearson

Which of
these kind
acts is your
favorite?



Ordinary Mary's
Extraordinary Deed
by Emily Pearson

Why do you
think Mary left
the blueberries
on Mrs. Bishop's
porch?



Ordinary Mary's Extraordinary
Deed by Emily Pearson

Have you
shared any of
the kind acts
featured in
this book?



Ordinary Mary's Extraordinar
Deed by Emily Pearson

Lend a Hand

Great stories, GOOD ideas

Do you think it's worth doing simple acts of kindness that may go unnoticed, like in the poem *Song*?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Lend a Hand
by John Frank

In the poem *No Charge*, the narrator isn't charged for his bike repair. Later the narrator won't accept money for helping someone with their groceries. This way of passing along a kindness we receive is called "paying it forward." Can you think of ways you could "pay it forward"?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Lend a Hand
by John Frank

In the poem *Letter*, what do you think the narrator is thinking when he crosses out the words "don't know me"?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Lend a Hand
by John Frank

In the process of illustrating this book, the artist London Ladd said he learned that "when we step out of our comfort zone, take time to meet other people, talk to one another, and help those who may differ from ourselves, we find we have more in common than we think." Do you agree with him? Why or why not?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Lend a Hand
by John Frank

Lend a Hand

Great stories, GOOD ideas

In the poem
Sandwich, would
the narrator have
felt as “full” if she
had let the new girl
know about free
cafeteria lunches?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Lend a Hand
by John Frank

In the poem
Puppy, what clues
do the pictures
give about the
puppy’s future
job?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Lend a Hand
by John Frank

In the poem
Jammin’, what do
you think the act
of kindness is?
Why is it
important?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Lend a Hand
by John Frank

Think about the
narrator at the
beginning of the poem
Stream. Have you ever
felt reluctant or
frustrated about an act
of service or kindness?
How does the narrator
feel at the end of the
experience? Why?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. Lend a Hand
by John Frank

Lesson 2: How does kindness make a difference?

2C - Group Activity: Spiral Kindness Game

Now we're going to turn a simple paper plate into a colorful spiral game that will help you share kindness all month. Help students transform a simple paper plate into a spiral-cut mobile that will guide families in sharing kindness far beyond their immediate circle. Students will decorate a simple template, glue it to their plate, then cut along the spiral line to create a three-dimensional game board. They will use their take-home checklist to begin a quest to show kindness through all circles. The take-home checklist offers a menu of suggestions.

What you'll need:

- ✓ Spiral Kindness Game Template (one copy per student)
- ✓ Paper plates* – unwaxed (one per student)
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Glue sticks
- ✓ Pencils, markers, or crayons
- ✓ Hole punch
- ✓ Yarn
- ✓ Clothespins (one per student)

*Note: For younger students or groups pressed for time, you may want to pre-cut and glue the templates onto the paper plates before class.



Instructions:

1. Pass out supplies. Say: **Let's really focus on sharing our help, our concern, and our acts of kindness with others. This little craft is actually a game that will make it easier for you to remember to share kindness beyond your first two Circles of Concern.**
2. First, decorate the back of the plate (not where the food would go). The plates will be cut soon, so being colorful is more important than drawing a careful picture. Prompt students to consider the following: color it like a rainbow; use the colors of your school or favorite sports team; or create swirls of color like a lollipop!
3. Next, decorate the handout with the spiral on it. Invite students to turn the figure at the center into a tiny self-portrait. Then decorate the other images: Your friends and family. Your school. Neighborhood. Community. Nation. World.
4. Now glue the decorated template to the blank side of your paper plate.
5. Cut along the spiral line.

6. Punch a hole in the center where you see the black dot and tie yarn through it in a fat loop. Ask students, **“Do you see how the spiral represents your Circle of Concern extending out into the world?”**
7. Decorate the clothespin with marker, or glue a fun paper shape to the end of it.
8. Explain the game: **Start with your clothespin on the space marked “you” and hang it up. Then, using the list of kindness activities I’m going to give you, move the clothespin along the spiral each time you complete an act of kindness at that level. Each group of ideas on the handout matches a different circle on your Circle of Concern, starting with yourself at the very center.**

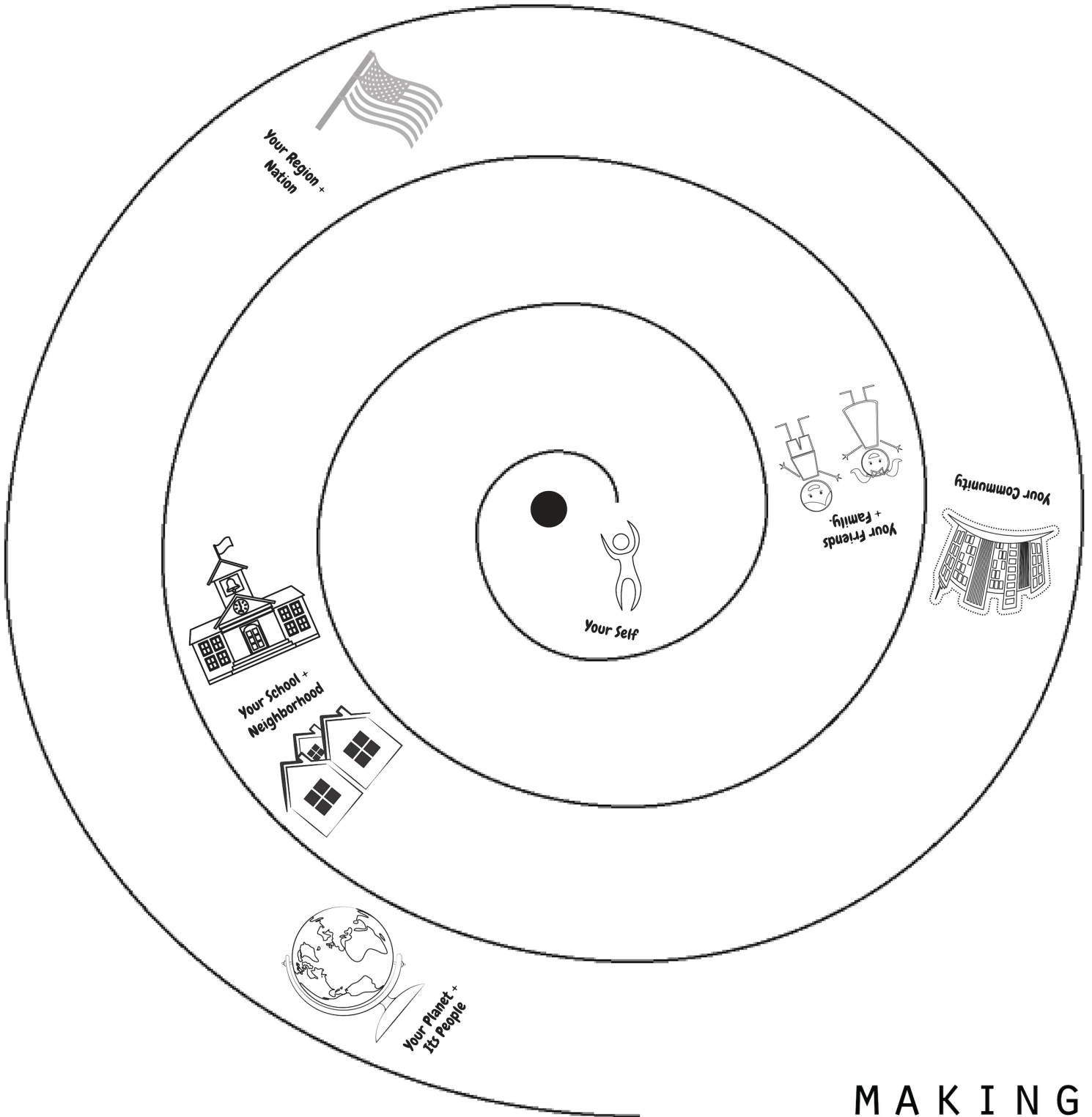
Discussion questions:

- Do you think this spiral will help you remember to make a conscious effort to show kindness?
- How do you feel when someone shares kindness with you? How do you feel when you share kindness with someone else?

Introduce take home page

Distribute the “Choose your Next Act of Kindness” list. Say: **We have a list of kindness ideas for you all to take home along with your mobile. From this list you can choose your favorite ideas from each category to complete. Each time you complete an activity, move your paper clip down to the next level of your mobile.**

Spiral Kindness Game Template



Lesson 2: How does kindness make a difference?

2D - Take Home Activity Introduction

After the group project is completed, introduce the take-home project.

- Distribute the “Choose your Next Act of Kindness” list.
- **This list of kindness ideas will help you move your clothespin game piece to each level of your Spiral Kindness Game.** Consider reading aloud a few of the ideas in each category.
- **From this list you can choose to try your favorite ideas in each category. Inspire your family to try each task with you. Tell them what you learned today, and get them excited about showing kindness to others as well.**
- **Each time you complete an activity, move your clothespin down to the next level of your mobile.**
- **You could even talk to your family about setting a simple reward for yourselves if you finish your game** Prompt kids to think about ways their family likes to celebrate. Going out of ice cream, having a dance party, or visiting a favorite park may all be good options.

Lesson 2: How does kindness make a difference?

Take Home Activity

Today, we learned how acts of kindness, respect, and service to others can ripple from one of our circles to the next, creating a lasting impact. We also brainstormed ways we can share kindness beyond our immediate Circle of Concern.

This project will help us share thoughtful acts of caring far beyond our immediate circle. Let's choose at least one act of kindness from each category on this handout, and complete it. Each category represents a different level on the Spiral Kindness Game. Start with your clothespin at the very center, which means you'll start with self-kindness. Then move it down the spiral each time you complete an activity. **Inspire your family try an act of kindness at each level!**

What You'll **NEED**:

- ✓ Choose Your Next Act of Kindness! handout
- ✓ A few minutes of family time every few days to complete an action or make a plan

How it **WORKS**:

1. Starting with "Your Self" at the top of your mobile, choose an idea from this list in the "Your Self" group, or come up with your own act of kindness to complete.
2. Each time you complete a task, talk as a family about what you've learned using the questions below.
3. When you're done, move the clothespin down the spiral to the next circle.
4. Then, choose a new activity from the next category on your menu and start again.

TALK about it:

- When you first glanced at this list, did some activities look especially fun? Difficult?
- How do you think this act of kindness made a difference?
- How did your activity make you feel? How do you think it made others feel?
- Do you have any ideas for our next activity that are not on the menu?

Choose Your Next Act of Kindness!

For Your Self



- Play outside!
- Organize your room.
- Make an "I am grateful for" list.
- Make a list of the ways you have helped others and the ways others have helped you.
- Talk to someone you love about the different feelings you experienced today.
- Start a journal to write or draw daily.

For Your Friends + Family



- Have a dance party together.
- Start a book club together.
- Pay a sincere compliment each day.
- Send a hand-made gift to someone you love.
- Give a thank you card to someone you appreciate.
- Volunteer together, making memories while helping someone else.

For Your School + Neighborhood



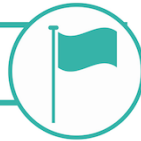
- Greet new students or neighbors with welcoming cards.
- Invite new or lonely-looking students to sit with you at lunch and play with you at recess.
- Make and deliver a thank you note to the school janitor or lunch helpers.
- Try a new sport or club and make new friends.
- Take a walk and clean up your neighborhood.
- Bake treats and deliver them to neighbors.
- Offer to pick up groceries for an ailing neighbor.
- Bring an extra snack for a schoolmate who may have forgotten theirs.

For Your Community



- Visit a nursing home and make new senior friends.
- Shop for and deliver donations to a food pantry.
- Create pet toys for an animal shelter.
- Look up a local nonprofit's wish list, purchase one item, and deliver it.
- Cook a meal at a local shelter.
- Donate kids' craft kits to a children's hospital.
- Take part in a walk or run for a cause.
- Leave colorful bookmarks in library books.
- Share cheerful posters on a public bulletin board.

For Your Region + Nation



- Adopt a family in need through TheBoxProject.org.
- Create cheerful drawings for ColorASmile.org.
- Send notes to soldiers with AMillionThanks.org.
- Share books pen-pal style with Family-to-Family.org.
- Have a lemonade stand for children's cancer research with AlexsLemonade.org.
- Buy a pair of pjs and donate them to the PajamaProgram.org.
- Write a letter or draw a picture in support of a cause you believe in and send it to your representative.

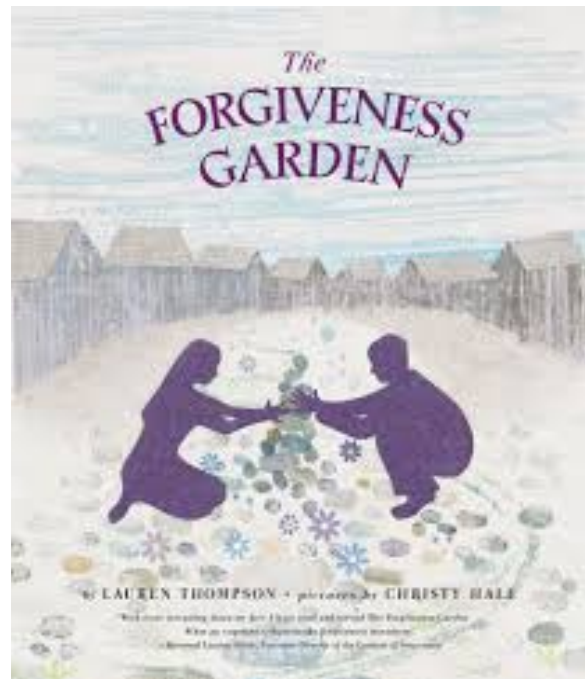
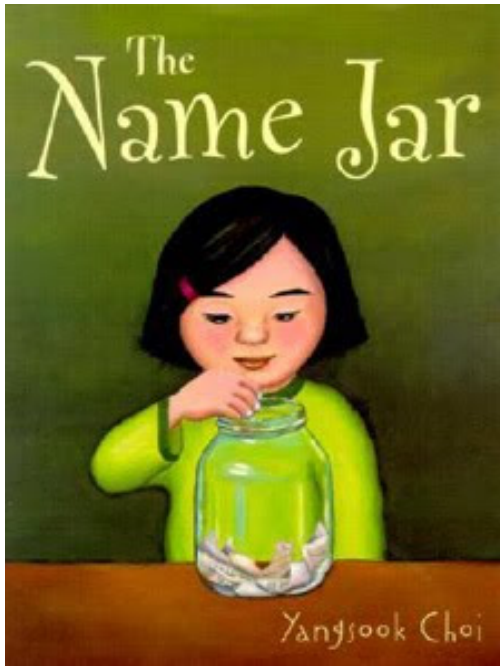
For Your Planet + Its People



- Attend a festival celebrating a different culture from your own.
- Make microloans through Kiva.org and read stories of global entrepreneurs.
- Create essential hygiene or baby care kits for CWSKits.org.
- Have a "zero waste day" when you don't use any items that generate trash.
- Start or recommit to a green habit, like using less plastic, less water, or less energy.

Beyond Our Neighbors:

A Curriculum for Expanding Empathy & Compassion to “Others”



LESSON 3

How can we make peace and solve problems in our circle?

Lesson 3: How can we make peace and solve problems in our circle?

OVERVIEW

In this lesson, kids will consider what it takes to be a peacemaker and an upstander in their immediate circle and beyond. When we work to build an inclusive, accepting community by treating all people – even those who may seem different than ourselves – with kindness, our world feels like a more peaceful place to live. Together, the group will explore the different ways they can respond with compassion and inclusion when social situations get tricky. They will also decorate little signs to keep in their lockers (or at home) as helpful reminders. As a take-home project, they will keep a week-long family journal to help them master the knack of understanding situations from another person’s perspective.

SUPPLIES NEEDED:

- ✓ Conversation Cards for the featured books: *The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi (grades K-2) and *The Forgiveness Garden* by Lauren Thompson (grades 3-6)
- ✓ Small group handout: “What could you do when...” (one copy per each pair of students)
- ✓ “Upstander Toolkit” sheet (one copy of each per student)
- ✓ “Swapping Shoes” week-long family journal (one copy of complete journal per student)
- ✓ Markers, crayons, and colored pencils to decorate handouts
- ✓ Scissors

TIME REQUIRED:

65 – 95 minutes (depending on size of group and time allowed for discussion)

- **3A - Group Discussion: How can we make peace and solve conflict in our circle?**
20 - 30 minutes
- **3B- Book with Conversation Starters: *The Name Jar* and *The Forgiveness Garden***
20 - 30 minutes
- **3C - Group Activity: Using Your Upstander Toolkit**
20 - 30 minutes
- **3D - Take-Home Activity Introduction: Swapping Shoes Journal**
5 minutes

If time is short, the lesson can be divided into any combination of its three component parts.

Lesson 3: How can we make peace and solve problems in our circle?

3A - Group Discussion

1. Gather participants for a group conversation. Group leader prompts are in bold. Say: **Does anyone want to tell a story about an act of kindness they've shared since we last met? Raise your hand if you completed one activity from the handout you took home last time. Raise your hand if you completed two. Three or more? Raise your hand if you plan try more of the kindness ideas from that list.**

2. As a group, talk about conflict and peacemaking. **So far, we've talked about how we can think about our connection to others beyond our immediate circle of friends and family. And we've talked about how to share acts of kindness with not only our friends and family but our school, our neighborhoods, our community, and our world.**
 - **Today, we're going to think about what we can do when we see problems in our social circles, like teasing, bullying, or even fighting around us. Now that we have started to look at people beyond our immediate social circle as worthy of our care and concern, (hold up the "map a bigger circle" craft from lesson one), we'll probably start noticing problems not just among our friends and family, but also around school and in our neighborhood. You may hear news stories about challenges around the country. Or around the world. The truth is, peace in the world begins with peace in our own communities. And learning to respond to the problems we notice close to home is one step toward making the world more peaceful.**

 - **Raise your hand if you've seen an argument, some type of conflict, or even bullying behavior between students at school. How can we tell the difference between these three things?** Help students clarify with the definitions below.
 - i. An argument is when people disagree on something and can get angry with each other.

 - ii. A conflict can come out of an argument, like when people no longer like each other or want to talk to each other because they disagreed on something. A conflict can also be used to refer to groups of people or even countries not getting along because they have very different views on things, like how people should live or what religion they can practice.

 - iii. Bullying is when one person or a group of people hurt someone and it's usually not just once. There are different ways to hurt someone; even words can hurt and so can ignoring someone on purpose, or telling lies

about them (note, this will probably not resonate with K-2 aged students since young children tend to think of bullying in very simple terms). The person getting bullied can't easily help or defend him or herself.

- **Raise your hand if you've had your feelings hurt by a friend or classmate. That happens – we all feel that way sometimes and it's important to see the difference between having an argument, a conflict, or when it turns into bullying. For example, we've all probably felt teased at times, right? Teasing is usually playful, like when two friends goof around. But when the teasing goes too far and keeps hurting our feelings, and we feel like we can't stop it, it can turn into bullying.**
- **Now also raise your hand if you've hurt someone else's feelings. It's important to recognize that we all cause hurt feelings from time to time. Sometime we say things that we don't mean, or we lash out at someone because we're feeling sad or tired or frustrated. It's important to recognize when we take that too far and really hurt someone, it can also turn into bullying.**
- **Bullying is a big topic these days, isn't it? By some estimates, one out of every four kids in elementary and middle school will experience bullying. But in the moment, it's hard to know what's bullying and what's just kids being rude or mean or grumpy. Whatever we call it, it can be difficult to know what to say in those moments.**
- **Today we'll try to come up with some ideas for what we can do when we encounter conflicts and bullying. We can actually practice the skills that can make our school and community more inclusive and kinder.**

Lesson 3: How can we make peace and solve problems in our circle?

3B - Book with Conversation Starters

1. Introduce and read your selected story aloud. Say: **This book can help us think about how we can step in and stand up for others when we see conflicts nearby.**
 - ***The Name Jar* by Yangsook Choi** is perfect for younger children (grades K-2). This heart-warming story introduces kids to the importance of welcoming new students with compassion and acceptance.
 - ***The Forgiveness Garden* by Lauren Thompson** may speak more deeply to older students (grades 3-6). This unique parable shows how courage and forgiveness can lead to peace even in the most hostile situations.
2. After reading, pull out the book's Conversation Cards. You have three options:
 - Read the questions aloud and brainstorm together using a whiteboard.
 - Pass out the cards and invite children to take turns leading each discussion.
 - Break into smaller groups and assign each group to answer a single question. After a few minutes, ask groups to share what they discussed.

The Name Jar

Great stories, GOOD ideas

How do you think Unhei felt when she tried on new names?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. The Name Jar by
Yangsook Choi

If you had to choose a new name for yourself, what would you choose?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. The Name Jar by
Yangsook Choi

Have you ever traveled to a faraway place that felt strange and unfamiliar? If you have, explain what it was like. If not, what do you think it would feel like?

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. The Name Jar by
Yangsook Choi

Let's think of some ways we could be welcoming for new kids in our community.

DOING
GOOD
TOGETHER. The Name Jar by
Yangsook Choi

The Name Jar

Great stories, GOOD ideas

Practice saying
“Unhei” aloud,
the way she
describes in
the book.



The Name Jar by
Yangsook Choi

Why do you think
Unhei felt she
needed to pick a
new name?



The Name Jar by
Yangsook Choi

Remember when the
kids in the beginning of
the story were teasing
Unhei about her name?

Let’s think of some
things we could have
done to stand up for
her in that situation.

(For example, you could tell the
teasers to stop, compliment Unhei on
her pretty name, sit with Unhei and
ask her other questions.)



The Name Jar by
Yangsook Choi

Has anyone ever
said or spelled
your name
wrong? How did
it make you feel?



The Name Jar by
Yangsook Choi

The Forgiveness Garden

Great stories, GOOD ideas

How do you think Sama felt when the villagers put the stone into her hand and said “throw it hard”?



The Forgiveness Garden
by Lauren Thompson

The villagers were full of questions about forgiveness. Sama’s answer was, “The garden will help us find what is right.” Let’s talk about what we think. Does forgiveness mean we have to forget what happened? Does forgiveness mean we have to apologize?



The Forgiveness Garden
by Lauren Thompson

Can you think of a time in the past when you found it difficult to forgive someone?
What did you do?
How do you feel about that conflict now that some time has passed?



The Forgiveness Garden
by Lauren Thompson

At the end of the book, what do you think Sama and Karune said?



The Forgiveness Garden
by Lauren Thompson

The Forgiveness Garden

Great stories, GOOD ideas

Let's talk about the word "hate." Is that a word you use or hear very often? What do you think the Vayams and the Gamtes mean when they use the word "hate"?



The Forgiveness Garden
by Lauren Thompson

Sama sees the fear and anger on her own face and then on others. What does your fearful face look like? What does your angry pose look like? How would your body feel if you held one of these poses all day, or all week, or for years?



The Forgiveness Garden
by Lauren Thompson

When Sama was hurt in the fight, what did the villagers admire about her?



The Forgiveness Garden
by Lauren Thompson

What is revenge? Have you ever imagined or carried out any sort of revenge? Does revenge make you feel better? Does revenge solve your problem?



The Forgiveness Garden
by Lauren Thompson

Lesson 3: How can we make peace and solve problems in our circle?

3C - Group Activity: Using Your Toolkit

How do you know what to do when you experience rude or mean or bullying people? We're going to use some tools that make it easier to know what to do. Pass out the Upstander Toolkit sheet.

What you'll need:

- ✓ "The Upstander Toolkit" Sign
- ✓ "What Could You Do When" Prompts
- ✓ Pencils, markers, or crayons

Instructions:

1. First, distribute copies of the "The Upstander Toolkit."
2. Say: **Let's decorate these little signs for your school locker or your tack board at home.**
3. **While you decorate your sign, let's read through them.** Read and talk a little about each item on the Upstander Toolkit sheet.
4. **Now let's practice some of these ideas.** If possible, invite everyone to gather in small groups of 2 to 4 kids. Share the "What could you do when..." handout. For young pre-readers, feel free to talk about these scenarios in one or two larger groups instead. **Your job is to read the scenarios one at a time and talk about how you would react. Feel free to use the solutions you see in the Upstander Toolkit. Or, if you come up with a new idea, write it down so you can remember it later.**
5. If you've broken into small groups, come back together as a larger group. Invite each group to share something about their conversation. If you have time, consider using a whiteboard or easel to list ideas for each scenario.

Your Upstander Toolkit

Offer to help when you can. Pick up dropped books.
Hold the door.
Share school supplies.
Be kind.

Look them in the eye and say
STOP
in a calm clear voice.

Shrug it off.
Maybe even crack a joke to change the subject.

Reach out with
FRIENDSHIP
Ask a kid who is being bullied to sit near you or play at recess.

Leave the situation and find an adult or older friend to help decide what to do.

Adults need to know when bad things happen so they can help.



Apologize when you hurt other people's feelings.

Make a plan
for how you can help others that are far away and need help. For example, you could send money, supplies, or words of encouragement.

What could you do when...

We've gathered eight scenarios to consider. Write, draw, and talk about how you would react. (Remember, there is no one right answer.)

Your friend accidentally knocks over his or her milk, spilling it all over the school lunch table.

A young man who looks and acts a little differently is cleaning tables at a local restaurant. You notice that one table of people laughs at him and calls him names.

Your friend starts mocking the accent of a new student.

You hear a news story about people far away who are struggling to get clean water to drink.

A woman in front of you in the grocery store checkout line discovers she is short one dollar after her groceries have been rung up.

Your friends are swapping mean-spirited jokes. One of them calls the bus driver "stupid."

A classmate starts making fun of your new shoes.

You learn about an earthquake that has destroyed a far away town, including its library and school buildings.

You see a group of kids approach a student with her arms full of books and papers. They intentionally trip her, scattering her books after she falls.

Lesson 3: How does kindness make a difference?

3D - Take Home Activity Introduction

After the group project is completed, introduce the take-home project.

- Distribute the “Swapping Shoes” journals.
- **Have you ever heard the saying, “Before you judge a person, walk a mile in their shoes”? What do you think that might mean?**
- **Well, this week we’re sending home a simple, daily journal that will help you “swap shoes” with people beyond your immediate circle for a week. Your job is to inspire your family to work through this journal with you each day for a whole week. Do you think you can do that?**
- Time permitting, read through some of the prompts together.

Lesson 3: How does kindness make a difference?

Take Home Activity Introduction

We've been learning about how we can understand and share compassion with others. This time we focused on how we can step in and stand up for others when we notice bullying or hurtful conflict. Now we're going to practice understanding the world with a daily journal that invites your whole family to try small exercises to "swap shoes" with people beyond your immediate circles. If we can get really good at walking in another person's shoes, we can get really good at helping others and making the world a better place. The ability to understand someone else's perspective is the foundation for empathy.

What You'll **NEED**:

- ✓ Swapping Shoes: A 7-Day Family Journal
- ✓ A few minutes each day as a family to discuss the prompt and write or draw in your journal about your experiences.

How it **WORKS**:

1. Talk about the famous saying, "Before you judge a person, walk a mile in their shoes." *What do you think that might mean? How do you think "walking in their shoes" can help us relate to people outside of our immediate circle of concern? To people who are treating us or others unkindly?*
2. Make time each day for a week to write/draw in response to the instructions you see on each page.

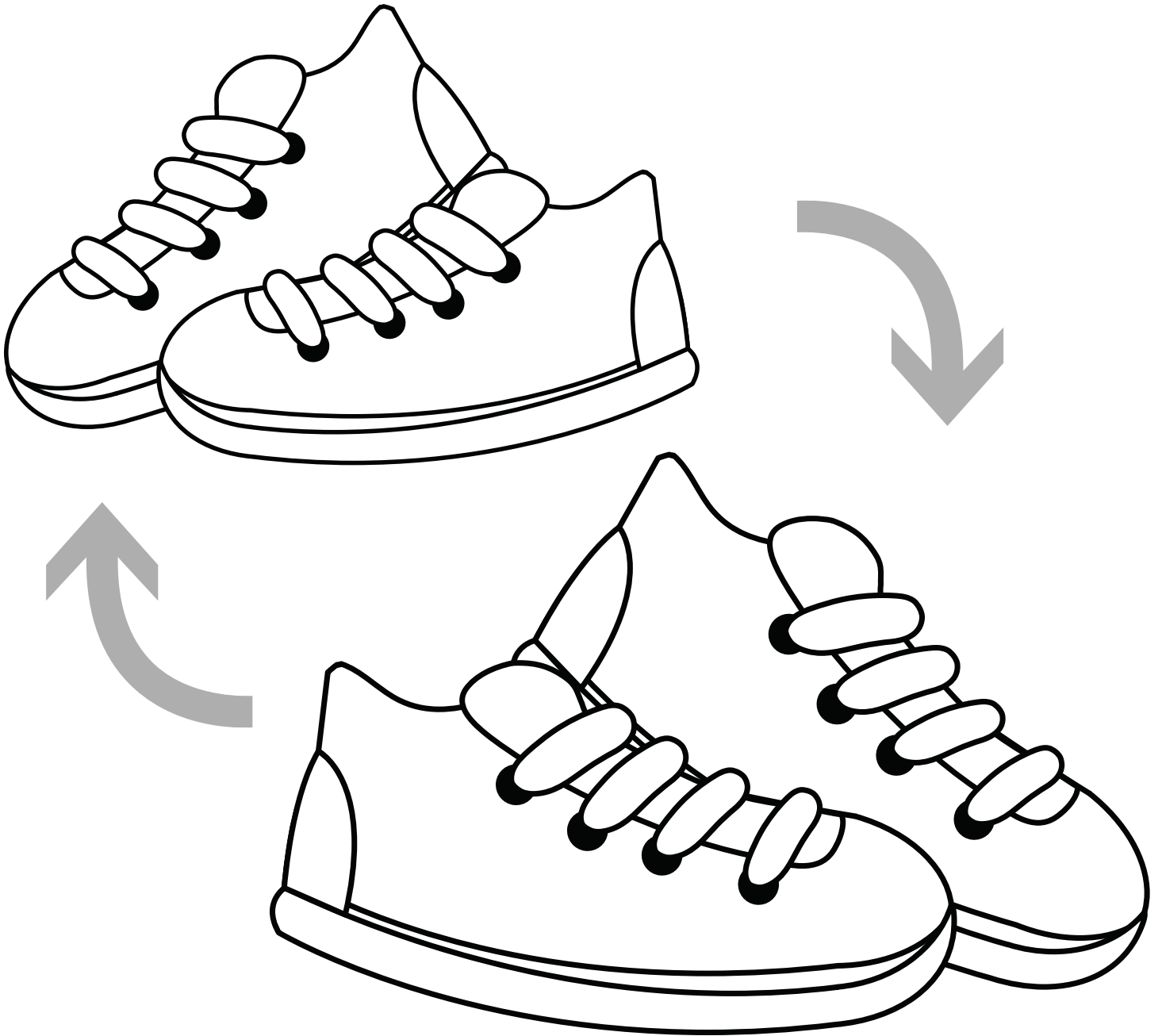
TALK about it:

Here are questions you might want to ask during or after you work together on your journal.

- How were you feeling in the moment you described in your journal?
- How was the other person feeling in that moment?
- What did you learn by taking time to step into the other person's shoes?
- How might you act differently if this happens again?

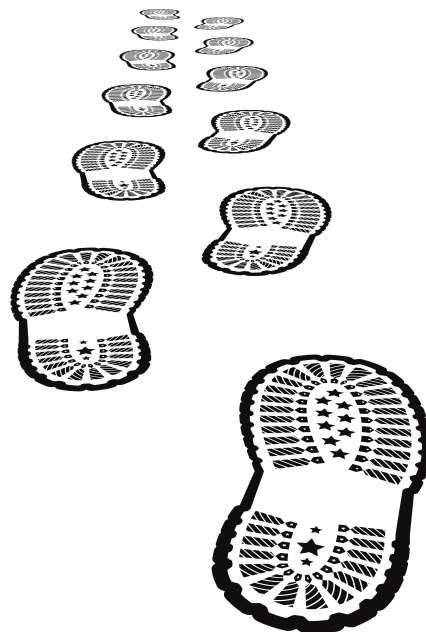
SWAPPING SHOES

A 7 Day Family Journal to Build Empathy



How to Use This Journal

- Read your morning prompt together at the start of each day. Encourage everyone in your family participate.
- At the end of each day, discuss the reflection question from your journal together. Invite everyone in your family to share their experiences.
- Students, write or draw about your experiences and what you've learned.



Day
4

Morning
Reminder:

Challenge your whole family to notice a problem today. Watch for unkind acts, conflicts, challenges, or even bullying.

Evening
Prompt

Share stories of the problems you noticed. How did you react? What could you have done instead? How do you think the person experiencing the problem felt in that moment? Draw a picture and/or write a few sentences about how you might (or did) solve one of the problems you observed.

Blank lined area for writing responses.

