

TEACHER-FOCUSED SEL SESSION 1: BRAIN BUILDING

Objectives:

Teachers will be able to...

- Demonstrate focusing attention strategies
- Understand the benefits of using strategies to focus their attention

Aim: What can teachers do to help focus their attention in the classroom?

Materials: Flipchart, markers, Focusing Attention Strategies Handout printed for all participants

Time: 20 minutes

STEPS TO FOLLOW:

PREPARE (5 minutes)

1. Explain that the purpose of these sessions is to build the teachers' own social and emotional skills, so that they can better model and reinforce SEL in the classroom, as was discussed in the training.
2. Every session will begin with a mindfulness activity.
3. Invite participants to sit comfortably.
4. Say the following in a slow, calm, gentle voice:

Sit comfortably. If it is comfortable for you, close your eyes and begin to calm your breathing. Slowly feel your belly expand as you breathe deeply into your bellies. As you exhale, feel your bellies deflate.

We are going to calm our minds and our bodies and become aware of our senses during the quiet time. Continue to relax your entire body.

Notice the feelings in your body. Accept what you are sensing, without trying to question it or change it. Just become aware of what you are sensing.

- *What do you hear? Do you hear the sounds outside? Do you hear the silence? Or the sounds of your breathing?*
- *What do you smell? Do you smell food? Or natural smells from outside?*
- *What do you taste? Do you taste some food remaining in your mouth?*
- *What colors do you see as your eyes are closed? Do you see bright colors? Do you only see the darkness of your closed eyes?*

Continue to be aware of the feelings, sounds, scents, tastes, and sights you sense as you are quiet and calm. Be aware of them and let them sit. Do not try to change them. Become comfortable with your senses.

5. Allow the participants to sit quietly for about a minute.

6. Say: *Begin to bring yourself back to the present. Focus on your breathing – in and out slowly. Wiggle your fingers and toes. As you are ready, open your eyes if you closed them and bring your consciousness back into the room.*
7. Wait until participants open their eyes and bring their awareness back to the space to continue the session.
8. Ask how participants are feeling.

PRESENT (7 minutes)

1. Explain that today they will focus on Brain Building – in particular working on ways to help the teachers focus their attention in and out of class.
2. Ask teachers to think about what happens in the classroom or during school hours that distracts them, then turn to a partner and discuss.
3. After they have discussed in pairs, have them present back to the group. Invite one participant to write the distractions on the left (“Distractions”) side of the chart shown here on a flipchart or chalkboard.
4. Then ask participants what strategies they use to help focus their attention – something that they learned during the SEL training, from the SEL curriculum, or something they learned on their own.
5. Have another participant write these on the right (“Strategies”) side of the chart on the flipchart or chalkboard.
6. In the strategies, be sure to include Belly-Breathing and Self-Talk.

Distractions	Strategies
1. <i>Loud noises</i> 2. <i>Needs of my daughter</i>	1. <i>Belly Breathing</i> 2. <i>Self-Talk</i>

PRACTICE (10 minutes)

1. Explain that now they will practice the strategies that they brainstormed.
2. If there were strategies that participants brought up that you did not include, ask those participants to teach the others that strategy.
3. After each strategy is practiced – allow participants to share how and when they would use it, and ask any questions they have.
4. Invite a volunteer to teach belly-breathing. If no one feels comfortable, instruct belly breathing as follows:
 - a. *Sit up tall, and put one hand on your belly. This hand should rise as you inhale, fall as you exhale.*
 - b. *Slowly breathe in like you are smelling a flower, feeling your belly rise, for four seconds [Count: 1, 2, 3, 4]*
 - c. *Hold your breath for two seconds [Count: 1, 2]*
 - d. *Breathe out of your mouth for four seconds like you are blowing out a candle, feeling your belly fall [Count: 1, 2, 3, 4]*
5. Ask if any participant feels comfortable teaching Self-Talk. If not, instruct as follows:
 - a. *Self-Talk is speaking to yourself out loud or in your head to tell yourself what to do and to help stay on task and ignore distractions. It can be used to recall directions, instructions and avoid distractions. Stay positive in your self-talk.*
6. Explain that we can try out a short activity to practice using self-talk to complete a series of actions. Explain that you will give a set of instructions. Participants will have to focus as you say the instructions, repeat the instructions together, and then complete the actions listed in the instructions. Say:
 - a. *Stand up, jump up, pat your head, raise your right hand, sit down*
7. Repeat the instructions as a group.
8. Have the group demonstrate the actions and use Self-Talk.

PRODUCE (3 minutes)

1. Lead a final discussion with the group about how they will use these strategies.
2. Ask the following questions to guide the discussion:
 - a. What new strategies did you learn today?
 - b. How will you use the focusing attention strategies in your class? Outside of your class?
 - c. What questions do you still have regarding focusing attention?
3. Remind participants that these strategies should be used and practiced throughout their TLCs, when they are teaching their classes, and in the rest of their lives.
4. Hand out the “Focusing Attention Strategies Handout” to participants so they can add in the strategies they learned today.

