

Our Greatest Influences

While ultimately each person is responsible for his or her choices, there are many things that impact our ability to think, speak, and act in a way that is kind and responsible. This lesson gives students an opportunity to explore who and what influences them and their ability to make responsible decisions. They also get to reflect on the qualities that they admire in others and develop a deeper sense of self-awareness when they are being influenced to make a choice.

Kindness Sub-Concept(s)

Self-Discipline

Lesson Timeframe

25-30 minutes

Required Materials

- ❑ Signs with the following words: Friends/Peers, Parents/Guardians, Brothers and Sisters, Relatives (cousins, aunt/uncles, grandparents, etc), Teachers, Mentor/Other Adult, Media (TV, movies, music), Me; post signs around the room before the activity.

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.



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

Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Define influence.
- Identify what influences responsible decision making.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Responsibility is defined as being reliable to do the things that are expected and required of you. Oftentimes, we tend to focus on the tasks that affect us personally. I pay my mortgage so I have a place to live. I take care of my body so I will be healthy. This week, focus on the actions you carry through that can and do have an immediate effect on others. What responsibilities do you have in your teaching team, at your school, and within your community? How can you work harder to ensure that others can count on you at all times? The reality is that no one is perfect. Each one of us will drop the ball at some point. How you choose to handle these times says a great deal about how you view your responsibilities. Take some time this week to examine your response to natural human error. Be kind to yourself and move forward. None of us is perfect!

Tips for Diverse Learners

- Work with a partner to talk about why they are influenced by certain people more than others.
- Share an image for each statement and highlight the keyword to help organize their thinking as a pre-writing strategy. Encourage them to think of three ways that people influence them the most.
- Eliminate the classroom movement if this is too distracting for your students.



Share

3-5 minutes

In this unit we are talking about responsibility. In our last lesson, we talked about what this means and some of the things that we are responsible for. Let's do a round of "popcorn"; one at a time, like kernels popping in a bag of popcorn, let's call out one thing we are responsible for. I will start by saying, "I am responsible for," and then my responsibility, and then others can randomly "pop" with their contribution, but you don't have to say, "I am responsible for," first. If someone speaks when you do, that is okay; sometimes two kernels pop at once! Try not to let there be too much silence between pops! Ok. Here we go.

"I am responsible for," _____.

Let the class "pop" with their answers.



Inspire

5-7 minutes

For Inspire, you will need to hang up the signs that read: Friends/Peers, Parents/Guardians, Brothers and Sisters, Relatives (cousins, aunt/uncles, grandparents, etc), Teachers, Mentor/Other Adult, Media (TV, movies, music), Me.

It will be easiest if you have pre-hung the signs around the room (perhaps during lunch or recess). Or, if this is not possible or preferred, you can quickly hang up each sign at this point in the activity or hand each sign to a different student and have them stand at different points in the room; other students in the class can "join" that particular student and his/her sign throughout the activity. The downside is that the students holding signs do not get to participate.

In this lesson, we are going to talk about the things that impact our ability to make responsible decisions. While we alone are ultimately responsible for the choices we make and the things we think and how we treat others, there are many things and people that influence how we make choices, think, and act.

We have many influences in our lives...our peers (people our own age), our parents, guardians, or other people who care for us, our school setting, the media, and others. Can anyone tell me what an influence is?

Invite student responses.

To influence is to have an effect or an impact on someone or something. How many of you think you have the power to influence others?

Invite students to raise their hands.

Well, today we are going to do an activity where we show who and what influences us in different parts of our lives. I am going to read a statement and you will walk to the sign that shows who has the greatest influence on you in this area. Remember there are no right answers! Keep track in your mind as you do this activity who has the greatest influence on you.

Read each statement one at a time (or write your own) and allow students to walk to the signs.

Who influences...

- How I treat my family or the people I live with
- How I treat my friends
- Whether I do my homework
- How I feel about myself
- What clothes I wear
- What music I listen to
- Who my friends are
- What kind of grades I get
- Which TV shows I watch
- What books I read
- Which computer/video games I play
- What career or job I want
- What movies I like
- How I solve problems
- What hobbies or sports I like



Empower

10-15 minutes

Have students return to their seats; the following segment can either be something they journal about, discuss as a large group, or discuss with a partner.

You may have noticed that you had many influences or that one person or group influenced you the most. Who had the greatest influence on you, based on the list I read? What surprises you about who or what influences you? Are there areas in which you would like to have a greater influence on yourself than others?

Using magazine pictures or drawing their own, have students create a collage (on 8.5"x11" pieces of paper) showing which person/people or media influences them and in what areas. Under each photo or drawing, complete one of the following statements:

- _____ influences me to make good choices because...
- _____ influences what I enjoy doing because...
- _____ influences how I treat others because...
- _____ influences how I see the world the most because...

Students can also simply cut out things that represent influences in their life: movies, books, famous people, words that represent concepts, food, landscapes or scenes that are representative of important places or events in their lives, etc.

Do a community gallery walk in which students walk around and look at each others' collages. This is a great opportunity for community building that allows students to get to know each other intimately and see the similarities and differences in their people of influence.



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Today we thought about our actions and who influences how we act. Our actions affect other people and we also influence other people's decisions. The way we act is important. If we surround ourselves with people who are kind and are kind to others, they will influence us to be kind as well. It is important to also remember that while we may be influenced by someone or something else, we are ultimately the ones responsible for our thoughts, words, and actions.

To gauge understanding of the material, choose from either the evaluation or reflection questions as discussion, writing, or journal prompts. Consider providing additional time for deeper evaluation and reflection as needed.

Evaluation Questions

- What kind of people influence our thoughts and decisions?
- What things other than people can influence our decisions?
- Whose responsibility is it for you to make a good decision?
- How do you use self-discipline to make good choices when you feel someone or something else influencing you to make a poor choice?

Reflection

- How much do you think others influence you and how much do you think you make your decisions based on your own judgment?
- How are your influences similar or different to your friends in the class?
- Whose opinion is most important to listen to?
- Describe a time when someone else influenced you to make either a poor choice or a positive choice. How did you feel? Were you able to use self-discipline to make a good choice?

Teacher Resources

How Role Models Influence Youth Strategies for Success

<http://www.rootsofaction.com/role-models-youth-strategies-success/>

Children and Role Models:

https://www.aacap.org/App_Themes/AACAP/docs/facts_for_families/99_child_ren_and_role_models.pdf

World Without Teachers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RN3iLeq1828>

[Curriculum - SheHeroes](#)

Rita Pierson: Every Kid Needs a Champion

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFnMTHhKdkw>

Parents are powerful role models for children: <http://www.easternflorida.edu/community-resources/child-development-centers/parent-resource-library/documents/parents-powerful-role-models.pdf>

Social Influence: Crash Course Psychology #38

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UGxGDdQnClY>



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PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL
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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/>