

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
SAFE RELATIONSHIPS

What is it?

Life happens in the context of relationships. Humans are wired for social connection, and it's in that connection that we are able to express our best selves, contribute to our communities, and achieve successful and satisfying lives.

Why is it Important?

Learning about our role in the class community helps us to connect to one another and feel safe at school.

School Connection

Your child will be learning that everyone in the class community is important, and will begin to identify the feelings and perspectives of others.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Our Family is a Team

As your child learns at school what it means to be part of the class community, you can talk to them at home about what it means to be a part of your family. For a fun activity that includes your whole family, draw a picture of everyone together and put pictures or words to symbolize what your family values. You could add things like honesty, loyalty, or fun. Write "our family is a team" at the top. Display it somewhere in your house where everyone can see it and be reminded that they are an important part of what makes their family unique.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
THE BRAIN

What is it?

The brain guides everything that you do: how you move your body, make decisions, experience emotions and deal with stress. When children understand how their brain is connected to their emotions, they are better able to manage those emotions.

Why is it Important?

Learning the parts of the brain and how the brain influences behavior and emotions empower children to control their brains and their feelings.

School Connection

Your child will be learning about the three main parts of the brain, that their brain helps to focus their attention and that clear thinking requires a calm brain.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Memory

Your child will be learning more in depth about different parts of the brain and how each section works. The hippocampus part of your brain is the processing and storage part of our brain where information and memories are contained for later use. You can help your child strengthen this part of their brain by playing games where they have to use their memory.

Use cards that consist of 10 paired picture cards. Mix up the cards and lay them in rows, face down. Turn over any two cards. If the two cards match, you can keep them. If they don't match, turn them back over. The point of the game is to use your hippocampus to remember what was on each card and where it was. The game is over when all the cards have been matched.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
BREATH

What is it?

The positive impact of focused breathing on overall well-being has been well researched. Children and the adults in their lives can easily learn how to use their breath to calm, center, and refocus.

Why is it Important?

By learning breathing strategies for self-regulation, children can make appropriate decisions and respond to stressful situations in a more mindful way.

School Connection

Your child will be learning to identify when and where to incorporate breathing strategies and begin using focused breathing routinely in their day.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Breathing Roles

Children have a difficult time regulating their emotions in times of frustration. Practicing breathing strategies with your child during calm moments helps them have tools to use when upset or overwhelmed. Learn to identify your child's triggers so that you can suggest breathing exercises before they get overwhelmed.

Take a deep breath in through your nose. As you inhale for four seconds slowly roll your shoulders up to your ears. Release the air from your mouth for four seconds and roll your shoulders down as far away from your ears as you can. Repeat the shoulder rolls four times slowly while breathing in and out.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
FEELINGS

What is it?

The ability to identify personal feelings, recognize the feelings of others, and understand that feelings are not permanent, but change throughout the day.

Why is it Important?

The ability to manage emotions is a necessary lifelong skill for all social interactions.

School Connection

Your child will be learning that different situations or events may trigger different emotions.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Teachable Moments

Children need support in dealing with uncomfortable feelings. It's important to continue to have ongoing conversations about how to handle emotions in a healthy way.

Look for teachable moments to help children find healthy ways to cope with big feelings. Try to draw attention to your child when they are expressing their feelings in a healthy way by saying something like, "I really like the way you told your sister you were upset instead of hitting her." The more attention children get for the behavior you want to see more of, the more likely they will repeat the action in the future. When children react to big feelings in a negative way, like hitting, exploding, or throwing things, try to take a step back and give everyone time to cool down. Have your child practice what they would like to do next time when you have both calmed down. We don't always get it right the first time, but with a chance to re-do, children feel like they can learn from mistakes.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
THE BODY

What is it?

Self-awareness begins with learning how the brain and body work together.

Why is it Important?

Children need to understand how their brain and body are connected. By understanding how we experience emotions in the body, children will deepen their sense of self-awareness. Having this understanding will allow children to self-regulate more easily because they will have an understanding of how to use the body to calm strong feelings.

School Connection

Your child will be learning to identify physical cues that indicate strong emotions.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

How Do I Feel? How Do You Know?

While reading about characters in books, pause to ask your child, "How do you think this character feels right now? How do you know? What does their face look like? What is their body doing?" Discuss the feelings the character may be experiencing and the reasons why. Next, you can physically re-enact or role-play the story with your child, focusing on body language. Children love to re-tell familiar stories by role-playing! When a child mimics the facial expressions of a character, it helps them understand the character's feelings. This activity requires children to practice using facial expressions, voice, and body language and helps them understand how our brains and bodies are connected.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
IMPULSE CONTROL

What is it?

Impulse control is the ability to control sudden urges to react.

Why is it Important?

When children begin to understand what an impulse feels like, they can then begin to learn how to manage those impulses when they arise. Teaching children how to control themselves empowers them to navigate difficult situations successfully.

School Connection

Your child will be discussing the importance of controlling impulses and practice managing them.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

I'm a Statue

It can be really fun for children to practice impulse control by playing games. Try out this statue game with your child! Stand on one side of the room and have your child stand on the other. Turn and face the wall with your back to your child. Explain that while your back is turned, your child will tiptoe toward you. When you turn to face your child they must freeze in a statue position and hold it until you turn around again! If you catch them moving, reset and try again.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
GRATITUDE

What is it?

Gratitude is the quality of being thankful and the readiness to show appreciation for kind actions by showing kindness in return.

Why is it Important?

Through the practice of gratitude, children learn to consider and appreciate the goodness in the world and understand that they receive benefits from sources outside of themselves. Gratitude is the building block for developing an optimistic outlook.

School Connection

Your child will be practicing gratitude by recognizing things that others do for them and thanking them.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Gratitude Challenge

Research shows that practicing gratitude can help us to feel happier. One way to practice is to try this gratitude challenge with your child! On a piece of paper write ONE, TWO, THREE, FOUR, and FIVE vertically along the left side of the paper. On the first day of the challenge, look for one thing to be grateful for. It can be something or someone. You and your child can each write the name of the person or thing next to the word ONE. (You may choose to write your item or person in a different color than your child.) The challenge is that every day, you'll find more things that you are thankful for than the day before. On day two, you'll find two things to be grateful for. On day three, you'll find three people or things. The challenge is to find new things every day for five days.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
OPTIMISM

What is it?

Optimism is a mindset that allows us to see options for addressing challenges in life. When you have optimism, you have the ability to see that opportunities exist in any situation.

Why is it Important?

Having optimism makes it easier to take risks and view mistakes and challenges as opportunities for growth. Approaching challenges with an optimistic attitude will help children persist, target their efforts, and ultimately succeed.

School Connection

Your child will learn that opportunities exist in every situation.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Doodle the Possibilities

Try this activity to help your child grow their brain and think of new possibilities! Gather paper and something to draw with. Use one color to draw a random shape or doodle on the paper. Make it fairly simple, but interesting. Using another color, ask your child to make something recognizable from the doodle. Maybe they take a swirl and turn it into a monster or a rainbow! Optimism is the ability to see possibilities. This activity is a way to train our brain to construct possibilities where none are obvious.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
GRIT

What is it?

Grit is the ability to keep working toward a goal, especially when it is hard or challenging.

Why is it Important?

In school, children are asked to work hard on things that are not necessarily intrinsically motivating. Sometimes, they can begin to associate struggle with failure. We want children to learn to feel comfortable with taking risks and working on challenges. When children learn early that they have an inner source of strength, they approach life and learning with more confidence.

School Connection

Your child will be learning that grit is a characteristic that can help them succeed at difficult tasks and be skilled at recognizing behaviors that show grit.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

You Did It!

Children are eager to share their successes. In fact, they usually seek affirmation by saying things like, "Look what I did!" Capitalize on these opportunities by emphasizing the amount of effort that your child had to apply to accomplish the task. Consider adding the following phrases to your feedback:

- "Your effort really paid off!"
- "You didn't give up!"
- "You really had to practice to get that just right!"
- "I'll bet you feel proud of yourself!"
- "Aren't you glad you tried again?!"
- "Wow! That wasn't easy, but you just kept trying!"

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
RESILIENCE

What is it?

Resilience is the capacity to recover quickly from failures or setbacks.

Why is it Important?

Failure and setbacks are an inevitable part of life. Sometimes, caring adults in children's lives try to shield them from failure. This is a mistake! We learn so much about ourselves when we experience failure and then "bounce back." It is essential to teach resilience so that students will have the skills they need to bounce back from setbacks that they will experience in the future.

School Connection

Your child will be learning what it means to be resilient and identify times when they have been resilient after a difficult situation.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Bounce Back and Keep Going

Sometimes children have a hard time pushing through frustration, and they give up on something they are working on. Choose a time to talk with your child when you are both calm and relaxed. Use an example of something you've seen recently, like "I saw that the other day you were having trouble with your math homework. When you are feeling frustrated there are lots of different things you can try." Next, create a list with words, or even better pictures, of strategies to try! You can print pictures from the internet, draw together, or even take pictures of your own children in action. You can use the options from the list below, or add ones that work for your family.

- Ask for help.
- Try your best and keep going.
- Take a break and rest for a minute.
- Take three slow, deep breaths.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
PERSPECTIVE TAKING

What is it?

A perspective is a particular attitude toward something or a point of view. Perspective taking is the ability to appreciate the viewpoint of another person, even if it differs from your own.

Why is it Important?

Understanding that it is okay for each of us to have our own unique needs, ideas, and opinions gives us the emotional space to consider perspectives that differ from our own. Seeing things from the perspective of others opens up a whole new world of possibilities and gives us options that would never be available otherwise.

School Connection

Your child will be learning that other's perspectives may be different from their own and practice seeing things from a different perspective.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Thought Bubbles

Find cartoons or pictures showing people with different expressions. Give your child opportunities to add pictures or cartoons, even encouraging them to draw their own. Explain that you have these cartoons or pictures and need help writing what the characters are thinking about using speech bubbles. By writing in the thoughts of different people in a picture or cartoon, students have to take the perspective of each character, look for environmental cues, and guess what each person might be thinking or saying. Practicing this skill helps your child take perspective and pay attention to social cues.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
EMPATHY

What is it?

Empathy goes beyond simply seeing another's point of view; it takes us into the other person's world of feeling and helps us understand the motives and context of their perspective.

Why is it Important?

Empathy is the glue that binds relationships of all kinds. When we are able to express empathy and really let the other person know that we feel with them, we form bonds of trust and cooperation that create a solid foundation of relationships in every aspect of life.

School Connection

Your child will be practicing empathy by imagining how others might feel and demonstrating empathy by showing concern for others.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Empathy Guessing Game

Body language is the best indicator of a person's emotions. Learning to read facial expressions and body language is incredibly helpful for understanding the people in our lives, and is essential for understanding empathy. This is a non-verbal guessing game that is designed to practice reading non-verbal social cues. When you're at the playground or any public space, ask your child to guess how another person is feeling "He's laughing and his eyes are wide open. I think he's happy and excited. What do you think?" Or ask them to notice facial features. "See the girl sitting by herself with her arms crossed, looking at the ground? How do you think she is feeling?"

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
KINDNESS

What is it?

Kindness is the quality of being friendly, generous, and considerate.

Why is it Important?

Children are often quick to announce when someone has treated them badly, and are surprised when another child offers an act of kindness. This makes sense because developmentally, children are focused on their own needs. When we model and teach kindness, we help children to develop this skill and create a positive culture in our classrooms. Children need to experience kindness to be able to reproduce it. It's our job to help them balance their needs with the needs of others, and learn that kindness toward others helps meet both sets of needs.

School Connection

Your child will be learning how kind acts impact themselves and their classmates.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Good News

At this age, children are still developing the cognition necessary to understand abstract concepts and benefit from examples that make ideas tangible. Search newspapers, magazines, and the internet for stories that give examples of people helping each other or doing something that makes a difference in their communities. Real examples of good news not only increase understanding of the concept, but they also encourage children by showing them how simple actions can make a big impact! This activity provides a way for children to understand abstract concepts like hope, kindness, and compassion by reviewing real-world examples of each.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
COMPASSION

What is it?

Compassion is the feeling that arises when you are confronted with another's distress and feel motivated to do something to help.

Why is it Important?

Nothing teaches compassion better than practicing it! Focusing on the feelings and needs of people in the community will empower children and lead them to realize they can be a positive influence in the lives of others.

School Connection

Your child will be learning about how compassion affects themselves and others and show their understanding through a service learning project.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Helpful Words

One way that children can practice compassion is by sending friendly wishes to themselves, friends, or family. This is a wonderfully simple way to feel more happy, positive, and hopeful. When we practice these strategies, our sense of connectedness increases.

Close your eyes. Take two deep breaths together. Imagine the person you are sending kind thoughts to. Imagine the person (even if it's you!) smiling and surrounded by all the wonderful things that make them happy. Say some friendly wishes aloud, and your child can repeat them back to you.

- I wish for you to be happy.
- I wish for you to be healthy.
- I wish you to have a joyful and peaceful day.

Dear Family,
This week we're learning about
HOPE

What is it?

Hope is the belief that the future will be better than the present and one has the power to make it a reality.

Why is it Important?

Hopeful students are more likely to tell themselves, "I can do this! I'll try again." By helping students focus on how hope is at the center of what we want in our homes, neighborhoods, and cities, we can help them to be more hopeful about their own dreams and future.

School Connection

Your child will be learning about how to identify a short term goal for academic success and celebrate accomplishments when a goal is reached.

HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

Goal Setting

Self-talk is such an important part of being hopeful. Your words are powerful because they are the foundation of how you approach your future. Begin the conversation of goal setting with your child. Instead of pushing to set a goal that you want them to reach, help them consider what they would like to accomplish.

- What's something you wish you could do?
- What's a challenge you would feel proud to complete?

As they talk about their goal, listen and guide their self-talk to be optimistic and hopeful. This can include talking about possible obstacles and the many ways they might overcome their obstacles in the future.