

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

### What is it?

A safe relationship is one in which you are accepted for who you are and valued for the unique contributions you bring to the world.

### Why is it Important?

Safe relationships are important because they help us to realize that together, we can accomplish more than one person alone!

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Fourth graders in our class are sharing characteristics that make them similar to and unique from others in the class.

### PRACTICING AT HOME:

We all need to feel that we belong, and we begin our sense of belonging in our family! As your child becomes older and spends more time with peers, it's especially important for them to understand that they are (and always will be) an important part of your family. To make this point at home, to create a mini-poster to honor the members of your family. Grab your family members and sit around the table with whatever crayons or markers you have available. Together, color in the word FAMILY. As you're coloring, give everyone a chance to talk about how they are similar to (and different from) other members of your family!

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?

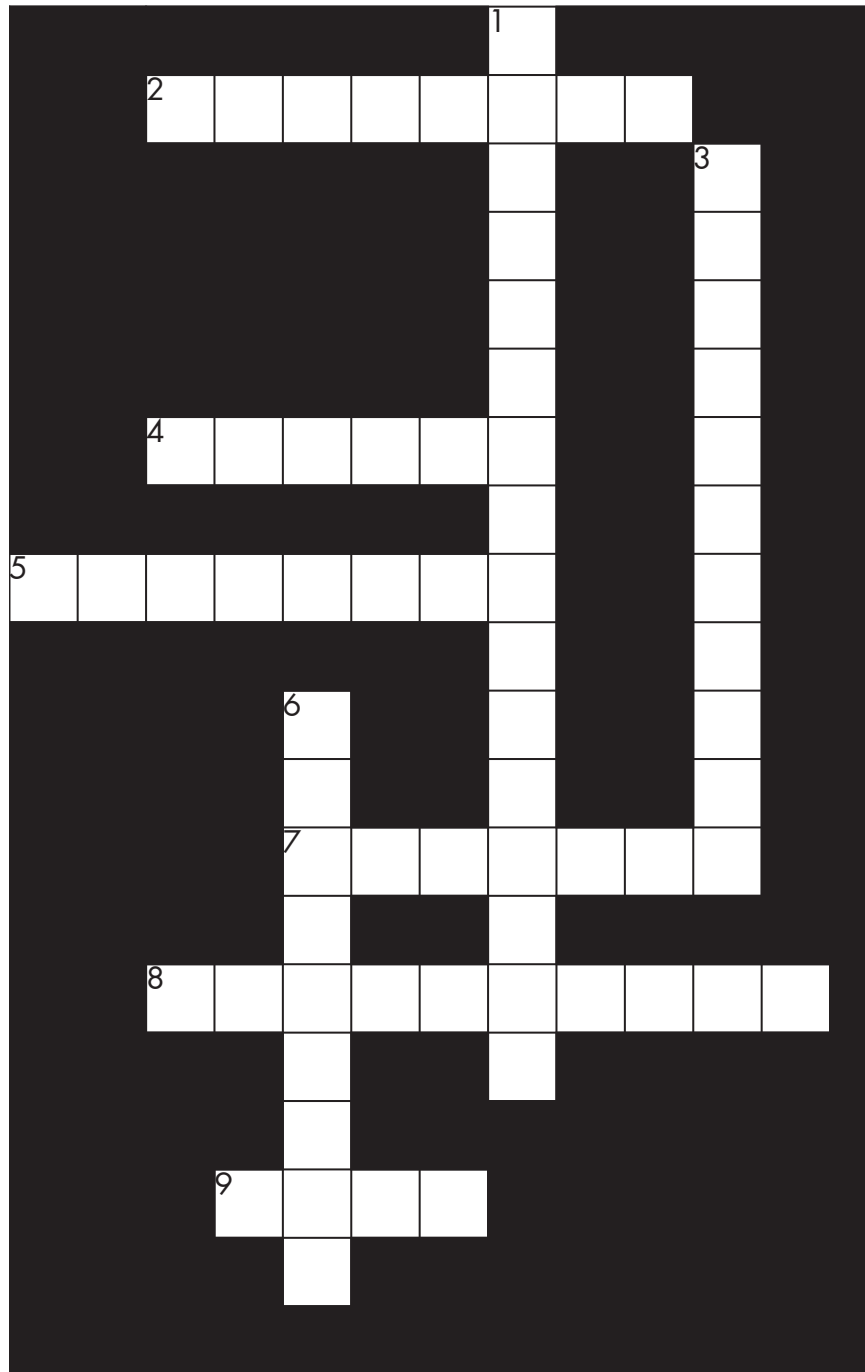
We want kids to be proud of their amazing brain because it makes them the special people that they are!

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Our fourth graders are learning to identify three parts of the brain: the amygdala, hippocampus and prefrontal cortex. The amygdala is a structure that helps protect us by telling the body what to do when we are scared, angry or feel vulnerable. The prefrontal cortex helps us make decisions, goals and plans. The hippocampus stores information as memories and helps us learn new information.

### PRACTICING AT HOME:

Together, complete this puzzle to review the brain words that your child is learning!



ACROSS

- 2. The two parts or hemispheres of the brain
- 4. Thick coating of the axon which helps information travel quickly through the brain
- 5. The part of the brain in charge of strong emotion
- 7. Special cells that carry and send information to every part of your body
- 8. A part of the brain that helps us with balance and coordinated movement
- 9. Body part of the cell that holds information or instructions

DOWN

- 1. The part of the brain that helps us do our best thinking
- 3. The part of the brain that helps us learn and remember
- 6. Branches of the cell body that carry information to another neuron by connecting to its dendrites

Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**BREATH**

### What is it?

Breath is a tool for self regulation that aids in managing impulses and emotions.

### Why is it Important?

Kids should learn that they can use their breath as a tool to relax and think clearly.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Our fourth graders are learning to manage strong emotions and reactions through coping skills, like breathing.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

One of the best ways you can help your child practice using deep breathing as a means to relax and think clearly after an upset, is to model this practice yourself! In the hustle and bustle of afterschool activities, we can often feel overwhelmed and even if we don't say so, kids can tell when we feel stressed! Before moving on to the next task, tell your child that you need a minute to take a few deep breaths. By doing this, you'll be showing your child that everyone needs to use strategies to calm the brain and body - even you! When you notice your child becoming agitated or upset, ask them to take a few deep breaths with you. You might even practice a new breathing technique together! Here's an example of one technique, called box breathing!

[bit.ly/breathingbox](https://bit.ly/breathingbox)



Dear Family,  
This week we're learning about  
**FEELINGS**

### What is it?

Feelings are emotional states or reactions that stem from circumstances, mood, or relationships and are not permanent, but change throughout the day.

### Why is it Important?

It's important to learn about feelings because kids need words that tell exactly how they feel.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

In fourth grade, children are learning that the intensity of emotion can change over time.

### PRACTICING AT HOME:

As children grow, their capacity to handle their emotions improves. But fourth graders still have a way to go before they can do this effectively. One of the best ways to support development of this skill is to acknowledge your child's feelings - even if you don't agree with them. When your child is angry, a simple statement like, "I can see you're angry" can be enough to diffuse the intensity of that emotion. You can follow up with a boundary statement like, "I can see you're angry. It's not okay to hit someone when you're angry." Finally, consider offering your child a choice. This might sound like, "I can see you're angry. It's not okay to hit someone when you're angry. If you need to hit, you can hit a pillow or your mattress." When the strong emotion has calmed down, try talking to your child about how the intensity of their emotion changed with time. When a child is in the middle of an emotion, they often can't see that the world will ever be right again. Helping them think about their own experience of returning to calm will help them remember that even strong feelings pass.

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

### What is it?

Fourth graders are developing an awareness that their body is affected by and reflects internal emotional states.

### Why is it Important?

It's important for kids to pay attention to what's happening on the inside, because those body cues can help them understand how they're feeling!

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Our students are learning to describe physical cues and how they're paired with strong emotions. For example, students are learning that intense frustration is usually felt by a tightening of the stomach and clenching of muscles in the shoulders, arms and hands. Loneliness or sadness can sometimes be felt by an empty feeling in the stomach and tears that come easily.

### PRACTICING AT HOME:

Play a conversation game with your child to discuss how your bodies can show your feelings. Cut out both of the boards on the next page so that you have one and your child has the other. Each player needs three markers (i.e. pennies, buttons, dried beans). Take turns calling out one of the emotion words on the list on the next page. Each player places their three markers on physical signals that they experience when they have this feeling. Talk about how your reactions are similar or different from one another.

## EMOTION WORDS:

Frustrated, Embarrassed, Angry, Nervous, Excited, Stressed, Exhausted, Bored

Head down	Tears	Shrugging shoulders	Tight/high shoulders
Hand over eyes	Clenched fists	Eyes closed or looking down	Eyes wide open
Hands covering face	Resting chin on hands	Crossed arms	Hot or flushed cheeks
Jiggling knee	Big smile	Wringing hands	Eye roll
Slumped shoulders	Sighing	Giggling or laughing	Jumping up and down

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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?

It's important for children to know that they are in charge of their body and are responsible for the impact of what they do and say.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Our fourth graders are learning to take ownership of controlling their impulses by focusing on the impact of their actions. An important part of ownership is the willingness to apologize. Children (and adults!) sometimes say or do things on impulse that can hurt another person. Learning to apologize for that impact is the first step toward recognizing - and controlling - impulsive behavior.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

In class, students are learning a formula for a good apology. Sometimes, kids find it hard to apologize, because they just don't know what to say. Giving them a simple framework takes away this barrier. Here's a three-step apology that you might want to incorporate into your family:

1. I'm sorry for \_\_\_\_\_.
2. This was wrong because \_\_\_\_\_. (impact)
3. Next time, I'll \_\_\_\_\_.

It's best to introduce this to the whole family when things are calm. Each member of the family can make up an apology using the framework for practice. If your family agrees that these three steps are enough, you might encourage your child to make a simple poster of these statements and put them on the refrigerator. When it's time for your child to apologize, consider giving them time to calm their emotions. A forced apology isn't satisfying to anyone. Giving your child time and space to calm down and think will help them offer a sincere apology.



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?

It's important to learn about gratitude because kids can train their brains to look for the good around them.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Our fourth graders are exploring sources of gratitude that they might easily overlook or ignore.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

At school, your child will be looking for items that they are grateful for and create a list to record these. To extend learning, encourage them to discover what your family members are grateful for. Let your child imagine that they are a TV news interviewer. Using paper/pencil or a cell phone to record, ask your child to interview each family member to ask what they are grateful for. Your child can compile the results into these four categories:

1. People
2. Places
3. Things
4. Activities

Let your child explain their results to the rest of the family. It will warm your heart to hear how your family is grateful for things that we often take for granted!

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?

There are ups and downs in everyone's life. Optimism helps kids through difficulties by encouraging them to focus on the good in themselves and their lives.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Each student in our fourth grade class is working to identify their unique and personal strengths.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

By fourth grade, children are good at comparing themselves to others - sometimes unfavorably. Help your child to turn the tables by helping them focus on their areas of strength. We often see things in our children that they can't see in themselves. Express the potential and promise that you see in your child by doing this simple activity:

Cut out a paper heart and glue a picture of your child in the center. Around the picture, let your family members write why they love your child. Write adjectives that describe your child around the edges of the heart. If your child has siblings or other children in the home, encourage them to decorate the heart using crayons or stickers.

Consider making this a secret project that you do with other members of your family and present to your child as a way to show how much you believe in them!

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?

We want kids to know that they can achieve their dreams and goals when they keep going, one step at a time.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Our fourth graders are learning to monitor their progress on achieving a short-term goal.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

You can help your child practice grit at home by including them in developing (and working toward) a family goal. For example, your family might want to take a vacation or a trip to visit relatives during the summer. Another example may be for the children to get perfect attendance or on the honor roll at school for five out of the six grading periods during the year. A goal could even be to train your dog to obey four commands. Once you've decided on the goal and talked about why it is beneficial to everyone, talk about some of the challenges you might encounter in reaching the goal. Finally, talk about how you'll deal with each challenge. These are what we call grit strategies. A grit strategy is anything you do to help you to overcome a challenge and keep moving toward the goal. To save money for your trip, you might decide to eliminate fast food during the week. That might be a challenge because someone will have to cook dinner every night! A grit strategy would be to have each family member take part in the meal preparation, set up or clean up. A grit strategy for teaching your dog new commands might be to exercise patience and set aside time every day for practice. While these are simple suggestions, they are also an effective way for children to understand that achievement is intentional!

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?

It's empowering for kids to realize that they are capable of helping someone else bounce back from a hard situation.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Fourth graders are learning that resilience is not always individual - people help each other to be resilient.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

Think about the last time you helped someone (besides your child!) that you helped with no thought of receiving anything in return. These are times that we feel good about ourselves, knowing that we are able to make a difference for someone else. Share that knowledge and joy with your child by showing them opportunities to help someone who is struggling. Here are a few ideas that your child can try:

- Write and send a note to a loved one who is lonely.
- Help a sibling practice a skill that they find difficult like riding a bike or learning math facts.
- Make some soup or a dessert for someone who has been sick.
- Draw a picture to encourage a family member or neighbor who is struggling.
- Sort through clothing and toys to find things to donate to a charitable organization.

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?

It's important for kids to try to see each other's viewpoint because it helps them to better understand each other.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Fourth graders are learning about the importance of considering multiple perspectives when considering an issue.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

Play a quick art game to demonstrate the importance of trying to see another person's perspective in understanding a situation. Give your child a piece of blank paper and tell them to draw a simple picture. It doesn't have to be a picture of anything realistic - it can just be random shapes. No peeking at your child's picture! When they're done, grab another piece of paper and a pencil. Sit back-to-back with your child so that you can't see each other's paper. Now, let the child give you directions to copy their design on your own paper. Your child might say, "Draw a small circle in the bottom right corner." or "Draw a line from the middle of the top edge to the middle of the bottom edge of the paper." They shouldn't say, "Draw a house in the middle of the paper." :) You will follow your child's directions. When they are finished giving directions, compare your drawings. How close did you get to your child's drawing? What are some differences? In order to do this well, your child had to think of what you were seeing on your page - they had to see the drawing process from your perspective.

To follow up, when you are making family decisions, encourage the use of phrases like:

- In my opinion...
- The way I see it....
- From my perspective...
- My viewpoint is...

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?

It's important for children to think about how someone else feels so they can understand that person's words, actions and reactions.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Fourth graders are practicing empathy statements and identifying body postures that reflect empathy.

## HOW TO SUPPORT AT HOME:

The best way to learn empathy is to experience it! When your child is upset, consider making them feel like a VIP (very important person!). There are three steps you can take to show your child empathy as they're working through a tough emotion.

- 1. Validate** - Simply acknowledge your child's feelings. You don't have to agree with their behavior or intensity of emotion, but it's important to let them know that you understand what they're feeling. A simple statement like, "I can see that you're sad/disappointed/angry," is very validating and can diffuse some of the intensity of the emotion that your child feels.
- 2. Initiate** - as children get older, they can be less likely to tell you how they're feeling. Don't wait for your child to approach you. When you sense that your child is struggling, initiate the conversation. Doing so will make them realize how important they are to you.
- 3. (Be) Present** - Don't worry about solving your child's problem. Our loving instinct is to remove anything that causes our children pain or hurt, but fourth graders are able to handle many problems on their own. Being present means to be totally "in the moment" with your child. Close the door, put down the phone and focus only on your child. An arm around their shoulder and statements like, "I know this is hard. I'm here" are exactly what your child needs to feel like a very important person!

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?

It's important to learn that being kind (or unkind) can affect someone for a long time.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Our fourth grade class is discussing the power of kind and unkind words.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

This is an activity that helps children understand that unkind words hurt and that kind words bring comfort. Ask your child to identify three surfaces or items in your home that are rough, hard, or sharp. They should draw these on one side of a piece of paper. Next, ask them to find three surfaces or items that are soft or comfortable. Encourage them to draw these items on the opposite side of the paper. Ask your child which group of items they'd rather *avoid* bumping into. When they choose the hard, rough or sharp items, explain that unkind words can be like these items because they can cause hurt. The other objects are similar to kind words because they bring goodness and comfort. Have a conversation with your child about your desire to make the exchange of kind words the norm in your relationship and the exchange of unkind words a rare occurrence.

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?

When kids feel compassion, they'll be better able to help others in need.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

Fourth graders are identifying social needs and problems in the community.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

When children are recognized for doing something positive, they are more likely to repeat that action. Intentionally attending to the acts of compassion your child shows powerfully reinforces those actions. Give your child a 6-inch length of elastic string, yarn, or dental floss. Start by having a conversation about the way compassion shows up in your family and how your family shows compassion outside the home. Tell your child to tie a knot at the end of the string and give them two small beads to put on the string. The first is to remind them to look for ways to show compassion with other family members and the second is to show compassion to those beyond your family. Everyday, notice what your child does to show compassion. Ask them how they've shown it at school or in your neighborhood. Award each instance with another bead that your child can add to their string. When the string is nearly full of beads, take a few minutes to write a short note to your child, expressing your pride in their ability to show compassion in others. Attach your note to the string so that your child finds and reads it. If desired, the string can be tied in a loop and attached to a tennis shoe lace or a zipper pull on their backpack or jacket. Whenever they see it, the beads will remind them that you see them as a compassionate person.



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?

Children's self-confidence soars when they realize that they have the capacity to bring hope to others.

### Fourth Grade at a Glance

In class, fourth graders are learning that hope helps us believe in ourselves and our futures. They are exploring the lives of current and historical figures that made positive changes in the world.

## PRACTICING AT HOME:

Talk about what hope means to your family. On a blank sheet of paper, write a word for each letter of the word HOPE. For example, H might stand for *home* or *humanity*. Encourage family members to talk about each word and what it means to them. Let your child decorate the completed sheet. When things are stressful or challenging, go back to this word and remind your child (and yourself!) of how you have hope for the future.

H \_\_\_\_\_

O \_\_\_\_\_

P \_\_\_\_\_

E \_\_\_\_\_