

# Lesson Four – Wisdom Voice

## CREATIVE ACTIVITY – DRAW A SELF-PORTRAIT

### Lesson Intention:

In this lesson, we encourage students to have self-compassion in moments when they make mistakes or when they think self-critical thoughts. When we make a mistake, we tend to speak to ourselves in a way that can be harsh. Children can learn to strengthen their inner voice to be more loving towards themselves. We are calling this kinder voice ‘self-compassion’ and inviting students to draw a self-portrait from the perspective of this more loving and kind voice. This lesson supports students in turning up the volume on this kind inner voice and turning down the volume on the critical, negative one.

### Learning Goals:

- Distinguish between kind, loving thoughts and critical, negative thoughts.
- Students develop self-compassion by cultivating a more loving inner voice when they make a mistake or are critical of themselves.

### Materials for Lesson:

- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)
- [Lesson Plan PDF](#)

### Prior to Teaching this Lesson:

1. *Make your own example of this project ahead of time to share with your students. For the first half of the project, draw or write about a time when you made a mistake or weren't doing as well as you wanted. For the second half of the project, create a self-portrait with kind and loving words or images surrounding your picture. The words you use in this second half of the project are a reframing of the self-critical thoughts from the first half. (See creative activity.)*
2. *Have paper, markers, crayons, colored pencils, pens or paint available for students.*

## Lesson Plan:

Display the 'welcome slide' from the Lesson 4 PowerPoint as you begin.

*\*Slide 1*

- As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself, meaningful for your students, and tailored to your students' age-group.

### Launching the Lesson:

*\*Slide 2*

- Introduce the purpose of today's lesson – for students to learn to be more compassionate towards themselves by turning up the volume on the inner voice that is kind and loving and turning down the volume on the inner voice that is critical.

#### **Example of What You Could Say:**

"Today, we are going to talk about how to be kinder to ourselves when we make a mistake or feel like something is really hard, and we aren't doing as well as we wanted.

For example, maybe we are having trouble learning to read something or learning how to solve a math problem. When we get frustrated with ourselves, we may speak to ourselves in a critical way. We may say, "Why isn't this easier for me?!" or "Why am I so bad at this?!"

If we notice that we are doing this, we can learn to speak to ourselves in a more positive, kinder way. We could say, "Maybe I just need more practice." and "Everyone learns at their own pace."

Mistakes are a really big part of growing up. When you are learning something new, mistakes are part of how you learn – they are a part of life. We all make mistakes, even as adults.

I want to share an example of a time from my own life when I made a mistake and was hard on myself. *(Share a personal example that is age-appropriate, like being unkind to a friend.)*

When I did that, I got really mad at myself. I noticed that I spoke to myself in a harsh way. When I noticed this, I tried to replace those mean thoughts with kinder ones. I changed what I was saying to: "I wish I hadn't done that. But I can't undo it, so I will just try to do better in the future, and I am actually a really good friend most of a time."

#### **Notes on What You Plan to Say:**

## Introducing the Creative Activity:

*\*Slides 3 & 4*

- Students will practice reframing self-critical thoughts with more compassionate ones. Invite students to draw a picture or write about a moment when they were disappointed in themselves.
- Then, students will make a second drawing that is a self-portrait. They will surround this self-portrait with kind and loving words that will help them to reframe the prior, self-critical thoughts. If students are not yet writing, they can draw images that illustrate things that they like about themselves or that describe themselves.
- Give students 15-20 minutes for this creative project. Circulate the room and remind your students that the goal is not to have a “good” or “perfect” outcome, but to use the project as a chance to be kinder to themselves and to think about hard moments in a new way. You may want to play soft music as the students work.

### **Example of What You Could Say:**

“Today, we are going to do a creative project that will help us think about how to be kinder to ourselves when we make a mistake or are hard on ourselves. First, I want you to think about a time in your life when you felt mad at or disappointed in yourself. Maybe you were learning something new in class that you couldn’t understand, or you made a mistake playing a sport. You are going to draw a picture of that moment on a piece of paper, or write about that time. We are going to take five minutes to work on this.”

Give students five minutes to draw or write.

“Now we are going to try to look at this situation in a new way. We are going to take a second piece of paper and draw another picture. This time it is going to be a self-portrait – which is a picture you draw of yourself.

After we draw this self-portrait, we are going to surround our drawing with kind words and positive things that describe us. For example, we may write words like: strong, kind, fun, brave or smart – words that describe the good things we feel about ourselves, that are true even when we make mistakes. You may also want to write words that represent who you are. Maybe you love reading or you like to play sports. Feel free to add words that illustrate what you like about yourself. This will hopefully remind us to not be so hard on ourselves. It also helps us remember that we all have unique qualities that make us special.

For those of us not yet writing, we can draw images that illustrate the things that we like about ourselves, like a heart, sun, or smiley face. Or draw images of the things you are good at or like doing. Maybe you like building with blocks, coloring or playing with toys. This is a part of who you are, and it can help you feel good about yourself to think about these different parts of you.”

**Give students 10-15 minutes to work on their self-portrait.**

**Notes on What You Plan to Say:**

**Lesson Closure:**

- Invite students to share both of their drawings with the class. Encourage them to reflect on the way the process of making the drawings felt.

**Example of What You Could Say:**

"I hope you've enjoyed working on these two very different drawings! Hopefully this activity reminds us that it's important to be kinder to ourselves. I wonder, does anyone want to share if one of the drawings was harder than the other? Would anyone wants to share both of their drawings with the class? As we share, let's remember our class expectations. (*Remind students of listening with respect and kindness or review your class rules ahead of this sharing time.*) Next time that we are feeling angry or disappointed in ourselves, let's remember that we all have the power to reframe our negative thoughts into kinder and more self-compassionate ones."

## Additional Activities for Upper Elementary Students:

1. In our middle/high school curriculum, both Lesson 8 – Understanding the Narrative About Yourself and Lesson 10–The Wisdom Voice, focus on the concept of reframing negative thoughts into more positive ones. Lesson 8 uses a visual activity called a 'Found Poem' and in Lesson 10 students have an opportunity for reflection using a free-draw activity.