

Gather your class into a circle and think about:

“How did you feel about yourself when you owned up to your mistake?”

“How did it make you feel about your pretend child when she was brave and honest?”

“How might this activity help you in real life?”

“Coming clean” is another phrase to add to the “Words Don’t Always Mean What They Say” poster (page 62).

● RESPONSIBLE Activity 3

Oops, That Was a Lie

PRACTICE

Courage to tell the truth
Recovering after telling a lie

“Honesty can be scary and lying may seem easier, but telling the truth makes you a person people can trust. What are some lies you have heard people say when they are afraid to be brave and tell the truth?” (Examples: I didn’t do it; I don’t know who did it; I wasn’t there; I don’t know what you are talking about.)

Some students with social-emotional challenges may not understand why someone would tell a lie. When asked to report a lie they have told, they may say something like, “I would never do that” or “Why would I say that?” If a student feels comfortable explaining why they might think this, ask him to clarify his thoughts to the other students. Discuss why it is always better to be brave and tell the truth.

Then ask: “How do you feel right after you hear this lie come out of your mouth? Does lying make you feel good or not so good about yourself? How do you think your parents and teachers might feel when they don’t think you’re being brave and telling the truth?”

“Let’s practice a helpful communication habit for when you say one of these lies. If you hear yourself lie, quickly have the courage to catch yourself and tell the truth. I will demonstrate first.”

Have a student play the “teacher” role and ask you if you left the glue open. At first say, “I didn’t

do it,” but then quickly recover by saying, “Yes, I did. I don’t know why I said that.” Now reverse roles and approach students to ask them if they did something. Have them deny it but then quickly recover by choosing to be brave and honest. Keep track of the words that seem the most helpful for getting someone to be brave and tell the truth even when he is afraid of the consequences.

“I don’t know why I said that.”

“That’s not true. I did it.”

“I’m sorry I lied. I was scared because I did it.”

“I meant to say, ‘Yes, I did it.’”

“How do you think this communication habit might help you at home, in school, with friends?”

BE RESILIENT The following communication activities will help students be resilient and apologize when making a mistake and forgiving when others make mistakes that cause hurt feelings.

● RESILIENT Activity 1

Say Sorry

PRACTICE

Using courage to apologize
Owning mistakes

Materials: Bug, Sorry, Scared, Proud, Embarrassed, Brave, Loved, Grateful, Happy, Friendly, Kind

“Raise your hand if you make mistakes. How do you feel about friends who can say ‘I’m sorry’ when they make mistakes? How do you feel about friends who blame others or find excuses rather than saying ‘I am sorry’? Why do you think they don’t seem able to apologize? Why can it be difficult to say ‘I am sorry’”? (You feel scared, embarrassed, etc.)

“Today we are going to learn the value and importance of choosing to be a brave person who can say ‘I’m sorry’ when you make mistakes. Let’s practice our apology words. Repeat after me, ‘I’m sorry.’”

Point out how easy it is to say these words when we are NOT having upset feelings. Then talk about how these words mean nothing if they are insincere. Have students practice saying “I’m sorry” in sincere and insincere ways so they can hear and feel the difference.

Then give another apology that includes the student’s name: “Jimmy, I’m sorry.” Talk about how including the person’s name makes the apology even stronger.

“There are eight more important and easy things to do to help you be kind and brave enough to apologize when you do wrong.”

The steps listed below may be too much for students with social-emotional challenges to remember. Write simplified steps on the whiteboard so students can check them during role-plays. Some students with social-emotional challenges may be able to remember only the first five steps. Give them lots of opportunities to practice in role-plays. Make a small reminder card or make a poster with the steps for the classroom. Prompt students to use their card or to refer to the poster when they need a reminder of the steps for an apology.

Habit 1: Apologize Quickly

“The quicker you apologize, the quicker you make things right.” Model quickly saying sorry when accidentally bumping someone. Remember to say the person’s name to personalize the apology. Reverse roles so students can practice.

Habit 2: You Have to Mean It

Demonstrate two different apologies.

1. Say “I’m sorry” but look and sound insincere.
2. Say “I’m sorry” and look and sound sincere (adding eye contact).

“Which apology would make you more likely to forgive this person? Why? How does it make you feel about the sender when he doesn’t seem to mean it?” Have students practice saying “I’m sorry” with the different tones of voice.

Habit 3: Tell Why You Are Sorry

Brainstorm reasons to apologize. “You need to apologize when you ...” Then model sending an apology that names what the student regrets. “Keith, I’m sorry I didn’t wait for you.”

Reverse roles so students can practice. Ask your students if it makes a difference when the person names what he is sorry for. Why?

Habit 4: Give It a Name

Create a “words wall” with words that describe actions we regret, such as: mean, thoughtless, rude, impolite, careless, and unkind.

Model an apology and name what you think of your action: “Wesley, I’m sorry I took your pencil without asking. That was rude of me.”

Reverse roles so students can practice. Ask students if it makes a difference when someone names how he feels about what he did.

Habit 5: Make Things Right!

“What else do you appreciate that your friends do besides saying ‘I’m sorry?’ Model how to make things right by saying, “Matt, I am sorry I broke your tower. That was careless. What can I do to make things right?” Reverse roles so students can practice.

Habit 6: If at First You Don’t Succeed, Try Again

“Sometimes when you apologize, your classmates say things like, ‘You don’t sound sorry. Why should I forgive you? I’ll think about it.’ How do those words make you feel? What might your classmates be thinking and feeling?” Model how to repeat your apology when someone does not accept your first apology. Ask a student to join you in a show where you apologize for talking about a party she was not invited to. Have the student use one of the above hurtful reactions to your apology so you can model giving a second

apology with the same sincerity: “Deirdre, I really am sorry.”)

Reverse roles so your students can practice giving a second apology when you don't accept their first apology.

Habit 7: It Takes Time to Forgive

“Raise your hand if you ever feel like you need time to forgive.” Brainstorm kind ways to let someone know you need time, such as, “I know you are sorry, but I just need time.”

“It takes courage and understanding to allow people we hurt time to forgive.”

Invite a student to join you in a show where he is not ready to forgive you so you can model this helpful script: “I understand you're still upset with me. I just want you to know that I really am sorry.” Reverse roles so students can practice.

Habit 8: Managing a “Big Upset” Reaction

Ask a volunteer to overreact when you accidentally step on his foot. Model not getting alarmed but repeating your apology in a soft, calm way to cool down the person's “big upset” reaction. Explain that people often overreact because they are feeling shocked or surprised, not because they are trying to be hurtful.

Reverse roles, with you overreacting to students so they can practice giving a second apology in a calm, cool way.

Students with social-emotional challenges often overreact to small things. For these students, make an Affirmation Card (page 63) that lists statements a student could say in her head or whisper. Possible affirmation statements could be: “This is not really a big upset. I can handle it. I will do my calming strategy to get through this. Take three deep breaths. I can forget about it.”

● RESILIENT Activity 2

I Forgive You

PRACTICE

Working through hurt feelings to forgive

Materials: Sad, Mad, Hurt

“How do you feel when someone says he forgives you? How do you feel about yourself when you can forgive someone for hurting you even though you are still feeling upset?”

“Let's make a list of favorite words we like hearing when someone forgives us.” (List examples on board: I forgive you. It's okay. It's okay and please don't do that again. Everybody makes mistakes. I forgive you. Don't worry about it. It's over.)

Habit 1: Forgive Quickly

“Forgiveness can be something you do easily and quickly. It doesn't mean that your upset feelings go away but it does mean you forgive because you know that everyone makes mistakes.”

Place the Mad, Sad, and Hurt pillows face-up in the center of your circle and write the feelings on your board. Have students brainstorm actions and words that cause these feelings at school by completing this prompt: “I can make people feel (mad, sad, hurt) when I ...”

Ask a volunteer to be in a show and apologize to you for doing something hurtful. Model saying, “I forgive you.” Reverse roles. Finally, have students assume both roles of apologizing and forgiving.

For younger students, use the Kimochis™ characters as puppets and end the lesson here. Younger students will benefit from frequent practice.

Habit 2: Two Wrongs Don't Make a Right

“‘Two wrongs don't make a right.’ Nod if you know this expression. What do these words mean? If two wrongs don't make a right, why do people choose to hurt you back when you hurt them?”