

Special thanks to the many people
who contributed to this guidebook

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“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.”

- Leo Buscaglia

Hello!

Are you ready to go on an adventure to discover your character strength powers? When we practice and build on our character, this can help us to become braver, happier and kinder people, which helps to create a kinder world. Welcome to the Kind World Explorers Guidebook, a social emotional well-being tool to support educators and parents in fostering compassionate and courageous character in kids!

We have 12 guidebooks addressing various character strengths. This guidebook is filled with activities that build on the character strength "Gratitude".

Explore character strengths through 3 themes: My World, Your World, and Our World.

- **My World** - Focus on the character strength and myself
- **Your World** - Focus on the character strength and those around us
- **Our World** - Focus on the character strength and our community and world

We encourage you to have discussions with each activity and think of ways to extend the learning into your everyday life. Building kind character is like learning to ride a bicycle. The more we practice, the better we will get, and the better we get, the more natural it becomes!

By developing kind character, we create happier, stronger communities! Thank you for joining us on this adventure and helping to make the world a better place. Have fun and enjoy exploring!

Let's connect with Kindness,
Team Camp Kindness Counts

About Us

Camp Kindness Counts believes in the power of kindness as foundational for children and families to create a happier, healthier, and stronger world. When we formed in 2012, the initial response from parents surprised us and the reactions from the kids inspired us. It became clear that taking time to show kids how their simple acts of kindness help can make a positive impact around them was powerful. It makes them feel like “superheroes.” They feel important and understand their thoughts and actions matter! We became a 501c3 nonprofit organization in 2014 and we have expanded our programming to schools and communities near and far since then.

We are committed to providing families, educators and children tools for character development, which help foster social emotional well-being and opportunities for service and social action. These tools and learnings help build a generation of compassionate, strong leaders and community members. Families and youth build on crucial character strengths, such as compassion, perseverance, and forgiveness, while making a difference in themselves and in turn, the community. We aim to foster a culture of kindness in our schools and communities and we believe youth and families, when inspired and empowered, are the people who can help make this happen! TOGETHER we can encourage kindness and character development as central values and watch our family, school, work, and community life flourish!

MISSION

We empower kids and families to embrace kindness as a core value to community building. We encourage kids to embrace their authentic selves through mindfulness. We believe that when kindness and authenticity are embraced as societal values, the youth of today are better equipped to shape the world as confident, compassionate leaders.

VISION

We envision a world where young people feel confident, curious, and productive. Youth will lead their communities and schools to adopt a culture of kindness and compassion.

VALUES

- Listen deeply to the thoughts, feelings, and ideas of kids
- Foster connected and supportive communities across parents, schools, and kids
- Nurture ourselves and those around us through compassion and mindfulness
- Inspire leadership by nourishing creativity and acts of kindness
- Express joy and gratitude through our thoughts, words, and actions

Embrace a worldview in which each person can make an impact locally and globally. The next pages contain tips to help your community put these activities into practice. With a little planning and communication, you can share simple but powerful activities with children, helping them become kind leaders of tomorrow!

Creating a Compassionate Community

Leading a Kind World Explorers Meeting

Kind World Explorers can be used with groups such as a classroom of kids, a family, or a group of families to foster community. Here are a few ideas on how to sequence activities to create a sense of community and foster positive and supportive connections with all participants! Feel free to use the ideas that would be helpful to your group. Both kids and adults are encouraged to participate in the activities.

Setting a Consistent Routine

Children of all ages thrive on routine. By practicing a regular routine, all participants will know what to expect and what to do once everyone is ready to get started. Positive ways to welcome everyone are greeting participants by name and guiding them to join the optional pre-gathering activity.

Before the Meeting

- Arrange your meeting space so that participants can begin in a welcome circle. When we sit in a circle, we experience a stronger sense of community. Sometimes the space available doesn't allow for forming a perfect circle. This is an opportunity to get creative and find the best way to gather!
- Optional: Choose a separate area to set up all the materials for the activity
- Optional: Prepare a poster with the day's character focus and guidelines
- Optional: Provide an attendance sheet for parents to sign in when they arrive

Pre-Gathering Activity Suggestions for Family Groups

Some families/ participants may arrive early. Planning a calming activity that participants can do with minimal direction from you will allow you more free time to greet parents and prepare for the meeting. Choose activities that allow participants to join in at any time. Some suggestions include:

- Artwork: crayons, markers, paper or coloring books on a table
- Books to read in a quiet space
- Puzzles, word searches, or simple games

Transitioning and Attention Getters

For smoother transitioning from one activity to the next, give participants a signal before the end of this activity. Some suggestions include:

- You might say: "We will be cleaning up in five minutes so we can gather around the circle and begin our meeting!"
- Sound a drum, bell or any objects which makes a sound
- Create a clapping pattern and have the group repeat the sound when they hear it (clap, clap clap, clap)

Kind World Explorers Curriculum

Setting Expectations

The first time your group gathers, it may be helpful to have everyone share how they want to feel and what they need to do to make their experience together positive! Using the Club Pledge handout in the back of the book, reflect on what is important to your group. How will you agree to treat each other? How do you want to feel when you are here? What needs to happen in order to allow this feeling?

Opening Circle Activities (5-10 minutes)

Invite all participants to gather and sit in a circle. This gesture signals it is time to begin your meeting. Leaders are encouraged to sit in the circle, be active listeners, and model the activity for the group. Plan for an opening activity to set the tone. Some ideas include:

- Reciting the Club Pledge
- Reviewing the activity
- Talking about the day's goals
- Mindfulness activity
- Talking about character strength
- Introducing the "Opening Question"
- Ask a question about favorite activities, foods, or colors and practice kind listening

Tips for effective opening circles:

Provide a talking piece that can be passed from one person to another. A talking piece is an invitation to share with the group and ensures that everyone gets an opportunity to share without interruptions. Examples include a small, soft toy, a special stick or stone, or some other object that can withstand being passed multiple times.

The first person decides which direction the talking piece should go. Participants may share or pass the talking piece to the next person in the circle. Keep track of time and help to gently keep the talking piece moving so everyone has a turn to share.

Model for participants how to respect the talking piece by giving the person who is holding it their full attention.

Adapt your circle time depending on the age and needs of your group.

My/Your/Our World Activity (10-45 minutes depending on group size)

- Introduce the activity character strength
- Model how to use and share the materials before participants begin
- Assign specific jobs for cleaning up after the activity
- Share what participants may do if they finish their activity before others

“Character Connection, Kinder World, and Hints”

Take a look at the [Character Connection](#) to help explain how the activity relates to the character strength. Review the [Kinder World](#) section to help explain how the character strength contributes to a kinder world. Check out the [Hints](#) section for more conversation ideas.

“Kind World Passport and Next Steps” (5-10 minutes)

Complete your Kind World Explorers activity 5-10 minutes before the end of your time together. Doing so will dedicate that time for reflection and celebration! Invite all participants to gather and share a brief comment about their experience.

- Reflection: Ask participants to reflect on what they learned. Hand out Kind World Passports to participants and encourage them to write a few words or draw a picture about the activity.
- Extension: The [Next Steps](#) section of your guidebook offers additional ideas for how to practice the character strength during the week or month!
- Celebration: Lead the group with a quick, lively song, chant, cheer, or high five celebrating the community’s effort and accomplishments that day. You can celebrate the hard work of the session by acknowledging group agreements, how individuals helped others, and group problem solving. There are many possibilities, so feel welcome to come up with your own ideas as well.

Kind World Passport

Once your class, group, or family completes all activities for a character strength — My World, your World and Our World — each participant receives a sticker indicating they learned all about that character strength and can place the sticker in their Kind World Passport. Now, everyone can refer to that character strength in conversation, as well as seek opportunities to further build it into their daily lives!

Using the Handouts

In the back of the curriculum, you will find a set of handouts which can be used with some of the activities. You have three options for how to utilize these handouts:

1. Photocopy directly from the book
2. Print from the web version
3. Recreate using pen and paper

Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Competencies

SEL helps to provide a foundation of positive learning, awareness and management of emotions, expressing and feeling empathy towards others, relationship building and responsible decision making. The Kind World Explorers curriculum highlights the CASEL core competencies practiced in each character building activity. When fostering SEL skills, we encourage actively practicing these skills and incorporating them in all aspects of daily life including school, home and community settings.

CASEL 5 Core Competencies

Self-Awareness

The ability to accurately recognize one’s own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior. The ability to accurately assess one’s strengths and limitations, with a well grounded sense of confidence, optimism, and a “growth mindset.”

- Identifying emotions
- Accurate self-perception
- Recognizing strengths
- Self-confidence
- Self-efficacy

Self-Management

The ability to successfully regulate one’s emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations — effectively managing stress, controlling impulses, and motivating oneself. The ability to set and work toward personal and academic goals.

- Impulse control
- Stress management
- Self-discipline
- Self-motivation
- Goal setting
- Organizational skills

Social Awareness

The ability to take the perspective of and empathize with others, including those from diverse backgrounds and cultures. The ability to understand social and ethical norms for behavior and to recognize family, school, and community resources and supports.

- Perspective-taking
- Empathy
- Appreciating diversity
- Respect for others

Relationship Skills

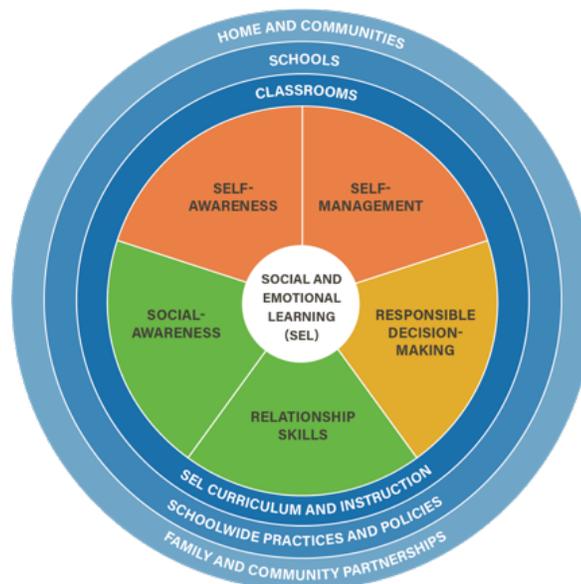
The ability to establish and maintain healthy and rewarding relationships with diverse individuals and groups. The ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist inappropriate social pressure, negotiate conflict constructively, and seek and offer help when needed.

- Communication
- Social engagement
- Relationship building
- Teamwork

Responsible Decision-Making

The ability to make constructive choices about personal behavior and social interactions based on ethical standards, safety concerns, and social norms. The realistic evaluation of consequences of various actions, and a consideration of the wellbeing of oneself and others.

- Identifying problems
- Analyzing situations
- Solving problems
- Evaluating
- Reflecting
- Ethical responsibility



CASEL 5 Core Competencies Wheel

®CASEL, 2017. The five social and emotional learning (SEL) competencies were developed and defined by the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL). For more information, visit <https://casel.org/core-competencies/>

Harmony

Coming together in agreement and unity.

Gratitude

Harmony is critical to our sense of community and connection. When we express gratitude and generosity, and have a system in place to facilitate forgiveness, these emotional tools are helpful building blocks to embracing a sense of harmony, whether within a family, school, or neighborhood.

Gratitude is **feeling thankful and appreciative**, which is an important part of building harmony. The best way to foster gratitude in children is to increase the times they experience gratitude, as well as their awareness of it.¹ Move beyond telling kids to say “thank you” and guide them to Notice the feeling of being grateful. Adults can help kids understand gratitude through reflection by encouraging them to Think about why it is meaningful, how they Feel, and what they will Do to express their happiness and gratitude².

We demonstrate Generosity by **giving and sharing with others**. We can demonstrate generosity by modeling it with kids, helping them understand why we act generously, showing the impact, and connecting the act to their personal interests. These are great evidence-based behaviors for building generosity³.

When we are open to Forgiveness, or **letting go of grudges**, we can develop harmony. Modeling forgiveness shows kids that it is a good thing to do even when it doesn't feel easy. Kids learn to forgive when they can separate the action that caused harm from the person who did it – a heartfelt apology can go a long way! Building empathy for the person they are upset with will also help, where building anger makes forgiveness more challenging. Additionally, seeing the value and positive impact of their friendship or connection with the person will motivate kids to see the reasons to forgive⁴.

Guidebook Activity Options

Start with a character strength (Gratitude, Generosity or Forgiveness)! Once you select your character strength, we recommend completing all the “world” options before you begin another. For example, begin with My World, then go on to Your World and end with Our World. There are 2 activity options to choose from. Choose 1 option per “world” based on what works best for your group or family.

Gratitude: feeling thankful and appreciative



Gratitude Journals

OR

Embodying Gratitude



Affirmations

OR

What If We Didn't Have



Thank You Cards

OR

Zoom Out Gratitude

Check out our website for more resources related to each character strength! www.campkindnesscounts.org/characterportal

Gratitude: My World

Feeling thankful and appreciative

What do I notice in my life for which I am grateful?

Option 1: Gratitude Journal Making

Learning Objectives: Participants will learn the meaning of gratitude. Participants will practice noticing moments of gratitude and their feelings through reflection.

SEL Competencies: Self-Awareness (identifying emotions), Social Awareness (perspective-taking)

Materials: plain letter-size paper or construction paper, stapler or string, hole punch (optional)

Opening Script: “Today, we will learn about gratitude. What do you think gratitude means? [Invite participants to share their own ideas.] To some, gratitude means feeling thankful and appreciative. What do you notice in your life for which you are grateful? How can you show your appreciation back? [Invite participants to share their own ideas.] Today, we are going to practice gratitude by creating a Gratitude Journal!”

Activity: Fold the **plain paper** in half to turn into a booklet. To bind it, either **staple** it along the folded edge or use a **hole punch** to punch a few holes to weave **yarn** through, and tie a knot at the end.

Decorate the cover. Start the journal by having kids fill out at least 1 page with words or drawings of moments or things they feel grateful for. Think about how you feel and how you can show your appreciation. Moving forward, reflect as a group, recording things you feel grateful for that day, week, or month in the journal! If there is a day you want to feel a little happier, open your journal to remind yourself of everything you have to be grateful for!

MY WORLD: Focus on Gratitude and myself.



Character
Connection

This activity helps participants to practice gratitude as a part of their everyday life. Studies show that an effective way to foster gratitude in children is to encourage them to take the time to notice what they are thankful for, to think about it and examine their feelings, and reflect on what they can do to show their appreciation.



Kinder World

Several studies have found that grateful people are more helpful and generous. This can help to increase kindness in our world!



Hints

If children are having a difficult time thinking of things to be grateful for, ask them to stop and look around them. Parents can model noticing what they are grateful for in the world around them and how it makes them feel. They might see a water bottle next to them which reminds them to be grateful for clean water to drink. They might look out the window and think about being grateful for sunshine or squirrels to entertain them for a moment. Often, it only takes one or two examples to get kids' minds racing as they think about all the things in their lives to be happy about!



Next Steps

Start each day noticing what you are grateful for by thinking of something that begins with a letter in your name or any letter of the alphabet! Was it the lunch someone made for you? The smile your friend gave you at school? Next, think about why this happened and how it makes you feel. Lastly, what can you do to show your appreciation? Practicing gratitude in the morning can set the tone for the rest of your interactions all day.

Gratitude: My World

Feeling thankful and appreciative

What do I notice in my life for which I am grateful?

Option 2: Embodying Gratitude

Learning Objective(s): Participants will learn the meaning of gratitude by practicing expressing their feelings and appreciation towards different parts of their body. Students will learn what others may appreciate about their bodies as well.

SEL Competencies: Self- Awareness (self-confidence), Social Awareness (perspective-taking)

Materials: crayons/markers

Opening Script: “Today, we will learn about gratitude. What do you think gratitude means? [Invite participants to share their own ideas.] To some, gratitude means feeling thankful and appreciative. What do you notice in your life for which you are grateful? Why are you grateful for that? What part of your body are you grateful for? [Invite participants to share their own ideas.] Today, we are going to practice gratitude towards ourselves!”

Activity: Draw a picture of yourself and illustrate why you are grateful for various parts of your body. All bodies are different, some people have a wheelchair to help them move, others have glasses to help them see, sometimes our bodies hurt and need casts and time to heal. We all have strong parts of our body that help us do things that we really love! Why are you grateful for YOUR body? Do your hands help you work on your favorite hobby? Are your legs and feet able to make you kick far or jump high? Does your brain help you to read all the books you love? Or maybe your ears help you to hear music you love and create music of your own!

MY WORLD: Focus on Gratitude and myself.



Character Connection

This activity encourages participants to think about body parts that are usually taken for granted, prompting gratitude for them. Studies show that an effective way to foster gratitude in children is to encourage them to take the time to notice what they are thankful for, to think about it and examine their feelings, and reflect on what they can do to show their appreciation.



Kinder World

Several studies have found that grateful people are more helpful and generous. This can help to increase kindness in our world!



Hints

Many of our messages to children are concerned with things they could do better, but it is important to spend energy focusing on the things they already do well. Help them recognize that their bodies are working all the time to keep them healthy without even trying. Can they point out things that happen in their bodies that they take for granted or simply don't think about?

Try to find at least one thing you are grateful for by the area of your body. For example: eyes help us see, the heart beats, the stomach digests food, hips help us sit or stand, legs get us moving, feet take us on a walk. What can you do to take care of the area of your body that you appreciate



Next Steps

The next time you are sick or injured, can you take a minute to thank your body's defenses and strengths for helping to heal you? Can you take a moment to notice what part of your body is letting you do what you want each day and be grateful for it? Say it out loud or silently in your head: "Thanks feet, heart, hands etc.!"

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