

What Are You Responsible For?

This lesson provides an overview of responsibility but taps more deeply into self-discipline. As students in 5th grade likely already have a good understanding of what responsibility means, we are looking more at what keeps us making responsible choices, especially when we don't feel like it. This lesson gives students an opportunity to discuss why they might make irresponsible choices and how they can tap into their self-discipline to make better choices. It ends with students making motivational posters they can hang around the classroom or school to help remind themselves (and others) to persevere in making responsible choices.

Kindness Sub-Concept(s)

Self-Discipline

Lesson Timeframe

25-30 minutes

Required Materials

- Poster-sized paper
- Markers, crayons and other art supplies for poster making
- You could Google and project or print some clever marathon signs that are age-appropriate for inspiration.

Standards Map

This lesson aligns with CASEL Competencies, National Health Education Standards, and Common Core State Standards. Please refer to the [Standards Map](#) for more information.



DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED PROGRAM
FOR SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING.

See last page for details.

Lesson Objective

Students will analyze the role of self-discipline in responsible decision making.

Teacher Connection/Self-Care

As a teacher you are responsible for the safety and education of dozens of children. How do you prepare for school each day? Every teacher is required to provide some type of lesson plans as proof of planning. Effective planning goes much further than this. Mapping out a unit based on the number of in class days coupled with allotted time constraints can completely change the original lesson. Oftentimes our planning gets shorter and shorter the longer we have been teaching. However, each year we receive a completely new set of students. This week, set aside some extra time to evaluate your current class. What special needs do they have (both strengths and weaknesses) that require a different approach than past years? If this is your first year teaching, try categorizing your students by learning style rather than academic level. You may begin to appreciate each student a bit more, which ultimately leads to a teacher that responds with kindness rather than frustration during this trying time of the year!

Tips for Diverse Learners

- The posters could be made in pairs or groups if there are some students who need assistance or work better in partners.
- When calling on students to share which rules they have broken, be aware of students who might over-share or who are routinely breaking the rules or getting into trouble. Frame the question differently if such discussion might embarrass or trigger students who regularly struggle with following the rules. (This is different from the embarrassment that honest accountability might inspire; in this case, the embarrassment is temporary and leads to revelations more associated with humility. This, in turn, may create a sense of urgency to self-correct or even a sense of solidarity with others as we all make mistakes or break rules sometimes - both healthy manifestations of humility that could lead to better choices later).



Share

5-7 minutes

In this lesson, we are going to talk about responsibility and something called self-discipline. Can someone share a basic definition of responsibility with us?

Invite student responses.

What are some things that you are personally responsible for?

Invite student responses.

So, what if you don't want to do something that you are responsible for? Let's say it's your responsibility to make your bed every morning and one day you just don't want to. What is it that enables you to continue making your bed even when you don't want to?

Invite student response - you are looking for "self-discipline."

The answer is self-discipline! Self-discipline is the ability to overcome negative feelings that might stop you from doing something you need to do (like make your bed) or that might stop you from finishing what you started (maybe you started playing a sport and it's hard; instead of giving up on your team, you decide to stick it out and try to get better). This is self-discipline!

When we choose self-discipline, we are making a responsible choice. Self-discipline is what helps us make responsible choices and do the right thing.



Inspire

5-7 minutes

Now we are going to examine the rules we have in our classroom. What are the rules we have here as 5th graders?

Invite student responses. Feel free to explore many rules, both written and unwritten. (Unwritten rules might be things like arrive to class on time, put your name on your homework, walk in the classroom, don't talk while the teacher is talking, etc.)

Good! And, everyone is responsible for following the rules, yes? Why do we follow the rules?

Invite student responses. Look for things like the rules help keep our classroom safe, help us learn in an organized environment, help us have fun while taking our work here seriously.

Good! Now, let's have an honest chat. How many of you have ever broken one of these rules?

Invite student response. When you call on a student to share, ask him or her why he/she chose to break the rule.

This is where self-discipline comes into play. We must overcome the temptation to break the rules even if it feels like it won't be a big deal.

Building our self-discipline skills will help us make responsible choices all the time!



Empower

10-15 minutes

Has anyone ever seen the signs that people hold up at big running races, like marathons, triathlons, or Iron Man competitions? Or, has anyone ever watched American Ninja Warrior or been to a professional sporting event? Have you seen people in those crowds hold up signs for the competitors? What are those signs supposed to do for the people running or competing?

Invite student responses.

That's right! They are supposed to encourage the runners or athletes to keep going. Right now, we are going to create posters that we can post around our room (and maybe even the school) that help inspire our self-discipline to make responsible decisions, even when we don't feel like it. As we get closer to the end of school, it can get easier to give up or to not finish what we start. Or, we might not even start something because we don't know if we will be successful or we are just too tired. These posters can help encourage us and others throughout the rest of the year.

Give students the poster paper and have them get out their own art supplies (or set out the classroom art supplies). On the board, write (or project some examples) of some common phrases that you would see on signs: "You Can Do It!", "Don't Give Up!", "You are Almost Finished!", "Keep Going!", and "Finish What You Start!" Somewhere on the poster, ask students to add one or both of the following hashtags: #responsibility or #self-discipline or #kindness. Encourage students to be creative.



Reflect

5-7 minutes

Have students share their posters when they are finished and then hang them up around the room or around the school/hallways if you are able.

Remind students that making responsible choices is not always easy and they need to dig deep to make sure they are thinking about the choices they are making, especially at the end of the year. Encourage students to look at these affirming posters and use them as encouragement to tap into their self-discipline when faced with a difficult choice or the nagging feeling of quitting or giving only half effort when the days get long.



Extension Ideas

- If you are getting near the end of the year or are around standardized testing time or some other “stressful” part of the year, where kids (and teachers!) have a high level of responsibility but the self-discipline tank might be running low, create a “marathon” to finish whatever large task is at hand. Have students develop an end goal (the marathon) and then design a “training plan” to get to that goal (cross the finish line). Make sure your students write SMART goals! What specific things do they need to do to reach the goal? How will they need to develop self-discipline to be successful? Use this training plan in your morning meeting or as exit tickets to see how students are making and tracking progress. This could also be a class-wide goal and plan, which would give everyone a common goal and plan to follow and encourage each other and hold each other accountable.

When your students meet their goals, have a class celebration with typical marathon treats - orange slices, cookies, water, and gatorade. You could even hand out ribbons or make paper medals to give kids as they “cross the finish line” of their goal (which they could also do symbolically in the classroom, if you set up a “FINISH” line area of your room).



DESIGNATED BY CASEL
AS A RECOMMENDED
PROGRAM FOR SOCIAL
AND EMOTIONAL
LEARNING.

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) has been reviewing evidence-based SEL programs since 2003. Kindness in the Classroom® meets CASEL's SElect Program and is included in the CASEL Guide to Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.

Kindness in the Classroom® met or exceeded all of CASEL's criteria for high-quality SEL programming. Kindness in the Classroom® received CASEL's highest designation for high-quality SEL programming.

<https://casel.org/guide/kindness-in-the-classroom/>