



with feeling

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE THROUGH THE ARTS

Unit 3.2 How Can I Work Through Difficult Emotions?

Lesson: Safe Building

Grade Levels 5–8



Yearlong Objectives

- Express oneself in words and art.
- Work as an ensemble.
- Understand the power and importance of uniqueness.

Essential Questions

- What can I do when I feel uncomfortable?
- Why is it important to exercise self-compassion?
- What is a sculpture?

Lesson Objectives

- Create a sculpture representing an important personal space.
- Use knowledge of self-compassion to practice coping strategies.

National Arts Standards

- Formulate an artistic investigation of personally relevant content for creating art. *(VA:Cr1.2.6a)*
- Design or redesign objects, places, or systems that meet the identified needs of diverse users. *(VA:CR2.3.6a)*
- Contribute ideas and accept and incorporate the ideas of others in preparing or devising drama/theatre work. *(TH:Cr2-6.b)*



Materials needed

Empty mini cereal boxes (1 per student), acrylic paint, brushes, cups for water, paper towels, masking tape, blank paper, pencils for sketching



Time needed

90 minutes



Vocabulary for this lesson

Social-Emotional: *compassion, self-compassion, comfortable, uncomfortable*
 Visual Arts: *sculpture*
 Theatre: *ensemble, body*



Warm-Up Phase (15 minutes)

Circle: Favorites question: *What is your favorite meal?*

Optional follow-up question: *How are you feeling right now? Use an emotion word*

Team-building game: One-Word Story, Level 2 (see [Team-Building Games](#))



I Do/ We Do (20 minutes)

Explicitly Teach

- Review definition of “self-compassion.” *Remember that honoring your own emotions is an important part of self-compassion. It is easiest to do that when you feel safe, so we have been strategizing around imagining safe places in our lives.*
- Have students share some of the places in their lives where they have felt safe. They may do this in pairs, as table groups, or in a whole group setting.
- Say, *Last class we thought about five places that felt safe to us. This class, I want you to think about the SAFEST place. If you feel comfortable doing so, close your eyes for a moment. Picture a place where you have a lot of memories feeling happy or safe. Think about what furniture is there if it’s inside, or what sounds you might hear in this place. Maybe you hear birds singing, or a TV show in the next room. What can you smell in this place? Imagine this place as the most beautiful, safe, lovely place in the world. Who would be in the place? Maybe you would be alone, or maybe you’d be around your friends or family. The idea is to try to picture a place where you would feel completely and totally secure, warm, and safe.* Allow time for students to picture their place before opening their eyes.
- Define **sculpture**: *A sculpture is a three-dimensional work of art.* Tell students that today we will be creating sculptures that allow us to zoom in on a place that is safe to us.

Keep in Mind

- Go over norms for an art space. *Art space needs to be safe, respectful and calm. What needs to happen to ensure everyone feels that way?*
- Describe the new art supplies and explain how they might be difficult to use. *Paint can be messy. What expectations should we follow around paint?*
- Talk about ways to extend if students finish early. *What can you add to your sculpture if you are done before your neighbor?*



You Do (55 minutes)

The project, step-by-step

- Begin by sketching the place that is special to you on a piece of blank paper, including as many specific details as you can. If it is a room, include furniture and people and food you’d want in the room. If it is someplace outside, sketch the plant life and show the weather that would make you feel the best.
- Take an empty miniature cereal box. Carefully take the box apart by separating the glued seams.
- Fold the box inside out, so it is the same shape, but inverted.
- Tape the seams of the box with masking tape.
- Sketch details on the box to make it represent your special place.
- Paint your details. Cover your entire box with paint and set it aside to dry.

Extensions: Add color and detail to your sketch so that people who look at your piece can get a better sense of the picture you were trying to convey.

Closure: Have students pair up and share with each other about their places. What makes the place special to them?

Optional Writing Prompt: If you could change one thing about your special place, what would it be? Why?



Big Picture

Next class we’ll put all our places on a big class map.