



LESSON 5:

Courage and The Brave Breath

Brave Breaths and Rest and Relax activities help our bodies, minds, and hearts prepare to learn and practice Courage.

Student Outcomes

Students will be able to:

- Practice Brave Breaths (diaphragmatic breathing) and focused awareness.
- Practice Rest and Relax activities.
- Recognize that Brave Breaths and Rest and Relax activities relax their bodies, calm their emotions, and focus their minds.
- Define Courage.
- Recognize how their brains respond to fear.
- Identify the somatic cues of fear.

CSED/ SEL Model Standards

- Self Awareness
- Self Management
- Responsible and Ethical Decision-Making
- Interpersonal/Relationship Skills
- Social Awareness

Daily Dose of Love

"Courage is grace under pressure." —Ernest Hemingway

Educator Prep

Note to teacher: It is extremely important that students realize all feelings are okay and that they can have control over their emotions by using the skills and tools taught in this unit. When teaching the hand model it's important to know that we have a choice, are we going to let the numbat and lizard take over or are we going to nudge the numbat to hug the human and hold on to our personal power!

Incorporate this language into daily routines and whenever students are experiencing strong feelings. Normalize feelings and emotions and emphasize their abilities to take back their personal power.

Videos and Read Alouds on slides:

Preview and cue the following resources in advance of the lesson to avoid unexpected ads/other online distractions:

[Brave Breath taught by children in Hawaii](http://safesha.re/io8) video
(<http://safesha.re/io8>)

[American Sign Language for Courage by Emily](http://safesha.re/iqw)
(<http://safesha.re/iqw>)

Additional Supporting Literature:

[Alphabreaths](http://safesha.re/io9) Christopher Willard and, Daniel Rechtschaffen or [read the book](#)
(<http://safesha.re/io9>)

[Think, Think, Think: Learning About the Brain](#) by Pamela Hill Nettleton (*no read aloud*)

Prepare

- Review the instructions and research on diaphragmatic breathing (Brave Breaths) in the Educator's Guide. Diaphragmatic breathing relaxes us and helps us regulate our nervous systems. In turn, this helps improve focus and readiness to learn. Diaphragmatic breathing is especially good for children experiencing acute fear or anxiety.
- Copy the Brave Breath Card to send home to caregivers.
- Watch one of the following videos on how to teach the hand-model of the brain:
 - [Dr. Russ Harris description of the brain](https://safesha.re/jdy) (<https://safesha.re/jdy>)
 - [Dr. Dan Siegel's Hand Model of the Brain](http://safesha.re/hq2) (<http://safesha.re/hq2>) that describes how the brain works

- Here's another version by [Jeanette Yoffe](http://safesha.re/hq3) (<http://safesha.re/hq3>) geared toward your students.
- Practice describing the brain to students using Dr. Siegel's model.
- Create a physical cue for Courage. Physical cues help students remember and embody the lessons about Courage, Gratitude, Forgiveness, and Compassion in Action. Options include using American Sign Language (ASL), clapping chants, brief rhymes, or a full-body pose.
- Now is a good time to introduce the **Choose Love Area** where students can go to take a break and regroup when they experience strong emotions. Explain and model when and how students can use this area. This is not a "time-out" area. **See Educator Guide for additional information.**
- Read the instructions in the **Educator's Guide** on using non-judgmental responses with students to encourage participation while correcting off-topic replies.
- Write "Courage" on a word wall or vocabulary list.

Focused Awareness

Slide: [Brave Breath taught by children in Hawaii](#)

Slide: Brave Breath Card

"Now, let's learn one way that we can help our brains cooperate. We'll learn how to do a Brave Breath."

"First, place your hand on your belly, just under your ribs. This is your diaphragm. Your diaphragm helps you breathe, sing, and calm down."

"Next, place your other hand on your heart. See if you can get quiet enough to feel your heartbeat."

"Now, you can either close your eyes, if you'd like, or just gaze down. Count to four in your mind and take a slow, deep breath in. Feel your belly get bigger and full of air, like a balloon. Now count to four and slowly breathe out."

"Let's do that again. Breathe in and count to four. Let your belly fill up like a balloon. Then breathe out and count to four. Let's take one more Brave Breath together."

"Next we'll learn how to Rest and Relax our bodies."

“Sometimes, when we’re trying to have Courage, we might feel scared, uncertain, or confused. When we feel like that, our bodies get tense, our hearts start beating faster, and we might start breathing rapidly.”

“How does your body let you know that you feel scared?” (Our cheeks get hot, our eyes get wide, our stomachs may be upset, our postures shrink, etc.)

“It can be difficult to make decisions when our bodies feel that way. We want to teach our bodies to Rest and Relax, so that we can make the best decisions possible, even when we’re scared. Let’s practice.”

“First, take another slow, deep Brave Breath. Now, on the count of three, squeeze all your muscles as tight as you can. Ready? 1–2–3–squeeze! Hold...” (Hold for 3 seconds.) **“...and release.”**

“Let’s try again. Ready? 1–2–3–squeeze! Hold...” (Hold for three seconds.) **“...and release. Feel the difference between when your muscles are tight and when they’re relaxed.”**

“Finally, let’s check our bodies to see if there are any areas we need to relax one more time. Close your eyes. Are your feet relaxed? Your legs? Your hips? Your stomach? Your chest? Your arms? Your shoulders? Your neck? Your face? If there’s any area that’s still tense, let’s squeeze it and relax it one more time. Ready? Go!”

“Let’s take one more Brave Breath together. The Brave Breath helps your body relax, helps your emotions calm down, and helps your brain get ready to learn.”

“You can use Brave Breaths any time you want to focus, or any time you want to have Courage.”

“Let’s reflect on how you feel after practicing the Brave Breath and Rest and Relaxing your body. How does your body feel now?”

“Why do you think taking a brave breath can help you be more courageous?”

Slide: Review and Recite Choose Love Formula

Courage + Gratitude + Forgiveness + Compassion-in-Action = Choose Love

“Choosing Love is important because it helps us live healthy and happy lives. Courage is when you feel afraid but choose to do something anyway because it’s the right thing to do. It can help you make important decisions.”

“The first ingredient is courage. Who has an idea of what courage means?”

“Let’s learn how to say ‘Courage’ in American Sign Language.”

Slide: [American Sign Language for Courage by Emily](#)

Slide: Hand Model of Brain

“Let’s learn about three parts of the brain that work together when we need Courage: the lizard brain, the numbat brain, and the human brain.”

“Everyone hold up your hand like you are going to give someone a high-five.” (Hold your hand up, palm out.) **“Next, tuck your thumb into your palm.”** (It will look like you are holding up four fingers. Help students as necessary.)

“Let’s imagine your hand is your brain. Your wrist and palm are what we’ll call our lizard brain. It’s responsible for helping us breathe, helping our heart beat, and controlling our body temperature. It never sleeps!”

“The next part of the brain is our thumb. It is called the numbat. It’s responsible for our emotions and relationships. It helps us decide whether something is right or wrong. It also helps us have many different feelings.”

“Now, take the rest of your fingers and wrap them around your thumb. These fingers are the part of your brain that helps you think clearly and solve problems.” (Hold up your fist, fingernails facing out.) **“This is the front part of your brain, near your forehead. Let’s call it the human brain.”**

“This is the part of the brain responsible for imagination, thinking, planning, and decision-making. It helps us learn to read, spell, do math, and practice patience.”

“These parts of your brain—the lizard, the numbat, and the human—work together to help us play and learn.”

“When you have very strong emotions—when you feel angry, scared, or overwhelmed—this happens.” (Flip up your four fingers, leaving your thumb nestled in your palm.)

“Look how far away our fingers are from our thumb! It is hard for the lizard, numbat, and human brains to work together when they’re so far apart like that.”

“This is what happens when we get scared. It becomes difficult for our thoughts and feelings to work together. There are many things we can do to help them cooperate again.” We can identify which part of our brain is in charge at any moment. You can tell your lizard brain is working if you feel hot, if your heart starts beating rapidly, or if your muscles suddenly get tense. You can tell your numbat brain is working if you start feeling

lots of strong emotions. You can tell your human brain is working if you can stop and reflect on what is happening in the moment.”

“When we slow down, or pause, it helps our human brain give the human a hug, and nudge the numbat back into place.” (Wrap your fingers back around your thumb.)

“Once we do that, our lizard, numbat, and human brains can cooperate again.”

“We have a choice, are we going to let the numbat and lizard take over or are we going to nudge the numbat to hug the human and hold on to our personal power?”

Slide: Brain parts and functions

Use this diagram to show students where the three parts of the brain are compared to the hand-model.

“The human brain is at the front of our head, right behind our forehead. The numbat brain is between the human brain and the lizard brain. The lizard brain is at the back of our head where our neck connects.”

Have a Lot of Fun!

Have students draw a picture of their brains in their Choose Love Journals.

Transfer of Learning

Cue students to take a Brave Breath when they need to calm down and feel safe, strong, focused, and brave. Great times to do this include transitions between subjects, or when students are adapting to changing situations. These are especially helpful during times of transition or before and after anxiety provoking situations like assessments or weather drills.

Practice Brave Breaths throughout the day while students are calm so that they can more easily use the skill when needed.

Encourage them to summon their courage when they need it and catch them showing courage and recognize their courageous efforts.

Reinforce that everyone feels afraid at times and it’s our brains job to send those signals to our body to keep us safe. We have a choice, are we going to let the numbat and lizard take over or are we going to nudge the numbat to leave the lizard and hug the human and hold on to our personal power!

Ask students if anyone had to nudge their numbat or hug their human brain, and what they did to calm down.

Home Connection

Send home the Brave Breath Card.

Today our class learned how to do a Brave Breath. You can learn and practice the Brave Breath with your child and receive benefit from this practice as well.

Link to [Brave Breath taught by children in Hawaii](#)