

# Bridges of Helpfulness

This lesson focuses on caring for others through helpfulness and teamwork. Students work together to create a bridge that can hold several objects using only spaghetti and marshmallows. The key to succeeding is that every person has an assigned task in the group. Everyone on the team is needed to build a strong bridge!

## Caring Sub-Concept(s)

Gratitude, Helpfulness, Kindness

## Lesson Timeframe

30-40 minutes

## Required Materials

- ☐ Long Spaghetti
- ☐ Marshmallows
- ☐ 1 bowl per group
- ☐ Index cards (1 per student)
- ☐ Cups (enough for every student)
- ☐ "JUST HELP" by Sonia Sotomayer

## 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.

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Recognize the value of every role in their team.
- Work together to create a sturdy bridge
- Identify one way to be helpful in their community

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Clear boundaries matter. Make an effort today to leave work at the school. You can't pour from an empty cup.

## Tips for Diverse Learners

- Use simple words and pictures to assign tasks to each person in the group. If needed, translate the task to help ESL students understand their role.
- Invite advanced students to measure the height, length, and width of each bridge
- Create heterogeneous groups that include all learning styles and levels



## Share

2-3 minutes

*Close your eyes and think back to this past weekend. Remember what you did and who you were with. Answer the following questions:*

- *How did you help someone?*
- *How did someone help you?*
- *What is one thing you would have liked help with, but didn't ask or didn't receive it?*

*Caring for yourself and others includes helpfulness. When we see someone needs help, we can show kindness and caring by offering to help them in some manner. Sometimes we cannot help them in the way that they need (like driving them some place or paying for something), but we can still offer a kind smile and kind words.*

**RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS**  
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## Inspire

15-20 minutes

Helping others can come in a variety of ways. Not every helpful act needs to be a grand gesture. Even little actions like opening a door or sharing your seat on the bus are kind gestures that show you care.

**Read Aloud:** “JUST HELP” by Sonia Sotomayer

**Read Aloud Link:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Pd-8-61Le4>

After you have read the book, ask the following questions:

- What question did Sonia’s mom ask her every day?
- What examples of large helpful programs did the book list?
- What examples of everyday helpfulness did the book list?



## Empower

10 minutes

*Today we are going to build Bridges of Helpfulness to illustrate how all our help works together to create something stronger. When we work together to accomplish a shared goal, we are showing that we care for others. Our helpfulness demonstrates kindness and caring, no matter how small the gesture.*

Divide the students into groups of 4-6. Provide the following supplies:

- Handful of spaghetti
- Handful of marshmallows in a bowl
- 1 small cup per student
- 1 marker
- Task Cards (use as many as needed for your group size)
  - Plan the bridge (2 people)
  - Build the bridge (1-2 people)
  - Test the bridge (1-2 people)

Follow the steps to complete the activity:

**Step 1:** Have each student write an example of how they would help their community like Sonia and her friends did in the book on the outside of their cup. This can be something big (book drive, recycling, etc.) or small (picking up trash, writing nice notes, etc.).

**Step 2:** Have the groups work together to build a bridge using the task cards provided to them. Emphasize the importance that every role counts and the team can only accomplish the goal of building a strong bridge if they work together.

**Step 3:** After the bridge is built, have each group stack their cups on top of the bridge. The goal is for the bridge to hold the weight of the cups, however, there is no right or wrong way to accomplish this!



## Reflect

5 minutes

Have each group share their bridge and the 4-6 ideas they have for helping their community. Which ones could be done easily? Which ones might take help from others?



## Extension Ideas

- As a class, vote on a new service project based on the ideas presented in class. If time allows, choose a simple activity and a more lengthy one



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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/>