

# Respect

This week our lessons will focus on building skills to engage in respectful communication. We will do this through practicing I-Messages, negotiation skills, speaking skills, and in evaluating written communication for respectful messaging and tone.

Begin the unit with the whole class lesson and then aim to complete at least two of the mini lessons with your students throughout the week. Each mini lesson is designed to present elements of the main lesson in new and engaging ways.

## Main Lesson

### Whole Class Lesson

30 minutes



### Using I-Messages

Students will learn to use I-Messages when communicating respectfully with others. This lesson also introduces the concept of assertive communication and self-discipline. (See page 3 for lesson details.)

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## Mini Lessons

### For Small Groups

15 minutes



### Negotiation Skills

One part of communicating effectively is learning how to negotiate with others. Negotiation is a discussion aimed at reaching a decision that everyone agrees to live with. Like anything else, this can take a certain amount of skill. Lawyers use these skills when trying to reach a conclusion to a legal issue. But these skills can be important for us as well. When we get in a disagreement with someone, getting mad or aggressive can make the situation much worse. Using I-messages during a negotiation is a good way to be assertive yet respectful. We are going to practice our negotiation skills through group skits!

(Follow the instructions on the Negotiation Skits handout to complete this activity.)

### For Partners

15 minutes



### Speaking Skills

This week we are talking about respectful ways to communicate. In our first lesson, we learned how to use I-Messages to communicate with someone. We also started talking about body language, tone of voice, and how we can respectfully and effectively communicate without even saying a word! Here are some additional strategies to help you communicate respectfully and effectively: make eye contact (if that is culturally appropriate; some cultures do not like to make extended eye contact and that is okay), listen to what others are saying, summarize information, give concise details, give examples to support what you're saying (this helps your listeners understand what you are saying), use humor when appropriate, speak clearly, and ask questions of your audience so you are sure they are understanding you. This is called checking for understanding. Similarly, if you are listening and are not

understanding what you are hearing, you should also respectfully ask questions of the speaker. We are going to practice some of these additional communication skills now.

*Give partner pairs the Communication Observation Sheet and have them follow the instructions.*

**For Individuals**  
15 minutes



### Personal Communication Inventory

In a brief journal entry, describe how you speak to others and to yourself. How do (or could) you use some of the communication strategies we have been learning about? If you aren't sure how you communicate, look through texts, snaps, or other messages you have sent. What is your communication like in those?

**Technology-Focused**  
15 minutes



### Communicating through Text

Large Group Discussion: Discuss how texting can make communication both easier and more challenging. How might we misinterpret a text? How can we ensure our texts are clear, respectful, and that the messages will be received as we intended them?

Fun example:



# Using I-Messages

Students will learn to use I-Messages when communicating respectfully with others. This lesson also introduces the concept of assertive communication and self-discipline.

## Lesson Timeframe

30 minutes

## Required Materials

- No materials required, other than the communication phrases noted above (or ones you write yourself)
- Home extension worksheet can be provided, if desired

## Standards Map

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

## Lesson Objective

Students will:

- Practice respectful communication

## Teacher Connection/Self-Care

Welcome to the Respect Unit! As you guide your students through the lessons in this first week, remember that your students ability to learn and demonstrate respect begins with you. How do you model respect for your students, for your colleagues, and most importantly, for yourself? Students at this age can be skeptical about the power of respect, but active modeling can show them how being respectful can completely change attitudes, relationships, self-perception, and even culture. As you go into this week, focus specifically on how you show respect for yourself. Do you believe that you are a good educator? Are you proud of your classroom culture? Do you value your health? Are you pushing yourself too hard? Do you communicate your needs? Can you be calm in the midst of conflict? If you feel you could improve how you show respect for yourself, take some time this week to write down all the things you are doing well right now. What are some things about your classroom that students love? What are students doing well this week? That is a reflection of you. Need a nap or a long, brisk walk? Take one, even if it feels like you have no time! This week, work on improving how you see, care for, and respect yourself.



## Share

5-7 minutes

In this unit we are going to talk about respect. The definition of respect that we are going to use is “treating people, places, and things with kindness”. This includes treating ourselves with kindness, which is also called self-respect.

Can someone name some ways we show respect to ourselves? (Invite student responses.)

Today we are going to focus on how we show respect when we communicate with others in a kind but assertive manner. Before we do that, let’s talk about the word assertive. Does anyone know what assertive means? (Invite student responses.)



## Inspire

15 minutes

Good! Assertive is where we communicate our words and ideas with confidence and not with arrogance or aggression. When we are assertive we say what we think and feel in a calm, respectful way. Our goal is to communicate. Note that this is NOT the same as being aggressive, which is saying what we think and feel in a way that is harsh, overly loud, and disrespectful. When you are aggressive, your goal is often to harm. This is not what we are talking about here! One assertive yet respectful way to communicate is using I-Messages (and no, this is not the same as the iMessages on your iPhone!). These messages don't blame or judge the other person, and allow you to state how you feel or what you need without attacking the other person. For example, if someone upsets you, you can say either, "You make me mad," or, "I felt upset when you did that." Which response do you think is a more effective way to talk to people? Why? (Invite student responses.)

Communicating in an assertive, respectful manner takes self-discipline. It takes real work not to simply explode at the other person. We have to check-in with our brains and with reality before we let our emotions do the talking for us! What are some things we can do to help calm ourselves down when we need to communicate assertively but we feel like communicating aggressively?

(Invite student responses. Some ideas include taking a deep breath, counting to 10, leaving the room and then returning, closing your eyes to refocus, etc.)



## Empower

15 minutes

Let's talk through some examples. I am going to write on the paper a phrase people might say when they are upset. I want you to talk in your small groups about what I-Message you could use instead. Remember they need to be assertive and respectful.

Write one phrase at a time on an I-Message sheet posted on the wall and allow the students to discuss. Then ask for a volunteer to suggest a different phrase; cross out the phrase and write the I-Message that replaces it. Use as many of these as you have time for or write your own:

- You are so annoying!
- It's your fault I got into trouble.
- You always ignore me when your other friends are around.
- Your never listen to me!
- You never told us the assignment was due today.

We also communicate nonverbally with our body language and tone of voice. Body language might include using gestures, facial expression, eye contact, or body position (arms crossed in a closed position, hands on hips in a defiant position, etc.). When you read the first original statement, what is your tone of voice and what might your body language be like? (Invite a student to role-play this.)

Now, how does your tone of voice and body language change when you say the phrase as an I-Message? (Invite a student to role-play and discuss the difference.)

Work through the rest of the original messages and their I-Messages (or as many as you have time for). Note the difference in tone of voice and body language between the aggressive message and the I-Message.



## Reflect

5-7 minutes

Using I-Messages is a powerful way to communicate how we feel while not placing blame on others. It is also a productive way to communicate as it can help us resolve problems with others and is a kind way to talk. Remember to think about body language and tone of voice, too. You cannot use an I-Message effectively if you are also rolling your eyes or glaring at someone. Your entire message, from what you say to how you say it, needs to communicate respect and assertiveness and not aggression.

Think about this today as you have conversations with people, especially with parents, guardians, or siblings. These are the people we might be most aggressive with. In your conversations today, how can you use an I-Message to respectfully communicate?

# Negotiations Skits

Divide the students into groups of three or four, depending on the skit. Explain that students will work in groups to learn a skit that they will perform for the other students. These skits demonstrate positive ways to respond to problems. Cut apart the skits and hand one to each group. You can also give students topics and have them create their own skits if you want to provide extra time. After each skit, ask by a show of hands which character demonstrated respectful communication skills.

## Skit 1: Doing Chores

Characters: Narrator, Craig, Cynthia (his mom), José (his friend)

**Narrator:** Craig and his family are going to clean the house today, and Craig's job is to do the dishes. The phone rings and it is José, Craig's friend.

**José:** Craig, do you want to see a movie this afternoon?

**Craig:** Let me ask. (calling to his mom) Mom, can I go see a movie with José?

**Cynthia:** Sure, as long as you do the dishes before you leave.

**Craig:** I can go José. I'll see you later on today. (hanging up the phone)

**Narrator:** Later that day, Cynthia returns home from running errands and finds the dishes in the sink. Craig walks in the door a few minutes later.

**Cynthia:** Craig, I asked you to do the dishes before going to the movies.

**Craig:** Oh, mom, stop nagging me! You are always making me do things I don't want to do.

**Cynthia:** I hear that you are upset Craig. However, I am disappointed that you didn't do what you agreed to do.

### Questions:

- By a show of hands, who thinks Cynthia, the mom, communicated clearly to Craig? Why or why not?
- By a show of hands, who thinks Craig communicated in a responsible and respectful way? Why or why not?

## Skit 2: Late Homework

Characters: Narrator, Mr. Johnson, Marina, Andrea

**Narrator:** (Have characters act out what the narrator says.) In math class, Mr. Johnson is writing some of the days' problems on the board. Marina and Andrea walk in and sit down in their seats.

**Mr. Johnson:** Okay, class, before we begin please pass in the math homework that was due today.

**Marina:** Mr. Johnson, you never told us the homework was due today! That's not fair!

**Andrea:** I forgot to write down the assignment, and so I didn't do it. Could I turn it in tomorrow?

### Questions:

- By a show of hands, who thinks Marina spoke in a way that Mr. Johnson will listen to? Why or why not?
  - By a show of hands, who thinks Andrea spoke in a way that Mr. Johnson will listen to? Why or why not?
  - If you were Mr. Johnson, to whom would you listen and why? (*Explain that Mr. Johnson may still mark Andrea's homework as late, but she took responsibility for her actions.*)
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## Skit 3: Listening to Music

Characters: Narrator, a Teenager, two friends, Little Sister, Older Sister

**Narrator:** (Have characters act out while the narrator is talking) A teenage boy and his friends are hanging out in the basement listening to very loud music. His younger sister and older sister are upstairs trying to do homework.

**Little Sister** (calling down the stairs): Could you please turn down the music? *Little Sister waits for a minute, then calls more loudly:* Turn down the music! You are always so rude!

**Older Sister** (going down the stairs to talk to her brother and his friends): Excuse me, but I need to talk to you.

**Brother:** What do you want, sis?

**Older Sister:** We are trying to work and can't because it's so loud. Could you turn it down please?

### Questions:

- By a show of hands, who thinks the little sister communicated respectfully?
- By a show of hands, who thinks the older sister communicated respectfully?
- If you were the teenage boy, to whom would you listen and why?

## Skit 4: On The Basketball Court

Characters: Narrator, Matthew, Connor, Sam

**Narrator:** Matthew, Connor, and Sam are sixth graders on a top basketball team. They are all strong players, but Connor has not played well today. The game is tied 20-20, when a player on the other team dribbles past Connor, shoots, and scores. *(Have Connor and player from the other team act this out while the narrator is talking.)*

**Connor:** Man, I'm really not playing well today.

**Matthew:** Connor, you're terrible. I can't believe you let that player past you! You always screw up.

**Sam:** I was struggling last game, Connor. Maybe we can practice some plays together during half time; I could use the practice too.

### Questions:

- By a show of hands, who thinks Matthew communicated respectfully?
  - By a show of hands, who thinks Sam communicated respectfully?
  - If you were Connor, to whom would you listen and why?
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## Skit 5: Breaking a Friends iPad

Characters: Narrator, Anna, Kaitlyn, Jordan

**Narrator:** Last week, Anna borrowed Kaitlyn's iPad to finish up a school assignment. On the way to school that morning, the iPad drops out of Anna's backpack and breaks after Jordan accidentally knocks into Anna. They see Kaitlyn at the front of school and walk up to her. *(Have Anna and Jordan act this out while the narrator is talking.)*

**Anna:** Hey, Kaitlyn. You know your iPad that I borrowed? Well, Jordan knocked into me and made me drop it. It's all her fault.

**Kaitlyn:** Wow, Jordan, that was really dumb!

**Jordan:** I am sorry for breaking your iPad, Kaitlyn, and I can buy you another one with my allowance money. But, I don't think that it is fair to blame me, Anna. I ran into you by mistake; I didn't mean to break anything.

### Questions:

- Who do you think communicated their needs and feelings clearly in this skit? (Answer: Jordan)
- Who do you think communicated unkindly? (Anna and Kaitlyn)
- What could Anna and Kaitlyn have said instead?

# Communication Observation Sheet

**Directions:** For this activity, you are going to practice your speaking skills with a partner. You will take turns being the speaker and the observer. Choose one of the topics listed on the sheet and spend about five minutes thinking about or taking notes about what you will say. Then speak for *two minutes* about that topic while your partner listens.

Have your partner complete a column for you while you speak and then switch roles so that the other person is the speaker for two minutes. The observer will check in the table below the skills he/she sees the speaker using and then share strengths and what needs to be improved.

## Possible Topics:

- Describe a funny situation you have experienced.
- Tell about a proud moment or accomplishment.
- Talk about your favorite music group and what you like about them.
- Talk about someone you admire and why.
- Talk about your favorite actor or actress and why you like him or her.
- In your opinion, what was the greatest strength about your school community?
- Describe one of the best vacations you have ever had.
- If you could go anywhere in the world, where would you go and why?
- Explain something you feel is important on a national or global scale, and why.

Skill Demonstrated	Name of Speaker	Name of Speaker
Makes Eye Contact (if culturally appropriate)		
Uses Facial Expressions		
Shows Interest in Topic		
Summarizes Information		
Gives Concise Details		
Uses Humor (if appropriate for the topic)		
Speaks Clearly		
Checks For Listener Understanding		