

MERRELL'S

Grades
3-5

STRONG KIDS

A Social &
Emotional
Learning
Curriculum

SECOND EDITION



Dianna Carrizales-Engelmann
Laura L. Feuerborn
Barbara A. Gueldner
Oanh K. Tran





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Second Edition*



Merrell's Strong Kids—Grades 3–5

A Social & Emotional Learning Curriculum

Second Edition

by

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Clear Thinking 1

SEL Competencies Addressed in This Lesson



Purpose and Objectives

To teach students an awareness and understanding of common thinking traps. In this lesson students will

- Understand the influence of thoughts on emotions and behaviors
- Develop an awareness of their own thoughts
- Identify common thinking traps that affect behavior, thoughts, and emotions

Materials Needed

- Supplements 6.1–6.2 (online download)
- Supplement 6.3 (online download and handout)
- Supplement 6.4–6.5 (online download)
- Supplement 6.6–6.7 (online download and handout)
- Supplement 6.8 (homework handout)
- Optional props (dark glasses, binoculars, and fortune cookie)
- Activity C sheet (thermometer image from Lesson 2)

Teacher Notes


Running Short on Time?

Suggested stopping points: end of Activity B and Closure activity.

Instructor Reflection

This lesson identifies thought patterns that can lead to overly pessimistic thinking and hinder well-being. In this program, these thoughts are called “thinking traps.” We all fall victim to thinking traps sometimes. At times, thinking traps help us deal with our situation in the moment or help us feel better about the situation in the short term, without really dealing with the problem or helping us see the reality of it. To help you prepare for this lesson, see if you can identify with some of the thinking traps in this lesson. Have you noticed these thinking traps in your own life? If so, what were the consequences? Did they affect your emotional state, your behaviors, and your interactions with others?


Review

-  5 MINS. Review the ideas (listed below) that were discussed in Lesson 5: Dealing with Anger.
- Anger is a necessary and natural reaction.
 - There are some good ways and some not-so-good ways to deal with anger.
 - Refer to the steps of the Anger Model.
 - There are healthy strategies for expressing anger.

Sample Script

During our last meeting, we talked about ways to deal with your anger—what it looks like, what we do or say when we feel angry, and healthy ways of dealing with anger. We have a lot of choices for how we respond when we feel angry. Not-so-good choices might be unhelpful to ourselves and others, but positive choices can help us feel better. We learned that, a lot of times, it helps to take a moment to think about our angry feelings before we do anything about them.

Introduction


-  5 MINS. Introduce the lesson. Lead students in a focusing activity. Then, show students Supplements 6.1 and 6.2 and discuss how people have emotions, thoughts, and sometimes thinking traps.



Sample Script

Today we're going to learn about the thoughts we have when we experience emotions.

Mindfulness-Based Focusing Activity

-  2–3 MINS. **Sample Script**
- Before we get started with today's lesson, let's begin with an activity to settle our bodies and practice focusing our minds. Close your eyes or look at a point*

in front of you on the floor or on your desk. Rest your hands comfortably on your desk or in your lap. Feel your feet on the floor or your hands as they rest. First, pay attention to your breathing for three breaths. [Pause.] During these exercises, you may notice that your mind wanders when you are trying to pay attention to one thing. It's okay and normal that your thoughts wander. For the next minute or two, focus on your breath. When you notice your attention wandering to your thoughts, you can say to yourself, "Oh, I'm thinking," and then bring your attention back to your breath. [Allow students 1–2 minutes to practice.] Now, let's take two breaths together. [Pause.] When you finish letting out the second breath, slowly open your eyes. Now that we've observed our breathing and thoughts, we are ready to move on to our lesson.

Show Supplement 6.1 first, followed by Supplement 6.2. This activity illustrates that how we think about a situation affects our emotions and behaviors.

Sample Script

[Show Supplement 6.1.] How does this make you feel? Does it make you feel scared? Disgusted? [Then, show Supplement 6.2.] This woman studies frogs. How might she feel about this picture? So, how I think about frogs affects how I feel and how I act when around them. If I think frogs are cool, I feel excited to see the frog! But, if I think they will hurt me, I feel scared. This is like everything in life! How we think about something affects how we feel about it. Today, we will continue to discuss emotions. We will learn how our thoughts can affect our emotions and how we behave. In this lesson, we'll learn ways to be more aware of our thoughts and identify thoughts that might not be very helpful or healthy for us.

Key Terms and Definitions



5 MINS. Use Supplement 6.3 as a handout to define the key terms that will be used in this lesson.



Sample Script

Here are some important words or ideas that will help us understand how our thoughts are connected to our emotions and behaviors. We'll define the words and discuss examples to understand what they mean.

Thoughts Associated with Emotions



10 MINS. Use Supplement 6.4 as a visual aid. Recognizing our thoughts helps us understand our emotions.




Sample Script

When we feel emotions, we have thoughts that go with those emotions. Sometimes, we don't even notice what we are thinking and feeling because it happens so quickly or we get used to certain feelings and thoughts. It's important to pay

attention to both our feelings and our thoughts. With practice, we can get really good at noticing our thoughts and feelings. Then we can better understand how they can affect the way we behave. This understanding can help us feel better, make better friendships, and enjoy school more!

Activity A: Thoughts Associated with Emotions


-  5–10 MINS. Using Supplement 6.4 as a visual aid, ask for volunteers to share three to five thoughts and emotions. An example is provided in the sample script. To help your students understand this connection, you might share one of the examples from your own life. Using Supplement 6.4, model your thoughts, your self-talk, and your feelings. You can use the board to write down student responses, drawing connections between the thought and the emotion.



Sample Script

Let's take a closer look at this. Think of a time when you were frustrated [or another emotion of your choice]. What kinds of thoughts and self-talk did you have when you realized you were frustrated? I wonder if your thoughts led you to feel more frustrated? Or, maybe your thoughts helped calm you down. Who would like to share another example?

Identifying Thinking Traps


-  20 MINS. Use Supplement 6.5 as a visual aid. Sometimes, the way in which we think about a situation is not always accurate and can lead to a thinking trap.



Sample Script

Thinking traps are thoughts that are inaccurate or unrealistic interpretations of events. For example, what if you accidentally tripped on a rock while carrying something important that broke, and then you decided you were clumsy because of that one thing? That would be the thinking trap. Many times, thinking traps can happen when we experience strong emotions, like those toward the top of our emotional thermometer. Thinking traps can make us feel even worse or make the situation worse. They can lead us to feel like this person you see here, stuck in a trap! But if we better understand these thinking traps, we can affect the way we feel about something. We can also change the way we react to something. Today, we will discuss common thinking traps.

Activity B: Identifying Thinking Traps Part 1


-  10 MINS. Use Supplement 6.6 as a handout to guide students in a thorough explanation of the common thinking traps. Consider using one of the examples from Activity A to begin the discussion. Provide students with the opportunity to ask questions for each thinking trap.



Sample Script

Sometimes, these thinking traps feel like they happen without us even noticing them—until we're right in the middle, or stuck. But if we practice noticing these traps, we can get better at spotting them early, before we get too stuck. Let's look at the different thinking traps we might fall into from time to time.

Activity C: Identifying Thinking Traps Part 2

-  10 MINS. Use Supplement 6.7 as a handout and the optional props (e.g., dark glasses) to discuss the eight situations. Ask students to identify which thinking trap is being demonstrated by referring to the Common Thinking Traps handout (Supplement 6.6). Read each situation aloud, and encourage students to follow along on the projector. After reading each situation, ask, “Which of the thinking traps is occurring in this story?” If students identify more than one thinking trap, lead them to the best answer, but also explain that we can get stuck in more than one trap at a time. Provide feedback as needed.



Note: If your students are struggling, provide other examples that are directly relevant to them. Or, ask them to come up with examples of their own.

Sample Script

Let's talk more about thinking traps. In your handout, there are example situations and we will identify the thinking trap in each situation. For example, Emma. She made a little mistake in math class. She thought this little mistake was a HUGE deal. Class, what thinking trap is it if I feel like a small mistake is a big problem? [Binocular vision—you may choose to use binoculars.] But Emma didn't recognize it was a trap, so she was stuck! At the end of the class, she felt like the WHOLE class went HORRIBLY. She ignored the good things that happened. She ignored what she did well! Class, what thinking trap is it if I see only the bad things about something? [Dark glasses—you may choose to put on dark glasses.] Yes, Emma got stuck in dark glasses ALL day. As she was getting ready for bed, she thought, “Tomorrow's math class will be horrible, too.” Class, what thinking trap is it if I predict something without enough evidence? [Fortune telling—you may choose to bring out a fortune cookie.]

So you see? If I didn't realize my thoughts were a trap, and I believed them, they could cause me to feel grumpy for days! How do you think the thinking traps of binocular vision, dark glasses, and fortune telling [show props] affected how Emma acted with her friends that day? Her family? How do you think she acted in math class the next day? Ok, let's continue with the other examples.

Putting It All Together

-  10-15 MINS. Use the following activity to practice the concepts discussed in this lesson.

Sample Script

Let's practice what we've learned by putting it all together.



This activity uses the Supplement 6.8 handout and can be completed in small groups. If using small groups, have each group identify a note taker and a leader; the rest of the members are helpers. The members in the group can take turns being leaders and note takers until everyone has had a chance being a leader and a note taker. The leader identifies a situation in which he or she got stuck in a thinking trap. Leaders can also use situations they saw on television of someone stuck in a thinking trap. For each thinking trap, the helpers ask the leaders the following six questions. The note taker records the answers. You can also use this time to discuss students' observations and experiences of the focusing activity at the beginning of the lesson.

1. What was the situation? What happened?
2. What were your emotions and physical feelings?
3. Was the emotion comfortable, uncomfortable, or both?
4. Where was the emotion on the thermometer?
5. What were your thoughts?
6. What thinking trap were you stuck in?

Closure



2 MINS.

Sample Script

Close the lesson using a brief breathing activity and a reflection on the lesson content.

Let's take a moment to regroup. Close your eyes and rest your hands in your lap. Feel your feet on the floor. Relax the muscles in your body and face. Relax and soften your stomach muscles. Counting to 3, take a deep breath in slowly. Inhale the air down into your lungs. Feel your chest and stomach expand like a balloon. [Pause.] Now, exhale counting to 4. Feel your chest and stomach collapse as all the air exits your body. [Pause.] Again, inhale deep into your lungs so that your stomach expands [Pause.] and exhale. [Pause.] Take a moment to think about something you learned today that was important to you or you really liked. [Note to instructor: Pause for a moment to allow time for reflection.] Counting to 3, take one more deep breath in slowly [Pause.] and exhale counting to 4. [Pause.]

Tips for Transfer Training and Homework

Use the ideas and activities in the following section to practice this lesson's content with your students at other times during the day. Also remember to pre-correct, remind, and reinforce concepts from this lesson in activities throughout the school week and to encourage students to use the skills taught in this lesson across settings including home, the bus, and the cafeteria.

Additional Activities

- Have students make flash cards with the thinking traps and images on one side and example scenarios on the other side.
- Ask students to be on the lookout for thinking traps in television shows or books they may be interested in.
- Ask students to journal and record their thoughts and self-talk for a day or several days. Ask them to identify patterns and traps. Use the supplements in this lesson as guides.

Homework Handout



Pass out the homework handout, Supplement 6.8, Practice Situations Worksheet, and explain the instructions. Students will list situations where they got caught up in a thinking trap or saw someone on TV get caught in a thought trap. They will identify the thinking trap.

Picture of a Frog



Picture of a Scientist



Key Terms and Definitions



Thoughts

These are ideas or opinions in the mind.

Example: The thoughts we have about something can affect how we feel about it. If I think something will be fun, I am likely to feel more comfortable about it. If I think something will be boring, I may feel uncomfortable about it and avoid it.

Self-talk

The things we say to ourselves, self-talk can be negative, positive, or neutral.

Example: Self-talk can be helpful or encouraging (e.g., “I can do this!”) or discouraging (e.g., “I can’t do this. I’m going to fail”).

Thinking traps

These are thoughts that are an inaccurate or unrealistic interpretations of events.

Example: If you tend to focus on negative things, you might be stuck in the dark glasses thinking trap.

Picture of a Thought Bubble



Picture of a Man Trapped in a Hole



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Common Thinking Traps



Binocular vision

Looking at things in a way that makes them seem bigger or smaller than they really are

Example: I made small a mistake in class, and I think it is a much larger mistake than it actually is.



Black-and-white thinking

Looking at things in only extreme or opposite ways (e.g., thinking of things as being good or bad, never or always, all or none, friend or enemy)

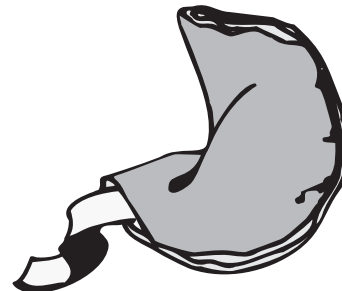
Example: You had one fight with your good friend. Now you think, “We always fight. She hates me.”



Dark glasses

Thinking about only the negative parts of things

Example: Your parents met with your teacher. Your teacher said many good things about you. She also said your writing needs improvement. Now, you think all the comments were bad.



Fortune telling

Making predictions about what will happen in the future without enough evidence

Example: You don’t want to try out for the basketball team because you predict you will not make the team.

(continued)



Making it personal

Blaming yourself for things that are not your fault or thinking things are about you when they are not

Example: Your friend was quiet at lunch because she had had a fight with her mother that morning. You think it's because she is mad at you.



Blame game

Blaming others for things that are your responsibility

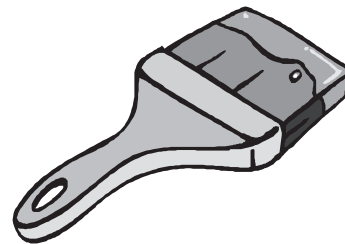
Example: You didn't follow the rules, and your teacher would not allow you to continue playing the game. You think it's your teacher's fault because she doesn't like you.



All alone

Thinking you have problems that no one else understands

Example: You give a report in front of the class, and you are so nervous you shake. You feel like you are weird. You think no one else gets nervous in front of people like that.



Broad brush

Judging something based on one experience with it

Example: You have eaten one green food and did not like it. Now, you think ALL green foods are terrible.

Example Situations



1. Jason's parents are getting a divorce. He thinks that this is all his fault because he has been getting into trouble lately.
2. Maylee's teacher suggested that she run for class president. She decided not to run because she knew that no one would vote for her.
3. Tamika got a bad grade on her spelling test. Now she thinks that she is the worst student in the class.
4. Lakota's soccer coach gave him a lot of praise and encouragement in soccer practice. As Lakota was leaving practice, the coach mentioned that he should practice his dribbling skills at home. Lakota was upset about how poorly he played at practice.
5. Maylee was grounded for not doing her chores. She thought to herself, "I am always the bad kid. My sister Sherrie is always the good kid."
6. Tamika got in trouble with her parents for taking juice into the living room. Her brother bumped into her and the juice spilled all over the floor and stained the carpet. Her parents told her she had to clean it up because they had told her not to take the juice out of the kitchen. Tamika felt that her brother should be the one to clean it up.
7. Emma lost her favorite pet. She feels like no one else knows what it's like to lose something they care about.
8. Jason met someone from Alabama [or insert neighboring state or province] and he thought the person was rude. Now he thinks everyone from Alabama is rude.

Practice Situations Worksheet



Name (optional) _____

Directions: List four situations where you got stuck in a thinking trap. For each trap, write down the emotion you experienced; if the emotion was comfortable, uncomfortable, or both; where on the thermometer your emotion was; what the thought was; and the name of the thinking trap. You can also use situations you saw on television of someone stuck in a thinking trap.

Situation	What was your (or the person's) emotion?	What did it (might it) feel like? Comfortable, uncomfortable, or both?	Where on the thermometer was your (or the person's) emotion?	What was your (or the person's) thinking?	What type of thinking trap did you (or the person) get stuck in?
1.					
2.					
3.					
4.					

Emotions Thermometer

