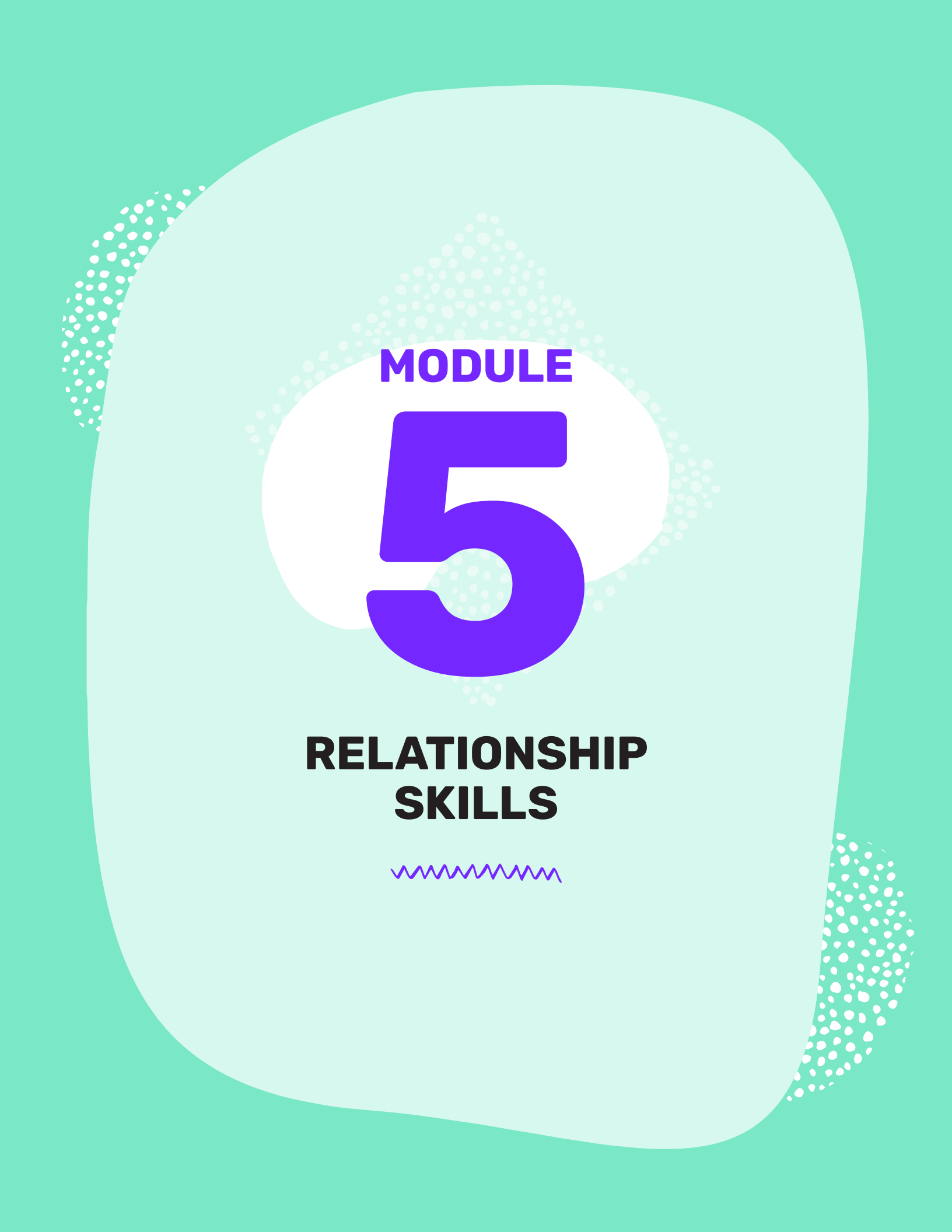




MODULE

5

**RELATIONSHIP
SKILLS**



MODULE 5

Relationship Skills

MODULE OVERVIEW

If students completed Modules 1 to 2, they uncovered three key attributes and skills that contribute to kindness: Self-Awareness, Empathy, and Relationship Skills. While there are many skills and attributes that support kind behaviors, these three are particularly powerful. Exploration of these skills allows students to scaffold up to potentially challenging or vulnerable acts by following a natural learning progression:

- **Self-Awareness:** I understand what's going on *inside of me*.
- **Empathy:** I understand what may be going on *inside of you*.
- **Relationship Skills:** I can use empathy and caring communication to *build relationships* with others.

The majority of Modules 3-5 focus on the immersive experience of each skill, rather than learning *about* each skill. Each module can be implemented individually, or in part, or can be taught as a scaffolded learning progression.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- Students will be able to exercise the Social-Awareness skills of Empathy, Perspective-Taking, and Respect for Others.
- Students will be able to exercise the Relationship Skills of Caring Communication, Social Engagement, and Relationship-building.
- Students will practice the Responsible Decision-Making Skills of Identifying problems, Analyzing situations, Solving problems, and Evaluating.

STANDARDS AND CORE COMPETENCY MAPPING

- (CASEL) Social-Awareness - Empathy, Perspective-taking, Respect for Others
- (CASEL) Relationship Skills - Communication, Social Engagement, Relationship-building
- (CASEL) Responsible Decision-Making - Identifying problems, Analyzing situations, Solving problems, Evaluating



Estimated Total Time

80-100 minutes

Module 5 consists of five parts that can be facilitated individually or combined as desired.

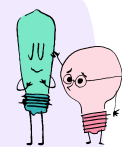


Materials

- Student Journals
([pdf download](#) | [copy Google Slides](#))
- Whiteboard, Smartboard, Digital Presentation Tool, or Chart Paper
- [Scenario Cards](#)

FACILITATION TIPS

Module 5 consists of five parts that can be facilitated individually or combined as desired.



If you are facilitating virtually, Learn Kind recommends that:

- Parts 1 and 3 be facilitated *synchronously* in whole group virtual sessions if possible. Parts 2, 4, and 5 can be assigned as *asynchronous* independent partner activities if desired.

Note: See *Teacher Rx, Section 2* for student accessibility tips.

Prior to facilitating this module, it will be important to revisit the Classroom Commitment and Discussion Guardrails you established through the Kind & Connected Classroom Community resource, or other community guidelines you've put in place.

Reflection Options: Throughout the module you will see a number of opportunities for students to reflect on their learning. These opportunities are included in the Student Journals, but you may choose to facilitate reflection in a variety of ways. Consider small groups discussions, exit tickets, recorded responses, discussion boards, and others. Consider the major takeaways you want your students to have, and facilitate reflections accordingly.

PART 1

It Starts with Communication



Estimated Total Time
25-30 minutes

SEL Skills: Relationship Skills: Communication;
Social Awareness: Empathy, Respect for Others;
Self-Awareness: Identifying Emotions

1. INTRODUCTION (Whole Group if possible)

Tell students, “Internal skills like empathy and perspective-taking are not fully realized until they lead to action. In this module we’ll explore the skills that help us to interact well with others and build kind and connected relationships.”

Strong relationship skills start with caring communication.

Tell students: “Communication goes beyond what we say – in fact, research has shown that the majority of communication actually takes place through nonverbal cues (like tone of voice or body language). This means that there are a lot of ways that we can communicate empathy and understanding, even beyond the words we use. Now, you’ll spend some time building up your communication muscles.”

2. BEGIN BY MODELING INDIVIDUALLY

With the entire class, take a few moments to explain and demonstrate the nonverbal aspects of caring communication:

- Even tone of voice
- Eye contact
- Appropriate volume
- Respecting personal space
- Active listening (nodding or leaning forward)
- Body language (facing the person you’re speaking with)
 - **If you are virtual**, body language is more challenging to read because the camera captures less of our bodies, and is less intuitive than in-person interaction. Discuss some ways that students can utilize their body language even on video.
- Respectful facial expressions
 - Discuss some ways that students can overcome the challenge of less visible facial expressions. (Can rely on body language, active listening cues, follow-up questions).

3. TEACHER MODELS WITH STUDENT

Ask a student volunteer to “have a conversation with you” (this can be anything from what you did over the weekend to sharing a story). Take turns modeling different nonverbal cues, contrasting what a respectful, caring response looks like with one that doesn’t. Some examples are:

- Sighing loudly and looking at the ceiling versus looking your partner in the eyes
- Laughing out loud at your partner’s expense versus responding with empathy and compassion
- Answering a question with a condescending tone versus answering evenly and respectfully
- *If virtual:* Looking down at another device or object in the room versus attentively looking at the person on screen
- *If in-person:* Allowing the distance between you to become a distraction versus focusing on what the other person is saying

4. STUDENTS ROLE-PLAY IN PAIRS

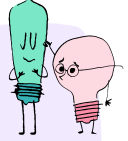
Have students partner up and role-play caring versus uncaring communication through the provided scenarios. One partner will share their “story” in the role of the character in the scenario, while their partner listens. Partners will switch roles with each new scenario.

5. PROCEDURE

- 1 Partner students in whatever way is most appropriate. Determine who will share and who will listen (students will switch roles each round).
- 2 Give students a scenario to act out. You can use these [Scenario Cards](#) and even add your own scenarios based on your students’ needs or experiences.
- 3 Tell the sharing student to read the scenario and imagine how they would feel if they were that student.
- 4 Role-Play: The listening student says, “Hey, how’s it going?”, and the sharing student responds as if they were the student in the scenario.
- 5 (Option 1) The listening student acts out what a caring and empathetic response would be.
- 6 (Option 2) Students act out the scenario twice. The listening student first acts out what an uncaring response would be, and then acts out what a caring response would be.
- 7 Provide students a new scenario and have them switch roles. Repeat for as many rounds as desired.
- 8 Reflect as a Class. Gather students together and debrief with the following questions.
 - How did it feel when your partner listened attentively and showed empathy?
 - How did it feel when they didn’t?
 - What specific actions did you observe that let you know your partner was listening with interest and/or had empathy?

FACILITATION TIPS

- It's important for students to understand that both caring communication and empathy should be used when students are experiencing positive circumstances as well as negative circumstances.
- **If Virtual:** Students can pair up and model for the whole group, or work together in virtual breakout rooms.



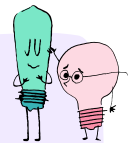
5. STUDENT REFLECTION

Have students complete the activity by reflecting on the following question in their journal.

- What does it look like when someone shows caring communication? What about when they don't? Sketch an example of both in your journal.

FACILITATION TIP

You may choose to facilitate this reflection in a variety of ways. Consider small group discussions, exit tickets, recorded responses, discussion boards, or other strategies. Consider the major takeaways you want your students to have, and facilitate reflections accordingly.



PART 2

Have a Conversation with Someone New



Estimated Total Time
15-20 minutes

SEL Skills: Relationship Skills: Communication, Social Engagement, Relationship-Building; Social Awareness: Respect for Others

1. INTRODUCTION (Partners)

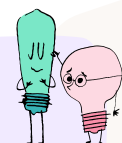
In this activity, students will pair up with someone they don't know or don't know well, and get to know them by asking 5 questions that you'll provide. Introduce the activity by letting students know that it's easy to fall into a rhythm with the friends they already have, or the people they've known for a while. There are a lot of opportunities for great connection if we're willing to look beyond our norm, and connect with someone new.

2. PROCEDURE

- ① Have students select a partner whom they do not know, or do not know well (however is most appropriate).
- ② Decide how you will determine which student answers first.
- ③ Provide students the following questions (or create your own):
 - If you could eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
 - If you could go anywhere in the world tomorrow, where would you go?
 - What's a phrase you say *all the time*?
 - If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
 - If you could have any pet, what would it be and why?
- ④ Prompt students to consider the ways they'll communicate interest, empathy, and understanding as they ask their partner each question.
- ⑤ Students will record their partner's answers in their journals.
- ⑥ At the end of the exercise, have each student introduce their partner and share one thing they learned about them.

VIRTUAL FACILITATION TIP

This activity can be done in virtual breakout rooms at the same time or assigned for independent completion over a designated period of time.



3. STUDENT REFLECTION

Have students complete the activity by reflecting on the following questions:

- How did you show your partner you were interested in what they were saying?
- How did it feel to get to know someone better?

PART 3

Affirmation Circles



Estimated Total Time
15-20 minutes

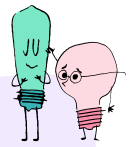
**SEL Skills: Relationship Skills: Communication, Social Engagement;
Social Awareness: Respect for Others**

1. INTRODUCTION (Whole Group)

When it comes to verbal communication and relationship-building, several simple messages have a surprisingly positive impact. Sharing something that you like or appreciate about another person (affirmation) can uplift those around you in a powerful way. In this activity, students will each share an affirmation about another student in the group.

2. PROCEDURE

- ① **"Circle" Up:** If in person, have students create a large circle so everyone is able to see each other, or 2-4 smaller circles if one large circle is not possible. If virtual, you can facilitate this activity as a whole group or (if appropriate) create breakout rooms for smaller groups of students.
- ② **Set Expectations:** Before students begin, set guidelines for the discussion. See additional thoughts on conversations in virtual spaces in the Kind & Connected Classroom Community resource.
 - **Start and end with respect:** Tell students, "Respect has as much to do with body language and tone of voice as it does with your choice of words. Starting with respect also means allowing space for beliefs and opinions that are different from your own."
 - **Be ok with some discomfort:** Tell students, "Sometimes real talk can touch on challenging topics or require vulnerability. It's ok to feel some discomfort. Sticking with it usually means you're growing in some way."
 - **Share only what's helpful:** Tell students, "The things you share should be genuinely useful for people to hear. Guide your words with the question, 'Does this help them or hurt them?'"
 - **Keep it in the "room":** Tell students, "Community and empathy can only be built when people feel safe to be honest and vulnerable." As a class refer to your *Class Commitment*, or set a new agreement that the things shared with the class won't leave the class, and will only be used to help.
- ③ **Students Share:** Encourage students to start their affirmation with a sentence stem like "I appreciate that you _____," or "You are good at _____". Have a student volunteer to start, and work your way around the "circle" (or each group) in the sequence most appropriate for your students. Each student will take a turn to share.



FACILITATION TIPS

If in-person, have all students start with legs/ankles uncrossed. Once they've shared, have them cross their legs/ankles to indicate they have shared. If virtual, have students use a prop or digital tool (like changing their background) to indicate they have/have not shared.

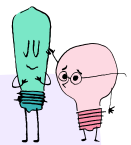
Cultivate Active Listening: To help cultivate active listening, empathy, and a sense of community, have students respond physically to things that resonate with them, or as a show of support. This allows sharing students to know they've been heard and understood, without additional discourse. Students can nod, snap, clap, or another gesture of your choosing. Choose the action(s) that will resonate most with your student community and set clear guidelines for active response.

- If students are receiving an affirmation, guide them to make eye contact with the person affirming them (if virtual, to be attentive), and say "thank you" when the speaker is done sharing.

3. STUDENT REFLECTION

Have students complete this activity by reflecting on the following question in their journal:

- How does sharing affirmations help build good relationships?



FACILITATION TIP

You may choose to facilitate this reflection in a variety of ways. Consider small group discussions, exit tickets, recorded responses, discussion boards, or other strategies. Consider the major takeaways you want your students to have, and facilitate reflections accordingly.

PART 4

The Teach Somebody Challenge (Independent Activity)

**SEL Skills: Relationship Skills: Communication, Relationship-Building;
Self-Awareness: Recognizing Strengths, Self-Efficacy**

1. OVERVIEW

The activity of teaching requires a variety of communication, social, and self-awareness skills. For students it provides a unique opportunity to combine and exercise these skills while also building meaningful social connections, as well as self-efficacy. In this activity, students will identify a skill, activity, or area of knowledge that they excel at or simply enjoy, and teach someone else about it.

Assign students this task as an independent activity and complete the activity at a later date with a whole group discussion.

2. PROCEDURE

Introduction: Using the outline provided in their journal, tell students they are going to stretch their communication and self-awareness muscles by teaching someone about something they know very well, love to learn about, or are good at. Students may choose topics like:

- How to bake their favorite treat
- How to illustrate a story (physically or digitally)
- The basics of their favorite sport
- All about their favorite historical event or scientific topic
- Secrets to beating their favorite video game
- Or something entirely different!

3. PLANNING

Students will plan their lesson using the provided outline and deliver it to the person(s) of their choice before reflecting on their experience together as a group. Tell students to choose who they will teach, using the following guiding questions:

- What friend or family member would I like to (re)connect with?
- Who could benefit from the topic I am teaching about?
- Who do I know that might be feeling lonely and feel happy to reconnect with me?

PART 5

Brainstorming Booths

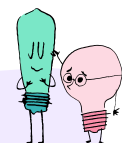


Estimated Total Time
20-30 minutes

SEL Skills: Relationship Skills: Communication, Teamwork;
Social Awareness: Empathy, Perspective-Taking;
Responsible Decision-Making: Identifying Problems, Analyzing Situations, Solving Problems, Evaluating

1. OVERVIEW (Whole Group if possible)

A powerful way to help students develop Social-Awareness and Relationship Skills, while exercising Responsible Decision-Making skills is by providing them with opportunities to help each other find solutions to real challenges. In this activity inspired by [Thrive LDN](#), students will follow a design process similar to the *Kind & Connected Classroom Community Relationship Design Challenge* to help a classmate brainstorm potential solutions to a challenge or problem they're facing.



FACILITATION TIPS

- This activity can be completed multiple times throughout the year, or integrated as a classroom routine.
- This activity can be facilitated in the classroom with partners or small groups, with students switching roles, in virtual breakout rooms, or as an independent assignment before reflecting together as a whole group.
- It's possible that during this activity students may share a challenge that is concerning. If so, continue with the activity as planned, but follow up with the student when appropriate, following your school's guidelines and procedure for student health and safety.

2. PROCEDURE

1. Divide students into small groups or partners and set the stage for the activity, explaining that they will be helping each other find solutions for real challenges or problems classmates are facing.
2. Indicate who will be the "Helper" and who will be the "Helpee" (students will switch roles in the next round).
3. Explain that before they can begin to brainstorm solution ideas, they will have to fully understand the problem. This means they will need to empathize with their partner and understand their perspective.
4. Explain that it's not the responsibility of the "Helpers" to solve the problem or challenge that the "Helpee" is presenting, but rather to support their partner and help them consider a variety of potential solutions.

5. Have students open their journals to the **Brainstorming Booth** activity and provide an overview of the following problem-solving process:
- Identify the Problem/Challenge: Ask your partner what problem or challenge they're facing.
 - Check your Perspective: Check in with your partner and ensure that you understand their perspective on the problem.
 - Brainstorm Solutions: Discuss and write down three to five potential solutions that they could try. Think creatively!
 - Evaluate and Choose: Discuss the strengths and weaknesses of each possible solution and determine which one seems most effective.
 - Make a Plan: Spend a few minutes designing how to best try out the solution and have the Helpee write it down.
 - Reflect: Have students reflect on the difference they feel now that they have helped another student or received help. What is one takeaway?
7. Have students switch roles and/or change groups and repeat for one more round (or more!).
8. Reflect as a class: Ask students to share how they felt prior to the activity and how they felt after. Ask them which skills were most important to be able to help their classmates. What was the most challenging part of this activity?

Congratulations! You've reached the end of Module 5.

Choose Kindness Now

When it comes down to it, kindness is a choice – and a choice we can make over and over again. Use this simple step-by-step tool at the end of every module, or as often as needed to help students strengthen their internal kindness muscles. Since science tells us kindness is contagious, every choice can create ripples of positive impact.

1 CHOOSE your kind act from the list below (or choose your own!)

2 PLAN the WHO, WHEN, and WHERE for your act

WHO – Do it for a friend, family member, teacher, or yourself

WHEN – Choose when you will do the act (maybe it's right now!)

WHERE – Where will you do it? School, home, or somewhere else?

3 DO your kind act!

4 OBSERVE what happened and how you feel

5 (Optional) SHARE with the class next time you meet

☐ Invite someone to something

☐ Help someone with schoolwork

☐ Pick up litter or trash

☐ Smile at someone

☐ Give someone a compliment

☐ Thank someone for something they did

☐ Help with a chore you don't normally do

☐ Draw a picture for someone

☐ Go outside and enjoy nature

☐ Take a mindful moment for yourself