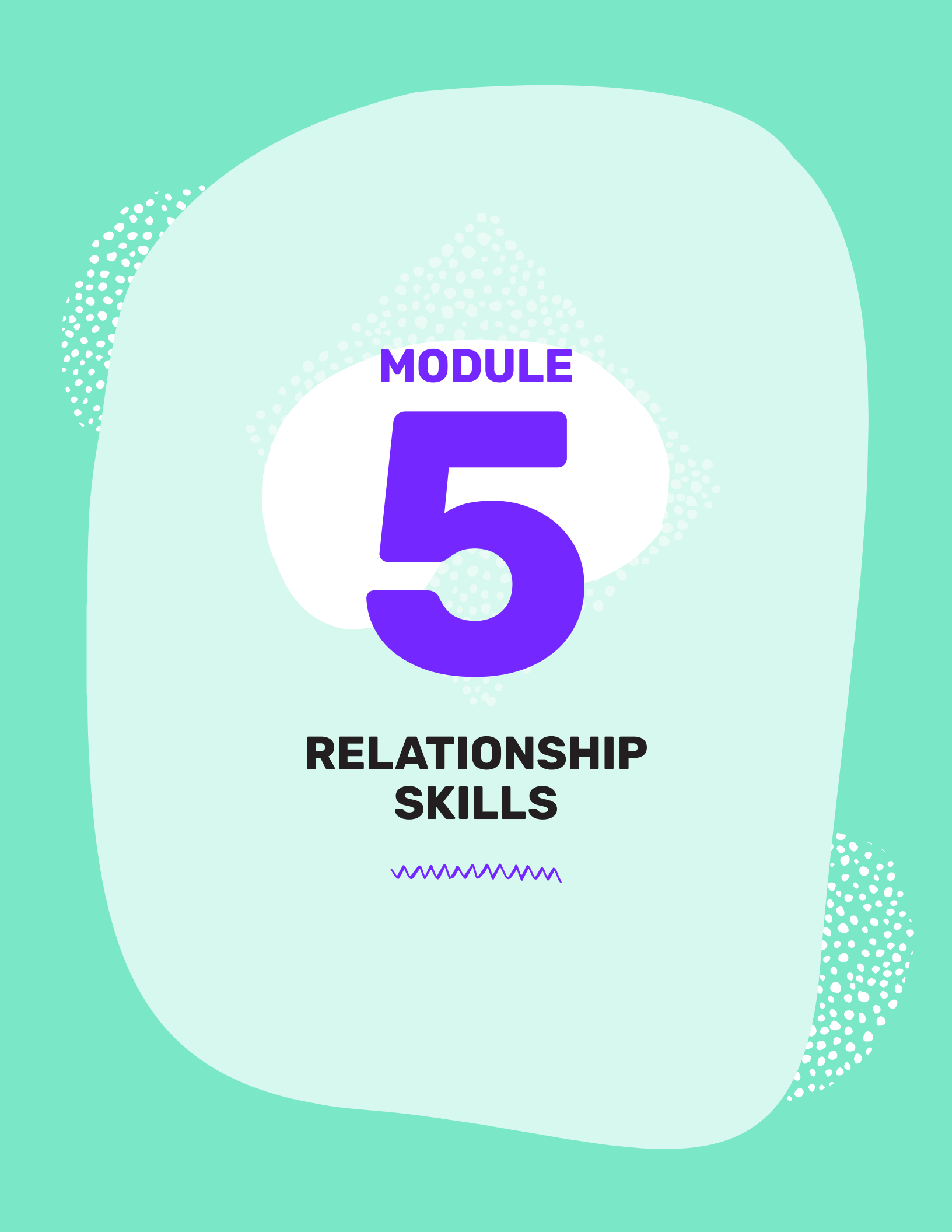




MODULE

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.

STANDARDS AND CORE COMPETENCY MAPPING

- (CASEL) Social Awareness – Empathy, Perspective-taking, Respect for Others
- (CASEL) Relationship Skills – Communication, Social Engagement, Relationship-building



Estimated Total Time

60-90 minutes

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

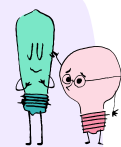


Materials

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

FACILITATION TIPS

Module 5 consists of four 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 and 4 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 most 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).

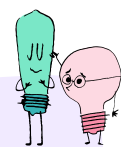
3. TEACHER MODELS WITH STUDENT

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 an unkind 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.



FACILITATION TIPS

- Students may need extra support to determine what a caring and uncaring response may be in these specific scenarios. If so, create response cards or options for the listening student to select from, or model a few scenario responses first.
- For younger students, this may be done as a whole group activity, in which each student is modeling with the teacher for the whole class instead of in partner pairs.

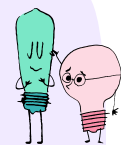
5. PROCEDURE

- 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 think about 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.



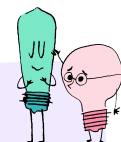
5. STUDENT REFLECTION

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)

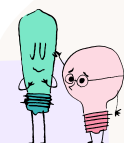
In this activity, students will pair up with someone (preferably someone they don't know very well), and get to know them by asking five questions that you'll provide them. Introduce the activity by letting students know that it's easy to fall into a rhythm with the friends they already have, or the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

2. PROCEDURE

- ① If in person, have students select a partner that they do not know well. Partners will sit across from each other to face each other as they share their answers.
- ② Determine which student will answer first so it is clear who will start as the speaker and who will start as the listener.
- ③ Ask the pairs to take turns answering, and prompt them with the following questions (or create your own):
 - If you could eat one food for the rest of your life, what would it be?
 - What's your favorite thing to do after school?
 - If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?
- ④ Tell students to consider how 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 by writing or drawing.
- ⑥ At the end of the exercise, have each student introduce their partner, and share one thing they learned about them.

VIRTUAL FACILITATION TIP

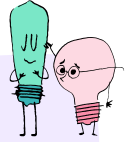
This activity can be done in virtual breakout rooms at the same time, or assigned for independent completion over a designated period of time. Assign partners ahead of time.



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?



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 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)

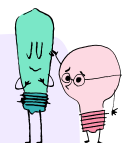
When it comes to verbal communication, there are several simple messages that have a surprisingly positive impact. Sharing something that you like or appreciate about another person (an affirmation) can uplift those around you in a powerful way. In this activity, students will each share an affirmation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

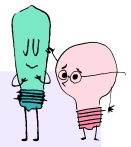
2. PROCEDURE

- ① **"Circle" Up:** If in person, have students create a large circle so everyone is able to see each other, or two to four smaller circles if distancing requires it. If virtual, you can facilitate this activity as a whole group or (if appropriate) create breakout rooms for smaller groups of students. Have students begin with their legs stretched out, crossing them once they've received an affirmation.
- 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.
- ③ **Use the following procedure to facilitate the activity:**
 - Discuss the meaning of an affirmation. Encourage students to start their affirmation with a sentence stem like "I appreciate that you _____" or "You are good at _____".

FACILITATION TIP

- Consider creating an anchor chart of affirmations that students may refer to throughout the activity. You may even add to it through the year!
 - Some students may need extra support. Posting these stems where students can refer to them or even saying to students "repeat after me" may be helpful in the beginning.
-
- **Have a student volunteer to start.** Tell them to call the name of the student they want to affirm. Have both students (giving and receiving) make eye contact while the affirmation is given.
 - **Cultivate active listening:** Have the receiving student say "Thank you," while maintaining eye contact, then cross their legs (indicating they have already received an affirmation).
 - **Pass it on:** The receiving student shares a new affirmation with a student who has not received one yet. This continues until all students have received and given an affirmation and are sitting cross-legged.





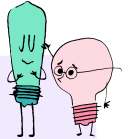
FACILITATION TIP

Have students use a prop or digital tool (like holding a pencil or changing their background) to indicate they have or have not shared.

3. STUDENT REFLECTION

Give students several minutes to reflect on this experience in their journal with the following question:

- 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 Reach Out Challenge (Independent Activity)

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

1. OVERVIEW

This activity helps students reconnect with both the people and activities they enjoy, while encouraging them to grow in several key skills, including communication, self-efficacy, social awareness, and empathy.

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 reaching out to someone to share about a specific topic. Students may choose topics like:

- Their favorite movie or show
- A favorite art project and how they created it
- The basics of their favorite sport or game
- All about their favorite hobby
- Secrets to beating their favorite video game
- Something entirely different!

3. PLANNING

Students will plan their “reach out” 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 reach out to, 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 sharing about?
- Who do I know that might be feeling lonely and feel happy to reconnect with me?

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

☐ Ask someone to play

☐ Help someone in school

☐ Pick up litter or trash

☐ Smile at someone

☐ Give someone a compliment

☐ Thank someone for something

☐ Draw a picture for someone

☐ Help with a chore at home

☐ Go outside and enjoy nature

☐ Take a mindful moment for yourself