Contents

Introduction

Every family is different, and with those differences come unique dynamics that can shape a child's emotional and social development. Navigating those dynamics isn't always easy for the child or the adults in their lives. That's why support is so important. As the saying goes, *"It takes a village to raise a child."* This curriculum aims to be a part of that village, helping bridge the gap between home and school by offering students a consistent, supportive space to grow. *Navigating Family Dynamics* recognizes the increasingly diverse realities of modern childhood, whether students are experiencing divorce, single-parent households, foster or kinship care, parental incarceration, or other complex and challenging situations. These circumstances can lead young people to feel isolated or even blame themselves for situations beyond their control. This program is designed to break that cycle of misunderstanding and silence.

This curriculum was created specifically for **students in grades 2 through 9** and offers ten to twelve 30-minute lessons that build emotional resilience, self-awareness, and healthy communication skills. Through interactive activities such as reflection, role-playing, and self-affirmation, students learn how to understand their emotions, express themselves clearly, and form positive relationships.

The curriculum empowers students to develop a stronger sense of self and purpose. It helps them recognize that their family situation does not define their worth. Instead, they are encouraged to see themselves as capable, valued, and deserving of support.

At its core, this initiative is about giving children the tools to face life challenges with confidence and the understanding that they are not alone.

The strategic design allows students to empathize, connect with others, and translate their new knowledge into practice. The American School Counselor Association (ASCA®)-aligned curriculum contains an introductory lesson, ten core lessons, and a final closing lesson. Facilitators have the flexibility to include the initial and final lessons as part of the core sessions if they have extra time.

You'll find a range of essential resources in the book's concluding pages. These consist of permission and completion letters, attendance logs, a group expectation form, and a certificate of completion. You'll also find pre- and post-group assessments to measure the success of the programming and templates to share the results with interested parties. Moreover, this workbook provides a comprehensive action plan that will integrate effortlessly into your ASCA® evaluation document and facilitate a seamless transition from planning to assessment.

Practical and applicable, the activities provided are suitable for small and large group instruction and require no additional materials. You do not need to bring supplies beyond pencils, markers or crayons, and scratch paper; you won't need to spend hours preparing materials before meeting with your students. Everything you need is included!

See page 133 for information on Downloadable Resources.

What's Included?

Navigating Family Dynamics offers a comprehensive ten-lesson program and accompanying materials for facilitating group sessions. Following each detailed lesson outline, you'll find practical resources for establishing a small group within your school environment.

Mind Map: Provides an illustrated diagram of the skill or concept being taught in the lesson that can help students make connections between the concept and others being taught. Students should begin each lesson by considering the meaning of the specific skill or word related to a skill or concept highlighted in the lesson. The mind map will introduce emotional, social, and cognitive skills and concepts that will help them navigate their relationships, overcome obstacles, and confidently move forward into the future. It is optional to write these, but visuals are helpful for many students. Some have found it beneficial to draw the Mind Map on the board, or you can draw a tree with the concept written on the trunk and the related words on the fruit of the tree.

ASCA® Standards: Each lesson includes success criteria for the learning target.

Lesson Introduction: At the start of each lesson, we will introduce a concept and explain it to provide clarity for the upcoming story.

Circle Time Questions: This section has three optional questions for the facilitator to start the conversation. These questions allow students to deepen their understanding of the topic and build community by discussing and sharing their experiences.

Story Time: Provides stories related to the concept that should be read aloud to help children understand the concept.

Coloring Sheets: Allow younger students to visualize the concept. Students can color the sheet while the facilitator shares the initial story after the lesson is complete, or take it home with them.

Discussion Questions: Students can discuss the questions posed to help them process their beliefs on the subject.

Skill Practice: Using the round-robin method, go around the table and ask students how they would practice that skill, giving each a chance to answer one question.

Additional Activities: Provides activities to help students practice and apply the concept.

Closing Considerations: This is an opportunity to review the concept and ask students to reflect on their new experience with the material.

Would You Rather? Game: Provides an opportunity for students to consider what they would "rather" do related to the lesson's topic. The facilitator can cut out the cards and let students discuss or read aloud while moving from one side of the room to the other to communicate their preferred answer.

Accompanying Group Documents

Action Plan: Provides the necessary information required to complete the ASCA® National Model's Classroom and Group Mindsets & Behaviors Action Plan.

Permission Form: The permission form is used to obtain permission from the student's caregivers for the child to attend the *Navigating Family Dynamics* group. Be sure to send this home about two weeks before the group starts.

Group Expectations: These provide basic expectations for the group process. The form has space for the facilitator and group to collaborate on adding additional expectations to fit their group.

Group Attendance Form: This is a blank form that allows the facilitator to track which students attended each session and what topics were discussed.

Group Attendance Form (Example): This form is an example of how to best utilize the group attendance form.

Mindsets & Behaviors Pre- and Post-Assessment: Provides an opportunity for students to share their understanding of the concepts before and after they've completed the curriculum.

To measure the progress of participating students, use the same assessment for both the pre-group and post-group assessments. Administer the pre-group assessment at the start of the instructional period, followed by instruction and practice opportunities for measured skills or knowledge.

At the end of the instructional period, administer the post-group assessment and compare the results of both assessments to identify areas of improvement and areas that need further instruction. Then calculate the average score of the pre-assessment and post-assessment, and determine the percentage of improvement by subtracting the pre-assessment average from the post-assessment average and then dividing the result by the pre-assessment total. Use this pre-assessment average improvement to measure the students' progress effectively.

Percentage of Improvement Formula:

((Post-Assessment Total - Pre-Assessment Total) / Pre-Assessment Total) x 100 = Percentage of Overall Improvement

Example:

((238 Post-Assessment Total - 122 Pre-Assessment Total)/ 122) x 100 = 95.1% Overall Improvement

Look at your data to determine who should attend your group. Review conduct referrals, attendance data, and achievement metrics, and look for students with challenges. Consider also tracking students' academic achievements, absences, and discipline referrals. You can better see the impact of your small groups when strategically selecting students and closely monitoring their academic, attendance, and conduct metrics. Be sure to share the results of your intervention with your advisory council.

Results Report: The Results Report shows one way to share your data with interested parties. Remember, we want to be sure to use graphs and charts because they show our data, which has more impact than a paragraph of text. Use whatever platform you prefer to show your data, but be sure to complete the data following the group, and then share it with interested parties.

Results Report (Example): The Results Report (Example) shows what your data might resemble following the completion of the groups. You can use this form to share your data.

Certificate of Completion: Present students with a certificate to congratulate them on completing the curriculum.

***Navigating Family Dynamics* Group Completion Letter:** Letter written to the caregivers/guardians of students following the completion of the group. Provide students with their certificate and their group review letter during the last session.

Additional Materials: We promised to provide everything you need in this workbook, and we have. However, you will need to make copies of the Pre-and Post-Assessments and print out the Coloring Sheets. You might also print and cut the "Would You Rather?" game or facilitate that activity verbally. We recommend having crayons or colored pencils readily available on the table for those who wish to complete the Coloring Sheet. It might also be helpful to have some fidgets or other regulation tools accessible for your students during their group session.

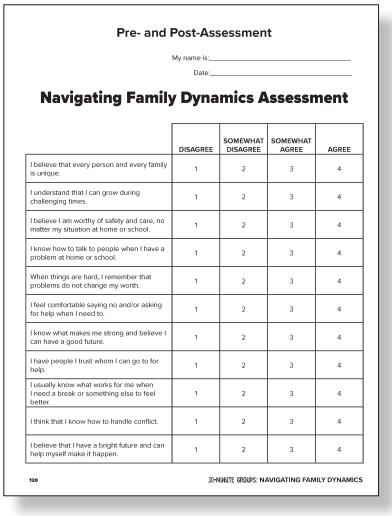
We're so excited for you to dive into this important work! We're rooting for you every step of the way and can't wait for you to experience the positive impact this group will have. You've got this!

Introductory Group Session

Directions & Overview

Conduct this introductory session before starting the regular lessons. This initial meeting will acclimate students to the program's structure, expectations, and foundational tools. They will learn the check-in process that will be utilized in each subsequent session.

DIRECTIONS: Begin by extending a warm welcome to all participants. Communicate the group's objectives and generate enthusiasm for learning and collaboration.



Pre- and Post-Assessment

My name is:_____

Date:_____

Navigating Family Dynamics Assessment

	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE
I believe that every person and every family is unique.	1	2	3	4
I understand that I can grow during challenging times.	1	2	3	4
I believe I am worthy of safety and care, no matter my situation at home or school.	1	2	3	4
I know how to talk to people when I have a problem at home or school.	1	2	3	4
When things are hard, I remember that problems do not change my worth.	1	2	3	4
I feel comfortable saying no and/or asking for help when I need to.	1	2	3	4
I know what makes me strong and believe I can have a good future.	1	2	3	4
I have people I trust whom I can go to for help.	1	2	3	4
I usually know what works for me when I need a break or something else to feel better.	1	2	3	4
I think that I know how to handle conflict.	1	2	3	4
I believe that I have a bright future and can help myself make it happen.	1	2	3	4

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ASSESSMENT: Before proceeding, read the pre-group assessment instructions aloud to the students and have each student complete the form. Carefully examine the completed forms to verify that all questions have been answered.

INTRODUCTIONS: Introduce yourself to the group and share the following: "Welcome to a space where you can grow, learn, and connect! This group is all about helping you build confidence, handle life's challenges, and develop strong, positive relationships. In this group, **we'll talk about something true for everyone**: families are **all different**, and sometimes the changes or problems we go through at home can feel **really big or confusing**. This group is here to help you understand that your feelings and experiences **are real and important**, that what happens in your family isn't your fault, and to give you tools to handle tough times with strength and confidence. You'll get to know other kids who might have been through something like you, learn ways to deal with hard feelings, and see that you're not the only one. No matter what your family looks like, you deserve to feel heard, supported, and strong."

Foster a sense of community by encouraging students to share their names, something about themselves, and what they wish to learn in the group.

CHECK-IN ACTIVITY: Start by introducing the **Climate Check** (emotional check-in), which will take place every week at the beginning of your group. This check-in helps ensure that students are emotionally ready for the session.

Explaining the Check-In Activity to the Students

- **What is a Meteorologist?** A meteorologist is someone who studies the weather. They look at things like clouds, rain, wind, and temperature to help us understand the weather. They use special tools to predict tomorrow's weather, and they share this information so we can plan our day.
- **Relating Emotions to Weather:** Just like a meteorologist watches the weather, we're going to check in on how we're feeling today. We'll talk about the 'weather' inside our hearts and minds—whether we feel sunny, cloudy, stormy, or something else. Talking through this helps us understand ourselves and each other better.

Explaining the Weather-Feeling Connection: You can explain to students that emotions can be like the weather. Here's how they can relate their feelings to different weather conditions.

- **Sunny** – Feeling happy, bright, and positiveExample: I feel sunny today because I'm excited about a fun activity!
- **Cloudy** – Feeling unsure, confused, or a little down
  Example: I feel cloudy today because I'm not sure what's going to happen later.
- **Rainy** – Feeling sad, tired, or needing a little rest
  Example: I feel rainy because I'm feeling a bit upset today.
- **Stormy** – Feeling angry, frustrated, or overwhelmed
  Example: I feel stormy because I argued with a friend.
- **Windy** – Feeling energetic, excited, or a bit restless
  Example: I feel windy today because I have a lot of energy and can't sit still!
- **Foggy** – Feeling confused, uncertain, or not clear about things
  Example: I feel foggy because I'm not sure how I feel about something that happened.
- **Snowy** – Feeling calm, peaceful, or in a cozy mood
  Example: I feel snowy because I'm in a calm and peaceful mood today.
- **Drizzly** – Feeling a little bit off, not terrible, but not great either
  Example: I feel drizzly because things are okay, but not amazing.
- **Clear Skies** – Feeling confident, proud, or excited
  Example: I feel clear skies today because I just did something I'm proud of!
- **Rainbow** – Feeling hopeful, joyful, or like things are looking up
  Example: I feel like a rainbow today because something good happened, and I'm feeling hopeful!

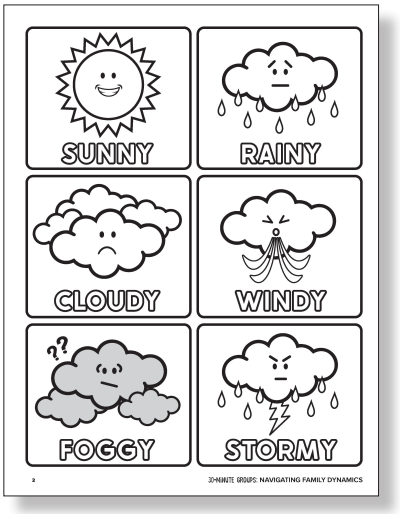
The Check-In Process

1. **Introduce the Check-In -** Now, think about your emotional weather for today. How are you feeling right now? If you're comfortable, you can share it with the group.

2. **Model the Activity -** I'll start by sharing my emotional weather. I feel [example feeling] today because [reason].

3. **Sharing and Discussion -** Next, you can share how you're feeling today, and if you're not sure, that's okay too! You can just say 'I'm not sure,' or pick any weather word that feels right.

4. **Use the Weather Graphic -** Show the picture or graphic (you can find it in the Downloadable Resources) with different types of weather to help students understand the range of emotions they might be feeling. Students can point to the one they think best represents how they are feeling.



Supportive Statements You Can Share

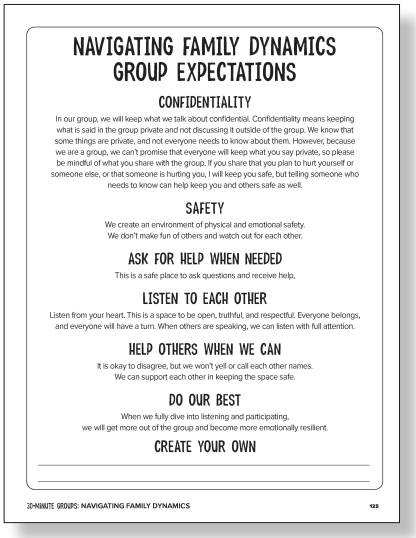
- **Encouraging Safe Sharing -** It's okay to feel all sorts of things, and no feeling is bad. Sometimes we have sunny days, and sometimes we have stormy days. Both are important because they help us learn about ourselves. If you're feeling a little stormy or cloudy right now, that's okay. This activity is about noticing your feelings, and if you feel like sharing, we're here to listen!
- **Reassuring Shifting Emotions -** Just like the weather can change, so can our feelings. It's normal for your forecast to shift during the day, and that's okay! Whether it's sunny or stormy, I'm here to help you handle it.

- **Building Resilience -** Thinking about how we feel helps us get ready for whatever happens today. When we can name our feelings, we can better handle them and stay strong through the day's challenges.
- **Helping with Emotional Regulation -** If your emotional weather changes throughout the day, think about what might help. Maybe you can take deep breaths, talk to someone, or take a short break. These are all tools we can use to feel better.

Weekly Practice: This is something we'll do every week, so we can keep getting better at noticing and talking about our feelings. The more we practice, the easier it gets!

- If a student says they are feeling stormy, cloudy, rainy, etc., validate them and ensure they can continue with the group. Ask them if they can see that the clouds will part, and the rain will stop. Do they have hope? If not, and they feel they are in "never-ending storms," or it's "dark outside," for example, then assess safety issues and check to see if the student would like to stay in the group (receiving your co-regulating presence through the lesson) or needs something more. Check to see if you can support the student and discuss the issue after the group so that the student can stay in the group.
- If the student needs one-on-one support, refer them to someone in the building who can provide focused attention and safety while the group continues. This will model how we help and what we do when someone is struggling for all students. During scheduled group time, ensure there is always a backup person to help a student who feels they cannot stay in the group. If a student is unable to remain in the group after the check-in (or another situation), be sure to follow up with the student after the group concludes, providing help and support as necessary.

EXPLAIN THE GROUP FORMAT: Explain where and how often you will meet. Share the list of topics. Explain that, in each meeting, you will discuss one of the topics together, then read the Story and answer questions. Discuss the logistics of what they'll do while you are reading; they'll be eating (if it is a lunch group) or completing their Coloring Sheet. Explain that they'll have time to work in pairs for the Skill Practice portion and play a "Would You Rather?" game. Finally, explain that at the end of each session, they'll be asked to give a one-sentence overview of what they've learned and how they plan to practice that lesson topic throughout the week.


NAVIGATING FAMILY DYNAMICS
GROUP EXPECTATIONS

CONFIDENTIALITY

In our group, we will keep what we talk about confidential. Confidentiality means keeping what is said in the group private and not discussing it outside of the group. We know that some things are private, and not everyone needs to know about them. However, because we are a group, we can't promise that everyone will keep what you say private, so please be mindful of what you share with the group. If you share that you plan to hurt yourself or someone else, or that someone is hurting you, I will keep you safe, but telling someone who needs to know can help keep you and others safe as well.

SAFETY

We create an environment of physical and emotional safety.
We don't make fun of others and watch out for each other.

ASK FOR HELP WHEN NEEDED

This is a safe place to ask questions and receive help.

LISTEN TO EACH OTHER

Listen from your heart. This is a space to be open, truthful, and respectful. Everyone belongs, and everyone will have a turn. When others are speaking, we can listen with full attention.

HELP OTHERS WHEN WE CAN

It is okay to disagree, but we won't yell or call each other names.
We can support each other in keeping the space safe.

DO OUR BEST

When we fully dive into listening and participating,
we will get more out of the group and become more emotionally resilient.

CREATE YOUR OWN

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REVIEW GROUP EXPECTATIONS: Print a copy of the Group Expectations. Review the expectations together with the students and answer questions as they arise. Collaborate with your group to determine whether you need to modify or add expectations.

GROUP CONCLUSION: Ask each student to summarize the information they learned from this session into one sentence. Students may share it with their partners or the group.

NOTE TO FACILITATORS: You can customize the material to fit the needs of your group. If your students are not yet readers, you can read the "Would You Rather?" game questions aloud and ask students to move to different sides of the room to show their answers. If you're working with reticent students, they can write their responses to questions instead of sharing them aloud, or break into smaller teams to discuss. Some facilitators may incorporate traditional games into the lessons if they have longer session times. Remember, the workbook is just the framework, but you will bring it to life!

SECTION ONE

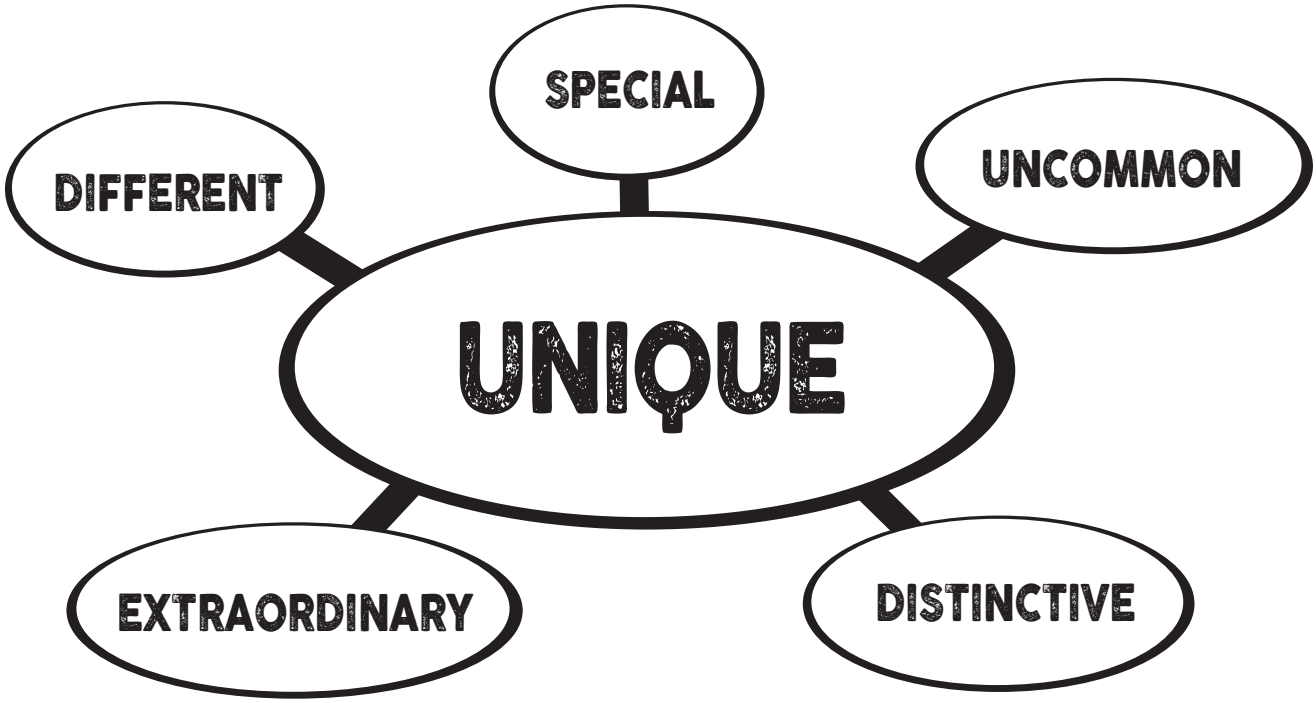
UNDERSTANDING MY STORY WITHIN MY FAMILY STRUCTURE

CHAPTER 1

Every Person and Every Family is Unique

MIND MAP

On the board, draw a Mind Map and ask students to consider the meaning of **Unique.**

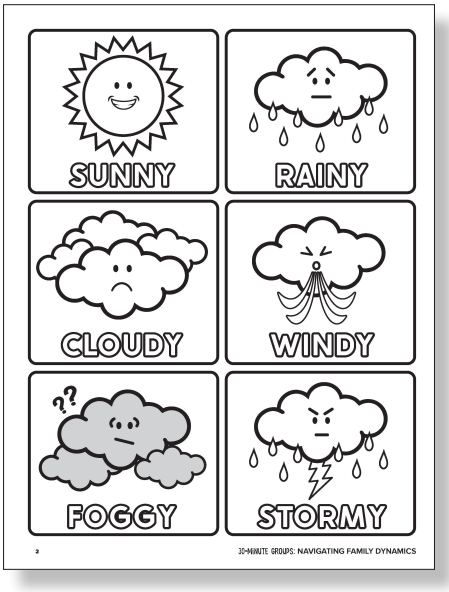


ASCA® STANDARDS

- **B-SS 2.** Positive, respectful and supportive relationships with students who are similar to and different from them
- **B-SS 4.** Empathy
- **B-SS 10.** Cultural awareness, sensitivity and responsiveness
- **B-SMS 6.** Ability to identify and overcome barriers

DIRECTIONS

Begin with the Check-In Activity: Climate Check. Remind students that each week, we'll begin by checking in on how we're feeling, just like a meteorologist checking the weather.



Share with the students: "Think about your emotional 'weather' for today—whether you feel sunny, cloudy, stormy, or something else. Just like a meteorologist uses tools to understand the weather, we'll use this check-in to understand how we're feeling. You can point to the graphic, draw how you're feeling, or tell us how you're feeling. If you feel sunny, you might be happy and excited; if you're stormy, you might feel frustrated or angry; and if you're foggy, you might feel unsure. Remember, it's okay to feel all sorts of things, and we're here to listen. If your emotions change during the day, that's normal, just like the weather can change. We'll use this check-in to help us understand our feelings and prepare ourselves to handle whatever comes our way today."

Review the Group Expectations before reviewing the Mind Map. Then, read the Lesson Introduction and ask the Circle Time Questions before reading the Story and the Discussion Questions. Students can work in pairs to craft their responses or share them with the whole group. Complete the Skill Practice, "Would You Rather?" game, and Additional Activities as time allows. Be sure to complete the Closing Considerations with each lesson.

LESSON INTRODUCTION

A **family** is a group of people who are connected and who help take care of each other. Families come in all shapes and sizes, and can look different to each person. Some people live with two parents, while others might be in single-parent households or live with grandparents or siblings. Others might live with foster families, stepfamilies, or close friends who feel like family. You don't have to be related to be a family. Some families are full of love and support, and others may have problems or find it hard to be part of sometimes.

Family dynamics are the ways family members interact, communicate, and relate to each other. This includes how they talk, the roles people take on, the rules they follow (even unspoken ones), and the overall way the family works together. These patterns are shaped by factors such as culture, family history, personality, and each person's role in the family.

When a family has healthy dynamics, it usually means there's good communication, respect, flexibility, and a feeling of safety and support. When family dynamics are unhealthy, there may be more conflict, stress, or confusion, which can make it harder for family members to feel understood or cared for. Differences in family dynamics don't make one family better or worse than another.

Recognizing and respecting the diversity of families helps us understand that there is no "one-size-fits-all" model for family life. Appreciating these differences allows us to understand one another's experiences and how they shape who we are. At the same time, we know families aren't perfect, and tough times can happen. That's why it's important to learn tools and strategies to stay strong, kind, and resilient — even when things are hard. When we grow our character, we can not only feel better about ourselves but also help others in our families do the same.

CIRCLE TIME QUESTIONS

Ask students to reflect and share their answers to the following questions with the group. Larger groups may need to be broken into smaller groups to give students ample time to share their answers and deepen the conversation.

Share with the students: "Some people live with two parents, one parent, grandparents, and in foster or group homes. Some have big families, some have just a few people, and some may have family members who live far away. Some families do special things together, like game nights or cooking meals, and others may be figuring things out or going through tough times. All of that is normal and okay."

- What's something unique or different about your family that makes it part of your story?
  (Help scaffold the conversation by giving examples like, "It could be something you do together, a tradition, who you live with, or even something you've overcome.")
- Sometimes our family situation can feel different, and that can be hard, even if we know it's okay. What are some things you tell yourself, or do, to feel confident or stay strong when you feel left out, misunderstood, or unsure?
  ("It could be something you say in your head, someone you talk to, or an activity that helps you feel better.")
- Sometimes it's hard to talk about our families. But in this group, we all have a chance to learn from each other's stories and know we're not alone. What are some ways we can support each other when someone shares something personal or hard about their family?
  ("What can we say, do, or show to help each other feel safe, respected, and cared for in this space?")

STORY TIME

Hand out the Coloring Sheets and crayons or markers to younger students while the facilitator reads the story, if desired.

Kaleb's One-of-a-Kind Family

Kaleb used to love spending weekends with his family, but lately, things have changed. His family doesn't look the same as it used to, and it looks different from some of his friends' families. His dad doesn't live with him anymore, and sometimes he's not sure when he'll see him again. His dad had to be away for a while to take care of things, and that made Kaleb feel a mix of emotions: sad, confused, and sometimes even a little angry. But deep down, he knew his dad still loved him, and that gave him hope.

At school, there were sometimes events like "Donuts with Dad" or "Dad Day," where kids would bring their fathers to class. Some of Kaleb's friends would talk about fun things they did with their dads, going to the park, watching movies, or just spending weekends together. Kaleb would smile and listen, but deep down, it made him feel a little left out. His situation was different, and sometimes it made him feel sad, even though he didn't always say it out loud.

One Saturday afternoon, Kaleb's mom took him to the food trucks parked near the neighborhood basketball courts. The smell of tacos, fries, and fried Oreos filled the air, and Kaleb's stomach growled as they looked at the colorful menus. It wasn't anything big, but his mom said they deserved a little treat

after a long week. They found a picnic table nearby with music playing from someone's speaker and kids riding scooters in the background. Kaleb picked at his street tacos while his mom asked about school and the science project he'd been working on. Even though it was nice out, Kaleb felt a little quiet. His mom nudged him gently. "After this, want to go grab one of those crazy milkshakes with the candy stuck on top?" Kaleb looked up and smiled. "Yeah, that sounds fun," he said, letting the moment feel good.

As lunch went on, Kaleb looked around from the picnic table near the food trucks. Families were scattered all over, some sitting on benches with takeout boxes, some standing in line laughing, others just quietly eating together. Some families had a lot of people; some had just one or two. Some looked full of energy, and others looked tired, just like him and his mom. That's when Kaleb noticed something important: families come in all shapes, sizes, and moods. His situation might feel different, and yeah, kind of hard, but that didn't mean his family was less than anyone else's. His mom showed up for him every day. And even though his dad wasn't around right now, deep down, he believed his dad still cared. Kaleb grinned as his mom made goofy faces and tried to balance a cookie on her nose. He could tell his mom was doing her best to make the day feel special, to lift the weight he sometimes carried. His mom was amazing like that.

Later, as they threw away their trash, his mom gave him a long hug and whispered, "We've got each other, and that's more than enough." Kaleb nodded. His heart felt just a little lighter. Things weren't perfect, but he knew one thing for sure: his family was still his family, no matter what. Being different didn't mean being broken, and he didn't have to hide his story.

On Monday at school, Kaleb told his friends about his weekend and how he and his mom went to the food trucks, tried crazy milkshakes, and laughed over cookies. He smiled as he described how his mom tried to balance one on her nose and almost dropped it in her lap. His friends laughed, and then one of them shared that he lived with his grandparents and that his family looked different, too. Kaleb let out a small breath he didn't even know he was holding. Sharing his truth had taken some pressure off. In that moment, he and his friends realized that talking about their lives didn't make them weaker; it made them feel understood. They were all beginning to realize that being different didn't make them less. There could still be joy, even in tough times, like laughter over lunch, silly moments with mom, and friendships that made the heavy stuff easier to carry.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- At the food truck spot, Kaleb saw all kinds of families, some big, some small, some loud, some quiet. What are some differences you've noticed in the families around you, at school, in your neighborhood, or even just out and about? How can noticing these differences help us understand people better instead of judging them?
- Kaleb started to feel like his family didn't look or work the same as his friends' families, and that brought up a lot of emotions. Why do you think that made him feel sad or unsure? Have you ever had a moment where you felt different from others, not just in your family, but in any part of your life? How did you handle it, and what did you learn from it?
- When Kaleb's mom said, "We've got each other, and that's more than enough," she reminded Kaleb that love and connection can be stronger than any challenging situation. What do you think that kind of love looks like in real life? Is there anyone in your life (family or at school) who reminds you that you're not alone? How do they show up for you when things get hard?

- When Kaleb talked to his friends, he realized other families looked different, too. And that helped him feel less alone. It also reminded him that being different didn't mean being broken. How could you be the kind of friend who helps others feel seen, safe, and not alone? What are some real things you could say or do to show you care and that they're not broken just because their family looks different?

SKILL PRACTICE

My Circle

Visualizing Family Roles and Relationships

This activity helps students reflect on the relationships in their lives—who supports them, and how those relationships make them feel. It also allows educators to understand each child's support system and emotional connections.

Explain that we all have people (and sometimes pets!) who affect our lives in different ways. This activity will help us *see* our support system and how those people make us feel.

Using the ***My Circle worksheet,*** follow these instructions:

- **Start with YOU** – In the circle in the center of the page, write your name and draw your face or decorate it however you like.
- **Add People Who Show Up in Your Life –** Think about who is around you — this could be a parent, grandparent, teacher, friend, counselor, neighbor, coach, or even a pet. In the circles around yours, write the names of those people. Feel free to add more bubbles for additional people.
- **Describe Their Role –** Under each name in the bubbles, write what that person does for you. Examples: "Helps with homework," "Makes me laugh," "Listens when I'm upset," "Checks on me," "Argues with me a lot," "Makes me feel uncertain," etc.
- **Add Feeling Symbols –** Draw symbols to show how each person makes you feel.
- **Share Your Observations –** If you feel comfortable, share what you discovered through this activity.

Share with the students: "Sometimes when we think about the people in our lives—especially those who support us and those who don't—it can bring up some strong feelings. That's okay. Everyone's circle looks different, and all feelings are welcome here. You don't have to carry your circle alone. If anything felt tough today, I'm here to listen and support you. You matter, and your feelings matter."

ADDITIONAL ACTIVITIES

My Family Rollercoaster

Identifying Emotional Highs and Lows Within Family Dynamics

In this activity, students will identify and discuss thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to discover their emotional rollercoaster with highs and lows within their family dynamics.

- **Pass out the *My Family Rollercoaster worksheet*** - You'll be given a blank rollercoaster path to use for this activity. Each twist, turn, and drop on the track can represent a moment in your life where your feelings changed, just like riding a real rollercoaster!

- **Direct How to Plot Key Moments** - Think about four to six important or memorable moments with your family or caregivers. These moments can be fun, challenging, confusing, or meaningful. At each spot on the rollercoaster, write or draw what happened. (Examples: “Mom surprised me with a treat,” “Dad didn’t come to visit,” “We argued,” “We laughed together.”)
- **Direct How to Label Feelings** - Next to each moment, write the feeling you had during that time. Be honest - all emotions are welcome here. (Examples: happy, frustrated, proud, lonely, safe, nervous, confused, calm.)
- **Direct How to Add Thoughts and Behaviors** - Under each feeling, ask yourself, “What did I think when that happened? What did I do afterward?” Write a few words or draw a picture to show your thoughts and actions.
- **Decorate and Reflect** (time permitting) - Use colors, symbols, or emojis to show how high or low each moment felt. Add stars for moments of strength, circles for moments of courage, or hearts for times you spoke up.

“Different, Not Broken” Mosaic Wall

MATERIALS:

- Colored cardstock or construction paper (cut into small squares/tiles, about 4”x4”)
- Markers, crayons, or colored pencils
- Glue or tape
- Large poster board or butcher paper (for assembling the mosaic)
- Title banner: “Being Different Doesn’t Mean Being Broken”

INSTRUCTIONS:

Read or reference Kaleb’s story. Talk about the phrase, “Being different didn’t mean being broken.”

Each student gets a paper “tile” and chooses one of the following prompts to draw or write:

- Something that makes my family different
- A hard thing I’ve gone through
- A strength I have because of my story
- What reminds me I’m not broken
- A word or symbol that makes me feel strong

Once everyone is done, come together as a group to arrange the squares into a mosaic on a large poster board or wall space. As you build, talk about how each tile is unique, but together, they make something beautiful.

REFLECTION (OPTIONAL):

You can use the ***Mosaic Wall Reflection worksheet*** or have the students answer these questions verbally.

- What do you notice about our mosaic?
- How does it feel to see everyone’s stories come together?
- Why is it important to remember that we’re not alone?

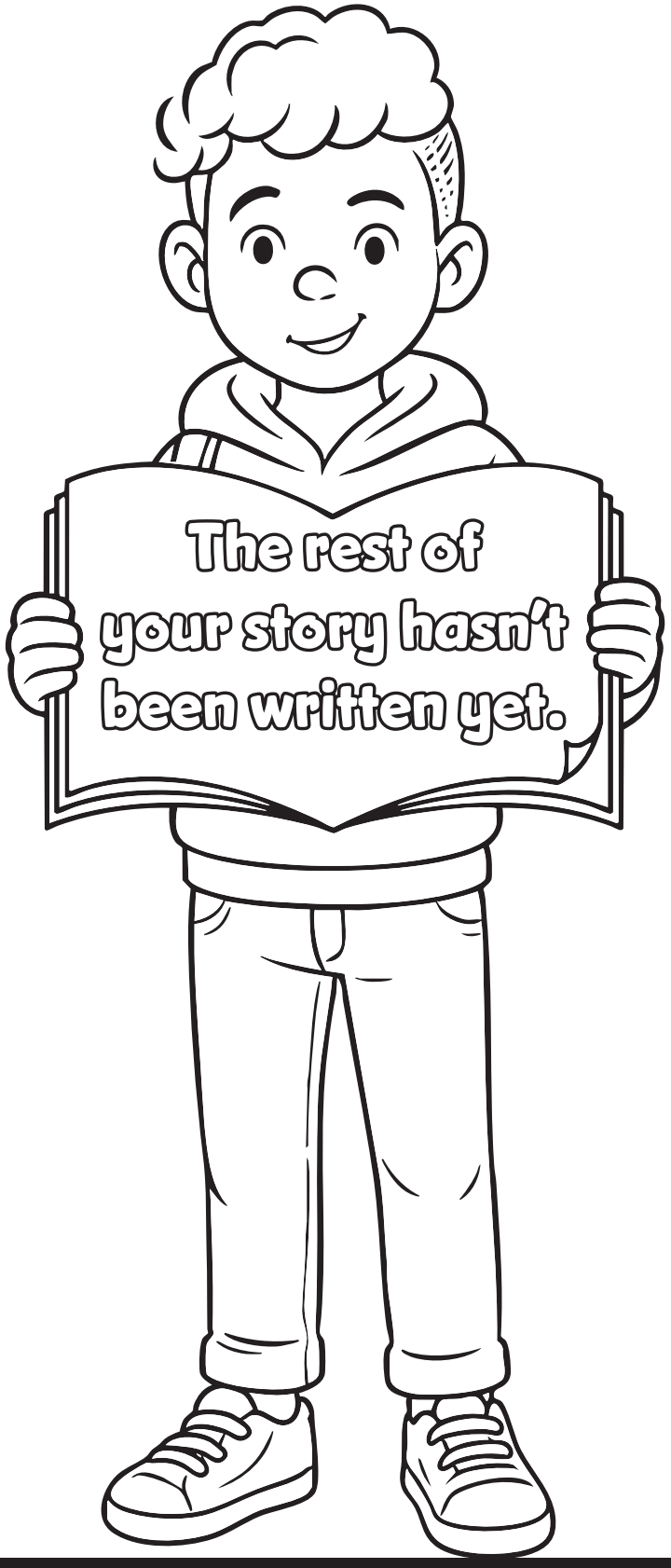
Share that this is a beautiful, visual reminder that every student's story matters — and that their differences create something beautiful, not broken. You can display it in your classroom, hallway, or small group space as a reminder of collective strength.

CLOSING CONSIDERATIONS

"We may feel like our family situation is different from others, but that doesn't make us any less. Even in tough times, we can find strength within ourselves. A flower needs rain to bloom, and sometimes it's the storms in our lives that help us grow into who we're meant to be. Whether it's a moment of laughter over food, a small act of love, or a quiet conversation that feels genuine and honest, these moments help us keep moving forward when life gets tough. And most importantly, remember that you don't have to face challenges alone. There's always someone who will care, listen, and remind you that you matter."

Ask students to consider what makes their families unique. Ask them to notice what support can be found, even if things don't always go as planned, and how they can implement what they have learned in their life with their family. Be mindful of students who may not have any support or a trusted adult they feel they can talk to. In those situations, let the student know that you are a safe space for them to share hard things. Students may share their answers in pairs or groups of three. If time allows, a few students may share with the whole group.

Ask students to summarize the content of this session's lesson in one sentence.



Your Story Is Unique, and It Matters.
Every Single Bit of It.

My Circle

Name:

What they do for me:

How I feel with them:

Name:

What they do for me:

How I feel with them:

ME

Name:

What they do for me:

How I feel with them:

Name:

What they do for me:

How I feel with them:

 **= Makes me feel loved**

 **= Someone I look up to**

 **= Helps me grow**

 **= Makes me laugh or feel joy**

 **= Things feel hard with this person**

 **= Confusing or causes conflict**

My Family Rollercoaster

MOMENT: _____

FEELINGS: _____

THOUGHTS/BEHAVIORS: _____

MOMENT: _____

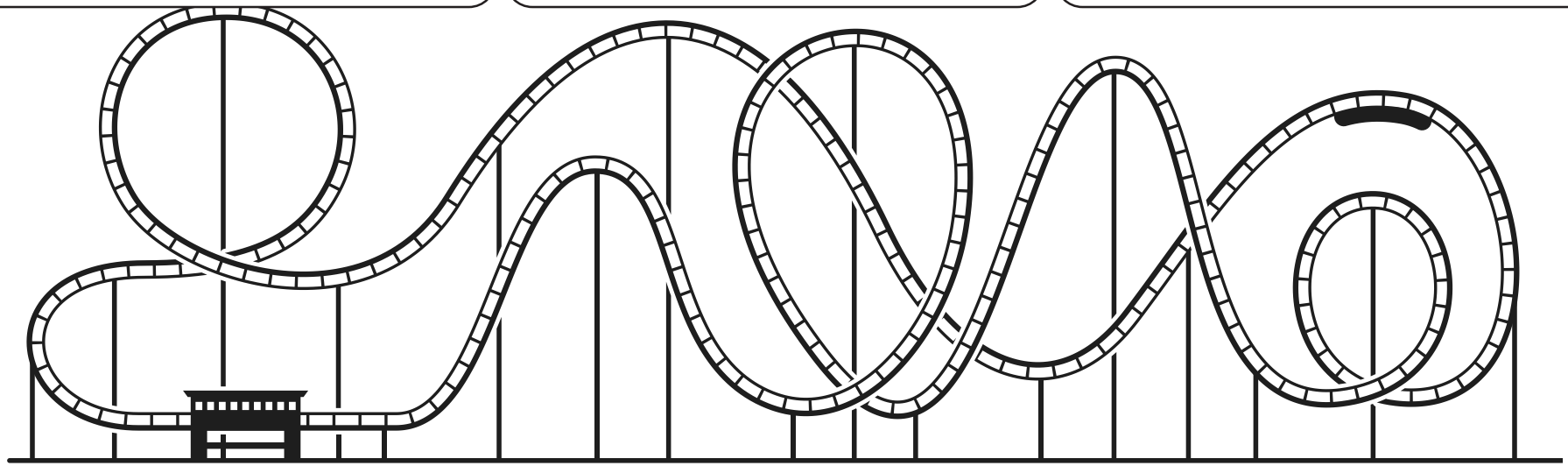
FEELINGS: _____

THOUGHTS/BEHAVIORS: _____

MOMENT: _____

FEELINGS: _____

THOUGHTS/BEHAVIORS: _____



MOMENT: _____

FEELINGS: _____

THOUGHTS/BEHAVIORS: _____

MOMENT: _____

FEELINGS: _____

THOUGHTS/BEHAVIORS: _____

MOMENT: _____

FEELINGS: _____

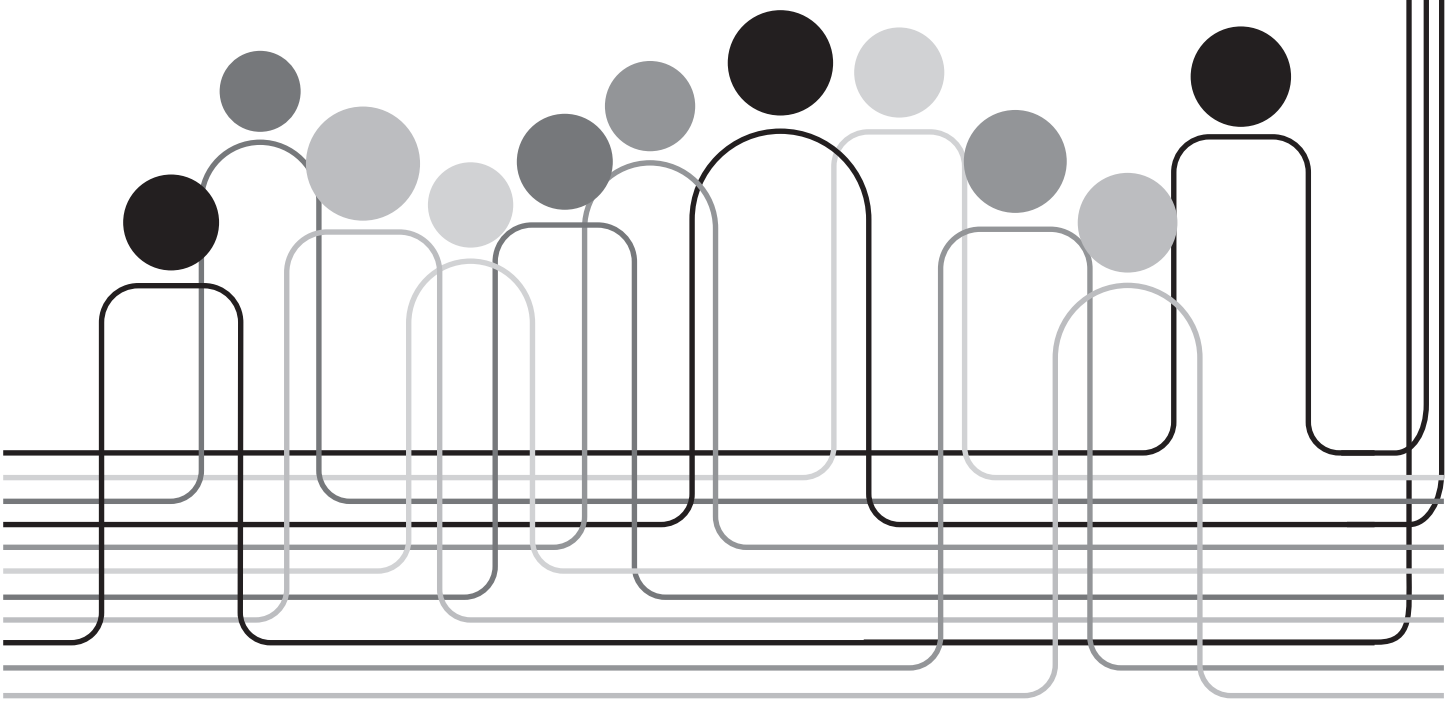
THOUGHTS/BEHAVIORS: _____

Mosaic Wall Reflection

What do you notice about our mosaic?

How does it feel to see everyone's stories come together?

Why is it important to remember that we're not alone?



"WOULD YOU RATHER?" GAME

Playing the "Would You Rather?" game is a fun and engaging activity for students to develop their critical thinking skills. Students will reflect on their experience, evaluate their options based on their preferences, and reflect on the opinions of others, providing a different perspective and strengthening their sense of connection to one another.

Would You Rather?

Copy and cut out the questions for small groups to discuss or have each person stand in the center of the room and move towards one side or the other to show their vote for either option as the facilitator reads the questions aloud.

HAVE A SMALL FAMILY WITH JUST A FEW PEOPLE OR A BIG FAMILY WITH LOTS OF PEOPLE?

SPEND A DAY WITH YOUR FAMILY DOING SOMETHING ACTIVE OR HAVE A QUIET DAY AT HOME WITH THEM?

LIVE IN A FAMILY WHERE EVERYONE IS ALWAYS TOGETHER OR WHERE EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN SPACE AND TIME?

BE IN A FAMILY WHERE EVERYONE LOOKS ALIKE OR ONE WHERE PEOPLE LOOK DIFFERENT AND COME FROM DIFFERENT PLACES?

TALK ABOUT YOUR FEELINGS OPENLY WITH YOUR FAMILY OR EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS THROUGH ACTIONS LIKE HELPING OUT?

BE THE ONE WHO SUPPORTS YOUR FAMILY DURING HARD TIMES OR THE ONE WHO MAKES CELEBRATIONS EXTRA SPECIAL WHEN THINGS ARE GOOD?