SEE Learning

Social, Emotional, and Ethical Learning

An Initiative for Educating Heart and Mind

Center for Contemplative Science
and Compassion-Based Ethics

EMORY UNIVERSITY

Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEE Learning)

Educating the Heart and Mind

FRAMEWORK

This document explains the framework for a program in Social, Emotional and Ethical Learning (SEE Learning) that can be implemented at all levels of education, from kindergarten to higher education. Consistent with many of the common organizing principles found in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), this framework also systematically incorporates additional crucial components that have been identified by some of the founders of SEL as next steps needed within SEL, such as attention training, the cultivation of compassion and care, and an appreciation of interdependence.

The SEE Learning framework is organized into three dimensions: (1) Awareness, (2) Compassion, and (3) Engagement, each of which can be taught across three domains: (1) Personal, (2) Social, and (3) Systems—all of which should take place within an educational context that is based on compassion and with teachers who strive to embody this underlying value.

INTRODUCTION

The Social, Emotional and Ethical (SEE) Learning Framework is a conceptual framework intended to support the development and implementation of programs and curricula that foster social, emotional and ethical learning in K-12 classes as well as in higher education. In order to do this, SEE Learning provides a broad structure for such programs as well as specifics about the core content and enduring capabilities that can be explored and taught in classrooms to facilitate social, emotional and ethical learning. This chapter begins by presenting some background information on SEE Learning and then explains the structure of the framework and each component contained within it.

Background and Relationship to Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

The SEE Learning framework owes its existence to a number of pioneers, researchers, and educators who have explored creatively and thoughtfully what education can be in order to maximize the flourishing of present and future generations. It builds on the innovative work done in Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and other educational initiatives that seek to introduce holistic education into schools. Those familiar with Dr. Daniel Goleman's work on emotional intelligence or the five sets of competencies identified by CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning)[1] will no doubt find a great deal of resonance between these approaches and the SEE Learning framework, and the influence of Dr. Goleman and Peter Senge's book, *The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education*, can be clearly seen. Where schools already have existing SEL programs, SEE Learning can be used to complement these programs. No background in SEL, however, is required to understand SEE Learning.

SEE Learning builds on the pioneering work done by the SEL community, developing and adding components that are often not found in SEL but that have been suggested by some of the founders of SEL. The first of these is an emphasis on cultivating the skill of attention. Attention is a fundamental skill that impacts all aspects of learning, yet it has

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[1] http://www.casel.org/social-and-emotional-learning/core-competencies/

been largely neglected as an explicit focus for education. As Dr. Goleman notes, "Because it is such an essential element of helping children better manage their inner worlds and enhance learning, training in attention seems an obvious next step for SEL."[2]

Secondly, SEE Learning adds to SEL a more comprehensive focus on ethics. This is not an ethics based on a particular culture or religion, but rather one grounded in basic human values such as compassion. In SEE Learning the benefits of kindness and compassion are explored, and students are taught material and practices that can contribute to a greater ability to care skillfully for themselves and others. Growing scientific evidence supports the notion that a compassionate, caring attitude is beneficial not only to others but also to oneself in terms of physical and emotional health, and the implications of such an attitude for social well-being are clear. Dr. Goleman has pointed out the absence of this critical component in schools: "It's not enough just to know how other people think or feel; we also need to be concerned about them and be ready to help. I think this is a vital life skill for both kids and adults, and such an addition to SEL would be an important next step for schools."[3]

Thirdly, SEE Learning includes a focus on increasing awareness of interdependence and systems, as well as the critical thinking skills necessary for responsible decision-making. In our increasingly dynamic and globalized world, both personal success and ethical action require a sophisticated appreciation of interdependence, systems and complexity. Increasingly, schools are recognizing the need to prepare students to be global citizens who can navigate an increasingly complex world in a responsible way that can contribute to their own and others' flourishing. A systems approach—namely one that recognizes that we exist within and are affected by interdependent systems—is the logical next step for programs that focus on helping students learn practices of self-care and other-care.

A Non-sectarian Approach to Ethics

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[2] Goleman and Senge, *The Triple Focus: A New Approach to Education* (Florence, Mass: More Than Sound, 2015), p. 27.
[3] Goelman and Senge, *The Triple Focus*, p. 30

It is important to note that as SEE Learning is intended to serve as a framework that can be used across countries and cultures internationally, as well as in schools that may be religious or non-religious, its approach to ethics is not based on any one particular religious, cultural or ethical tradition, but rather on the approach of "secular ethics"—a non-sectarian approach to universal ethics that can be acceptable to people of any or no religious faith. Just as SEE Learning aims to facilitate greater "emotional literacy" in students, it also seeks to promote "ethical literacy," understood here not as the following of specific externally-imposed ethical mandates, but as the cultivation of skills and understanding that can promote behaviors that are conducive to their own and others' wellbeing. A number of pioneers who have thought through the possibility and promise of such an approach to ethics, and what it can contribute to our society and our world, have therefore significantly influenced this framework. Prominent among these is His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who has called for a holistic approach to education that cultivates, alongside traditional academic subjects, a benevolent and ethical mindset grounded in the basic human values that can be discerned from common sense, common experience, and science. The Dalai Lama's writings and thinking on secular ethics and its implementation in education stem from over four decades of conversations with prominent scientists, educators, and leaders of the world's religions, and they have been picked up and developed by a range of thinkers across a variety of disciplines in recent years.

The idea that cultivating basic human values can benefit oneself and others is rapidly gaining ground as research shows the connection between ethical values and flourishing throughout the world. The United Nations' 2016 edition of the *World Happiness Report* contains an entire chapter on secular ethics, and notes "We should assess human progress by the extent to which people are enjoying their lives—by the prevalence of happiness and, conversely, the absence of misery… [W]e should in all our dealings truly wish for the happiness of all of those we can affect, and we should cultivate in ourselves an attitude of unconditional benevolence." The report goes on to cite the Dalai Lama's statement that "We need an approach to ethics that can be equally acceptable to those

with religious faith and those without. We need a secular ethics."[4]

In concert with such approaches, the conception of ethics reflected in this framework is based on an inclusive stance, and in no way suggests opposition to any religion. It is based on common sense, common experience, and science, built around a foundation of common humanity and interdependence. As noted, SEE Learning is intended to serve as a master framework that can be instantiated in a variety of ways. Therefore, alongside the standard curriculum developed for SEE Learning, it is envisioned that there will emerge multiple individualized programs employing this framework, each with their own distinctive characteristics that are best suited to the needs and contexts of the students being taught. While many programs may wish to retain the non-religious categories and practices presented in the SEE Learning framework, some programs may choose to implement SEE Learning in a way that draws on and includes the religious or cultural values of that school or community. As long as this is acceptable within that school and community, this is perfectly appropriate from a SEE Learning perspective, as the values of SEE Learning are basic human values that are intended to be compatible with people of any, or no, religious tradition, and should therefore pose no conflict.

Since it seeks to base its approach on common experience, common sense and science, SEE Learning is also inspired and informed by scientists and researchers in the fields of psychology, education and neuroscience, who are exploring the nature of basic human values, prosocial emotions and competencies, and how these can be taught and cultivated. Last but not least, SEE Learning draws from the experience of educators and teachers who have piloted sections of SEE Learning-based curricula with children of various ages in schools in several countries. These experiences suggest that the approach presented in this framework has great potential to be very beneficial, as well as practical, for implementation in schools in a variety of settings.

SEE Learning is grounded in the idea that education can, and indeed should, be expanded

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[4] Layer, Richard. "Promoting Secular Ethics." Ed. Helliwell, J., Layard, R., & Sachs, J. (2016). *World Happiness Report 2016, Update (Vol. I)*. New York: Sustainable Development Solutions Network.

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to foster the values and competencies that lead to greater happiness for both individuals and society at large, an idea that is rapidly gaining support in a variety of circles. Increasingly, research suggests that it is unwise for education to focus solely on cognitive skills while neglecting so-called "soft skills," such as emotional and social intelligence, the ability to cooperate and collaborate with others, and the ability to deal constructively with conflict when it arises. Nobel-prize winning economist, Dr. James Heckman, who advocates for the inclusion of soft skills in education, cites research indicating that success in life depends on these soft skills, which are just as important as performance on cognitive aptitude tests.[5] Increasingly, employers in multiple fields are recognizing the crucial importance of soft skills when it comes to hiring new employees. As increasing computerization and mechanization of tasks reduces the need for unskilled labor, many are forecasting that jobs will increasingly be found in the area of "STEMpathy," requiring a combination of the traditional background in humanities, social sciences, sciences and the arts, but combined with the human competencies of empathy and social skills.

The intention behind SEE Learning is to create an inclusive and comprehensive framework that can be used in any educational environment and at all levels of education to teach social, emotional and ethical competencies, no different to how students are taught mathematics, foreign languages, science, or any other academic subject. The framework acknowledges the importance of practical application, not merely theoretical knowledge, and it is intended to be specific enough to guide the theory and practice of how secular ethics can be incorporated into the classroom, while remaining broad enough that individual teachers and schools can approach secular ethics education in a way that is responsive to their own culture, the needs and abilities of the students with whom they are working, and the opportunities and challenges that may be present. It is understood that in certain cases the material here may need to be adapted or modified to suit the culture or context of a particular educational environment.

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[5] Heckman, James J. and Tim D. Katuz. Hard Evidence on Soft Skills. National Bureau of Economic Research, June 2012.

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In line with this, SEE Learning programs should not attempt to advance any kind of sectarian moral agenda, nor should they preclude or supersede the role of family or culture in helping children constructively engage the challenges of life. SEE Learning programs will work best when the educational efforts in the classroom are supported by and mirror the efforts made by parents and society at large. While SEE Learning provides a framework for curricular content, it also recognizes that a true education of social, emotional and ethical competencies depends not only on curriculum, but just as importantly on the environment in which learning takes place.

THE THREE DIMENSIONS AND THREE DOMAINS

SEE Learning is most fundamentally based around three dimensions, which broadly encompass the types of knowledge and competencies it seeks to foster in students: (1) Awareness, (2) Compassion, and (3) Engagement. Furthermore, these three dimensions can be approached in three domains: that of (1) the Personal; (2) the Social; and (3) Systems. This framework therefore builds on the evidence-based work of SEL, and parallels the model suggested in, Goleman and Senge's *The Triple Focus*: a focus on self, a focus on others, and a focus on interdependence and systems.

The three dimensions of SEE Learning—Awareness, Compassion, and Engagement—relate intimately to each other and are therefore depicted as overlapping. Each contains a set of specific competencies that can be taught individually, but are best understood within the context of the whole (*see figure 1.)*

Figure 1: Domains and Dimensions

Awareness refers to cultivating a nuanced, first-person understanding of thoughts, feelings, and emotions. It pertains to the ability to perceive inner and outer phenomena in an increasingly sophisticated way, including one's own inner life, the presence and needs of others, and interdependence as a feature of one's own life and of the systems within which one exists. Cultivating this type of awareness requires practice and the refinement of attention, and SEE Learning approaches attention as a skill that can be cultivated just like any other. By learning to attend to one's own inner states, to the presence of others, and to wider systems, one is able to develop what Dr. Goleman calls "inner, other and outer focus."[6]

Compassion refers to cultivating a way of relating to oneself, others, and humanity as a whole through kindness, empathy, and a concern for their happiness and suffering. Since the values in SEE Learning are not based on injunctions, but rather on personal insight and understanding, the cultivation of compassion and kindness cannot happen through

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[6] Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge, *The Triple Focus*.

merely instructing students to behave in a compassionate way. Therefore crucial to the dimension of compassion is critical thinking. This, however, is not just any kind of critical thinking, but a specific type of critical thinking that seeks to understand one's own personal needs, wants, and values. This includes the ability to discern what will bring about one's own long-term well-being. When this is extended beyond the personal domain, it includes recognizing and discerning the needs of others, and ultimately coming to recognize common humanity on a larger scale.

Engagement refers to the methods by which one puts into practice what one has gained from the awareness and compassion dimensions. This dimension refers to learning the behaviors and habituating the attitudes, dispositions and skills that are conducive to personal, social and communal well-being. This includes practices of self-regulation in the personal domain; social skills and the ability to relate to others in the social domain; and in the systems domain, engagement as a global citizen who is aware of larger systems and acts conscientiously and compassionately within them.

The three dimensions and three domains can be visualized in chart form (*see figure 2*). Since each dimension will be explored within each domain, this yields nine components. For ease of understanding, each component is also given its own name. As the components are explored in the framework below, it will be seen that each component may also contain a number of topics: usually two to four per component. Each topic directly corresponds to an enduring capability. This is all done for ease of understanding, so that first teachers can understand the general framework at its broadest level, and then can fit the topics and components into that highest-order framework to see how the individual topics work together to form a whole. In some cases, a linear approach to some of the topics and components will make sense in teaching SEE Learning, since certain topics build on and depend to a degree on others. Thus, for example, advances in the Personal domain, such as the acquisition of a degree of emotional literacy, will set the stage for moving into the Social and Systems domains, where the literacy that students gained in examining their own emotions can then be applied to others and to broader systems. Similarly, the skills gained in the dimension of Awareness are employed and

expanded upon as one moves into the dimensions of Compassion and Engagement. However, it is not necessary that a strictly linear approach be followed in every instance, as the focus is on the building up of capacities across all nine components and they are all highly inter-related.

DIMENSIONS		
Awareness	Compassion	Engagement
Attention and Self-Awareness (1A)	**Self-Compassion** (1C)	**Self-Regulation** (1E)
Interpersonal Awareness (2A)	**Compassion for Others** (2C)	**Relationship Skills** (2E)
Appreciating Inter-dependence (3A)	**Recognizing Common Humanity** (3C)	**Community and Global Engagement** (3E)

(DOMAINS: Personal, Social, Systemic)

Figure 2 – Nine components of the Domains and Dimensions

SEE Learning's three dimensions and three domains can be placed in a matrix that results in nine components. The list of benefits by learning area provided here is suggestive and not comprehensive. These benefits arise from students achieving insights into the various competencies at the level of critical insight and embodied understanding, which should be the primary goal of instructors. The overall benefit that is sought is the long-term well-being of the student and their ability to contribute to broader society through the development of the competencies.

SEE Learning also employs a pedagogical model in which students are guided to move through *three levels of understanding* as they gain proficiency in the fundamentals of each competency *(see figure 3)*. This is because developing character strengths and values requires not merely the acquisition of knowledge, but realizing that knowledge on a personal level and then deeply internalizing it. In the first level, "received knowledge," students learn by listening, reading, and experiencing. This level exposes students to
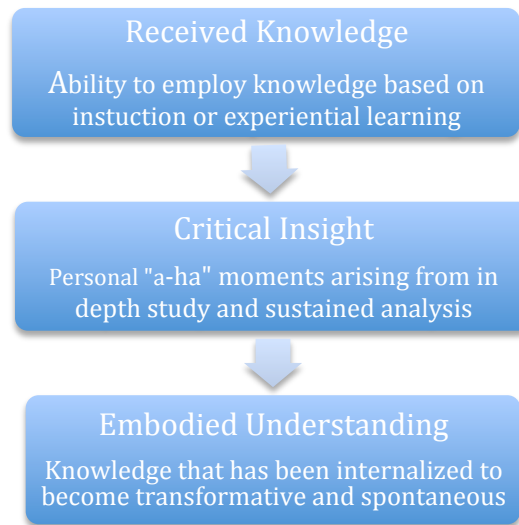
basic information and experiences related to the competencies and helps them develop a rich understanding of each one.

While essential, this level of knowledge is not sufficient on its own, because such knowledge has not yet become personal. Students should also be encouraged to use their critical thinking to investigate the topics deeply, using many different lines of approach, and apply them to their own situations, so that they can reach the second level of "critical insight." This refers to "a-ha" moments in which students gain personal insight, connecting the knowledge they have received to their own lives and existence. At this level, the knowledge is not merely received, but has led to a new perspective on the world; it has become the students' own knowledge, having been discovered by themselves. SEE Learning provides several specific strategies for achieving these new perspectives for each competency, and teachers can supplement these with their own.

These new perspectives may not be stable at first, so in order for them to become character strengths and personality traits in the deepest sense, repeated familiarization is necessary. Therefore, teachers are also encouraged to help students reinforce these insights through sustained practice, exercises, discussion and debate, and other tools until the knowledge becomes transformative and spontaneous. This is the level of "embodied understanding." Critical thinking facilitates the acquisition of knowledge at each of these successive levels of understanding.

Figure 3 – Pedagogical Model

Received Knowledge

Ability to employ knowledge based on instuction or experiential learning

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Critical Insight

Personal "a-ha" moments arising from in depth study and sustained analysis

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Embodied Understanding

Knowledge that has been internalized to become transformative and spontaneous

Figure 4 – SEE Learning Threads

Critical Thinking   **Reflective Practices**   **Scientific Perspectives**

Engaged Learning Pedagogy

Ecological Learning   Community Engagement Projects   Creative Expression   Cooperative Learning

Key Learning Threads

To facilitate the acuiqisition and internalization of knowledge and skills at each of these three levels of understanding, SEE Learning identifies four "Key Learning Threads" (*Figure 4*). These key learning threads are pedagogical components that function as the principle avenues for exploring, critically assessing, and internalizing the various topics and skills of SEE Learning. They are called learning threads because they should be evident in each individual learning experience in the curriculum, i.e. each individual SEE Learning session, and thereby become woven through the entire program, allowing knowledge and understanding to build and deepen over time on a firm foundation.

The first of the key learning threads is "critical thinking." As will be seen throughout the rest of this framework, critical thinking forms an essential part of SEE Learning at every stage. Within the context of SEE Learning, critical thinking can be understood as the exploration and investigation of topics and experiences through logical reasoning, multiple perspectives, dialogue, debate and other related activities in order to reach a deeper and more nuanced understanding. Critical thinking is essential in SEE Learning because the emotional and ethical literacy being cultivated in the program cannot be imposed from the outside-in or in a top-down manner, but should arise and develop on the foundation of a firm personal understanding that is consistent with personal experience and the realities of the world. As a result, the key learning thread of critical thinking in SEE Learning involves encouraging students to explore the nature of making sound arguments and engaging in sound reasoning, and to discover the process of asking the right questions, rather than having the right answers. Critical thinking also involves the cultivation of epistemic humility: an openness to the possibility of being wrong; the realization that one's knowledge is always partial and limited and can be informed by other information and other people's perspectives; and the recognition that one's views can develop and change over time. This in turn facilitates the ability to engage in dialogue, discussion and debate without the emotional reactivity that can hinder such activities when individuals become too attached to their own positions or lose sight of the possibility of learning more.

The second key learning thread is "reflective practices." Reflective practices are activities in which students direct attention towards their personal, inner experience in a sustained and structured way in order to develop a deeper personal understanding and internalize the skills and topics covered in their learning. These are "first-person" practices in the sense that students seek direct experience of aspects of the material being covered through attention, observation, and reflective examination. As such, this may involve practices such as attending to bodily sensations, cultivating attention on the breath, noticing the momentariness of thoughts and emotions, and noticing the effects of certain thoughts and emotions on one's body and mind. The reflective practices of attention support a second category of reflective practices involving analysis and critical thinking, such as reflecting on a certain topic with sustained attention and investigating it from various angles. Reflective practices are key tools for developing a richer received knowledge and for deepening that received knowledge to the levels of critical insight and eventually embodied understanding. Certain schools may feel comfortable approaching reflective practices as secular contemplative practices, while other schools may wish to avoid such an approach given the association that is sometimes made between contemplative practices and religion.

The third key learning thread is "scientific perspectives." As a program that deals with ethical development and that approaches this in large part through the cultivation of emotional literacy, it is crucial that teachers and students gradually develop an understanding of the science around emotions and other topics in SEE Learning. Here, "scientific perspectives" refers to modes of inquiry that depend on and are informed by prevailing scientific understanding of ourselves and the world we live in. In particular, certain topics within the fields of biology, psychology, and neuroscience will be relevant to the material presented in SEE Learning. Teachers are not expected to be experts in these areas and supporting materials and context are provided in the SEE Learning materials. The approach of SEE Learning is that the topics covered here will be better understood and students and teachers will be more motivated to engage in the material if they understand at least some of the science informing the approaches and topics being

presented. Like common experience and common sense, science helps to provide a common foundation for an approach to ethics that is impartial with regard to culture or religion. As science is based on empirical observation and the theorizing and testing of cause and effect, the key learning thread of scientific perspectives also supports critical thinking. It also serves as the third-person complement to the first-person approach of the key learning thread of reflective practices, yielding a well-rounded and more complete understanding of the topics in SEE Learning.

The fourth and final key learning thread in SEE Learning is "engaged learning." This term is used to refer to learning strategies and methods that are more active, participatory and embodied for students, in contrast to approaches where students are presented with material and receive it in a more passive and static way. This involves, for example, cooperative learning (group projects, student-led discussion, collaborative games); creative expression (arts, music, writing, performance); community engagement projects (such as service projects); and ecological learning (such as engaging directly with the natural world). Engaged learning is complementary to the other key learning threads and can also allow students to experience and further explore what they are learning in a direct, embodied and practical way, for example by seeing what it is like to try to put into practice what they have been learning conceptually, or by engaging in a practice that can then be reflected on subsequently. As with the other key learning threads, engaged learning is employed in order to help facilitate the movement of students through the three levels of learning: received knowledge, critical insight, and embodied understanding.

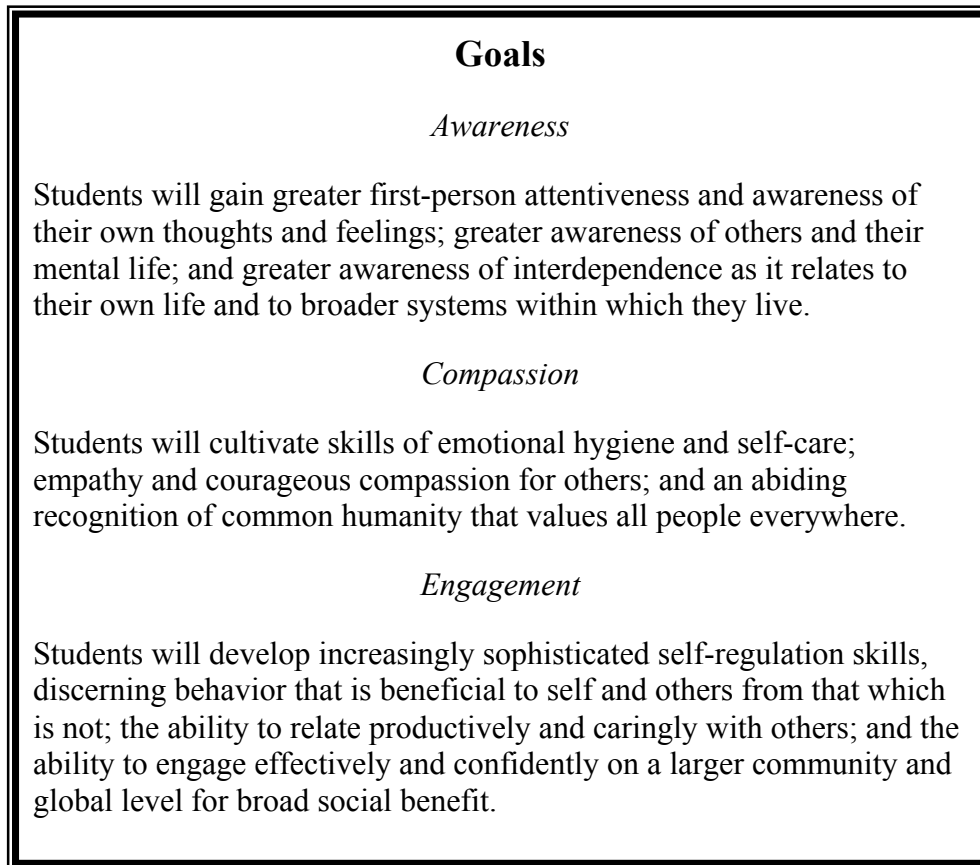*Goals, Core Content Knowledge, and Enduring Capabilities*

Each of the three dimensions in SEE Learning is linked with a broad goal (*see figure 5*). This goal is aspirational in nature, and it is not intended as a benchmark by which to measure the progress of students, but rather as an indication of the direction towards which learning can take place. In addition to the goals, each component of SEE Learning is linked to Core Content Knowledge as well as Enduring Capabilities. As can be seen

from the goals, SEE Learning embraces a growth model, promoting the continuous enhancement of these capabilities across the student's entire educational career.

Figure 5 – SEE Learning Goals

> **Goals**
>
> *Awareness*
>
> Students will gain greater first-person attentiveness and awareness of their own thoughts and feelings; greater awareness of others and their mental life; and greater awareness of interdependence as it relates to their own life and to broader systems within which they live.
>
> *Compassion*
>
> Students will cultivate skills of emotional hygiene and self-care; empathy and courageous compassion for others; and an abiding recognition of common humanity that values all people everywhere.
>
> *Engagement*
>
> Students will develop increasingly sophisticated self-regulation skills, discerning behavior that is beneficial to self and others from that which is not; the ability to relate productively and caringly with others; and the ability to engage effectively and confidently on a larger community and global level for broad social benefit.

The Core Content Knowledge specifies broadly the knowledge that students will be encouraged to learn and explore. The Enduring Capabilities are similar to higher-order learning outcomes, in that they specify what students should be able to do better after having learned and practiced the Core Content Knowledge. However, they are distinguished from specific learning outcomes that are tied to age and grade-level. This is because Enduring Capabilities are skills and types of knowledge that students can continue to return to, reflect upon, and more deeply embody throughout their educational experience and their entire lives (*see figure 6*). In this framework, the enduring capabilities are explained under each component of the framework, while the Core Content Knowledge is not covered explicitly here.

Figure 6 – Enduring Capabilities

Component: Attention and Self-Awareness (1A)

1. **Attending to Our Body and Sensations** – Notice and describe sensations in the body, especially those related to stress and well-being

2. **Attending to Emotions and Feelings** - Attend to and identify one's emotions in type and intensity as they arise

3. **Map of the Mind** - Categorize emotions in relation to emotion models including the continuum from beneficial to potentially harmful

Component: Self-Regulation (1C)

1) **Balancing the Body** - Regulate the body and nervous system, especially when activated, stressed or lacking in energy, to optimize well-being

2) **Cognitive and Impulse Control** - Sustain attention on an object, task, or experience, avoiding distraction

3) **Navigating Emotions** - Respond constructively to impulses and emotions and cultivate the behaviors and attitudes that facilitate one's long-term well-being

Component: Self-Regulation (1E)

1) **Balancing the Body** - Regulate the body and nervous system, especially when activated, stressed or lacking in energy, to optimize well-being

2) **Cognitive and Impulse Control** - Sustain attention on an object, task, or experience, avoiding distraction**.**

3) **Navigating Emotions** - Respond constructively to impulses and emotions and cultivate the behaviors and attitudes that facilitate one's long-term well-being

Component: Interpersonal Awareness (2A)

1) **Attending to Our Social Reality** – Recognize our inherently social nature and attend to the presence of others and the roles they play in our lives

2) **Attending to Our Shared Reality with Others** - Appreciate what we share with others on a fundamental level, such as wanting happiness and to avoid suffering, having emotions and body states, and other common experiences

3) **Appreciating Diversity and Difference** – Appreciate that part of our shared reality is the diversity, uniqueness and difference of individuals and groups, learning to respect those differences and the way they add to our collective life

Component: Compassion for Others (2C)

1) **Understanding others' feelings and emotions in context** – Understand other's feelings in context and understand that, like oneself, others have feelings caused by needs

2) **Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion** – Value the benefits of kindness and compassion and cultivate them as a disposition

3) **Appreciating and Cultivating Other Ethical Dispositions** – Value and cultivate ethical dispositions and prosocial emotions, such as forgiveness, patience, contentment, generosity, and humility

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Component: Relationship Skills (2E)

1) **Empathic Listening** - Listen attentively for the purpose of understanding others and their needs more deeply

2) **Skillful Communication** – Communicate compassionately in a way that empowers self and others

3) **Helping Others** – Offer help to others according to their needs and proportionate to one's ability

4) **Conflict Transformation** - Respond constructively to conflict and facilitate collaboration, reconciliation and peaceful relations

Component: Appreciating Interdependence (3A)

1) **Understanding interdependent systems** – Understand interdependence and the properties of systems, such as through exploring chains of cause and effect

2) **Individuals within a Systems Context** – Recognize how oneself and others exist within a systems context and affect and are affected by that context

Component: Recognizing Common Humanity (3C)

1) **Appreciating the Fundamental Equality of All** – Extend the realization of fundamental equality and common humanity to those outside one's immediate community and ultimately to the world, recognizing those things that we all share in common as human beings, such as our aspiration for happiness and well-being and to avoid suffering

2) **Appreciating How Systems Affect Well-Being** – Recognize how systems can promote or compromise well-being on cultural and structural levels, such as by promoting positive values or perpetuating problematic beliefs and inequalities

Component: Community and Global Engagement (3E)

1) **Exploring One's Potential for Effecting Positive Change in Community and World** – Recognize one's own potential to effect positive change based on one's abilities and opportunity, individually or collaboratively

2) **Engaging in Communal and Global Solutions** – Explore and reflect on creative solutions to issues affecting one's community or the world

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In each component of SEE Learning, educators will seek to facilitate learning on all three of the three levels of understanding—received knowledge, critical insight, and embodied understanding—by introducing material, helping students deepen their understanding so that they can achieve critical insights, and then reinforcing this knowledge and these insights through practice and repeated familiarization. Despite the specification of Core Content Knowledge and Enduring Capabilities, SEE Learning is not designed to be prescriptive in nature. As long as teachers understand the broad goals of SEE Learning

and the insights that are sought, a variety of approaches can be used, since it will be up to the teacher to find the most effective way of helping students develop personal knowledge of, and facility with, the SEE Learning components. Furthermore, while the SEE Learning curriculum is designed to build the skills and values associated with the objectives of a particular dimension, it should be noted that competencies across dimensions are mutually reinforcing, and teachers can make connections between a topic addressed within one dimension to those associated with the other two areas. That being said, one of the strengths of SEE Learning is that it provides specific strategies for developing key skills in each of the three dimensions such that they are mutually reinforcing.

The three dimensions are intended to be comprehensive across all age levels. Younger children can be exposed to each of the three dimensions at progressive levels of sophistication and depth appropriate to the child's age and maturity, while instructors of students at the high school and college levels can bring in additional nuance and depth according to their specific subjects of instruction. Organizing the framework with a focus on the most basic elements to be covered first allows educators to more easily ensure that the essential components of a SEE Learning education are covered at each developmental stage.

Naturally, an education for social, emotional and ethical development has to be more than simply providing lesson plans, syllabi, and curricula for teachers. It must also include educator preparation, parental involvement, and the support of educational administrators who can establish environments conducive to education in basic human values. Additionally, as with any new program, thought must be given to how to first introduce the program and then how to make the program sustainable. Therefore suggestions on how a holistic SEE Learning education program could be realized are offered separately, while the focus here remains on those aspects of the framework most important for curricular and program design.

Compassion

The SEE Learning framework is grounded in the principle of compassion, which lies at the center of the three dimensions of SEE Learning. In many ways, the other two dimensions serve as supports for the dimension of compassion: awareness of our own mental states and the mental life of others—especially their experiences of happiness and suffering—is essential for cultivating self-compassion and compassion for others, while awareness of interdependence and the broader systems within which we and others exist is essential for effective engagement as a global citizen oriented by compassion. Similarly, the actual practices of engagement and the skills required for compassion—whether oriented in the form of self-care, towards others around us, or towards wider communities—must be learned and in turn become both expressions of, and supports for, compassion and care.

Dr. Thupten Jinpa, a noted scholar of compassion and developer of Stanford University's "Compassion Cultivation Training" program, defines compassion as "a sense of concern that arises when we are confronted with another person's suffering and feel motivated to see that suffering relieved."[7] Dr. Jinpa goes on to note that "Compassion offers the possibility of responding to suffering with understanding, patience, and kindnesss, rather than, say, fear and repulsion… Compassion is what connects the feeling of empathy to acts of kindnesss, generosity, and other expressions of our altruistic tendencies."[8]

Too often, compassion is mistaken for weakness—for letting others get what they want at one's own expense, or even allowing bullying or other negative behaviors. In SEE Learning, however, compassion is always understood as courageous compassion. It does not imply weakness or an inability to stand up to injustice; on the contrary, it describes a stance of concern and consideration towards others that stems from, and results in, greater inner strength. Since ethics refers to the way we behave and interact with each

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[7] Jinpa, Thupten. *A fearless heart: How the courage to be compassionate can transform our lives* (Avery, 2016), xx.
[8] Jinpa, *A fearless heart*, xx.

other, scholars have recognized that consideration for others and their experiences of well-being and suffering lies at the heart of all ethical thinking.[9]

At the heart of the SEE Learning framework, therefore, is an understanding of what compassion is and bringing a deeper understanding of compassion to students, teachers, and all those involved in the learning environment as a whole. Compassion should ideally be present at each stage of SEE Learning. It provides the initial context for SEE Learning and the way it is introduced and taught in a school setting; it informs and contextualizes each competency as it is being taught; and it represents a desired long-term outcome of SEE Learning—namely that the entire school community becomes one that exhibits and embodies greater compassion on a daily basis to promote each individual's flourishing, the flourishing of the community, and a contribution to the wider world. For this reason, compassion should be present at each stage of SEE Learning: as the initial context and in the environment; in the manner and context in which each competency is taught; and as a desired outcome of SEE Learning for individual students and the community.

For the individual competencies of SEE Learning to have their deepest resonance in students and in the learning environment, it is important that compassion become a conscious stance in schools that implement SEE Learning. When teachers, parents, and others in the school community model compassionate behavior in their activities and in the way they relate to students and one another, this stance becomes integrated into the general school environment. Having compassion as an agreed upon communal value helps teachers to nurture this inclination in their students. Compassion becomes a starting point for the community, a context for SEE Learning as it is implemented and taught, and a goal or aspiration for all members of the community. If a school is teaching SEE Learning but has limited inclusion of the values, competencies, and foundational principle of SEE Learning in its teachers, administrators, and school structures, then students will experience this discrepancy and may have a more difficult time engaging

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[9] See for example the work in cultural psychology and moral psychology by Richard Shweder and Walter Sinnott-Armstrong; in other fields, this point has been made by Martin Buber, Emmanuel Levinas, Arthur Schopenhauer and others.

with and internalizing the pedagogical material. It is well known that conditions in the learning environment can have significant bearing on student outcomes. A recent review article on school climate notes the benefits of positive school climate, including reduced violence and bullying and an improved learning environment, and goes on to state, "The process of teaching and learning is fundamentally relational. The patterns of norms, goals, values, and interactions that shape relationships in schools provide an essential area of school climate. One of the most important aspects of relationships in schools is how connected people feel to one another. From a psychological point of view, relationships refer not only to relations with others but relations with ourselves—how we feel about and take care of ourselves."[10] As a result, in addition to recommended guidelines provided in supplementary materials such as the guides for teachers and administrators, SEE Learning recommends that teachers and administrators personally invest in exploring the concepts and practices outlined in this framework so that they can further cultivate positive relations with themselves and others and embody the curriculum being taught to their students.

For children with vulnerabilities, it has been shown that there are more negative outcomes for susceptible children in unfavorable environments, and positive outcomes for susceptible children in favorable environments.[11] There is also a growing body of research showing the beneficial effects of kindness and care on stress hormone release and immune function in children and even animals.[12] So both in terms of learning outcomes and physical health, compassion and kindness in the learning environment matters profoundly.

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[10] Thapa, A., Cohen, J., Higgins-D'Alessandro, A., & Guffey, S. (2012). School climate research summary: August 2012. School Climate Brief, 3, 1-21.

[11] Bakermans-Kranenburg MJ, van Ijzendoorn MH. Research Review: genetic vulnerability or differential susceptibility in child development: the case of attachment. J Child Psychol Psychiatry. 2007 Dec;48(12):1160-73.

[12] Miller, J. G., Kahle, S., Lopez, M., & Hastings, P. D. (2015). Compassionate love buffers stress-reactive mothers from fight-or-flight parenting. Developmental psychology, 51(1), 36. Keltner, Dacher. "Darwin's Touch: Survival of the Kindest." *Psychology Today,* February 11, 2009. Albers, E. M., Marianne Riksen-Walraven, J., Sweep, F. C., & Weerth, C. D. (2008). Maternal behavior predicts infant cortisol recovery from a mild everyday stressor. Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 49(1), 97-103.

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By accepting compassion as the foundation on which SEE Learning education is built, the stage is set to help students become more mindful of physical and verbal actions, and to abandon actions that are harmful to themselves and others. This leads to the first domain of SEE Learning, the Personal, which has to do with care of the self. The second domain, the Social, expands this to encourage students to develop awareness of others, empathy and compassion for them, and effective interpersonal skills for relating to others. Lastly, the Systems domain is oriented towards helping students develop the types of awareness, values and skills that pertain to broader communities and the world at large so that they can become responsible decision-makers and effective global citizens.

Domain I: Personal

SEE Learning is intended to help students at an individual level; in their interactions with each other and with their families; and as global citizens who make responsible decisions that benefit themselves and others. Although all three of these domains can be approached independently and in any order, to a great extent the Social and Systems domains find their support in the first domain of the Personal. If students are to learn to care for others and engage in sophisticated ethical decision making, they must also learn to take care of themselves. If they are to learn to attend to the needs of others and of wider communities, even the entire world, then they need to learn to attend to their own needs and inner life. In the context of SEE Learning, this means developing "emotional literacy" and the skills that support it, such as attention and emotional literacy. Emotional literacy has many aspects, each of which will be described in this section. It consists of the ability to recognize and identify emotions; to connect emotions to a larger context including one's own needs; to develop discernment with regard to the effects of emotions; and finally to navigate emotions successfully. Ultimately, emotional literacy allows students to refrain from reactive and impulsive behavior that could harm oneself and others, while having the calmness of mind necessary to make sound decisions that are in one's own best long-term interests. As such, it is a crucial skill for the student's ability to flourish.

In this domain, the three dimensions of SEE Learning are taught through the components of *Attention and Self-Awareness*; *Self-Compassion*; and *Self-Regulation*. These are briefly outlined here and then described in greater detail below with a section on each. *Attention and Self-Awareness* refers to directing attention to become increasingly aware of mental and physical states and what they may indicate about one's level of stress and well-being, one's emotions, and so on. In addition to the first-person or "subjective" dimension of students' attending directly to their bodies and minds so that they are aware of what is going on inside them, this component also includes learning about emotions from a third-person or "objective" perspective. This involves learning emotions, their types, and their characteristics, to develop what can be called a "map of the mind." When a first-person

ability to recognize emotions and body states as they arise is combined with this map of the mind, students establish the basic foundation for emotional literacy.

Building on this, the next component of *Self-Compassion* addresses how to make sense of emotions in their larger context. This involves investigating how emotions do not arise out of nowhere, but have causes and often arise from needs. As students learn how their attitudes, perspectives, and needs contribute to driving their emotional reactions, this recognition leads to a deeper, second level of emotional literacy. It can also lead to greater self-acceptance. By understanding that emotions come not just from external triggers but also from underlying needs, students can use this knowledge to develop a more realistic attitude towards themselves, becoming less self-critical with regard to the emotions they feel, and relaxing self-blame and self-judgment. This can also help in developing a sense of self-worth and a recognition of one's own value as well as one's values. The two inter-related topics in this component are therefore "understanding emotions in context" and "self-acceptance."

Self-Regulation refers to the behaviors and practices that follow from and reinforce the awareness and insights gained from the previous two components. Once students have learned to attend to their bodies and sensations, they can then engage in practices for regulating and balancing the body, bringing it back to a place of optimal functioning, well-being and resilience. Similarly, once students have learned to attend to their minds and emotions, they can engage in self-regulation practices involving the mind. This means cultivating cognitive and impulse control, which can be enhanced by sustaining attention on a chosen object, task or experience without distraction. All this supports the ability to "navigate emotions." This means discerning emotions and their impacts, and responding constructively to impulses and emotional reactions. This can involve the immediate application of "antidotes" or coping strategies in the face of a challenging situation, as well as over time learning to cultivate and choose attitudes, behaviors and perspectives that gradually transform one's emotional responses in a positive way.

When considered as a whole, the topics covered in the Personal domain can be understood as focusing on the cultivation of emotional literacy: the ability to identify the nature and context of one's emotions and to know how to effectively navigate them. Without an ability to negotiate the complexities of this inner terrain of mind and emotions, students may not be able to overcome deep-seated habitual patterns, limiting their capacity for self-control and their freedom. It is therefore essential to cultivate a deeper level of emotional awareness along with the tools to discern and regulate potentially destructive emotions. Since the purpose of successfully navigating one's world of emotions is a healthy, happy life, developing emotional literacy can also be described using the metaphor of cultivating good emotional hygiene. With physical hygiene, one distinguishes pathogens from contributors to health. Similarly, cultivating emotional literacy involves helping students clearly distinguish emotions that may be harmful to their well-being from those which are beneficial. These specific tools and skills can be used by students to avoid emotional hijacking and instead act in ways that help them to succeed and flourish.

Far from being selfish or opposed to ethics, the type of self-cultivation developed in the Personal domain helps establish a basis for ethical action by enhancing the naturally resilient capacities within students. If this aspect of the SEE Learning framework is understood, it can easily be applied to the Social and Systems domains, since many of the same skills and materials pertain to those, but are merely extended to interpersonal and wider communal and global contexts.

Attention and Self-Awareness

The goal of the Personal domain is for students to be able to combine a direct, first-person awareness of what their bodies and minds are telling them with third-person information about the mind and body. This is the first step towards emotional literacy. In other words, students learn to directly recognize an emotion such as anger in their own experience by attending to their body and mind, while also having come to an intellectual understanding of what anger is by having learned about it as an emotion. It is the

combination of these different types of knowledge (direct first-person observation and acquired third-person knowledge) that makes for increasingly powerful self-awareness. These two types of knowledge could also be called subjective and objective, since the former arises internally through direct perception and experience, while the latter is learned about externally and second-hand. (Note that this usage of subjective refers to personal experience, not the usage that refers to something merely being a matter of opinion or taste.) The subjective would therefore involve coming to notice what happiness, anger, or excitement looks like for me, in my body and in my mind, whereas the objective would involve coming to understand what is understood about these emotions and mental states in general (such as in scientific models).

The three main topics in this component are *attending to our body and sensations*; *attending to emotions and feelings*; and the *map of the mind*. Each can be articulated as an enduring capability (see chart), and each is helpful and useful on its own, as well as when combined with the others. The first two refer to cultivating direct personal awareness of the body and mind, while the third refers to developing general knowledge about the mind and emotions.

Domain – Personal | Dimension - Awareness

Component: Attention and Self-Awareness (1A)

Enduring Capabilities

1. **Attending to Our Body and Sensations** – Notice and describe sensations in the body, especially those related to stress and well-being
2. **Attending to Emotions and Feelings** - Attend to and identify one's emotions in type and intensity as they arise
3. **Map of the Mind** - Categorize emotions in relation to emotion models including the continuum from beneficial to potentially harmful

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We begin with *attending to our body and sensations*. This refers to helping students pay attention to what is happening to their bodies on the inside, that is, on the level of sensations. When attended to, the body is a constant source of information about the state

of our nervous system. Emotional states are typically accompanied by changes within the body, involving things such as heart rate, tightness or relaxation of muscles, feelings of heat or coolness, feelings of expansion or contraction, and so on. The nervous system responds very quickly to situations, such as perceived threat or safety, and it does so in a way that often seems to bypass higher cognition and executive function—what we could call the conscious brain. Therefore, noticing what is happening in the body can often inform a student of their emotional state faster than attuning solely to the mental aspects of the experience. Since what is happening inside the bodies happens on the level of sensations, and is often not consciously apprehended unless one pays attention to it, what is necessary here is to help students practice attending to sensations.

The practice of attending to sensations in the body has been given various names, including "mindfulness of sensations," "tracking" and "reading the nervous system." Within the context of SEE Learning, tracking contributes to the development of emotional literacy, but even on its own, it has been shown to be helpful in a variety of contexts. For example, tracking is used in several interventions created for people who have suffered from trauma, because of the way trauma affects the nervous system. All children go through experiences that can be perceived as scary or threatening, so students participating in SEE Learning programs need not have suffered from serious or "big T" trauma to benefit from practices that involve attending to the body and sensations (although some may have). However, since experts advise that even just noticing and attending to body sensations can lead to a retriggering of past trauma, it is highly recommended that tracking be taught in conjunction with other skills, such as grounding and resourcing,[13] which are explained in detail in the upcoming section on Self-Regulation (1E). This way, students are equipped with methods for returning their body to a place of safety and resilience from the start.

By learning to attend to their nervous systems through awareness of the sensations in their bodies, students will gradually learn to detect the signs of stress and well-being in

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[13] Miller-Karas, Elaine. *Building resilience to trauma: The trauma and community resiliency models.* Routledge, 2015.

their bodies. A greater awareness of sensations, which can be cultivated through practice, will help them to realize when their bodies are in a state of well-being—what Elaine Miller-Karas calls "the resiliency zone" or "zone of well-being."[14] Similarly, they will start to notice more quickly when they are out of that zone, either due to hyper-arousal (anxiety, excessive anger, agitation) or hypo-arousal (lethargy, feeling depressed). This awareness is the first step in learning to balance the body and return to a state of physiological well-being, which is a precondition for acting in one's own and others' best interests.

The next topic is *attending to emotions and feelings*. Learning to attend to and regulate the body provides a foundation for attending to emotions and feelings, because the calmer and more settled the body is, the easier it is to focus on the mind. Further, increased awareness of the body heightens the sensitivity and accuracy of emotional awareness because bodily sensations serve as important markers of emotional experience. As noted, for students to develop emotional literacy, externally provided knowledge is insufficient; it has to be complemented by personal insight as well. Students therefore need to develop emotional awareness, the ability to recognize and identify emotions as they arise in the present moment. When emotions become too powerful, they have the potential to overwhelm us and even drive us to actions that we might later regret. Yet although emotions can develop very quickly, they typically start off as a spark before they become a raging forest fire. If caught at that early stage of being just a spark, they can be dealt with quite easily. But to do that, students have to develop the ability to see emotions and feelings as they are arising in the present moment. Fortunately this is a practice that can be learned and improved upon over time. While emotional awareness is more fully cultivated in the *Compassion* dimension, here it takes the initial form of simply attending to, noticing, and being able to describe emotions and feelings as they arise.

As mentioned, the point of these practices is to help students develop a "first-person" understanding of emotions, that is, a personal understanding that arises from their own experience. Since such an understanding cannot be taught from the outside, this requires

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[14] Miller-Karas, *Building resilience to trauma.*

a practice component where students actively engage in the process of noticing, recognizing, and identifying their own emotions. Practices such as mindfulness are especially useful here.

Noticing emotions and feelings is greatly aided by having a *map of the mind*, which is the final topic in this component. The *map of the mind* is a metaphor that refers to helping students develop an increasingly sophisticated conceptual understanding of emotions and mental states. The ultimate aim of this map, just like a physical map, is to provide students with a resource that can help them navigate their own emotional landscape. Students can be guided in the development of this map through discussion and reflection, informed by age-appropriate scientific material on the effects of certain emotions on our body and relationships. The purpose of the map of the mind is to provide conceptual models that enable students to learn to identify the different families of emotions, their common features, and what gives rise to and promotes these emotions. These conceptual models can be relatively basic for very young students, but should be drawn from the most recent scientific research and other available models of mind and emotions for older students.

For example, by grouping emotions into "emotion families," students learn about the various shades, nuances and intensities of emotions, as well as their shared features. Students also learn that most emotions are not inherently destructive, but become destructive when they are inappropriate to the context and situation. Fear, for example, can be constructive as it can protect us from danger, but it becomes counterproductive when it reaches the point of anxiety. The psychologist Paul Ekman, one of the leading researchers on emotions, has created an online resource called the "Atlas of Emotions" that can be very helpful in teaching students the various types of emotions and emotion families, thereby leading to greater emotional literacy.[15]

The map of the mind serves as a guide for this cultivation of emotional awareness. For example, learning that irritation is a milder emotional state that can lead to anger, and that

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[15] http://www.paulekman.com/atlas-of-emotions/

unchecked anger can result in full-blown rage, can help a student recognize the subtler forms of emotions before they turn into unmanageable emotional states. A first-person exploration of emotions and the cultivation of emotional awareness can serve as a way of deepening one's understanding of the models of emotions presented in the map of the mind, or can even serve as a testing ground for whether those models hold true for the student or not when compared against the evidence of their own experience. Specifically, this can include practices such as types of mindfulness, reflecting on past experiences involving strong emotions, and other forms of introspective and contemplative practices.

Self-Compassion

The dimension of Compassion in the Personal domain is explored under the heading of *Self-Compassion*. Since self-compassion is easily misunderstood, Dr. Thupten Jinpa usefully points out what it is not: self-compassion is not self-pity, indulgent self-gratification, or merely high self-esteem, which is based on evaluations of self and others.[16] In SEE Learning, self-compassion refers to the process of genuine self-care, particularly of one's inner life. The component of self-compassion centers around a further vital aspect to the development of emotional literacy, which is the ability to understand emotions in a wider context that includes one's own needs. This additional layer of emotional literacy also allows for self-acceptance, because understanding why emotions arise and how they relate to their needs allows students to relate to their emotions with less self-judgment. By seeing emotions more clearly and understanding that they are transient, arise from contexts, and are therefore not fixed and immutable aspects of themselves, students can develop greater self-confidence and self-acceptance. This self-confidence and self-acceptance then creates the foundation for navigating the emotions and for accepting criticism and dealing with set-backs constructively and with resilience, preventing such disappointments from leading to excessive self-criticism or a loss of self-worth. The two topics of this component are therefore *understanding emotions in context* and *self-acceptance*.

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[16] Jinpa, *The fearless heart*, 29.

Domain – Personal | Dimension - Compassion

Component: Self-Compassion (1C)

Enduring Capabilities

1. **Understanding Emotions in Context** – Recognize emotions as they arise and understand how they arise within a context, including underlying needs, perceptions, and attitudes
2. **Self-Acceptance** – Accept oneself and one's emotions by understanding their context, allowing for a relaxation of self-judgment

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Understanding emotions in context is greatly aided by critical thinking, particularly as it relates to students' values, needs, and expectations. Whereas in cultivating self-awareness students learned to attend to their inner world of thoughts and emotions, and learned to identify emotions, here students explore and come to understand how an emotional reaction to a situation is prompted not only by the external trigger, but also by their own perspectives and attitudes, rooted in a perception of their own needs. A situation that triggers an emotional state of anxiety may result from a desire for more certainty in a situation where that may not be possible. An event that triggers the emotion of anger may result from a need to be respected. And an emotion of hopelessness or frustration may result from a desire for an immediate change to a situation that may require more time or patience before the wished-for outcome is achieved. Seeing that inner expectations and attitudes play a central role in generating emotional adds an important dimension to emotional literacy. From this, students can learn that a change in inner attitudes, expectations, and perspectives can result in long-term positive changes in habitual patterns and tendencies.

As students gain these insights, they are in a better position to recognize and appreciate their own value and cultivate an abiding sense of self-worth and inner confidence, while learning to identify unrealistic expectations that could lead to unhealthy self-judgment. By recognizing how emotional reactions often stem from needs, they can also begin to

critically assess those needs, not all of which may be equal. This can involve differentiating needs from wants by coming to a deeper appreciation of their own values and what will lead them to a life that exhibits those values, rather than short-term wants that may not lead to long-term well-being.

Recognizing the broader context in which emotions arise in one's life also supports the *self-acceptance* aspect of self-compassion. Self-acceptance is of great importance as anger in our societies is increasingly being turned inwards. Excessive self-criticism, self-hate, and self-loathing are not only damaging to individual health and happiness, but they can cause tremendous harm if they trigger violence towards self or others. Reinforcing self-esteem is not the best solution, since self-esteem is based on comparisons with others, and research suggests that inward and outward aggression often manifest when a person's high self-esteem is threatened. A better method is helping students cultivate inner fortitude, resilience, humility, and courage by coming to a greater understanding of their emotional life, allowing them to relax perfectionistic idealization and move toward realistic expectations of themselves and others. When a student has limited understanding and awareness of their emotional life, they will have greater difficulty tolerating challenges, difficulties, and setbacks, and will be less likely to seek and find opportunities for change and constructive action.

Modern culture is incredibly effective in teaching young people a host of unrealistic notions about themselves and others through television, films, and other forms of media. All too often young people compare themselves to idealized celebrities, or believe they should be performing like a "superman" or "wonder woman," free from imperfections or limitations. These impossible-to-reach standards lead to unnecessary mental anguish, and that frustration may in turn manifest as depression and self-blame, even to the point of physical self-harm, or hostility and violence directed outward towards others.

A realistic perspective regarding one's own limitations is crucial to circumventing this toxic cycle. By developing patience and understanding about their difficulties, their nature and origins, students can become both motivated and able to reorient themselves

away from these injurious mental states and behaviors. At the same time, students can learn to see that they have self-worth independent of their performance or their ability to meet arbitrary standards set by themselves or others. This sense of self-worth that is not dependent on external circumstances can then serve as a powerful support for resilience.

In SEE Learning, students cultivate self-acceptance by reflecting on topics such as the inevitability of certain forms of disappointment and distress. It is not possible to be the best at everything, to win all the time, to know everything, or to never make a mistake. In fact, disappointments, challenges and mistakes are inevitable facts of life for everyone. While it may appear discouraging to consider this reality, these insights do not in fact undermine motivation but rather build resilience, because students will come to a better understanding of the process that leads to achieving one's goals—a process that requires patience, effort, and the ability to work through setbacks. Losses, vulnerabilities, limitations, imperfections, even ageing, sickness, and death, are inescapable aspects of the human condition, and reflecting on this such that it becomes an embodied understanding prepares one to better face such difficulties when they inevitably arise. Furthermore, despite one's best efforts, most outcomes depend on a wide variety of causes and conditions, many of which are outside of one's control. With this realistic view in place, students can face the world with greater confidence and efficacy, seeing more clearly what *is* within their ability to address and then doing their best to make that happen.

Self-compassion involves kindness to oneself, but it is also a source of inner strength, resilience, and courage. It is not about pretending that things are okay when they are not; rather, it is based on a realistic assessment of both one's capabilities and how one can influence the wider reality. Without education in this area, students may feel that they should be able to do more when they cannot; similarly, they may feel disempowered and not recognize the abilities they have to influence the things they can. As Dr. Jinpa notes, "In cultivating self-compassion, we don't evaluate ourselves according to our worldly successes, and we don't compare ourselves with others. Instead, we acknowledge our shortcomings and failings with patience, understanding, and kindness. We view our

problems within the larger context of our shared human condition. So, self-compassion, unlike self-esteem, lets us feel more connected with other people, and more positively disposed to them. Finally, self-compassion lets us be honest with ourselves… [it] promotes a realistic understanding of our situation."[17]

Humility is part of that honesty with oneself, and is an important aspect of self-compassion. Seeking to instill constructive pride in students is reconcilable with humility, because humility is not thinking of oneself as less than one's abilities, but rather a realistic and honest assessment of one's capacities. Contrary to popular belief, humility is therefore a contributor to success and achievement, and is an opposing factor to self-criticism and self-hate, since it represents the opposite of the unrealistic expectations that lead to a sense of personal failure. Students can be shown how even historically esteemed figures who accomplished great good in society had limitations, and often expressed a humility that was not in conflict with their abilities and achievements.

Self-Regulation

The topics and practices of the two preceding components lay the groundwork for Self-Regulation. This component refers to the practices and behaviors that are consonant with and reinforce the insights and awareness gained with regard to body, mind and emotions. The three topics for this component are *balancing the body*; *cognitive and impulse control*; and *navigating emotions*. Each of these connects to a corresponding topic in the "Attention and Self-Awareness" component *(attending to our body and sensations; attending to emotions and feelings;* and *map of the mind)*. In many cases, therefore, it will make sense to teach these topics together. Ultimately the goal of this component is to help students successfully navigate emotions such that they do not cause undue problems for themselves or others—in other words, so that their emotions become allies rather than obstacles. In order to navigate the emotions in this way, cognitive and impulse control is required, but this is not easy to cultivate if the body is stressed, in a state of hyper- or hypo-arousal, or otherwise dysregulated. Thus, the three topics fit logically together.

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[17] Jinpa, *A fearless heart*, 31.

Domain – Personal | Dimension - Engagement

Component: Self-Regulation

Enduring Capabilities

1) **Balancing the Body** - Regulate the body and nervous system, especially when activated, stressed or lacking in energy, to optimize well-being

2) **Cognitive and Impulse Control** - Sustain attention on an object, task, or experience, avoiding distraction

3) **Navigating Emotions** - Respond constructively to impulses and emotions and cultivate the behaviors and attitudes that facilitate one's long-term well-being

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To support the cultivation of cognitive and impulse control, students will be benefited by practices that help them to balance the body. Without a basic level of physical regulation in the body, it is hard to bring about stability and clarity of mind. This in turn will make it very challenging to help students make progress in the other competencies. This is because a level of energy in the body and mind that is too high or too low will prevent stability and clarity of body and mind, and will make it hard for children to examine and navigate the inner landscape of their thoughts and emotions. Such a step is especially important when dealing with children who themselves or whose parents have suffered from trauma, who live in less than desirable conditions, or who have suffered adverse early childhood experiences. In such situations, the practices of learning to attend and developing emotional awareness may be hindered if students do not first learn to calm and balance their bodies and minds.

In SEE Learning, balancing the body serves as an important foundation for other practices, such as the cultivation of attention and the reflective practices. Three fundamental skills included in SEE Learning for balancing the body are resourcing, grounding and tracking (explained in the sidebar). These skills focus on regulating the nervous system, and are informed by trauma-informed care, but are applicable to all individuals, whether they have suffered from serious trauma or not.

Balancing the body is greatly facilitated by creating a safe space. Without a sense of trust and security, students may remain in a heightened state of alert. Dr. Bruce D. Perry, an authority on brain development and children in crisis, who has served as a consultant on many high-profile incidents involving traumatized children, including the Columbine High School shootings and the Oklahoma City Bombing, makes this point about the learning environment:

> When a child feels safe, curiosity lives. Yet when the world around us is strange and new, we crave familiarity. In new situations a child will be more easily overwhelmed, distressed, and frustrated. This child will be less capable of learning. The hungry child, the ill, tired, confused, or fearful child does not care about new things — they want familiar, comforting, and safe things.[18]

He then offers this advice for creating an emotionally safe classroom:

> A sense of safety comes from consistent, attentive, nurturing, and sensitive attention to each child's needs. Safety is created by predictability, and predictability is created by consistent behaviors. And the consistency that leads to predictability does not come from rigidity in the timing of activities, it comes from the consistency of interaction from the teacher.[19]

Dr. Perry continues by pointing out the need to be attuned to each child's overload point, and to provide time during the day for quiet and solitude so that the brain can catch up and process new information. He also suggests that, particularly with younger children, teachers can foster a sense of security by keeping the initial challenges light, and the praise heavy. This allows each student to experience success, mitigating any fear they may be feeling.

On a practical level, a safe learning environment is created when the teacher models kindness and consistency as well as patience, calmness, good humor, and vulnerability. A sense of safety is increased if tensions in the classroom are alleviated before they escalate, and when expectations regarding classroom behavior are clear, mutually respectful, and agreed upon. Students need to know the consequences of serious

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[18] Perry, Bruce D., Creating an emotionally safe classroom, *Early Childhood Today*; Aug/Sep2000, Vol. 15 Issue 1, p35
[19] Ibid.

infractions, and that there will be compassionate, but consistent follow-through with those consequences. For older students, a safe space may require the establishment of rules for how to conduct dialogue so that all students feel they can express themselves honestly without being attacked or undermined, thus creating a climate in which difficult discussions may take place in a productive fashion.

[SIDEBAR]

RESOURCES, GROUNDING, AND TRACKING
NOTES ON TEACHING METHODS FOR BALANCING THE BODY

Balancing the body is related to attuning to a sense of safety rather than a sense of being under threat, due to the effect that such perception has on the nervous system. Of course the first step is to maximize the actual safety and security of students in the classroom environment, extending this as much as possible to the entire school and community.[20] But a sense of safety can be developed by helping students think of, and practice accessing, "resources." These resources can be external, internal, or imagined. External resources could be a friend, a favorite place, a pleasant memory, a family member, a pet, a favorite piece of music or musician, and so on. Internal resources could be a skill the student has, a positive aspect of themselves such as their sense of humor or smile, an activity they like to do, or a part of their body that feels strong and capable. Imagined resources allow the student to create something that can serve as a resource for them, even if they have not experienced it in person. The point of the resource is that bringing it to mind and exploring it in detail helps to move the student into a place of resilience, safety and comfort. It may take time to help students develop a number of resources that they can bring to mind in order to bring about a sense of greater security, but once this process has become natural to them, it can prove very helpful in achieving this end. Once the resource has been developed, students can bring to mind their resource and then practice "tracking." This involves noticing any sensations in their body when they think of their resource, and attending to whether they are pleasant, unpleasant or neutral. Gradually students will learn to contrast their body's sensations and processes when recalling their resource to how their body is when stressed or dysregulated.

"Grounding" is also a useful sensorimotor practice in creating safety and bringing the mind back to the body. This practice involves bringing attention to any physical contact that creates a sense of support, security, safety or well-being. This can involve touching or holding an object that is grounding, or where the

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[20] Refer to the Teacher Guide for notes on creating a supportive SEE Learning environment, including practices for the teacher herself to cultivate emotional stability and self-regulation which will contribute to this environment.

body is supported. If paying attention to how the body is supported, students should be encouraged to change postures and noticing how these changes bring about a feeling of more or less support. Like resourcing, grounding should be done in conjunction with tracking, noticing sensations in the body and allowing students to shift to pleasant or neutral sensations (or to a resource) when the student encounters unpleasant sensations.[21] As students develop the skills of resourcing, grounding and tracking, they will gradually develop more awareness of the processes in their body, allowing them to sense tension, anxiety and stress earlier and before they become difficult to manage.

A variety of other tools can also be used to supplement these practices of balancing the body. Yoga or Tai-chi type exercises have become very popular in many American, Canadian and European schools,[22] and in Sweden, students routinely engage in peer-to-peer massage of the back, shoulder, and arms, although this may not be permissible or culturally appropriate in other places.[23] Listening to music, drawing, or journaling can also be good ways to help students transition into more formal activities for balancing the body. Another effective method is to engage in active relaxation through guided body scans, tensing and releasing muscle groups, or calming visualization practices such as the creation of a "secret garden." Perhaps the oldest and simplest is the use of various kinds of breathing techniques—counting one's breaths, engaging in deep breathing, or rhythmic breathing practices like the "elevator breath" in which students raise and lower their arms as they gently breath down to their belly for four counts, exhale out for four, and so on.

However, as noted above, since such sensorimotor practices as breathing or focusing on the breath have been known to lead to anxiety and other difficulties, particularly in individuals who have experienced trauma, it is recommended that teachers begin by offering practices such as grounding and resourcing so that students already have tools to deal with negative experiences should they arise. Care should be taken therefore to first provide students with basic tools that work for them individually before exploring sensorimotor practices more broadly.

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[21] Elaine Miller-Karas and her colleagues at the Trauma Resource Institute have drawn from trauma-informed care to develop the Community Resiliency Model, which describes these and other practices for calming the body in detail, and such practices can be very helpful in preparing students for attention training and emotional awareness practices. These practices have been incorporated into the SEE Learning curricula.

[22] *See for example*: Timmer, Cindy K., "Integrating yoga into elementary classrooms in order to create a foundation of serenity and health early in life" (2009). *School of Education Student Capstones and Dissertations.* Paper 779. Hagen, Ingunn and Nayar, Usha S. Yoga for children and young people's mental health and well-being: research review and reflections on the mental health potentials of yoga. *Frontiers in Psychiatry,* (April 2014, VOL. 5, Article 35). Converse, Alexander K., Ahlers, Elizabeth O., Travers, Brittany G., and Davidson, Richard J. "Tai chi training reduces self-report of inattention in healthy young adults," *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience.* 2014; 8: 13

[23] Berggren, Solveig. "Massage in schools reduces stress and anxiety," *Young Children,* (September, 2004).

It is important that teachers understand the difference between balancing the body and merely relaxing the body or inducing lethargy and sleepiness. The point is to develop a facility with bringing about a state of physical and mental regulation most conducive to attention and learning. This is an active, resilient and balanced state, rather than a sluggish, sleepy, or lethargic state. Therefore, practices for balancing the body should not merely involve relaxation, lying down, or nap time.

Balancing the body may be particularly challenging, but also particularly important, for children struggling with difficult life circumstances, confusing emotions, or certain medical conditions. Children, like adults, have stressors, and when a child behaves inappropriately, it can often be attributed to the fact that they are experiencing discomfort at some level due to stress. By helping students develop the ability to balance the body, they acquire a way to cope with this immediate sense of unease. At other times, balancing the body may simply serve as a method for transitioning between healthy states of physical activity to more focused work, such as when it is time to pay attention to a lesson after a period of exuberant outdoor games.

Familiarity with whatever technique is used is key to students learning to effectively and efficiently balance the body. It may take a significant amount of time for younger children and adolescents to learn to regulate their bodies. As with any skill, the more often one practices it, the greater the facility. With this skill in place, students may begin learning to cultivate cognitive and impulse control more easily.

In addition to a balanced body, navigating emotions depends on cognitive and impulse control, without which students would be at the mercy of their immediate emotions, feelings and impulses. Cognitive and impulse control in turn depends on the ability to sustain attention and not get caught up in distractions, emotional or otherwise. This topic therefore relies upon the cultivation of sustained attention. Here, attention refers to the ability of students to focus their attention on an object of their choice and to sustain that focus without undue stress or distraction. What is especially important, however, is not

just any kind of attention, but attention that can be focused inward and that can note changes in the body and mind as they occur. As Daniel Goleman notes in *The Triple Focus*, attention is key to bringing about awareness as it relates to all three of the inner, other, and outer domains (called Personal, Social and Systems in SEE Learning). Indeed, this skill of attention will be of great benefit when dealing with the Social domain, where it involves attending to inner responses to the presence and feelings of others, and the Systems domain, where it involves attending to inner awareness and responses to interdependence. Furthermore, practices of learning to attend can be combined with emotional literacy components to help students recognize emotions as they arise and eventually gain greater control over them. Since the body often signals emotional states faster than the mind detects them, practices can be employed to notice how emotions build up in the body, allowing students to recognize physical changes as signs of emotional disturbances and catch them before they become too overpowering.

The skill of attention is a necessity for developing the first-person side of emotional literacy and involves the cultivation of cognitive control. To succeed in life, students need to be able to stay focused and on task, avoiding distractions. This focus includes paying attention not simply to the teacher or the lesson at hand, but to those thoughts and behaviors that are counterproductive, such as daydreaming or passing notes, as well as to the types of behavior that are beneficial, such as listening. Rather than simply telling students to "pay attention," teachers can help students develop for themselves the crucial insights that will inform their own awareness and judgment of what to pay attention to at a given time, and the skills to be able to pay attention with greater ease and endurance.

Both the attentional control and the cognitive flexibility needed to redirect attention are important features of executive function, the collection of brain functions needed when one has to concentrate and think, or inhibit acting on impulse when it would be ill-advised.[24] When students have difficulty with attention-related self-regulation skills, it can lead to a variety of issues including trouble with reading and language development

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[24] Diamond, Adele, and Lee, Kathleen. "Interventions shown to Aid Executive Function Development in Children 4–12 Years Old." *Science*. 2011 August 19; 333(6045): 959–964

along with poorer overall academic performance. Additionally, the inability to effectively regulate attention impacts students socially, making them more susceptible to acting out and peer rejection.[25]

The ability to sustain attention is also necessary if students are to persevere with a long-term task or higher-order goal in the face of challenges; this competency is a crucial component of what some in education now term "grit."[26] Grit will allow students to see difficulties as a bump in the road on their way to success, rather than as a failure of individual ability or willpower. This is true especially when this persistence is framed in terms of their own values so that they understand *why* they are making an effort.[27] As Amir Raz, a cognitive neuroscientist and leading attention researcher at McGill University suggests, "If you have good attentional control, you can do more than just pay attention to someone speaking at a lecture, you can control your cognitive processes, control your emotions, better articulate your actions. You can enjoy and gain an edge on life."[28]

There is also evidence suggesting that inhibition control, along with the socializing environment, contributes significantly to the development of conscience in childhood, the foundation for autonomous self-regulation,[29] and eventually, for responsible decision making.[30] Thus far, research suggests that the best methods for cultivating attentional control and inhibition are specific types of curricula, and mindfulness-based practices

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[25] NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, "Do Children's Attention Processes Mediate the Link Between Family Predictors and School Readiness?" *Developmental Psychology*, 2003, Vol. 39, No. 3, p.583

[26] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Educational Technology. "Promoting Grit, Tenacity, and Perseverance: Critical Factors for Success in the 21st Century," February 14, 2013. p. vii

[27] Ibid. p.x

[28] Jackson, Maggie. "Attention Class." *The Boston Globe,* June 29, 2008.

[29] Kochanska, Gvazyna, Murray, Kathleen and Coy, Katherine C. "Inhibitory Control as a Contributor to Conscience in Childhood: From Toddler to Early School Age." *Child Development,* April 1997, Volume 68, Number 2, Pages 263-277. Kochanska, Gvazyna, and Aksan, Nazan. "Children's Conscience and Self-Regulation." *Journal of Personality.* Volume 74, Issue 6, pages 1587–1618, December 2006.

[30] Reudy et al. found that compared to individuals low in mindfulness, individuals high in mindfulness report that they are more likely to act ethically, are more likely to value upholding ethical standards and are more likely to engage in a principled approach to ethical decision making. Reudy, Nicole E. and Schweitzer, Maurice E. "In the Moment: The Effect of Mindfulness on Ethical Decision Making." *Journal of Business Ethics*, September 2010, Volume 95, Supplement 1, pp 73-87

such as meditation, martial arts, and yoga.[31] These research results align with observations made by both Linda Lantieri and Daniel Goleman, founding figures in the Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) movement. Lantieri and Goleman have recognized the need to incorporate attention training into SEL—that is, structured methods for learning to attend to one's feelings, thoughts and impulses without being carried away by them—in order to provide children with a technique for increasing self-control.[32] Even when kindness and compassion are valued, one may, of course, still harm others, or engage in actions that are detrimental to one's own well being. Often this is due to simply being "caught in the moment," or not considering the consequences of our actions until it is too late. Attention training helps one learn to create a space between stimulus and response: a space in which a more considered response can be formed.

Cognitive and impulse control can also be powerful tools in combating the ever-increasing stress experienced by students, as has been demonstrated in the work of Jon Kabat-Zinn, the originator of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction, and Dr. Herbert Benson, who first identified the physiological benefits of invoking the so-called "relaxation response." Other researchers have noted that, "When students use mindfulness in their learning processes, they utilize creativity, experience cognitive flexibility, and are able to better use information to enhance memory for instructional retention…. They were better able to focus and relax, reduce anxiety before taking a test, make better decisions when in conflict, and were more easily able to redirect their attention when off-task."[33] It should be noted that while mindfulness can be defined in various ways, the focus in SEE Learning is on the cultivation of attention. This ability to attend will then serve as a foundation for navigating the emotions as well as for the reflective practices in SEE Learning which require sustained attention in order to be most effective.

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[31] Diamond, Adele, and Lee, Kathleen. "Interventions shown to Aid Executive Function Development in Children 4–12 Years Old." *Science.* 2011 August 19; 333(6045): 959–964

[32] See Goleman and Senge, *The Triple Focus*, p. 21; and Linda Lantieri and Vicki Zakrzewski, "How SEL and Mindfulness Can Work Together." April 7, 2015.
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_social_emotional_learning_and_mindfulness_can_work_together

[33] Napoli, Maria, Krech, Paul Rock, and Holley, Lynn C. "Mindfulness Training for Elementary School Students: The Attention Academy." *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, Vol. 21(1) 2005.

Cognitive and impulse control in SEE Learning is based on specific strategies to enhance attention. Students can practice focusing on specific objects of attention (such as the breath), develop awareness of what is going on within the body and mind, and engage in witnessing their thoughts and emotions. These formal practices support learning to be "fully present," and help children develop attentional stability, impulse control, and the ability to delay gratification. For example, very young children can begin with a practice like "breathing buddies," where they place a small stuffed animal on their stomach and watch it go up and down as they count their breaths. Students can learn to attend through almost any activity if it is engaged in consciously for the purpose of cultivating attention, from walking to eating to noticing a sound.

Beyond this specific training in cultivating attention, pedagogical techniques can also support students in this competency. Breaking up tasks into smaller pieces, or alternating tasks can be helpful in students learning to direct, shift, and maintain focus, as is keeping teacher and parental expectations in line with developmental realities. There is also evidence indicating that providing students with both task goals and a roadmap for achieving those goals improves the ability to sustain attention over time.[34]

Balancing the body and cultivating cognitive and impulse control are of great value in themselves, but they also serve the final topic, which is *navigating emotions*. Equipped with skills and knowledge from the other topics in the Personal domain, such as the ability to recognize and identify emotions as well as the ability to relate them to one's deeper needs, the question now arises of how to put this knowledge into practice. This constitutes the remaining step of emotional literacy: the ability to use one's map of the mind and one's emotional awareness to successfully navigate the world of emotions.

A key step here is helping students develop emotional discernment, the ability to recognize when emotions are productive and helpful to oneself and others, and when they

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[34] Duckworth, Angela L., Peterson, Christopher, Michael D. Matthews and Kelly, Dennis R. "Grit: Perseverance and Passion for Long-Term Goals." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 2007, Vol. 92, No. 6, 1087–1101

become toxic or harmful to oneself and others. This process may already have begun to some extent in the Self-compassion component and in learning the "map of the mind," but here it is developed fully and explicitly addressed. Having recognized those attitudes and behaviors that are beneficial to oneself and others and those that are potentially harmful, students then learn the skills to successfully cultivate the former and deal effectively with the latter in their lives. The practice of self-regulation can take place on both a physical level—what kind of behaviors can one take to make things better or to avoid harming others—and a mental level—are there ways of thinking, perspective-taking or a change of attitude that could help or hinder in this situation?

As noted, it is important that students not only learn about emotions at the level of received knowledge, but also gain first-person experience and conviction into how emotions affect their minds and bodies, and even their behavior. This process of discernment is one that teachers can facilitate. Students can reflect on their personal experience in light of the map of the mind and also in a wider context of what effects emotions have on themselves and others. Where do certain emotions lead me? And do I want the results that they lead me to? A single thought of prejudice can be the germ that gives rise to terrible social consequences, and a single moment of a particular emotion, such as intense anger, if not caught and averted in time, can lead to lifelong, devastating results for oneself and others. Repeated reflection on this can lead students to develop a deep concern for learning how to identify and regulate their emotions and develop a caution with regard to emotions and mental states that may be harmful to themselves and others. As students develop competency in identifying and regulating emotions, they should begin to experience a sense of enthusiasm, courage and a boost to their self-confidence.

As students develop emotional discernment, they will also recognize that certain attitudes and perceptions affect how emotions arise. This is because they have already learned to see the relationship between emotions and underlying needs. The more students recognize the causal chains that give rise to certain emotions, the greater their emotional literacy. This will then enable students to decide which attitudes and perceptions they

may wish to encourage in themselves, and which they may wish to transform. This can also lead to an understanding of how to deal with potentially harmful emotions by applying strategies that serve to regulate, transform, or weaken the negative impact of such emotions. This is the practice of navigating the emotions.

Since emotions have to do with individual feelings and perceptions, it is important that students develop their knowledge of their emotional landscape through personal experience, rather than simply being told what is correct or what they should feel by teachers. Only when students discover for themselves what does and does not work in navigating their own emotions will it reach the level of critical insight and eventually embodied understanding. To the extent that students have cultivated attention, emotional awareness, and emotional discernment, they will have skills that help them catch themselves before reacting with harmful emotions, and if they so choose, to apply antidotal forces as remedies.

DIMENSION II: SOCIAL

Emotional literacy and the ability to self-regulate are skills of unquestionably great benefit for students both during their studies and as they continue throughout their life. As we human beings are social by nature, of equal importance is the ability to relate well with others. Although in the past we may have thought of this ability as simply inborn and immutable, increasingly scientific research is suggesting that prosocial traits can be cultivated through learning, reflection, and intentional practice. The results of such cultivation include measurable changes in the brain, body, and behavior, with associated benefits for physical, mental, and social well-being. Based on the mounting evidence, an education that is meant to help children to thrive should not only offer students the skills of self-regulation, but should also include essential skills to promote social flourishing. For this reason, the second dimension of SEE Learning is the Social. Here the word "Social" refers to immediate interpersonal interactions and interactions within a small-scale community, such as a classroom, school, family, or neighborhood. Larger-scale communities, such as a town, a society, or the world as a whole, are covered in the third domain of Systems.

The Social domain is similar to the Personal domain in many ways, except that the focus is now on others rather than oneself. Like the Personal domain it moves through the three dimensions of Awareness, Compassion, and Engagement. Awareness here means a basic awareness of others as well as an awareness of oneself as a social being—that is, as someone who exists in relation to others, who impacts others, and who needs others. Included in awareness is also the awareness of what we as human beings have in common and what differentiates us, and how to navigate these two. The Compassion dimension involves translating much of the knowledge gained in the Personal domain to others: understanding others' emotions in context in order to generate a better understanding of them with less reactive judgment, and using this understanding to cultivate compassion and other prosocial emotions and dispositions, such as gratitude, forgiveness, generosity and humility. Lastly, the Engagement dimension involves putting this awareness and insight together in learning how to relate positively and constructively

towards others. It involves navigating one's relations with others and developing the behaviors and skills that lead to well-being for others—with the recognition that such benefiting others often benefits oneself in the long term as well.

The three components of the Social domain are therefore *Interpersonal Awareness*, *Compassion for Others*, and *Relationship Skills*. *Social Awareness* focuses on the ability to recognize and appreciate how others contribute to one's well being. *Compassion for Others* emphasizes the development of the ability that we naturally have as human beings to understand how others feel and to see their perspective. *Relationship Skills* sets out to directly foster the practical skills necessary to communicate constructively and interact with others in helpful ways.

Although SEE Learning does not necessarily need to be approached in a linear fashion, progress in the Personal domain will certainly benefit students as they move into the Social domain. This is because the skills required to tune into one's own emotional life help greatly in attuning to the emotional life of others. The cultivation of the various aspects of emotional literacy—such as the map of the mind, emotional awareness, and the ability to recognize how emotions are tied to needs—can all be revisited here in the Social domain, where they will contribute to the cultivation of genuine empathy and understanding of others. This also holds true for moving from left to right on the chart along the three dimensions, from awareness to compassion to engagement: materials and practices need not be taken in a strictly linear fashion, but each successive component builds, expands upon, and reinforces those that come before it. That being said, progress in the Social domain can also translate backwards into progress in the Personal domain, as a greater understanding of others can lead to insights into oneself.

Interpersonal Awareness

"Appreciation is a wonderful thing. It makes what is excellent in others belong to us as well." As the 18th century philosopher Voltaire aptly observes, a sense of appreciation

for others facilitates and enhances feelings of personal well-being, as well as feelings of interpersonal connection. As such, it is essential for empathy, compassion, and an ability to relate productively with others and for their benefit. Even if there may be a tendency to initially focus on one's own narrow self-interest, relating to others from this perspective is a skill that can be learned over time, yielding great benefit to oneself as well.[35]

Interpersonal awareness is covered through three main topics, each linked to an enduring capability. The first is *attending to our social reality*. This is the ability to recognize our inherently social nature and attend to the presence of others and the roles they play in our lives. The second is *attending to our shared reality with others*. This involves appreciating what we share with others on a fundamental level, such as wanting happiness and to avoid suffering, having emotions and body states, and other common experiences. The third is *appreciating diversity and difference*. This involves appreciating that part of our shared reality is the diversity, uniqueness and difference of individuals and groups, learning to respect those differences and recognizing the way they add to our collective life.

Domain – Social | Dimension - Awareness

Component: Interpersonal Awareness (2A)

Enduring Capabilities

1) **Attending to Our Social Reality** – Recognize our inherently social nature and attend to the presence of others and the roles they play in our lives

2) **Attending to Our Shared Reality with Others** - Appreciate what we share with others on a fundamental level, such as wanting happiness and to avoid suffering, having emotions and body states, and other common experiences

3) **Appreciating Diversity and Difference** – Appreciate that part of our shared reality is the diversity, uniqueness and difference of individuals and groups, learning to respect those differences and the way they add to our collective life

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[35] Adler, Mitchel G. and Fagley, N. S. "Appreciation: Individual Differences in Finding Value and Meaning as a Unique Predictor of Subjective Well-Being." *Journal of Personality,* February, 2005. Vol. 73, No. 1, p.79-114.

At its most basic level, *attending to our social reality* is simply the recognition that we are social beings—that no man or woman is an "island." It is the recognition that others exist and play a role in our lives. Although this may seem like an obvious thing, this basic awareness that others exist and experience the world as subjects just as we do can sometimes escape us, as does the fact that we share a world with others and that others play a constant role in our lives in countless ways. It can be all too easy to fall into the trap of thinking that we are the only ones who have wants and needs, who should be cared for, and so on.

Although simple to begin with, this is a topic that can be explored in deeper and deeper ways, as students reflect on the people who have shaped who they are, who continue to affect their existence, and who will affect them in future. Students can explore all the ways in which others play a role in their lives from providing basic necessities to leisure activities, companionship, protection and so on. This lays the groundwork for cultivating appreciation, empathy and compassion for others. At more advanced stages, students can explore how selfhood is itself co-constructed in relation to others, the extent to which one's self-concept is influenced by others, the complexities of self-esteem, and so on.

Beyond the mere existence of others as subjects just like oneself comes the recognition that others also have emotional lives as well, and that one can attend to this as well. Thus, a basic appreciation of others can be enhanced and explored by *attending to our shared reality with others*. This second topic involves helping students recognize fundamental similarities between themselves and others, while also recognizing that these similarities need not efface an appreciation of differences. Most importantly, the fundamental similarities stressed in SEE Learning are those on the level of basic human experiences common to all. Others, just like oneself, wish to have well-being and do not want difficulties and suffering. They have emotional lives that include wants, needs, fears, hopes, and so on. They get sick, have limitations, run into obstacles, experience joys and setbacks. The recognition of these basic commonalities is a skill that can be cultivated and made habitual. Training to attend to others can improve one's ability to recognize and identify their feelings, which is an important component of cognitive empathy, while

identifying with them as similar to oneself is an important component of affective empathy. Thus this capability, when combined with the second dimension, which involves understanding others' emotions in context, becomes a powerful support for empathy.

To the extent that students have already developed a degree of emotional literacy, including a map of the mind and first-person emotional awareness, they will be able to note the similarities between themselves and others. At the same time, they need to be able to explore how others are not in every way like themselves. Although those around them have wants, needs, fears, and hopes, they do not necessarily always want the same things, or fear the same things, and this should be respected. Moreover, others have different life experiences, different perspectives, and different knowledge, all of which can be appreciated as well. Recognizing and appreciating these differences, while noting underlying similarities such as basic wish for happiness and well-being, creates a nuanced understanding of self and other that will serve as an important aspect of relationship skills.

The final topic in this component is therefore *appreciating diversity and difference*. One part of our shared reality with others is that we are all unique and different, and that we belong to social groups that have their distinctive characteristics and differ from other groups. A part of our shared reality is that we each have a different upbringing, a different family environment, and unique experiences that shape our perspectives, attitudes, and aspirations. Diversity is therefore part of our shared reality and can be appreciated as such—something that itself can bring us together, rather than push us apart. Respecting differences and the way diversity contributes to our collective life is an especially important type of awareness in our increasingly pluralistic and globalized world. It provides an important foundation for the cultivation of genuine empathy and compassion, because such emotions require that we acknowledge both the similarities between ourselves and others as well as the ways in which others are unique and distinctive and may not experience things precisely the way we do.

Compassion for Others

Interpersonal awareness and an appreciation for others pave the way for the cultivation of a range of prosocial capacities and ethical dispositions. The topics here cover some of the most important of these dispositions: *understanding others' feelings and emotions in context*; *appreciating and cultivating kindness and compassion*; and *appreciating and cultivating other ethical dispositions.* In SEE Learning, these are grouped together in the component called "Compassion for Others." This is because while all of these prosocial capacities are important, they can be understood as stemming from, or contributing to, compassion for others. Compassion therefore serves as a useful way of thinking about these prosocial capacities, and places them in their ethical context.

Domain – Social | Dimension - Compassion

Component: Compassion for Others (2C)

Enduring Capabilities

1) **Understanding others' feelings and emotions in context** – Understand other's feelings in context and understand that, like oneself, others have feelings caused by needs

2) **Appreciating and Cultivating Kindness and Compassion** – Value the benefits of kindness and compassion and cultivate them as a disposition

3) **Appreciating and Cultivating Other Ethical Dispositions** – Value and cultivate ethical dispositions and prosocial emotions, such as forgiveness, patience, contentment, generosity, and humility

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The first topic is *understanding others' feelings and emotions in context.* This is the Social domain pairing of the Personal domain topic that involves understanding one's own emotions in context. Many of the same strategies used in that topic can be translated here. Just as not understanding one's own emotions in context can lead to self-judgment, whereas understanding that they arise from needs can lead to self-acceptance and self-compassion, so too does this process work when looking at others. When one sees another person act in a way one does not approve of, it is natural to react with judgment.

If one understands that their actions were spurred by an emotion, and then understands that that emotion comes out of a context and perhaps an underlying need, this can lead to empathy and compassion rather than anger and judgment. There are many activities that can support the process of trying to understand where another person or another group of people is coming from. The intention, of course, is not to excuse inappropriate behavior, but to understand others and their emotions on a human level.

The next topic is *appreciating and cultivating kindness and compassion*. As noted earlier, compassion can serve as a powerful guiding principle for ethical behavior that benefits oneself and others. This requires that students come to understand what compassion is and what it is not, and come to value compassion as something that they wish to cultivate. If compassion is merely provided as a dictate, then it is unlikely that many students will be motivated to explore it in depth. This suggests that instructors and the school itself must come to a deep appreciation and understanding of compassion and the closely related concept of kindness. Kindness may in some cases be a more appropriate focus in working with young children, whereas compassion can be explored in greater detail as students progress.

As noted above, compassion is defined as the wish to alleviate the suffering of others. Increasingly, research across a number of fields is indicating that compassion and other prosocial capacities can be taught and cultivated, with measurable benefits to physical, mental and social well-being and health. Although many still view compassion and kindness as not being central aspects of human existence, research points to the biological roots of compassion, suggesting that it is both more innate and more essential to our survival than we tend to realize. The primatologist Frans de Waal points out that all mammalian and bird species require maternal care to survive, due to the fact that offspring cannot live on their own after birth, and provides numerous examples of non-human species expressing empathy and engaging in altruistic acts.[36] Altruistic behavior in various species, including humans, creates reciprocal bonding that supports survival

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[36] De Waal, Frans, Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society, Broadway Books; (September 7, 2010)

and flourishing on both the individual and group levels. In bird and mammalian species, including the human species, compassion is therefore a matter of survival, which may explain why we respond so positively to it, even on a physiological level.

In humans, a preference for kindness manifests in children at very young ages. Studies by developmental psychologists suggest that infants as young as three months old prefer individuals who exhibit helping behavior to those who exhibit antisocial behavior.[37] As one such researcher, Kiley Hamlin notes, "Though we may think of them as interested only in their own desires, given the chance, toddlers under two [years of age] show generosity. We find them willing to share—to give their treats away. And this makes them happy."[38]

Valuing kindness over cruelty may appear common sense, yet it is easy to become estranged from this basic fact. When that occurs, we may not value a compassionate perspective in ourselves or in others; we may accept the cruelty of others, or dismiss our own cruel acts. Students can be helped to strengthen their predisposition to kindness through the promotion of compassion as a deeply held value. The more those around them value a compassionate orientation, the more students will wish to show kindness to others, and the more they will appreciate kindness when they see it in others. Likewise, when students see others acting maliciously, they will recognize that this is harmful to themselves and others, and may be more inclined to respond or intervene in a constructive way. And when they see others acting kindly, they will appreciate this, and will be more likely to encourage, support, and praise it. This can contribute to a gradual change in school and classroom culture.

An appreciation of kindness and compassion supports the third topic, *appreciating and cultivating other ethical dispositions*. These ethical dispositions include gratitude, forgiveness, contentment, humility, patience and so on. Although it may seem vague to speak of "other" ethical dispositions, the topic is intentionally left open as students,

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[37] Hamlin, J. K., & Wynn, K. (2011). "Young infants prefer prosocial to antisocial others." *Cognitive development*, 26(1), 30-39.
[38] Goleman, *A Force for Good*, p. 51.

teachers and schools may wish to focus on particular dispositions that they wish to inculcate, and there are many that could be named.

Common among these ethical dispositions is that they refer to inner qualities that benefit the life and happiness of the student, rather than external possessions or accomplishments. A focus on valuing people and appreciating how they have enriched one's life stands in opposition to the idea that self-promotion and the acquisition of material possessions is the key to long-term satisfaction and happiness. It is important to help students recognize that these inner qualities are just as important, if not more so, than external possessions and achievements. Research shows that while there is a leveling-off of reported satisfaction with life after a certain level of material well-being, there are strong links between gratitude and happiness in children, adolescents, and adults. Not only is gratitude related to greater life satisfaction, but a sense of appreciation for received benefits also increases prosocial behaviors.[39] Appreciation of kindness and gratitude can become powerful antidotes to the materialistic messages often conveyed by social media, advertising, reality television, and other media.

Practically, this component involves engaging in critical thinking to develop an appreciation for the kindness of others that leads to gratitude, forgiveness, and so on. A deeper level of appreciation comes when one recognizes the ways in which others act to benefit oneself. In the topic of appreciating kindness, students can explore the ways in which their well-being depends on the actions of others. Certain insights facilitate the cultivation of appreciation, and learning and deepening these insights expands the appreciation of others enormously. This exploration, which can be very broad and very deep, can result in the cultivation of a genuine and abiding sense of gratitude, which turn serves as a powerful bond and connection with others. For example, it can be realized that is not necessary for others to have had an intention to benefit oneself; value can still be seen in benefits that came without any specific intention.

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[39] Froh, Jeffrey J., Emmons, Robert A., Card, Noel A., Bono, Giacomo, Wilson, Jennifer A. "Gratitude and the Reduced Costs of Materialism in Adolescents." *Journal of Happiness Studies*. 2011. 12:289-302.

Appreciation for others can also be cultivated by reflecting not merely on what others have done, but what they have not done, such as the restraint they have shown. Through this method, students can learn to appreciate others when they do not cause harm, inconvenience, or hurt. The fact that others have not stolen, harmed, or insulted oneself on a given occasion can be a cause for appreciation, since if everyone behaved ethically in this way all the time, there would be no fear of being harmed or stolen from. On a more advanced level, students can even gradually learn to appreciate the benefit they received when others acted in a harmful way. While not condoning the wrong behavior of others, this ability to take a new perspective is a powerful way to release anger, resentment and hatred. Students can study the examples of those who experience and survive difficult hardships yet manage to transform their perspectives in this way in order to lead a happier and more fulfilling life.

The appreciation for others can now expand to reflect on how others benefit oneself, and how one's own happiness and well-being depends on the countless acts of kindness shown to oneself by others, including strangers whom one does not know. This appreciation naturally will lead to gratitude, which will then facilitate bringing empathy (a recognition of others' emotional states and a resonance with them) to the level of empathic concern, whereby one cares about others' well-being or suffering in a personal way, without letting that caring turn into personal distress. This can be reinforced by reflecting on the disadvantages of an entirely self-centered attitude and the advantages that come when people care for and about each other. This can be explored on the level of an individual student, or expanded to consider groups and interpersonal interactions. Furthermore, just as students did with themselves in the Personal domain, they can learn to recognize that others' emotional states take place within a larger context, including their respective needs.

Empathy is the ability to recognize and be sensitive to the experiences of others, including both their joys and sorrows. Generally this is most easily accomplished with those in one's in-group, that is, those whom one already identifies as friends or loved ones, or with whom one shares a certain identification such as membership in a faith

tradition or political party, or even the fans of a particular sports team. "Identification is the primary portal for empathy," observes Emory primatologist Franz de Waal.[40] One feels happiness when things are going well for someone close, and finds their problems difficult to bear. On the other hand, one may feel somewhat indifferent to the difficulties of strangers, and a certain sense of satisfaction, or even elation, when people who have harmed us, or whom we simply find bothersome, experience pain or setbacks. There are, however, many benefits related to expanding one's field of regard to include those with whom one doesn't immediately empathize.

The philosopher Adam Smith pointed out more than two centuries ago that empathy requires one to actively imagine oneself in the situation of another and in that way it is possible to discern and experience on some level what another is feeling. Empathy begins then by taking the perspective of another, a skill long considered vital to proper social functioning[41] and key to active helping behavior. [42] Importantly for school settings, encouraging an empathic perspective has been found to be a successful strategy for reducing social bias, and the ability to take the perspective of another directly co-relates with the predisposition to cooperate.[43] School-aged children who are able to empathize are less likely to engage in aggression and bullying, and demonstrate more prosocial behavior. They are more likely to intervene to protect someone being victimized[44] and in adolescence, less likely to engage in delinquency.[45] And more recently, research by neuroscientists, as well as social scientists, is supporting the view that feeling empathy supports compassionate action.[46]

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[40] Age of Empathy. Franz de Waal. (Confirm page number)

[41] Davis, M. H. (1983). Measuring individual differences in empathy: Evidence for a multidimensional approach. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 44, 113-126.

[42] Oswald, Patricia A., "The Effects of Cognitive and Affective Perspective Taking on Empathic Concern and Altruistic Helping." *The Journal of Social Psychology,* Vol. 136, Iss. 5, 1996

[43] Johnson, David W., "Cooperativeness and Social Perspective Taking." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 1975, Vol. 31, No~ 2, 241-244.

[44] Eisenberg, Nancy, Spinrad, Tracy L., Morris, Amanda. *Empathy Related Responding in Children*. Handbook of Moral Development, ed. Killen, Melanie, Smetana, Judith G., Psychology Press, 2013. p.190-191.

[45] Chandler, Michael J., "Egocentrism and antisocial behavior: The assessment and training of social perspective-taking skills." *Developmental Psychology*, Vol 9(3), Nov 1973, 326-332.

[46] See for example, Singer, Tania and Lamm, Claus. "The social neuroscience of empathy." *The Year in Cognitive Neuroscience 2009*. Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. 1156: 81–96 (2009).

There are, however, also aspects of empathy that do not appear to support compassion as straightforwardly. As psychologist Paul Bloom argues in his book *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*, empathy is often irrational and problematic when considered from an ethical perspective.[47] Empathic responses tend to be strongest when there is a single person or animal suffering; when this is expanded to two or more individuals, the empathic response goes down, rather than up. Empathy also tends to be biased towards members of one's in-group.

Empathy works effectively to support this competency—*Compassion for Others* (2C)—when it is able to be expanded in an even and unbiased way, and when it is supported by self-regulation and self-compassion so that it does not lead to empathic distress. By working to expand the sense of identification with others to include more and more people, even people who may seem very different, this practice weakens the sharp in-group/out-group divisions that can make empathy uneven and limited.[48] Futhermore, a systems perspective, explored later in this framework, allows for a widening of our natural ability to take the perspectives of others into account, and to take a longer-term view. Some psychologists have suggested that learning to take the perspective of others may help to prevent the type of overly emotional identification that can lead to empathic distress and the avoidance of someone in pain.[49]

Expanding the skill of perspective-taking to be more inclusive is a crucial step in maintaining diverse relationships as well as being able to successfully navigate the school or any group setting. Developmental psychologist Carolyn Saarni has noted that to be successful in the learning environment one must "have skill in discerning and understanding the emotions of others, based on situational and expressive cues."[50] As consciousness around implicit bias increases in society, students can be taught about the

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[47] Bloom, Paul. *Against Empathy: The Case for Rational Compassion*. Ecco, 2016.
[48] Galinsky, Adam D., Moskowitz, Gordon B., "Perspective-Taking: Decreasing Stereotype Expression, Stereotype Accessibility, and In-Group Favoritism." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. 2000, Vol. 78, No~ 4, 708-724
[49] Decety, Jean, an Lamm, Claus. "Human Empathy through the Lens of Neuroscience." *The Scientific World JOURNAL*. 2006, 6, 1146-1163.
[50] Saarni, Carolyn. "The development of emotional competence: Pathways for helping children to become emotionally intelligent." *Educating people to be emotionally intelligent* (2007): 15-35.

harm caused by bias. When combined with an ability to relate to others on the basis of more fundamental shared similarities, as explored in the previous topics, a genuine empathy that is less constrained by bias can emerge.

In short, relating to others empathically involves sensitivity to the other's presence, the ability to interpret their affect, and a willingness to make an effort to understand the other's viewpoint and situation. For teachers this can begin with how they use language. Is the child being labeled, e.g. "she *is* selfish," "he *is* a bully," or is the behavior itself being identified, e.g., "that might be considered a selfish action" or "that would seem to be bullying behavior." Seen in this way, an effort can then be made to understand the feelings behind the negative behavior and then to communicate that understanding both to the child and to the other students. Modeling this for students is extremely important, as it creates a distinction between the actor and the action, which makes room for a growth mindset which is most supportive of change. Likewise it is helpful to point out that the behavior is not a permanent state of being by noting instances when the child demonstrated kindness or some other positive behavior. This separation of act from actor is important both for compassion for others and for self-compassion, as noted earlier. This is because it allows for a critical stance towards certain behaviors and attitudes, while maintaining a positive stance towards the person—either another or oneself.

Another way the teacher can demonstrate empathy is to be responsive to what a student is feeling, rather than directing them how to feel. For example, instead of telling them, "Don't be sad," or "You don't have any reason to be angry," a teacher can acknowledge the student's felt experience, for example, "You really seem to have sad feelings about this," or "You seem to be have angry feelings right now." This creates space for the student to engage in self-awareness and then self-regulation. When a student is made to feel that what they are experiencing is wrong or shameful or that they "should" feel differently, they are more likely to respond with denial or repression of the experience, and to withdraw from social interaction and support. Both responses limit self-awareness and the chance to learn to navigate difficult emotions, which then limits their ability to understand and relate constructively to the emotions of others.

Discussing age appropriate stories is one effective means for helping children practice taking another's perspective in a non-threatening way,[51] and research suggests that teachers can use the reading of fiction as an effective way of cultivating empathy, particularly when accompanied by exercises that encourage perspective taking and a reflection on the situations and emotional lives of the characters.[52] For adolescents and above, reading literary fiction that focuses on characters with complex inner lives can be a useful tool for developing the ability to empathize[53] as is role-playing at all ages.[54]

As empathic concern is developed, it then paves the way for compassion, a wish to alleviate the suffering of others. However, in its fullest sense, compassion is a powerful and courageous emotional state whereby a student feels empowered to help others.[55] It should not be understood as meekness, powerlessness, or blind kindness. Increasingly, scientific research is indicating that compassion is a skill that can be cultivated and that it brings about significant benefits, including benefits to one's own individual health and well-being. Students can also reflect, however, on the many benefits brought to classrooms, families and communities when compassion for others is expanded. As a lengthy exploration of compassion was presented earlier in this framework, it is not expounded upon in greater detail here.

As noted, just as students learned to relate their own emotions to a wider context and recognize how their emotions often stem from underlying needs, students can learn to extend this to others, relating their behaviors to their emotions, and those emotions to

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[51] Ornaghi, Veronica, Brockmeir, Jens, Grazzani, Ilaria. "Enhancing social cognition by training school children in emotion understanding: a primary school study." *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* 2014, Vol. 119, 26–39.

[52] See for example, several studies conducted by University of Toronto researcher Keith Oatley. Mar, Raymond A., Keith Oatley, and Jordan B. Peterson. "Exploring the link between reading fiction and empathy: Ruling out individual differences and examining outcomes." Communications 34.4 (2009): 407-428.

[53] Chiate, Julian, "Novel Finding: Reading Literary Fiction Improves Empathy." *Scientific American,* October 4, 2013.

[54] See for example, Varkey P, Chutka DS, and Lesnick TG. "The Aging Game: improving medical students' attitudes toward caring for the elderly." *J Am Med Dir* Assoc. 2006. 7(4):224-9.

[55] Jinpa, Thupten. *A fearless heart: How the courage to be compassionate can transform our lives*. Avery, 2016.

needs. By doing so, the reasons for the behaviors and emotional reactions of others becomes more clearly manifest. As students explore the similarities between themselves and others, and extend their practice of releasing unrealistic expectations and cultivating self-acceptance to others, this understanding can support the practice of forgiveness. Here in SEE Learning, forgiveness is understood not necessarily as an interpersonal action between two individuals, but internally as a releasing of anger and resentment towards others. As such, it can be recognized as something that benefits the students themselves and as "a gift one gives to oneself." That being said, because forgiveness certainly promotes prosocial behavior, it is, like gratitude and compassion, beneficial to both self and others. Students can also learn from and explore stories from real life that exemplify forgiveness, listening to the explanations of those who have suffered terribly yet found the strength to forgive their perpetrators. By examining these stories, students should come to an understanding that forgiveness is not the same as condoning, forgetting, justifying or excusing wrong actions, but rather is a process of releasing anger and finding inner freedom and happiness.

This component is a rich section in which students can explore these prosocial values at the level of received knowledge, exploring the emerging scientific literature on gratitude, forgiveness, empathic concern and compassion, as well as stories and examples from history and current events. By engaging in contemplative exercises and reflective practices, they can then explore these values in a personal, first-person way such that they yield critical insights. This then sets the stage for exploring what behaviors should emerge from these insights and these values, which is explored in the next component.

Relationship Skills

Children and adolescents must routinely navigate complex social interactions—from the dynamics of their family, to playing in a group or on a sports team, to making friends. An ability to adapt to a wide range of social settings is necessary in order to be both happy and successful. Long-term well-being is significantly related to the ability to form and maintain meaningful and positive relationships, while also being able to recognize and

terminate harmful ones.[56]

The school environment is no exception; the educational process is at heart a social one, and learning is facilitated or impeded by how well students can relate to and communicate with both teachers and peers.[57] Young people who fail to develop social competency are more likely to drop out of school and to perform poorly academically. They are also at risk for developing psychological and behavioral problems including depression and aggression.[58]

To be successful in both their personal and academic lives, students need to integrate the ability to self-regulate and engage in perspective taking with a repertoire of social skills. And rather than insisting students simply acquiesce to proscriptive rules and procedures, social competence is best enhanced through the creation of a supportive environment and by employing a variety of techniques, just as one would teach any skill. These can include explicit instruction and discussion, modeling behaviors, using role-play and practice, and giving feedback and reinforcement.

The previous two components of the framework set the stage for students to explore how best to conduct themselves productively with others. Awareness of others and one's own social nature, combined with an understanding of others' emotions in context and the cultivation of prosocial emotions, provides a solid foundation for interacting with others. Upon this foundation can be built the actual skills, behaviors and practices that are most conducive to one's own and others' well-being. This component involves exploring those behaviors and reinforcing the most productive among them.

Even if grounded in empathy, compassion and understanding, some behaviors lead to

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[56] Vaillant, GE. *Aging Well: Surprising Guideposts to a Happier Life from the Landmark Harvard Study of Adult Development* (Little, Brown and Company, Boston) 2002.

[57] Elias, Maurice J., Sarah J. Parker, V. Megan Kash, Roger P. Weissberg, and Mary Utne O'Brien. "Social and emotional learning, moral education, and character education: A comparative analysis and a view toward convergence." *Handbook of Moral and Character Education* (2008): 248-266.

[58] Gresham, Frank M., Van, Mai Bo, Cook, Clayton R. "Social skills training for teaching replacement behaviors: remediating acquisition deficits in at-risk students." *Behavioral Disorders*, August 2006. Vol. 31 (4), 363–377

desired outcomes in line with one's values, and some prove counterproductive. For example, a student may have good intentions but may inadvertently cause difficulties for themselves and others. Alternatively, a student may intend to interact with others or intervene in a situation in a positive way, yet lack the skills to navigate the relationship to a successful outcome. This is a matter of experience, which explains the need to actively practice skills that support relating to others in a positive way until they become embodied and natural. Moreover, these skills work best when supported by the prior two components. Although students can and do learn conflict resolution skills and communication skills without cultivating an awareness of others and prosocial values, it is the tying of these components together that makes for a powerful combination.

The four topics in this component are each broad categories, meant to encompass a range of skills that could be cultivated. They are *empathic listening*; *skillful communication*; *helping others*; and *conflict transformation*. The first two topics concentrate on communication: the ability to listen to and communicate with others. The third encompasses those aspects of helping that go beyond communication. The fourth looks specifically at the important topic of resolving and addressing conflicts, whether they involve oneself or others.

Domain – Social | Dimension - Engagement

Component: Relationship Skills (2E)

Enduring Capabilities

1) **Empathic Listening** - Listen attentively for the purpose of understanding others and their needs more deeply
2) **Skillful Communication** – Communicate compassionately in a way that empowers self and others
3) **Helping Others** – Offer help to others according to their needs and proportionate to one's ability
4) **Conflict Transformation** - Respond constructively to conflict and facilitate collaboration, reconciliation and peaceful relations

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Empathic listening has to do with listening to others in an open-minded way that is not

stymied by emotional reactivity, that recognizes common humanity, and that is grounded in respect and appreciation for the other person, even if their views differ from one's own. Empathic listening can be cultivated by "deep listening" exercises, such as exercises in which pairs of students listen to each other without comment or judgment for a minute or a few minutes at a time. Empathic listening can be practiced by watching or listening to those who say things one might disagree with, but pausing to paraphrase or re-state what one has heard before reacting emotionally to it. Developing this skill should build on and reinforce the enduring capabilities explored in the previous two components, such as recognizing our shared reality with others, appreciating diversity and differences, and understanding others' emotions in context. Empathic listening should be listening therefore that pays attention not only to surface-level content but also the underlying needs and aspirations that may provide the context for understanding that content.

Empathic listening is one of the most important aspects of *skillful communication*, but should be complemented by exploring how to communicate in a way that is considerate, productive, and empowering to oneself and others. The concept of "empowering communication" refers to the ability of students to learn to speak respectfully and articulately in a way that connects with their values and empowers themselves and others who may not be able to speak for themselves. Debate can be a powerful tool in cultivating both empowering communication and critical thinking, for example by having groups of students debate both sides of an issue, including the side they would naturally disagree with. Since it is often a tendency in society to delegitimize or even dehumanize those who oppose one's own viewpoints, such exercises can help in cultivating epistemic humility, intellectual curiosity, empathy and a sense of common humanity.

When it comes to empathic listening and communicating with others, Nonviolent Communication (NVC), sometimes known as compassionate communication, is a well-established method for helping students express themselves honestly while creating a context in which conflict can be constructively resolved. Predicated on the idea that all people have the capacity for compassion, and that maladaptive physical and verbal habits are learned from the cultures in which we live, NVC asks individuals to listen and speak

with empathy, discerning intention while recognizing our common humanity and interdependence.[59]

Listening and communicating are fundamental, but do not by themselves exhaust the range of possible ways we can help one another. *Helping others* refers to practicing the various ways we can help others that include or go beyond communication in ways that are appropriate to others' needs and proportionate to one's own ability. Many schools have engaged in projects involving community service, volunteerism, or "Random Acts of Kindness." Mounting research suggests that offering and providing help contributes even more to one's own well-being than receiving help, so being of service to others is something that can be practiced and nurtured from an early age. Helping others can take on an infinite variety of forms. In SEE Learning, however, the practice of helping others should not come simply as a mandate from above. Rather, the practice of helping others, including classmates, teachers, family members, and so on, will be most powerful when connected with the other insights, values and practices provided in the Social domain. Moreover, when engaging in practices involving helping others, some time should be taken to reflect on the process of helping others: how students feel when they do it, what they learn from it, how they could enhance it, what impact it has on those who they are striving to help, and so on. Students can also explore what is the kind of help that others may truly need for their long-term well-being beyond what may appear superficially to be the case.

The last topic here is *conflict transformation*. Students will inevitably encounter conflict in their lives, and conflict is unavoidable in adult life and in society. Conflict is not necessarily bad in itself, but learning to navigate conflict, both for oneself and others, is a vital skill. While some programs focus on conflict resolution, SEE Learning uses the term "conflict transformation" to suggest that resolving the conflict is only part of the way forward towards a transformation of circumstances and relationships that can enhance

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[59] Rosenberg, Marshall B. *Non-Violent Communication, A Language of Life: Life-Changing Tools for Healthy Relationships.* Puddle Dancer Press, (1 September 2003)

one's own and others' well-being. Conflict transformation therefore refers to the ability to respond constructively to conflict and to facilitate collaboration, reconciliation and peaceful relations.

While there are a number of conflict resolution and conflict transformation practices available, in SEE Learning, the emphasis is on connecting these approaches techniques with the insights, values and practices involved in the overall SEE Learning framework. In this way, inner peacefulness serves as a foundation for outer peacefulness, and inner reconciliation is combined with outer reconciliation, maximizing the chances of successful conflict transformation. Conflict transformation is greatly facilitated by prosocial qualities such as humility, empathy, compassion, forgiveness, impartiality, a recognition of shared communalities and an appreciation of difference, as well as the skills of empathic listening and skillful communication. Where these values and skills are lacking, conflict transformation will prove difficult, if not impossible. Where they are present, the task of conflict transformation can become deep and truly transformative for all parties involved.

SEL programs have used a number of ways to delineate and organize various social skills, and many aspects of the competencies already discussed overlap with this important area. Another way of examining this component is by identifying groups of skills explored in SEL, such interpersonal skills, communication skills, and social problem solving skills. Interpersonal skills involve valuing and modeling cooperation, honesty, trustworthiness, patience, kindness, and flexibility, including the ability to share and relate to others without excessive bias. Communication skills involves the ability to interpret and respect social cues from others; understanding the meaning of non-verbal attributes such as posture, tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions; expressing feelings and wishes positively and with precision and calmness; listening with openness to learning from what one hears. Social problem-solving skills involve the ability to predict consequences and plan responses; resolve conflict appropriately; take responsibility for harmful actions; apologize, forgive, and learn from the mistakes of oneself and others as appropriate; resist inappropriate social pressure; and ask for help

when needed. All of this can fit very comfortably within the SEE Learning framework.

What is important in an SEE Learning context is that the cultivation of relationship skills is always tied to the foundational principle of compassion, and stems from a wish to interact with others on the basis of kindness and compassion, as supported by the prior components. In this way, the cultivation of social skills is not merely a set of techniques, but a natural outcome of having cultivated a sense of appreciation and concern for others.

When students adopt and practice positive coping strategies in social contexts, not only are their relationships more harmonious, they are positioned to become happier and more socially engaged adults. Enlisting parents in modeling and reinforcing social skills has also been shown to improve outcomes.

Dimension III: Systems

In our increasingly complex world, compassion alone is not enough to reach the ultimate goal of effective ethical engagement in the world; it must be complemented with responsible decision-making that is based on an understanding of the wider systems within which we live. Without knowing how to engage a situation from multiple perspectives or being able to evaluate a course of action and its likely consequences over time, actions motivated by kindness can even result in negative, unintended outcomes. The world in which students are growing up in is increasingly complex, global, and interdependent. The challenges that face current and future generations are expansive and far-reaching in nature, and their solutions will require a new way of thinking and problem-solving that is collaborative, interdisciplinary, and systems-oriented.

Approaching the Systems domain may appear daunting at first, but it is built upon the same knowledge and skills explored in the Personal and Social domains. Here it is extended to the wider arena of communities, societies, and the global community. Many educational programs already exist that train teachers to explore global issues with students, even very young students, and this is a skill that is increasingly being recognized as critical for success in the 21st century.

Indications are that—in the same way students can understand their own behavior and that of others—the capacity to understand how systems operate is also innate. By deepening this awareness, and applying critical thinking to complex situations, a more comprehensive—and practical— approach to human relationships and ethical engagement can emerge. A compassionate intention to engage in a particular course of action can then be checked to see if it is indeed helpful on a wide scale and in the long run. In this way, problem solving becomes a more holistic process, avoiding the tendency to fragment issues into small, disconnected pieces.

Just as with the previous two domains, students are taught to develop a deeper awareness, to engage in critical thinking related to prosocial values, and then to explore how to

achieve desired outcomes through the practices of engagement. SEE Learning's third domain is therefore approached through the three topics of *Appreciating Interdependence*; *Recognizing Common Humanity*; and *Community and Global Engagement*.

Appreciating Interdependence

Interdependence is the concept that things and events do not arise without a context, but instead depend on an array of other things and events for their existence. A simple meal that one eats, for example, comes from a wide array of sources and individuals when one traces the ingredients back in time and out in area. Interdependence also means that changes in one area lead to changes elsewhere. Effects have causes, and in fact may arise due to a diversity of causes and conditions.

As Daniel Goleman and Peter Senge write in *The Triple Focus*, this involves "analyzing the dynamics of when I do this, the consequence is that, and how to use this insight to change the system for the better."[60] As is evident from this quote, the purpose is not just to develop a dry understanding of how systems work, but to relate this knowledge to one's own concerns and concerns for people and planet.

Thus, this component can be explored through two topics: *understanding interdependent systems* and *individuals within a systems context*. The first relates to moving from an "inner" and "other" focus to an "outer" focus on wider systems: directing the awareness of students to an understanding of the principles of interdependence and systems, such as cause and effect, in a general sense. The latter personalizes this knowledge by recognizing how one's own existence, and that of others around oneself, is intricately related to a vast array of events, causes, and people around the community and around the world. This involves recognizing how other events, even when apparently distant, affect one's own well-being, and how one participates in a context that affects and impacts others who may at first appear quite far removed, with sometimes unintended

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[60] Goleman and Senge, *The Triple Focus*.

consequences. Put together, these two topics develop skills for understanding interdependent systems and then relating those to oneself in a personal way such that this knowledge becomes meaningful.

Domain – Systemic | Dimension - Awareness

Component: Appreciating Interdependence (3A)

Enduring Capabilities

1) **Understanding interdependent systems** – Understand interdependence and the properties of systems, such as through exploring chains of cause and effect
2) **Individuals within a Systems Context** – Recognize how oneself and others exist within a systems context and affect and are affected by that context

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Interdependence is both a law of nature and a fundamental reality of human life. No one is able to sustain life, much less flourish, without the support of innumerable others who work to provide basic necessities of food, water, and shelter, as well as the supporting infrastructure of countless institutions responsible for education, law enforcement, government, agriculture, transportation, health care, and so on. Interdependence starts even before birth, when one depends on others for one's very survival. Furthermore, interdependence is required for successful widescale action. Attention to this truth in modern times has become all the more urgent due to the "intensification of worldwide social relations (linking) distant realities in such a way that local events are shaped by events occurring many miles away, and vice versa."[61] Major and well-publicized crises, such as the international recession of 2007-2009, and the mounting concerns about climate change and global violent conflict, demonstrate this kind of economic and ecological interdependence on a global level.

In older and more traditional societies, a sense of connection to others was embedded far more deeply into everyday life. Survival often depended on sharing and exchanging

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[61] Giddens, Anthony. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford University Press; 1 edition (March 1, 1991)

resources, and engaging in other types of social cooperation. Neighbors banded together to harvest crops, build needed structures, fight off predators, or cope with the natural elements. The implicit knowledge that what helped or harmed a part of the community affected the whole, often helped guide decision-making and behavior.

Since the advent of the Industrial Revolution, however, the desire to improve economic status has led people to become more and mobile, and with the concurrent disconnection from community, an illusion of independence has arisen. Since the way in which we depend on others is no longer readily apparent upon reaching adulthood, it becomes easy to believe others are no longer needed. In turn, this false sense of self-sufficiency contributes to a growing sense of psychological and social isolation, one of the most devastating experiences for human beings, as experiments in solitary confinement have shown.[62] Humans are intensely social creatures whose very survival as well as psychological wellbeing depend on relationships with others. And research has shown loneliness to be as significant a risk factor for negative health outcomes as smoking and obesity.[63]

For such an understanding of *interdependent systems* to become meaningful, it should be complemented with exercises and material that makes interdependence recognized on a personal way: *individuals within a systems context*. Thus, in response to this tendency to mistakenly view oneself as unconnected to others, or somehow independent of the larger system, the examination of interdependence within SEE Learning emphasizes relationships with other human beings and the complexity of those relationships. This is not to dismiss or devalue the interdependence that humans share with other animal species and life forms, or even the Earth as a whole. That awareness is of great significance, and it is included in this component. There is a special value, however, to be gained by attuning to the depth of one's interconnectedness to fellow humans, and especially to the many benefits that one receives. The outcomes are threefold: (1) a growing and felt sense of gratitude for others on a systemic level; (2) a deeper awareness

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[62] Include study about solitary confinement…
[63] Include the study reference…

of the potential we have to shape the lives of others, due to the pervasive interconnectedness; and (3) a growing aspiration to take action that ensures wider well-being and that repays the kindnesses that we have received from this vast web comprised of so many others. This final outcome of *appreciating interdependence (3A)* – when combined with the critical insight that is at the heart of *recognizing common humanity (3C)* – contributes strongly to our willingness to expand our sense of responsibility for the well-being of more and more others and to seek creative ways to act on their behalf, which is the final component: *community and global engagement (3E)*.

The process begins by learning to pay attention to others in more than a superficial way, and has been defined as "an understanding of the activities of others, which provides a context for your own activity."[64] In other words, students discern that their behavior affects others and vice versa. The next step is to acknowledge the different ways that others contribute to one's well being, thus developing positive emotional connections that begin to nurture a deeper sense of appreciation.[65] This can then be further enhanced by explicitly and repeatedly enumerating the specific ways in which others have contributed to one's own wellbeing.[66] In contrast to how this is done in the Social domain, however, here the focus is much broader, involving individuals, communities, and systems the student may not personally know.

There is a natural progression here from interpersonal awareness to recognizing interdependence, which shows the way in which SEE Learning components build upon and reinforce each other. The understanding that no one could thrive, or even survive, without the support of countless individuals is thus essential to developing a genuine appreciation for others. For most children it is easiest to begin with those from whom they have derived easily recognizable benefit such as parents, teachers or healthcare

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[64] Dourish, P. and Bly, S., (1992), Portholes: Supporting awareness in a distributed work group, Proceedings of ACM CHI 1992, 541-547

[65] Adler, Mitchel G. and Fagley, N. S. "Appreciation: Individual Differences in Finding Value and Meaning as a Unique Predictor of Subjective Well-Being." *Journal of Personality,* February, 2005. Vol. 73, No. 1, p.79-114.

[66] Algoe, Sarah B., Haidt, Jonathan, Gable, Shelly L. "Beyond Reciprocity: Gratitude and relationships in everyday life." *Emotion*. 2008 Jun; 8(3): 425–429. Algoe, Sarah B., Fredrickson, BL, Gable, Shelly L. "The social functions of the emotion of gratitude via expression." *Emotion.* 2013 Aug;13(4):605-9.

practitioners. Children with difficult circumstances may need extra help to see the fact that, despite being disappointed or even harmed by others, there are indeed people who have benefitted them in some way—perhaps a friend or sibling, or an adult outside their immediate family. Gradually, this recognition can be expanded to include strangers such as the firefighter or sanitation worker who provides an important service that helps make life safer or more comfortable. In time, and with practice, this regard may grow to even include those with whom one has difficult or contentious relations. Little by little one learns that one can benefit even from unpleasant people, such as seeing useful advice hidden in harsh criticism, or realizing that the experience of an injustice has motivated one to help others. To be sure, a degree of this appreciation of the ways others benefit us was already explored in earlier components, such as in the component of *Compassion for Others (2C)*, but here it is extended to broader systems and is explored in more nuance as students gain more expertise in systems thinking. The benefit others show us should not be seen only directly here, but as existing within a broad web of interdependence. This way, it will naturally support the following component of *recognizing common humanity (3C)*.

Though the initial introduction to the realities of interdependence may not penetrate deeply or evince a strong emotional reaction of gratitude or altruistic intent, the aforementioned three-level model of knowledge acquisition helps one understand how this competency will impact students over time. First, students can be asked to consider the nature of interdependence through multiple lenses; this can take the form of different pedagogical techniques and subject matter—such as literature, economics, biology, mathematics, psychology, and/or history—and then reflecting on it in ways that connect it to personal experience. Especially in science and mathematics, educators may bring into the classroom the tools of *systems thinking*[67] and its techniques to model, observe, and test the behavior of complex dynamic systems (either physically or virtually). Such modeling provides insight into the rules – which are often counter-intuitive to first assumptions – that govern cause and effect at the scale of interdependent systems. As when one is perplexed by watching complex field sport that we don't understand, simply learning the rules is the first step for gaining confidence so that we may eventually enter

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[67] Insert reference to Peter Senge's chapter in Triple Focus.

the field to practice and develop mastery. After examining interdependence from these many perspectives, one may develop an abiding awareness of interconnectedness that will infuse the way one relates to others. When one then approaches others—even strangers—a greater awareness of their humanity and their inherent value will inform that interaction. It soon becomes evident, especially with growing awareness of the dynamic and interconnected nature of complex systems, that everyone plays a part in the vast web of people who support one's life, and in turn a feeling of reciprocity can develop. One will no longer need to see exactly *how* a certain person benefits another before they accept that, most likely, in some way, there is benefit. As this awareness increases, the reciprocal, mutually beneficial nature of relationships slowly becomes sustained and prioritized over a narrowly self-focused or competitive view.

This increased sense of connection to others works directly to counter perceived social isolation (loneliness) by increasing one's capacity for sympathetic joy. It allows for vicarious pleasure in the accomplishments of others, and provides an antidote to envy and jealousy, as well as to harsh self-criticism or unrealistic comparisons to others.

Recognizing Common Humanity

A richer understanding of interdependence, especially when combined with the skills cultivated in the Social domain of empathic concern, should lead to a greater sense of concern for others and a recognition of the ways in which we are all interrelated. This can then be strengthened, expanded and reinforced by cultivating explicitly a recognition of common humanity. In the Personal domain, students learned to engage in critical thinking to connect their own emotions to a wider context, including their own needs, in order to develop greater emotional awareness and self-compassion. In the Social domain, they engaged in this process to connect others' emotions to their needs and a wider context in order to develop prosocial capacities like gratitude, empathic concern, and compassion for others. Here, students expand that out further by engaging in critical thinking to recognize how at a fundamental level all human beings share certain commonalities with regard to their inner life and the conditions of their life, thereby cultivating a degree of

appreciation, empathic concern, and compassionate engagement that can extend to any individual anywhere, even people who may be far away or may appear quite different to oneself and those in one's community. The two topics in this component are therefore *appreciating the fundamental equality of all* and *appreciating how systems affect well-being*.

Domain – Systemic | Dimension - Compassion

Component: Recognizing Common Humanity (3C)

Enduring Capabilities

1) **Appreciating the Fundamental Equality of All** – Extend the realization of fundamental equality and common humanity to those outside one's immediate community and ultimately to the world, recognizing those things that we all share in common as human beings, such as our aspiration for happiness and well-being and to avoid suffering

2) **Appreciating How Systems Affect Well-Being** – Recognize how systems can promote or compromise well-being on cultural and structural levels, such as by promoting positive values or perpetuating problematic beliefs and inequities.

Appreciating the fundamental equality of all involves extending the realization of fundamental equality and common humanity to those outside the students' immediate community and ultimately to the world. This can happen by attending to and focusing on those things that all people in the world share in common as human beings, such as our aspiration for happiness and well-being and to avoid suffering. One of the important functions of this is to increase a sense of identification with others that extends beyond our immediate community and to decrease bias and the tendency to discount the needs of others if they are far away or apparently different or unrelated to us.

Recent scientific findings are increasingly suggesting the numerous benefits that accrue from compassionate motivation and behavior. Several published studies suggest that people who engage in generosity or helping behavior beyond their immediate circle (volunteering or supporting friends in need, or giving to worthy causes) are more likely to

have good health outcomes, such as lower blood pressure or decreased illness, including populations such as the elderly or people with chronic disease. In the social sciences, the Harvard Business School has published research showing that spending money on others increased happiness more than spending on oneself, and in neuroscience, the National Institute of Health found that giving to charity activated brain regions in study participants associated with pleasure and social affiliation.[68]

In his book *The Age of Empathy*, Frans de Waal describes an experiment in which capuchin monkeys are given the choice between getting a reward, or getting a reward and their monkey neighbor getting one too. The monkeys chose the prosocial option— unless the receiving monkey was unknown to them,

> *Caring for others must be expanded beyond those who obviously benefit us personally if it is to become the basis for ethical decision-making.*

at which point they reverted to simple self-interest.[69] As human beings, our initial tendencies may be uncomfortably similar to those of the capuchins, in that the biologically-based kindness necessary for survival is typically limited to members of a close group. Caring for others must be expanded beyond those who obviously benefit us personally if it is to become the basis for ethical decision-making. Moreover, through studies on implicit bias and other research, we are increasingly becoming aware of the problems that arise when empathy and compassion are limited to an in-group.

Without an ability to overcome the biases that arise from our self-interest, our strong feelings for those closest to us could become a reason for prejudice or harm. For example, a teacher who experiences strong preference for one child over another, without an awareness of this bias, will not be fair when mediating a dispute between the two. Such a lack of evenhandedness can lead to feelings of resentment and disempowerment in the less favored child. And unfortunately, this type of bias often extends beyond the individual level. The desire to protect members of an in-group at the expense of others is responsible for many of the attitudes and policies that shape our societies, and it is at the

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[68] **"5 Ways Giving Is Good for You," Greater Good Science Center, Jill Suttie, Jason Marsh, December 13, 2010, http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/5_ways_giving_is_good_for_you**
[69] de Waal, Frans, *Age of Empathy: Nature's Lessons for a Kinder Society*, , Crown, 2009, p.112-117

root of many of the most troubling injustices and deep-seated conflicts we see around the world. While loyalty is in many cases a positive quality, excessive allegiance to those identified as the in-group can lead to distorted judgments and discrimination. Therefore it is worth making effort to explore the common humanity of all individuals regardless of their superficial differences. This exploration of similarities and differences was also covered in the Social domain, but here again it is expanded to a wider scale.

Fortunately, compared to Dr. de Waal's capuchins, humans have the distinct ability to expand their circle of empathy beyond those with whom they most closely identify. We learn to extend care to those who fall outside the boundaries of personal experience and preferences by finding common ground; and a powerful method for attuning to this common sense of humanity is to reflect on the aspirations shared by all: the wish to thrive and the desire to avoid distress and dissatisfaction. By identifying others as similar in this way, the in-group can be expanded to include people of different nationalities, ethnicities, religions, and so forth. This capability is demonstrated in various ways throughout society, from an individual donating blood, to the outpouring of charitable giving that occurs after a natural disaster, to protesting injustice against groups of which one is not a part.

The skills of appreciating interdependence and having empathic concern for others serve as antidotes to many of the obstacles students may have in relating to others, such as bias, a sense of distance, and a lack of concern for the problems of those beyond their immediate circle. When an understanding of common humanity is cultivated, students can develop a more inclusive viewpoint. Such a broad-based view promotes evenhandedness in dealings with others, a stance that is both more objective and more connected. This creates a viable platform for the final component, *Community and Global Engagement*, and with maturity and practice students can see the value of forgiveness and develop a more deeply engaged and less biased attitude of compassion. As Dr. Goleman states so clearly in his book *Social Intelligence*, "When we focus on ourselves, our world contracts as our problems and preoccupations loom large. But when we focus on others, our world expands. Our own problems drift to the periphery of the mind and so seem

smaller, and we increase our capacity for connection - or compassionate action."[70]

Recognizing common humanity will work best when it is based on a foundation of interpersonal empathy, so that it does not merely remain at an abstract level. It can be applied in the classroom in various ways. Moreover, an exploration of systems can facilitate greater empathy. This is the ground for the second topic of this component, *appreciating how systems affect well-being*. This involves recognizing how systems can promote or compromise well-being on cultural and structural levels, such as by promoting positive values or perpetuating problematic beliefs and inequalities. Students can examine, at an age-appropriate level, what they think of inequality, prejudice, bias or favoritism when they are subjugated to it. Examples from history and current affairs can be used to illustrate where bias has been exhibited in various ways, and the consequences for society as a whole that come from such behavior can be discussed. Older students can debate whether such prejudice and bias are justified, or whether all human beings have an equal right to pursue happiness.

Cultivating a wider-scoped empathy in this way, meaning by employing a systems perspective, is crucial because as human beings our inborn capacity for empathy does not appear to have been designed to automatically accommodate large scale suffering or systems-level problems. For example, studies show that we have a stronger tendency to empathize with a single victim over a large number of victims, or with a person who is immediately in front of us rather than one who may be far away. Suffering, however, is not always caused in obvious or direct ways, but can arise from social structures and cultural norms. For example, if a system such an organization has policies and procedures that are oppressive or unequal, this will influence the behavior of those who work in that environment. If a society has legalized discrimination or policies that are in effect discriminative, this creates a system where people's well-being can be compromised. Underlying those structures are the cultural beliefs that justify and reinforce such structures: for example the belief that one group of people is superior to another on the

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[70] Goleman, Daniel. Social Intelligence: The New Science of Human Relationships, Bantam, 2006. p.54

basis of gender, race, ethnicity or social status.[71] By learning about structural and cultural violence, students' appreciation of, and insight into, suffering will increase, as will the sophistication of their responses to suffering.

Mutual understanding has been identified as a curricular objective in many school systems and in programs such as the International Baccalaureate. Through the recognition of common humanity, students can learn to communicate and cooperate across ethnic and social groups while having more realistic understanding and expectations of others. With greater awareness and understanding of what one shares with others, students will be able to appreciate rather than mistrust apparent differences, leading to decreased prejudice and isolation. Through understanding how the well being of individuals is shaped by systems, their empathy will be deeper and more encompassing, as will their critical thinking about possible solutions to human suffering.

Community and Global Engagement

Appreciating interdependence, attuning to the many ways we benefit from others, and recognizing our common humanity in a felt sense can create a sense of responsibility and a desire in students to take action and to repay the many kindnesses we receive from society, and to act on behalf of others who are struggling and in need. Yet how does one engage effectively in complex systems or on a communal or global level? The very prospect of addressing issues as complex and wide ranging as poverty or the environment can appear daunting if not approached in a skilful way. Yet the purpose of SEE Learning is to empower students to recognize and realize their own potential as compassionate global citizens. Therefore, the final component of SEE Learning addresses exploring the ways in which students can engage productively as compassionate global citizens.

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[71] Flores, Thomas, Ozawa-de Silva, Brendan, and Murphy, Caroline. "Peace Studies and the Dalai Lama's Approach of Secular Ethics: Towards a Positive, Multidimensional Model of Health and Flourishing," *Journal of Healthcare, Science and the Humanities*, vol. 4, no. 2 (Fall, 2014), pp. 65-92.

The first of the two topics in this component is *exploring one's potential for effecting positive change in community and world*. The second is *engaging in communal and global solutions*. While similar, the first involves helping students recognize their own individual potential to effect positive change based on their abilities and opportunities, whatever they may be, individually or collaboratively. The second involves helping students explore and reflect on creative solutions to issues affecting their community or the world; that is, thinking through complex problems collaboratively and from a systems perspective, even if it is an issue that students cannot immediately address or solve themselves.

Domain – Systemic | Dimension - Engagement

Component: Community and Global Engagement (3E)

Enduring Capabilities

1) **Exploring One's Potential for Effecting Positive Change in Community and World** – Recognize one's own potential to effect positive change based on one's abilities and opportunity, individually or collaboratively

2) **Engaging in Communal and Global Solutions** – Explore and reflect on creative and collaborative solutions to issues affecting one's community or the world

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If students are to engage in the community or world and address its needs in a way that is beneficial to self and others, that does not give in to despair, that is realistic and effective, they must recognize both their limitations and their capabilities. With regard to the former, it is important to explore how not everything is within one's immediate power, and that deep-seated problems take time to change. That does not mean that one cannot engage in effective action, however. Indeed, if students feel powerless when confronting difficult issues, this will make the cultivation of compassion for others and self-compassion much more difficult, because compassion—the wish or intention to relieve suffering—depends on hope—the belief that suffering can be alleviated.

Certain strategies can help in generating confidence that change is possible and within reach if approached in an appropriate and informed way. One may not be able to change an entire system, but one can act in ways that maximize change by focusing on key elements within a system. This can provide a feeling of empowerment without being overwhelmed by the scale of global and systems-level issues. As an example, the Pareto principle states that in many cases, 20% of a system's inputs account for 80% of its outputs. For example, 80% of a system's problems may come from 20% of its components (such as a majority of the systems' pollution coming from a minority of the systems' activities). If one identifies the few key factors that account for most of the effects in a system, one can focus on addressing those factors and achieve significant results. It is also worth reflecting on the fact that even if students cannot bring about large-scale change immediately, even the smaller-scale changes they can effect are very worthwhile, because small-scale changes now can grow into much larger changes later, or cumulative larger changes can be created through collective smaller actions (e.g., sorting recyclables from landfill trash). Through a thorough understanding of interdependent systems, students gain confidence that smaller-scale actions and behaviors set the stage for greater impact in the future, even if they cannot directly see the results.

Even if motivated by compassion, the impact that students' decisions will make depends on their level of understanding of the complexity of the situations they are seeking to address, as well as their skill in engaging in critical thinking around complex issues. Like any other skill, this type of critical thinking can increase with practice and can be included in the pedagogical material of a learning environment. Complex social and global issues need to be broken down into smaller chunks that can be analyzed and engaged with. When students see how their actions can address the smaller components of problems, and how those components relate interdependently in wider systems, they will gain in confidence and a sense of agency and empowerment. Moreover, examining stories of individuals, especially young people, who have brought about impact in their communities can be inspiration and encouraging, showing that effective change is possible.

This component therefore depends greatly on critical thinking. Here, critical thinking involves the practice of thinking through complex issues in a way that is informed by basic human values. This is a skill that can be developed and therefore should be taught and practiced. While it does not provide a guarantee that the actions taken will necessarily be considered beneficial by others, this type of critical thinking increases the probability that a constructive outcome will be obtained.

This component of Community and Global Engagement refers not only to the actions students take, but also to the cultivation of a facility for critical thinking that allows for effective and compassionate engagement. This is why the second topic, *engaging in communal and global solutions*, involves the process of reflecting on problems in a way that could lead to solutions, even if implementing those solutions may not be at present within the power of students to accomplish. This type of critical thinking involves many parts and is informed by all the components of SEE Learning. In a more robust sense, it can include the integration of the following topics: (a) recognizing systems and complexity; (b) assessing short- and long-term consequences for multiple constituencies; (c) assessing situations in the context of basic human values; (d) minimizing the influence of emotions and bias; (e) cultivating an open-minded, collaborative and intellectually humble attitude; and (f) communicating the pros and cons of a particular course of action in a way that can be understood by others. It is clear that many of these topics were initially covered in previous components of SEE Learning. Here they can be integrated with an orientation towards community and global engagement.

With regard to the first step listed above—recognizing systems and complexity—students can engage in projects that look at complex systems and map out the relationships between the various factors in those systems (e.g., ecoliteracy or systems thinking). These could be relatively simple for younger students, such as looking at the dynamics between three friends, or increasingly complex as students study family systems, ecological systems, and economic systems, or even issues that cut across multiple systems and disciplines, such as poverty. By mapping out these systems, students can

gain a greater appreciation of interdependence and complexity, and will gain facility in thinking in more complex and sophisticated ways about systems.

Similar skills were developed in the component of *Appreciating Interdependence*, but here they can be more specifically oriented towards a project or issue, and include the further step of assessing consequences. All too often, actions are taken without a proper assessment of short- and long-term consequences. Moreover, to be ethical, assessments of consequences should consider the impact of actions on multiple constituencies. When students examine a particular issue, they can be encouraged to think about the various populations that will be affected by a course of action. This connects clearly with the component of Appreciating Interdependence. As this process becomes increasingly familiar, students will begin to naturally think about the broader implications of actions and how they can affect populations that at first glance would appear quite remote from the issue at hand.

Furthermore, the skill of critically thinking about a complex issue in a way that is aligned with one's values is an important skill to develop. In thinking through and assessing broader social and global issues, students should be encouraged to repeatedly ask themselves how the issue at hand relates to basic human values. In this way, their engagement can become oriented increasingly towards that which promotes individual, social and global flourishing. This ties in closely with recognizing and minimizing the role that mindsets and emotions such as bias can play in hindering critical thinking around ethical issues. Here, many of the other competencies of SEE Learning will play a supporting role, as students' own cultivation of self-regulation, their sense of empathy and appreciation of others, and their appreciation of common humanity will all foster their ability to minimize the distorting effect that such emotions can have on responsible decision-making.

Lastly, engagement here, and the critical thinking that supports it, has a broader communal or global dimension. Ethical issues always include a dimension of impact on self and others, and therefore the role of others must always be taken into consideration.

Community and global engagement is greatly supported by an open-minded attitude that is willing to collaborate with others and learn from and respect others' perspectives, opinions, knowledge, and experiences. The faculty of intellectual humility—the recognition that one does not know all there is to know, and that others' knowledge and perspectives can be equally valuable—greatly aids learning, communication and collaboration. Healthy debate is only possible when one considers that others are also using their reasoning and experience to come to the positions they hold, even when those positions are different to one's own. Without intellectual humility and open-mindedness, debate and mutual consensus becomes impossible, and conversation can degenerate to unproductive conflict and power struggles.

This broader approach in community and global engagement also requires the ability to articulate one's position and one's thinking to others, and to engage in dialogue with others around issues and values. There are few serious problems that we can solve alone as individuals without collaborating and working with others, and that requires an ability to clearly community one's ideas and values. Community and global engagement is therefore greatly supported by the ability to articulate one's position, ask questions, learn from dialogue partners, and engage in debate in a constructive way. Being able to communicate clearly and articulately on the basis of one's critical thinking and one's deeply-held values, and being able to speak in a way that is empowering and inspiring, even on behalf of those who have no voice, is a powerful skill for future global citizens and transformative leaders. It builds off of the Relationship Skills covered in the Social domain, here coupled with a broader awareness of systems and interdependence. Moreover, this communication requires being able to speak on a level that is common to those one is addressing. Here, students can realize the full potential of SEE Learning in a dialogical fashion, which is not just the internalization of competencies and values on a personal level, but which also embodies a communal discourse around issues of import using a common language of basic human values. It is this kind of discourse that will enable students to work together collaboratively to address social issues on a small or large scale, and that will prepare students to effectively and meaningfully engage with others—even different or difficult others—throughout their future lives and careers.

Conclusion

Clearly the present human condition is complex. Both children and adults face a range of challenges while navigating through countless individual encounters and social situations. When it comes to managing the ups and downs of life, though, there is clear distinction between actions and decisions motivated by narrow self-interest, and those that take into account the interests of others. Consequences can only be successfully managed by a greater awareness of our impulses and biases along with an ability to manage our reactions and a willingness to critically examine the factors contributing to any specific situation. This is why compassion is the overarching theme uniting and motivating SEE Learning. The components of SEE Learning are not a guarantee for ethical behavior and responsible decision making, but students who cultivate the enduring capabilities articulated within them will be better prepared to act in ways that are considerate, informed, and responsible, thereby contributing to their own and others' long-term well-being. Through this, students can move forward in realizing their tremendous potential for being a force for good: their own good, the good of others, and the good of the wider world.

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Social, Emotional, and Ethical Learning

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