



Be **SAFE**

*Safe, Affirming & Fair
Environments*

MICHIGAN STATE
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Extension



Be SAFE Introduction

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Be SAFE Acknowledgments

Be SAFE: Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments was conceived, developed and written with deep gratitude to all the young people, adults and scholars who have shaped our thinking over the past two decades about these incredibly important issues in the lives of kids, families and communities.

During 2012, adults involved with a variety of out-of-school-time sites around Michigan generously stepped forward to become pilot sites for the Be SAFE curriculum. Their commitment to work with their young people to “try on” and “try out” the curriculum design and activities – as well as their willingness to provide thoughtful feedback – has been instrumental in strengthening this material. Our thanks goes to all of the young people and adult leaders at the following Michigan pilot sites, as well as to the MSU Extension staff members who served as liaisons to these sites:

- ▶ **The Boys & Girls Club of Alpena, Alpena.** Site leader: Matt Muszynski; MSUE liaison: Carolyn Penniman
- ▶ **Branch County Coalition Against Domestic Violence Youth Program, Coldwater.** Site leader: Jenny Rufenacht; MSUE liaison: Suzanne Pish
- ▶ **Branch County 4-H FRIENDS Nutrition and Health Day Camp, Coldwater.** Site leader: Jenny Rufenacht; MSUE liaison: Suzanne Pish
- ▶ **Camp Fire USA West Michigan Afterschool and Summer Programs, Grand Rapids.** Site leaders: Pam Bland, Evita Iyire, Kohan Kolleh, Tashara Stanley, Brianne Tuinstra and Ericka VanderLaan; MSUE liaison: Holly Tired
- ▶ **Central Lake 21st Century Afterschool Program, Central Lake.** Site leader: Jenny Shooks; MSUE liaison: Denise Aungst
- ▶ **The Boys & Girls Club South Oakland County ‘field Zone Afterschool Program, Southfield.** Site leaders: Meredith Luckey, Linda Nabers and Vania Smith; MSUE liaison: Julie Scislowicz
- ▶ **Mt. Zion 4-H Club, Detroit.** Site leaders: Jacqueline Donaldson-Barber and Sandra Griffin; MSUE liaison: Sandra Griffin
- ▶ **Sault Area Middle School Afterschool Program, Sault Ste. Marie.** Site leader: Austin Lowes; MSUE liaison: Andrea Caron
- ▶ **Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians Youth Program, St. Ignace.** Site leader: Sue St. Onge; MSUE liaison: Tracie Abram

We are also indebted to the contributions of those who served as reviewers of the curriculum. Their critical feedback and powerful suggestions have significantly improved this material.

- ▶ **Tracie Abram**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Denise Aungst**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Hannah Davidson**, Teen Reviewer
- ▶ **Jennifer Esch**, Security Awareness Leader, GE Capital Business, and former Consumer Programs Administrator, Michigan Attorney General’s Office
- ▶ **Kendra Moyses**, Associate Program Leader, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Suzanne Pish**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Dionardo Pizaña**, Diversity and Personnel Specialist, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Erin Ross**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Olga Santiago**, Ph.D., Extension Specialist and Program Evaluator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Lawrence Schiamberg**, Ph.D., Professor, Department of Human Development and Families Studies, MSU
- ▶ **Jodi Schulz**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Holly Tired**, Extension Educator, MSU Extension
- ▶ **Michael Wallace**, Extension Educator, Washington State University Extension

Finally, we want to recognize and thank **Lisa Laughman**, Emotional Wellness Consultant and Director of Wisdom Heart Life, who provided invaluable contributions to the development of this curriculum.

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Production

Production of this book was coordinated by ANR Communications (anrcom.msu.edu/), Michigan State University Extension.

- ▶ Rebecca McKee, Editor, ANR Communications
- ▶ Marian Reiter, Graphic Artist, ANR Communications

Welcome to Be SAFE!

Be SAFE: *Safe, Affirming and Fair Environments* is a Michigan State University (MSU) Extension initiative designed to help young people aged 11 to 14 and adults work in partnership to create environments that are physically and emotionally safe. While the primary audiences for Be SAFE are young people and adults involved in out-of-school time settings (such as after-school programs, 4-H, Boys and Girls Clubs, Scouts, Y's, sports programs and faith-based programs), the effort also applies to middle school settings. Be SAFE focuses on education and prevention of bullying, bias, harassment and other hurtful behaviors – as well as providing suggestions for intervening when young people are affected by these issues. It draws from extensive research from a variety of key disciplines – as well as from evidence-based bullying prevention programs.

The overall goals of Be SAFE are to:

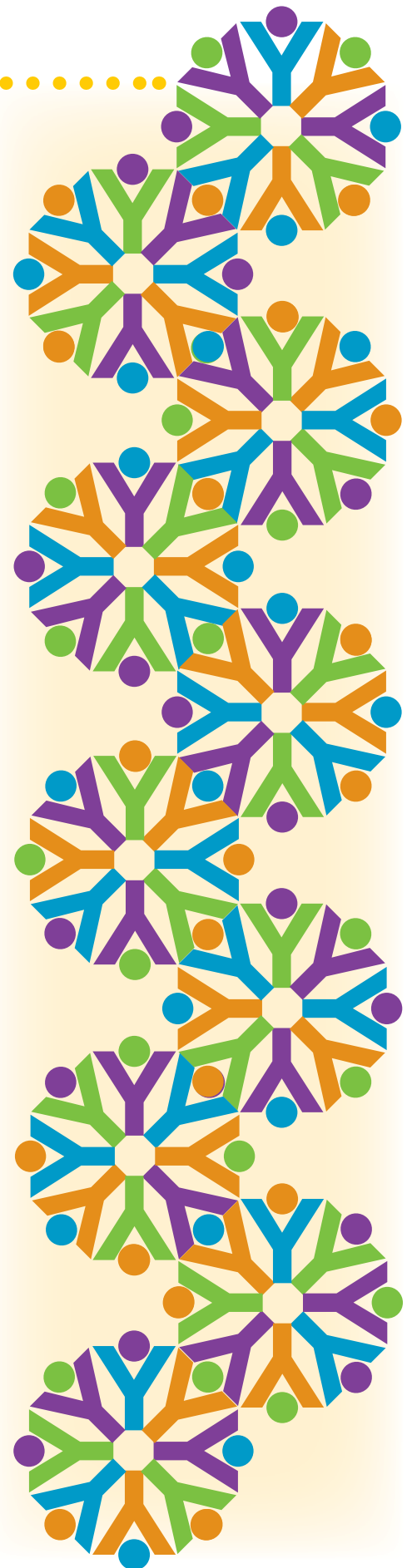
- ▶ Promote social and emotional learning and development.
- ▶ Address and reduce bullying.
- ▶ Prevent bullying behaviors by tapping the wisdom and assets of youth and adults.
- ▶ Develop positive relationships with peers and adults.

What Makes Be SAFE Unique?

Be SAFE Is Grounded in Positive Youth Development

Bullying is widespread in the United States and of great concern to many young people, families, educators, youth workers and other community members. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2012), bullying is a form of youth violence that can cause physical injury, social and emotional distress, and even death. Bullying has serious consequences that put youth at higher risk for substance abuse, academic problems, mental health issues and violence in adolescence and adulthood.

While these concerns are valid, a focus on “preventing” bullying is not enough. Too many programs come from a deficit approach and focus on bullying as a set of problem behaviors to be eliminated and prevented. In addition, these prevention efforts often frame the issue as a “youth problem,” rather than examining the complex issues





surrounding bullying through larger institutional, cultural and societal influences that affect young peoples' development.

Young people need to feel a sense of connection and belonging and establish positive bonds with peers, families, schools and communities (Henderson, 2007). They are not “the future.” They are the *present* – and they long to be engaged in meaningful ways around important issues that affect their lives. The contributions they make enhance their own development – and their engagement is essential if we want to make significant positive changes around issues like bullying in our communities (Pitman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem & Ferber, 2003). Be SAFE taps the wisdom, strengths and resiliency of young people and draws them into a process of learning, growth and change – alongside and in partnership with adults.

Be SAFE Explores the Complexities of the Issues

One of the unique features of Be SAFE is that it encourages us to examine the complex issue of bullying through a variety of lenses and levels. Too many approaches to bullying scapegoat or blame youth by focusing only on peer aggression and peer abuse without focusing on the behavior of adults – and by ignoring the larger institutional and cultural influences that contribute to the reasons why bullying, bias and harassment are such serious issues in communities. Be SAFE encourages us to step back and take a broader view and to develop a critical consciousness and lens through which to examine these complex issues.

Be SAFE Is About Social & Emotional Learning & Health

A growing body of reliable, scientific research shows the benefits of social and emotional learning for both youth and adults. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), efforts that promote social and emotional learning improve young people's academic success and overall health and well-being. These efforts also help reduce negative behaviors such as alcohol and drug use, violence and bullying. In short, helping children master their emotions and relationships makes them better learners (CASEL, 2012).

Social and emotional competencies – including self-awareness, ability to manage distressing emotions, sensitivity to how others feel and the ability to effectively manage relationships – are vital throughout our lives, and the foundations for these important



life skills begin in childhood. People who bully others may lack the social skills of empathy, self-control, sharing, listening and negotiating that are part of healthy relationships. Be SAFE draws from the research on social-emotional learning and integrates it throughout the curriculum. It also provides specific content focuses that invite youth and adults to explore the areas of emotional and social intelligence more deeply.

Be SAFE Shines a Light on Shame

According to researcher, educator and author, Brené Brown, a core emotion that is linked to issues of bullying is shame. Shame is universal and something we all experience, and yet we rarely, if ever, talk about it. The silence around shame helps it flourish and allows it to be used as a weapon to hurt ourselves and others (Brown, 2012). When young people (and adults) are targets of hurtful, cruel, bullying behaviors it often triggers feelings of worthlessness, inadequacy and shame. Interestingly, it's not just the targets or victims of bullying who experience these painful feelings. The person doing the bullying is likely to be acting aggressively to cover up similar feelings harbored within himself or herself.

Shame is connected to the intensely painful experience of believing that we are flawed and unworthy of love, acceptance and belonging. These feelings often lead to fear, blame, disconnection and isolation. When we unconsciously feel shame, we may respond by shutting down, acting out or attacking others. Shame diminishes our capacity to feel empathy – and it is empathy that opens our minds and hearts to the kind of courage, connection and compassion required to address issues of bullying in meaningful ways.

You will notice that issues of shame are addressed throughout the Be SAFE curriculum. Young people and adults are encouraged to:

- ▶ Talk openly about their experiences within a safe and caring environment.
- ▶ Develop critical awareness about the issues.
- ▶ Be vulnerable and courageous as they explore ways to address bullying in their lives.





Be SAFE Distinguishes Between Bullying & Harassment

When young people are asked to list the kinds of things that people are bullied for, they often mention characteristics connected to race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation (real or perceived), disabilities and other aspects of human differences. Hurtful language and behaviors that continually target people based on these human differences and that create a hostile environment for people connected to those groups are called “harassment.” Too many approaches to bullying either minimize or ignore these important connections to differences – or they go to the other extreme and label as “bullying” what could more accurately be identified as illegal **civil rights violations** and even **hate crimes**. Be SAFE invites young people and adults into important conversations about the differences between bullying, bias and harassment, and provides opportunities to learn about human differences in healthy ways.





The Be SAFE Focus Areas





OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 1:

Creating a SAFE Space

Research shows that young people benefit from time spent in positive and safe settings with adults and peers (Durlak & Weissberg, 2007). But these kinds of settings don't just happen. Creating positive environments requires intentional time in order to foster settings that are physically, verbally and emotionally safe for all youth (and adults). As the adult working with young people, you have an important role to play in helping to set a tone that encourages a caring, nonjudgmental and safe environment (Tucker, 2011). Activities in this section are designed to introduce Be SAFE to your group, help them get to know each other better, build a sense of connection and belonging, and create guidelines to establish group norms and expectations. Guidelines (created along with youth) help to create an environment that fosters the development of healthy relationships.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 2:

Exploring Bullying

Every day across our communities, thousands of young people are affected by a range of harmful bullying behaviors (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012; Wang, Ionotti, & Nansel, 2009). Building an understanding of what bullying is – including the various kinds of bullying taking place in our lives – is an important initial step in interrupting and preventing these behaviors. The activities in this section are designed to help your group explore examples of the kinds of bullying behaviors they see around them and how these can affect all of us, including those being targeted, those carrying out negative behaviors and those who are witnesses. Your group can also do some important reflection about how our own and others' attitudes and beliefs influence our roles within these kinds of situations – reflection that is a critical aspect of preventing these negative behaviors (Espalage, Green, & Polanin, 2011).

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 3:

Addressing Cyberbullying & Cyber Safety

Technology plays a powerful role in connecting young people in positive ways – and it can also be used to carry out hurtful and unsafe online behaviors. Twenty percent of 11- to 18-year-olds have indicated that they've been cyberbullied at some point in their lives, with 20 percent also admitting to cyberbullying others (Hinduja & Patchin, 2010). To prevent the serious outcomes that can result from these behaviors, it's important to explore these kinds of outcomes as well as our responsibility to work together to respond to cyberbullying (Hertz & David-Ferdon, 2008). Activities in this focus area help your group reflect on the role of technology in our lives and ways that cyberbullying can affect both those directly involved and those witnessing it virtually. Your group can also identify and practice a menu of strategies for responding to these kinds of situations, which is essential learning for making a difference in our own and others' behaviors (Haber, 2011).

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 4:

Understanding Differences

When young people are asked to list the kinds of things that people are bullied for, they often mention characteristics connected to race, gender, socioeconomic class, sexual orientation (real or perceived), disabilities and other aspects of human differences (Davis & Nixon, 2010; Garbarino & deLara, 2002; Goldman, 2012; Guerra, Williamson, & Sadek, 2012). Activities in this focus area will help you talk about differences with your group and help them understand the importance of recognizing, understanding and appreciating differences in themselves and in others – a life skill that will serve them well now and in the future. Information is also provided to help youth and adults understand the connections and differences between bullying behaviors and illegal forms of harassment.



OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 5:

Nurturing Our Emotional Intelligence

Many studies show the importance of developing emotional intelligence – for children, youth and adults (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning, 2012; Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor & Schellinger, 2011; Goleman, 1995 & 2006; Lantieri & Goleman, 2008; Saarni, Campos, Camras & Witherington, 2008). Emotional intelligence includes developing self-awareness and an increased ability to notice and navigate our thoughts and emotions – particularly when we’re experiencing stress. Tapping our resiliency – the innate ability we all have to gently self-correct and thrive in the face of change and challenges – is an important life skill for children, youth and adults (Lantieri & Goleman, 2008; Benard, 2004). The activities in this section will help you develop greater self-awareness of your own state of mind and emotional life so that you can share this understanding with the young people with whom you work.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 7:

Moving From Bystanders to Allies

Settings where bullying behaviors occur (whether the behaviors happen face-to-face or virtually) nearly always involve a larger group of bystanders (Obermann, 2011; Pepler, Craig, & O’Connell, 2010). An important aspect of creating positive change involves helping kids and adults move from being passive bystanders to being powerful allies – that is, people who use their voices in powerful ways to interrupt hurtful behaviors, to support those being targeted, or to do both. The activities in this section focus on elements that are important for this transformation: Knowing what influences our willingness to act during these situations, and identifying and practicing specific skills for being an ally (Espelage, Green, & Polanin, 2011). The activities also help group members examine different meanings of courage and their own potential for everyday acts of courage and support.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 6:

Developing Our Social Intelligence

This section focuses on developing social intelligence, which is connected in many ways to emotional intelligence. For example, research shows that children who are well-liked by their peers are better able to express their emotions in appropriate ways and are better able to manage their own negative emotions such as anger, nervousness and sadness (Terzian, 2012). While emotional intelligence is about developing self-awareness and an increased ability to notice and navigate thoughts and emotions, social intelligence focuses on our sensitivity to how others feel and on our capacity to nurture and navigate relationships (Goleman, 2006). Activities in this section focus on helping participants understand the differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships, reflect on the qualities we want in our own relationships, develop listening skills and learn about the concept of separate realities – all important aspects of social intelligence.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 8:

Keeping Ourselves Safe

This section focuses on those most affected – the victim or target of hurtful language and bullying behaviors. While anyone can be a target, those most at risk for becoming victims of bullying include those who are passive, isolated or who appear weak, those who have low self-confidence and those who don’t fit in because of a difference (Davis & Nixon, 2010 & 2011; GLSEN, 2012; Kosciw, Greytak, Bartkiewicz, Boesen, & Palmer, 2012; Garbarino & deLara, 2002; Goldman, 2012; Guerra, Williamson, & Sadek, 2012; Storey & Slaby, 2008). The activities in this section focus on taking power away from the person engaging in bullying behaviors by helping those targeted feel empowered, confident and prepared to respond to bullying when it happens. Activities include creating a safety plan, responding assertively rather than aggressively, and practicing mindfulness to help stay psychologically and emotionally safe in the face of bullying and other challenging situations.



OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 9:

Becoming Critical Consumers of Media

From the moment we're born, the media and advertising messages that surround us provide a toolkit for building our understanding about the world (Brown, Schaffer, Vargas, & Romocki, 2004). These messages influence how we view ourselves and others and can contribute to unhealthy self-images, stereotypes about groups of people, and relationships in which bullying and aggression are considered "normal." Many scholars stress that while we can't turn off this media world, we have a responsibility to help young people (and adults) learn to read it well (Brown & Bobkowski, 2011; Brown, Lamb, & Tappan, 2009; Lamb & Brown, 2006). The activities in this section will help your group explore what's underneath these messages and ways they can influence our beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors. The activities also help group members identify and practice strategies for becoming critical media consumers and advocates for change.

OVERVIEW OF FOCUS AREA 10:

Reflecting on Our Be SAFE Experiences

Providing intentional time for reflection about a group's Be SAFE learning experiences allows kids and adults to examine changes in awareness, feelings, attitudes, knowledge and actions – including how we treat ourselves and our friends, peers, families and others. The activities in this focus area provide structured time for both group reflection and individual reflection through the "Be SAFE Survey" (see the "Assessing Changes in Your Group" section for more information). The group will celebrate what they've learned and contributed to the Be SAFE experiences, as well as explore ways to share their knowledge, wisdom and skills with others in their community.





Be SAFE Scope & Sequence

	Focus Area 1: Creating a SAFE Space	Focus Area 2: Exploring Bullying	Focus Area 3: Addressing Cyberbullying and Cyber Safety	Focus Area 4: Understanding Differences
Essential Activities	Creating Guidelines for Our Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe what Be SAFE is. Identify settings and environments that young people are involved with. Describe the concepts of <i>safe</i>, <i>affirming</i> and <i>fair</i> as they are used in this program. Discuss the importance of and follow the group's guidelines for how the group members will treat each other. 	What Makes Bullying Real for You? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify types and examples of bullying behaviors. Explain ways that bullying behaviors can affect the people involved. Share a definition of bullying. 	And Words (and Images) Can Hurt Forever <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify different kinds of cyberbullying behaviors. Explain how cyberbullying behaviors can affect the people involved. 	What's the Difference? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate increased awareness about human differences and connections to bullying behaviors. Describe why people may target others based on differences. Describe ways that bullying is different from illegal forms of harassment.
Going Deeper Activities	What's in a Name? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share the importance of their names to their identities. Discuss ways that people's names have cultural significance to them. 	Exploring Spheres of Influence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express their beliefs about how people should be treated. Explains ways that other people can influence these beliefs. Make connections between their beliefs and their reactions to bullying situations. 	Taking Action to Stop Cyberbullying <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Express positive and safe ways to interrupt cyberbullying. 	Who Am I? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe <i>being</i> and <i>doing</i> aspects of who they are. Explain the importance of recognizing, understanding and appreciating differences in themselves and others.
Extending Our Learning Activities	Creating Personal Respect Posters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain what <i>respect</i> means to them. Discuss why the notion of respect means different things to different people. Explain that respect can have different meanings across cultural groups. Talk about how the concept of respect applies to ways that the group members want to treat each other. 	Gathering the Perspectives of Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate increased awareness about the bullying experiences and perspectives of others (including youth and adults). Share with others how the group is using Be SAFE to build a setting that is physically and emotionally safe. 	Steps to Cyber Safety <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe ways to stay safe online. 	Take a Stand! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain why it's important to engage in dialogue around complex issues such as bullying and human differences. Demonstrate skills in engaging in dialogue around complex issues.



Be SAFE Scope & Sequence, continued

	Focus Area 5: Nurturing Our Emotional Intelligence	Focus Area 6: Developing Our Social Intelligence	Focus Area 7: Moving From Bystanders to Allies	Focus Area 8: Keeping Ourselves Safe
Essential Activities	Clear Mind – Mud Mind: Understanding State of Mind <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the concept of <i>state of mind</i> and how it affects their thinking and perceptions. Identify how their thoughts can create their experiences from moment to moment. Discuss the concept of <i>personal accountability</i> related to their thoughts, feelings and actions. Use a “mud mind jar” as a reminder about the concept of state of mind. 	The Relationships Continuum <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define several qualities of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Describe the continuum of healthy and unhealthy relationships. Identify ways to nurture healthy relationships and navigate unhealthy relationships. Apply the relationship continuum to their relationships with others. 	Moving to Circles of Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> List several reasons why people don’t try to interrupt bullying behaviors. Explain differences between being a silent bystander and being a supportive ally. Identify some strategies for moving from being bystanders to allies. 	Creating a Safety Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify ways to respond in situations when they are feeling unsafe. Discuss the importance of safety planning.
Going Deeper Activities	Creating Space for Feelings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Name six core feelings: mad, sad, scared, peaceful, powerful and joyful, and ways they express them. Describe how people learn about feelings in different ways. Practice noticing and naming their feelings. 	The Art of Listening <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the importance of listening in creating connections, understanding and rapport with people. Identify listening skills and consider their cross-cultural implications. Practice listening to and being heard by others. Share feedback with each other on their listening skills. 	Speaking Up and Standing With: Skills for Being an Ally <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demonstrate skills for being an ally to people who are bullied. Demonstrate ways to help those who are bullying others. 	Standing Up: Assertive Versus Aggressive Responses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the difference between assertive and aggressive responses. Demonstrate their skills in responding assertively as the target in bullying scenarios.
Extending Our Learning Activities	The Mood Elevator <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the impact that mood has on thoughts, feelings and behaviors. Recognize and discuss the temporary and shifting nature of moods and be aware of different mood states. Increase their ability to <i>not</i> participate in “low mood behavior.” 	Exploring Separate Realities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the concept of <i>separate realities</i>. Discuss how every person sees words, images and situations through his or her own unique perspective or lens. Honor their own realities while also being open to the realities and experiences of others. 	Contributing to the Circle of Courage <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discuss different meanings of <i>courage</i>. Share examples of courage in ourselves and others. 	Everyday Mindfulness <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explain the concept of <i>mindfulness</i>. Demonstrate their skills in practicing everyday mindfulness.



	Focus Area 9: Becoming Critical Consumers of Media	Focus Area 10: Reflecting on Our Be SAFE Experiences
Essential Activities	Seeing Is Believing – or Is It? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Define the word <i>stereotypes</i>. Describe ways that media images and messages may reinforce gender stereotypes. Describe ways that negative and positive images and messages can influence our beliefs, attitudes, values and behaviors – including bullying behaviors. Begin to identify ways to critically evaluate media messages. 	Celebrating Our Be SAFE Experiences! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe changes in their awareness, feelings, attitudes, knowledge and actions as a result of their Be SAFE experiences.
Going Deeper Activities	Wake Up and Smell the Messages! <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify the wide range of sources around us that convey messages and information. Discuss ways we consciously and unconsciously take in media messages and how they can affect our feelings, thoughts and behaviors – including bullying behaviors. Identify ways to critically evaluate media messages. 	Sharing and Celebrating With Our Important Circles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share information about the Be SAFE focus areas with other people (such as family members, friends, teachers and other community members).
Extending Our Learning Activities	And the Beat Goes On – How Does Music Move You? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Describe the power of music – how it makes us feel about ourselves, other people and issues of importance in our lives. 	Passing It Forward – Opportunities for Educating Others <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teach other groups information from the Be SAFE focus areas. Recognize themselves as community leaders around critical issues.

