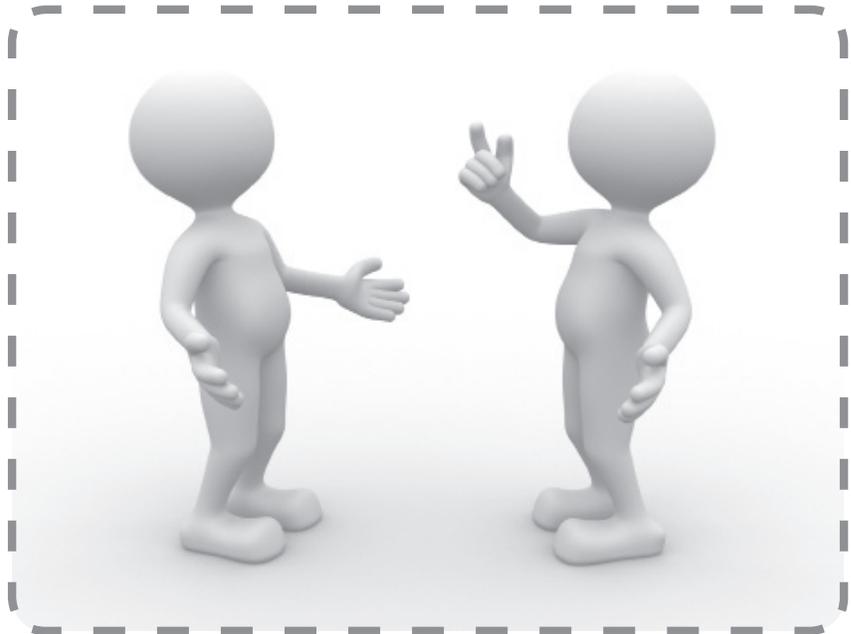


## KEY CONCEPTS AND LANGUAGE FOR FAMILIES

*Acting with Purpose*<sup>™</sup> is built on a framework of best practice principles and evidence-based research in several key research areas. (A comprehensive description of scientific research foundations is available at [www.positivelearningcommunities.com](http://www.positivelearningcommunities.com)) A few of these key concepts, and the language used to teach them, have been prepared for parents and families.

As your child participates in the learning, some of these terms will become familiar. Understanding these ideas will help you feel comfortable using the vocabulary to offer feedback and guide your child's learning. Taking some time to familiarize yourselves with these terms and ideas will help you support your child's progress..

### PERSPECTIVE-TAKING



Perspective-Taking is a crucial component of good social language programming and intervention. When we empathize with other people and see things from their point of view, we are “taking perspective.” We do not necessarily **share** their perspective, but we recognize that they have experiences and viewpoints other than our own.

This curriculum offers specific tools and techniques to help young people observe and internalize the key components of Perspective-Taking:

- ▶ Noticing, interpreting, and reacting to non-verbal cues;
- ▶ Predicting other people's reactions to one's own social behaviors;
- ▶ Becoming aware of and responsible for one's own social skills and interactions.

## MINDFULNESS

Mindfulness is practice that brings a quality of non-judgmental attention to the present moment. Jon Kabat-Zinn, the author of several books on mindfulness, says:



“ Mindfulness involves learning to direct our attention to our experience as it unfolds, moment by moment, with open-minded curiosity and acceptance. Rather than worrying about what has happened or might happen, it trains us to respond skillfully to whatever is happening right now, be that good or bad.”

Mindfulness is not a religious practice, although the concept of mindfulness is compatible with many spiritual, sacred, and philosophical traditions. ***More than anything else, the practice of mindfulness is a practice of compassion—toward oneself as well as others.***

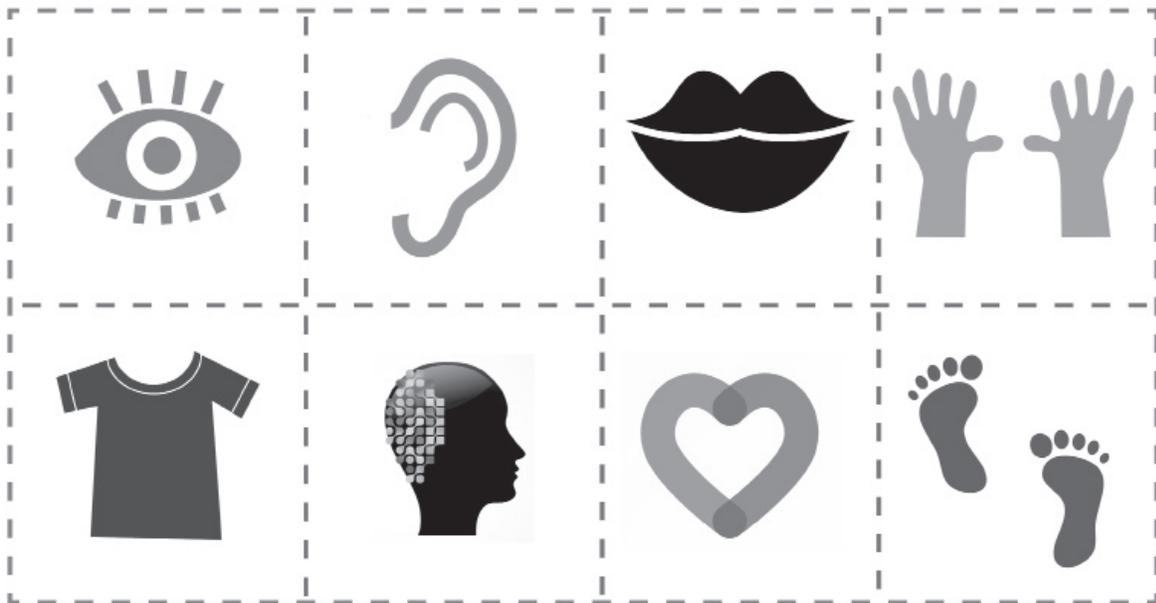
The curriculum includes many activities that help students learn and practice mindfulness. They teach students how to be present and appreciate each moment—right here, and right now.

Taking a moment to breathe and notice your physical and emotional state throughout the day helps nurture an atmosphere of calm and well-being. Simple exercises of mindful sitting, listening, and breathing can help children sharpen their perceptions of the thoughts of others, manage their stress and stress reactions, and regulate emotional responses to social encounters. This can have a profound impact on skill development, learning, and social understanding for children and adults.

# WHOLE-BODY LISTENING

The concept of “Whole Body Listening” emphasizes that the act of listening is different from the act of hearing, in ways that are both concrete and recognizable. Young people can learn to examine and control each component of Whole Body Listening, checking in with their bodies, noticing every part and asking themselves:

- Are my eyes looking at the person that is speaking?
- Is my mouth quiet?
- Are my hands resting?
- Are my shoulders and body directly facing the person that is speaking?
- Is my brain thinking about the same thing the person speaking is talking about?
- Are my feet silent and still?



Awareness of Whole Body Listening is fundamental to learning, both at school and at home. When students are calm and their bodies are still, they experience fewer distractions. With eyes intentionally focused on the speaker, they are better able to notice and analyze the non-verbal cues that accompany a speaker's words. In the classroom, students use Whole Body Listening to demonstrate respect for the value of the individual speaking, show that they are actively engaged in a social interaction, and confirm that they are interested in what is being said.

# FLEXIBILITY

Just as bodies need to be flexible, brains need to be flexible, too! This is known as “cognitive flexibility.”



People with flexible thinking are able to observe a social situation, sum up what is happening, and modify or vary their responses. This helps them to be successful in different social settings and with different conversational partners.

When young people lack cognitive flexibility, it is difficult for them to move beyond a single perspective or point of view. Children with poor cognitive flexibility often present with behavioral challenges; because they maintain a single point of view they may have difficulty interpreting social demands from outside of that view.

This curriculum series nurtures cognitive flexibility through a multi-step process. Turn-taking and fairness are established in the early weeks of the program as important shared values. Theater games and improvisational activities (which otherwise might provoke anxiety for students) are enjoyable when offered in the context of amusing situations, silly characters, and entertaining adventures.

Repeated practice in these fun cooperative learning exercises extends students’ willingness to engage, and demonstrates to young people that they can, with time and practice, learn to think with greater flexibility.

