



School Mental Health Communities of Practice

Relationship Skills Micro-Skills

Model using I-statements and active listening skills and give authentic praise to students who use those skills appropriately

Micro-skills are moment-to-moment activities that K-12 building and district administrators, educators and classroom personnel, school psychologists, counselors, and social workers (among other school personnel) can use to promote mental health, behavioral health, and academic success among K-12 students. Micro-skills are designed to assist you in knowing how to respond and intervene directly with students in need (e.g., those who are experiencing MH/BH concerns). Micro-skills are strength-based and asset-driven in nature, and can be used by individuals without formal MH/BH training (e.g., micro-skills are NOT clinical strategies that must be delivered by formally trained MH/BH professionals). Identifying actionable strategies that all school personnel can take to support students spreads the onus of responsibility for addressing the MH/BH needs of students to the entire school staff, providing a broad (and needed) level of support for students.

SEL Standard: *Relationship Skills:* The ability to establish and maintain healthy relationships with diverse individuals and groups. Developing relationship skills promotes the ability to communicate clearly, listen well, cooperate with others, resist social and peer pressure, negotiate conflict, seek help, and offer help to others when they need it.

Relationship Skills Micro-Skill: Model using I-statements and active listening skills and give authentic praise to students who use those skills appropriately.

Relationship Skills Resources:

- Act for Youth's Relationship Skills Resources:
http://actforyouth.net/youth_development/professionals/sel/relationship_skills.cfm
- CASEL's Relationship Skills Video:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XME8FjpdSc&list=PLqSvevVI2ir-MthHDHyBhgEvWVsjgqbzO&index=3&t=0s>
- Landmark School Outreach's Relationship Skills (Social Emotional Learning):
<https://www.landmarkoutreach.org/strategies/relationship-skills-sel/>
- PBIS World's Teach Relationship Skills:
<https://www.pbisworld.com/tier-1/teach-relationship-skills/>
- Search Institute's Developmental Relationships Framework:
<https://www.search-institute.org/developmental-relationships/>



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The following are micro-skills that school personnel can use to model using I-statements and active listening skills and give authentic praise to students who use those skills appropriately:

Teach students how to use I-statements

- School personnel can teach students how to use I-statements:
 - "I feel (your emotion) when (the event) because (your thoughts about event). Next time, can you please (your request)?"
 - "I feel (your emotion) when you (the event) and I want (what you would like to change)."
 - For example, "I feel upset when you cut in line because you are not being respectful or fair. Next time, can you please respect our school rules and wait your turn in line to be fair to everyone else?"

Teach students how to be active listeners

- School personnel can teach students active listening skills:
 - When someone is talking to you, look at them and give them your full attention (e.g., stop doing other things)
 - Listen to both the person's words and their feelings
 - Be sincerely interested in what they are telling you
 - Restate what the other person has told you
 - Ask the other person clarifying questions (if needed)
 - Be aware of your own opinions and feelings
 - State your own views after you have actively listened to the other person

Model using I- statements for your students

- School personnel can model using I-statements such as:
 - "I feel proud of each of you when try out our new teaching tools during this pandemic crisis because I know this change has been very difficult for everyone."
 - "I feel overwhelmed by all the changes that have happened recently because of our new remote learning situation and I want to thank you for all of your support and kindness."
 - "I feel sad that I cannot be with you right now because of our health emergency, and I want you to know that I am thinking about you every day."



Model active listening skills for your students

- School personnel can model active listening skills by:
 - Intentionally stopping what you are doing and giving someone your full attention when they need to talk to you
 - Being sincerely interested in what others are telling you
 - Restating what the other person has told you, and asking any clarifying questions if you didn't understand something
 - Being aware of your own feelings and opinions about what they have said, and state them only after you have listened to the other person (avoiding being judgmental, if possible)

Give authentic praise to students using I-statements

- School personnel can give students authentic praise for using I-statements by saying things like:
 - *"I'm really proud of you for letting your classmate know how you felt when she cut in line. I'm glad that you were able to help her understand how important it is to be respectful and fair to others by following our school rules."*
 - *"I noticed that you took a deep breath and stayed calm when your friend was rude to you. Instead of getting upset, you told your friend how that made you feel and asked him to be more considerate of you in the future. Great job!"*

Give authentic praise to students who demonstrate active listening skills

- School personnel can give students authentic praise for demonstrating active listening skills by saying things like:
 - *"I noticed that you stopped what you were doing and took time to really listen to your friend when she needed someone to be there for her. You are a great friend!"*
 - *"You did a very good job giving everyone in your group a chance to share their ideas about the group project. I was very impressed with how you encouraged each person to talk about the things that were most important to them, while encouraging everyone else to really listen to those ideas."*