

Take 5!

Transformative SEL in Action

Equity, Social Justice & Social and Emotional Learning

A dynamic dialog is emerging among educators and other professionals that support children and families: It's time to renew our efforts to advance equity and social justice. And, as CASEL¹ has recently affirmed, social and emotional learning (SEL) can act as a powerful lever for positive change. We agree.

At Take 5! our objective is to support young people, of all racial, ethnic & socio-economic backgrounds, to grow their capacity to self-regulate – which we describe as the ability to monitor *and* to modify one's experiences in life. Or, put a little more simply, awareness before action. When we're self-regulating, action is always preceded by awareness.

When young people are supported to grow their capacity to self-regulate, they are better prepared to navigate the challenges that life will inevitably bring. And, with robust self-reg skills, they are better prepared to play a positive role in creating a healthier future, a more equitable future, a thriving future ... for themselves, for their families, and for their fellow citizens.

Strengthening their ability to self-regulate, bringing higher levels of awareness to their actions, young people are able to grow two essential capacities: resilience and response-ability. *Resilience* describes the ability to cope and adapt in the face of adversity, trauma and stress. It's what helps us bounce back when times are tough. *Response-ability* is a little different. It's the ability to respond positively and proactively to life's challenges, including complex problems and promising potentials.

At our best, humans are both resilient and response-able. We are able to bounce back, and we are able to leap forward. And, as we grow our capacity for response-ability as well as resilience, we will see ourselves – individually and collectively – not as mere victims of circumstances but, rather, as capable agents of healthy change. How young people learn to respond to life's ups and downs will strongly influence how the future unfolds – their future, their family's future, their community's future. Here's the good news: With a little help, young people can learn to be both resilient and response-able.

There's little question that our world is changing, revealing an intensifying need for both resilience and response-ability. In recent months, for example, two dynamic events have called attention to issues of equity and justice. The virus-related lockdown has asked each of us to regulate our personal choices and behaviors in service of our own personal health, *and* the health of our community. And a global upswell of protest is a response to growing concern over equity issues; once tolerated social and institutional attitudes and behaviors are no longer acceptable. While there are many bigger, systemically and culturally rooted forces at work here, social and emotional learning is an important tool for fostering attitudes and actions that enhance equity for all.

¹ Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning: www.casel.org

Take 5! Self-Reg Asset-Building is well-aligned with these objectives. With lots of self-reg assets to draw on – when they can BE HERE, BE WITH, BE CALM, BE STRONG, and BE CHANGE - young people are themselves a potent lever for transformative action.



Take 5! Self-Reg Asset-Building: Awareness to Agency to Action

In children, youth, and adults alike, our ability to make skillful and equitable change is closely correlated with our capacity for mindful awareness, interpersonal effectiveness, and emotion regulation, as well as our ability to be resilient, enabling us to thrive even when life gets tough. In other words, to BE CHANGE, we must also be able to BE HERE, BE WITH, BE CALM and BE STRONG.

Going a little further, our ability to BE CHANGE - making change that makes a real difference in our world – is strengthened by the following building blocks; each is an integrated part of the Take 5! Framework.

1. **Flex/Flow Thinking:** Seeing and embracing complexity, multiple perspectives, paradox, and the natural flow of change, I can be flexible with myself, and with others.
2. **Imagine a Preferred Future:** A chosen future, not just an inherited future.
3. **Stepping Up:** What if I ...? What if we ...?
4. **Playing It Forward:** How will this action affect my future, our future, the planet's future?
5. **Busting My Immunity to Change:** How do competing commitments undermine my very best intentions?