

# SEL Infusion: 5 Flavors for Any Space

## Movement Exercises:

### Mirrors

**SEL Competency:** Social Awareness > Empathy & Perspective-Taking

**Objective:** To be expressive using movement, and to learn to experience and appreciate different perspectives by mimicking partners' movements

**Space:** Open floor space, or push desks or tables to the edge of the room if necessary

**Equipment:** Age-appropriate music and music speaker

**Preparation:** Select different genres of music

#### **Summary:**

1. Students sit on the floor facing one direction.
2. Explain what happens when looking into a mirror. Choose a volunteer(s) to exemplify steps.
3. Silently do movements and the volunteer mirrors, and switch roles so that the volunteer is now the "human" that leads movements.
4. Class stands and partner up. Come up with two names and assign teams.
5. Switch roles throughout the game according to the music.

#### **Tips:**

1. *Remind students what unsafe movement are.*
2. *To extend this game, isolate different body parts (head, arms, shoulders, etc.), use levels (move up high, move down low, etc.), and use different speeds (go in slow motion versus fast).*
3. *To extend this game, the class can reflect on the activity afterwards. Who enjoyed being the human versus the mirror? Did anyone enjoy both roles equally? Who learned something about their partner from the way they move?*

Source: <https://dancingwithclass.org/sel-movement-game-mirrors/>

## What is Your Emoji?

**SEL Competency:** Self-Awareness > Identifying Emotions

**Objective:** To allow students to freely express their emotions through their motor skills using familiar emoji symbols.

**Space:** Open floor space large enough to form a circle

**Equipment:** Chalkboard, or yellow poster board with crayons/markers, glue and popsicle sticks.

**Minimum Preparation:** Draw 4 emojis on the chalkboard that represent happy, sad, OK, and mad and write the appropriate emotion next to each emoji.

**Maximum Preparation:** If you want to be more creative, cut out 4 large circles from yellow poster board or construction paper. On the back of each circle, write out one of the 4 emotions: happy, sad, OK, or mad. On the front of each circle (using crayons or markers) draw in the appropriate face to match the emotion written on the back. After you have created your "emoji," take a large popsicle stick and glue it on the back of the circle being careful not to block the word. Let dry.

### **Summary:**

1. Have the students sit or stand in a circle.
2. Each student walks to the middle of the circle and says *Today, I am feeling* (1 of the 4 emotions on board or from the handmade emojis). The student will then do a body movement that represents how they feel and repeat it.
3. Every time a student demonstrates their movement, the class repeats that same movement back.

### **Tips:**

1. If you have a larger class, then have 2 students express their feelings at the same time.
2. Invite older students to provide one simple reason why they feel the way they do in addition to the movement. Example: *today I feel OK because I came in 2<sup>nd</sup> place for the race that I wanted to win.*
3. If students are more comfortable in expressing their emotions, invite them to choose 2 emojis instead of 1.

**Source:** <https://dancingwithclass.org/dance-games-video-series-part1/>

## **Don't You Budge!**

**SEL Competency:** Self-Management>Self-Discipline

**Objective:** To engage and warm up the class while encouraging self-discipline in a fun way.

**Space:** Open floor space

**Equipment:** Age-appropriate music, music speaker

**Preparation:** Pick fun upbeat music

### **Summary**

1. Talk to students about the definition of self-discipline.
2. Spread the class out into the dance space and have students stand in a "dance frame" position.
3. Play upbeat music.
4. Pick one volunteer to be the "distractor" (no touching, no talking). The distractor's goal is to get their classmates to break focus (ie: frame).
5. If classmates break their frame, then they are out!

### **Tips**

1. *Add more "distractors" for an extra challenge.*
2. *Use other poses or dance steps to focus on for an extra challenge. For example, dance basic steps (box step, salsa step, etc.) solo. Continue to dance that step through the entire song without being distracted.*

**Source:** <https://dancingwithclass.org/sel-movement-game-dont-you-budge/>

## **Super Dance Powers**

**SEL Competency:** Responsible Decision-Making > Solving Problems & Ethical Responsibility

**Objective:** To get students moving and thinking about ways they can improve the world

**Space:** Open floor space

**Equipment:** Age-appropriate music, music speaker

**Preparation:** Select age-appropriate music, create a short, choreographed routine with music

### **Summary**

1. Practice and routine from video or make your own. Show the routine without "superpowers".
2. Have a discussion on superheroes and students' superpowers. Students choose a superpower and a pose that reflects this.
3. Dance routine with the superhero pose.

### **Tips**

1. *To extend this activity, students can guess the superpower instead of sharing it with the group.*
2. *To extend this activity, they can further create a story with movement. How can they specifically improve the world with their superpowers?*

**Source:** <https://dancingwithclass.org/sel-movement-game-super-dance-powers/>

## Let's Make Rhythms!

**Time:** 5–10 minutes

**SEL skills addressed:**

- Delayed gratification
- Group cooperation
- Problem-solving
- Impulse control

**Activity:** This activity can be done while children are sitting or standing in a circle. Choose a category of items, such as colors. Ask the group to choose four different colors. Say each color and clap its rhythm. Then put them all together into a rhythm sentence. For example, *Purple, yellow, black, red!*

If the children are sitting, ask them to say the colors and clap the rhythm with you, and then add stomping the rhythm with their feet. If they are standing, ask them to march in place to the rhythm as they clap and say the colors.

Perform the rhythm sentence several times in a row. Do it slowly at first, then go faster and faster. Repeat with other categories—for example, winter clothes or vegetables:

*Hat, coat, mittens, boots!*

*Carrot, celery, broccoli, peas!*

**Expand the activity:** For a livelier activity, ask the children to take the rhythm sentences around the room. Along with marching, add large-motor skills such as galloping, hopping, and jumping.

## Crawl, Jump, and Fly

**Time:** 10–15 minutes

**SEL skills addressed:**

- Creativity
- Problem-solving
- Self-awareness
- Group cooperation

**Activity:** This activity will spark children’s imaginations and works best in a large, unobstructed space. Explain to the children that this is a movement game about insects. Ask for a suggestion of an insect, and then ask, *How does that insect move?* Allow the children to move freely in the large space as they explore this idea. Give them time to respond to this prompt, then ask for another insect suggestion and let them explore that insect’s movement as well. Repeat with another insect, and so on.

Here are some ideas to supplement the ones the children suggest:

- *Crawl like an ant, then imagine you are carrying a heavy leaf while you crawl.*
- *Crawl like a spider, then spin a web.*
- *Roll to one side, then to the other side. Now curl up in a tight ball like a pill bug.*
- *Jump like a cricket. How far can you jump? How high?*
- *Fly like a bee. Land on a flower, and then on another one. Now go back to the hive!*
- *Imagine you are a butterfly. You are in your cocoon. Can you push your way out? Try out your wings. Fly away!*

**Finish the Activity:** Say to the children: *You are a bug stuck on your back! Wave your arms and legs. Finally, you figure out how to turn yourself over. Take a rest, little bug!*

## It's My Turn!

**Time:** 15–20 minutes

**Materials:** At least one note card per student, lively musical selection (optional)

**SEL skills addressed:**

- Delayed gratification
- Group cooperation
- Problem-solving
- Impulse control

**Preparation:** This activity works well for circle time or for a lively brain break. Write simple movement ideas on several note cards. Here are some suggestions:

- *Hop on one foot, then the other.*
- *Jump as high as you can.*
- *Balance on one foot and count to five.*
- *Make a high shape.*
- *Make an upside-down shape.*
- *Shake your whole body.*
- *Make a sad face, then a happy one, then sad, then happy.*
- *Balance on your tiptoes for as long as you can.*
- *Walk a small circle around yourself, then do it walking backward.*
- *Stomp your feet.*
- *Go down to the floor as slowly as you can. Then come back up quickly.*
- *Clap your hands in front of you, then in back.*
- *March 10 times and swing your arms.*
- *Touch your knee to your shoulder.*
- *Make a shape with two hands and two feet on the floor.*
- *Make a twisty shape like cooked spaghetti.*
- *Walk around yourself stiff like a robot, then again like a floppy scarecrow.*
- *Turn around in a circle, then try it hopping.*
- *Do five jumping jacks.*
- *Turn around quickly on your tiptoes.*
- *March in slow motion, then as fast as you can.*
- *Make a silly shape.*
- *Make a rhythm: clap, clap, stomp, stomp. Repeat it three times.*

**Activity:** Have the children stand in a circle, evenly spaced. Ask one to choose a card and perform that movement. Then everyone tries the movement. Have the next student choose a card and perform the movement, with the others following suit. Continue this all the way around the circle.

**Finish the activity:** Play the lively musical selection. Ask the children to do a free dance using movement ideas from the cards.

**Expand the activity:**

- Mix up the cards and go around the circle again or make enough cards so that each child gets a new card the second time.
- Ask a child to pick three cards and try the movements in the order chosen. Then everyone tries the three-movement dance. Shuffle the cards and continue until everyone has had a turn.

**Source:** <https://freespirtpublishingblog.com/2019/03/28/movement-based-sel-activities-for-the-classroom/>



## Mindfulness Resources

Click on the header to be taken to additional resources on each strategy.

- **Teaching STOP Mindfulness:** Teach kids the core components of mindfulness through the acronym STOP: Stop, Take a breath, Observe, and Proceed. Resource: <https://cogbtherapy.com/mindfulness-meditation-blog/mindfulness-stop-skill>
- **Breathing Boards:** Have your students follow the line with their fingers as they take calm, measured breaths. Resource: <https://care.uci.edu/services/Breathing%20boards.pdf>
- **Five Senses Exercise:** Did you know that you can use all five of your senses while being mindful? This activity can show you how! Resource: <https://positivepsychology.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Five-Senses-Worksheet.pdf>
- Website with more SEL Mindfulness practices: <https://www.waterford.org/resources/mindfulness-activities-for-kids/>

## SEL Learning Apps and Games

- **Daniel Tiger's Grr-ific Feelings** (Pre-K) – Children can play, sing, and learn about all kinds of feelings with Daniel Tiger and his friends. This app offers 4 major features of a trolley game, sing-along, drawing easel and feelings photo booth all geared towards play and exploring feelings. – Apple or Google Play Store App Price: \$2.99
- **Quaver SEL** (Pre K- 1<sup>st</sup>) –Fun for students, easy for teachers, QuaverSEL uses the power of music to boost social and emotional learning. This app offers lessons packed with songs, stories and activities organized by grade level. This app is unique because it is geared toward not only students but offers a full curriculum to the teachers, counselors and specialists that work with them. – Paid Online Resource
- **Me: A kid's Diary** (grades 2-5)–A kid's diary app offers a safe space for a child to create their own world of expression in their own way. This app allows children to upload pictures of themselves and those around them to discuss their interests, friends, families and feelings. With plenty of ways to express and document their thoughts and more, this app can help students learn something new about themselves through open-ended prompts. –Apple Store Price \$2.99
- **The Mood Meter** (Grades 6-12) –The mood meter app is a well-designed tool encourages kids to reflect on and manage emotions with an appealing, thought-provoking tool that builds emotional intelligence. This app gives users a chance to build on emotional vocabulary, regulate feelings and ways to check in with self then

uses the given information to form a report on how feelings are affecting decisions, relationships and performance. – Apple or Google Play Store Price\$0.99

- **Please Knock on My Door** (Grades 9-12)-Please knock on my door is a story-driven game that gives the user control over a person suffering with depression and social anxiety. This app is geared for older students as it allows the user to walk in someone else's shoes by going to work, school and forming relationships while trying to manage mental health. It gives a first-hand experience of struggles with mental health but also highlights helpful resources that can be accessed in the real world for help. This game is about learning, acceptance and understanding. – Online Game