

## Pause Breathe Smile Enrichment / Follow-On Lesson

# Friendliness

### Content:

Neuroscience increasingly shows that as humans we are wired for kindness and compassion. Something called mirror neurons light up in the brain when we see others who are suffering or in pain, and specific areas in the brain that are associated with nurturing and caring are also activated in these instances.

In other words, the way our brain works encourages us to feel compassion, understand how others feel, and do kind things. When we do kind things for others, our brain releases dopamine and serotonin (which are a type of chemical called neurotransmitters). Dopamine helps with feelings of motivation and accomplishment, whereas serotonin helps us feel happier, calmer and more focused. The brain literally rewards us with wonderful, green zone feelings whenever we practice kindness.

How cool is that?!

Being kind to ourselves also lowers stress, reduces negative thoughts, and can help build resilience. There are specific things that we can do to grow kindness, compassion, love, and happiness in ourselves, and for others.

Part of being able to be compassionate is understanding that other people see things from different perspectives than we do. For example, have you ever had a disagreement with a friend about something? What kind of argument did you have? (allow a couple of your ākongā to talk about a situation and help them identify the different perspectives the various individuals had on what happened)

Or even outside of a conflict, people are quite different: in what they like and dislike, what sports they play or activities they enjoy, what foods they prefer, types of music or shows they watch, etc.

Differences across people makes the world interesting and helps us to learn and grow through spending time with each other! But sometimes difference can feel uncomfortable or can cause disagreements or conflict.

It can help us to cultivate compassion to remember that just as our feelings and preferences are valid (define valid, meaning something that has a sound basis of makes sense, even if it isn't what I think or feel personally), so are the feelings and preferences of others! Our words and actions have an impact on others, too, so understanding how someone else is feeling can help us be kinder.

**Activity:** Think of a recent disagreement you've had with a friend, sibling, or classmate. On a blank piece of paper, make two columns. Label one "My thoughts" and label the other "Their Thoughts." Then fill in both columns based on the disagreement. To empathise with someone else, we need to be able to get curious about how things are for them. Then we can put ourselves in their shoes to have compassion for how they see the world!

### **Script: Imagining Kindness**

Start by sitting up straight with a soft belly and bring your noticing to your breathing.

(sound the mindfulness bell)

Keep noticing your breathing, in and out

Now, can you bring to your mind something that represents kindness to you?

It might be gentle glow like from a twinkling light or a candle

It could be a sense of warmth like the sun's rays gently touching your back on a spring day.

Kindness could be imagined as a puppy or a kitten, their soft fur and playfulness.

Or you could picture a sparkling precious gemstone or a flower in your heart.

Whatever you imagine, can you hold that idea in the front of your mind?

With each mindful breath in and out, soaking in the experience of kindness and compassion that this image gives to you. Let the feeling fill you with love and kindness.

Can you feel the kindness in your body? With each breath, maybe you can feel it coming from your heart, moving out gently into your hands and your legs, and up into your head.

Now, can you use your breathing and your imagination to spread the kindness from your heart outward to others around you in our classroom? Then on to our town, across our country?

And then use your imagination to send that kindness out all the way around the whole world.

(Sound the mindfulness bell)

### **Experiential practice: "Being a Friend to Yourself"**

#### **Note for Teachers:**

This enrichment activity can be delivered as one complete lesson or you could break it down into chunks across a series of days. Feel free to use it in a way that makes sense with your learners in your context.