

Ways of Being Model

Use this simple teaching tool to guide conversations about social and emotional learning, regardless of the specific framework or set of SEL skills your program is using. This model is designed to facilitate discussions that deepen understanding of what social and emotional skills look like in action.

Why This Matters

- The lingo of social and emotional learning can be confusing and intimidating to youth, parents, and practitioners who are unfamiliar with the concepts.
- Multiple frameworks exist to describe social and emotional skills. The Ways of Being model is a flexible way to explain social and emotional learning.
- The Ways of Being model describes identity (Ways I Am) as central to the development of social and emotional skills. Most frameworks do not account for the role of identity. By including Ways I Am, the model is able to account for diverse interpretations of social and emotional success based on culture, beliefs, and life experiences (see [Mapping Cultural Values](#)). Yet the focus on the individual has implications and gives privilege to western values. To open up the conversation, we intentionally use “we” instead of “I” for the Ways We Are Aware, and Ways We Navigate.

Getting Started

- Materials: A copy of the Ways of Being model for each participant.
- Time: 30 minutes

How To Do It

- 1) Make a list of SEL skills that are a natural fit for your program (or see your [SEL + Program Map](#)).
- 2) Pass out a copy of the Ways of Being model for every person in the group. Write the skills from your list on the areas of the model that seem to be the best fit. (For example, the skill of identifying one’s emotions might be written in the Ways of Feeling area).
- 3) Staff share their models with the group. Compare and contrast the results. Note that there is no right or wrong place to put a skill. It’s often in the areas where people disagree that the most insightful discussions occur.
- 4) If your team is having difficulty identifying specific skills or is stuck talking about broad clusters of skills (like leadership), consider sharing the [SEL Skill Bank](#) to jumpstart the discussion.
- 5) Use the following conversation starters to debrief the activity:
 - What part of your model was most full or sparse?
 - What area of skills (Ways I Am, Ways of Feelings, Ways of Relating, Ways of Doing) is our program strongest?
 - What skills were difficult to place? Why?
 - What happens if you change “we” to “I”: Ways I am Aware, and Ways I Navigate?

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Take It Further

- Get more practical and concrete with your team by breaking down a cluster skill set into all of the component skills. (Example: Conflict Resolution is a cluster of skills such as self-awareness, empathy, communication skills, etc.)
- Use this model to spark a conversation with youth. See [Meet the Wobbies](#).
- See the [Ways of Being Factsheet](#) for an overview of what SEL is, why it matters for youth programs, how adults can support SEL in youth program, and four strategies for incorporating SEL in youth programs.

Tool: Ways of Being Model



Tool: SEL Skill Bank

Self-awareness	Grit
Self-regulation	Perseverance
Self-control	Persistence
Emotional competence	Tenacity
Emotional intelligence	Leadership
Emotion management	Autonomy
Coping	Advocacy
Social awareness	Attention
Relationship skills	Critical thinking
Social skills	Goal setting
Empathy	Time management
Teamwork	Planning for success
Connection	Resilience
Cooperation	Problem solving
Collaboration	Focus
Communication skills	Drive
Active listening	Assertiveness
Conflict resolution	Motivation
Getting along with others	Initiative
Understanding others' feelings	Responsibility
Accepting others	Determination
Self-confidence	Agency
Self-efficacy	Flexibility
Self-reliance	Contribution
Responsible decision-making	Strategic Thinking

Note: This is not a complete list of skills — just common ones intended to spark your thinking.