

## C.A.R.E.S.

### Practical Tips to Improve Your Social and Emotional Competence

These practical tips are aligned with *Cultivating SEL Competence: Building Social and Emotional Skills for Adults*. They are research-based strategies and techniques for strengthening your SEL skills in all of the C.A.R.E.S. competencies, and they are designed to be flexible, scalable, and easily implemented into your everyday life. Each tip is tied to an anchor standard of the curriculum. As you explore these tips, consider how you can use them to build on the social and emotional competence you already possess.

**Objective:** Practice ways to further develop competence in cooperation, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, or self-control.

Cooperation	Assertiveness	Responsibility	Empathy	Self-Control
<p><b>Able to Make and Keep Friends</b></p> <p>Deepen your casual connections. Is there someone at work or in an organization you're part of with whom you connect but haven't cultivated a friendship? Ask them for a coffee and get to know them better. If that seems daunting, remind yourself that making friends as an adult is tough for almost everyone—you're not alone.</p>	<p><b>Expresses Strong Emotions and Opinions Effectively</b></p> <p>When strong emotions arise, remind yourself that they are temporary. <i>Before</i> reacting to them, find a strategy to work through them, such as writing, taking a walk, or taking three to five deep breaths.</p> <p>As you work through these emotions, remind yourself that you are capable of handling them constructively. Practice affirmations like "I am in control of my thoughts" or "This feeling will pass."</p>	<p><b>Selects the Best Option Among Choices for A Suitable Outcome</b></p> <p>When making a decision, big or small, consider your ideal outcome. What does that outcome look like and feel like? Take a moment to visualize yourself experiencing that outcome.</p> <p>Work backward from that outcome and consider the action steps to take and choices to make to get there. Backwards planning helps you to make well-thought-out decisions that put you on track to reach your goals.</p>	<p><b>Recognizes and Manages One's Own Emotions and Recognizes the Emotions of Others</b></p> <p>Schedule moments throughout the day to stop and notice how you are feeling. How do you feel right before students come to class? How do you feel before and after lunch? During your commute home?</p> <p>Intentionally noticing how we are feeling cultivates emotional awareness, and this awareness nurtures a stronger relationship with our emotions. Strengthening this relationship allows us to notice habits and patterns and better manage our emotions in a given situation.</p>	<p><b>Adheres to Social, Behavioral, and Moral Standards</b></p> <p>Consider why certain social norms and standards exist. As we examine the purpose these norms and standards serve, we can better adhere to them because we understand how our behavior fits into a larger picture. Understanding the purpose also helps us connect norms and standards to our lives, which can make it easier for us to adhere to them in a variety of situations.</p>

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<p><b>Works With Others Toward A Common Goal</b></p> <p>When working with others, outline a clear role with concrete, bounded responsibilities for each person. There can be flexibility as the project goes on, but laying out a clear structure from the beginning can increase productivity, set up a clear channel of communication, and lessen the likelihood of disagreements.</p>	<p><b>Able to Seek Help</b></p> <p>Identify exactly what you need help with and who would be the best person to seek that help from. Tell them why you've sought out their help and ask for clear, concrete assistance. What is it about their skills or knowledge that would be valuable to you?</p> <p>If you're feeling nervous or reluctant, remind yourself that everyone needs help sometimes. Consider your favorite athlete, musician, or intellectual—how many coaches and mentors did they need to find success in their field? Seeking help is a sign of strength and self-awareness!</p>	<p><b>Holds Oneself Accountable</b></p> <p>Reflect on exactly what you are holding yourself accountable for and what the logical consequences of this accountability are. This self-awareness can help you clearly see what needs to be done and course-correct or make amends. It also ensures you are making informed decisions about how to best proceed.</p> <p>Ask yourself:  <i>To what extent is this issue my responsibility?</i>  <i>Can I resolve any problems that may arise?</i>  <i>What is the worst that may happen?</i>            Then, commit to completing what needs to be done to be accountable and proceed in a calm and focused manner.</p>	<p><b>Respects and Values Diversity in Others</b></p> <p>Engage with diverse books, music, movies, and opinions. Take an inventory of where you find your news, the media, literature, and music you consume, and the opinions you tend to be drawn to. Notice the similarities and patterns. Then, for a set period of time (a weekend, week, or even month!), deliberately choose alternatives to your usual routine.</p> <p>Practice perspective-taking by consulting a different news source, listening to a new genre of music, or reading an article or book by an author with whom you share few similarities. What sparks your interest? What do you find interesting, exciting, or meaningful about this experience?</p>	<p><b>Manages Overwhelming Thoughts and Emotions</b></p> <p>When emotions start to feel too big to handle, take a deep inhale and feel your feet on the floor. Visualize or draw a set of stairs. On each stair, see and/or write what is causing the emotion. Is it a conflict with a friend? Negative feedback? Financial or familial stress?</p> <p>Write out all aspects of the stressor, one aspect per step. When you've completed this, take a deep breath and go back down the stairs. This time, write out what you can do to solve this particular aspect of stress; if you can't immediately solve it, commit to letting it go for now.</p> <p>Visualizing and identifying your stressors can keep them organized and allow us to constructively manage our emotions, which is a crucial skill for developing emotional competence.</p>

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<p><b>Cooperates as a Group Leader or Member of a Group</b></p> <p>Create effort-based goals for yourself and your team. Effort-based goals prioritize the work and the learning that happens when working toward a goal, rather than focusing on the outcome. An effort-based goal for a classroom teacher can include using reinforcing language to foster learning, rather than an outcome goal of finishing a lesson.</p> <p>Then, schedule in reflection time as you work with others on your team to see the progress you're making on these goals.</p>	<p><b>Shows Openness and Honesty</b></p> <p>Observe the moments when you instinctively say "yes" before taking a moment to think a decision through. In those moments, notice how you are feeling and what you are thinking. Pause and repeat what was said to or asked of you. What is compelling you to say yes? Are you actually able to do what you are agreeing to do?</p> <p>Sometimes the answer will still ultimately be yes, but it's important to be honest with ourselves about our motivations for saying yes and our ability to fulfill our end of the bargain. If the answer is actually a no, you can practice your assertive communication skills and say no firmly and respectfully. Giving yourself the time to consider saying yes ensures you act with intention and remain open and honest with yourself and others.</p>	<p><b>Demonstrates Social, Civic, and Digital Responsibility</b></p> <p>Reflect on all of the ways that you and your educational community already show responsibility. How do you engage with the community? What initiatives are in place that promote social well-being, diversity, and inclusion?</p> <p>Then, reflect on what further steps you can take at the class or school level to go deeper. How can your students model social responsibility? What steps could your school take to foster social responsibility within the community at large?</p>	<p><b>Respects Differing Cultural Norms</b></p> <p>Find a similarity between a norm from your culture and a norm from a different culture. Consider holidays, birthday traditions, or family structures. Although they may look different, the underlying purpose may be similar: to celebrate something, to share an experience, to participate in a ritual, or to make a connection, for instance. Making these important connections builds cognitive empathy, which allows you to recognize how others think and feel in a given situation.</p> <p>If you cannot find a similarity, consider the value you get from participating in your cultural norm. What value might someone get from participating in a different norm? Does the cultural norm connect the community, build relationships, or celebrate something? Analyzing our own norms in this way can help us extend respect to and feel cognitive empathy for others' norms, no matter how different they may initially appear.</p>	<p><b>Controls Impulses and Delays Gratification</b></p> <p>Develop initiatory behaviors, which are positive actions or habits that put you on a path toward reaching a long-term goal. Consider a goal you have, and then brainstorm the actions you'll need to take to achieve it. Embed those actions into your daily routine.</p> <p>For instance, if you want to run a half marathon, you must initiate a running routine. Initiatory behaviors remind us that self-control is more than just restricting behaviors in the moment; it's also initiating positive habits to reach long-term goals.</p>

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<p><b>Resolves Differences Quickly</b></p> <p>When conflicts arise, assume good intentions in the other person and commit to listening to their perspective. Our emotions can often overwhelm us during moments of conflict.</p> <p>Take a breath and make the choice to assume this person did not intentionally or maliciously cause the conflict. Then, open the conversation with a question like "What's your understanding of [the conflict]?" Commit to listening to what they have to say, repeating what you heard, and then sharing your perspective.</p>	<p><b>Persists Through Challenging Events</b></p> <p>Consider your mistakes or setbacks as tools for learning. When we view mistakes as opportunities to refine a skill or take a different path, we are less likely to become dejected. This mindset also reminds us that we are in control of reaching our goals. We have what it takes to acquire the expertise needed to succeed or chart the right path to get where we want to go.</p>	<p><b>Takes Care of Property</b></p> <p>When possible, take immediate action on repairing, fixing, or cleaning your belongings. For instance, washing a dish immediately after you're done with it lessens pile-up and keeps a space consistently clean. Repairing or replacing broken items, when you have the resources available, can prevent small problems from becoming big ones and ensures that you are dealing with issues as they arise.</p>	<p><b>Aware of the Impact of One's Actions on Others</b></p> <p>Incorporate perspective-taking strategies into your decision-making process. Before you do something, consider all parties involved.</p> <p>Ask yourself: <i>Will my action impact others? If so, to what extent? How might others feel about the impact of this decision?</i> You may still have to take an action that comes with a potential negative impact, but being informed and aware of possible consequences is a crucial step in consistently making socially-competent choices and dealing appropriately with the outcome.</p>	<p><b>Shows Hope and Perseverance</b></p> <p>Draw or write out different pathways to reach a goal. There are typically multiple routes available to get where we want to go, and being able to identify different paths forward reminds us that we are in control of our trajectory. If an obstacle arises, we can either go around it or take an alternative route.</p> <p>When we are open to trying many options, we can use hope to propel us forward and perseverance to keep trying, no matter what obstacles block our path.</p>