



# SELF-MANAGEMENT

## Settled and Ready to Learn

*"The way to boost our will power and focus is to manage our distractions instead of letting them manage us." - Daniel Goleman*



### TEACHER NOTES

Being distracted is a normal part of the human condition. Recognizing when something was different in the environment helped our ancestors make decisions about whether there was something new happening that was interesting and helpful for survival, or if there was danger to be avoided. Our brains are wired to be alert for novel ideas, thoughts, and situations. We are also intricately connected to our individual previous experiences, so the external stimuli that seems inconsequential to one person may be triggering or enticing to another.

It's natural to expect that our students will have many moments throughout their school day when they are distracted and not fully engaged and ready to learn. Whether as a group, when transitioning from one activity to another (such as from lunch to class), or individually during any given lesson, students will experience feelings of distraction.

Helping them to be able to notice and name their distracted feelings, and be proactive about shifting themselves back to an effective learning mode, is a powerful classroom management tool. When students are able to internally regulate themselves, and do so intentionally, they rightfully feel more in charge of their learning experiences. And a roomful of effectively self-regulated students, settled and ready to learn, makes classroom management an achievable, shared goal!



**DURATION:** 25 minutes

**GOALS:** [Teacher and Student](#)

### MATERIALS:

- Group ["Settled and Ready To Learn" T-chart](#) on board or chart paper
- ["I can settle" handout](#) for each student



### MAIN POINTS (2 minutes)

- Introducing the concept of settling to be ready to learn
- Acknowledge feelings of distraction as natural and universal.
- Connect the desire to be successful learners with being able to settle oneself, becoming fully present and ready to learn





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## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*We are a class of hard workers who try our best every day to learn! Think about that great feeling of satisfaction you've had when you really stuck with something, and practiced, and asked questions—and learned something new! We do that every day. We decide to do our best to learn every day. And one important key to being ready to learn is to be able to settle ourselves.*

*Every one of us, kids and adults, all have times when we're feeling distracted or unsettled. This can get in the way of our learning. Someone might come in upbeat and excited about making a great catch, playing football on the playground, or having just heard a really funny joke from a friend. Or maybe they're feeling mad or upset over something that has happened. But now it's time to learn—and to do that, we have to settle our emotions.*



**MAIN POINTS:** Brainstorm and record distracting feelings (7 minutes)

- Have students brainstorm feelings that can distract from learning. Record them on the left side of the group T-chart under “Distracting Feelings.”
- Have students take notes on their handout during the group discussion.



## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*What are some feelings that you've had that can distract you from learning? Take a quiet moment and write some of your ideas on the left side of your handout under Distracting Feelings.*

*What other feelings might people have that could distract them from learning? (This language helps depersonalize, so that students who haven't offered something from their own experience have a chance to add from a less vulnerable position.)*

*Let's share as a group. What are some of the distracting feelings you thought of?*

Students may say: sad, mad, excited, upset, hyper, goofy, and so forth. If a student suggests a feeling like “happy,” you might ask if it's a feeling that distracts them from learning, and if not, write it off to the side. If it is a distracting feeling for them, add it to the main list.



**MAIN POINTS:** Brainstorm and model settling strategies (10 minutes)

- Remind students that a key to learning is to settle ourselves, so the brain can learn well.
- Provide examples of settling strategies and record them on right side of the group T-chart.
- Model and engage students in practicing settling strategies.




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## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*Keeping in mind that settling ourselves is a very important key to being ready to learn, let's practice some ways to do that—some settling strategies. Because we all have times when we're distracted and need to re-focus, we may notice when others around us are using one of these strategies. Or we might be using a strategy that's not very noticeable to others around us.*

*One strategy is Three Belly Breaths. Record this on the T-chart. Put your hands on your belly and take a deep breath. Model. Feel your belly stretch out as your lungs fill up with air. Slowly let that air out, quietly, feeling your belly relax and sink back in. Let's all do that together, three times. Model.*

*Another settling strategy that other people have found really helpful is tapping. When I am just a little distracted and need to refocus, I can tap like this, lightly patting my legs. Model. When I'm feeling pretty upset or very distracted, I can power tap like this, crossing my arms and patting my shoulders with my whole hands on my crossed arms. Model. Both of these tapping strategies can help our brains feel comforted, and more relaxed, so we can move past the feelings we're having that are distracting us from what we want to do, which is be really open to learning. Remember to take deep breaths while you're tapping, too. Let's practice tapping together. Model.*

*We'll start with a light tapping, just using our fingers. Model. And now, let's use our open hands, to give our brains an even stronger message of "Settle. Focus." Model. It's so quiet, we would hardly know we're all tapping, except that we can look around and see each other. Any time we're working, and we notice someone near us practicing this tapping strategy, we can be impressed that they are being actively in charge of any distracted feelings that were keeping them from being ready to learn.*

*Another strategy that adults and youth find very effective is to tense and release various muscle groups. For example, you could tense all of the muscles in your legs and feet, hold for a few seconds, and release. We'll all try that now. Tense. Pause. Release. Try another muscle group, like your arms and hands, or maybe the muscles in your neck, jaw, and face. Tense. Pause. Release.*



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*What other ideas do you have of ways we can help ourselves settle?*

Solicit ideas from students, then record and model their strategies. Students record on their handout. Additional ideas might include:

- Close my eyes and picture a place I love to be, that's very peaceful for me. Nod when I have the picture in my mind.
- Lay my hand on my heart or on my other wrist, by my pulse point, and think about someone who loves me and who really cares that I learn.
- Do back and forth shoulder rolls, tightening and relaxing my muscles.



**MAIN POINTS:** Guided practice of settling strategies

- Once there is a list of 3–5 settling strategies on the group chart, act out (charades style) a distracted feeling, paired with a settling strategy. Have students guess the feeling and name the settling strategy. Repeat with a different feeling and settling strategy.
- When students understand the charades-type idea of acting out a distracting emotion paired with a settling strategy, have pairs of students take turns stepping out to a nearby area in which they can't see or hear the group.
- The group chooses an emotion and a settling strategy to act out, then asks the pair back in to have them guess the emotion and strategy.



**GUIDING LANGUAGE** (5 minutes)

*I am going to silently act out one of the distracting emotions you listed on the chart, and one of the settling strategies, and you get to guess which ones they are! Act out an emotion and settling strategy. Right! Let's do another one. I'm thinking which feeling and which way of settling I want to act out? Act out another emotion and settling strategy. Right!*

*Now we'll all take some turns acting out some feelings and settling strategies. Who would like to take a turn at guessing what the rest of us are silently acting out? Choose a pair of volunteers. We're going to get ready for you very quietly, but it will help if you step away a bit so you can't see or hear us very well. Students may stand near a door, in the coat area, in a corner, or whatever is suited to your space.*

When the volunteer guessers have left the area, choose, or have a student choose, one of the emotions from the list on the chart. Everyone silently practices acting that feeling word out. Repeat with a selected settling strategy. Bring back the guessers and have the group act out the feeling word. Say: *Settle. Have the group act out the selected settling strategy.* Repeat several times.

Quietly: *Let's choose an emotion to act out for (name and name) to guess. Point to the feeling word and settling strategy, or let the group help choose. As I point to our distracting feeling words on the chart, give me a thumbs up for the one you think we should all act out first.* Observe and make a choice. *Now let's choose a settler. Again, super quietly, just show your choice with a thumbs-up.* Observe and make a choice. *Okay, let's practice, really quietly so they don't get a hint!* Point to the feeling word and let students




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practice; whisper “Settle,” then point to the strategy word and have them practice. *We’re ready!* Call the student pair back in or have a volunteer go get them.

*Ready? Here’s the feeling.* The group acts out the distracting feeling. *SETTLE!* The group acts out the settling strategy; the pair guesses until correct. *Who wants to guess next?*

Repeat several for several rounds as time permits



## TEACHER NOTE

If you are going to break this into two lessons, stop here and move to the closure section. For the next lesson, start with a fresh T-chart and ask students to recall the ideas for both sides to begin the illustration activity.



## MAIN POINT: (13 minutes)

- Independent work illustrating personal strategy choice
- Introduce the “I can settle…” handout and give students time to work.



## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*Choose a distracting feeling word and a settling strategy from our list. Write the feeling words and strategy you’ve chosen on the top of your handout, then draw a picture of yourself using your settling strategy.*



## MAIN POINT: Reflection on the purpose of settling (2 minutes)

Guide students in reflecting on how great it feels to be ready to learn, and to learn well.



## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*As we finish our drawings, let’s take a moment to remember why we’re going to pay special attention to being able to settle when we are distracted: It’s because we all want to learn. It’s our job here at school, every one of us, to learn the best we can every day, and to help each other be ready to learn. The very best way to help others calm down and focus is to calm ourselves. To really help others settle, we work to stay settled ourselves.*



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**CLOSURE:** Connecting to support one another (2 minutes)

To underscore the shared, universal need to overcome distracted feelings by using a strategy, direct students to briefly share their choices and acknowledge one another's.



## GUIDING LANGUAGE

*Turn to a partner and show each other your drawing. Or, if splitting this lesson into two parts: Show each other one settling strategy that you like on our T-chart. Give each other a high five or an encouraging word (or both!) to remind us that we're all in this together. We can all help each other, as well as each of us helping ourselves.*



## EXTENSIONS

- Once students are familiar with the Feelings Charades activity, it can be used as a quick brain break any time. It's a simple, fun, and practical way to reinforce noticing feelings and practicing settling strategies.
- You can post a permanent T-chart in the classroom and add new strategies to it anytime.



## ADAPTATIONS

- Individual students may benefit from a tactile reminder for settling and regaining focus. A small, soft object that fits easily in their hand or a smooth stone for stroking work well, as does a small lump of beeswax.
- Physical movement is an excellent refocusing aid. Allowing students to stand, stretch, and re-seat themselves without it being considered an interruption can be extremely beneficial to active individuals.
- Group opportunities for 60 seconds of Cardio can help the whole class feel refreshed and ready to concentrate again.

Additional resources for belly breathing

[Adults](#)

[Student](#)



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## Teacher: Self-Management Goals

*Self-Management: A child's success in controlling his or her emotions and behaviors in order to complete a task or persevere in a new or challenging situation.*

**My students are able to:**

- Recognize feelings that distract them from being ready to learn
- Name strategies for settling themselves
- Use strategies for settling themselves

**I am aware of my individual students' abilities to:**

- Name and describe feelings that distract them from learning
- Name and use proactive strategies for settling themselves

**The environment I create supports my students' growth related to:**

- Supporting self and others in recognizing when they are distracted
- Supporting self and others in actively shifting from distracted to settled and ready to learn

**Student: Self-Management goals and demonstrated behaviors**

**Students will:**

- Notice and name distracting feelings that interfere with being ready to learn
- Name strategies for settling themselves
- Use strategies for settling themselves

**DESSA SELF-MANAGEMENT INDICATORS  
(Highlighted indicators are directly addressed in this lesson.)**

I can:

Pay attention
Wait for my turn
Focus on a task despite a problem or distraction
Act comfortable in a new situation
Perform the steps of a task in order
Think before I act
Pass up something I want, or do something I don't like, to get something better in the future
Accept another choice when my first choice is unavailable
Stay calm when faced with a challenge
Adjust well to changes in plans
Adjust well when going from one setting to another

# Distracting Feelings

# Ways to Settle



Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

"When I feel \_\_\_\_\_,

I can \_\_\_\_\_

to help myself settle for learning."