



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
- ["Settled and Ready To Learn"](#) T-chart handout
- ["Reflection Questions"](#) handout copied on the other side



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 have come into class wound up and excited about plan they just made for the weekend, 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 (5 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 (Strand1_SM_Universal_I_M_T Chart Handout_v1_3.2.14) during the group discussion.



GUIDING LANGUAGE

What are some feelings you've had that can distract you from learning? Take a few quiet minutes to write some of your own ideas on the left side of your handout under Distracting Feelings. Model by putting a word or two from the introduction examples, such as “excited” or “upset,” onto the group chart.

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.




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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.



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 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.

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

Solicit ideas from students, then record and model their strategies. 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.
- If there's a window, look very intentionally to take in something from nature. Maybe it's sunlight, or rain. Maybe a tree...or whatever colors are there to be seen. In a very short glance, if I'm looking with purpose, and letting the beauty of something in nature help to ground me, I can feel much more settled and ready to focus.




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MAIN POINT: Guided practice of settling strategies (6 minutes)

Once there is a list of 3–5 settling strategies on the group chart and on students' graphic organizers, direct them to turn over their paper and use the question handout to guide a three-minute quick-write (silent, personal writing time).



GUIDING LANGUAGE

We know that several factors come into play when we're working on building new, more successful patterns for our brains. First, we have to have an idea or goal in mind. Second, we have to really want it, and third, we have to practice it over and over to make it "sticky"—to make it become a comfortable habit. It's much easier to do this when others around us are working on strengthening the same skills, and we are willing to support each other.

On the back of your T-chart, you'll find three questions. We're going to do a five-minute quick-write, which you'll be turning in to me. It's private writing, so no one will see it but you and me; you are the audience. You're writing for your own learning, and you'll get it back to use as you practice these settling strategies over the next weeks. When we finish writing, we'll have a few minutes for group discussion about general ideas we're taking away from this discussion about settling ourselves for learning.

Give students five minutes for their quick-write, with a one-minute heads-up that the time is about to end.



MAIN POINT: Group review of settling strategy support ideas (4 minutes)

- Facilitate group sharing of strategies students anticipate being most successful with, as well as ideas they have for being supportive of one another.
- Consider: This may be appropriate for your group during this introductory lesson, or it may be better suited as part of a follow-up, extension lesson.



GUIDING LANGUAGE

We have a few minutes now for the whole group to hear some of the ideas people have been thinking about. First, let's share some of the times when it can be hard to feel really settled and ready to learn. Solicit student responses. Depending on your group, you may wish to invite everyone to show solidarity by giving a thumbs-up when they hear a choice they made too.

And some ideas that came up that we think might be helpful to practice as focusing, settling strategies? Solicit student responses. If the conversation doesn't flow easily, close it. As students gain in their comfort and confidence using the settling strategies, there will be opportunities for additional group dialogue.



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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 this discussion, 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.

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 tell them one thing you're going to do to support yourself or others using settling strategies effectively. Give each other an encouraging word to remind us that we're all in this together. We can all help each other, as well as each of us helping ourselves, to be focused learners.



EXTENSIONS

- Once students are familiar with the settling strategies concept, it can be used as a quick refocusing activity any time.
- Having students routinely revisit their writing with varying partners is a simple and practical way to reinforce noticing distracting feelings and practicing settling strategies.
- Consider having students keep their handouts in a particular place for easy access (such as a folder made for this purpose or a particular section in an assignment notebook).
- You can post a permanent T-chart in the classroom and add new strategies to it anytime.



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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](#)



SELF-MANAGEMENT

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: _____

Settled and Ready to Learn

1. One settling strategy I think would work well for me and why:

2. What might help me feel comfortable and confident using settling strategies?

3. How can I support others in being successful when using settling strategies?