

WHOLISTIC LEARNING

CALM Empathy Skills Vault

Listening with Empathy — skills we can actually practice

Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): CALM teaching approach • CPR application skill

Every young person. Seen. Heard. Valued.



12 named skills • Original micropractices • Fictional examples • Reflection prompts • Research references

A reusable teaching companion to The Whole Way and the Whole Self, Strong Circle four-week pilot.

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Social-Emotional Learning (SEL): The umbrella

SEL is the learning umbrella for this vault. Its five competency areas are Self-awareness, Self-management, Social awareness, Relationship skills, and Responsible decision-making.

How the pieces fit

CALM is the teaching approach within SEL: Centering Breathwork, Active Yoga, Listening with Empathy, and Mindfulness, Movement, and Meditation. CPR is an application skill within SEL: Center Yourself, Practice Your Power, Respond with Respect.

Welcoming, Share, Practice, and Reflection remain the session flow; they are not the meaning of CPR. Yoga, breathwork, movement, mindfulness, meditation, DBT-informed educational skills, journaling, Listening with Empathy, and CPR are SEL learning options—not separate programs or clinical treatment. Every Practice section names an empathy skill and gives a concrete rehearsal.

CALM Empathy Skills Vault

C — Centering Breathwork

A — Active Yoga

L — Listening with Empathy

M — Mindfulness, Movement, and Meditation

Within Social-Emotional Learning (SEL), this reusable vault gathers 12 distinct, original, choice-based empathy micropractices for Listening with Empathy, the L component of the CALM teaching approach. The practices use fictional or low-stakes scenes and invite learners to write, draw, think, watch, participate, or pass. The lesson and week maps are flexible planning placements, not a hierarchy, mastery sequence, or validation claim.

Every Practice section includes a named empathy skill and an actual opportunity to rehearse it. Choose one practice within the existing session time; the vault is not an extra set of required assignments.

CPR is an application skill within SEL: Center Yourself, Practice Your Power, Respond with Respect. Strength in Your Body. Power in Your Choices. Respect in Your Actions.

Empathy makes room for another person's perspective without giving up your own voice or boundary. No one has to tell a private story, agree, forgive, apologize, make eye contact, or stay in an unsafe interaction.

How to use a practice

Choose a named skill. Use the fictional example or another approved low-stakes scene. Practice the three steps by speaking, drawing, thinking quietly, observing, or passing. Reflect on the action—not whether a person is “good at empathy.”

Research note

Each skill is research-informed by the sources reproduced with it. Its research connection states only what the cited design, population, and measure support. These sources do not validate the original micropractices, the full CALM or CPR framework, a worksheet, or outcomes across all youth, cultural, school, or detention settings. Adult and indirect findings are not direct proof for youth contexts.

References below support the underlying research connection. The practice names, teaching steps and journal prompts are original educational adaptations, not copied clinical worksheets or a validated treatment package.

01 • Pause and Make Attention Available

SEL: Social Awareness • Relationship Skills

Pause before replying so you can choose whether and how to offer your attention. Make that offer clear without assuming what another person feels, agrees with, or wants to share.

A brief pause can interrupt a quick reaction and create room to listen, ask what is wanted, or respectfully set a limit. Attention is an offer, not a demand, and empathy does not require agreement.

One-Minute Attention Offer

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Pause your reply; let your hands rest and notice one object in the room.
2. Clear a small listening space: silence distractions if safe, or say what attention you can offer.
3. Offer a choice: “I can listen for a minute. Do you want listening, help, or space?”

Fictional example: In a fictional after-school room, Jordan says, “People kept talking over me today.” Rei is packing up and wants to say, “That happens.” Rei pauses, puts the phone away, and says, “I can listen for a minute. Would listening, help, or space fit best?” Jordan may answer, decline, or leave.

Words to try: “I’m pausing so I can give this a little attention. I can listen for a minute; would you rather I listen, help think, or give you space?”

Think, draw, or write about the fictional scene: What could Rei notice before replying? Draft one sentence that makes attention available and one sentence that respectfully names a limit. You may pass.

Practice with the fictional story by speaking, writing a response card, drawing the three steps, silently rehearsing, observing, or passing. No one has to share, pair up, make eye contact, or discuss personal experiences. Use this when it is safe and wanted. You may keep distance, decline, leave, seek trusted support, or say, “I can’t talk now.” Do not pressure disclosure, touch, eye contact, forgiveness, agreement, or an apology. Attention never means accepting harm; power, racism, injustice, and limited choices matter.

Research connection

In a preregistered video-vignette experiment, 1,001 UK adolescents aged 13–16 anticipated greater well-being and future self-disclosure after viewing good rather than moderate parental listening (Weinstein et al., 2021). The videos varied listener attention and positive intention in parent-adolescent disclosure scenes. In a separate initial-interaction experiment with 115 U.S. undergraduates, active-listening responses (paraphrase and sometimes an invitation to elaborate) produced greater perceived understanding than advice or simple acknowledgements (Weger et al., 2014). These are related listening findings, not proof that this original practice works or that results generalize to all youth or detention contexts. [E1] [E2]

Limit: Vignette and young-adult studies support related listening processes; they do not validate this practice or establish outcomes across youth, cultures, or detention settings.

Facilitator notice: Offer the fictional practice and options; notice whether youth had a choice to pass or observe. Do not score attention, disclosure, eye contact, or empathy.

02 • Observe and Describe Without Quick Labels

SEL: Social Awareness • Relationship Skills

Notice what a person says or does, then separate those observable details from the quick story, trait, or motive your mind adds. Describe only what a camera could record or a microphone could hear before choosing what to say next.

Quick labels can turn a single moment into a fixed story about someone. Observable details leave room for context, fairness, curiosity, and boundaries. The skill asks a listener to distinguish what is known from an assumption before deciding how to respond.

Camera, Caption, Choice

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Read the fictional moment and name two camera-or-microphone details.
2. Spot one quick label or guessed motive; replace it with a neutral description.
3. Choose a respectful next line, or pass: “I noticed ___; what was going on?”

Fictional example: In a group project, Jordan arrives ten minutes after the agreed start, puts their backpack down hard, and says, “Just start without me.” Sam thinks, “Jordan is lazy and rude.” Jordan’s bus route was delayed, but Sam does not know that.

Words to try: “‘I noticed Jordan arrived after the agreed start, put their backpack down hard, and said, ‘Just start without me.’ I do not know why yet. If it feels okay to ask, what happened?’”

Where do I most quickly turn one action into a label? Write or draw one camera-style description and one question you could ask. You may use a fictional person or pass.

Write, draw two columns, think privately, observe a fictional character, work alone, share a made-up answer, or pass. Use only fictional or low-stakes scenes. No one must disclose, partner, make eye contact, close their eyes, agree, forgive, or make contact. Observable description does not erase harm; use boundaries and seek support when something feels unsafe.

Research connection

Epinat-Duclos et al. randomly assigned 312 third-year French medical students to 2.5 days of nonviolent communication training or a non-NVC control. The curriculum practiced distinguishing observation from interpretation. At three months, the intervention group increased on a custom five-item self-report Jefferson empathy subset; Empathy Quotient and implicit empathy-related tests did not change. This adult, multi-part professional-training finding is a research-informed foundation, not evidence that this original youth activity improves empathy. [E3]

Limit: One adult medical-student study tested a multi-part training; no direct evidence validates this original youth micropractice.

Facilitator notice: Offer a fictional or private observation practice and a pass option; notice access needs without scoring accuracy, empathy, disclosure, or participation.

03 • Ask Curious Open Questions

SEL: Social Awareness • Relationship Skills

Ask a question that invites another person to share what they choose, then make room for their answer. Curious open questions begin with what, how, or which, rather than assuming you already know their reasons, feelings, or story.

Curious questions can shift a conversation from guessing to learning. They give another person control over what to share and make it easier to notice a perspective different from your own. A question is an invitation, not a demand, and it does not replace listening.

One Door, One Follow-Up

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Read the fictional scene and choose one detail you genuinely want to understand.
2. Write one open question that starts with what, how, or which; skip personal questions.
3. Choose Sam's reply—"My ride fell through" or "I want to focus on the project"—and write one follow-up using a detail from it, or pass.

Fictional example: Sam arrives late to a group project and says, "I had a lot going on." Two classmates want to know what happened before deciding how to divide the work. Sam has not said they want advice or to explain everything.

Words to try: "What part of today do you want us to understand? If you would rather not explain, we can focus on the project."

In Sam's situation, what is one question that could invite sharing without asking for private details? What could you do if Sam does not want to answer?

Write, draw a speech bubble, think silently, observe the fictional scene, or pass. Work alone or with a willing partner; no eye contact or personal disclosure is required. Ask about what someone chooses to share; do not press for reasons, trauma, identity, or private information. Accept "I don't want to talk" or no answer. Curiosity is not agreement, permission to cross boundaries, or a reason to delay safety support.

Research connection

Research-informed foundation: In adult stranger conversations, asking more questions—especially follow-ups tied to what a partner said—was associated with greater liking and perceived responsiveness: listening, understanding, validation, and care (Huang et al., 2017). A psychotherapy review found mixed immediate effects: open questions can support emotional expressiveness and exploration, but questions can also relate to poorer perceptions of therapist empathy. These adult findings do not test this youth practice or prove empathy increases. [E4] [E5]

Limit: Adult conversation and psychotherapy evidence informs question use; neither source tests this youth practice or shows it builds empathy.

Facilitator notice: Offer each young person a fictional, written, spoken, or pass option; notice whether an open question avoids assumptions and respects a no-answer—do not score empathy or disclosure.

04 • Listen and Reflect Back

SEL: Relationship Skills

Listen for the main point, then say back what you heard in your own respectful words and check whether you understood. A reflection can include a tentative feeling word, but it does not assume you know someone's whole story.

Reflecting back can slow a conversation down and make room to check meaning before responding. It is one way to show attention while leaving the speaker free to correct, add to, or keep their perspective private.

Hear-Reflect-Check

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Choose a fictional line and silently notice its main point.
2. Offer one brief reflection: "It sounds like ..."
3. Add "Did I get that right?" and revise only if new information is offered.

Fictional example: In a fictional group project, Jordan says, "I did my part, but people keep acting like I did nothing. Now I don't even want to speak up." A classmate wants to respond without fixing the problem or taking sides.

Words to try: "It sounds like you feel overlooked after putting in effort, and speaking up now feels hard. Did I get that right?"

What words helped the reflection stay close to what the fictional speaker actually said? What might you ask or change if they said, "Not exactly"?

Practice aloud with the fictional scenario, write or draw a reflection, think of one silently, observe a modeled example, or pass. No personal story, eye contact, or partner sharing is required. Reflecting back is not agreeing, diagnosing, forgiving, taking responsibility for harm, or promising secrecy. Use tentative words; do not guess private history. Anyone may use a fictional example, request space, choose another role, or pass. If safety or harm is raised, follow the setting's adult-support and reporting expectations.

Research connection

In a lab experiment with 115 college students, active listening that included paraphrasing and, when appropriate, an elaboration question produced greater immediate perceived understanding than advice or simple acknowledgements. In a separate peer-interview experiment with 180 undergraduates, a paraphrase alone was associated with listener social attractiveness but not participants' felt understanding or conversation satisfaction. These adult, brief laboratory findings inform the skill's focus; they do not test this practice with youth or in detention settings. [E2] [E6]

Limit: Two brief adult college experiments; no direct evidence for this original practice, adolescents, schools, or detention settings.

Facilitator notice: Offer the fictional practice and multiple participation choices; notice whether a participant had a chance to try, observe, write, think, or pass—do not score empathy, disclosure, or eye contact.

05 • Name Feelings with Tentative Language

SEL: Social Awareness • Relationship Skills

A respectful way to name what someone may be feeling without claiming you know for sure. Notice their words or actions, offer a possibility such as “I wonder if...,” and leave room for them to correct, add to, or decline the guess.

Tentative words can show you are paying attention while protecting the other person’s authority over their own experience. They help avoid treating a guess as a fact and can open a respectful conversation without requiring anyone to explain personal details.

Maybe, Not Mind-Reading

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Read, watch, or choose the fictional scene.
2. Write, say, draw, or think one feeling possibility beginning “I wonder if...” or “It seems like....”
3. Add: “I could be wrong. Do you want to correct me, add something, or leave it there?”

Fictional example: Jordan’s poster for the community showcase is removed because the hallway is being repainted. Jordan crumples the event flyer, says “Whatever,” and walks to another table while others plan the display.

Words to try: ““Jordan, I wonder if you might be disappointed or frustrated that your poster was removed. I could be off. Do you want to say more, correct me, or leave it there?””

In the fictional scene, what words made the feeling guess sound open rather than certain? Write or draw another respectful possibility.

Practice with the fictional scene; write, draw, say, point to a feeling word, observe silently, or pass. No personal sharing, eye contact, or partner work is required. A feeling guess is not a fact. Do not press for an answer, diagnose, label motives, or use it to excuse harm. Respect “no,” pause if safety is involved, and get adult or support help when needed.

Research connection

Direct but limited evidence comes from a randomized laboratory paradigm with 74 romantic couples: partner-chosen emotion labels during aversive-picture viewing reduced targets’ reported distress compared with self-labeling, and the effect increased with regulators’ empathy. This measured interpersonal affect labeling, not youth learning or this practice. In a separate experiment, 115 undergraduate participants felt more understood after active-listening responses than after advice or simple acknowledgments. That supports related empathic communication, not tentative wording specifically. [E7] [E2]

Limit: Evidence comes from romantic couples and undergraduates, not adolescents, detention settings, classrooms, or exact tentative-language practice trials.

Facilitator notice: Offer the fictional practice and participation choices; notice whether learners have a chance to use tentative language and a correction/pass option. Do not score, require disclosure, or judge emotional accuracy.

06 • Get a Perspective by Asking Rather Than Guessing

SEL: Social Awareness • Relationship Skills

Instead of deciding what someone thinks or feels, use a respectful, optional question to invite their view, then listen to the answer or their choice not to answer.

People's experiences and needs may differ from what they show or from our assumptions. Asking can make room for information the person chooses to share, while leaving them control over privacy, boundaries, and whether conversation is welcome.

Question, Not Conclusion

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. With a fictional scenario or a low-stakes moment, notice one conclusion you might be tempted to make.
2. Turn it into one open, choice-respecting question: "What was that like for you?" or "What would you want me to understand?"
3. Pause; accept an answer, "not now," or silence, then name only what you heard.

Fictional example: At lunch, Imani sees Jo leave the group chat after a joke about their shoes. Imani thinks, "Jo is mad at everyone." Before repeating that guess, Imani could ask Jo privately whether they want to say what was going on.

Words to try: "I noticed you left the chat. I might be reading it wrong. Would you want to tell me what was going on, or would you rather not talk about it?"

Write, draw, or think: What is one conclusion people sometimes jump to in a fictional conflict? What respectful question could open space for the person's own view? When might it be better not to ask?

Practice on the fictional scenario, write a question instead of saying it, observe and notice guessing words, or pass. No personal story, eye contact, or partner disclosure is required. Do not press for explanations, ask in unsafe situations, or use questions to debate someone's experience. "No," "not now," and silence are complete responses. Asking does not require agreement, forgiveness, or accepting harm; create distance or seek support when needed.

Research connection

Direct perspective-getting evidence: in Eyal, Steffel, and Epley's adult experiments, conversing to obtain a partner's views increased prediction accuracy compared with simply trying to take that partner's perspective. This supports asking as information-gathering, not a claim about empathy or youth. Related youth communication evidence: in McLaren and Sillars's 98 parent-adolescent conversations, supportive listening was associated with children's greater empathic accuracy; the observational study did not test this micropractice. [E8] [E9]

Limit: Evidence includes adult experiments and one observational parent-adolescent study; it does not validate this practice or predict outcomes in other youth settings.

Facilitator notice: Offer, without scoring: Did each participant have a chance to turn a guess about a fictional situation into an optional, open question or choose to pass?

07 • Validate without necessarily agreeing

SEL: Social Awareness • Relationship Skills

Validation means showing you understand that someone's feeling or viewpoint makes sense from what they experienced. It does not mean agreeing with every choice, excusing harm, giving up your boundary, or knowing their whole story.

Validation makes room to acknowledge another person's experience before deciding what you think or need. In a disagreement, it can help keep attention on the issue instead of treating a feeling as wrong.

Name–Sense–Boundary

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Choose the fictional situation or quietly imagine one; name one possible feeling or concern without claiming certainty.
2. Write, say, or think: "It makes sense you felt ___ when ___."
3. Add: "I may see it differently, and I still need ___."

Fictional example: At lunch, Nia says she is angry because Jordan reposted a private joke. Jordan thinks the post was harmless and does not want to argue. Jordan can acknowledge Nia's embarrassment while still seeing the intent differently.

Words to try: ""I hear that you felt embarrassed when it was reposted. I see the intent differently, and I will not debate your feeling. I need us to talk without insults.""

Think, write, or draw: What words can acknowledge a feeling without agreeing with every conclusion or giving up a boundary?

Practice silently, write or draw one line, use only the fictional scenario, observe a demonstration, or pass. No personal story, partner work, or eye contact is required. Validate the person's experience, not harm or misinformation. You may set limits, disagree, pause, seek support, or choose safety. When power, racism, or other injustice affects choices, do not explain away or debate the person's experience. Do not pressure anyone to disclose, forgive, reconcile, or continue a conversation.

Research connection

Two direct validation studies inform the distinction. In a randomized laboratory experiment with 60 adult undergraduates, invalidating rather than validating responses during a stress task were associated with higher negative affect, heart rate, and skin conductance. An observational longitudinal study of 38 high-risk adolescents and parents found parent validation/invalidation associated with later self-harm; it did not establish cause or test peer or school practice. These studies support validation as an interpersonal process, not proof that this original activity changes youth outcomes. [E10] [E11]

Limit: Evidence is adult-lab and high-risk family research; it does not test this practice in general youth, school, or detention settings.

Facilitator notice: Offer the fictional prompt and several ways to participate; notice whether youth had access to a validation sentence, without rating sincerity, disclosure, agreement, or performance.

08 • Check Understanding and Correct a Misread

SEL: Relationship Skills • Social Awareness

Checking understanding means saying what you think you heard, marking it as a guess, and inviting the other person to correct it. A correction helps you learn their meaning; it does not require agreement.

People can mean something different from what we first assume. A brief check can slow down guessing and make room for the speaker's own words, perspective, and correction.

Guess, Check, Update

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Choose the fictional message and notice your first guess.
2. Offer one tentative summary: "I might be hearing ...; did I get that right?"
3. Hear the correction and restate only what changed.

Fictional example: During a group project, Jordan says, "I'm not doing the slides tonight." Sam assumes Jordan does not care and starts to reply. Jordan actually has a late shift and can work on the slides tomorrow.

Words to try: "I might be hearing that you do not want to help tonight. Did I get that right?" "Not exactly. I am working late; I can do slides tomorrow." "Thanks for correcting me. You can help tomorrow, not tonight.""

Journal, draw, or think: What is one time a fictional character, or a situation you choose, might say, "That's not what I meant"? Write a respectful check-in that leaves room for their correction.

Practice aloud with a fictional figure, write or draw the three lines, think through them silently, watch a demonstration, or pass. No partner work or personal sharing is required. Use a made-up scenario or pass. A correction is information, not an argument; do not press someone to explain private details, agree, forgive, or continue a conversation that feels unsafe. You can pause, set a boundary, seek support, or name unequal power or unfair treatment.

Research connection

These brief experiments tested communication responses related to, rather than direct measures of, empathy. In 115 undergraduates, active-listening responses—paraphrasing plus, when appropriate, elaboration questions—produced higher immediate self-reported feeling understood than advice or simple acknowledgements. In 180 undergraduates, paraphrasing alone did not improve reported feeling understood. This adult/college evidence does not test youth, detention contexts, or this original practice. [E6] [E2]

Limit: Evidence comes from brief experiments with undergraduates; it does not establish effects for adolescents, classrooms, detention settings, or this original practice.

Facilitator notice: Offer a chance to practice a tentative check-in using the fictional scenario in any participation mode; do not score youth for correctness, disclosure, eye contact, or speaking aloud.

09 • Respectful disagreement and boundaries

SEL: Relationship Skills • Social Awareness • Responsible Decision-Making

Respectful disagreement and boundaries means saying what you think or need without attacking someone, and noticing their right to say no or step back. You can listen for understanding while keeping your own limits.

Disagreement can involve real differences, unequal power, or safety concerns. A clear, respectful response can name a boundary, protect choice, and leave room for another person's perspective. Respect does not require agreement, disclosure, forgiveness, or staying in a harmful situation.

Different, Need, Next

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Read a fictional disagreement; choose an observer role if preferred.
2. Say or write: "I see it differently. I need ___ / I'm not okay with ___."
3. Add a respectful next step: "Let's pause," "Please stop," or "We can ask for support."

Fictional example: During a group project, Kai wants everyone to keep joking about another student's drawing. Rowan disagrees and does not want to join. Rowan may speak, write a response card, ask a trusted adult for support, or simply step away.

Words to try: "I hear your point. I see it differently, and I'm not okay with jokes about someone's work. Please stop. If you want space, I'll give it to you; we can get support."

Journal, draw, or think: In the fictional scenario, what words could Rowan use to disagree without putting Kai down? What could Rowan do if speaking feels unsafe or does not change the situation?

Use the fictional scenario only. Youth may say a line aloud, write it, draw a response card, watch as an observer, choose an external focus, or pass. No personal examples, partner work, eye contact, or disclosure are needed. Use fictional material; do not ask anyone to reveal a conflict. A boundary can be brief and can include leaving, seeking staff support, or reporting harm. Young people do not owe someone a debate, explanation, forgiveness, or continued contact. If immediate safety or a power difference is involved, use the setting's support and reporting options rather than practice confrontation.

Research connection

In a cross-sectional Dutch study of 307 adolescents ages 13–16, dispositional affective empathy was associated with more self-reported positive problem solving and less conflict engagement with same-sex best friends; it did not test boundary setting or a lesson. In two U.S. parent-adolescent laboratory-discussion studies, observed open communication was associated with smaller differences between parent and adolescent conflict reports. That related communication finding is not a direct empathy result and does not establish causation. Together they inform, but do not validate, this original fictional micropractice. [E12] [E13]

Limit: Correlational adolescent studies link empathy or open communication with conflict processes; neither tests this practice, youth detention settings, safety outcomes, or boundary-setting effects.

Facilitator notice: Offer fictional scenarios and choices to speak, write, draw, observe, or pass; notice whether an opportunity to name a respectful limit was available, not whether youth perform it correctly.

10 • Invite Voices and Share Turns

SEL: Social Awareness • Relationship Skills

Invite voices and share turns means making room for more than one viewpoint: offer a low-pressure way to join, speak briefly, and leave space before responding. It is a choice, not a demand to disclose or agree.

This is a discussion habit for balancing participation. It treats listening as active and makes room for viewpoints, questions, or a pass while keeping boundaries and safety in view.

Two Spaces, One Story

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Read the fictional situation; choose Speak, Pass, or Write, and offer one brief observation or question—or pass.
2. After each turn, pause for two silent counts; someone who has not spoken may add a view, or the space may stay open.
3. Name one idea that was heard and one question still open; no one has to explain a personal experience.

Fictional example: A youth group is choosing a mural theme. Three people have already named bold ideas. Jay quietly sketches a river and says, “I’m not sure it fits.” The group has two minutes before deciding what to propose.

Words to try: “I have an idea, and I can keep it brief. I’d also like to leave space for someone who has not spoken. Passing is okay. What feels important to add—or would anyone rather write it down?”

Think, write, or draw: In the mural conversation, which voice might be easiest to miss? What could make sharing safer or easier without requiring anyone to speak?

Speak once, point to a prepared card, write a sentence, observe the turn pattern, or pass. No eye contact, partner work, or personal story is required. Participation is optional. Do not press anyone to share, explain silence, make eye contact, agree, or disclose experiences. A turn may be a pass. Keep the fictional topic; honor safety, power differences, racism/injustice, and boundaries.

Research connection

Andolina and Conklin’s case study directly reports high-school participants’ perceived listening and empathy gains after a multi-part civic curriculum, not a turn-sharing test. Malti et al.’s review/meta-analysis of 19 school programs and 36 evaluations reports a small average social-emotional competency effect ($d=0.27$); evaluated participants were approximately ages 4–11. That review concerns broader empathy-related programs. Together, these are research-informed background, not evidence that this original practice changes empathy, participation, or outcomes in detention settings. [E14] [E15]

Limit: Evidence supports broader curricula, not this original practice; neither source establishes effects for equitable turn-sharing or in youth detention settings.

Facilitator notice: Offer the options and notice whether space was made available; do not score youth for speaking, passing, confidence, or agreement.

11 • Offer Help With Consent

SEL: Relationship Skills • Social Awareness

Offer useful support only after checking what, if anything, another person wants; accept a yes, no, or different request without pressure.

A consent-based offer makes room for another person's choices, boundaries, and knowledge of what feels useful. It can be practiced without assuming access, safety, or a need to disclose.

Ask–Offer–Respect

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Choose a fictional moment when someone may need support; pause and name one possible need.
2. Ask once: "Would you like help, company, or space?"
3. Respect the answer; offer the agreed action, or say, "Okay—I'll give you space."

Fictional example: Rae notices Jordan staring at an unfinished poster before a group showcase. Rae wants to step in, but does not know whether Jordan wants ideas, quiet, or another kind of support.

Words to try: **"I noticed the poster seems unfinished. Would you like help, company, or space? 'No' is okay."**

Journal or draw: What words could you use to offer help without deciding for someone else? How might you show respect if they say no, not now, or ask for something different?

Write, draw, think privately, watch a facilitator model it, or pass. Practice only with the fictional scenario; no personal sharing or partner role-play is required. Do not pressure anyone to accept help, explain a refusal, disclose personal experiences, or work with a partner. A "no," "not now," silence, or different request is respected. For immediate safety concerns, follow the setting's safeguarding procedure rather than asking youth to handle it alone.

Research connection

Ishikawa et al. studied young people's help-seeking intentions, not peer offers of help. Gray et al. showed that adults can experience intended workplace support as unhelpful and reported associated strains. Together, they support treating offers as invitations rather than assumptions. They do not test this youth practice, prove empathy outcomes, or establish effects in schools or justice settings. [E16] [E17]

Limit: No study tested this exact youth practice; evidence concerns help-seeking intentions in youth and unhelpful workplace support among adults.

Facilitator notice: Offer the practice and note whether youth had a voluntary way to participate; do not score disclosure, wording, eye contact, or acceptance of help.

12 • Notice Impact and Practice Voluntary Repair

SEL: Social Awareness • Relationship Skills • Responsible Decision-Making

Noticing how your words or actions may have landed, then freely choosing a respectful step to address harm. You can ask, listen, make a specific offer, or pause. Repair is an invitation, not a demand for forgiveness, closeness, or a private conversation.

After a hurtful moment, focusing on impact can make room for responsibility without mind-reading or self-shaming. A voluntary repair can be small and concrete: checking in, replacing something, correcting misinformation, or giving space. The person affected decides whether, when, or how to respond.

Impact-Choice-Repair

3–5 minutes • Adapt within the agreed session time.

1. Use a fictional or low-stakes moment; name what happened and one possible impact without guessing anyone's feelings.
2. Try: "I notice my choice may have affected you. Would you like to tell me what it was like?"
3. Offer one realistic repair or ask what would help; respect "no," "not now," or no response.

Fictional example: During a group poster project, Jordan laughs and says Sam's drawing is "useless." Sam goes quiet and stops contributing. Later Jordan notices the comment may have affected Sam and wants to address it without pressuring Sam to forgive or work together.

Words to try: "I said your drawing was useless. I can see that may have shut you down. I'm sorry for the comment. Would it help if I removed it, listened, or gave you space? You do not have to answer now."

In Jordan's situation, what is one impact Jordan can name without deciding how Sam feels? What repair choice could Jordan offer, and how would they respect a "no," "not now," or no response?

Work only with the fictional story, a made-up comic, or a private low-stakes example; write, draw, rehearse silently, or pass. No personal disclosure, partner work, eye contact, or direct contact is required. Use only safe, low-stakes situations; do not contact someone who feels unsafe or holds power over you. Repair does not require forgiveness, renewed access, a private meeting, or sharing personal details. Seek trusted adult or support guidance for serious harm, threats, discrimination, or legal or school processes.

Research connection

Research-informed foundation: Fehr, Gelfand, and Nag's meta-analysis of 175 interpersonal-forgiveness studies (26,006 participants) found apology associated with victims' forgiveness ($r = .42$); this does not mean anyone owes forgiveness or that repair will be accepted. Lodi and colleagues' school review (34 studies, ages 6–18) identifies restorative conversations and conferences as studied practices but reports limited direct evidence. These sources inform a choice-based repair process; they do not test this original micropractice or prove outcomes for individual learners. [E18] [E19]

Limit: Evidence links apologies and school restorative practices to related processes; it does not validate this micropractice, compel forgiveness, or establish outcomes in all youth settings.

Facilitator notice: Offer—not score—the chance to name a possible impact and choose, adapt, or pass on a repair idea.

Empathy research references

Research details are for adults preparing the practices. Each study's population, design and limits matter. These citations are not an endorsement or validation of CALM, CPR, these original pages, or the youth pilot.

[E1] Netta Weinstein, Andrew Huo, and Guy Itzhakov (2021). [Parental listening when adolescents self-disclose: A preregistered experimental study](#)

Journal of Experimental Child Psychology, 209, 105178

Design and population: Preregistered 2 × 2 video-vignette experiment; N = 1,001 UK adolescents aged 13–16 imagined disclosing to a parent in two vaping-related scenarios.

Finding: Viewing good rather than moderate parental listening predicted higher anticipated well-being and intention to self-disclose; autonomy and relatedness need satisfaction mediated the effects.

Limit: Participants watched scripted vignettes and reported anticipated reactions; the study did not observe actual family conversations or test this practice in classrooms, programs, or detention settings.

DOI: 10.1016/j.jecp.2021.105178

[E2] Harry Weger Jr., Gina Castle Bell, Elizabeth M. Minei, and Melissa C. Robinson (2014). [The Relative Effectiveness of Active Listening in Initial Interactions](#)

International Journal of Listening, 28(1), 13–31

Design and population: Laboratory experiment with 115 undergraduates at a large southeastern U.S. university (ages 18–50; M = 20.01); confederates used active listening, advice, or simple acknowledgements in first conversations.

Finding: Participants receiving active listening felt more understood than participants receiving advice or simple acknowledgements; satisfaction and social attractiveness did not differ from the advice condition.

Limit: Single 3–7 minute initial interactions with university students; nonverbal involvement was held moderate but not tested, and findings do not establish effects for adolescents.

DOI: 10.1080/10904018.2013.813234

[E3] Epinat-Duclos, Justine; Foncelle, Alexandre; Quesque, François; Chabanat, Eric; Duguet, Alexandre; Van der Henst, Jean-Baptiste; Rossetti, Yves (2021). [Does nonviolent communication education improve empathy in French medical students?](#)

International Journal of Medical Education, 12, 205–218

Design and population: Randomized controlled pre/post study of 312 volunteer third-year medical students at Sorbonne University in Paris; median age 22 (intervention n=123; control n=189).

Finding: Three months after training, the intervention group increased on a five-item adapted Jefferson Scale subset; Empathy Quotient scores and three implicit empathy-related cognitive tests did not significantly change.

Limit: Only a subjective custom subset showed change; the study tested a multi-component adult training, had an arbitrarily selected three-month follow-up, and could not identify whether observation-versus-interpretation practice caused the result.

DOI: 10.5116/ijme.615e.c507

[E4] Huang, Karen; Yeomans, Michael; Brooks, Alison Wood; Minson, Julia; Gino, Francesca (2017). [It doesn't hurt to ask: Question-asking increases liking](#)

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 113(3), 430–452

Design and population: Three live adult dyadic-conversation studies: behavioral-lab chat participants, online strangers, and heterosexual speed daters; two experiments varied question-asking instructions and one field study observed speed dating.

Finding: Across the three studies, more questions—especially follow-up questions—were linked to greater partner liking; perceived responsiveness statistically explained the question-asking effect in the experiments.

Limit: Adult get-acquainted and speed-dating settings; the study measured liking and perceived responsiveness, not youth empathy or this specific practice.

DOI: 10.1037/pspi0000097

[E5] Williams, Elizabeth Nutt (2023). [The use of questions in psychotherapy: A review of research on immediate outcomes](#)

Psychotherapy, 60(3), 246–254

Design and population: Review of naturalistic empirical research on therapist questions in individual psychotherapy; included populations varied and it was not a youth classroom trial.

Finding: The review reports mixed immediate effects: open questions can support client emotional expressiveness and affective exploration, while questions can also relate to poorer client perceptions of therapist empathy, helpfulness, and session smoothness.

Limit: Clinical psychotherapy research does not evaluate ordinary youth peer conversation or this original micropractice.

DOI: 10.1037/pst0000471

[E6] Weger Jr., Harry; Castle, Gina R.; Emmett, Melissa C. (2010). [Active Listening in Peer Interviews: The Influence of Message Paraphrasing on Perceptions of Listening Skill](#)

International Journal of Listening

Design and population: Experiment with 180 undergraduate students (mean age 18.5) completing peer interviews about a proposed university examination policy.

Finding: Compared with a simple acknowledgement, a paraphrased reflection was associated with the listener's social attractiveness, but not with conversational satisfaction or participants' feelings of being understood.

Limit: Tests one paraphrase in a college interview context, not an ongoing youth relationship or a complete empathy lesson; outcomes were self-reports immediately after the interaction.

DOI: 10.1080/10904010903466311

[E7] Shamay-Tsoory, Simone G.; Levy-Gigi, Einat (2021). [You Name It: Interpersonal Affect Labeling Diminishes Distress in Romantic Couples](#)

Behavior Therapy, 52(2), 455–464

Design and population: Randomized laboratory paradigm with 74 romantic couples; one partner was the target and the other the regulator.

Finding: Viewing a partner-chosen emotion label reduced targets' reported distress more than self-labeling; the effect increased with regulator empathy.

Limit: An aversive-picture laboratory task with romantic couples; it does not establish effects for adolescents, classrooms, detention settings, or tentative phrasing.

DOI: 10.1016/j.beth.2020.06.004

[E8] Tal Eyal, Mary Steffel, and Nicholas Epley (2018). [Perspective mistaking: Accurately understanding the mind of another requires getting perspective, not taking perspective](#)

Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 114(4), 547–571

Design and population: Twenty-five experiments; Experiment 25 recruited 104 heterosexual romantic couples from the community, ages 19–72, with 58% married.

Finding: Across 25 experiments, instructions to take another's perspective did not consistently improve accuracy. In Experiment 25, conversation that obtained a partner's views increased accuracy compared with perspective-taking instructions.

Limit: The studies used adults and laboratory-style interpersonal-judgment tasks; they do not test youth programming, safety, or this original practice.

DOI: 10.1037/pspa0000115

[E9] Rachel M. McLaren and Alan Sillars (2020). [Parent and adolescent conversations about hurt: How interaction patterns predict empathic accuracy and perceived understanding](#)

Communication Monographs, 87(3), 312–335

Design and population: Observational analysis of conversations between 98 parent–adolescent dyads about an event in which the adolescent felt hurt by something a parent said or did.

Finding: Supportive listening was associated with greater empathic accuracy for adolescents and greater perceived understanding for both parents and adolescents; empathic accuracy was low across all interaction patterns.

Limit: This was observational, focused on parent–adolescent hurt conversations, and did not test asking rather than guessing as a discrete intervention.

DOI: 10.1080/03637751.2020.1722848

[E10] Shenk, Chad E.; Fruzzetti, Alan E. (2011). [The Impact of Validating and Invalidating Responses on Emotional Reactivity](#)

Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 30(2), 163–183

Design and population: Randomized laboratory experiment; 60 undergraduate psychology students (35 women), ages 18–55 (M=22.33).

Finding: Compared with validation, invalidation during a stress task was associated with higher negative affect, heart rate, and skin conductance over time.

Limit: Adult undergraduate laboratory sample and stress task; it does not test adolescents, peers, classrooms, or this micropractice.

DOI: 10.1521/jscp.2011.30.2.163

[E11] Adrian, Molly; Berk, Michele S.; Korslund, Kathryn; Whitlock, Kathryn; McCauley, Elizabeth; Linehan, Marsha (2018). [Parental Validation and Invalidation Predict Adolescent Self-Harm](#)

Professional Psychology: Research and Practice, 49(4), 274–281

Design and population: Observational, longitudinal coding of parent–teen conflict discussions at three assessments over six months; 38 high-risk adolescents ages 12–18 (M=14.85; 94.1% female) and parents.

Finding: Observed parental validation and invalidation were associated with adolescent self-harm; the study reported no significant association with suicidal ideation.

Limit: Small, predominantly female high-risk sample; lab observation and design cannot determine causality or generalize to peer or school settings.

DOI: 10.1037/pro0000200

[E12] de Wied, M.; Branje, S. J. T.; Meeus, W. H. J. (2007). [Empathy and conflict resolution in friendship relations among adolescents](#)

Aggressive Behavior, 33(1), 48–55

Design and population: Cross-sectional self-report study and multigroup path analysis of 307 Dutch adolescents ages 13–16 (149 boys, 158 girls) reporting on same-sex best friendships.

Finding: Higher dispositional affective empathy was associated with more positive problem solving and less conflict engagement; it was not associated with withdrawal or compliance.

Limit: Cross-sectional self-report associations cannot establish that empathy causes constructive conflict behavior; the sample concerned same-sex best-friend relationships in the Netherlands.

DOI: 10.1002/ab.20166

[E13] Ehrlich, K. B.; Richards, J. M.; Cassidy, J.; Lejuez, C. W. (2016). [When parents and adolescents disagree about disagreeing: Observed parent-adolescent communication predicts informant discrepancies about conflict](#)

Journal of Research on Adolescence, 26(3), 380–389

Design and population: Two U.S. cross-sectional laboratory conflict-discussion studies: 189 eleventh-grade adolescents (mean age 16.5) and parents; 223 additional families with adolescents ages 12–17 (mean 14.1).

Finding: In Study 1, more observed open communication predicted smaller parent-adolescent conflict-report discrepancies; in Study 2, this association appeared for mother-adolescent dyads.

Limit: The study did not measure empathy or boundary setting, and observed associations in these family samples do not show that communication caused agreement or safety.

DOI: 10.1111/jora.12197

[E14] Molly W. Andolina; Hilary G. Conklin (2018). [Speaking With Confidence and Listening With Empathy: The Impact of Project Soapbox on High School Students](#)

Theory & Research in Social Education, 46(3), 374–409

Design and population: Case study using pre/post surveys, classroom observations, teacher interviews, student work, and focus groups with 204 high-school students from 9 public high schools.

Finding: Participants reported modest gains in future civic engagement expectations and stronger rhetorical confidence; listening and empathy were among the curriculum's strongest reported impacts.

Limit: A multi-component action-civics case study with self-reported outcomes; it did not experimentally test equitable turn-taking or this original practice.

DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2018.1435324

[E15] Tina Malti; Maria Paula Chaparro; Antonio Zuffianò; Tyler Colasante (2016). [School-Based Interventions to Promote Empathy-Related Responding in Children and Adolescents: A Developmental Analysis](#)

Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology

Design and population: Developmental review and meta-analysis of 19 empirically supported school programs and 36 evaluations; evaluated participants across programs were approximately ages 4–11.

Finding: Across included evaluations, the random-effects average for social-emotional competencies was $d=0.27$ (95% CI 0.20–0.34).

Limit: Programs were multi-component and evaluated participants were mostly younger; the review did not test equitable turn-sharing or this micropractice.

DOI: 10.1080/15374416.2015.1121822

[E16] Ishikawa, Amelia; Rickwood, Debra; Bariola, Emily; Bhullar, Navjot (2022). [Autonomy versus support: self-reliance and help-seeking for mental health problems in young people](#)

Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology, 58(3), 489–499

Design and population: Cross-sectional online survey of a representative Australian community sample of 5,203 young people aged 12–25 years.

Finding: Higher self-reliance was associated with lower intentions to seek informal and professional help; perceived social support fully mediated the association with informal help-seeking intentions.

Limit: Observational intentions, not observed support offers or outcomes; mental-health help-seeking context in Australia.

DOI: 10.1007/s00127-022-02361-4

[E17] Gray, Cheryl E.; Spector, Paul E.; Lacey, Kayla N.; Young, Briana G.; Jacobsen, Scott T.; Taylor, Morgan R. (2020). [Helping may be harming: unintended negative consequences of providing social support](#)

Work & Stress, 34(4), 359–385

Design and population: Two workplace studies: qualitative critical incidents from 116 employees; quantitative samples of 176 diverse employees and 496 registered nurses.

Finding: Recipient-perceived unhelpful workplace support was associated with negative affect, lower competence-based self-esteem, lower coworker satisfaction, burnout, frustration, and physical symptoms.

Limit: Adult workplace evidence, mainly correlational associations in Study 2; did not test youth, empathy, or asking consent before helping.

DOI: 10.1080/02678373.2019.1695294

[E18] Fehr, Ryan; Gelfand, Michele J.; Nag, Monisha (2010). [The road to forgiveness: A meta-analytic synthesis of its situational and dispositional correlates](#)

Psychological Bulletin, 136(5), 894–914

Design and population: Meta-analysis of 175 studies with 26,006 participants on interpersonal forgiveness; the source reports sample characteristics, including age, as moderators.

Finding: Apology was associated with victims' interpersonal forgiveness ($r = .42$); state empathy was also associated with forgiveness ($r = .51$).

Limit: This synthesis concerns correlates of victims' forgiveness, not a required apology, voluntary repair behavior, or outcomes from this youth micropractice.

DOI: 10.1037/a0019993

[E19] Lodi, Ernesto; Perrella, Lucrezia; Lepri, Gian Luigi; Scarpa, Maria Luisa; Patrizi, Patrizia (2021). [Use of Restorative Justice and Restorative Practices at School: A Systematic Literature Review](#)

International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 19(1), 96

Design and population: PRISMA-guided qualitative systematic review of 34 studies published 2010–2021 involving school students aged 6–18 years.

Finding: Restorative conversations and conferences were among the practices reviewed; the authors describe positive reported school-related outcomes while noting limited evidence of direct correlation.

Limit: It is a qualitative review of varied whole-school practices, not a test of brief voluntary repair practice or evidence that a particular young person will experience a given outcome.

DOI: 10.3390/ijerph19010096

References checked October 28, 2026. Wholistic Learning • wholisticeducation46@gmail.com