A GRADES 6–8 SEL MEETING CURRICULUM

Navigating Middle School

Powered by the BECOME Pathway

Eight advisory-ready SEL lessons for the realities of middle school — identity, peer pressure, stress, digital life, and changing friendships. Built on **The Compass Check-In** and aligned with the CASEL 5 Competencies and Massachusetts DESE guidance. Includes tiered supports, vocabulary, assessments, and original Becoming U student worksheets and family handouts.

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How to Use This Curriculum

These eight lessons are built for the middle-school advisory or SEL block. Each follows a **Connect** → **Learn** → **Apply** rhythm: a short connection prompt that earns trust and surfaces real experience, a skill taught with adolescent honesty, and applied practice students can use the same day. The lessons move from self-awareness, through stress and communication, into the topics that define middle school — peer pressure, identity, digital life, and changing friendships.

Why Middle-School SEL Is Different

Early adolescence brings rapid identity development, intense peer influence, growing independence, and heavy digital and social pressures. Well-implemented SEL is linked to stronger skills, behavior, and academic outcomes across this age range, with effects that persist over time (Durlak et al., 2011; Taylor et al., 2017).[1] The Compass Check-In carries forward from elementary, but the language matures and a fifth direction — **Drift** — names the checked-out, disconnected feeling many middle schoolers know well.

The Meeting Rhythm

1. **Connect** — A brief, low-stakes prompt that invites honesty and builds trust.
2. **Learn** — Teach one concrete SEL skill, using The Compass and original tools.
3. **Apply** — Practice it in a realistic scenario, discussion, or reflection.
4. **Carry It Forward** — Name when students will use the skill before the next meeting.

> **Tone matters at this age.** Adolescents detect performance instantly. Lead with authenticity, give real choice, keep check-ins private when feelings are involved, and never use the Compass to rank or label students. Trust is the prerequisite for everything else.

[1] Citations support the framing of this curriculum. The Compass Check-In and all activities, worksheets, and routines are original works of Becoming U Wellness. See the References section.

The Signature Tool · The Compass Check-In

Instead of asking whether a feeling is "good" or "bad," the Compass asks: **"Where is my compass pointing right now — and what helps me navigate back to Center?"** Students learn to **Notice** → **Name** → **Navigate**: notice the signal, name the direction without judgment, and choose a strategy to steer back toward Center — and to recognize when a feeling is too big to navigate alone.

The Compass Check-In is an original Becoming U Wellness framework, informed by the research base on emotional self-awareness and self-regulation (CASEL, 2020). It is not derived from any proprietary curriculum.

Direction	What It Feels Like	Body / Mind Signals	Examples
CENTER	Grounded, focused, regulated.	Steady, present, able to think clearly.	Calm, content, motivated.
REST	Low energy, withdrawn, flat.	Tired, low motivation, wanting to isolate.	Sad, drained, discouraged.
RUSH	Revved up, on edge, racing.	Racing thoughts, tense body, irritability.	Anxious, stressed, hyped, frustrated.
STORM	Flooded, overwhelming.	Panic, anger that feels uncontrollable, tears.	Panic, rage, despair.
DRIFT	Checked-out, numb, disconnected.	Detachment, boredom, "not really here."	Numb, apathetic, disengaged.

Know the handoff. A compass stuck in Storm, Rest, or Drift for days — not minutes — is a signal a student may need more than self-regulation. Know your school's referral pathway and involve a counselor when patterns persist.

GRADES 6–8 SEL MEETING

Lesson 1

Who Am I?
Self-Awareness & Identity

Naming emotions with nuance, exploring values and identity, and using the Compass with honesty.

Connect

Ask: If someone made a playlist, a jersey, or a profile that captured the real you, what would be on it? Share one thing that genuinely matters to you.

Learn

Middle school is when identity comes into focus — and when feelings get more complex. Today we grow our emotional vocabulary beyond “good” and “bad.” Naming a feeling precisely (anxious vs. overwhelmed vs. dread) actually helps us manage it — this is called **emotional granularity**.

We also connect feelings to **values** — what matters most to us — and to identity. Use the Compass to map how you feel right now, without judging it. Knowing your own patterns is the first step to steering back to Center.

Core Activities

Activity	Approach	Extension
Identity Map	Map the pieces of who you are: values, interests, communities.	Write a short identity statement; note where identity and feelings connect.
Feelings Thesaurus	Build a class wall of precise feeling words.	Analyze a character or scenario using exact emotional language.
Compass Journal	Daily one-line check-in plus a weekly pattern reflection.	Track triggers and patterns over two weeks; reflect on what you notice.

Deeper Practice

Journaling, seminar discussion, perspective-taking, problem-solving, and structured peer dialogue extend each lesson for middle schoolers:

- **Journaling:** “A value that guides me is ___. It shows up when ___.”
- **Discussion:** How do online spaces shape how we see ourselves?
- **Perspective-taking:** How might someone misread your feelings from the outside?
- **Problem-solving:** Name a precise feeling for three tricky situations.
- **Peer dialogue:** Share one value and how it affects your choices.

Vocabulary

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Emotional granularity	Naming feelings precisely	“It was dread, not just ‘bad’ — that helped.”
Identity	The sense of who you are	“Music is part of my identity.”

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Values	What matters most and guides choices	“Loyalty is a value I act on.”
Trigger	Something that reliably shifts your compass	“Tests are a trigger toward Rush.”
Self-awareness	Understanding your emotions and patterns	“Self-awareness caught my Drift early.”

Assessment Ideas

Method	What to Look For
Reflection	Journals show increasingly precise emotional vocabulary and self-insight.
Observation	Students use Compass and feeling language naturally in discussion.
Performance Task	Map a real situation to a Compass direction and a values-aligned response.
Self-Assessment	Identify one personal pattern and an early-warning signal.

Tiered Supports

Tier 1 = universal, for all students. Tier 2 = targeted small-group practice. Tier 3 = individualized, intensive support (Massachusetts DESE, n.d.).

Tier & Focus	Strategies & Activities	Examples of Differentiation
Tier 1 — Universal ***Build shared self-awareness language for all.***	Daily Compass check-in; feelings-thesaurus wall; identity mapping; model self-awareness.	Private/written check-ins; pair-shares for reluctant talkers.
Tier 2 — Targeted ***Targeted support for students who struggle to name feelings.***	Small-group emotion-vocabulary practice; visual feeling scales; guided reflection sheets.	Sentence starters; one-to-one journaling conferences.
Tier 3 — Intensive ***Individualized support.***	One-on-one work connecting body cues to feelings and patterns; counselor collaboration.	Personalized self-awareness goals; check-in/check-out.

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Lesson 2

Under Pressure
Stress & Regulation

Understanding stress, building a real toolkit, and steering back to Center under middle-school pressure.

Connect

Ask: On a scale from calm to maxed-out, where's your stress this week — and what's driving it? (Anonymous hands or a private slip works well here.)

Learn

Stress is normal, but it helps to understand it. **Acute stress** is short-term (a test tomorrow); **chronic stress** builds over time (ongoing overload). Both affect the body and make it harder to think clearly.

Today we build a personal **regulation toolkit** — breathing, grounding, movement, and **cognitive reframing** (swapping an unhelpful thought for a more accurate one). We also name the difference between healthy coping and avoidance, which makes stress worse later. Match tools to your Compass: Rush and Storm often need breathing first; Rest may need movement.

> **Worksheet included.** See "My Stress Map" and "Reframe It" in the worksheet pack at the back.

Core Activities

Activity	Approach	Extension
Stress Science	Map personal stress signals and what triggers them.	Design a personal stress-management plan for a busy stretch.
Toolkit Build	Try a menu of strategies; keep the ones that work.	Curate and test a toolkit over two weeks; journal effectiveness.
Reframe It	Practice swapping unhelpful thoughts for balanced ones.	Apply reframing to a real stressor; spot common thinking traps.

Deeper Practice

Journaling, seminar discussion, perspective-taking, problem-solving, and structured peer dialogue extend each lesson for middle schoolers:

- **Journaling:** "My biggest stressor right now is ___. One tool that helps is ___."
- **Discussion:** Where's the line between healthy coping and avoidance?
- **Perspective-taking:** How does stress show up differently in different people?
- **Problem-solving:** Match tools to Rush, Storm, Rest, and Drift.
- **Peer dialogue:** Teach a partner one regulation strategy.

Vocabulary

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Acute stress	Short-term stress from an immediate demand	“Acute stress hit before the game.”
Chronic stress	Ongoing stress that builds over time	“Chronic stress pushed me toward Drift.”
Cognitive reframing	Re-interpreting a situation more accurately	“I reframed ‘I’ll fail’ to ‘this is hard but doable.’”
Coping	How you handle stress (healthy or harmful)	“Avoidance is coping that backfires.”
Grounding	Using the senses to return to the present	“Five-senses grounding calmed me.”

Assessment Ideas

Method	What to Look For
Performance Task	Demonstrate two regulation strategies and explain when to use each.
Reflection	Journal shows tools matched to Compass directions.
Project	A personal stress-management plan with a self-review.
Observation	Students use tools before escalation and seek help appropriately.

Tiered Supports

Tier 1 = universal, for all students. Tier 2 = targeted small-group practice. Tier 3 = individualized, intensive support (Massachusetts DESE, n.d.).

Tier & Focus	Strategies & Activities	Examples of Differentiation
Tier 1 — Universal ***All students build a regulation toolkit.***	Teach strategies in calm moments; post a tools menu; model use during transitions.	Short practice with visuals; longer journaling for fluent writers.
Tier 2 — Targeted ***Targeted support for students who escalate or shut down.***	Small-group practice; personal tools card; pre-teach reframing with examples.	Calm-space pass; rehearse one strategy to fluency.
Tier 3 — Intensive ***Individualized regulation support.***	One-on-one plan with preferred tools; counselor collaboration.	Co-regulation with a trusted adult; frequent check-ins.

GRADES 6–8 SEL MEETING

Lesson 3

Say It Straight
Communication & Conflict

Assertive communication, I-Messages, and repairing conflict without blame.

Connect

Ask: Think of a time a small issue blew up because of *how* it was said. What made it escalate? (No names.)

Learn

Communication has three modes: **passive** (bottling it up), **aggressive** (blaming, attacking), and **assertive** (honest and direct, while respecting the other person). Assertive is the goal.

The **I-Message** keeps us assertive: “I feel ___ when ___. Could we ___?” It names a feeling and a request without blame. Paired with **active listening** and a willingness to **repair** after a rupture, it resolves most conflicts before they escalate — and keeps our compass closer to Center.

Core Activities

Activity	Approach	Extension
Three Modes	Sort statements into passive, aggressive, assertive.	Rewrite passive/aggressive lines as assertive I-Messages.
I-Message Lab	Build I-Messages for common middle-school conflicts.	Role-play a high-stakes conversation and a repair afterward.
Listen to Understand	Practice active listening: reflect back what you heard.	Debate an issue, then restate the other side fairly before responding.

Deeper Practice

Journaling, seminar discussion, perspective-taking, problem-solving, and structured peer dialogue extend each lesson for middle schoolers:

- **Journaling:** “A conflict I’d handle differently now is ___.”
- **Discussion:** Why does blame almost always escalate a conflict?
- **Perspective-taking:** How does it feel to receive blame vs. an I-Message?
- **Problem-solving:** Turn three aggressive statements into assertive ones.
- **Peer dialogue:** Practice a full conflict-and-repair with a partner.

Vocabulary

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Assertive	Honest and direct while respecting others	“I was assertive, not aggressive.”
Passive	Hiding your needs or staying silent	“Being passive left me resentful.”
I-Message	Sharing a feeling and request without blame	“I feel ignored when plans change last minute.”

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Active listening	Fully attending and reflecting back	“Active listening defused it.”
Repair	Restoring a relationship after a rupture	“We did a repair after the argument.”

Assessment Ideas

Method	What to Look For
Performance Task	Compose and deliver a clear, assertive I-Message.
Observation	Students use feeling language and reflect back what they hear.
Reflection	Journal reframes a real conflict assertively.
Discussion	Students explain why blame escalates conflict.

Tiered Supports

Tier 1 = universal, for all students. Tier 2 = targeted small-group practice. Tier 3 = individualized, intensive support (Massachusetts DESE, n.d.).

Tier & Focus	Strategies & Activities	Examples of Differentiation
Tier 1 — Universal ***All students learn assertive communication.***	Teach and post the three modes and I-Message frame; model assertive language.	Sentence frames and visuals; written practice for fluent writers.
Tier 2 — Targeted ***Targeted support for students who blame or withdraw.***	Small-group role-play; cue cards; pre-teach feeling words.	Personal I-Message card; guided practice before known flashpoints.
Tier 3 — Intensive ***Individualized communication support.***	One-to-one scripting; build into social goals; adult-supported practice.	Real-time coaching; family reinforcement.

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Lesson 4

Your Call
Peer Pressure & Decisions

Recognizing influence, thinking independently, and making decisions with real stakes.

Connect

Ask: What's the difference between a friend influencing you and a friend pressuring you? Where's the line?

Learn

Peer influence is normal and not always bad — friends shape us. But **peer pressure** is when influence pushes us toward something against our values or judgment. Knowing the difference protects us.

We learn how persuasion works — **social proof** ("everyone's doing it"), urgency, and belonging — and we practice a decision routine: **Pause, check your compass, weigh consequences, decide from your values.** We also rehearse refusal skills: ways to say no that keep your standing and your standards.

> **Worksheet included.** See "Influence or Pressure?" and "Ways to Say No" in the worksheet pack.

Core Activities

Activity	Approach	Extension
Influence vs. Pressure	Sort scenarios; discuss where the line is.	Analyze how social proof and urgency drive decisions.
Refusal Toolkit	Practice several ways to say no without losing face.	Role-play escalating pressure; rehearse exit strategies.
Decide From Values	Walk a decision through the four-step routine.	Apply the routine to a realistic, higher-stakes scenario.

Deeper Practice

Journaling, seminar discussion, perspective-taking, problem-solving, and structured peer dialogue extend each lesson for middle schoolers:

- **Journaling:** "A time I went along with something I regretted was ___."
- **Discussion:** Why is it so hard to go against the group?
- **Perspective-taking:** Why might someone apply pressure in the first place?
- **Problem-solving:** Generate three refusal strategies for one scenario.
- **Peer dialogue:** Practice resisting pressure with a partner.

Vocabulary

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Peer pressure	Influence pushing you against your judgment	"Peer pressure made it feel normal."
Influence	How others shape our choices	"Good influence pushed me to study."

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Social proof	Doing something because others do	“Social proof made it feel safe.”
Refusal skills	Ways to say no and hold your ground	“My refusal skills kept me out of it.”
Values-based decision	A choice guided by what matters to you	“I made a values-based decision.”

Assessment Ideas

Method	What to Look For
Performance Task	Demonstrate two refusal strategies for a realistic scenario.
Discussion	Students distinguish influence from pressure with examples.
Reflection	Journal connects a past decision to values and consequences.
Role-Play	Students resist escalating pressure while keeping composure.

Tiered Supports

Tier 1 = universal, for all students. Tier 2 = targeted small-group practice. Tier 3 = individualized, intensive support (Massachusetts DESE, n.d.).

Tier & Focus	Strategies & Activities	Examples of Differentiation
Tier 1 — Universal ***All students learn to recognize and resist pressure.***	Teach influence vs. pressure; practice refusal skills; model values-based decisions.	Scenario sorting with visuals; written analysis for extension.
Tier 2 — Targeted ***Targeted support for students vulnerable to pressure.***	Small-group refusal rehearsal; personal exit-plan card.	One-to-one role-play; identify trusted friends and adults.
Tier 3 — Intensive ***Individualized support.***	One-on-one decision coaching; build into goals; counselor partnership.	Real-time support around known pressure points; family follow-through.

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Lesson 5

In Their Shoes
Empathy & Belonging

Perspective-taking across difference, recognizing bias, and being an upstander.

Connect

Ask: Think of a time you felt truly included — and a time you felt left out. What made the difference?

Learn

Cognitive empathy is understanding how someone sees things; **emotional empathy** is feeling with them. Both build belonging. In middle school, where in-groups and out-groups form fast, empathy is a skill worth practicing on purpose.

We examine **bias** and assumptions — including our own — and how they shape who gets included. Then we practice being an **upstander**: someone who acts to support or include, rather than a bystander who watches. Noticing a struggling peer and responding with care (and boundaries) is part of this.

Core Activities

Activity	Approach	Extension
Perspective Swap	Retell a conflict from each side fairly.	Steelman an opposing view; analyze a real issue from multiple angles.
Bias Check	Notice assumptions; discuss stereotypes in media.	Examine in-group/out-group dynamics; reflect on personal blind spots.
Upstander Moves	Brainstorm small ways to include and support.	Design and rehearse upstander scripts for exclusion or bias.

Deeper Practice

Journaling, seminar discussion, perspective-taking, problem-solving, and structured peer dialogue extend each lesson for middle schoolers:

- **Journaling:** “A time I was an upstander (or wish I had been) was ___.”
- **Discussion:** Why do in-groups and out-groups form so fast in middle school?
- **Perspective-taking:** Describe a classmate’s day from their point of view.
- **Problem-solving:** Plan three ways to include someone left out.
- **Peer dialogue:** Practice a supportive response to a struggling peer.

Vocabulary

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Cognitive empathy	Understanding another’s perspective	“Cognitive empathy let me get his side.”
Emotional empathy	Feeling with another person	“Emotional empathy moved me to help.”
Bias	An automatic, often unaware assumption	“I caught my own bias.”
Upstander	Someone who acts to support, not just watch	“I was an upstander at lunch.”

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Belonging	Feeling accepted and part of a group	“Belonging changed how I felt at school.”

Assessment Ideas

Method	What to Look For
Discussion	Students articulate a view they disagree with, accurately and fairly.
Performance Task	Role-play an upstander response to a realistic scenario.
Reflection	Journal names a personal bias noticed and questioned.
Observation	Students show inclusive behavior toward peers.

Tiered Supports

Tier 1 = universal, for all students. Tier 2 = targeted small-group practice. Tier 3 = individualized, intensive support (Massachusetts DESE, n.d.).

Tier & Focus	Strategies & Activities	Examples of Differentiation
Tier 1 — Universal ***All students build empathy and inclusion skills.***	Set norms for respectful disagreement; practice perspective-taking and upstander moves.	Visual supports and structured talk; written analysis for extension.
Tier 2 — Targeted ***Targeted support for students who struggle socially.***	Small-group practice reading cues and responding; rehearse inclusion scripts.	One-to-one coaching; identify safe peers and entry points.
Tier 3 — Intensive ***Individualized support.***	Personalized social goals; structured peer interactions with adult support.	Counselor collaboration; family reinforcement at home.

GRADES 6–8 SEL MEETING

Lesson 6

Online & In Real Life Digital Citizenship

Navigating social media, digital footprint, and online conflict with the same SEL skills.

Connect

Ask: How does your compass tend to move after 20 minutes of scrolling — toward Center, or somewhere else? Be honest.

Learn

Our SEL skills apply online too. Social media is designed to capture attention and invites **social comparison** — measuring our real lives against others' curated highlights, which often moves the compass toward Rush, Rest, or Drift.

We learn three habits: protect your **digital footprint** (what you post lasts and is visible), pause before reacting to online conflict (the Five-step pause works on a screen too), and check sources before sharing to avoid spreading **misinformation**. Online kindness is the same skill as in-person kindness.

> **Worksheet included.** See "My Digital Footprint" and "Scroll Check" in the worksheet pack.

Core Activities

Activity	Approach	Extension
Scroll Check	Track how your compass shifts during and after screen time.	Analyze how design features drive comparison and time-on-app.
Footprint Audit	Discuss what's okay to share and what lasts.	Map a personal digital footprint; write a personal posting policy.
Pause Before You Post	Practice pausing before reacting to online conflict.	Role-play de-escalating an online disagreement using I-Messages.

Deeper Practice

Journaling, seminar discussion, perspective-taking, problem-solving, and structured peer dialogue extend each lesson for middle schoolers:

- **Journaling:** "Social media affects my compass by ___."
- **Discussion:** Why is online conflict often worse than in person?
- **Perspective-taking:** How can a post land differently than intended?
- **Problem-solving:** Plan a response to an unkind comment using SEL skills.
- **Peer dialogue:** Share one digital boundary you want to keep.

Vocabulary

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Digital footprint	The lasting record of your online activity	"Colleges can see a digital footprint."

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Social comparison	Measuring yourself against others online	“Social comparison tanked my mood.”
Misinformation	False or misleading information	“I checked before sharing — misinformation.”
Digital citizenship	Acting responsibly and kindly online	“Digital citizenship means pausing first.”
Boundary	A limit that protects your wellbeing	“My boundary: no phone after 10.”

Assessment Ideas

Method	What to Look For
Performance Task	Draft a personal posting policy or de-escalation response.
Discussion	Students explain how social comparison affects mood and focus.
Reflection	Journal identifies one digital boundary and why it matters.
Project	Create a digital-citizenship guide for younger students.

Tiered Supports

Tier 1 = universal, for all students. Tier 2 = targeted small-group practice. Tier 3 = individualized, intensive support (Massachusetts DESE, n.d.).

Tier & Focus	Strategies & Activities	Examples of Differentiation
Tier 1 — Universal ***All students build digital-citizenship skills.***	Teach footprint, comparison, and pause-before-posting; model healthy habits.	Visual supports; written audits and policies for extension.
Tier 2 — Targeted ***Targeted support for students affected by online conflict.***	Small-group practice de-escalating; personal boundary plan.	One-to-one coaching on specific situations; loop in families.
Tier 3 — Intensive ***Individualized support.***	Personalized plan for online stressors; counselor partnership.	Family collaboration on home device norms; check-ins.

GRADES 6–8 SEL MEETING

Lesson 7

Changing Friendships & Boundaries

Healthy vs. unhealthy friendships, setting boundaries, and navigating friendships that change.

Connect

Ask: Friendships change a lot in middle school. What makes a friendship feel healthy — and what are the warning signs it isn't?

Learn

Healthy friendships are built on respect, trust, and give-and-take. Unhealthy ones show **red flags**: control, pressure, constant put-downs, or feeling worse after time together. Recognizing the difference is a life skill.

We practice setting **boundaries** — limits that protect our wellbeing (time, energy, what we'll do) — and communicating them kindly but clearly. We also normalize that friendships **change**: drifting apart, taking space, or growing in new directions is normal and doesn't make anyone a villain.

Core Activities

Activity	Approach	Extension
Healthy or Unhealthy?	Sort friendship behaviors; discuss respect and trust.	Analyze a case study for red flags and green flags.
Boundary Scripts	Practice clear, kind boundary statements.	Map personal boundaries and rehearse asserting them.
Friendships Change	Discuss how and why friendships shift over time.	Reflect on a changing friendship; plan a respectful response.

Deeper Practice

Journaling, seminar discussion, perspective-taking, problem-solving, and structured peer dialogue extend each lesson for middle schoolers:

- **Journaling:** "A boundary I want to set is ___."
- **Discussion:** Why is setting a boundary so hard, even when it's healthy?
- **Perspective-taking:** How does it feel to have a boundary set with you?
- **Problem-solving:** Word a kind boundary for a tricky friendship.
- **Peer dialogue:** Practice giving and receiving a boundary respectfully.

Vocabulary

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Boundary	A limit that protects your wellbeing	"I set a boundary about my time."
Red flag	A warning sign of an unhealthy pattern	"Controlling who I see is a red flag."
Green flag	A sign of a healthy relationship	"Respecting my no is a green flag."
Mutual	Going both ways; shared	"A good friendship is mutual."

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Drifting apart	Naturally growing in different directions	“We drifted apart, and that’s okay.”

Assessment Ideas

Method	What to Look For
Performance Task	State a clear, kind boundary for a realistic situation.
Discussion	Students name red and green flags in friendships.
Reflection	Journal explores a changing friendship with self-respect.
Observation	Students respect peers’ boundaries.

Tiered Supports

Tier 1 = universal, for all students. Tier 2 = targeted small-group practice. Tier 3 = individualized, intensive support (Massachusetts DESE, n.d.).

Tier & Focus	Strategies & Activities	Examples of Differentiation
Tier 1 — Universal ***All students learn boundaries and healthy-friendship markers.***	Teach red/green flags; practice boundary scripts; normalize changing friendships.	Sentence frames and sorting; written reflection for extension.
Tier 2 — Targeted ***Targeted support for students in friendship conflict.***	Small-group role-play; coaching on specific situations.	One-to-one scripting; identify supportive peers.
Tier 3 — Intensive ***Individualized support.***	Personalized social goals; adult-facilitated conversations.	Counselor collaboration; family reinforcement.

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Lesson 8

Future Self Goals & Resilience

Growth mindset, meaningful goals, and connecting today's effort to who you're becoming.

Connect

Ask: If you met yourself three years from now, who would you hope to be? What's one thing that version of you is proud you started?

Learn

A **growth mindset** is the belief that ability grows with effort and strategy (Dweck, 2006). Its opposite, a fixed mindset, says ability is set. The honest truth: setbacks aren't proof you can't — they're information about what to try next.

We set **SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound), monitor and revise them, and connect today's effort to our **future self**. We also build **resilience** with strategies and support — not just willpower — and learn to reframe failure as part of growth.

Core Activities

Activity	Approach	Extension
Mindset in Action	Reframe fixed self-talk into growth statements.	Analyze mindset in your own recent setback (Dweck, 2006).
SMART Goals	Set one academic and one personal SMART goal.	Build a goal system with milestones, monitoring, and revision.
Future Self	Write a letter to your future self.	Connect goals to a longer-term vision; map effort to outcomes.

Deeper Practice

Journaling, seminar discussion, perspective-taking, problem-solving, and structured peer dialogue extend each lesson for middle schoolers:

- **Journaling:** "A setback that taught me something was ___."
- **Discussion:** Why does praising effort beat praising being 'smart'?
- **Perspective-taking:** How would your future self coach you today?
- **Problem-solving:** Turn a vague wish into a SMART goal with steps.
- **Peer dialogue:** Share a goal and one obstacle; brainstorm strategies.

Vocabulary

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
Growth mindset	Belief that ability grows with effort	"Growth mindset: 'not yet.'" (Dweck, 2006)
Fixed mindset	Belief that ability is unchangeable	"Fixed mindset said 'I'm just bad at this.'"

Term	Student-Friendly Definition	In Context
SMART goal	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound	“My SMART goal has a deadline.”
Resilience	Recovering and adapting after difficulty	“Resilience is bouncing back with a plan.”
Future self	Who you’re working to become	“I asked what my future self would want.”

Assessment Ideas

Method	What to Look For
Project	A SMART goal plan with milestones and a reflection.
Reflection	Journal reframes a real setback with growth language.
Performance Task	Connect present effort to a future goal.
Observation	Students persist with strategies and encourage peers.

Tiered Supports

Tier 1 = universal, for all students. Tier 2 = targeted small-group practice. Tier 3 = individualized, intensive support (Massachusetts DESE, n.d.).

Tier & Focus	Strategies & Activities	Examples of Differentiation
Tier 1 — Universal ***All students learn growth mindset and goal-setting.***	Praise process; teach SMART goals; revisit goals regularly; model resilience.	Goal templates with visuals; written multi-goal systems for extension.
Tier 2 — Targeted ***Targeted support for students who give up quickly.***	Small-group goal coaching; reframing practice; celebrate small wins.	One-to-one goal check-ins; scaffolded milestone tracking.
Tier 3 — Intensive ***Individualized support.***	Personalized goal and resilience plan; counselor partnership.	Frequent check-ins; family celebrates progress at home.

Student Worksheets

Twenty printable, original Becoming U worksheets, organized to match the eight lessons. Written for middle schoolers — expect reflection and writing, with room to make them personal.

Worksheet 1 · Identity Map

Connects to Lesson 1.

Map the pieces of who you are. Fill each area honestly — there are no wrong answers.

My values (what matters most)	My interests & strengths

Communities I belong to	Who I'm becoming

Worksheet 2 · Feelings, With Precision

Connects to Lesson 1.

For each situation, go beyond “good/bad.” Name the most precise feeling you can.

When a plan falls through, I feel… (e.g., disappointed, relieved, anxious)

Before something I care about, I feel…

When I’m left out, I feel…

Worksheet 3 · My Compass Patterns

Connects to Lesson 1.

Track your compass for a few days. Look for patterns: what tends to move it, and what brings it back to Center?

Statement	Write your answer
What pulls me toward Rush	
What pulls me toward Rest or Drift	
What brings me back to Center	
An early-warning signal I notice	

Worksheet 4 · My Stress Map

Connects to Lesson 2.

Map your stress: what causes it, how it shows up, and what helps.

My top stressors right now	How stress shows up in my body

Two tools that actually help me:

Worksheet 5 · Reframe It

Connects to Lesson 2.

Catch an unhelpful thought and swap it for a more accurate, balanced one.

Unhelpful thought: _____

More accurate thought: _____

When could you use this reframe this week?

Worksheet 6 · Tools by Compass Direction

Connects to Lesson 2.

Match a go-to regulation tool to each direction. There’s no single right answer.

Statement	My go-to tool
RUSH (revved up)	
STORM (flooded)	
REST (low energy)	
DRIFT (checked-out)	

Worksheet 7 · Passive, Aggressive, or Assertive?

Connects to Lesson 3.

Label each statement. Then rewrite the passive/aggressive ones as assertive I-Messages.

Statement	P / A / Assertive
“Whatever, it’s fine.” (it’s not)	
“You always ruin everything!”	
“I feel frustrated when plans change last minute.”	

Rewrite one as an assertive I-Message:

Worksheet 8 · My I-Message

Connects to Lesson 3.

Build an I-Message for a real (or realistic) conflict.

I feel _____ when _____.

Could we _____?

What might the other person be feeling?

Worksheet 9 · Influence or Pressure?

Connects to Lesson 4.

For each example, decide: is this healthy influence or peer pressure? Why?

Statement	Influence / Pressure
A friend invites you to study together	
The group dares you to skip class	
A teammate pushes you to practice	
Everyone wants you to exclude someone	

Worksheet 10 · Ways to Say No

Connects to Lesson 4.

Write three different ways you could say no and keep your standing.

The honest no:

The exit (“I’ve got to go / not my thing”):

The redirect (suggest something else):

Who’s a person you can text or stand near when pressure hits?

Worksheet 11 · Decide From Your Values

Connects to Lesson 4.

Walk a real decision through the routine.

The decision:

Pause — where's my compass?

Consequences (short and long term):

My values-based choice:

Worksheet 12 · Perspective Swap

Connects to Lesson 5.

Think of a recent disagreement. Tell it from both sides as fairly as you can.

My side	Their side

Worksheet 13 · Upstander Moves

Connects to Lesson 5.

Plan small, realistic ways to include or support someone.

- Invite someone sitting alone
- Speak up when someone’s put down
- Check on a friend who seems off
- Include a new student

One upstander move I’ll actually try this week:

Worksheet 14 · Scroll Check

Connects to Lesson 6.

Notice how your compass shifts around screen time this week.

Statement	Direction
Before scrolling, my compass is…	
After 20 min, my compass is…	
An app that helps me feel Center	
An app that moves me off Center	

Worksheet 15 · My Digital Footprint

Connects to Lesson 6.

Think about what you share and what lasts.

Okay to post	Better to keep private

One rule for my own posting:

Worksheet 16 · Pause Before You Post

Connects to Lesson 6.

Practice responding to an unkind comment using your SEL skills.

The comment / situation:

My first reaction (in Rush/Storm):

My response after pausing and checking my compass:

Worksheet 17 · Red Flags & Green Flags

Connects to Lesson 7.

Sort what you've seen in friendships. Add your own.

Green flags (healthy)	Red flags (unhealthy)

Worksheet 18 · My Boundary Script

Connects to Lesson 7.

Write a clear, kind boundary for a real situation.

I value _____.

I need _____.

Going forward, I’m going to _____.

Worksheet 19 · From Fixed to Growth

Connects to Lesson 8.

Catch fixed-mindset self-talk and rewrite it with a growth mindset (Dweck, 2006).

Statement	Growth rewrite →
“I’m just bad at this.”	
“I’ll never get it.”	
“There’s no point trying.”	

Rewrite one in your own words:

Worksheet 20 · My SMART Goal & Future Self

Connects to Lesson 8.

Set one goal and connect it to who you're becoming.

My SMART goal: _____

By when: _____ First step: _____

How does this connect to my future self?

One obstacle and my plan for it:

Family Handouts

Ten standalone, take-home handouts for families of middle schoolers — each on its own page. Share them so the same language travels between school and home.

Family Handout 1 · Talking with Your Middle Schooler

Early adolescence is when kids pull toward independence — and when conversations can get shorter. Your child is learning **The Compass Check-In** at school: a way to notice where their feelings point (Center, Rest, Rush, Storm, Drift) and steer back to Center.

Try this:

- Ask “Where’s your compass today?” instead of “How was school?”
- Talk side-by-side (in the car, on a walk) — it’s easier than face-to-face.
- Listen first; resist fixing right away.
- Share your own compass honestly: “I’m in Rush, give me a few minutes.”

Family Handout 2 · Stress and Your Teen

Middle schoolers face real stress — academic, social, and digital. Your child is learning the difference between short-term (acute) and ongoing (chronic) stress, and building a personal toolkit of healthy coping strategies.

Support at home:

- Normalize stress without minimizing it: “That sounds hard. What might help?”
- Protect sleep, movement, and downtime — they’re regulation tools.
- Watch for avoidance (a common but unhelpful coping style).
- Model your own healthy coping out loud.

> If stress seems constant, or your child withdraws for weeks, reach out to the school counselor.

Family Handout 3 · Helping with Healthy Communication

Your child is practicing **assertive** communication — honest and direct, but respectful — using I-Messages: “I feel ___ when ___. Could we ___?” It’s the middle path between bottling things up and blowing up.

At home:

- Model I-Messages instead of blame, even when you’re frustrated.
- Invite your child to restate a conflict using a feeling, not an accusation.
- Praise it when they communicate calmly.
- Let them practice on low-stakes things first.

Family Handout 4 · Peer Pressure and Independent Choices

Peer influence is at its peak in middle school. Your child is learning to tell the difference between healthy influence and pressure, and to make decisions from their values — including how to say no and keep their standing.

Talk about it:

- Ask “What would you do if…?” scenarios without judgment.
- Agree on a code word or text they can send you for an easy exit.
- Reinforce that saying no is a strength, not weakness.
- Keep the door open — kids who feel judged stop sharing.

Family Handout 5 · Empathy and Belonging

Belonging matters enormously at this age. Your child is learning perspective-taking, noticing bias, and being an **upstander** — someone who includes and supports rather than watching from the side.

Encourage it:

- Ask about who felt included or left out today — and why.
- Notice and name your child's kind, inclusive moments.
- Model curiosity about people different from you.
- Talk through how a situation might look from someone else's side.

Family Handout 6 · Your Teen and Social Media

Social media is part of middle-school life. Your child is learning to protect their **digital footprint**, recognize **social comparison** (curated highlights vs. real life), pause before reacting to online conflict, and check sources before sharing.

Healthy digital habits:

- Co-create device norms (charging spot, off-times) rather than only rules.
- Talk about how feeds are designed to keep us scrolling.
- Ask how their compass shifts after time online.
- Keep devices out of bedrooms overnight when you can.

> Comparison and online conflict can affect mood and sleep. If you notice big changes, talk with the school counselor.

Family Handout 7 · Changing Friendships

Friendships shift a lot in middle school — and that's normal. Your child is learning to recognize healthy vs. unhealthy friendships (green flags and red flags), set boundaries, and accept that drifting apart isn't anyone's fault.

How to help:

- Listen without rushing to fix or take sides.
- Help them name what a healthy friendship feels like.
- Support boundary-setting: "It's okay to need space."
- Reassure them that friendship changes don't mean they did something wrong.

Family Handout 8 · Growth Mindset at Home

Your child is learning that ability grows with effort and strategy — a **growth mindset** (Dweck, 2006). Setbacks aren't proof they can't; they're information about what to try next.

Reinforce it:

- Praise effort and strategy, not "you're so smart."
- Add "yet": "You haven't figured it out yet."
- Share your own struggles and what you learned.
- Treat mistakes as part of learning, not failure.

Family Handout 9 · Supporting Goals and Motivation

Your child is setting **SMART goals** (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound) and connecting today's effort to their **future self**. Motivation grows when goals feel meaningful and progress is visible.

At home:

- Help break big goals into small, doable steps.
- Check in on progress without taking over.
- Celebrate effort and milestones, not just results.
- Connect schoolwork to things they actually care about.

Family Handout 10 · When to Reach Out for Support

Most ups and downs are a normal part of early adolescence. But some signs mean your child needs more support: a compass stuck in Storm, Rest, or Drift for weeks; pulling away from friends and activities; big changes in sleep, eating, or mood; or talk of hopelessness.

What you can do:

- Stay connected and curious, not alarmed.
- Name what you notice gently: “You’ve seemed really down lately.”
- Reach out to the school counselor — they’re a partner, not a last resort.
- Make sure your child knows their trusted adults at home and school.

If you’re ever worried about your child’s safety, contact a professional. In a crisis, the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline (call or text 988) is available 24/7 in the U.S.

References & Notes

This curriculum is evidence-informed and aligned with the CASEL competencies and Massachusetts DESE guidance. The Compass Check-In and all lessons, activities, worksheets, and family handouts are original works of Becoming U Wellness. Formatted in APA 7th edition.

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A Note on Original Materials

All worksheets, handouts, reference tools, and routines in this curriculum are original to Becoming U Wellness and do not reproduce any third-party program or trademarked material. Established public-domain practices — growth-mindset and "yet" language (Dweck, 2006), SMART goals, I-Messages, and assertive communication — reflect common professional practice and are cited where a specific author originated the concept. Where teachers choose published books, films, or media, preview and license them according to school policy.

Educator's Note

This is a universal (Tier 1) SEL curriculum, not clinical care. For students who need more, partner with your school counseling or clinical staff and follow district policy and applicable law.