

Teaching the Skills That Matter in a Home Learning Environment

As we all adjust to rapidly changing circumstances in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, one of the biggest challenges is continuing to support students' education in a new environment. Students might be struggling with skills that will be crucial for succeeding in these new circumstances, such as assertiveness, self-regulation, conflict management, and self-efficacy. To support teachers, students, and families in adapting, we are highlighting some helpful resources for supporting students' intrapersonal and interpersonal skills in a virtual and/or home learning environment. Consider practicing these strategies along with your students – it's a stressful time for all of us.

Assertiveness

As you make this transition, are you noticing that students are struggling to ask for help when they need it or reacting aggressively (or passively) in tense situations or conversations?

[Assertiveness](#) helps students express their wants, needs, and thoughts while still respecting what others want, need, and think – even when it's difficult. Below, explore assertiveness resources and tools that you might find helpful for supporting your students during this adjustment period.



- Assertive Communication:** For elementary, middle, and high school students to understand the difference between passive, assertive, and aggressive communication. As they deal with new circumstances, some students might behave passively (like not speaking up with questions/needs or not establishing boundaries with family members) while others might adopt aggressive behaviors/communication (like demanding deadline extensions or yelling at family members). Consider helping your students better understand these concepts and provide tips for being assertive.
- 3-Part Assertive Statements** and **Encouraging Students to Ask for Help:** For empowering elementary, middle, and high school students to ask for help. **3-Part Assertive Statements** provides a structure that students can use to express what they need and ask for help while still ensuring that they are respectful to others. An example would be, "I know playing video games helps you relax, but I get too distracted by the noise to do my homework, so please use headphones." It might be difficult for students to ask teachers, peers, or family members for help when learning virtually from home. **Encouraging Students to Ask for Help** provides tips for making students more comfortable with asking for help. Consider having students practice requesting help with specific scenarios that they might encounter while learning at home.
- Feeling Words Wheel** and **Feelings Chart:** For supporting elementary, middle, and high school students to identify and express their emotions. As we all adjust to new circumstances, it is normal to experience a variety of complex emotions – students might feel anxiety about the current pandemic, frustration at being in a confined space with siblings, doubt about their ability to complete schoolwork without their usual resources or supports, and many other emotions. These emotions are natural, but not all students are equipped to effectively identify and express them. The **Feeling Words Wheel** (or the **Feelings Chart** for elementary grades) helps students describe emotions more precisely, which can help them more effectively communicate and address their wants, needs, and thoughts.
- Active Listening: Katie Owens at TEDxYouth@Conejo** and **Listening & Paraphrasing Activity:** For supporting elementary, middle, and high school students in developing empathy. An important part of assertiveness is ensuring that as we express ourselves more clearly and directly, we are still respecting others – to do that, we need to be able to listen. One strategy for increasing students' empathy is active listening. **Active Listening: Katie Owens at TEDxYouth@Conejo** provides an explanation of what active listening is from a teen's perspective; **Listening & Paraphrasing Activity** provides a way to practice it.

You can find other resources for supporting your students' assertiveness on <http://resources.cccframework.org>.