



Mindful Exploration

Community Connections – Kindness in Community



Designed by Freepik

TOPIC

Community Connections –
Building Relationships (Mindful
Explorations)

GRADE LEVEL

6th-8th grade

DURATION

40 minutes (10 min per lesson)

SUBJECT AREA

Character Development, ELA,
Homeroom, Advisory

DESCRIPTION OF THE LESSON

In this Mindful Exploration, students will recognize the importance of the role kindness plays in supporting individuals within a community and strengthening community bonds. Students will listen to testimony from individuals describing instances of kindness they encountered within a community and the lasting impact that kindness had on their ability to cope with struggle and find strength. By the end of this activity, students will reflect on how they can practice kindness within their community as a way to strengthen and foster community connections in their own lives.

This activity contains testimony from Holocaust survivors Marion Blumenthal Lazan and Allan Hall and WWII liberator, Tadashi Takaguchi.

This curriculum is a project of the California Teachers Collaborative for Holocaust and Genocide Education. Established by the JFCS Holocaust Center, with support from a grant from the Marin County Office of Education and the State of California.

STANDARDS ADDRESSED

CCSS. ELA-Literacy. CCRA. W10.

Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of tasks, purposes, and audiences.

CCSS. ELA-Literacy. CCRA. R9.

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.

MATERIALS

- *Student Handout: Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Kindness in Community*
- Clips of testimony: Marion Blumenthal Lazan (1:12 min), Allan Hall (01:06 min), and Tadashi Takaguchi (01:03 min)

LEARNING AIMS

Students will:

- Recognize the importance of kindness within a community and the role it plays in providing strength to the individual and the community at large.
- Analyze audiovisual testimony and draw conclusions supported with evidence about the value of practicing kindness towards individuals entering or part of your community.
- Reflect on how they can practice kindness within their community as a way to strengthen and foster community connections and well being in their own lives



Mindful Exploration

Community Connections – Kindness in Community

Consider

1. **ME Purpose** Explain to students that over the course of four days they will complete three mindful explorations and one final reflection that assesses their understanding of the importance of community service as acts of service foster a sense of responsibility for our community which strengthens community connections. By the end of the lesson, students will have considered ways in which acts of service contribute to the development of healthy community connections that benefit themselves and others.
2. **Mindful Exploration Handout** Pass out the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Kindness in Community*. Read the brief introduction and focus question together. Explain that over the course of three lessons the class will listen to clips of testimony that will help them reflect on this topic.

Student Handout Question:

Focus Question: *How does kindness impact the individual and the group in a community?*

According to the **Mental Health Foundation**, “By taking the time to be kind to others, we can benefit from emotional upsides. It really does make a difference, especially for people who are vulnerable or struggling.” Choosing kindness in our community not only makes us feel better about ourselves, it also helps those around us. We will have a stronger understanding that our actions make a difference, when we see the impact being kind has on ourselves and others in our community.

The following three individuals—Marion Blumenthal Lazan, Allan Hall, and Tadashi Takiguchi— all share stories of experiencing kindness in their community. As you listen to each of their testimonies, consider the ways their communities’ kindnesses brought them strength and contributed to their well being. Think about how kindness strengthened the community in which they were engaged.

Collect

3. **Clips of Testimony** Each day, play one of the three clips of testimony twice. Begin by providing a brief introduction of each individual and the content of the clip... (see clip information and biographies below).
4. **First Viewing** Have students listen to the clip of testimony and answer any clarifying questions they may have. Then, have students read and respond to the first connected question on the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Community Connections: Kindness in Community*. To encourage collaboration, have students pair with a partner to discuss their response to the first connected question. Then, have them share key takeaways from their discussion with the whole group.

Supportive sentence starters:

- *X experiences kindness from their community by _____. This is important to note because _____*
- *X’s well being was supported by their individual or community by _____.*

5. **Second Viewing** After this viewing, have students respond to the second connected question on the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Kindness in Community*. To encourage collaboration, have students share their responses to the second connected question with their partner. Then, have them share key takeaways from their discussion with the whole group.

Supportive sentence starters:

- *A lesson I could take away to help me recognize and value kindness within a community in my own life is...*

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Community Connections – Kindness in Community

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6. **Repeat** Follow the same format for each clip of testimony. Display the content of the clip and the biography (all biographies available below). As a way for students to demonstrate what they have learned about the individual in the testimony, you may ask students to share what they find most interesting about the individual based on the information provided or what they might be more curious about.

Exploration 1

Clip 1: Marion Blumenthal Lazan

In this clip, Marion shares her experience entering a very diverse high school in New York. She shares how she felt the kindness of a welcoming environment.

Marion Blumenthal Lazan, a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust, was born on December 20, 1934, in Bremen, Germany. After Kristallnacht in November 1938, the family moved to the Netherlands, with the hope of moving to the United States. In May 1940, the Germans invaded the Netherlands and Marion's family could not leave. In February of 1944, Marion was sent to Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. After liberation by the Soviet Armed Forces, Marion went to the United States. She gave her testimony on February 6, 1995, in Hewlett, New York.

Student Handout Questions:

- *What is Marion's experience entering into a new community? How was she treated by the other students in her class? How did their kindness help her to feel part of her new community?*
- *What does Marion's story help you understand the impact of kindness on one's sense of self?*

Exploration 2

Clip 2: Allan J. Hall

In this clip, Allan shares his experience starting school for the first time after his family escaped to safety. Due to the war, he had huge gaps in his education, but his new community worked hard to ensure he was accepted and treated with kindness.

Allan J. Hall was a Jewish survivor of the Holocaust who was born in Krakow, Poland on April 12, 1935. His Jewish family was forced to go into hiding and conceal their identities during the Holocaust. Allan was interviewed about his experiences on January 19, 1998, in Miami Beach, Florida.

Student Handout Questions:

- *How does the new community Allan is part of show him kindness? In what way might this treatment impact his ability to learn and his sense of self?*
- *What does Allan's story help you understand the impact of kindness on one's sense of self?*

Exploration 3

Clip 3: Tadashi Takiguchi

In this clip, Tadashi shares his experience as a Japanese member of the 442nd regiment, a group of Japanese soldiers during WWII sent to Italy to fend off the Nazi invasion. During his time in Italy, he found kindness and consideration that helped him on his journey to becoming a liberator.

Tadashi Takiguchi was an American WWII liberator who was born into a Buddhist home on September 24, 1916, in Kauai, Hawaii. After Japan bombed Pearl Harbor, he joined the Army and was made a member of the 442nd regiment which consisted of Japanese American soldiers. Tadashi shared his experiences in an interview given on August 11, 1997 in Kapaa, Hawaii.

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Mindful Exploration

Community Connections – Kindness in Community

Collect con't

Student Handout Questions:

- *How does Tadashi describe the treatment he received from the Italian people? How might this kindness have benefitted his mental health and his community?*
- *What does Tadashi's story help you understand the impact of kindness on one's sense of self?*

Construct

7. **Final Reflection (Exploration 4)** After viewing and answering questions related to the third clip, direct students to the Final Reflection section of the *Student Handout Mindful Exploration – Kindness in Community*. Encourage students to work quietly and respond on their paper.

Student Handout Questions:

- *Marion, Allan, and Tadashi all share instances of receiving kindness from their local community. This kindness makes a difference in the way they see themselves and others within the communities they have entered.*
- *Consider the role kindness has played in your community. This can include kindness you have received from members of your community or kindness you have extended to others in your community. How did it feel to receive kindness? How did it feel to extend kindness to others? Choose a time when kindness played a role in strengthening community connections for yourself or another person. In a short paragraph, tell all about this experience. Make note of how this experience may have helped you or someone else feel stronger and more secure. Consider how you can show kindness to community members in the future. Be prepared to share your thoughts with a partner.*

Communicate

8. **Discuss** To close this Mindful Exploration, ask volunteers to reflect on their responses to the final reflection.

Additional Note to Teacher

If assigning the Mindful Exploration activity series to students, we recommend asking students to keep a Mindful Explorations reflection journal. Using a reflection journal or folder to maintain their responses will provide them a compilation of their thoughts, enabling them to see how their thinking develops.

Mindful Explorations serve as short daily activities that develop introspection and social-emotional learning. Students are asked to reflect on the challenges they may face, the goals they have for themselves and the relationships they aspire to have in their lives. Each lesson is designed to be completed over the course of the week and includes an opening focus question, three 10-minute activities with clips of testimony, and a closing self-reflection question.