

Topic 5

Be Your BEST

OBJECTIVES

- To introduce the BEST concept
- To model and provide an overview of assertive, respectful BEST behaviors as shown by body posture, eye contact, spoken words, and tone of voice
- To begin to teach children to distinguish between BEST assertive behaviors and behavior that is aggressive or passive
- To provide children with opportunities to practice BEST behaviors in simple interactions such as offering greetings and saying good-bye

MATERIALS

Whole-class display of Be Your BEST (Worksheet K.5.1)

Copies of the Be Your BEST Home Activity (Worksheet K.5.2)

Optional: Whole-class display of Be Your Best Grid (Worksheet K.5.3 is an example format you can use to create your own grid.)

PREPARATION

Prepare a series of photographs and/or short clips of characters from *Sesame Street*, *Dora the Explorer*, Walt Disney films, the Arthur/PBS Kids website, and other sources depicting good communication skills (appropriate body posture, eye contact, speech with nice words and in a good tone of voice), along with some clips that illustrate aggressive or passive body posture, eye contact, speech, or tone of voice. Use these during step 8 of the instructional activities in this topic.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

I. Review the concept of showing respect.

Review Sharing Circle rules and include some of the examples students provided during the activities in Topic 2 of behaviors that show respect and behaviors that do not show respect.

2. Introduce the new skill of Be Your BEST.

Explain that everyone will learn a powerful new skill that will help them treat each other with respect. Say:

A team is successful when all members are their BEST and feel respected—when everyone on the team has a right to say what he or she thinks and feels. It is important to know how to tell people what you think and feel in a way that shows respect.

Point to each letter and illustration on the whole-class display of Be Your BEST (Worksheet K.5.1) and explain. Demonstrate the concept as you point out each step (for example, stand tall with shoulders back and arms relaxed at your side to demonstrate body posture):

B is for Body Posture

E is for Eye Contact

S is for Speech (use nice words)

T is for Tone of Voice

Say:

There are three different ways to act when you are with other people. In any situation you can act like a Blaster or a Shriner, or you can Be Your BEST.

3. Describe and model Blaster behavior.

If possible, hold up a puppet or illustration to represent the Blaster. Say:

Blasters are very pushy, bossy, loud, and sometimes mean when they express how they think and feel. The problem is that the Blaster does not respect other people or care about what they think or feel. The Blaster sticks up for his or her own rights but does not respect the rights of others.

Model the BEST components of the Blaster as you point to each letter and symbol on the BEST display:

B: Body Posture—tense, tightened muscles; stiff back; towering over others, stomping foot; making a fist.

E: Eye Contact—glaring; piercing stare.

S: Speech—threats, insults, putdowns, angry words, bossiness (provide examples as appropriate for your group; for example, stupid; dummy; you are a jerk; no, you cannot play!).

T: Tone of Voice—harsh, loud, clipped, yelling.

Ask students, “How does Blaster behavior make you feel?”

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A team is successful when all members are their BEST and feel respected—when everyone on the team has a right to say what he or she thinks and feels. It is important to know how to tell people what you think and feel in a way that shows respect.

Point to each letter and illustration on the whole-class display of Be Your BEST (Worksheet K.5.1) and explain. Demonstrate the concept as you point out each step (for example, stand tall with shoulders back and arms relaxed at your side to demonstrate body posture):

- B** is for Body Posture
- E** is for Eye Contact
- S** is for Speech (use nice words)
- T** is for Tone of Voice

Say:

There are three different ways to act when you are with other people. In any situation you can act like a Blaster or a Shrinker, or you can Be Your BEST.

3. Describe and model Blaster behavior.

If possible, hold up a puppet or illustration to represent the Blaster. Say:

Blasters are very pushy, bossy, loud, and sometimes mean when they express how they think and feel. The problem is that the Blaster does not respect other people or care about what they think or feel. The Blaster sticks up for his or her own rights but does not respect the rights of others.

Model the BEST components of the Blaster as you point to each letter and symbol on the BEST display:

- B:** Body Posture—tense, tightened muscles; stiff back; towering over others, stomping foot; making a fist.
- E:** Eye Contact—glaring; piercing stare.
- S:** Speech—threats, insults, putdowns, angry words, bossiness (provide examples as appropriate for your group; for example, stupid; dummy; you are a jerk; no, you cannot play!).
- T:** Tone of Voice—harsh, loud, clipped, yelling.

Ask students, “How does Blaster behavior make you feel?”

4. Describe and model Shrinker behavior.

Say:

The Shrinker way of behaving is very meek and mild and lets other people have their way. Shrinkers are good at respecting other people's right to say what they think and feel, but they do not respect their own rights.

Display a puppet or an illustration to represent a Shrinker and model and describe the BEST components.

B: Body Posture—slouched, rounded shoulders, head down, shuffling feet, tense body.

E: Eye Contact—looking down, looking away, making eye contact briefly and then darting the eyes away.

S: Speech—vague, indirect words (I don't know; well, sort of; maybe . . . [mumble]).

T: Tone of Voice—low, hesitant, squeaky.

Ask students, "How does Shrinker behavior make you feel?"

5. Describe and model respectful BEST behavior.

Say:

When people use their BEST behavior, they say what they think and feel in a way that respects the rights of the people who are listening. When we are being our BEST, we also listen to how other people think and feel.

Describe and model components of Be Your BEST:

B: Body Posture—Stand or sit tall. Do not slump.

E: Eye Contact—Look the person in the eye in a friendly way.

S: Speech—Say what you see and feel. Use nice words. Do not use bad or insulting words.

T: Tone of Voice—Use a calm and even tone of voice.

Let children know that you are going to show them how to use Be Your BEST to say hello. Then demonstrate what BEST would look like when greeting someone:

B: Body posture—Walk tall, with a slight bounce in your step. Pause as you approach the other person to make authentic contact. Face the other person; maintain a relaxed stance. Don't slump. Keep a friendly look on your face.

E: Eye Contact—Look straight at the other person, with a friendly and happy look in your eyes.

S: Speech—Use nice, polite words; for example, say, “Good morning. How are you today?” (Modify your words according to local language and norms.)

T: Tone of Voice—Use a calm, even tone of voice.

6. Conduct a practice of BEST.

After providing a concrete model of BEST behavior, allow children an opportunity to practice and imitate the model. Depending on the maturity of the group, a combination of the following strategies can be used:

- Have students stand in a circle. Select two students with good conversation skills to model how they would greet each other in the morning. Ask students whether the role-players used BEST. What did they observe?
- Provide students with an opportunity to practice what they observed. This can be done, for example, by going around the circle letting students practice, one at a time, receiving a greeting from the student to their right, then turning to greet the student on their left. If the group is mature enough, students can also pair up and practice.

7. Provide opportunities for repeated practice based on performance feedback.

Praise students for specific behaviors that match BEST criteria and give them positive, corrective prompts for aspects missed during their behavioral rehearsal. Skills develop through practice with feedback, and improvement requires repeated practice based on that feedback. Multiple practice opportunities are needed for skills to develop. You can promote development of the skills by offering coaching, much like that provided by the director of a play, both in this lesson and in the course of other daily activities. Ask students:

- What parts of BEST did you use?
- Can you think of a way to make your BEST even better?

Providing students with concrete feedback is helpful. Examples include:

“You did a great job of saying nice words. I wonder if you could use a little bit louder tone of voice? Try it again and see if that makes your BEST even better.”

“Your tone of voice was great and you used nice words, too. Your BEST could be even better if you try again and remember to make eye contact when you say hello. Try it one more time and remember to look him in the eye.”

8. Practice identifying BEST behavior components.

Show students photos or video clips (prepared ahead of time) illustrating characters communicating using BEST behaviors. Ask students to describe what they observe about body posture, eye contact, speech and words used, and tone of voice.

As behaviors are described, ask students to give a thumbs up if it is BEST behavior, or a thumbs down if it is Blaster or Shrinker behavior.

For Blaster or Shrinker behaviors, ask students whether they can think of a way that the characters could change their behavior to be their BEST.

Ask students to role-play what the BEST behavior would look like. Allow several students to suggest ways to change Blaster or Shrinker behavior to BEST behavior.

See Tips for Teachers at the end of this topic for a discussion of cultural competency issues regarding eye contact and other aspects of BEST.

9. Present a reflective summary.

Ask students to share what they learned from the lesson. Ask them to think about times when it is important to use BEST. Let children know that you will be using the word *BEST* as a cue or reminder when they need to change their behavior. Ask children to practice using their BEST.

10. Follow up.

The following activities will give students a chance to continue working with the new concepts throughout the school day and at home.

Assignment

Divide the class into groups of four and let each group draw and decorate one of the letters from BEST. Have them work as a team to illustrate what their letter means. Display their illustrated BEST letters in the classroom as a visual prompt and reminder to Be Your BEST.

Take-Home

Once children are able to respond to the words *Be Your BEST* as a prompt or cue to use BEST behaviors, distribute the Be Your BEST Home Activity (Worksheet K.5.2). If possible, conduct a parent/guardian workshop or meeting to go over BEST. Give parents and guardians a copy of the activity instructions to take home for review.

Promoting Transfer and Generalization of Skill

1. Continue to use BEST coaching and skill prompts throughout the day. Encourage children to prompt each other to use their BEST skills.
2. Look for opportunities to identify and praise specific BEST behaviors such as a nice tone of voice, good eye contact and body posture, and nice words.
3. Using photos and illustrations that you create and gather, put together and display a Be Your BEST Grid in the classroom. Worksheet K.5.3 is a blank example for you to refer to when creating the grid. Use posterboard or another large display surface for your classroom grid.
4. Create and put up posters illustrating BEST (and other SDM/SPS skill prompts) in the classroom and elsewhere in the school. Refer to them often to help children learn to transfer and generalize BEST skills to multiple and varied situations and settings. As students gain more practice identifying these behavioral distinctions, it will be possible to use the posters to prompt skill use.
5. When reading stories aloud, point out characters that are using BEST behaviors.

TIPS FOR TEACHERS

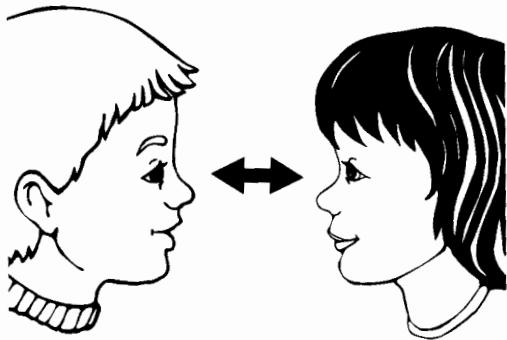
1. The objective of this topic area is to demonstrate BEST behaviors as a way to clarify what respectful behavior looks like, feels like, and sounds like. Once taught, the goal is to provide multiple and varied practice opportunities of BEST to help students develop the skills needed to meet the behavioral expectation that they treat others with respect.
2. In some of our earlier work, Blaster and Shrinker behaviors were referred to as Monster and Mouse—terms that have been used successfully with younger children to help describe the distinction between aggressive and passive behavior. These terms were borrowed from the book *The Mouse, the Monster, and Me* by Pat Palmer (1977, Impact Publishers), which is a good resource, but the content focuses on respect and responsibility rather than going into depth and detail about the behavioral distinctions. The book's illustrations and category descriptions, however, nicely support the objectives of this topic. In recent years, though, we have moved toward using Blaster and Shrinker because less-mature students occasionally focus more literally on pretending to act like a mouse or a monster (for example, squeaking and crawling or growling and showing claws), which distracts them from learning to identify and recognize specific behavioral distinctions.
3. It is important to incorporate awareness and respect for cultural and ethnic differences in what might be regarded as proper BEST behavior.

For example, Latino children may be less likely to make eye contact with adult males, out of respect. These differences can be made explicit by asking children whether there are times and ways that they would not want to make direct eye contact, stand tall, or use any of the other recommended behaviors based on what they have learned in their family or culture. This is a way to further clarify the concept of respect using BEST in a way that also fosters cultural competency and awareness.

4. This activity is meant as an introduction to the BEST skills, using simple social situations. The objective is to provide children with repeated behavior practice so that they can have experience and success in demonstrating BEST skills. This activity is a foundation for more emotionally challenging situations such as dealing with teasing, bullying, anger, fear, or highly frustrating situations.
5. You may want to provide some examples of respectful and not respectful behaviors and ask children to give a thumbs up or a thumbs down for BEST and not BEST behaviors. For example:
 - ▶ Someone holds open a door for you.
 - ▶ Someone grabs a toy out of your hands.
 - ▶ Someone yells at you for accidentally bumping into him or her.
 - ▶ Someone waits until your turn to speak is over before he or she starts talking.
 - ▶ Someone calls you a name.
6. BEST introduces children to a powerful prompt that incorporates key target behaviors of many social skills programs (posture, eye contact, avoidance of inappropriate language, and maintaining a pleasant tone of voice). In reviewing discipline data in many of the districts we work with, we have noted that student disciplinary action is often the result of provoking other students or adults through insults, a challenging tone of voice, aggressive body posture, glaring eye contact, or whining that sets off reactions from other group members. Improved BEST behavior thus becomes a form of anti-provocation training.



B is for Body Posture

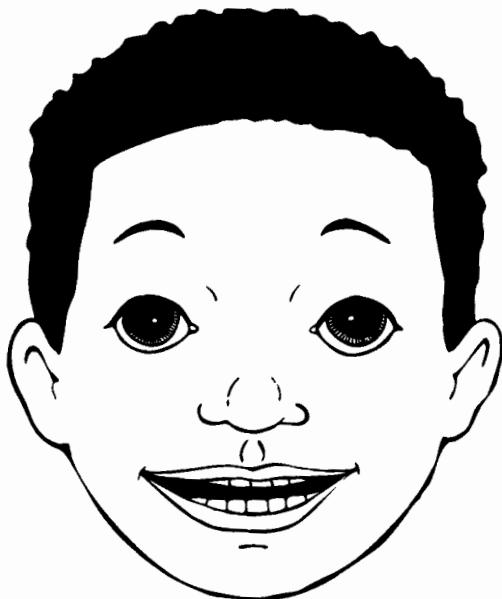


E is for Eye Contact

**HOW
ARE
YOU?**

The text "HOW ARE YOU?" is enclosed in a large oval border.

**S is for Speech
(use nice words)**



T is for Tone of Voice

Dear Parents or Guardians:

Your child has been learning how important it is to show respect to others by being his or her BEST:

B is for Body Posture

E is for Eye Contact

S is for Speech (use nice words)

T is for Tone of Voice

Practice Being Your BEST at Home

In class, we are learning to show respect by having good body posture, making and maintaining eye contact when appropriate, using nice words, and speaking in a pleasant tone of voice. Look for times your child shows respect in these ways and praise him or her for doing so.

We are also learning and practicing ways to use BEST when greeting others and having conversations. If relatives or visitors come to your home, remind your child to Be Your BEST. Practice ways to greet grandparents or other guests.

(At our next meeting, your child may be asked to share ways he or she used Be Your BEST outside of school.)

Teacher _____

Date _____

(Parent/Supervising Adult: Please sign and return this section.)

Be Your BEST

Student _____

Date _____

We tried Be Your BEST: Yes No

If you did, how did it go?

Parent/Supervising Adult _____

WORKSHEET K.5.2**Be Your BEST Home Activity**

Dear Parents or Guardians:

Your child has been learning how important it is to show respect to others by being his or her BEST:

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Be Your BEST

Student _____

Date _____

We tried Be Your BEST: Yes No

If you did, how did it go?

Parent/Supervising Adult _____

WORKSHEET K.5.3**Be Your BEST Grid Example**

	Blaster	Shrinker	BEST
Body Posture			
Eye Contact			
Speech			
Tone of Voice			