



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES

The activities listed below may be applied to any or all of the books in the I AM series.

Sometimes I . . .

Sometimes children need help learning how to appropriately express their feelings. The I AM book series helps children find healthy ways to deal with big emotions. Select one of these powerful texts to introduce this whole-group activity. Through class discussion, create a t-chart that helps students identify how their emotional expressions impact others.

Set up your T-chart using the example below with the titles “Sometimes I . . .” and “Then . . .” Ask students to share different ways they express their emotions, and then ask what they notice about the reactions of the people around them.

Sometimes I . . .	Then . . .
Scream	People are scared.
Laugh	Other people laugh with me.
Cry	My friends hug me.
Yell	People walk away.
Smile	People smile back.

Task Cards

Create a set of ten cool-down task cards that can be kept on a ring for easy access. Each card contains a different strategy that promotes self-regulation. When students feel overwhelmed or like they need to cool down, they can take the ring and select an activity to help them get re-centered. Select favorite strategies shared through the I AM book series, one for each card.

EXAMPLES:

Tree Pose – Lift your right foot and with your knee out, place your foot on the left inner thigh. Press your hands together above your head. Stretch yourself as tall as you can without falling and focus on a spot in the distance. Picture yourself as a tall, strong tree. Hold this pose for the count of thirty and then switch legs. (You can draw a stick figure of each pose on the card).

Belly Breaths – Find a quiet, safe spot and sit down with your legs folded. Close your mouth and breath in through your nose for three seconds as you fill your chest with air all the way down to your belly. Slowly blow the air out through your mouth. Do this ten times, taking long, full, slow breaths.

Social/Emotional Activities (continued)

Empathy Cards

Each I AM book acknowledges the importance of showing empathy and compassion. This may be a vague concept for some children. After reading an I AM book, begin to make a list on an anchor chart of the different ways each character showed empathy and/or compassion in the story. Students will rely on the explicit words as well as the powerful illustrations, which provide rich inferences. Add to this list after each I AM book that is read. This anchor chart will serve as a reference guide for students who need support in showing empathy or compassion. After several ideas have been added to the list, guide students in making their own list to keep in their supply box or backpack. On index cards, students will write *Ways I Can Show Empathy or Compassion*. They will select five actions from the anchor chart and write these on their own card. Teachers can use this card as a tool when students are struggling with relationships by asking the student to review their card and select an action or words that could help them offer empathy or show compassion toward a classmate or friend.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

The I AM book series is a true gift to readers of all ages. While each story is unique, the common threads of kindness, connection, and acceptance are woven through each individual story. Use the following questions to help students reflect on each text in a personal and meaningful way. These can be used for guided discussions, individual student conferences, or as writing journal prompts.

I AM YOGA

QUESTIONS (GRADES K-2)

- Pick your favorite yoga pose from the story. Which pose is it? What did the girl become in that pose? What can you do or become in that same pose?

QUESTIONS (GRADES 3-5)

- What signs did the girl in the story get from her brain and her body that let her know it was time to practice yoga?

I AM PEACE

QUESTIONS (GRADES K-2)

- After reading this book, name one thing you could do every day to be mindful? Draw a picture of yourself doing this mindful practice.

QUESTIONS (GRADES 3-5)

- When you feel yourself getting carried away like the boy in the story, or like your emotions are escalating, how can you find your anchor?

I AM HUMAN

QUESTIONS (GRADES K-2)

- Being human means we can feel all sorts of different feelings. Identify one feeling that the boy in the story had and explain when you have felt that same way.

QUESTIONS (GRADES 3-5)

- This is a book of compassion. Cite one example from the text where the main character showed compassion for another person.

I AM LOVE

QUESTIONS (GRADES K-2)

- Discuss two ways the girl in this story showed love to someone else. Draw a picture of one way you show love to your friends or family.

QUESTIONS (GRADES 3-5)

- This is a book of empathy. Empathy is described as the ability to imagine what someone else might be feeling. Cite two examples from this book that you are able to empathize with.

I AM YOGA ACTIVITIES

THE POWER OF YOGA (Grades K-2)

I Am Yoga encourages children to be mindful through the practice of yoga. They can see the power of transformation through yoga in this beautiful story. After reading or hearing the book, *I Am Yoga*, and having the opportunity to practice yoga in the classroom, tell your students that they are going to share their practice of yoga with their friends in the school.

Each student in your classroom will get a piece of blank paper to write the framed sentence, “I am yoga. I can _____.” Students will fill in the blank using examples that resonated with them from the book or their own imagination. Prompt students by asking them what yoga can help them do or become. Did yoga help you sparkle? Did yoga help you listen? Did yoga help you breathe? After students have completed their sentence, ask them to draw a picture of themselves in their favorite yoga pose. Students can also choose to work with a partner and sketch each other. They can label the pose, too! Display this work in the hallway to help other students learn about the power of yoga.

THE ORIGIN OF YOGA (Grades 3-5)

Considering the benefits of yoga, ask students if there would be any advantages to incorporating five to ten minutes of yoga into each school day. How could the practice of yoga help students become more mindful of their feelings? Would yoga, guided breathing, or meditation help kids who were feeling sad, angry, or depressed? What other practices can we learn from this story that can help students during stressful situations?

Ask each student group to work together to create a proposal for incorporating the practice of mindfulness and/or yoga into the school day at their school. Each proposal should include a persuasive letter that covers why yoga is beneficial and two specific ways it will positively impact the students in the school. The proposal should answer the following questions:

- What short activity can teachers do every day to encourage and promote mindfulness in the classroom?
- Could yoga be incorporated into the school day? How many minutes?
- Where will this take place?
- Who will guide the yoga?

Work with students to honor their proposals and build yoga into the daily classroom routine. Encourage students to share their proposal and letter with school administrators. If students have other positive, healthy practices they would like to see in the classroom instead of or besides yoga, encourage them to follow the above steps for guidance.

I AM PEACE ACTIVITIES

BREATHING BRACELET (Grades K-2)

I Am Peace teaches children how to be mindful and present, even when they feel anxious. To encourage this practice, create a beaded bracelet using a pipe cleaner and ten beads for each student. Begin by teaching students about purposeful breathing—in through the nose and out through the mouth. Students can use their breathing bracelets to focus on this important breathing. Each bead will represent one complete breath—in and out.

Model for students how to sit, close your eyes, and touch the breathing bracelet. Begin with the first bead by slowly moving it from its resting place (as you inhale from your belly) all the way around to the end of the bracelet as you exhale. Repeat with the next bead, until all beads have been moved to the opposite end. In closing, discuss scenarios that may lend themselves to using the breathing bracelet. Help frame student behavior and expectations. Where can you go if you feel you need to center yourself and use your breathing bracelet? How do you let your teacher know? Is this a loud activity or a quiet activity? What should you do when you are breathing with your bracelet?

EMOTIONAL RULER (Grades 3-5)

I Am Peace helps students breathe and find peace even when emotions are running high. Like the book teaches, the Emotional Ruler helps students identify how big or small their problem is and how big or small their reaction to that problem is. This concrete way of looking at a difficult situation or emotional reaction helps offer perspective and insight when a big kid is struggling. Using these tools, model for students how to gauge the size of your problem by thinking aloud.

FOR EXAMPLE:

- “I got a C on a test I studied really hard for.” The size of that problem would be a two or three.
- “I reacted to that grade by tearing up my paper and putting my head on my desk. That reaction is about a five.”
- “When the size of my reaction doesn’t match the size of the problem, I know I need to re-think how I handled the situation and make a better choice.”
- Take time to discuss the range of problems and reactions with students. Share examples of how to classify different-sized problems. For example, a size ten problem would include tragedy, loss, or a dangerous situation.

Over time, continue modeling situations for students that range in size on both scales. When a student is struggling, coach them through using these Rulers to help get themselves regulated and to talk through (or write about) their emotions in a healthy and productive way. Eventually, students will gain proficiency in using the tools themselves. You may even want to have students create Emotional Rulers for characters in some of their favorite books. How do their own emotional reactions compare to those of their favorite characters?

I AM HUMAN ACTIVITIES

SAY YES TO YET (Grades K-2)

I Am Human reminds students that humans make mistakes. Embracing the idea of “yet” helps students nurture their growth mindset and willingness to keep working toward goals without giving up. Create a list on the board of things the class is working on currently. This list should contain specifics that aren’t mastered yet but will be. For example, “We are working on memorizing our addition fact families. We’re not there yet, but we will be by the end of the school year!” Think aloud as you make this list to model the growth mindset for your students.

Then, using some basic materials (sticky notes and blank paper), each student will create their own Say Yes to Yet poster. Place one sticky note in each corner of a larger piece of paper so that there are four total. Ask students to write or draw the word YET in the middle of the paper.

Next, you will guide them in what to write on each sticky note. Starting with the first note, students will write, “I have not learned how to _____ yet” and fill in their own blank. On the next sticky note, students will write “If I do these three things, I will learn how to _____.” Then, they list three specific steps they can take to master the skill they wrote on the first sticky note. The bottom two sticky notes are similar to the sticky notes on the top: “I am working on _____.” and “Doing _____ will help me reach my goal.” This will result in a total of two “yet” statements or two goals that each student is working towards. Students may need help with their list of specifics for reaching their goal. Goal examples could range from memorizing multiplication facts to reading a specific word list or book. Steps towards goals can include practicing flashcards, reading for twenty minutes each night, completing daily homework assignments, etc. Teachers may decide if they want both “yet” statements to be academic, or if one could also be a social/emotional goal, such as counting to ten when feeling frustrated, deep breathing when feeling anxious, showing empathy when a friend is sad or hurt, etc. Showcase posters when finished, discuss student goals and actionables for reaching their goals, and be sure to follow up later in the year to help students see if they achieved their goals!

FAMOUS FAILURES (Grades 3-5)

It can be hard to accept that being human means we make mistakes, especially when students want so badly to be perfect. It’s not uncommon for children to look up to famous athletes or celebrities and think that their lives are perfect. What students don’t realize is that these people are human, too, and have their own fair share of difficult times or failures.

Students will be embarking on a research project that is called Famous Failures. Their goal is to select a famous person (past or present) and research their life, specifically looking for a time when they struggled or faced hardship.

The outline students will follow can be adjusted as necessary for each student and grade level but will consist of the following: background information on the person; their difficulty, failure, or hardship; how they overcame this; where they are now.

Some suggested subjects are below, but if students have their own ideas for people they’d like to research, celebrate those ideas and let them run with them!

- Michael Jordan
- Simone Biles
- JK Rowling
- Oprah Winfrey
- America Ferrara
- Soichiro Honda

The overall goal of this research paper is to help students realize that everyone is human – just like *I Am Human* beautifully highlights. Although someone may look successful, or they may be successful now, they have also had to overcome mistakes, failures, and difficult times. They embraced a growth mindset and didn’t give up; their setbacks made them even stronger! The true celebration in each essay will be how the subject learned from their failure or mistake. As an extension activity, have students reflect on a time in their lives when they turned a mistake or failure into something positive.

I AM LOVE ACTIVITIES

SHARE YOUR LOVE (Grades K-2)

I Am Love teaches compassion through actions and affirmations. Use this beautiful story as a springboard for students to spread their love to others. Begin by writing a short, positive message to each student on a single sticky note. Place these sticky notes on or inside each student's desk before class begins. As students begin to find the notes, let them know that you wrote each one. Share with them how you were intentional in your messages, and how you wanted to share your love with each student. Ask students to reflect on how finding the note and reading the message made them feel. You can even create a list of the words or emotions they might share: happy, surprised, safe, loved, etc.

Tell students that they are going to use that message to continue sharing love and spreading kindness to others. Each student will keep their sticky note with them, and when they see another friend or a family member who is in need of some love or lifting up, they can secretly leave the sticky note for that person.

Each student may choose to tell their chosen person who wrote the message, and why. Perhaps the new owner of the loving message will want to continue with this chain of kindness and will pass it on to someone else who needs it.

How long can this chain of love continue?

ALL THINGS JOURNAL (Grades 3-5)

The *I Am Love* story teaches children the importance of self-love. Embracing one's own identity is where self-love begins. Students will use individual composition books to create a journal about all of the things that make them who they are. Students will use pictures, words, phrases, drawings, magazine clippings, and writings that represent all of the things that make them unique and amazing. Promote self-love and the celebration of identity by building time into a weekly schedule to work in the All Things journal with guided exercises.

FOR EXAMPLE:

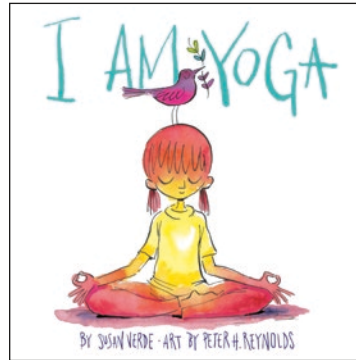
- Make a list of the top ten things you really like about yourself and that make you unique.
- Illustrate a page of your favorites: food, candy, music, movie, book, place, etc.
- Write about your "yet". What is a goal you are working toward or a dream that you have? You aren't there yet, but can you see it?
- Make a list of three things people either don't know about you or would be surprised by.
- Fill a page with single words that describe you. Write or illustrate each word in a different color and/or font style.
- Draw a big circle in the middle of a blank page. This is your crystal ball and you can use it to look twenty years into your future. What do you see? Illustrate or write what you envision for yourself in twenty years.

Through modeling, remind students that these journals can be used at any time. Students do not need to wait for a guided activity to write or create in their All Things journal. Encourage students to cut out words, quotes, or pictures they see that make them feel happy, or that connect to them in some way.

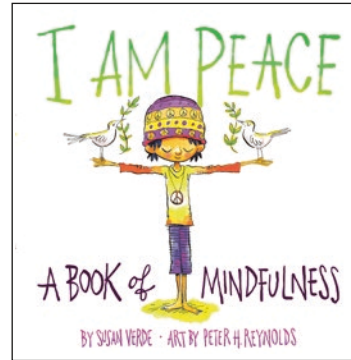
I AM

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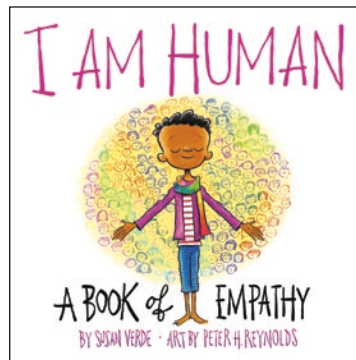
Ages 3-7



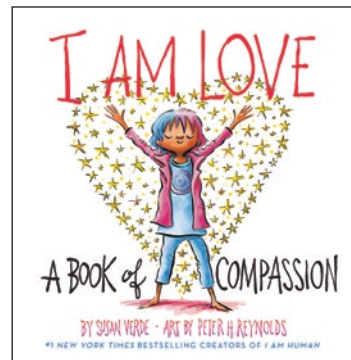
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The I AM books are a celebration of mindfulness, creativity, and human connection.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Susan Verde is the author of the instant #1 *New York Times* bestseller *I Am Human*. Her books include *The Museum, You and Me, I Am Yoga, I Am Peace, My Kicks* and *Rock 'n' Roll Soul*. A certified yoga and wellness instructor, she lives in East Hampton, New York with her family. Find out more at susanverde.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Peter H. Reynolds is the renowned illustrator behind the bestselling *Judy Moody* and *Stink* series, as well as many other award-winning picture books, including *The Dot* and *Ish*. He lives in Dedham, Massachusetts.