



### Empowered Mind & Body

This mini-lesson focuses on being empowered to make healthy decisions. In middle school students will learn how developing strategies to deal with stress and other emotions – as well as being kind to others and themselves – can empower them to make healthier decisions. The key message is that it's healthy to be empowered. It's important to note, the lesson plans may need to be adjusted by the teacher to accommodate the unique attributes and diversity of individual classes and students. All mini-lessons can be implemented in their entirety or added to already existing health education or physical education lessons.

**Lesson Name: Mystery Puzzle Friends**

**Unit Name: Empowered Mind & Body**

**Grade Level: 6-8**

**Lesson Length: 10 minutes (or an on going activity)**

**Before beginning**, teachers should offer accommodations specifically mentioned in a student's IEP to support their ability to participate in the mini-lesson. A sample list of common accommodations and modifications to aid you in selecting appropriate supports for students can be found under "Additional Resources" [here](#).

### Lesson Objective(s):

Students will practice developing positive relationships with peers in their class and other class periods by working together to complete a puzzle.

Students will be able to recognize puzzles as a tool for practicing mindfulness or as a tool for managing emotions/stress.

### Essential Question (related to objective):

How can I use puzzles personally and socially?

### Equipment Needed:

- [How am I feeling? Emoji Rating Scale poster](#) or [How am I feeling? Daily Check-In poster](#)
- Various puzzles ranging from 250 pieces to 1,000 pieces
- Tables for the puzzles
- 1 notebook per puzzle station
- Pens/pencils
- Optional: Large cardboard, exercise/yoga mat, parchment paper or jigsaw puzzle mats

### CASEL Core SEL Competency:

Relationship skills

- Communicating effectively
- Developing positive relationships

### National Standards and Grade-Level Outcomes for K-12 Physical Education:

Standard 4: The physically literate individual exhibits responsible personal and social behavior that respects self and others.

- No specific grade-level outcome is addressed.

### National Health Education Standards & Performance Indicators:

Standard 1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.

- No specific performance indicator is addressed.

### Lesson Overview:

This mini-lesson offers two ways to use puzzles in class to help build positive relationships between students in the same class as well as students in other class periods with mystery puzzle friends. It also provides students with another tool they can use when they need to manage strong feelings. This mini-lesson can be done in health or PE.

## Definitions:

**Inclusion** is being included within a group where everyone has

- value
- sense of belonging
- support

**Diversity** is a range of differences that make us unique (e.g., race, religion, language, gender, age, physical ability, mental ability, nationality, sexual orientation, socio-economic status).

## Activity Progression:

To start the mini-lesson, have students check in using the Emoji Rating Scale or the Daily Check In Poster.

**Example script:** “Before we get started let’s check in with ourselves. It’s healthy for us to take time to see how we are feeling. So, let’s look at this check-in poster and see how we are feeling today, right now in class.

[Give students a few minutes to think about how they are feeling. They can share out if they would like or keep their response to themselves.]

If you would like to share how you are feeling right now you can or if not, that’s okay too! I’m feeling [insert an emoji/heart] because [then a reason you are feeling this way]. We do this check-in daily as a way to be mindful because a lot of times our feelings can affect our actions.

Today we will be working with others so it might be especially helpful to identify how we are feeling.”

Have puzzles set up on various tables around the perimeter of the instructional area. Try to select places where the tables can stay set up for a week or two. Ideally, try to have 6-7 puzzles set up.

### Option 1 – Instant Activity/Warm-Up to an already existing lesson (PE)

Have students walk around the instructional area. Assign students to be either a mango or a pineapple. Mangoes will continue to walk around the instructional area while pineapples will pick a table and start working on a puzzle of their choice. After a few minutes have pizzas switch with the tacos. Allow students to work on the puzzles a little bit every day until the puzzle is complete.

Possible variations:

- Pre-assign students to puzzles and have them work as a team to get the puzzle done as much as possible in class to see how far they can get. This will work better with smaller puzzle sizes of 100- 250 pieces.
- Allow students to work on any puzzle they want, not sticking with the same puzzle each new round.
- Once students pick a puzzle after a few laps, use this as a way to get them into groups according to the puzzle they picked.
- Assign students more foods such as mango, watermelon, papaya, and avocado so there will be fewer people working on puzzles at a time.

### Option 2 – Mystery Puzzle Friends, an ongoing class activity (Health or PE)

Randomly assign students to a puzzle. Each puzzle table should have a composition/spiral notebook and writing utensils. Designate 5-7 minutes each class for students to spend time working on their puzzle. Let them know that other students from other classes will be working on the same puzzle and that they will be Mystery Puzzle Friends.

They can leave notes in the notebook for the other students who are working on the same puzzle to read. It can be helpful hints about the puzzle or “getting to know you” questions. But they can’t ask anyone to reveal their identity or reveal themselves. Encourage students to find common interests (like a show they are currently watching) or to leave kind messages. Tell students this is just a fun way to get to know other people in school.

Mini-Lesson Name: **Mystery Puzzle Friends** Unit Name: **Empowered Mind & Body** Grade Level: **6-8**

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Once the puzzle is complete, students can reveal their identity in the notebook. Have students share what they learned about their classmates in their class and other class periods.

While students are working on their puzzles, encourage them to use this as a time to practice mindfulness. Guide students to take their time and focus on the puzzle, trying not to think of anything but working on the puzzle. Explain to students that puzzles are another tool to practice mindfulness.

After the Mystery Puzzle Friends is over, debrief the activity with students and allow them to reflect.

Possible questions

- Compare working on a puzzle with people you know and people you didn't know.
- What kinds of questions did you ask your Mystery Puzzle Friends?
- What common interests did you find out about your Mystery Puzzle Friends?
- Did you learn something new about your class puzzle partners or yourself?
- Could you see yourself using puzzles as a tool to practice mindfulness?

**Example script:** “By now we should all know who our Mystery Puzzle Friends are. What did you think about working on a puzzle with a group of other students you didn't know? [Allow for responses. Ask other debriefing questions to continue discussion.]

These are all great responses and I love how you all are taking the time to reflect on the activity we did to share thoughtful answers. Puzzles are pretty cool because they are an activity you can do with friends, new and old, or something you can do alone as a self-care tool or when you need some time to yourself.

I added the Mystery Puzzle Friends to this activity because we have been talking about inclusion and diversity. We want to practice being inclusive of people of all differences and abilities. There will always be people different than us and that's a cool thing because we can learn about others and their uniqueness. And while we all may be different there are similarities that can help us connect as classmates and as a community.”

At the end of class have students check in with themselves again using the Emoji Rating Scale or the Daily Check In Poster. If time permits, allow students some time to reflect through participation in a Mindful Minute.

Additional notes:

If students in a class period want to continue to work on their puzzle the next time they're in class, consider putting puzzles on a large piece of cardboard, parchment paper, exercise/yoga mat (then rolling it up) or using jigsaw puzzle mats to store puzzles in between classes. This is a good option if you can't leave puzzles set up for students or need to move them.

Alternatively, teachers can opt to remove the puzzle aspect and focus on the relationship building and have “mystery friends” where students leave notes, messages and questions for an anonymous student in another class period. Assign each student an alias or code name to use when writing to the “mystery friend.”

*Adapted from Kate Cox, 2018 SHAPE America Southwest District Middle School PE Teacher of the Year*

**Example script:** “A Mindful Minute is when you sit quietly with your eyes shut, clear your mind and focus on what you notice around you. We learned that a Mindful Minute can help us when we are feeling big feelings like sadness, being scared, being mad or worried. What do you think a Kindful Minute is? [Allow for students to share their guesses.] Those are some pretty good guesses! A Kindful Minute is when we send loving, kind thoughts to ourselves, to someone we know and eventually to everyone in the world! That sounds like a lot right? I'm going to help you practice a Kindful Minute and for now we will only send loving, kind thoughts to ourselves and people we know.

Why do you think we would want to learn about a Kindful Minute? [Allow student responses.] Well, we are practicing being kinder people. It's easy to be kind to people we know and love, but we want to be kind to everyone. This can even help us during times when we have some big feelings.”

### **Modifications/Differentiation:**

- Provide "getting to know" you questions.
- Have students come up with a list of "getting to know you" questions.
- Use puzzles with larger pieces.
- Provide tasks for students to choose from (e.g., puzzle piece sorter, edge finder)
- Remove the puzzle

### **Checks for Understanding:**

- What are benefits of getting to know people in your school/ community?
- How can puzzles be used personally and socially?