

SEL IN THE WORKPLACE

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Infuse Adult SEL Practices at a Meeting/Group Session

- When in-person: use circle seating without tables, be clear on who plays the role of “circle keeper” or facilitator. Talking piece optional. Decide format of participation (around the circle, partner, popcorn, etc.) for a particular round / segment or the entire meeting. Allow individuals to “pass” but check-in periodically to make sure everyone has a voice.
- Establish group norms by consensus (judgment free, deep listening, present, trust, lean speech, acceptance of non-closure, etc) and keep them visible or refer to them at each gathering.
- Start with welcoming ritual (mindful breathing moment, brief greeting or sharing, setting intentions for the meeting or the project).
- Use brain breaks (movement, energizers, etc.) and apply the 90/20/8 rule to stay engaged – take a break every 90 minutes, content chunked in 20 minute segments, incorporate interaction every 8 minutes.
- Manage efficiency and participation with attention cues based on choice (raised hand, call and response, type in chat, use a reaction icon etc.).
- Close with an optimistic closure (positive reflection) related to the theme of the meeting.

Build Adult SEL Practices into Office Culture

- Allow for quiet time / spaces.
- Take technology breaks.
- Pause 3 seconds before responding or hitting “send” to an email.
- Take the long way to the restroom and greet / compliment a colleague en route.
- Give a colleague a random positive note/text when you catch them doing something right.
- Set a goal to express gratitude explicitly daily.
- Apply problem solving/ restorative circle structures and protocols to resolve conflict.

See pages two and three for signature practices for use as Adult SEL Practices, taken from the CASEL Signature Practices Playbook.





SEL THREE SIGNATURE PRACTICES for **ADULTS** Creating the Conditions for Adult Learning

Social and Emotional Learning for Facilitating Meetings and Professional Learning Engagements

Highly engaging, effective and purposeful meetings and professional learning experiences are created using three key social and emotional learning (SEL) practices:

WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITIES • Setting the Tone

ENGAGING STRATEGIES • Sense Making, Transitions, Brain Breaks

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE • Reflections and Looking Forward

Even if you are using these three SEL practices for the first time, they can be effective. When they are carefully chosen, effectively facilitated, and thoughtfully debriefed, they create a solid foundation of safety, consistency and joy in adult learning environments. These signature practices create conditions for growth and learning across all five SEL competencies while using culturally responsive teaching strategies. They also build upon and are aligned with the principles of adult learning, Restorative Justice (RJ), Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS), and trauma-informed practices.

Establishing these three practices is beneficial for every adult participant, and is absolutely essential for some:

- *Adults who walk into our meetings after a day, a week or a lifetime of difficult situations need calming, centering and focusing routines in order to participate fully.*
- *Humans are internally soothed by sameness – while paradoxically our brains need freshness too. It's balancing novelty within routines and rituals that allows us to move with confidence through our work days while navigating multiple competing demands on time, energy and attention. These routines provide a solid foundation for our most overextended participants to be engaged as learners and contributors.*
- *In order for the learning to be purposeful and applicable, adults need direct, concrete experiences to use what they have learned, and they need structures that promote self-direction.*
- *Productivity and creative thinking result only when our basic human needs have been met and our neocortex is engaged and available.*



THREE SIGNATURE SEL PRACTICES FOR ADULTS*

Creating the Conditions for Adult Learning

WELCOMING INCLUSION ACTIVITIES

(1-9 minutes)

Adults bring their experience; allow them to use it.

Rituals or routine openings establish safety and predictability, support contribution by all voices, set norms for respectful listening, and allow people to connect with one another creating a sense of belonging. To be successful these activities must be: carefully chosen, connected to the work of the day, engagingly facilitated, and thoughtfully debriefed.

EXAMPLES

- **Community Building:** Using an open-ended question (e.g., from SEL Reflection cards), build community in a quick and lively way. Each participant shares their response with a partner. After sharing, ask for 2-3 comments from the whole group.
- **Check-In:** Begin with a sentence starter:
 - "A success I recently had ____."
 - "One thing that's new ____."
 - "One norm I will uphold today is ____."

ENGAGING STRATEGIES (1-15 minutes)

Sense Making, Transitions, Brain Breaks

Adults want to make their own meaning, connect to work and colleagues, and have fun.

Engaging practices are brain compatible strategies that can foster: relationships, cultural humility and responsiveness, empowerment, and collaboration. They intentionally build adult SEL skills. These practices can also be opportunities for brain breaks that provide a space for integrating new information into long-term memory. (Otherwise it is soon forgotten.)

EXAMPLES

- **Think Time:** 30-90 seconds of silent think time before speaking, sharing.
- **Turn To Your Partner:** Sharing and listening to make sense of new input,
- **Think-Ink-Pair-Share:** Generating ideas and deepening understanding through reflection, writing, speaking and listening.
- **Brain Break - Stand and Stretch:** Refresh and reset the brain.
- **Opportunities for Interaction:** Cultivate a variety of practices that involve interactions in partnerships, triads, small groups and as a whole group.

OPTIMISTIC CLOSURE (3-5 minutes)

Reflections and Looking Forward

Adult learning is connected to behavior changes.

End each meeting or professional learning by having participants reflect on, then name, something that helps them leave on an optimistic note. This provides intentional closure, opens space for expressing disequilibrium, reinforces the topic, and creates momentum towards taking action.

EXAMPLES OF REFLECTIVE QUESTIONS

- "What are my next steps?"
- "When is my next influencing conversation about this and with whom?"
- "Who do I want to connect with about this topic?"
- "A word or phrase that reflects how I feel about moving forward with this..."
- "Offer an appreciation for someone in the room..."
- "I'm eager to learn more about ____."