

# Coping with Crisis

Middle School

Health and Wellness, Social and Emotional Learning

5 Lessons, 1 Project

## Introduction

We often use the word **crisis** to describe an event that creates emotional stress, trauma, difficulty, instability, and/or danger. A person's response to a **crisis** is influenced by many personal and situational factors, which may determine the degree of psychological and emotional impact the **crisis** has on those involved. Students may present a wide array of emotional, social, cognitive, and psychological reactions after experiencing or witnessing natural disasters, accidents, cyberbullying, neglect, or acts of violence. In the aftermath of a **crisis** children may demonstrate one or more common responses to trauma including detachment, depression, guilt, anger, risky behavior, disillusionment, fatigue, headaches, or other physical ailments.

Regardless of our age, traumatic events shake our sense of safety and can fuel chronic anxiety and recurring thoughts that the event may happen again. Resulting stress in the aftermath of a **crisis** impacts physical health, thoughts, feelings, and behavior. Children are typically not as equipped as adults to process traumatic events independently and are highly influenced by the reaction of the adults around them. Adults supporting students in times of crisis can mitigate the intensity of a student's response by managing their own emotions and thoughts, by responding proactively to protect students from actual dangers that may exist while giving clear directions, and by avoiding intense emotional displays that might increase the likelihood of a panic response from others.

In the aftermath of a **crisis**, caring adults can provide meaningful support and even impact the duration and intensity of a student's response through active listening. Active, empathetic listening where listeners non-verbally and verbally communicate understanding and concern for the student's experience reduces feelings of isolation and counters the withdrawal response. In active listening, adults build trust and provide non-judgmental feedback to help students acknowledge and label their feelings. Active listening and then paraphrasing student language demonstrates that the listener is connecting to the student's experience. Allowing for times of silence can also be a valuable strategy for increasing student awareness of their own thoughts and feelings and allowing space for students to continue talking about their experience.

Many who experience a **crisis** may recover significantly within a few weeks after the traumatic event, especially if they are supported by a caring circle of family and friends, given the opportunity to express their feelings, and are protected from other intense stressors immediately following the **crisis**. However, it is important to remember that intense grief and emotional distress following a **crisis** may overload our natural coping mechanisms, and, in many cases, may require professional, clinical support or intensive interventions to support long-term recovery. A formal school process for identifying and referring students who need additional support following trauma is key to ensuring all students get the help they need. As schools prepare and plan for this unit, it is recommended that

school leaders ensure that all staff members have adequate training to recognize the warning signs of high risk and have access to, and clearly understand, the district and school student referral process and policies.

During this unit, students will begin by differentiating between a **crisis**, an **emergency**, and a **challenging time**. They will then write their own definitions of the word 'resilient' and articulate why **resilience** is important. They will explore healthy ways to process the feelings that crises bring up and will learn about how applying the lens of gratitude to tough times can help to build **resilience**. In Lesson 5, they will use a game from [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) to learn about what to do in the face of different natural disasters. Finally, they will have two options for their final project: a) working with their parents/caregivers to build an **emergency** kit and family communication plan, or b) developing a tip sheet called "How to Be Resilient During a **Crisis**."

An event that is universally experienced is the death of a loved one. According to the National **Emergency** Response and **Crisis** Management Technical Assistance Center, most children will experience the death of a relative or friend before high school graduation, and five percent of young people will experience the death of a parent by sixteen.<sup>1</sup> These losses and other difficult life events can have a dramatic impact on the direction of a child's life by having a significant and long-term influence on a student's school performance, behavior, social and emotional wellness, physical health, and relationships. Educators have the opportunity to mitigate the negative effects of students' potentially traumatic experiences, and, through caring and personalized support, can contribute to a student's recovery process.

Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, Huston and DiPietro found that most students perceived even the smallest effort by their professors as beneficial to their recovery.<sup>2</sup> The only response that engendered consistently negative feedback from students was when teachers barely acknowledged the occurrence of the event and urged the class to move on without offering strategies for coping or opportunities for discussion. Informed by the research and best practices developed by organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Center for PTSD, and the American Counseling Association (links to resources are found on the following page), teachers can positively impact student's recovery from a crisis.

<sup>1</sup>U.S. Department of Education's Emergency Response and Crisis Management Technical Assistance Center (2007). Coping with the death of a student or staff member. *Emergency Response and Crisis Management Express*, 3(2), 1-12.

<sup>2</sup>Huston, T. A. & DiPietro, M. (2007). In the eye of the storm: Students' perceptions of helpful faculty actions following a collective tragedy. *To Improve the Academy: Resources for Faculty, Instructional, and Organizational Development*, 25, 207-224.

## Recommendations for Starting Strong

### 1. Establish a Safe Space

Because discussions about crisis and trauma may serve as emotional triggers for some of your students, it is recommended that you proactively take the following steps to make your classroom a comfortable sharing space:

- Ensure that a high level of familiarity and trust is already established in your Advocacy class. Consider introducing other unit topics before teaching **Coping with Crisis**.
- Inform guidance counselors, school psychologists, and parents/guardians that you will be engaging students in this unit topic. Invite the participation of counselors and psychologists in the lessons.
- Be sensitive to ethnic, racial, and cultural differences when engaging your students in specific case studies.
- Collaboratively draft a set of ground rules or norms with your students to define appropriate behavior expectations and communication protocols. (Note: this activity is included in the first lesson.)
- Allow students time to reflect and process after each lesson. (Note: time for this is offered through reflection questions included after each lesson.)
- Be aware that some students may find certain conversations or activities in this unit to be difficult or uncomfortable. Be prepared to support those students with an alternative related task, such as journaling, practicing mindfulness, creating art, playing or listening to music, writing a private letter. Consider making arrangements with another teacher ahead of time in case working in a different classroom is necessary for any student during specific components of this Unit.

### 2. Be a role model.

There are several places in this unit where you are invited and encouraged to do and share the same activities your students are doing. This includes coming up with your own definition of **resilience** and articulating why you believe **resilience** is important, naming emotions you've experienced during tough times and describing healthy activities you did to process your emotions, and applying the lens of **gratitude** to difficult experiences you've had. While it may feel vulnerable to share aspects of your personal life with your students, seeing their teacher model healthy coping strategies will go a long way in encouraging your students take these lessons to heart.

## Additional Resources

Below are additional resources that teachers can use to expand their understanding of the unit topic.

- "Psychological First Aid Manual - Appendix E: Handouts"  
[http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/manuals/manual-pdf/pfa/PFA\\_Appx\\_E\\_handouts.pdf](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/manuals/manual-pdf/pfa/PFA_Appx_E_handouts.pdf)
- "Skills for Psychological Recovery: Field Operations Guide"  
[http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/manuals/manual-pdf/SPR\\_Manual.pdf](http://www.ptsd.va.gov/professional/manuals/manual-pdf/SPR_Manual.pdf)
- "Trauma and Disaster Mental Health"  
<https://www.counseling.org/knowledge-center/trauma-disaster>
- "In the Eye of the Storm: Students' Perceptions of Helpful Faculty Actions Following a Collective Tragedy"  
[https://podnetwork.org/content/uploads/In\\_the\\_Eye.pdf](https://podnetwork.org/content/uploads/In_the_Eye.pdf)
- "Helping Children and Adolescents Cope with Violence and Disasters: What Parents Can Do"  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/helping-children-and-adolescents-cope-with-violence-and-disasters-parents-trifold/index.shtml#pub1>
- "Teaching in Times of **Crisis**"  
<https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/guides-sub-pages/crisis/>
- Book: The Imagine Project: Empowering Kids to Rise Above Drama, Trauma, and Stress  
<https://www.amazon.com/Imagine-Project-Empowering-Trauma-Stress/dp/0988995115/>

## Lesson 1: What is a Crisis?

**Lesson Focus:** Students will learn to differentiate between a **crisis**, a **challenging time**, and an **emergency**. They will reflect on emergencies, crises, and/or challenging times they've experienced in their life or those they anticipate experiencing in the future. Finally, they will discuss the concept of **resilience** and write a definition of it in their own words.

### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-awareness:** specifically, *recognizing strengths and self-efficacy*
- **Responsible decision-making:** specifically, *identifying problems and reflecting*

### Learning Standards

Students will:

- Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem (ASCA B-SMS 7)
- Demonstrate ability to manage transitions and ability to adapt to changing situations and responsibilities (ASCA B-SMS 10)

### Essential Questions

- How does resilience help us face crises, emergencies, and/or challenging times?

### Key VOCABULARY TERMS for Students

- **emergency:** a situation that poses an immediate risk and which requires urgent attention
- **crisis:** a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger
- **a challenging time:** an extended period of personal, community, or societal difficulty
- **resilience:** The ability to recover, adapt, and bounce back from adversity, crisis, or trauma.

### Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand the similarities and differences between a **crisis**, an **emergency**, and a **challenging time**
- Reflect on crises, emergencies, and/or challenging times they have experienced or anticipate that they may experience in their lifetime
- Create their own definition of **resilience** and explain why it's important

## Materials

- Enough whiteboard markers for each student
- A poster or piece of chart paper ready to be taped to the whiteboard
- Projector or interactive whiteboard (to play video)
- Speakers (if needed so students can adequately hear video)

## Time Frame

Preparation: 10 minutes

Instruction: 30 minutes

## Lesson Preparation (10 minutes)

1. Obtain enough whiteboard markers for every student.
2. Obtain a posterboard or piece of chart paper.
3. Make double-sided copies of “Emergencies, Crises, and Challenging Times” worksheet (one per student).  
*Note: students will only complete the front side of the worksheet during this lesson. They will complete the back during the next lesson.*
4. Write the definitions of emergency, crisis, and a challenging time on the board.
5. Preview [What Does Resilience Mean to Young People?](#) video (3:07) and have it ready to play.



### **Lesson Activator** (10 minutes)

**[Suggested Script]:** “Today we’re starting a new unit on **Coping with Crisis**. This unit will cover potentially traumatic experiences that can be emotionally stressful to talk about, especially for those who have experienced similar events or who are currently recovering from a recent **crisis**. In order to increase our collective safety and to allow us to speak honestly about difficult situations, our first step is to create a list of ground rules to ensure everyone is treating each other with kindness, respect, and understanding.”

Give students a few minutes to write at least two original ground rules anywhere on the whiteboard (e.g., listen respectfully to one another, don’t judge other’s stories or reactions, conversations that happen in the classroom stay in the classroom).

Ask each student to vote on three ground rules that he or she finds most appropriate. Have students write one tick mark next to each of their three favorite suggestions.

As two students are calculating and circling the five highest-rated suggestions, tape a poster or piece of chart paper on the whiteboard.

Ask a volunteer with good handwriting to record each elected guideline on the chart paper or poster. After the top-rated guidelines are recorded, erase the whiteboard. Have a student tape the list somewhere visible within the room. Emphasize that the expectation is that students will adhere to these ground rules throughout the unit. Ask for a show of hands that this is something they can agree to.

### **Lesson Procedure** (20 minutes)

#### **1. Direct. [Suggested Script]:**

“Let’s start by defining and distinguishing between three different words: **emergency**, **crisis**, and a **challenging time**.” Point to the definitions on the board. “Can I have a volunteer read the definition of **‘emergency’** for the class?” Choose a student volunteer.

#### **2. Ask the class to name examples of emergencies.**

Write their suggestions on the board. Examples may include: medical emergencies (heart attack, stroke, diabetic shock, life-threatening allergic reactions, injuries from an accident, etc.), mental-health emergencies (harm to self or others, or immediate risk of it), fires, terrorist attack, mass shooting.

#### **3. Direct. [Suggested Script]:**

“Now, let’s talk about the definition of a crisis. Can I have a volunteer read the definition for us?” Choose a student volunteer.

**4. Ask the class to name examples of crises.**

Write their suggestions on the board. Examples may include: pandemics, the aftermath of natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, fires, tornadoes, and earthquakes, the aftermath of man-made disasters such as terrorist attacks or mass shootings, financial downturns/recessions, etc. Crises can also occur at the personal/family level, such as a period when someone is very sick, a death, a job loss, an eviction, a time when violence (or the threat of it) is ever-present, etc.

**5. Direct. [Suggested Script]:**

"Finally, let's talk about the definition of a challenging time. Can I have a volunteer read the definition for us?"  
Choose a student volunteer.

**6. Ask the class to name examples of challenging times.**

Write their suggestions on the board. Examples may include: you or someone close to you struggling with challenges like drug/alcohol abuse, eating disorders, depression, etc., facing health challenges like cancer, intensely demanding periods at work or school, a breakup/divorce, financial struggles, etc. Emergencies and crises are challenging times, but challenging times also refer to everyday-life struggles.

**7. Ask the class:**

"Why is it useful to understand the differences between these three words?" Discuss the following:

- It's useful to know that emergencies require immediate action, while crises and challenging times require ongoing management.
- It's useful to know that crises and challenging times have much in common; however, crises usually have more to do with extraordinary circumstances, whereas challenging times also include the ups and downs of regular life.
- Despite the differences between these three terms, they are closely interconnected and they overlap significantly.

**8. Ask the class:**

"Do you think that it's a normal part of life to face emergencies, crises, and challenging times?" *Listen to their responses.*

**9. Explain. [Suggested Script]:**

"If we haven't already, we all can expect to face tough times in our lifetime. It comes with being human. This isn't meant to provoke anxiety or to promote a doom-and-gloom outlook. Instead, discussing this allows us to prepare ourselves so that when challenging times show up, we are in a better position to take action and/or take care of ourselves. With that in mind, you're now going to spend a few minutes writing about emergencies/crises/challenging times you have faced or may face in your lifetime. Before you start, however, please keep in mind that if you do experience feelings of anxiety during this activity, that's normal and ok. Take deep breaths, be kind to yourself, and remember that this unit will ultimately give you tools to help you reduce anxiety during emergencies/crises/challenging times."



**10. Hand out Emergencies, Crises, and Challenging Times worksheet.**

Give students 3-4 minutes to complete the first two questions.

**11. Direct. [Suggested Script]:**

"The good news amidst all of this focus on tough times is the fact that humans have a great capacity for **resilience**. Write '**resilience**' on the board. Can anyone tell me what this word means? Listen to answers, then write this definition: The ability to recover, adapt, and bounce back from adversity, **crisis**, or trauma.

**12. Explain. [Suggested Script]:**

"Over the course of our existence, humans have bounced back from all kinds of hard times. Just think about all that you've learned in history class about tough times humans have been through - wars, widespread disease, natural disasters, economic hardship like the Great Depression, and more. None of that was easy, and yet: we're still here. And on a personal level, you, your family, and your friends have probably been through and bounced back from hard times as well. The fact that you are here is a testament to your resilience."

**13. Tell students that they are now going to watch a short video about resilience. [Play, What Does Resilience Mean to Young People?](#) (3:07)**

**14. Instruct students to answer questions 3 and 4 on their worksheets. Tell students that they will do the back of the worksheets next class.**

**15. If time, ask for student volunteers to share their answers. Collect worksheets at end of class.**

**Assessment**

- Review worksheets for effort and understanding.

**Reflection Questions**

- What do I know about my own capacity for **resilience**?
- What social-emotional skills are helpful when facing emergencies, crises, and/or challenging times?

### Variations/Extensions

- After step 10 in Lesson Procedure, have a class discussion about emergencies, crises, and/or challenging times that students listed as things they may experience in their lifetime.
- Consider sharing your own definition of **resilience** and why you think it's important.
- Consider sharing a story of an **emergency, crisis**, or challenging time you've been through and how **resilience** helped you through.

*“When written in Chinese, the word ‘crisis’ is composed of two characters. One represents danger and the other represents opportunity.”*  
- John F. Kennedy

## Emergencies, Crises, and Challenging Times

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Make a list of emergencies, crises, and challenging times you've faced in your life so far.
2. Make a list of emergencies, crises, and challenging times you may experience in your lifetime.
3. In your own words, how would you describe **resilience**?
4. In your own words, why do you think **resilience** is important?

*When I went through...*

*OR... I imagine that if I go through...*

I felt/I imagine I would feel. . .	Healthy activities I could do to process this emotion are. . .
	1.  2.  3.
	1.  2.  3.
	1.  2.  3.

## Lesson 2: It's OK to not be OK

**Lesson Focus:** Students will learn that is natural and healthy to be upset during a crisis. They will explore healthy ways to express their sadness, anger, or fear.

### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-awareness:** specifically, *identifying emotions*
- **Self-management:** specifically, *stress management*
- **Responsible decision-making:** specifically, *analyzing solutions and reflecting*

### Learning Standards

Students will:

- Demonstrate creativity (ASCA B-LS 2)
- Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem (ASCA B-SMS 7)
- Demonstrate ability to manage transitions and ability to adapt to changing situations and responsibilities (ASCA B-SMS 10)

### Essential Questions

- What are healthy ways for me to process my emotions during a crisis?

### Key VOCABULARY TERMS for Students

- None

### Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Understand that it's natural and healthy to be upset during a crisis.
- Learn that naming and processing emotions in a healthy way builds resilience.
- Reflect on healthy coping strategies that work specifically for them.

### Materials

- Notecards (9 per student)
- Colored pencils or markers
- Students' Emergencies, Crises, and Challenging Times worksheets from the previous lesson

## Time Frame

*Preparation: 5 minutes*

*Instruction: 30 minutes*

### Lesson Preparation (5 minutes)

1. Complete your own version of the back side of the Emergences, Crises, and Challenging Times worksheet. Use sample worksheet as a guide if needed.
2. If you think your students may need help coming up with feelings words, download the *List of Core Emotions* from Brené Brown's downloads page and have it ready to project on the board during Step 6 of Lesson Procedure.

### Lesson Activator (3 minutes)

**[Suggested Script]:** "In our last class we learned about emergencies, crises, and challenging times. We also learned about **resilience** and wrote down our own personal definitions of **resilience**. Who remembers how they defined **resilience** and is willing to share with the class?" Choose 1-2 student volunteers to share. "We also reflected on why **resilience** is important. Can I have a volunteer or two to share why they think **resilience** is important?" Choose 1-2 student volunteers to share.

**[Suggested Script]:** "Now that we know what **resilience** is and why it's important, we're going to turn our attention to the 'how'. It's one thing to toss around a word like **resilience**, and it's another thing to actually know what, specifically, we can do to help us be more resilient. We'll explore this over the next few lessons."

### Lesson Procedure (27 minutes)

#### 1. Ask the class:

"Which way of responding do you think builds more **resilience** when you're facing a **crisis**: a) pretending that everything is ok and you're not affected by it, or b) allowing yourself to feel the feelings that come up (which often will include fear, anger, and/or sadness) and finding healthy ways to express your feelings?" Ask the class to raise their hands to vote for either Option A or Option B.

#### 2. [Suggested Script]:

"Thank you for your votes. While it's understandable that you may think that pretending you're not affected by a **crisis** builds **resilience**, research shows that Option B - allowing yourself to feel and express your feelings - is actually more helpful if we want to build **resilience**. Some of us may have been told that having feelings - especially strong "negative" feelings like sadness, anger, or fear - is bad. However, psychologists and neurobiologists tell us that having feelings across the emotional spectrum is an inherent and natural part of being human. It's wired into our biological makeup. In the context of coping with a **crisis**, the key point here is that it's normal and healthy to feel upset when we're going through a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger."

3. **Hand back the Emergencies, Crises, and Challenging Times worksheets that they completed last class.**

4. **[Suggested Script]:**

"During our last class you listed emergencies, crises, and challenging times you've been through in your life so far, or that you anticipate that you may go through at some point in your lifetime. Today you will build on this work by remembering or imagining the feelings that these situations bring up. Then, you'll brainstorm healthy ways to express these feelings."

5. **Show students your own previously-completed worksheet.**

Briefly explain the situation you were in, and walk them through the feelings you experienced and the healthy activities you did or could have done to process your emotions.

6. **Instruct students to turn to the back side of their worksheets.**

Give them 1-2 minutes to fill out the top question (When I went through...OR...I imagine that if I go through...) and the first column (I felt/I imagine I would feel...). Note: if you know or sense that students do not have a large feelings vocabulary (or if they begin this activity and are having trouble), consider projecting this list of core emotions from Dr. Brené Brown on the board to help them articulate those feelings.

7. **Break students into pairs or groups of three.**

Give them 5 minutes to take turns sharing what they wrote for the top question and in the feelings column, and then have them work together to brainstorm things each student can put in the third column (Healthy activities I could do to process this emotion are...). Encourage students to write down activities specific to them. If playing basketball or sewing or cooking is something that soothes them when they're feeling scared, they should put it on the list, even if that activity wouldn't have the same effect on someone else.

8. **As students are working in pairs, hand out nine notecards per student and colored pencils/markers.**

As you are doing this, monitor their discussions, offering suggestions or feedback when needed.

9. **Bring class back together.**

10. **[Suggested Script]:**

"Now that you've brainstormed healthy ways to process your emotions during a **crisis**, you're going to make a set of '**Coping with Crisis**' cards that you can use in the future when you need them. The cards will be a reminder of the tools you have in your own personal "**Coping with Crisis**" toolkit. Here's what you'll do:

**11. Check for understanding.**

Explain that these cards are meant to be visually appealing. It's ok if they do not think they are artistically talented; they are welcome to get creative with strategies like drawing emoji faces or using different colors to express different emotions. If they struggle to draw the activity on the back of the card, encourage them to keep it simple, like drawing just a journal instead of a person journaling, or just a yoga mat instead of a person practicing yoga.

**12. Give students 15 minutes to work on their cards.**

If you run out of class time, students can finish the cards as homework.

**13. If time, invite student volunteers to show their cards to the class.**

Collect cards at the end of class.

**Assessment**

- Review cards for effort and understanding.

**Reflection Questions**

- How does it feel to have a plan for different ways to process my feelings in a healthy way?





## Sample Worksheet

*When I went through...*

*OR... I imagine that if I go through...*

*the Coronavirus Pandemic*

I felt/I imagine I would feel...	Healthy activities I could do to process this emotion are...
<b>Sad</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write in my journal.</li> <li>2. Allow myself to cry.</li> <li>3. Draw or paint a picture that expresses my sadness.</li> </ol>
<b>Anxious</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Take deep breaths and say calming words to myself.</li> <li>2. Yoga.</li> <li>3. Clean.</li> </ol>
<b>Lonely</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Cuddle with my dog.</li> <li>2. Call a friend.</li> <li>3. Read a familiar book or watch a familiar movie.</li> </ol>

## Lesson 3: Processing Your Emotions

**Lesson Focus:** Students will watch a video of a community in **crisis** and will put themselves in the shoes of the people in the video. They will experience two different healthy activities meant to help them process their emotions and will evaluate whether they would like to add one or both of these activities to their personal “Coping with Crisis” toolkits.

### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-awareness:** specifically, *identifying emotions*
- **Self-management:** specifically, *stress management*
- **Social awareness:** specifically, *perspective-taking and empathy*
- **Responsible decision-making:** specifically, *evaluating and reflecting*

### Learning Standards

Students will:

- Demonstrate ability to work independently (ASCA B-SMS 3)
- Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem (ASCA B-SMS 7)
- Demonstrate empathy (ASCA B-SS 4)

### Essential Questions

- What potentially new activities can I add to my personal “Coping with Crisis” toolkit?

### Key VOCABULARY TERMS for Students

- None

### Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Experience two different activities that can be useful for processing emotions in a healthy way.
- Evaluate how they’re feeling before and after experiencing different activities to process their emotions.



## Materials

- Projector or interactive whiteboard (to play videos)
- Speakers (if needed to adequately hear videos)

## Time Frame

*Preparation: 10 minutes*

*Instruction: 30 minutes*

## Lesson Preparation (10 minutes)

1. Review [The Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina](#) video and have it ready to play.
2. Review the [mindfulness meditation video](#) and set it at 0:26, ready to play.

## Lesson Activator (8 minutes)

**[Suggested Script]:** "During our last lesson, we talked about healthy ways to process the feelings that we may experience during a **crisis**. Today, we're going to take it to another level by watching a video about a real-life **crisis** and imagining that we're in the shoes of the people in the video. Then, we'll explore and name the emotions that come up and will do several different activities to help us process them."

**[Suggested Script]:** "Raise your hand if you've heard of Hurricane Katrina." Wait for students to raise their hands. "Hurricane Katrina was a very powerful hurricane that hit the city of New Orleans and surrounding areas in August 2005. It completely devastated the city, as you'll see in a moment. We're now going to watch a 5-minute video about the storm and its aftermath. As you watch, I'd like you to imagine that you are one of the people you see in the video, experiencing what they experienced in the aftermath of the hurricane. Pay attention to the feelings that this brings up." Play [The Aftermath of Hurricane Katrina](#) (5:42).

## Lesson Procedure (22 minutes)

### 1. Instruct students to take out their journals or a piece of paper.

Ask them to write down three words that describe how they're feeling after watching the video and imagining that they were one of the people having that experience. After each feelings word, ask them to write down how intensely they would say they're experiencing that feeling, on a scale of 1-10 (1 = feeling it hardly at all, 5 = feeling it a moderate amount, 10 = feeling it the maximum amount I could possibly feel it).

For example, they may write:

Sad - 7

Confused - 5

Scared - 8

**2. Set a timer for 5 minutes and ask students to either free-write or free-draw in a stream-of-consciousness style (e.g. - writing/drawing continuously for the allotted time, capturing whatever comes up for them).**

This activity should be done without any talking. Their writing/drawing should expand upon the question “How do you feel upon watching this video?” They are welcome to take their writing/drawing in any direction that arises naturally for them. If they get stuck, they can use the sub-questions below as prompts. These questions are simply fodder if they get stuck; they are not a requirement.

- As you pay attention to what you’re feeling, how are you experiencing your feelings in your body?
- What part of the video stood out to you the most? Why?
- What questions do you have after watching the video?

**3. Consider playing calming music while they work.**

**4. Bring the class back together.**

**5. [Suggested Script]:**

“Whether you realize it or not, what you just did – free-writing/free-drawing about your feelings in response to a **crisis** – can be a really helpful way to process your emotions and build **resilience**. Right after the video ended, you wrote down three words that described how you were feeling in that moment. Let’s take a moment to see how you’re feeling now, five minutes later, after taking some time to free-write/free-draw. Please check in with yourself and then write down three words that describe how you’re feeling right now, as well as how intensely you’re experiencing these feelings on a scale of 1-10. You may notice that you’re experiencing the same feelings at the same intensity, or the same feelings at a greater or lesser intensity. Alternately, you may notice that you’re experiencing different feelings now. There’s no right or wrong; just notice what you’re feeling and write it down.”

**6. Tell students that they’re now going to move into another activity that can be helpful for processing emotions - a mindfulness meditation.**

Invite them to put down their pencils and relax. They can do this activity with their eyes open or closed.

**7. Play [this video](#). Start at 0:26 and stop at 4:54.**

**8. Invite students to once again write down three words that describe how they’re feeling right now and how intensely they are feeling these feelings on a 1-10 scale.**

As before, note that there’s no right or wrong answer. The point is to check in with our emotions and notice what methods of processing them are most helpful to each of us as individuals.

9. Have students sit in a circle. Go around the room and invite students to share their answers to the reflection questions.

- What feelings did you experience when you watched the video and imagined you were one of the people in it?
- What impact did the free-writing/free-drawing and/or mindfulness activity have on your emotions?
- Do you think you would add free-writing/free-drawing and/or the type of mindfulness activity we did today to your personal **Coping with Crisis** toolkit?

#### Assessment

- Collect students' papers. Review their free-writing/free-drawing and the three different times they wrote down what they were feeling.

#### Reflection Questions

- What feelings did you experience when you watched the video and imagined you were one of the people in it?
- What impact did the free-writing/free-drawing and/or mindfulness activity have on your emotions?
- Do you think you would add free-writing/free-drawing and/or the type of mindfulness activity we did today to your personal **Coping with Crisis** toolkit?

#### Variations or Extensions

- If you have more time, you can have students share their experiences with the class at several points throughout this lesson: 1) They can share their feelings right after watching the video, 2) They can share the impact that free-writing/free-drawing had on how they were feeling, and/or 3) They can share the impact that the mindfulness activity had on how they were feeling.
- If your students are currently experiencing or recently experienced a collective **crisis** (such as a pandemic or natural disaster), consider skipping the Katrina video and instead spending the first few minutes discussing the current **crisis**, then moving into the activities.
- If students think that free-writing/free-drawing and/or the mindfulness meditation would be something they would add to their "**Coping with Crisis**" toolkits, give them extra notecards so that they can make cards for those activities.

*"Be strong enough to stand alone, smart enough to know when you need help, and brave enough to ask for it."  
- Unknown*

## Lesson 4: Focusing on Gratitude

**Lesson Focus:** Students will learn that cultivating **gratitude** builds **resilience** and is a helpful healing tool during and after times of **crisis**. They will listen to a poem about **gratitude** and then will reflect on ways they are grateful for a **crisis** they have experienced.

### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-awareness:** specifically, *recognizing strengths and self-confidence*.
- **Self-management:** specifically, *stress management*
- **Social awareness:** specifically, *perspective-taking*
- **Responsible decision-making:** specifically, *analyzing situations and reflecting*

### Learning Standards

Students will:

- Demonstrate effective coping skills when faced with a problem (ASCA B-SMS 7)
- Demonstrate ability to manage transitions and ability to adapt to changing situations and responsibilities (ASCA B-SMS 10)

### Essential Question

- How does **gratitude** build **resilience**?

### Key VOCABULARY TERMS for Students

- **gratitude:** the quality of being thankful

### Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Reflect on ways they are grateful for a **crisis** they have experienced.
- Understand how **gratitude** can help to build **resilience**.

### Materials

- Projector or interactive whiteboard (if you'd like to project the poem on the board so that students can read along when they listen to the recording).
- Speakers (if needed to adequately hear poem).
- Copies of **Gratitude During Times of Crisis** worksheet.

## Time Frame

*Preparation: 15-20 minutes*

*Instruction: 30 minutes*

## Lesson Preparation (15-20 minutes)

1. Preview the poem ["Three Gratuities."](#)
2. Make copies of Gratitude During Times of Crisis worksheet (one per student).
3. Complete your own Gratitude During Times of Crisis worksheet.

## Lesson Activator (3 minutes)

**[Suggested Script]:** "During this unit you've been developing your own personal **"Coping with Crisis"** toolkit focused on healthy activities to help you process your emotions during a **crisis**. It's my hope that you will remember and use this toolkit when you need it, because being able to process emotions is an important part of being resilient. Today, we're going to focus on another practice that has been shown to be helpful for the development of **resilience**: the practice of **gratitude**."

**[Suggested Script]:** "To begin, we're going to listen to a poem called ["Three Gratuities"](#) (1:39). This was written by a poet named Carrie Newcomer and this is a recording of her reading it to a live audience." Click on the 'listen' link to the right of the poem title to play. Consider projecting the poem on the board and scrolling through it during the reading so that students can silently read along as they listen.

## Lesson Procedure (27 minutes)

1. **[Suggested Script]:** "Let's talk about the coronavirus pandemic, which is a **crisis** that we've all been through/ are going through. Life changed completely for all of us during this **crisis**, and there were a lot of ways that life became much harder. Maybe our families struggled with money, or maybe people we love got sick or even died. Maybe we had a hard time being stuck at home all the time, or tensions were high in our household. Maybe we really missed seeing people who are important to us. Maybe we struggled with boredom or fear or loneliness. There are/were a lot of ways in which this **crisis** is/was really difficult. That being said, research shows that when we reframe difficult times using the language of **gratitude**, it can help to heal and even redeem troubling memories."
2. **Hand out Gratitude During Times of Crisis worksheet.**
3. **Model vulnerability and how you have personally taken this lesson to heart by showing students your own (previously-completed) Gratitude During Times of Crisis worksheet. Take several minutes to share your answers to each question with them.**
4. **Give students 15 minutes to complete the worksheet. It's their choice if they'd like to focus on the coronavirus pandemic or another crisis that they have experienced.**

5. Bring the class back together. Go through the worksheet, inviting a few students per question to share their answers with the class.
6. Collect worksheets at the end of class.

#### Assessment

- Review **Gratitude During Times of Crisis** worksheets for effort and understanding.

#### Reflection Question

- How does focusing on **gratitude** change my perspective on a **crisis** I experienced?

#### Variations or Extensions

- Spend an additional class period in circle time. Invite every student to share their answers to the worksheet questions while the rest of the class holds a safe space and practices active listening. Hearing their peers share their answers may provoke new insights for students. It may also give them a deeper understanding of how the lens of gratitude can change the stories we tell ourselves about the things we've been through.

#### Resources

- Article: "How Gratitude Can Help You Through Hard Times" [https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how\\_gratitude\\_can\\_help\\_you\\_through\\_hard\\_times](https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_gratitude_can_help_you_through_hard_times)



## Gratitude During Times of Crisis

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Copy the following sentence three times. Each time, fill in the blanks with something different.

Even though it was really hard to \_\_\_\_\_, I feel grateful that \_\_\_\_\_.

Examples:

- Even though it was really hard to stay at home all the time, I feel grateful that I had a safe place to live during the pandemic.
- Even though it was really hard to know that my grandma was sick and not be able to visit her, I feel grateful that we could use FaceTime to stay in touch.
- Even though it was really hard because my family had trouble making ends meet, I feel grateful that we were in it together and that we're closer now than we were before.

2. Name two specific moments that occurred during the crisis that you are grateful for.

3. What lessons did the experience teach you? Name at least two.

4. What ability or abilities did the experience draw out of you that surprised you?

5. How are you now more the person you want to be because of this experience?

## Lesson 5: Responding to Disasters

**Lesson Focus:** Students will play an online game called “**Disaster Master**” through [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov) to learn about appropriate actions to take when faced with a variety of natural disasters. As they play, they will complete a worksheet about what to do in the case of each type of disaster.

### CASEL Competencies

- **Responsible decision-making:** specifically, identifying problems, analyzing situations, solving problems, and evaluating.

### Learning Standards

Students will:

- Demonstrate critical-thinking skills to make informed decisions (ASCA B-LS 1)
- Apply media and technology skills (ASCA B-LS 5)
- Demonstrate ability to work independently (ASCA B-SMS 3)
- Demonstrate personal safety skills (ASCA B-SMS 9)

### Essential Question

- What actions will help me keep me safe if I face a natural disaster?

### Key VOCABULARY TERMS for Students

- none

### Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- Explain actions they can take to keep themselves safe during a natural disaster.

### Materials

- Computers or tablets (one per student).
- Copies of **Responding to Disasters** worksheet.

### Time Frame

*Preparation: 10 minutes*

*Instruction: 30 minutes*

### Lesson Preparation (10 minutes)

1. Arrange for students to have access to computers or tablets (one per student). If it's not possible for each student to have their own digital device for this lesson, two alternate options are: 1) Have students play the game in pairs (if there are enough devices to have one per pair), or 2) Project the game on the board and play it as a class.
2. Make copies of Responding to Disasters worksheet (one per student).
3. Using the estimate of 5 minutes per level, decide how many levels of "Disaster Master" students can feasibly complete during the class time available. Decide if you'd like to limit the number of disasters they explore through the game to the number they can get to in class, or if you'd like them to go through all of them (finishing the levels they don't finish in class as homework).
4. Pull up this website on every student device: <https://www.ready.gov/kids/games>.

### Lesson Activator (5 minutes)

**[Suggested Script]:** "This is our fifth lesson in our **Coping with Crisis** unit, which has been all about how to build **resilience** to help us make it through times of **crisis**. Let's do a quick review of the strategies we've learned about so far. Who can name one of them?" *Elicit student answers, which include knowing that it's ok not to be ok, naming and processing their emotions in a healthy way, and focusing on gratitude.*

**[Suggested Script]:** "Today we're going to change gears and learn about different types of disasters and the things we should and should not do if we ever find ourselves facing them. To do this, we're going to use a resource developed by [www.ready.gov](http://www.ready.gov), which is a national public service campaign designed to educate and empower the American people to prepare for, respond to and mitigate emergencies, including natural and man-made disasters. Ready.gov offers a variety of comprehensive resources on their website. The one we're going to use today is a game they've created called "**Disaster Master**", which is designed like an experiential graphic novel, where you make choices throughout the game about the best thing to do when facing different disasters. The game covers wildfires, tornadoes, hurricanes, home fires, winter storm/extreme cold, earthquakes/tsunamis, and thunderstorms/lightning."

**Lesson Procedure** (25 minutes; can be more or less depending on how many levels of the game students go through)

1. Hand out Responding to Disasters worksheet.
2. Instruct students to click on the "Disaster Master" game.  
You can choose to have them all start on Level 1 and then move through the disasters in the designated order, or (if there is only time to explore a limited number of the disasters) you can allow them to choose which disasters they would like to focus on. If played in order, the games loosely follow the same characters through all of the disasters, but nothing consequential is lost if they are played out of order. However, if played out of order, they will need passwords to access every level after level 1.

These passwords are:

Level 1 - Wildfire	No password needed
Level 2 - Tornado	FUNNEL
Level 3 - Hurricane/Blackout	EYE
Level 4 - Home Fire	ALARM
Level 5 - Winter snow/Extreme Cold	SLEET
Level 6 - Tsunami/Earthquake	SEISMIC
Level 7 - Thunderstorm/Lightning	FLASH

3. **Have students fill out their worksheets as they play each game.**
4. **Collect worksheets at the end of class.**

#### **Assessment**

- Use the teacher's guide to review worksheets for correct answers.

#### **Reflection Question**

- What did you learn about disaster response today?

*"Any disaster you can survive is an improvement in your character, your stature, and your life."  
- Joseph Campbell*

## Responding to Disasters Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: For each disaster you learn about through the **"Disaster Master"** game, write down at least four things that you should do when preparing for or facing that disaster.

1. Type of Disaster:

2. Type of Disaster:

3. Type of Disaster:

4. Type of Disaster:

5. Type of Disaster:

6. Type of Disaster:

7. Type of Disaster:

## Responding to Disasters Worksheet - TEACHER'S GUIDE

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions: For each disaster you learn about through the “Disaster Master” game, write down at least four things that you should do when preparing for or facing that disaster.

### 1. Type of Disaster: WILDFIRE

- Be alert for the smell of smoke. If you smell it, watch for visual signs of smoke and keep an eye out for information from **emergency** officials.
- Check your smoke alarm every month.
- Clear away debris like twigs and pine needles.
- Fill large containers with water.
- If you need to evacuate quickly, pack only what you absolutely need right away or things that can't easily be replaced.
- Leave lights on so that the cabin can be seen in heavy smoke.

### 2. Type of Disaster: TORNADO

- Be alert for hail and/or a loud roar, like a freight train.
- Go immediately to the basement.
- Go to smaller rooms instead of larger rooms.
- Stay away from windows.
- After the tornado, watch out for broken glass and debris.
- Text loved ones instead of calling them to keep phone lines available for 911.
- If you need to call, try calling someone out of state to let them know you're ok.

### 3. Type of Disaster: HURRICANE

- Put outdoor furniture/plants indoors or in the garage.
- Get gas and cash.
- Have an **emergency** kit with flashlights, batteries, non-perishable food, and enough water for 3 days ready to go.
- Fill plastic bags with water and put them in the freezer.
- Don't open the fridge during the storm (to keep the cold air in so the food can stay fresh longer if the power goes out).
- Stay away from windows.
- Don't go out during the eye of the storm.

- Don't go out immediately after the storm because of dangers like live electrical wires and broken glass.
- Don't drink tap water.
- Use a flashlight instead of candles in case of a blackout.

#### 4. Type of Disaster: HOME FIRE

- Get low and go.
- Feel the door and doorknob to see if they're hot before opening a door.
- If the door/doorknob is hot, get out through a window.
- Once you're out, do not go back inside, not even to look for your family.
- Go to the family meeting spot.

#### 5. Type of Disaster: WINTER STORM/EXTREME COLD

- Sprinkle sand on the sidewalk.
- Wear a hat and mittens.
- Cover your mouth with a scarf to protect your lungs from the cold air.
- Watch out for pale white fingers, toes, ears or nose, or for not being able to feel them (these are signs of frostbite).

#### 6. Type of Disaster: EARTHQUAKE/TSUNAMI

- **Tsunami:** Be alert to the tide quickly going out to sea.
- **Tsunami:** Run to high ground.
- **Tsunami:** Stay on high ground because tsunami waves can continue for hours.
- **Tsunami:** Stay out of any building with water around it.
- **Earthquake:** Drop to the ground.
- **Earthquake:** Crawl under a sturdy piece of furniture.
- **Earthquake:** Stay away from things that could fall or shatter.
- **Earthquake:** Cover your head with your hands.
- **Earthquake:** If you're outside, run to an open space.
- **Earthquake:** Stay far away from downed power lines.
- **Earthquake:** Afterwards, stay outside in case walls crumble.

#### 7. Type of Disaster: THUNDERSTORMS/LIGHTNING

- See if you can count to 30 between when you see lightening and when you hear thunder. If not, and you're outside, take cover.
- Don't ride your bike.
- Stay away from trees.
- Don't use electrical devices.
- Don't go out until 30 minutes after the last clap of thunder.
- Bring essential items to a higher part of the house in case of flooding.



## Project: Preparing for an Emergency OR Designing a Crisis Resilience Tip Sheet

**Project Focus:** Students have two options for their unit project. They can either: a) work with their parents/caregivers to put together an **emergency** kit and a family communication plan, or b) design a tip sheet called “**How to Be Resilient During a Crisis.**” **Teacher note: if you prefer one option over the other, feel free to present only one project option to the class, keeping in mind that a student’s ability to complete Option A is not entirely under their control.**

### CASEL Competencies

- **Self-management:** specifically, *goal-setting and organizational skills*
- **Relationship skills:** specifically, *communication and teamwork*
- **Responsible decision-making:** specifically, *identifying problems and analyzing solutions*

### Learning Standards

Students will:

- Demonstrate creativity (ASCA B-LS 2)
- Apply media and technology skills (ASCA B-LS 5)
- Demonstrate ability to assume responsibility (ASCA B-SMS 1)
- Demonstrate effectivity coping skills when faced with a problem (ASCA B-SMS 7)
- Demonstrate personal safety skills (ASCA B-SMS 9)
- Use effective collaboration and cooperation skills (ASCA B-SS 6)

### Essential Questions

- **Option A:** What should my family do to be prepared in case of an **emergency**?
- **Option B:** What is important for people to know about how to be resilient during a **crisis**?

### Learning Objectives

As a result of this lesson, students will be able to:

- **Option A:** In partnership with their parents/caregivers, create an **emergency** kit and family communication plan.
- **Option B:** Create a tip sheet about how to be resilient during a **crisis**.

### Materials

- Projector/interactive whiteboard
- Emergency kit checklist and [family communication plan template](#) (pulled up and ready to go)

## Time Frame

*Preparation: 2 minutes*

*Project: 1 class period + 2-3 hours homework time*

## Project Procedure

1. **Explain to students that they have two options for their final project for this unit:**
  - a) **Option A:** They can work with their parents/caregivers to put together an **emergency** kit and to create a family communication plan so that they are prepared in case they face a physical **crisis** like a natural disaster. Show students the [emergency kit checklist](#) and [family communication plan template](#) that they will use if they choose this option. If they choose this option, they will need to write and turn in responses to the following questions:
    - 1) Before taking on this project, was your family prepared for an **emergency**? Explain what measures had been taken.
    - 2) How did your parents/caregivers respond when you approached them about preparing for an **emergency**?
    - 3) What items did you put into your **emergency** kit? Where is it stored in your home?
    - 4) What did you learn while creating a family communication plan?
    - 5) How did it feel to take the lead on preparing your family for an **emergency**?
  - b) **Option B:** They can design a tip sheet called "How to Be Resilient During a Crisis." They can do this either by hand (in a poster format) or on the computer. If students are unsure of what a tip sheet is, do a google image search for 'tip sheet' and show them some examples. If they'd like to design their tip sheet on the computer, they can use a free resource like Canva ([www.canva.com](http://www.canva.com)) to find ready-made tip-sheet templates that they can update with their own information. If they choose this option, their tip sheet must include:
    - 1) A definition of **resilience** and an explanation of why it's important.
    - 2) Information on common emotions that may come up during a **crisis**.
    - 3) Ideas for healthy ways to process emotions.
    - 4) Information about how **gratitude** can help us look at a **crisis** through a different lens.
2. **Answer student questions about the options. Tell students that the majority of their project will be completed as homework. Clearly communicate the project due date.**
3. **Have students tell you which option they would like to choose. They can use the rest of the class period to begin working on their project. Depending on the option they choose, this may look like:**
  - a) **Option A:** Reviewing the **emergency** kit checklist and family communication plan to determine what they already have/know and what will need to be acquired/decided.
  - b) **Option B:** Writing an outline of the information they'd like to include in their tip sheet.

**Assessment**

- **Option A:** Use the rubric below to grade student’s answers to the project prompts.

Prompt	3	2	1	0
<b>Before taking on this project, was your family prepared for an emergency? Explain what measures had been taken.</b>	Student clearly and fully responded to this prompt.	Student somewhat responded to this prompt.	Student minimally responded to this prompt.	Student did not respond to this prompt.
<b>How did your parents/caregivers respond when you approached them about preparing for an emergency?</b>	Student clearly and fully responded to this prompt.	Student somewhat responded to this prompt.	Student minimally responded to this prompt.	Student did not respond to this prompt.
<b>What items did you put into your emergency kit? Where is it stored in your home?</b>	Student clearly and fully responded to this prompt.	Student somewhat responded to this prompt.	Student minimally responded to this prompt.	Student did not respond to this prompt.
<b>What did you learn while creating a family communication plan?</b>	Student clearly and fully responded to this prompt.	Student somewhat responded to this prompt.	Student minimally responded to this prompt.	Student did not respond to this prompt.
<b>How did it feel to take the lead on preparing your family for an emergency?</b>	Student clearly and fully responded to this prompt.	Student somewhat responded to this prompt.	Student minimally responded to this prompt.	Student did not respond to this prompt.

Grading Scale

A: 12-15 points

B: 9-11 points

C: 7-8 points

D: 5-6 point

F: less than 5 points

Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_

- **Option B:** Use the rubric below to grade the tip sheet. The four project requirements are:
  - ✓ A definition of resilience and an explanation of why it's important.
  - ✓ Information on common emotions that may come up during a crisis.
  - ✓ Ideas for healthy ways to process emotions.
  - ✓ Information about how gratitude can help us look at a crisis through a different lens

	3	2	1	0
<b>Content</b>	Student clearly addressed all 4 project requirements.	Student somewhat addressed all 4 project requirements or only addressed 2-3 project requirements	Student minimally addressed all 4 project requirements or only addressed 1 project requirement	Student did not address project requirements.
<b>Presentation</b>	Tip sheet is neat and appealing to look at.	Tip sheet is mostly neat and appealing to look at.	Tip sheet lacks neatness.	Tip sheet is messy and not appealing to look at.
<b>Organization</b>	Tip sheet is well organized and easy to follow.	Tip sheet is mostly well organized and easy to follow.	Tip sheet lacks clear organization.	Tip sheet is disorganized and difficult to follow.

Grading Scale

- A: 8-9 points
- B: 6-7 points
- C: 4-5 points
- D: 2-3 points
- F: 0-1 points

Total Points: \_\_\_\_\_