

PILLAR THREE: SELF CURIOSITY

Notes:

Self Curiosity Pillar Unit Summary

In the Self Curiosity Pillar, we begin to cultivate an interest and wonder about all of our experiences, and we use curious questioning to understand ourselves on a deeper level. Our Self Curiosity tools empower children (and adults) to internally cultivate wonder, positivity, self-awareness, love, and self-understanding. By using self curiosity, we become aware of what triggers us emotionally, why, and how our thoughts and assumptions can shape our world.

Self Curiosity approaches guide students through a series of key questions to generate an attitude of wonder and interest in all of their thoughts, emotions, and sensations. Using self curiosity, we become Self Scientists as we non-judgmentally explore any and all experiences; regardless of whether they are pleasurable or painful. Self Scientists love to learn more about who they are on the inside; regardless of whether their experience is pleasant or unpleasant.

The Self Scientist will be the anchor tool for building an understanding of Self Curiosity and the ways it can apply to our lives to create a deeper understanding of ourselves. We are all natural scientists as we explore our environment, ask fascinating questions, and seek to answer them. Self Curiosity is simply getting interested in exploring the inner experiences of our physical sensations, thoughts, and emotions. The more curious we are about our experiences, the more likely it will be for us to introspect and generate useful insights about how we navigate the world. This is a major step toward cultivating a fulfilling, happy life.

Self Curiosity will be understood as *nonjudgmental interest in all of my experiences, and questioning into the nature of all of these experiences*. It is a form of metacognition where students are encouraged to treat all inner experience (physical, mental, and emotional) as interesting and worthy of investigation – just as a scientist would treat an area of study.

Using the Self Curiosity approaches found within these lessons, students are empowered to understand what triggers them emotionally, why, and what they can do to change the perspectives and assumptions that created the triggers.

The Self Scientist tool uses curious questioning to explore the nature of our experiences, and the stories that the mind creates to trigger these experiences. Ultimately, Self Curiosity progresses beyond asking specific questions about daily experiences, and it becomes an attitude of genuine nonjudgmental wonder and interest in any feelings that arise in the moment. Students eventually emerge as joyful observers of their mind, as various thoughts, feelings, and sensations pass by with ease.

By having a regular practice of Self Curiosity, and an understanding of the theory behind the practice, students will be able to use the Self Scientist tool to give them a sense of self-understanding, self-awareness, and a genuine interest in introspection and contemplation. All of these are key outcomes to generating enhanced understanding and regulation of our emotions, and for cultivating sustained wellbeing in life.

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ESTABLISHED GOALS (US SCHOOLS ONLY)

SEL Standard (Illinois State) - Develop self-awareness and self-management (self-regulation) skills to achieve school and life success. This unit of study will target the core competencies for SEL (outlined by CASEL) of self-awareness and self-management.

IDENTIFIER (US ONLY)

Identify and manage one's attention, focus, emotions, and behaviors.

STANDARD (US ONLY)

Early Elementary:

- Recognize and accurately label emotions, thoughts, and bodily sensations, and how they are linked to behavior.
- Demonstrate control of impulsive behavior.
- Identify ways to calm yourself.

Late Elementary:

- Describe your physical responses to strong emotions.
- Recognize that feelings change throughout the day.
- Practice self-talk to calm yourself.

Middle:

- Apply strategies to manage stress and motivate focused, disciplined performance.
- Describe the physical responses to a range of emotions.

ENDURING UNDERSTANDINGS (EUS): STUDENTS WILL KNOW THAT...

1. Self Curiosity is developed by asking the what, where, when, why, how, and who questions of the Self Scientist tool.
2. Our attitude toward ourselves when we experience an emotion matters – we approach all sensations with a deep curiosity and interest instead of running away from them.
3. We can use curious questioning to safely bring our awareness to reactive emotional patterns in the body and mind. This skill of creating a genuine interest in self-knowledge is critical to wellbeing and metacognition.
4. We also pay attention to others' emotional reactions with curiosity and interest, rather than reacting along with them.
5. Students are empowered to take responsibility for their emotional triggers by questioning into the thought patterns and stories that created the trigger. This is instead of blaming others for how we feel, which can be disempowering. Cultivating an attitude of radical curiosity about our experiences allows us to become less and less reactive over time, which increases wellbeing, self-acceptance, and self-awareness.

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ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS (EQS):

1. What does it mean to be curious about the self?
2. Why does asking questions about the self matter? Why does maintaining an attitude of curiosity matter?
3. What are the big questions we can ask about our personal experiences?
4. What is the relationship between our thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations? How can we explore this relationship?
5. How do our minds' stories shape the emotions we feel? How do the minds' stories shape the triggers that make us react to different situations?
6. What are some strategies we can use to cultivate curiosity and interest in our minds, bodies, and emotions – without judging them right away?
7. What are some strategies we can use to cultivate curiosity and interest in others' mental, physical, and emotional patterns – without judging them right away?

KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS

Knowledge - Students Will Know:

- We can develop a curiosity about our experiences, instead of wanting different experiences.
- We use gentle questioning to wonder about why we have experiences, where they are located, why they've arrived, and what part of us is experiencing them.
- When we are curious about ourselves, it's natural for the mind to wander or judge the feelings that we're experiencing. When it does, we can gently return back to the question we were originally wondering about.
- It doesn't matter if the mind answers the Self Scientist questions. In many cases, it's even more effective to experience them as open questions and curiosities that do not need to be answered right away.
- The way we bring our mind back to the question matters, in a gentle and open way.
- Self Curiosity can be practiced while sitting, standing, moving, or during any kind of experience whatsoever.
- We don't have to practice Self Curiosity only when we're feeling calm. Being curious about more intense emotions can provide fascinating insights about the emotions, triggers, and experiences related to them.
- When applying the Self Scientist tool to a specific situation or experience, we ask the fundamental questions: what, where, when, why, how, and who?
- Thoughts and feelings come and go like visitors, and we can ask our visitors interesting questions while they are here. This helps us learn more about them (us) and cultivates a healthier, less reactive relationship to them.

Skills - Students Will Know How To:

- Identify the differences between open, closed, and non-questioning.
- Generate curiosity and interest in pleasant & unpleasant sensations and emotions.
- Develop the "curiosity muscle" by approaching daily experiences with wonder and interest.

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Skills - Students Will Know How To (Cont.):

- Explain why curiosity is important to wellbeing, and apply Self Curiosity practice to their everyday lives.
- Construct meaning for Self Curiosity in their own words, and use different kinds of questioning – about the body, mind, and emotions.
- Describe the physical sensations that come from emotional states and describes the emotions that arise from noticing physical sensations.
- Apply curious attention to inner experiences and know what the body is communicating.

MISCONCEPTIONS AND CLARIFICATIONS

Misconception	Clarification
Self Curiosity is about asking questions about the self.	Self Curiosity is about cultivating an <i>attitude</i> of curiosity and interest toward our experiences, without getting tied up with the specific questions. It's the same way that explorers don't really know what they'll find when they explore – they're simply open to discovering new and exciting things.
The main purpose of Self Curiosity is to answer questions about our experiences.	While Self Curiosity involves asking a lot of interesting questions, it is more importantly a way of cultivating a nonreactive attitude toward our experiences. Cultivating an attitude of inner exploration is the first step toward self-understanding, self-management, and ultimately, self-awareness.
Self Curiosity is something that we only use to regulate difficult experiences.	We use Self Curiosity to understand and regulate all emotions. Most importantly, Self Curiosity is used to cultivate a deeper sense of understanding about why our emotions arise, and to develop the capacity to observe our emotions non-judgmentally, rather than getting hijacked by our experiences.
When an emotion arises we are using Self Curiosity to ignore it or make sure we don't feel it again.	Emotions come for a visit and when they do it's our job as Self Scientists to explore them. With Self Curiosity, we are trying to be "with" whatever is happening, without pushing it away. Curiosity helps us allow the emotion to have a visit, and go when it is ready. The Self Scientist tool helps us explore and understand the emotion while it visits.
Self Curiosity is about using the mind's logic to override emotion and other experiences.	With Self Curiosity we are not trying to override anything. In fact, it is the opposite. We are allowing all sensations and emotions to arise naturally in an accepting way, and when we do, we ask curious and gentle questions about the sensation.

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PERFORMANCE TASK SUMMARY (USING GRASPS)

Students will pick an area of their life they could improve upon and apply the Self Scientist practice to grow. Examples can be similar to the following:

1. Keep track of interesting questions about the Self.
2. Playing with the questions from the Self Scientist Tool during/after an intense situation.
3. Speaking to yourself and others in a curious and interested way, without judging or needing to hear the answers right away.
4. Using the Self Scientist tool as an opportunity to learn about the self when triggered by a challenging situation or difficult emotion.

Self Curiosity Pillar Assessment Evidence

OTHER EVIDENCE OF STUDENT UNDERSTANDING	
Other Assessments	Knowledge and Skills
Turn and Talk	Have students consistently turn and talk about their use or lack of use of Self Curiosity strategies in their day-to-day experience. This will be utilized in each of the individual lessons and then shared with the whole group.
Lesson Reflections in Journal	Daily Reflections that answer questions in each lesson.
Pre/ Post Assessment	Before teaching Self Curiosity to students, give them a stressful scenario and have them describe how they would handle it. At the end of the unit, give them the same scenario and see if they have new curiosities about the situation that are nonjudgmental.
Home Log	Students will keep track of Self Curiosity practice at home. Perhaps sitting and being a Self Scientist for one minute after feeling an emotion. Students write about how they feel before and after the Self Scientist practice.
Class Project	The class will build Mind Jars together and use them to cultivate a sense of unconditional curiosity of their experiences.

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Self Curiosity Learning Plan — Introduction

Have you ever wondered where your thoughts, emotions, and experiences come from, or why they happen? Hold a discussion around what students find interesting about emotions, sensations, or thought patterns.

Make a list of the most interesting questions that come up around our emotional experiences (e.g., Why do some things make me angry, but others make me sad? Where do the emotions exist in our bodies? How do our minds interpret stories that create the emotions?, etc.)

Ask students how they would feel if you had a special way to teach them how to start learning more about themselves and their personal experiences, a way that could actually increase their wellbeing and self-awareness, according to scientists.

Ask students if they would be interested in exploring their inner world, just like adventurers and explorers map out the outer world.

Self Curiosity Learning Plan — Lesson Overview

Eight Lessons are provided with this pillar. These eight lessons move through the very basic fundamentals of developing a personal self-questioning practice (Self Scientist). We begin with learning about the importance of asking questions about the Self, and about cultivating open-ended curious questions that do not require an immediate answer. We then discuss the nature of thoughts/emotions, and how we can begin to wonder about what they are, and what they can tell us about ourselves. We then learn how to directly ask questions to gain important insights about who we are, and why we have the thought/emotion patterns that we do. We conclude by understanding how to engage with our minds as a pure observer, and how we can apply Self Curiosity to everyday life and as it applies to our self-understanding.

Be sure to reteach any of the lessons at any time based on student needs. Some lessons may need more time, and others less. In general, they are meant to take around 30 minutes.

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Introduction to Self Curiosity	Types of Questioning	From Reactivity to Curiosity	Emotions as Perspectives	Self Scientist: The Fascinating Five
Day 6	Day 7	Day 8		
Embodied Curiosity	Being the Observer	Self Curiosity in Everyday Life		