



Facilitator Guide Overview

Version 2, updated August 2023

What is FYBS?

Feel Your Best Self (FYBS) is a free toolkit that teaches 12 simple coping strategies to promote emotion regulation. These types of coping strategies are important life skills, and when used regularly, can promote emotional well-being. Using FYBS, kids explore different strategies to find those that help them feel their best as they navigate different situations.

Our team mapped these emotion-focused coping strategies into three easy-to-remember categories: Calm Your Self, Catch Your Feelings and Connect with Others. There are 12 evidence-informed strategies, each with a catchy title to make it fun for kids (and grown-ups). You can find definitions of each strategy in the section "Introducing the Strategies" below.

Feel Your Best Self Strategies

Calm Your Self Strategies teach self-soothing skills that can help children calm down when they are not feeling their best self.

- Belly Breathing
- Shake Out the Yuck
- Ground it Down
- Chillax in my Head

Catch Your Feelings Strategies promote self-awareness by helping children shift their thoughts to those that help them feel their best self.

- Float Your Boat
- Turn the Dial
- Push the Clouds
- Smell the Roses

Connect With Others Strategies help children feel their best self through building supportive relationships and acts of kindness toward others.

- Feel it Together
- Bring a High 5!
- Be a Kind Helper
- 3 Friendly Wishes

FEEL YOUR BEST SELF

feelyourbestself.org

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How Does FYBS Work?

As previously noted, FYBS is evidence-informed – meaning that the strategies included in FYBS come from what we know works. One intervention type that we know works to support emotional well-being is cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is a commonly used intervention framework that can promote emotional well-being by using strategies that focus on the relationship between thoughts, feelings, or actions, and how by changing one of these aspects, we can influence the other two (Iovino et al., 2021). We took active ingredients – or kernels – of CBT, like psychoeducation, cognitive restructuring, and relaxation techniques, and packaged them in a way to make it easy to pick up our Facilitator Guides and show how these kernels can work. We created engaging stories to illustrate how the strategies can be used to navigate everyday scenarios and work through big feelings.

For our readers who are interested in the specifics of the science behind FYBS, we recommend reading [Teaching Simple Strategies to Foster Emotional Well-Being](#) and our forthcoming brief covering the theory of change that shows how FYBS promotes emotional well-being.

FYBS strategies are aligned with emotion-regulation processes. Emotion-regulation processes include setting your situation, refocusing your attention, shifting your thoughts, and settling your body. These strategies and processes help to increase positive emotion or decrease negative emotion. Regularly using these strategies to increase positive emotion or decrease negative emotion leads to increased emotional well-being, or how positive an individual feels generally and about life overall (Park et al., 2022).

Below, we provide additional explanation of each of the emotion-regulation processes to build your understanding of each process. You can likely identify times in your own life when you use each of these processes.


Setting Your Situation means taking actions proactively that either increase the likelihood of experiencing positive emotions or modify a situation to change its impact. For example, by initiating a warm and playful interaction with a peer, a child is seeking out a situation that makes them feel calm and happy. Or, by finding someone to talk to when feeling nervous, a child changes a negative situation by taking action that regulates their emotions.

Strategies that target **Refocusing Attention** teach kids to shift their focus from an undesired or negative emotion towards more desired emotions by using distraction or concentration. For example, by pausing to focus on what they can see, hear, smell, and touch, a child becomes centered in the moment and shifts their attention away from the situation that was making them not feel their best self.

Strategies that support **Shifting Your Thoughts** illustrate how kids can change their interpretation of a situation to change how they feel or to allow them to think differently about how they can manage a difficult situation. For example, learning to shift thoughts about a situation that makes a child mad and thinking about it from another perspective can shift those feelings to be lighter.

And finally, strategies that focus on **Settling Your Body** teach kids how to change their emotional response to a challenging situation by changing their behavior or physiological response. For example, taking a deep breath in, counting to five, and then exhaling slowly can slow down undesired responses to a tough situation and change that physiological response (e.g., slowed heart rate and breathing, relaxed muscles).

In the box below, we show the alignment of FYBS strategies with each of these emotion-regulation processes.



Guiding Decisions - Selecting Strategies to Use

		Setting Your Situation	Refocusing Your Attention	Shifting Your Thoughts	Settling Your Body
CALM YOUR SELF	Belly Breathing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Shake Out the Yuck	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Ground it Down	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Chillax in my Head	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CATCH YOUR FEELINGS	Float Your Boat	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Turn the Dial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Push the Clouds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Smell the Roses	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CONNECT WITH OTHERS	Feel it Together	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Bring a High 5!	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	Be a Kind Helper	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3 Friendly Wishes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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Responsive Use of FYBS

Of course, using an emotion-regulation strategy is always a choice. Empowering kids to make choices about when and how they regulate their emotions is important and supports their independent application of strategies. There are times when venting or sitting with an emotion is appropriate or helpful. We teach kids these strategies for moments in which they hope to reduce negative emotion or increase positive emotion. We are not teaching emotion-regulation strategies to control or manage kids, nor do we expect them to conform to any particular set of standards. Instead, it is important to remember that these strategies are designed to give kids tools to use to reduce negative emotion or increase positive emotion.

In addition, emotion-regulation strategies are one piece of the puzzle in supporting kids. Teaching kids emotion-regulation strategies is not a replacement for broader work to improve the conditions in kids' lives. At times, kids may be upset because of teasing, bullying, or discrimination – in these instances, adults have a responsibility to address the issue more broadly. Prompting emotion-regulation strategies may help kids to feel better in the moment, but adults need to be thoughtful about any additional action that may be needed to support and advocate for kids. To consider responsible and responsive use of FYBS more deeply,

please see our briefs entitled, [Considerations for Responsive and Responsible Use of FYBS: Brief 1](#) and [Considerations for Responsive and Responsible Use of FYBS: Brief 2](#).

Who is FYBS for?

FYBS is intended for use with kids in pre-kindergarten through elementary grades, although extensions to older and neurodiverse populations are possible. The FYBS strategies can be taught in individual, small group, or whole-class settings. Facilitators can adapt materials to best support kids' developmental level and functioning across school, family, and community settings.

FYBS can be used in many ways in school settings. **Educators** could use the complete toolkit with entire classes, introducing a "strategy of the month" and incorporating puppet building as part of an integrated arts and social and emotional learning (SEL) unit. For example, a classroom teacher could play the theme song or videos as part of a morning or break-time routine. **School mental health personnel** might use various components to complement the intervention strategies they are using to support students with more intensive social, emotional, or behavioral needs. For more on how educators and related services providers can use FYBS in schools, check out our guide, [Making the Most of the Toolkit: Educators](#).

Families might watch the videos and check out the tip sheets. If their child's school or teacher is using FYBS, families can also reinforce teaching that happens in school by re-watching specific videos at home, or by engaging in additional discussion using the reflection sheets. For more on how families can use FYBS, check out our guide, [Making the Most of the Toolkit: Families](#).

Community providers, which we define as people using FYBS outside of school or home settings, might tailor pieces of the toolkit to fit a specific goal – such as using the videos to teach coping skills to an individual or small group. Providers can support practice of new skills by engaging in role play and additional discussion about how the strategies can apply to kids' lives. For more on using FYBS in different settings, check out our guide, [Making the Most of the Toolkit: Community Partners](#).

What is Included in FYBS?



Facilitator Guidance

All videos have accompanying facilitator steps that provide a lesson plan. In addition, we have roadmaps for getting started, introductory webinars, and guides for making the most of the toolkit.

Feelings Forecast

Our introductory lesson includes the Feelings Forecast, which is a visual aid to help kids identify how they are feeling. In addition to including several feelings words, it introduces a weather analogy that explains that emotions can range from stormy to sunny clouds. For example, sometimes, when there are stormy clouds—maybe we're feeling angry or sad—it could be a good time to pick a strategy to help shift toward a sunny cloud feeling. Or, if we're feeling really excited after recess, but it's time for math, we might need a strategy to shift from that sunny cloud feeling to a medium cloud feeling, like focused.

Videos and Tip Sheets

FYBS includes 13 brief videos. The first video introduces naming feelings and what it means to feel your best self. Then, there is one video for each of the 12 strategies, with each video being around five minutes long. The 12 strategy videos also include tip sheets that provide discussion questions and recommendations for practicing the strategies.

Strategy Cards

Strategy cards are designed to reinforce understanding of each strategy with simple, easy-to-follow instructions that allow for explicit instruction of the strategy. We recommend reading each step aloud together, then reading each step and engaging in the action.

Reflection Sheets

Reflection sheets help kids practice and reflect on the strategies, sharing how they felt before and after practicing the strategy.

Puppet-Making Guide

Using step-by-step guidance, the Puppet-Making Guide describes how to incorporate puppet-making to reinforce use of the strategies. In addition to providing fun, the act of creating a puppet allows kids to increase their ownership of the strategies and provides them with a companion with whom to practice the strategies. It also gives facilitators the opportunity to interact with kids in a way they might not normally do without a puppet. This guide includes step-by-step instructions for gathering materials and building puppets with kids. See our [evidence brief](#) to learn more about the benefits of teaching and learning with puppets.

How Do You Use FYBS?

FYBS can be adapted for use in different contexts. We think of the components as a “choose your own adventure” story. The Prologue is our Feelings Forecast and Intro Video. These can set you up for success on your adventure. Then, we have our Main Adventure, which consists of the videos, facilitator steps/tip sheets, and strategy cards. These are the bulk of the story, and you can choose when and how you use each component. Finally, we have two Additional Quests: reflection sheets and puppet-making. The story is great on its own, but you can add these on for additional fun and adventure.

FYBS	
Prologue	
Feelings Forecast & Intro Video	The Feelings Forecast and intro video introduce the language of FYBS and provides options for naming and scaling feelings.
Main Adventure	
Videos	The videos use a familiar structure across each of the 12 strategies. The characters demonstrate each strategy within a fun storyline, including how and when the strategy might be used.
Strategy Cards	Engage kids in guided practice using the strategy cards (which can also be found at the top of our tip sheets). Then, have kids practice the strategy independently.
Facilitator Steps/ Tip Sheets	You can initiate discussion using the questions provided in the facilitator steps or in the tip sheets. The discussion questions encourage reflection on how the strategy worked and how kids might use it in their own lives.
Additional Quets	
Reflection Sheets	The reflection sheets allow kids to further reflect on the strategy they have just learned. We don't expect that every strategy will work the same for each child. Incorporating the reflection sheets provides kids a space to identify strategies that they enjoy and find useful in helping them to feel their best self.
Puppet-Making	You can also add a puppet-making activity. We offer a guide and video resources , which outline steps to puppet construction and highlight the added value of puppets in this toolkit. Incorporating puppet-making is fun and using puppets can provide an additional means for kids to express their thoughts and feelings.

FYBS in Action: Examples Across Settings

Classroom

One common setting for using FYBS is the classroom. Whether you are a general education or special education teacher, there are many ways to incorporate FYBS into what you are already doing. For example, FYBS can be used in morning meeting, a designated block in your schedule, or during transitions, such as coming back to the classroom from lunch or recess. If you are already using a social and emotional learning program or curriculum, it is easy to teach kids how the skills and language of FYBS align with that program. Below, we offer some brief examples of how teachers can use FYBS in the classroom.

In the General Education Classroom

Mr. Morales, a general education classroom teacher, uses the videos, strategy cards, and puppet-making activity with his 2nd grade students. The videos and cards give the kids he

works with strategies to help them feel their best self. The puppet activities help increase engagement and allow kids to practice the strategies. Together, these activities help increase kids' understanding of how to cope with a variety of situations and provide them with strategies to help them feel their best self both inside and outside of the classroom.

In the Special Education Classroom

Mrs. Brady, a special education teacher, uses the videos, strategy cards, and reflection sheets with her 4th grade students during her life skills intervention block. The videos and strategy cards teach emotion-focused coping skills that are important for success throughout life, and the reflection sheets allow for further reflection on how well each strategy worked for them. They start each intervention block by watching a video and practicing with the strategy card, and then completing the reflection sheet for that strategy. Mrs. Brady has strategy cards and the Feelings Forecast posted in her classroom as a visual reminder to use strategies when needed. These easy-to-use tools have become an important component of her life skills lessons as they support her instruction towards students' IEP goals.

Schools: Beyond the Classroom

There are many other settings in a school building that provide a natural fit for using FYBS! School-based mental health providers (e.g., school counselors, social workers, psychologists) and related arts teachers (e.g., physical education, health education, art education, music education) have told us about their successes using FYBS. Next, check out some examples based on experiences shared by these individuals!

School-Based Mental Health Intervention

Dr. Bower is a school psychologist at an elementary school. She uses the videos and strategy cards, reflection sheets, and puppets for her work with both individual kids and small groups in need of additional instruction and practice with identifying their feelings and coping when they are not feeling their best self. All components can be adapted to fit their needs, and the flexibility of the lessons means that Dr. Bower can alter her approach based on the goals, developmental levels, and responsiveness of the kids.

Physical and Health Education

Cassie is a physical education teacher at a high school. She uses the videos, strategy cards, and reflection sheets in her adaptive health and physical education classes for students with different abilities. Cassie appreciates that these strategies and materials can be adapted to meet the needs of her students, and that FYBS strategies are important life skills that align nicely with curriculum focused on making health-promoting choices.

Community

FYBS is also being used in a variety of settings outside of schools! For example, we've heard from individuals using FYBS in summer camp settings, religious education (e.g., Sunday school),

afterschool programs, and community arts centers.

Afterschool Programs

Dominique runs an afterschool program at a local community center. She uses the videos, strategy cards, and tip sheet discussion questions with the K-2 room. They first watched the Intro: Feel Your Best Self video and discussed the Feelings Forecast to learn more about feelings before watching other strategy videos. After watching, Dominique thinks that adding a puppet-making activity would be fun and allow the kids to further engage with FYBS. Before diving into the strategy videos, Dominique uses the puppet-making guidance to gather materials from the supply closet so that kids can make their own puppets. Now, each week, they watch a new strategy video, practice the strategy (with their puppets and on their own), and reflect on what they learned. The afterschool program staff has printed copies of the strategy cards to keep with them to be able to prompt use of strategies when needed. They also add on an activity in which they use the Feelings Forecast to check in with students as part of their welcome routine each day.

Families

Families are also using FYBS at home. Individuals have shared that they are using the videos along with our Feelings Forecast to learn together and talk about emotion-coping strategies. They also have used the tip sheets as a starting place for talking about and reflecting on the videos, and the strategy cards to guide practice together. Some families have shared that they have loved creating their own sock puppets!

At Home

Yichén was looking for a fun activity to do with his kids over summer break and came across the FYBS puppet-making guide. The family works together to make their own sock puppets using lonely socks whose partner got lost in the laundry. They then watch the Intro: Feel Your Best Self video and download the Feelings Forecast to learn more about feelings. Now, every day after lunch, they put on their sock puppets and watch a new strategy video. Yichén uses the tip sheets to help his kids reflect on what they learned and then to practice the strategy together. He finds it particularly helpful to be able to ask his kids: "What would the puppets do?" when they are faced with a difficult situation. This allows them to use their new skills to navigate challenges in their lives.

Did you know?

Our team has mapped the alignment between FYBS and SEL guidance for your use in decision-making! We have crosswalks available to show alignment between FYBS and:

[CASEL](#) | [EASEL](#) | [SHAPE](#) | [Responsive Classroom](#)

Introducing the Strategies

A summary description of each strategy is provided in the table below. Complete information about each strategy, along with suggestions for implementing, are detailed in the Facilitator Steps for each video.

Within each category, strategies are roughly organized by which are the most universal. In other words, the first strategy listed in each category is typically the easiest to implement, understand, and teach across developmental levels, contexts, etc.

We also offer an [introductory video and associated activities](#) to introduce the common language we use to talk about feelings, and to promote emotion recognition.

Category	Strategy Video Linked	Materials	Description
Calm Your Self	Belly Breathing	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Belly Breathing shows kids how to use relaxation breathing to help settle their bodies.
	Shake Out the Yuck	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Shake Out the Yuck shows kids to shake off heavy feelings that keep them from feeling their best self.
	Ground it Down	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Ground it Down shows kids to tighten and relax their muscles as a self-soothing strategy.
	Chillax in my Head	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Chillax in my Head shows kids to use visualization to help refocus their attention.
Catch Your Feelings	Float Your Boat	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Float Your Boat shows kids to let go of heavy thoughts or feelings so that they can feel lighter.
	Turn the Dial	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Turn the Dial teaches kids how to look at an upsetting or challenging situation in a different way.
	Push the Clouds	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Push the Clouds gives kids a rhyme and simple action to help make room for lighter, sunnier feelings.
	Smell the Roses	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Smell the Roses helps kids use their senses to focus on the present moment.
Connect With Others	Feel it Together	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Feel it Together teaches kids to seek social support from trusted individuals.
	Bring a High 5!	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Bring a High 5! teaches kids to show gratitude for the strengths of others.
	Be a Kind Helper	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	Be a Kind Helper teaches kids to use acts of kindness to help others and themselves feel their best.
	3 Friendly Wishes	Facilitator Steps Reflection Sheet Strategy Card Tip Sheet	3 Friendly Wishes teaches kids to share friendly wishes with someone to help everyone feel their best self.

