



# Making the Most of the Toolkit: Educators



Feel Your Best Self (FYBS) is designed to be user-friendly. Below, we provide suggestions for aligning your facilitation with your existing classroom structures and routines as well as best practices in education.

We recommend aligning your FYBS instruction with your existing teaching practices and routines. For example, following a consistent structure when teaching FYBS lessons, previewing expectations before beginning a lesson, and reinforcing use of the strategies are always good practices. Of course, you can apply your strong teaching practices to FYBS instruction.

Most importantly, we know that one-and-done initiatives are unlikely to have a lasting impact. Repetition and multiple exposures to new content or a new skill are essential; this goes for the FYBS skills as well! To ensure our efforts in teaching the strategies are mastered, regular practice is needed. Although this might seem daunting, there are simple ways to incorporate practicing these skills into things you are already doing! Here are some of our ideas:

1. **Find ways to build in practice.** In your daily schedule or routine, look for places where you can have children spend 5 minutes practicing a strategy. For example, as a classroom teacher, you might include strategy practice as part of morning meeting, the transition back from lunch or recess, or any other “brain break” time built into your schedule. As a psychologist or counselor, you might start each session with an opportunity to practice or use their favorite strategy and share ways that they tried out a strategy since the last session.
2. **Pick a “strategy of the week/month.”** When first introducing a strategy, you may choose to introduce that strategy and then spend focused time on practicing before introducing a new strategy. For example, on the first Monday of the month, you might choose to introduce a strategy and then find ways to practice that strategy every day for a week, two-week, or month-long period. When children can independently demonstrate the strategy or you notice children using the strategy without prompting, you may introduce a new strategy and repeat the process.

We've included some sample schedules below to show what this might look like. As you may notice, in the “strategy of the month” example, children end up practicing the strategy in various locations before moving onto a new strategy. This can provide children with an opportunity to generalize skills – meaning that they will learn that the strategy isn't only useful in one setting but instead can be used anywhere. In addition, building in opportunities for practice in physical education, transitions in the hallway, in the lunchroom, and other locations will integrate learning throughout the school environment.

Strategy of the Week				
Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Introduce strategy during SEL block	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting
Practice strategy after recess	Practice strategy after recess	Practice strategy after recess	Practice strategy with a friend at snack time	Practice strategy after recess

Strategy of the Month					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
<b>Week 1</b>	Introduce strategy on the first Monday of the month	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting	Practice strategy with a friend after recess	Practice strategy after recess	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting and invite a guest (e.g., teacher, administrator, parent) to practice with the class
<b>Week 2</b>	Review strategy – ask whether children used it over the weekend	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting and after recess	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting and after recess	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting and after recess	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting and after recess
<b>Week 3</b>	Review strategy – ask whether children used it over the weekend	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting; practice in the hallway	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting; practice in the cafeteria	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting; practice in the library	Practice strategy during Morning Meeting; practice in the gym
<b>Week 4</b>	Review strategy – ask whether children used it over the weekend	Challenge children to find a time to practice independently; look for and praise practice	Challenge children to find a time to practice independently; look for and praise practice	Challenge children to find a time to practice independently; look for and praise practice	Challenge children to find a time to practice independently; look for and praise practice

- Plan for generalization and maintenance of use.** Having children practice the strategies in various locations can help to promote generalization – meaning they will understand how to use the strategies in settings other than the classroom, gymnasium, or office. You can even extend practice beyond the school setting by connecting with families or other care

providers to share information about FYBS strategies and suggestions for practice. See resources like our tip sheets for materials that can be easily shared.

To make sure that children continue using the strategy after you are done actively teaching and practicing – in other words, they maintain the skill – add unexpected or random reminders to use a strategy. For example, a few weeks after you have shifted to focus on a new strategy, remind or ask children to practice the previous strategy. This will communicate that even though we have moved on, we can and should continue to use and practice what we have previously learned.

**Tip:** To make reminders or prompts more fun, after all selected strategies have been taught, incorporate a “mystery motivator” to encourage children to practice a strategy of focus each day (or one or two days each week). At the start of the day or lesson, pick a strategy out of a hat/container/etc. The children will be tasked with practicing the strategy at least once during the day or lesson. If, at the end of the day or lesson, you’ve seen most students practice the strategy, they can have a chance to earn a reward (e.g., extra 5 min of recess the next day, 5 min of relaxation time before dismissal, etc.).

4. **Proactively plan for challenges.** Challenges to teaching and practicing new skills are inevitable! We can plan for potential challenges by engaging in coping planning – where we brainstorm a list of potential challenges (e.g., snow days, child sick/absent, interruptions to routine), and have solutions ready for how we will move forward.<sup>1</sup> We recommend creating a table like the example below as part of your FYBS planning.


Potential Challenge	Solutions to Move Forward
Child is absent during initial teaching.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify an alternative time to show the strategy video.</li> <li>• Have child join in whole group practice.</li> <li>• Pair child with peer to review discussion questions.</li> </ul>
Interruption, such as a surprise visitor, occurs during practice session.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Invite the visitor to join in the lesson after students greet the visitor.</li> <li>• If that is not possible, have children practice after the visitor leaves and discuss whether the strategy was helpful.</li> </ul>
Technology stops working when about to show a strategy video.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have kids gather around a few computers to watch in small groups.</li> <li>• Start ELA block earlier and push FYBS block later.</li> <li>• Ask for volunteers to help you walk through a demonstration of the strategy steps.</li> </ul>
No time in schedule for dedicated FYBS block.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integrate FYBS teaching into ELA block.</li> <li>• Add a 10-minute “movement break” in your schedule and shorten two other blocks by 5-minutes each.</li> <li>• Show video during snack time and have kids participate in small group discussions. Have one kid from each table share out thoughts and observations to summarize.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> Sanetti, L. M. H., & Collier-Meek, M. A. (2019). Supporting successful interventions in schools: Tools to plan, evaluate, and sustain effective implementation. Guilford Publications.

# How Do I Choose Which Strategies to Use?

To help you prioritize strategy choices, we have included resources to help guide decisions as to which strategies will work best in your setting.

Our **Guiding Decisions Chart** can help you select strategies based on what is addressed in each strategy relative to the needs of the children with whom you work.



**Guiding Decisions - Selecting Strategies to Use**

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

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**Setting Your Situation** means taking actions proactively that either increase the likelihood of experiencing positive emotions or modify a situation to change its impact.

Strategies that target **Refocusing Attention** teach children to shift their focus from an undesired or negative emotion towards more desired emotions by using distraction or concentration.

Strategies that support **Shifting Your Thoughts** illustrate how children 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.

And finally, strategies that focus on **Settling Your Body** teach children how to change their emotional response to a challenging situation by changing their behavior or physiological response.


**Reminder:** teaching emotion-regulation strategies is not a replacement for broader actions to

support and advocate for kids. For example, if a child is upset because they are being teased, bullied, or discriminated against, adults have a responsibility to address the issue with others. To more deeply consider responsible and responsive use of FYBS, 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](#).

We also offer a **Planning Worksheet** to use in your lesson planning. This worksheet provides a space to record which components you are going to include, what resources (e.g., computer, printer with colored ink, puppet-making supplies) you might need, logistical planning – meaning when and where you are going to teach, and any adaptations needed based on the kids you are teaching (e.g., increased font size on materials to support a child with visual impairment).

**Pick a Strategy**

- Intro: Feel Your Best Self
- Belly Breathing
- Shake Out the Yuck
- Ground it Down
- Chillax in my Head
- Float Your Boat
- Turn the Dial
- Push the Clouds
- Smell the Roses
- Feel it Together
- Bring a High 5!
- Be a Kind Helper
- 3 Friendly Wishes



**Guiding Decisions - Planning**

Relevant state standard(s): \_\_\_\_\_

**What components are you going to include?**

Videos    Strategy Cards    Tip Sheets    Reflection Sheets

Puppet-Making

**What resources do you need to teach the strategy?**

**When and where are you going to teach the strategy?**

**Consider your setting and kids. What adaptations do you need to make?**

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Finally, we offer an **Implementation Checklist** to help you monitor implementation of the steps involved in introducing strategies. We have intentionally not numbered the steps, as we want you to continue to use FYBS as flexibly as you'd like. However, we know that for your purposes, it may be helpful to track your use of steps. Feel free to cross off any steps you aren't using, or you can just circle "N/A" for those steps.

## Feel Your Best Self Implementation Checklist



**Directions:** Write the name of the strategy you are evaluating in column 2. Circle the number that represents your implementation of each step used, or N/A if steps are not used. Write the number you circled in the 3<sup>rd</sup> column, then sum the numbers in the "Total" box. Calculate the % of implementation by dividing the total by the number of steps implemented, then multiplying by 100.

<b>Date:</b> _____ <b>Setting:</b> _____	<b>Key for Scoring:</b> 0 = Step was not used 1 = Step was partially used 2 = Step was used N/A = Step was not applicable	<b>Step Total (row)</b>
<b>Strategy Name:</b> _____		
<b>FYBS Steps</b>		
Did I introduce the strategy?	0    1    2    N/A	
Did I show the corresponding video?	0    1    2    N/A	
Did I check for understanding?	0    1    2    N/A	
Did I provide the strategy card?	0    1    2    N/A	
Did we practice the strategy?	0    1    2    N/A	
Did we reflect on how the strategy worked and how we might use it in our own lives?	0    1    2    N/A	
Did we fill out the reflection sheet?	0    1    2    N/A	
<b>OPTIONAL:</b> Did we use our puppets to practice the strategy?	0    1    2    N/A	
<b>Total:</b>		
<b>Percent:</b> (Total/(Steps Implemented x 2)) x 100 =		
<b>Comments/Notes:</b>   		

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We welcome your feedback as you use the toolkit so that we can make it the best that it can be. We have an [online form](#) where you can give us feedback any time!

### Examples in Action

Here, we offer some case examples to help you think about how you can use the tools in this guide to make decisions about how you can use FYBS.

#### **Mr. Morales makes decisions about how to use FYBS**

Mr. Morales, a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade classroom teacher, decides to use all FYBS components with his class. Using the Facilitator Worksheets, Mr. Morales determines that he wants to focus on strategies in the Calm Your Self category, as those strategies primarily target settling the body. He also wants to teach at least one Catch Your Feelings strategy to provide an option for shifting thoughts. Mr. Morales also would like to cover at least one Connect With Others strategy to promote setting their situation up for success. Mr. Morales decides that it would be reasonable to focus on one strategy per academic quarter. He will fit practice into morning meeting, SEL block, and hallway transitions at least a few times per week, and one strategy per quarter will give his students plenty of time to master the new skills. After reading the strategy descriptions and reviewing the Facilitator Materials, he decides on Belly Breathing, Float Your Boat, Feel it Together, and Shake Out the Yuck. This way, his students can learn strategies to settle their bodies, shift their thoughts, and set their situation so that they can effectively regulate their emotions.

Mr. Morales needs to do some additional planning before getting started. He prints the Guiding Decisions – Planning worksheet to help him make decisions about how to plan for his teaching. He decides to start with Belly Breathing, so he marks off “Belly Breathing” on the left-hand column. Since he already decided to use all components, he checks off that he is going to include the videos, strategy cards, tip sheets, reflection sheets, and puppet-making. Mr. Morales decides that he is going to implement initial teaching of Belly Breathing in the classroom during his SEL block. As he extends teaching to reinforce the strategy, he will include opportunities for practice during morning meeting and SEL block in the classroom and during transitions in the hallway. He knows that, to implement Belly Breathing, he will need to use a projector and speakers to show the strategy video. He will also need paper, a color printer, and scissors or a paper cutter to print out the strategy cards and reflection sheets. Mr. Morales will need to ask his school’s administrative assistant with printing help, but he has access to a projector and speakers in his classroom. In terms of adaptations, Mr. Morales knows that a few children might need additional practice to understand the strategy, so he builds in an additional opportunity to break into small groups to practice Belly Breathing after they practice as a whole group.

Mr. Morales decides to use the Implementation Checklist to track implementation of each strategy. As a bonus, he can use these data as part of his required year-end portfolio focused on SEL! After the initial teaching of Belly Breathing, during which his class was excited and engaged, Mr. Morales completes the checklist. He gives himself a rating of 2 for the first 3 steps listed. Although Mr. Morales did check for understanding, he didn’t get through as many questions as he would have liked, so he gives himself a rating of 1. However, they all did a great job of practicing Belly Breathing, including with their puppets, and talking about how it could apply to their own lives, so he gives himself a 2 for those steps. Finally, Mr. Morales did prompt his class to fill out their Reflection Sheets, but he knows that not all students had enough time to get their thoughts down before transitioning to snack, so he gives himself a 1 for that step. Mr. Morales then writes himself a few notes in the comments section about what went well and what he would like to do differently during initial implementation of the second strategy next quarter.

### **Dr. Edwards makes decisions about how to use FYBS**

Dr. Edwards, an elementary school counselor, decides to incorporate FYBS into her 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade social skills group. Using the Facilitator Worksheets, Dr. Edwards determines that she wants to focus on strategies in the Connect with Others category, as those strategies primarily target setting their situation up for success and building social relationships. She also wants to teach at least one Catch Your Feelings strategy to provide an option for shifting thoughts. Dr. Edwards decides that it would be reasonable to focus on one strategy per month, since the social skills group meets weekly. After reading the strategy descriptions and reviewing the Facilitator Materials, she decides on Feel it Together, Bring a High 5!, Be a Kind Helper, 3 Friendly Wishes, and Turn the Dial. This way, the students can learn strategies to set their situation through positive social relationships, which is an objective of this social skills group, along with a strategy for shifting unhelpful thoughts.

To help with planning for implementation, Dr. Edwards prints the Guiding Decisions – Planning worksheet to complete for the first strategy, Feel It Together. She decides to include the videos, strategy cards, tip sheets, and reflection sheets. Initial teaching of the strategy will take place during social skills group, and throughout the month, she will include



opportunities for practice in other locations like the cafeteria and gymnasium. She has a large monitor in her office to show the videos, and she can use the color printer in the staff lounge to print the strategy cards and reflection sheets. Dr. Edwards plans to create a self-monitoring form to have students complete outside of group to help with tracking progress toward their goals.

Dr. Edwards uses the Implementation Checklist to track her teaching of each strategy. After the initial teaching of Feel it Together during social skills group, Dr. Edwards completes the checklist. She gives herself a rating of 2 for the first 4 steps listed. Students struggled a bit with practicing Feel it Together and talking about how it could apply to their own lives, so she gives herself a 1 for those steps and notes ideas for shifting implementation for the next strategy to be more successful. Finally, students successfully completed their reflection sheets, so Dr. Edwards gives herself a rating of 2 for that step.