



BINDLESTIFF'S CIRKUS AFTER SCHOOL

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Safety- the condition of being safe from, undergoing, or causing hurt, injury, or loss.

Life-long learning- the "ongoing, voluntary, and self-motivated" pursuit of knowledge for either personal or professional reasons.

Responsibility- personal or financial accountability (accepting blame or credit); having a duty; being in control of something; the ability to act independently and make decisions without authorization

Practice- repeated exercise in or performance of an activity or skill so as to acquire or maintain proficiency in it.

Collaboration: the action of working with someone to produce or create something; synonyms: teamwork, partnership, association, working together, cooperation

Compassion-sympathetic consciousness of others' feelings (i.e. distress, fear) together with a desire to alleviate it. Empathy vs. Sympathy. Empathy is the ability to experience the feelings of another person. It goes beyond sympathy, which is caring and understanding for the suffering of others.

Respect- to feel admiration for (someone or something); to regard (someone or something) as being worthy of admiration because of good qualities;
to act in a way which shows that you are aware of someone's rights, wishes, etc.

Trustworthiness - The quality of dependability. Steadiness. The knowledge that something can be relied on. Consistency.

Empowerment - a process of becoming stronger by recognizing and building on individual strengths/ skills in a way that is valuing and affirming for all

Choice- the act of selecting or making a decision when faced with multiple possibilities

Positive words:

Definition / [In Action](#)

Effort a vigorous or determined attempt. / [Do your best; end on a good one; stay on task](#)

Attitude A firmly held belief which affects thoughts and behaviour. Point of View. Frame of Mind. Examples: stubborn, willing, courageous, pessimistic, critical, enthusiastic, energetic, lethargic.

[Be aware of how your state of being \(hungry, angry, tired\) affects your attitude.](#)

[Be aware of how your attitude may shift as you try new or difficult things](#)

Cooperation assistance, especially by ready compliance with requests. / help others; share; follow directions

Leadership the action of leading a group of people or an organization. / be an example of positive behaviour; instill confidence in others; work for the group

Community a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common; a feeling of fellowship with others, as a result of sharing common attitudes, interests, and goals; society; people sharing social values and responsibilities / the feeling of belonging

Character the mental and moral qualities distinctive to an individual.

Qualities of good character: cooperation, focus, attention, patience, enthusiasm, punctuality, duty, sincerity, dependability, truthfulness, gentleness, self-control, endurance, generosity, compassion, boldness

Resilienc(e)(y) the capacity to recover quickly from adversity, change, or difficulties / bouncing back; keeping your mind open to different possibilities; looking for optimism; making a way out of no way

Trust firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something / being honest with someone about your feelings, needs, thoughts; holding someone's confidence

BELL RINGERS

Line ups:

by height,

by shirt color,

by hair color,

by eye color...

challenge participants to do this silently

Balance on one foot with eyes closed

Recite alphabet backwards

Check-in questions -

aesthetic distancing (the gap between conscious reality and fictional reality - safe emotional space)

What is your personal weather status (cloudy, foggy, sunny breaks etc)?

If you were the river today, would you be smooth? Waves? high tide? low tide?

If you were an animal, what would you be?

What are you noticing in your environment that relates to Cirkus?

What's one new and interesting thing you've been thinking about lately?

What's one thing that brings you energy and joy?

What kind of a day have you had so far today?

What words would you use to describe where your head is? And where your heart is?

If you could invite someone you respect to sit beside you and support you in making your day successful, whom would that be?

What's one thing you hope to get accomplished at today's class?

What is one interest of yours that others in this group might not know about?

Given our work in Cirkus so far, what do you feel best about?

Share a one or two-word intention you hold for today's class.

What is something you came across recently that gave you hope or inspiration?

One thing nobody here knows about you?

One thing you would buy if you were a millionaire and why?

One thing you would never like to do again and why?

Would you prefer to travel forward in time, or back?

What's The Weirdest Thing You've Ever Eaten?

What's your strangest talent?

What is something that amazes you?

What is your absolute dream job?

Non-Verbal check-ins:

Make a body shape

Tell us a story with your face

Thumbs up / thumbs down / thumbs “meh”

Show your favorite animal in motion

Mime a chore you hate

Make a letter with your body

Class Format- weekly structure

Circle: this is our “go-to” structure for starting / ending class.

We start each session by creating shared agreements; we come back to circle to discuss group issues

Check-in: each student answers a question by telling a story or following a physical prompt

Value: each week we discuss a different value and experience it in the context of the day's class

Warm-up or Mindfulness: full group

Activity: can be stations or full group

Game: this is an improv exercise or a game with an SEL or Value component

Student self-assessments - can happen any time during class... individually or small groups

Closing circle: a safety check (emotional / physical), a closing ritual

Staff reflections: notes from instructors on how the day went entered into lesson plan

12 Week Lesson Plan

Check In Question:

- Builds a supportive environment by providing an opportunity for coaches and students to become familiar with each other
- Gives students an opportunity to speak and be heard
- Gives teachers an opportunity to feel out individual student and group energy for the day

Connection: Gets students thinking about concepts related to the value that are already relevant to their lives

Value: Things that are important to us and help guide our decisions

- Guide our decisions as a circus class community
- Not only help us learn circus skills, but help us through life in general

Connection: Referring back to the check-in questions helps students see how the value is already a part of their day to day lives

Games: Support community building and skill acquisition with various focus areas

- Teamwork and collaboration
- Problem solving

- Speed, agility, dexterity--physical warm-up
- Can be non-competitive explorations
- Can foster "friendly competition"

- Games are selected to avoid having students be "out"--some games seem to involve "winners" or "losers" on their face, but in the end show that all players are part of the same effort, even if their role in the game shifts

Post Game Reflection: (if time allows)

- How does the game relate to the value?
- How does the game relate to circus?

Connection: Selecting games related to the value--people are more likely to enjoy and retain information when it is presented in a game-like way

Circus Skill: Selecting circus skills related to the value--puts theory into practice

Connection: Students can experience how the value helps them acquire skill or helps them cope with the challenges of skill acquisition

Lesson Plans Follow:

Week 1: Getting to Know Each Other and What Circus Is About, Setting Boundaries

Check In: Name and favorite circus skill if you have taken circus before, or something you like to do?

Shared Agreements--how we agree to treat each other during our shared circus time

"Values" are things that are important to us--they not only help us with our circus skills, but help us through life in general.

Value: Safety--physical and emotional safety

Suggested Game:

- Compliment Game
- Entourage

Demonstration of Circus Skills

- If you have returning students, they can help demonstrate
- Demonstrations should balance giving students a quick overview of the basics that they will learn, and showcasing a couple more advanced tricks that give students a feel for what the prop is about--this way, students can both be inspired by the demonstrations, but also prepared to manage expectations
 - Example: Show how students will start with 1, and 2 scarves first, and then show 3 or 4 scarves
 - Example: Show how students will first learn to stand on stilts and walk in place using the wall for balance, and then show walking forwards and backwards
 - Example: Show easier methods to get a plate spinning before showing a quick start and tricks

Suggested Skills:

- Feather Balancing (and feather balance race)
- Spinning Plates (translating feather balances to plate and stick balances)
- Scarf Juggling (1 and 2 scarves)

Notes:

Week 2: Building Skills

Check In: When you feel impatient, what is something that keeps you calm?

Value: Patience (sometimes in circus, we have to be patient with others as we wait for our turn, and sometimes we have to be patient with ourselves as we learn new skills)

Suggested Games:

- One word stories
- Bucket stilt relay race
- Slow Motion Race
- Feather Balance Race
- Clowns in the Museum

Suggested Skills:

- Specialized activities that require students to take turns--aerials, rolling globe, tightwire, unicycle, human pyramids, stilts, rola bola
- Introduction to ball juggling
- Introduction to diabolo

Helping students regulate frustrations with skill acquisition:

- What does it feel like when you are getting frustrated?
- When you begin to experience those feelings:
 - Ways to take a break:
 - "Shake it out"
 - Take a breath
 - Get a drink of water
 - Work on an easier trick
 - Work on a different skill
 - Come back to it later
 - Use the Self-Assessment Chart to process feelings

*For programs that operate on an "open skills" format, where students pick the skills they want to work on, the "Suggested Skills" section can be disregarded. For programs that operate on rotations where all students work on specific skills for a set period of time, "Suggested Skills" can be followed.

INTRODUCE Self-Assessment Chart**Notes:****Week 3: Continuing to Build Skills**

Check In: What is something you weren't able to do when you were younger that you can do now?

Value: Practice--repeated exercise in or performance of an activity or skill so as to acquire or maintain proficiency in it

Suggested Games: Have the class pick a game they played previously that they want to get better at

Skill Building:

- Have students focus on a skill that they would like to learn more about

Helping students learn to practice efficiently:

- We learn faster if we work on one thing for a period of time rather than changing skills every couple of minutes
 - pick a skill and work on it for 10-15 minutes; see if you can go longer
- Goal Setting: SMART Goals
 - Specific (example: 3 ball juggling vs "better at juggling")
 - Measurable (example: 10 tosses and catches)
 - Achievable (example: are you able to do 3 tosses and catches yet?)
 - Relevant (example: is this a good goal if you are working on tightwire?)
 - Timely (example: 10 tosses and catches of 3 balls by next month)
 - Remind students that it is okay to reassess goals
- Ending on a good note (encourage students to end practice with a success)
- Quality over quantity--practicing incorrectly or with poor technique creates bad habits that will be hard to break

Keep Going With Self Assessment Chart

Notes:

Week 4: Building Community As We Build Skills

Check In:

- Who is somebody that you trust, and why do you trust them?
- What is a promise that you have made and kept?

Value: Trustworthiness--knowing that you can depend on somebody; somebody who tries their best to keep the promises they make, and holds themselves accountable if they cannot

Game:

- Blindfolded trust circle (can evolve in Pinball)
- Blindfolded obstacle course

Suggested Skills:

- Human pyramids
- Partner and passing skills with juggling, spinning plates, diabolo and flower sticks

- other partner acrobatics

Ask if any students want to show off a trick with a partner

Keep Going With Self Assessment Chart

Notes:

Week 5: Choosing Skills to Perform

Check In: What skills would you like to perform in the show?

- Depending upon the size of the class and time available, you may let the students select as many skills as they want to perform, or set limitations (for example: select 2 props, and 1 specialty skill)
- Depending on student skill and comfort level, you might have them give you their top choices, but let them know that teachers will make the final decision (example: tell us 3 props and 2 specialty skills that you want to perform, and out of those, teachers will decide on 2 props and 1 specialty skill that you will perform)

Value: Choice--the act of making a decision when faced with multiple options

Suggested Skills:

- Let students know that this is the last class where they can re-visit any skill they want; after this week, students will be focusing on the skills they will perform
- Continue with Show-offs to get students use to performing in front of others

Self-Assessment Chart

Notes:

Week 6: The Responsibilities of Performing in a Show

Check In:

- **What is something you do to help others?**
- **What is a chore that you have at home?**
- **What is something that you are in charge of taking care of by yourself?**

Value: Responsibility--having a duty, being in control of something, being able to act independently

- When performing in a show, we are responsible for knowing what acts we are in, when we are suppose to go on stage, and what props or equipments we need
- In order to be prepared, we are responsible for coming to class, or communicating to the teacher and our classmates if we have to miss a class

Suggested Game:

- If/Then
- Stage Directions
- 10 Count
- Human Chess

Skills: Let students know which skills they will be performing in the show and begin act creation

Show offs: Have students continue performing in front of each other

Keep Going With Self-Assessment Chart

Notes:

Week 7: A Circus Works As aCommunity

Check In: Can you think of a time when somebody was kind to you? How did it make you feel?

- What is something you do to show kindness to others?

Value: Compassion--being aware of how others are feeling

How can we show compassion in circus class as we go through our first rehearsal and get ready for the show?

- Being a good audience during the rehearsal
- Being supportive of fellow performers
- Giving focus when others are performing

Skill: Rehearse the show

- Explain that first rehearsals can be rough and take a lot of patience
- Practice makes progress
- Mistakes will happen--rehearsal is how we get the kinks out

Notes:

Week 8: The Final Show

Check In: How are you feeling about performing?

Value: Resiliency--the ability to recover quickly from difficulties or adapt to change

- Remind students that feeling nervous is natural; it means they care about doing well
- The audience is made up of family and friends who are supportive, and want to see them share what they have been learning and want to see them succeed
- Many people aren't familiar with circus skills, so if they make a mistake while performing, the audience might not even notice
- Remind students to take their time, take a breath, take a moment to center and ground

Notes:

Week 9: Wrap Up

Check In: What was your favorite thing about performing?

- or, Roses, Thorns and Buds about your circus experience?

Value: Lifelong learning--the pursuit of knowledge continues throughout our entire lives

Student directed class:

- Students can pick the games to play
- Students can explore their favorite props one more time.

Exit Surveys (if applicable)

Notes: