

# 5 Reasons Why Social-Emotional Learning Should Be a Daily Routine

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*By Sara LaHayne*

In a world that is constantly trying to divide our attention, daily routines can help ground us and provide a sense of structure and security to our days. [Establishing routines](#) that I hold sacred have helped me to enter my day intentionally and balance the responsibilities of being a mother, wife, friend, and leader of [Move This World](#). Whether you are a district administrator, school leader, teacher, or student, routines can have a positive impact on your life.

Routines are even *more* important for our young people. At the beginning of each school year, a large chunk of classroom time is devoted to teaching expectations and practicing routines. It seems there's a routine for every portion of the day, from arrival, to using the restroom, to learning activities like warmups or quizzes, to dismissal—all for good reason. Routines create a more predictable environment, which allows students to feel safe and promotes effective classroom management. This, in turn, contributes to more effective teaching and learning.



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Sara LaHayne  
Founder & CEO, Move This World



Too often, social-emotional learning (SEL) is approached as a standalone curriculum or program rather than a daily routine or ritual. *Here are five reasons why social-emotional learning needs to become a daily classroom routine:*

1. **Routines ground us and provide a feeling of safety and security.** We know that students need to feel safe and secure in order to learn, and [we know that routines can help achieve help this](#). Routines and rituals are even more important for students who have experienced trauma. Twenty-six percent of children in the US will either witness or experience a traumatic event before they turn four and nearly 35 million US children have experienced one or more types of childhood trauma. Part of becoming a trauma sensitive school is establishing consistent daily routines and stability so that students know they are in a safe place.
2. **Safety and security is needed to authentically build social-emotional skills.** Forming authentic connections and being honest with our emotions means we have to be vulnerable. In order to be vulnerable, we need to create classroom communities that are supportive. Establishing a time for social-emotional learning each day provides a safe space for students to authentically connect to themselves and to others as they build social-emotional skills.
3. **Students need an opportunity to identify and express**

**emotions on a daily basis.** Feelings and emotions change frequently, sometimes from one moment to the next. By providing students with a daily opportunity to identify how they are feeling and work through any challenge or obstacle they may be facing, we are helping them better prepare for their day ahead and be better able to navigate challenging situations as they arise.

4. **Teachers need time to check in with students on a daily basis.** Teachers are better able to form meaningful relationships and meet individual needs when they understand what students are carrying into the classroom each day from an emotional standpoint. They can also identify students who may need additional support from a mental health professional more proactively. It's important to note that teachers should not be expected to add "mental health professional" to their own resume. This means it's important to provide teachers with a structured framework that allows them to quickly touch base with students without taking away from instructional time. If needed, teachers can connect students to the appropriate resources and individuals.
5. **Empathy and other social-emotional skills are just like any other muscle in your body: they need to be flexed regularly in order to grow.** We would never go to the gym for one hour a week and check off the box saying, "OK—now I'm physically fit." Similarly, we can't learn about or practice social-emotional skills for one hour a week and expect to be mentally, emotionally, and socially well.

So, how can you develop a daily routine focused on social-emotional learning? Find a time each day for students to identify and express their emotions. This is best done at the start of the school day, perhaps during a morning meeting or an advisory period. Transition times like coming back from lunch or recess, or prior to dismissal, can work as well as they give students time to reflect and reset. Creative practices like journaling or matching an emotion with a movement can help students get started. One

place to get started is [Move This World's](#) social-emotional learning program, which provides PreK-12 educators and students with short videos that open and close the school day in order to ritualize a daily practice of identifying, expressing and managing emotions through creative expression.

Think about the rituals in your life that you hold sacred—would you begin your day without brushing your teeth? Taking a shower? Imagine a school day where rituals of identifying, expressing, and managing our emotions were integrated seamlessly and effortlessly so that we could all thrive and reach our full potential.

*Sara LaHayne is the Founder & CEO of Move This World, a social emotional learning program that provides PreK-12 educators and students with video tools to strengthen their social and emotional wellbeing in order to create healthy environments where effective teaching and learning can occur.*