


**Elementary School Youth Activity:
Developing a Community Commitment
Creating a Positive Program Climate through RULER**

Video 4 

Note: This youth activity connects directly to the learning from the staff activity, Developing a Staff Community Commitment, and is an iteration of that activity. For this reason, we suggest that your staff view the video titled [Creating a Positive Program Climate](#) through RULER and complete the accompanying staff activities before facilitating this activity with youth.

Activity Summary: In this activity, youth will:

- Work together to create a Community Commitment
- Describe how they want to feel in your program
- Identify actionable behaviors to feel the way they want to feel

Time: 1 hour - this can be completed over multiple days

Materials

- Various books or video clips, index cards or sticky notes, poster board, markers, art supplies or other materials for creating the Community Commitment visual

Facilitator Directions

1. Introduce the Community Commitment by explaining:

"A Community Commitment is a promise that we make to ourselves and each other so we can feel the way we want to feel when we're together in (insert your program name here)."

2. Ask:

"Why do we make promises? How do we benefit from keeping our promises to each other? Call on a few youth to share."


3. Say:

"Our Community Commitment is important because it is a promise we make about how we will work together to feel how we want to feel more often. We're going to start by thinking about how we want to feel when we're together."

4. Ask: *"How do you want to feel when you are here?"*

Ask each youth to think of 3 to 5 feeling words. Have them write each word on a card or sticky note. Circulate and help youth who might not have the vocabulary or be able to write or spell independently. Collect the cards.




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5. Sort the cards by grouping feeling words that are repeated. Pair feeling words that are similar and discuss which word better represents how everyone wants to feel (for example, *kind* and *thoughtful* are similar, and the group can decide which one better represents how they'd like to feel.) Based on the most frequent words and discussions of similar words, determine as a group which words will appear on the Community Commitment. Allow youth to participate in the sorting and pairing process as appropriate.

6. Pick one of your feeling words. Prompt youth to brainstorm what that feeling word *looks like*, *sounds like*, and *feels like* to them. Essentially, youth are exploring what the feeling word looks like in daily life and what it means to them. Go through each word one-by-one, and record ideas as the group brainstorms.

Safe

| Looks Like  | Sounds Like  | Feels Like  |
|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Having a buddy when we go to the bathroom • Everyone sitting together | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inside voices • Asking if a friend is comfortable | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being loved • Calm |

7. Ask:

"How do we help each other and ourselves experience these feelings? In other words, what will the group **do** each day to ensure that everyone experiences each **feeling**? The actions should be specific and observable."


These might look like:

Kind: Share the supplies; help a friend who's hurt.

Happy: Say "hi" to each other when we get to our program.

8. Work together to create a visual representation of the agreements. Include your 3 to 5 feeling words, and the behaviors that will help youth experience these feelings more. This can be a large poster, or a digital display of your Community Commitment. Be creative and do what works for your group! Remember, it's the content - the feeling words and actions - that is most meaningful.

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9. Debrief using the following questions:

- How did it feel to create our Community Commitment?
- Why do you think it will be important for us to help each other feel the way we want to feel?
- How can we celebrate our friends for keeping the promises made on the Community Commitment?

Note: Sustain your Community Commitment by integrating it throughout your program and finding systemic ways to integrate and reference your commitments. See ideas below for how to keep your Community Commitment alive and integrate it into your program.

Ideas to Keep Your Community Commitment Alive

- **Daily Focus:** Identify one behavior to highlight. Ask youth to pay special attention to it and to acknowledge, thank, or celebrate others when they engage in the behavior through the day.
- **Community Commitment Reflection:** Review your commitments to the community. Ask youth to consider an area of challenge for themselves and how they can work toward developing the skills they need to live up to that area. Ask youth to also recognize an area of strength for themselves, and how they can continue to uphold the Community Commitment in this way. Consider suggesting that youth add new behaviors to the Community Commitment if you see a pattern of challenging areas for youth as a whole.
- **Feeling Word of the Week:** Begin your program meeting with a reflection on a single feeling word on your Community Commitments. For example, ask youth to get into pairs. Then, ask them to think about a recent time they have felt one of the words on the Community Commitment, including when the event took place, where they were, who was present, and what happened that made them feel this way. Invite partners to share when they experience that feeling in your community.