

# SELF-AWARENESS PROGRAM 2019

Activity Report Submitted to “American  
Himalayan Foundation”



Note: Introducing and making an effort to implement this curriculum does not necessarily indicate that EduLift is an expert on this curriculum, but rather is putting a genuine effort towards highlighting the importance of ‘social, emotional and ethical learning’.

## Self-Awareness Program 2019

This year EduLift designed the Self Awareness Program by researching and adapting the elements of **Social, Emotional and Ethical**. We conduct two days sessions for the students of grade 11 & 12 -**Namgyal High Secondary School**.

Beneficiary School	Beneficiary class	Total number of Beneficiaries
Namgyal High School, Gokarna-Kathmandu	Grade 11 and 12	81

### The Self-awareness program framework:

1. Involves processes through which students and adults can acquire and effectively apply the knowledge, attitudes and skills necessary to understand ourselves.
2. Guides to manage their emotions feel and show empathy for others.
3. Establish and achieve positive goals, develop and maintain positive relationships, and make decisions, so that one can handle ourselves, relationships, and work effectively and ethically.

### Objectives of the program

- 1) To provide basic knowledge about Self-awareness.
- 2) To let the participants realise and respect the similarities/differences between one's own and others' perspectives and demonstrate how to express understanding or those who hold different opinions.
- 3) To understand the importance of Kindness, Emotional Hygiene, Positive Thought Bubble.
- 4) To bring some realization about the importance of School as a whole and seeing school as a system.
- 5) To bring the idea of planning, implementing and evaluating one's Community and global engagement in their life.

In order to achieve the above mentioned objectives, EduLift specifically designed and implemented the following program framework.

(Note: all the activities mentioned below can and were modified according to the situation, number of participants and availability of the resources.)

### **Program framework**

<b>PROGRAM</b>	<b>TIME</b>	<b>ACTIVITY</b>
Ice breaking	9:30-10:00	Warm up session
Participants introductory session	10:00-10:10	Individuals including facilitators will be introducing themselves by using only their name and one sentence.
Program introduction /introduction on Self awareness	10:10-10:20	Brainstorming on Self awareness
Activity 1	10:20-10:30	The participants will be given a set of sticky note, where they will have to write 'one challenge they are facing in their life.' Later, each of the participants will stick their sticky notes on the board and the fellow participants will offer possible solutions to any of the sticky note they prefer.
Code of Conduct; COC	10:30-10:35	In mutual understanding and led by the facilitator, the whole class will make a list of CoC's to be followed through the whole session.
Pre assessment	10:35-10:40	A pre assessment will be done in order to analyse the knowledge of the participants about the session.
First session	10:40-11:20	Exploring kindness, remembering kindness
Second session	11:40-12:30	Exploring attention
Lunch Break	12:30-13:30	Lunch Break
Continuation of second session	13:30-14:00	Emotional Hygiene Each group will have an emotion to discuss and prepare sample strategies on four emotions: sadness, fear, anger and stress.
Third session	14:00-14:40	Practicing positive bubble and sassing school as a system Each group will get a certain challenging situation to create a positive thought bubble through Self Talk. Highlighting the importance of School as a whole.
Fourth session	15:00-16:00	Write a letter to your future self? Information on the basic requirements to have after graduating high school. Post assessment

Before the Self-awareness session started, an **ice breaking session** for 30 minutes was done with much enthusiasm and excitement. EduLift highly believes and follows the importance of ice breaking sessions because it:

1. Helps to start the flow of the whole session.

2. Supports in knowing the participants.
3. Helps to warm up the conversation and also ensures that the participants enjoy their interaction and the session.
4. Helps to create an environment for the participants to feel comfortable in expressing themselves and their potentials.



After the ice breaking session, Participants introduction, program introduction, making of Code of Conduct; CoC and Pre- assessment was done.

The **participant's introduction** was done in a very short yet effective way.

Instead of asking the participants to introduce themselves in a traditional way, the participants were asked to say their name and only a sentence to describe them. Some of the participants introduced themselves as - My name is Dawa and i am a savage :) my name is Tsering and I cry very easily and so on. This way of introduction helped the participants to really think about themselves rather than depending on the available knowledge such as their class, age and school. The facilitators started the session for the participants to give an idea of the activity.

For the **program introduction**, a discussion on 'Self Awareness' was done. EduLift believes it is always important to know the perspective of the participants in order to conduct an effective session. Here we did brainstorming and pre assessment to have the analysis. Afterwards, the whole class and the facilitators made a mutual Code of Conduct (CoC) to be followed by everyone present in the session.



Below is a sample of the CoC made in and for the session.

### Code of Conduct

- 1) Mutual RESPECT.
- 2) Use of language (the language used should not be harsh and should not be disrespectful in any form)
- 3) What's shared in the circle will remain within the circle.
- 4) Any form of dominance will not be tolerated.
- 5) The whole class will support and encourage each other.

Having the participants be involved in making the rules ensured that they were able to follow the rules without being reminded about it time and again, which also created a sense of responsibility in the participants.

The whole session was divided into Four sessions: 1) Exploring and Remembering Kindness 2) Exploring attention and Emotional hygiene 3) Practicing Positive Bubble and Seeing school as a system 4) Community and global engagement and Post assessment.



In the first session, we explored a bit more about **Kindness** rather than just the meaning of the word itself. We tried to explore Kindness by working to be in a set of diverse participants and exploring the commonalities.

To explore the commonalities, an activity was done where the participants had to raise their hands if the statement said by the facilitator applied to them. For example: raise your hand if you like momos, raise your hand if your favorite color is blue, raise your hand if you like someone, raise your hand if you have black hair .... and more.

These activities help them realize and see the commonalities around them as they all shared some common choices and yet are different individuals. It was also to highlight the importance of seeing and respecting the diversity and acknowledging the commonalities shared.

After this, the participants were asked to recall and write a time in their life when they were being kind to someone or when someone was kind to them. When writing the memory the participants were asked to answer the following two questions:

1. What did the memory look like?
2. How did it feel to be receiving/giving kindness?

Some of the participants were brave enough to share their deep personal experiences of receiving Kindness with the whole class and was a very emotional moment of each one of us present there. We made sure that we followed the CoC and respected the matter shared to remain within the class only.



It was amazing to witness the willingness of the participants to share such personal experiences voluntarily but on the other hand, it also highlighted that these students



were/are not used to understanding own emotions and have less opportunities to talk and share about it. The students were seeking opportunities to share what they felt and we would like to believe that the session helped them in finding that space to talk about how they felt and appreciate the act of Kindness done to them.

In the session, it was highlighted that it is important to be kind but it is also equally important to remember the act of kindness done to oneself or done by one self, to have the motivation in doing more acts of kindness.

After exploring, understanding and remembering kindness it was important to **explore Attention.**

The participants were asked: 'what does it mean to pay attention? How do we do that? What happens when we pay attention does anything happen in our body?'

A discussion was done to collect the opinions of the participants. Then an activity was done in order for the participants to have a clear understanding about the topic rather than providing them a lecture.



The activity was:

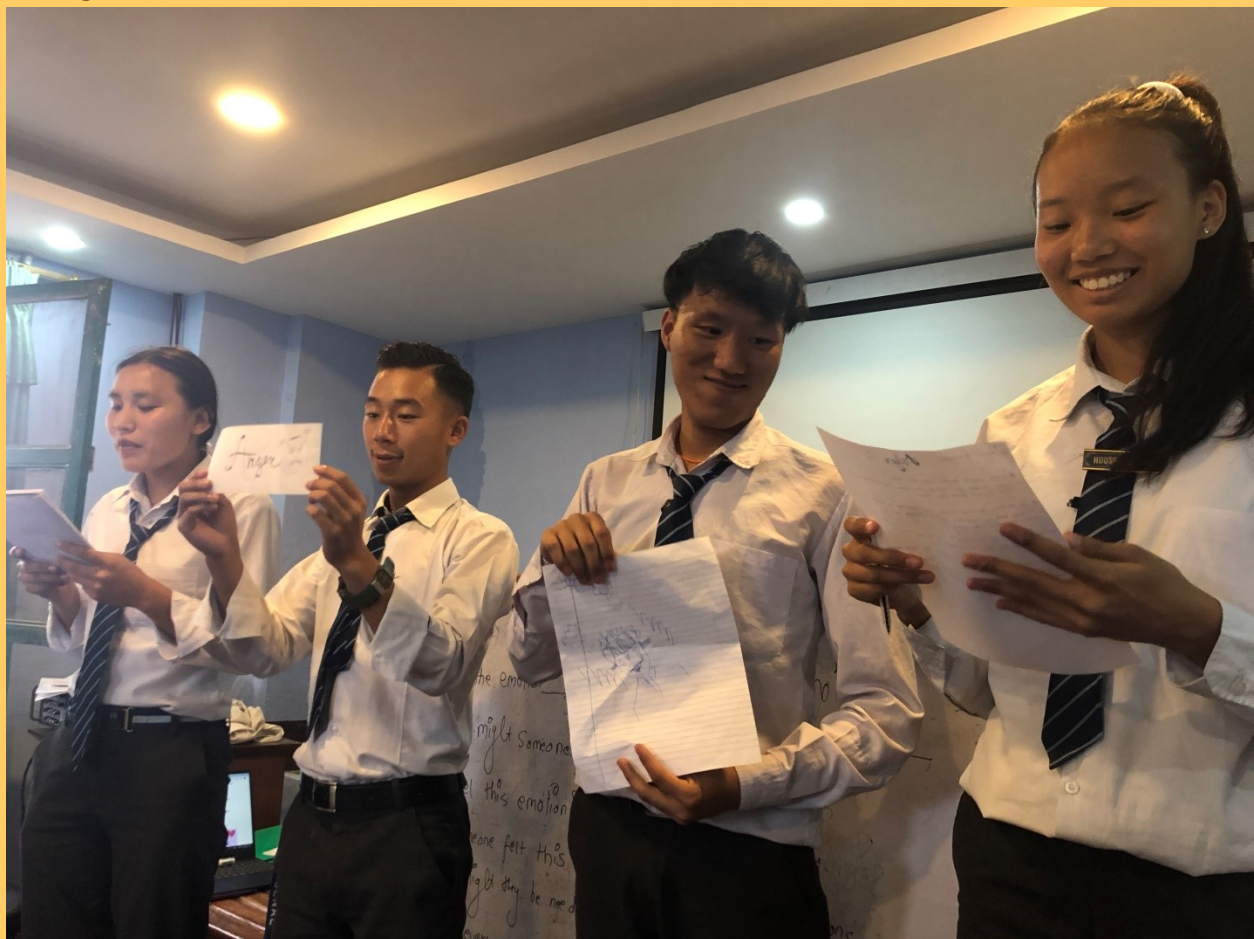
The lights in the room were dimmed and they were asked to focus on an object (here a big packet of biscuit crackers). The participants then were asked to focus on the very same object but with the lights on. The participants were asked to describe the object they

focused on and share how was the very same object different when the light was dim, and how different the object looked when there was light.

They were asked : what methods did they try or how did they try to make themselves pay attention to the object. Did it work? Did it help? Do they think they can pay attention WHEN they WANT ?why? What were the distracting factors making it hard for them to pay attention?

A group sharing session was done to try and understand everyone's perspective. They mentioned that the lack of light, the external noise, the limitations of the object being at one spot were some of the distracting factors for them while trying to pay attention. It was important for the facilitators to highlight the fact that just as the external factors has some effect in distracting us to pay attention; we also have internal factors such as fleeting thoughts, hunger, daydreaming, fatigue, worry and more that might distract us in trying to pay attention. During the activity, the participants focused on only the external factors and did not bother to notice the internal factors.

Improving attention is like strengthening our muscles, the more we practice the better and stronger it becomes.



And having said that, **we reminded the participants to not forget that everyone has their own perspective and notice different things about the same object. It was/is**



**important to remind, there is no right or wrong answers here (because we all see and describe the object in relate to our experiences)**

Next activity was done to practice more of paying attention.

Firstly, the participants were made to pass around an empty cup , secondly the cup was partially filled with water and again they had to pass the partially filled cup in the class making sure that everyone in the classroom gets the chance to hold the cup and also without spilling water. Lastly, following the same instructions as before they all had to pass the cup around but this time the cup being completely filled with water.

During this activity, it was noticed that when the cup was empty, the participants paid less attention - almost zero attention in passing the cup but as the cup started getting filled with water, the participants started paying more and more attention to the cup so that they don't spill water.



After the activity, the participants were asked:

**how did you feel holding an empty cup and holding a filled cup, did you notice the sensations in your body, how did you feel when the cup coming closer to you, how did you feel watching others when your turn was over, what distracted you?**

Following more questions were asked to help them understand the learning from the activity:

1. Did anyone notice that they started paying closer attention as the poured the water was poured?
2. Do you remember what you were thinking?
3. How were you able to not spill the water and have the attention on the cup? What helped you pay attention?

Summing up this activity, it was reminded to them that:

4. try to pay attention as you did to the cup, keeping the mind right on it, mindfulness. IT IS NOT A RACE, GO AS SLOWLY AS YOU NEED TO, EVERYONE HAS THEIR OWN WAY AND PACE OF LEARNING.
5. Be aware of what's going outside as well as on the inside.
6. It's okay to make mistakes, we can always begin again like we can always refill the cup with water.

After practicing how to pay attention, it was very important to talk about **Emotional hygiene**. In the pre assessment, we were able to know that majority of the participants did not have or had very less knowledge about Emotional Hygiene.

Emotional Hygiene is an idea developed by Karla McLaren. Karla McLaren, M.Ed. is an award winning author, social science researcher, and empathy pioneer. Her lifelong work





focuses on her grand unified theory of emotions, which revalues even the most 'negative' emotions and opens startling new pathways into self-awareness, effective communication and healthy empathy. She is also the founder and CEO of Emotions Dynamics and the developer of the Empathy Academy online learning site.

To present the very simple idea of 'Just as we take care of our body, we can take care of our minds', this session was conducted which highlighted more of Risky emotions. Emotional hygiene allows us to '**think twice**' when we experience a risky emotion, protecting ourselves and others.

**(Risky emotions:** emotions (Frustration, depression, anxiety, sadness, fear, disgust, rejection, discrimination) which can prompt behaviors that harm ourselves and others if they go out of hand. The participants were reminded that it is okay to feel these emotions and everyone has it. A group discussion was done in order to understand what risky emotions are. The participants then were suggested to do the below checklist in time when they feel they have any of the risky emotions, which might help them to refrain from risky emotions:

- Could this emotion be dangerous?
- Does this emotion cause stress for me or others?
- What might happen if everyone in our school/class had a lot more of this emotion?
- What might happen if everyone had a lot less of this emotion?
- What else comes to mind about this emotion? Have I explored about this emotion? do I know about this emotion?
- Am I missing anything?

Secondly, we did a group activity to start and have an open discussion about the risky emotions. It was very important for the participants to know about the risky emotions but it was and is equally important for them to start having an open discussion about it.

We divided the whole class in a group of four and each group was given four different risky emotions to discussion upon and prepares a strategy to deal with the emotions using a sample strategy format provided by the facilitator.

The risky emotions to work upon were: Fear, Stress, Anger and sadness.

#### Sample strategy for dealing with Risky emotions

- 1) Name of the emotion: .....
- 2) When might someone feel this emotion? .....
- 3) If someone felt this emotion, what might they need? .....
- 4) Does everyone feel this emotion sometimes? .....
- 5) If someone felt this emotion, what sensations might they feel in their body? .....



Things we can do with our bodies: .....

Things we can do with our minds: .....

Things we can do with other people: .....

What can we do if we see another person having this emotion? .....

Each group presented their sample strategies after having a group discussion. This activity helped the participants to share their perspectives and helped them in learning to deal with risky emotions without the facilitator taking the primary lead in giving them information. It was also worthy to witness that the participants were actively involved and had serious dialogues when talking about emotions.

After talking about the risky emotions, which also involves high negative thinking, we conducted a session about **practicing positive bubble**.

To practise positive bubble one needs to start doing self-talk and we asked if anyone in the class does Self talk on a regular basis. Then the class was asked to remember a time when they needed to use positive self-talk for themselves. Following that the class was instructed to draw a bubble in a paper, which will be their thought bubble. In the thought bubble, they were to write what positive talk do they said to themselves in a past situation or what positive talk they might say to themselves in a situation where they might need self-talk. For this activity the participants were given some situations to practise positive self-talk on:

*Situation 1:* Imagine tomorrow is going to be your first day in a completely new high school/university where you know no one. In such coming scenario, what positive self-talk will you do to prepare for the first day of school/university?

*Situation 2:* Imagine that you have to give an individual presentation to your whole school and you are very nervous about it. In such a situation, what positive things will you say to yourself to create a positive thought bubble?

*Situation 3:* Imagine you and your only best friend had a really bad argument/fight and are no longer in talking terms. In such a situation, what positive talk will you do with yourself?

*Situation 4:* Imagine you have failed your exam and you know your family is going to be very upset about it. In such case, what positive talk will you do with yourself?

The participants were let to write inside their thought bubble and later were asked to share. After the sharing, the participants were also asked if they wanted to add any new positive talk in their friends notes which might be helpful for them in the future.

Then the class also did a discussion on following situations and tried creating positive talk for it.

**Some of the common thoughts in the teens:**

**"I will fail the test".....**

**“What if I can’t do it” .....**  
**“Things are not going to work out” .....**  
**“They/nobody doesn't like me” .....**  
**“I’m stupid” .....**  
**“I’m not attractive” .....**  
**“He/she is better than me” .....**

The class then was advised some possible ways to practice realistic thinking to practice positive self-talk and some coping statements that might help them in certain situations:

- “If I get anxious, I will **try some calm breathing**”, “I just need to do my best”, “People cannot tell when I am feeling anxious”, “This has happened before and I know how to handle it”, or “My anxiety won’t last forever”.
- Try to carry little index cards with positive notes on it or carry something that might help you be calm and shall encourage you.
- Stop saying ‘I **think** my teacher hates me’ ‘I **feel like** he/she doesn’t like me’ ‘I **feel like** i will not be selected’ ‘I **feel like** i am not good enough’. It will be helpful to think of facts instead of possible scenarios to help with anxious situations.

Teaching the young participants to create and practise positive thought bubble and positive self-talk is extremely important these days. The young students are very much in daily pressure from their school, their teachers, their family issues, their personal issues and more. So it is much needed to remind them about the possible ways to have a self-talk at least once in a while and self-motivate themselves.

### **Seeing School as a system**

One additional objective of the Self-awareness session is also to try and highlight the importance of school in their life and to bring some level of appreciation for their school and the school system. Every school has its problems and pretty often the students complain and nag about what the school has to offer them, so through an activity, we tried to practice self-realization in the class.

The participants were asked to look at their school as a system and all the people involved in maintaining and running it. They were also to recognize the ways the school needs each of these people and some of the things people share in common.

### **The school being the focus.**

The participants then were to draw a representation of their school in the center of a large piece of chart paper or on paper and were given time to explore the parts of their school and pay ATTENTION. They were to list at least 10 actual people or people’s job the school

connects to, needs, depends on. Eg: the principal, the cook, the cleaning didi, the gatekeeper, the teachers, the school captain.

**Then they all were asked to ask themselves:**

What if some of these people were not be able to come to school, what would happen? Would it change anything in the system? Are you a part of this system? How do you we affect people outside the system?

Thinking about school system helped them realise how important each part is and how important each person is, because each person's actions affect the situation around.

Also, the participants were asked **'in what ways are these people the same as us? In what ways are they different?**

It was reminded to the participants that 'Each and everyone involved in the school system, all have emotions and feelings; they all want happiness and they all want to be treated with RESPECT and KINDNESS.

To end this particular topic, the facilitator also talked about how;

Most of the times, the teachers, the administration and the school hardly share their emotions because they are seen as having strong personalities but as being a part of the school system, the students should at least try to be aware and acknowledge the fact that they also do have emotions even though they don't share it. The school might be going through a huge financial crisis or a teacher might be having a hard time in their personal life but rarely do they share and express, so where should the students try to practice the idea of valuing everyone's perspectives and respecting it with kindness.

The students also might feel a sense of responsibility and a desire to repay the many benefits received from their school. We reminded them that 'one may not be able to change an entire system, but one can act in ways that can maximize change by focusing on key elements within a system. This can provide them a feeling of empowerment without being overwhelmed by the scale of responsibilities they might get.

It is very important to practise Valuing Perspectives (Getting out of the proximity, seeing and understanding rather than being judgmental).

**Possible engaging options for the participants were also shortly discussed:**

- 1) Setting an intention for the coming months/years.
- 2) Internship
- 3) Volunteering
- 4) Attending workshops/seminars
- 5) Organizing community events or school events
- 6) Learn new skills including languages
- 7) Make a habit of writing assignments
- 8) Start looking for scholarship opportunities.
- 9) Trying some new sports, adapt new hobbies.



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As the session ended we did a post assessment of the whole session followed by one last activity:

Write a letter to your future self? Here the students had to think and write a letter to their 5-10 year old version of them. EduLift collected the letters and these letters will be given back to them during their graduation time.

We asked the participants to write The Take Away from this Self Awareness Program?

(Unedited answers)

1. I know much about myself & to control the emotions the topic is much more interesting & useful.
  2. I realized that knowing yourself is more important than knowing about others since the only thing that matters at the end is “ you” not ‘They’.
  3. Never assume just do what you want to do. Always take positive thoughts while performing any activities.
  4. To be strong and confident in any condition.
  5. A new mind set full of new knowledge, every program event were simple but it had deep meaning into it.
  6. For self-awareness we need to be positive in every situation, emotion and need to be controlled by self. As it is important to learn more
  7. Extra information about exploring kindness, to build more attention capacity, strategies for risky emotion to hold opportunity to share personal views.
  8. I Think or know that we should first believe in Yourself and I also get some solution to my problem in this program
  9. We should be focusing our attention whenever we're doing anything. Be kind and I learning about Emotional Hygiene (This is New for me).
  10. I know EduLift is good at building someone’s confidence but today i got to know others feelings and to know about myself a bit.
  11. From this program I got to know myself better than before and I learnt many new things like emotional hygiene.
  12. I got to know that everyone has a problem & it’s only that they don't share it. I got to know more about people in this session.
  13. This program helps us to build our confidence and i have learnt lots of new things in this session
  14. More Confident, knowing and understanding oneself a good opportunity to be better and better.
  15. I've learnt to accept that every person is different but we do have some commonalities. I will take away the solutions to my problems. I have quite learnt more to build my self-esteem. As always this Self-awareness program of EduLift was worth it.
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