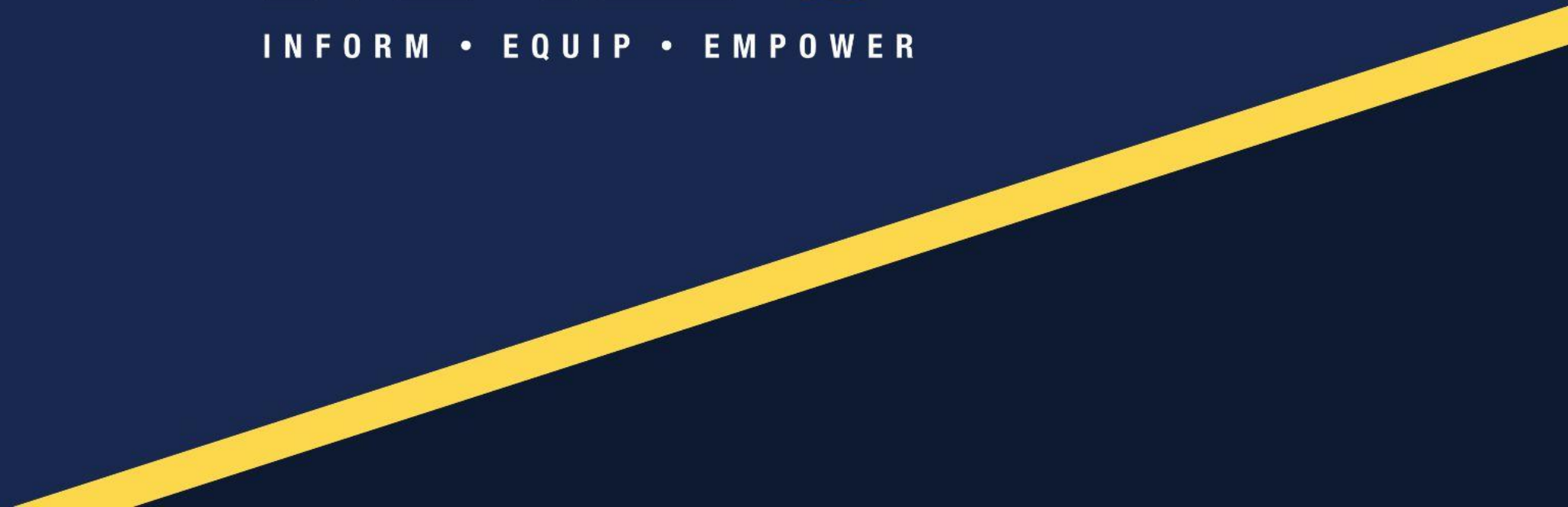


# M4LU

INFORM • EQUIP • EMPOWER



# Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

Version 1, January 2, 2025

- What is SEL?
- How did it start?
- How did it spread?
- SEL's dominance and entrance or CRT
- What does SEL look like in schools?
- What does SEL look like on the ground?
- How to fight back

# What is SEL?

- Educational method developed at Yale between 1968 and 1994.
- Transfers responsibility of child's personality development from parents to schools.
- Emphasizes trauma, leading teachers to de-emphasize academics in favor of emotions.
- Over the past 20 years, it has become prevalent in most public schools and some private ones, as well.
- Linked to the Fetzer Institute, a New Age Spiritualist and Occultist organization with links to socialist and Marxist thought.

# What is SEL?

- The nonprofit CASEL is the primary “pusher” of SEL curriculums
  - Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning ([CASEL.org](https://CASEL.org))
- SEL receives massive amounts of funding via the federal government and liberal/left philanthropies and nonprofits
- Despite the word “nonprofit,” SEL is a cash cow
  - Many of these entities net \$3M-\$10M per year.
- Datamining students via screeners and surveys also a major component of the SEL “data driven” cycle
  - Student data represents another cash cow

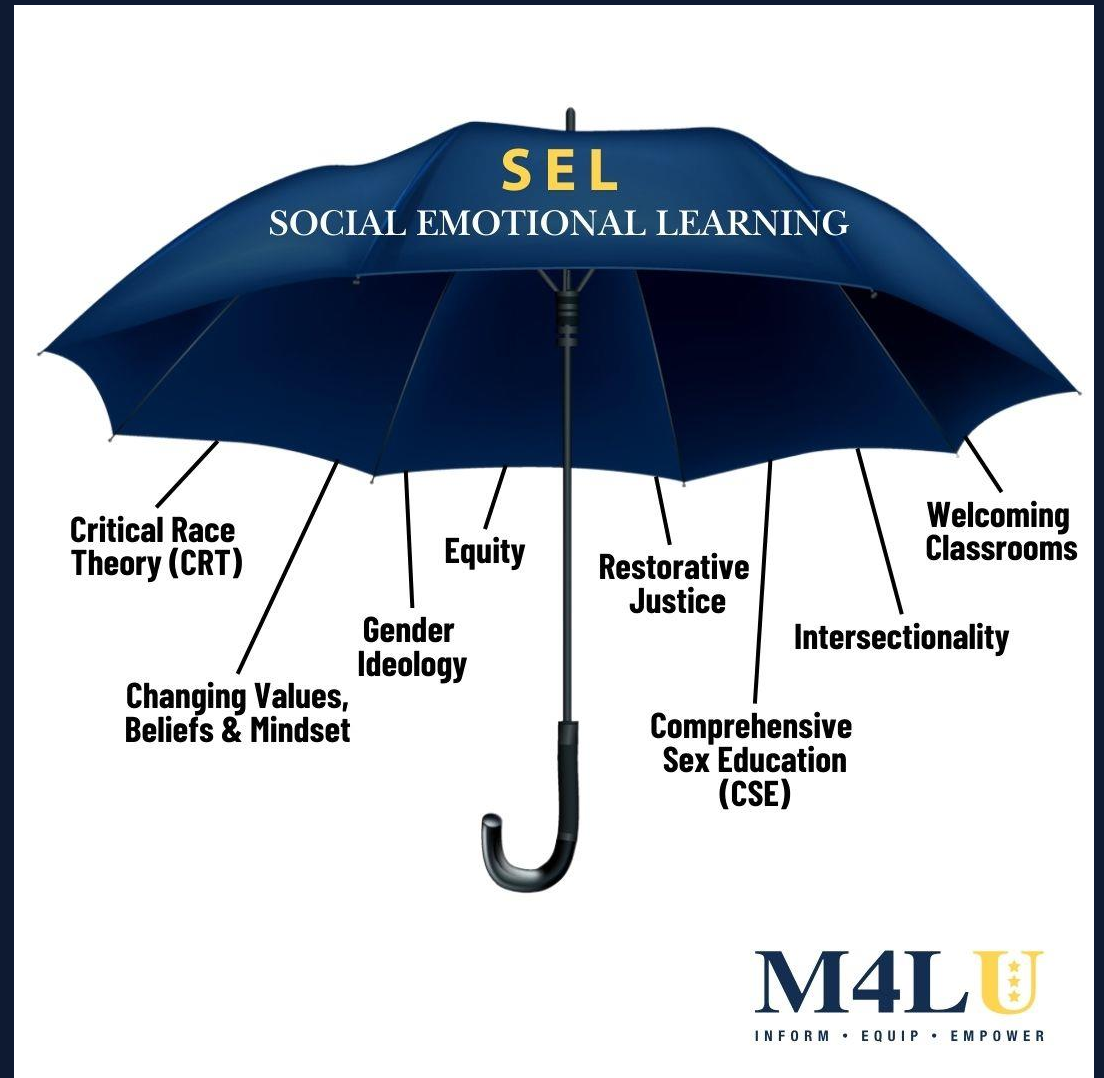
# SEL

## The Great Facilitator

SEL's focus on emotional trauma make it an ideal entry point for other ideologies with claims of psychological trauma due to:

- Racial Injustices (CRT)
- Gender Discrimination (Gender Theory)
- Sexual Rights (CSE)

SEL thus becomes an umbrella for nearly all other ideologies. It's integration into nearly every aspect of the school day makes these ideologies inescapable for students.



# How did SEL Start?

1968-1995

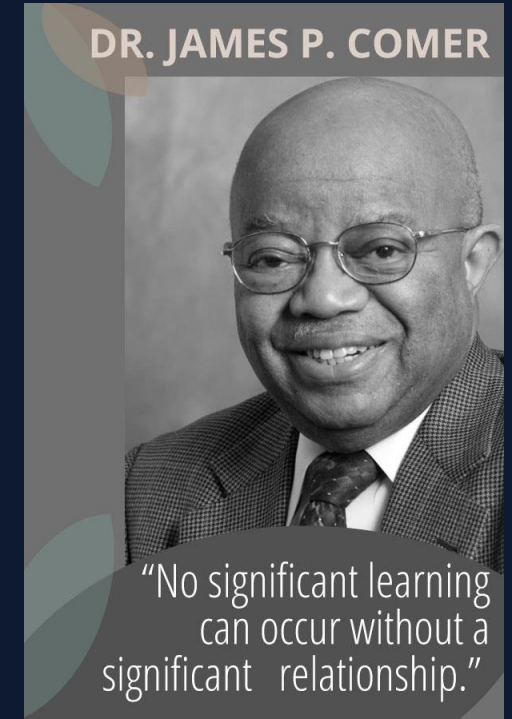
**1968-1995**

Like a lot of bad ideas that hurt Americans, SEL started with tenured academics and establishment journalists.



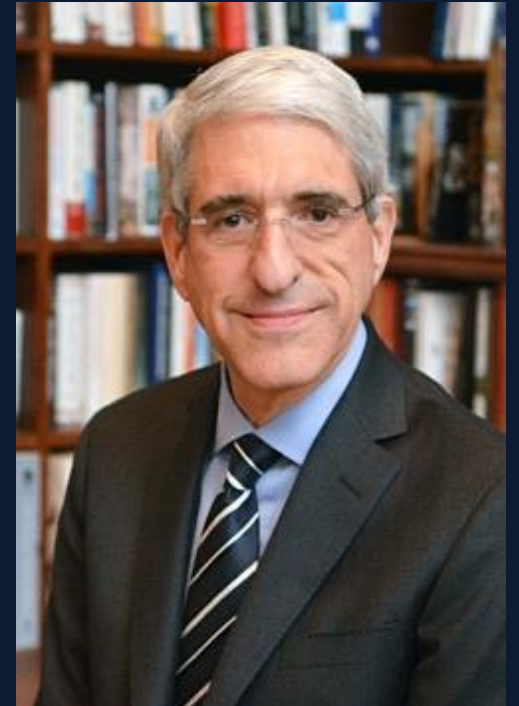
# Dr. James Comer

- Yale psychiatrist who founded SEL in 1968 to address underperforming students in New Haven, Connecticut
- His solution: make schools responsible for student mental health.
  - Rebranded it “emotional intelligence”
  - A curriculum that would focus not just on traditional subjects (Math, English, etc.), but the “whole child”
  - This meant a “management team of about a dozen people” making judgment calls about a child’s development
- Statistics did not support the success of Comer’s program
- However, his ideas gained important followers
  - Chiefly, Dr. Peter Salovey and Daniel Goleman



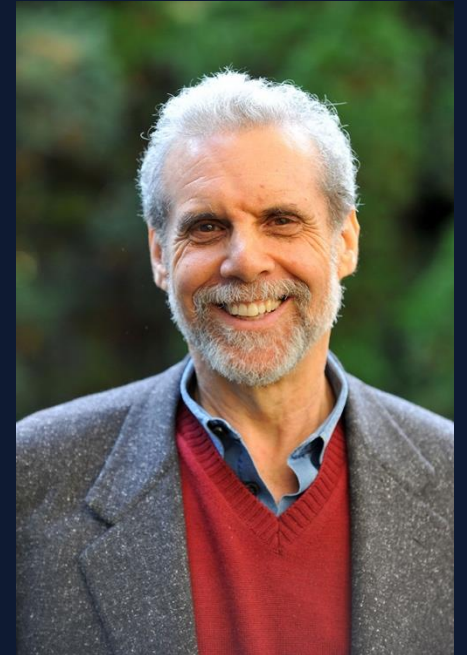
# Dr. Peter Salovey

- Yale psychology professor
- Founded the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence
  - Which “conducts research on the psychological significance and function of human moods and emotions, the theory and measurement of emotional intelligence, and the effectiveness of evidence-based programs designed to teach emotional intelligence.”
- Also Yale’s Dean, Provost and President until 2024
  - Provost 2008-2013
  - President 2013-2024



# Daniel Goleman

- New York Times Science & Technology journalist
- Connected with Dr. Salovey re: Emotional Intelligence
- Wrote 1995 book “Emotional Intelligence”
  - Book was funded by the Fetzer Institute
  - Expanded Comer’s approach to educating *every* child to be “whole”
  - Applied PTSD research to the “ordinary travails” of childhood
  - Considered the “SEL Bible”
- Goleman’s book was an instant hit among academics
  - Despite the DSM-5 not endorsing this expansive view of trauma



# Fetzer Institute



- Known for New Age Spirituality and Occultism
- Founded by business mogul John Fetzer (1901-1991)
  - Stated Mission: “Helping build the spiritual foundation for a loving world.”
- “Disseminated the teachings of Alice Bailey (1880-1949)”
  - Coined the term “New Age”
  - Authored array of books on “neo-theosophical” and esoteric thought
  - Founded Lucifer Publishing Company (Now Lucis Trust)
- Present at the 1994 founding of CASEL
- Financially backed Daniel Goleman’s 1995 book “Emotional Intelligence”

# The Result

Suddenly, based on high academic and journalistic authority, child-raising was a matter for institutions, not society.

# How did SEL Spread?

1995-2004

**1995-2004**

Like a lot of bad ideas that affect Americans, SEL spread from universities and journalists via nonprofits, philanthropies, Democratic state governments, and the federal government.



# CASEL

- The flagship program was the non-profit CASEL
- Co-founded in 1994 by Daniel Goleman, David Sluyter, Senior Advisor for the Fetzer Institute, and 5 others
- Created a framework for SEL implementation
- Five competencies for SEL (inner circle)
- Four outer rings
  - Classrooms and schools comprise first two rings
  - Families and communities furthest removed
  - Implies emotional development starts in classroom





# CASEL & Money

- CASEL's other contribution to SEL: Funneling Money
- Money funneled from Left-of-center philanthropic foundations:
  - Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
  - The NoVo Foundation
  - The Gates Foundation
  - Chan Zuckerberg Initiative
  - Rockefeller Foundation
- Teaching kids to “manage their emotions” is good for future employment at highly managed companies like Meta
- These companies also have an interest in the data collected on students and families via school screeners

# CASEL & the Democrats

- CASEL board member: Linda Darling-Hammond
  - Policy Working Group Leader for Education in the Obama White House
- Congresswoman Rosa DeLauro (D-CT)
  - District included New Haven, CT (where Yale is located)
- Aaliyah A. Samuel
  - DOE Deputy Assistant for Local, State, National Engagement
  - President and CEO of CASEL, 2022-present
  - Praised Biden Administration's 2023 funding of SEL
- Funding from Illinois Democrats and Illinois resident-turned-president Barack Obama is what pushed SEL to its current dominance today.



CASEL was well-funded and well-positioned for what came next.

# SEL's Dominance and the Adoption of CRT

2004-2025

The Obama White House (2008-2016) poured gasoline on the fire, igniting SEL into the powerhouse that it is today.

Then it received another funding boom from the Biden Administration (2021).

Enter Critical Race Theory (2020).

- The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2014
  - 10% of its \$4 Billion in funding was allocated to SEL
  - Created a federal mandate for schools to implement SEL programs in order to receive federal dollars
  - CASEL was the only SEL game in town, ready to accommodate all the schools suddenly clamoring to implement its charter
  - Almost overnight, SEL was in nearly every government school

# COVID Dollars

- In the wake of the COVID Pandemic and racial unrest, the Biden Administration funneled massive amounts of money into SEL
- The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act invested \$122 billion in K-12 education, largely dispersed via the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funds.
  - The goal was to “help states and districts safely reopen schools and address students’ academic, social, and emotional learning in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.”
  - Under ARP, states and districts were required to spend 5% and 20% of funds respectively to address “learning loss through evidence-based interventions that respond to the academic, social, and emotional needs of students.”
  - That means up to \$30.5 billion federal dollars potentially spent on mental health and social emotional learning initiatives
  - No wonder there are so many SEL curriculums available for purchase; it has become a massive for-profit industry

# Enter CRT

- 2019 – Daniel Goleman expanded his definition of the causes of childhood trauma
  - Now racism and sexism were added to the list under “systemic racism/oppression”
- 2020 – the George Floyd race riots and the meteoric rise of BLM
- Enter Critical Race Theory (CRT)
  - The idea that America is systemically racist/oppressive
  - This ideology uses identity politics (race, gender, sexual preference, socioeconomic status, etc.) to divide people into groups of oppressed vs. privileged



# Culturally Responsive Teaching

- SEL uses a method of instruction called “Culturally Responsive Teaching” (the other CRT)
  - Coined by Gloria Ladson-Billings, Critical Race Theorist/Activist
  - Filters lessons through CRT viewpoint to get students to attain “critical consciousness”
- “Critical Consciousness” – theory developed by Marxist revolutionist Paulo Friere who believed education was the way to advance the Communist agenda
- In 2019, CASEL revised its competencies to accommodate CRT by teaching children through an “Equity Lens”
- Linda Darling-Hammond then went full speed ahead with the California Board of Education, which earned public praise from CASEL

Dividing people by identity and convincing them that only national institutions can protect them is good politics for Democrats.

What could be more attractive than getting their message direct to people at their most vulnerable age – as kids?

# What does SEL look like in Schools?

2025

# Money Talks

When billions of federal dollars are on the line, schools will jump through incredible hoops to get the money.

# Changing Priorities

- SEL changed the priorities of school administrators competing for federal funding
  - Accounts of school superintendents prioritizing SEL in order to receive millions in grant money
- But what do these grants require?
  - In Minnesota, a NoVo Foundation grant supports daily Wellness Checks on students “integrating ...trauma; restorative justice; and maintaining good mental, physical and community health”
  - A Robert Wood Johnson grant supports regular school visits by CASEL to measure progress
- “Alive and Well Communities,” a Missouri nonprofit, seeks to “re-orient the trauma informed environment... to recognize trauma caused by ...anti-Black racism and white supremacy...”

# Does it benefit students?

- The hype does not bear the results
- A Minneapolis superintendent who famously prioritized SEL stepped down after being nearly ousted by his school board in response to declining literacy rates
- In the Ferguson-Florissant School District, Missouri, which received Alive and Well's curricula...
  - 9% high schoolers proficient in math
  - 32% high schoolers proficient in reading
  - 42 fights reported at a single high school
  - Teacher walkouts over violence and drug use
- Representative of schools across the country

# Result

Even research from Leftist analysts shows that trauma-based learning makes kids traumatized, rather than freeing them from trauma.

# What does SEL look like on the ground?




# The End of the Line

- Universal Screenings
- Student Perspective
- Teacher Perspective
- Parent Perspective

# Universal Screeners

- CASEL’s trauma-informed practices are meant to be proactive
- Enter universal screeners to psychologically profile children as a way to target “at risk” students.
  - Given in the form of surveys and questionnaires that appear harmless
- However, many of these questions can be traumatizing by themselves:
  - Leading questions about suicide, sexual activity, self harm, family life
  - Some answers may gain students an automatic referral to a counselor or mental health professional outside of parents’ knowledge
  - These school counselors often support radical ideologies such as gender fluidity and the sexualization of minors

- Student Data Collection is big business
  - One of the most prolific screeners is Panorama Ed 
- Student data often contains intimate information about family members attained through seemingly innocuous survey questions.
- Data is managed by private contractors; there is largely no accountability for who ultimately owns this data.
- Data is retained long after the student leaves school or perhaps follows them through their post-school lives.
- Thus family information is being transmitted, permanently, to states and Washington DC

# Student Perspective

- Screenshots of lesson plans and results of FOIA request show that traditional academics (Math, Reading, Science, etc.) are being deprioritized in favor of Social Emotional Learning Curricula
- SEL training occurs throughout the day and through every subject via vocabulary words, class exercises, generative themes, book selection, etc.
- Most days begin with “Community Circle” or “Listening Circle” in which feelings are prioritized
- Most major publishers advertise SEL as being integrated into their curriculums (yes, even math)
- For the average government school student, SEL is inescapable
- These practices can also be found in many private schools

# Teacher Perspective

- Forces teachers into the role of mental health professionals
  - They are not qualified as such, so this juxtaposition is unfair to teachers and dangerous to students
- Class disruption is common
  - Traditionally, a child that displayed significant behavior concerns would be supported individually
  - Under SEL, the entire class must be involved in the intervention so that they can “learn empathy”
  - A teacher can be interrupted at any time with “trauma” and must stop learning in order to address it as a class
- Students use trauma as an excuse for poor performance
  - “I couldn’t finish the homework because mom and dad were fighting, so I was dis-regulated.”

# Parent Perspective

- Parents complain that their children seem more distant and utilize SEL language to undermine parental authority at home
- Their children are inculcated into radical ideologies throughout the school day without parent consent or knowledge
- Their children are being introduced to highly sexualized topics without parent knowledge or consent
- The trauma-based learning at the core of SEL makes children more frightened and less self sufficient
- Child mental health statistics show increases in anxiety, depression, learning deficits, and suicide
- Parents often feel alienated, intimidated, and at a loss for words to speak against the SEL jargon

# Conclusion

SEL does not appear to benefit students, teachers, or their families.

The only entities that appear to profit are the non-profits, data collectors, and politicians.

# What you can do



# Fighting Back: Arguments

1. The Partisanship Angle
  - Based on its supporters and funders, SEL is highly partisan, and schools should not be using taxpayer dollars to push partisan agendas not approved by voters.
2. The Profit Angle
  - SEL is a for-profit initiative. Schools create bureaucracy to facilitate SEL and non-profits are created to feed it into the schools.
3. The Results
  - Self-generated trauma, acting out in school, making excuses for poor performance and family tensions are all results of SEL
4. Who's Left Behind
  - Most people turned off by this are the people SEL purports to help: working class families who are alienated by the jargon.

# Fighting Back: Actions

## 1. Federal Government

- Engage the current administration and your congressional representative/senators to stop federal funding of SEL in schools, as well as funding directly or indirectly to SEL nonprofits

## 2. State Legislatures

- Engage your state representatives urging them to pass legislation stopping their Departments of Education from disseminating SEL material in schools.

# Fighting Back: Actions

## 3. School District – MOST IMPORTANT!

- i. Research the SEL program your school uses and expose the radical agenda. Utilize FOIA records requests, as needed.
- ii. Attend school board meetings and speak out about any contracts or grants that extend the use of SEL programs.
- iii. Support the election of school board members that will stand against SEL programs in schools
- iv. Choose to have your child “opt-out” of school screeners.

# We Covered

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For more information, please visit our SEL Parent Toolkit at <https://m4lu.org/sel-toolkit/>



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