

Social Emotional Learning: *Grandma Ruby's Refrigerator Series: The Notion of Family* (Grades K-5)



Grandma Ruby's Refrigerator Series: The Notion of Family, 2007, Latoya Ruby Frazier

Gelatin silver print, 24 7/8 x 17 3/4 in., Gift of Josef Vascovitz and Lisa Goodman, in honor of Sandra Jackson-Dumont, 2014.36.3.

Find online at: <https://tinyurl.com/499rxwk8>

LOOKING QUESTIONS

Let's get curious about what we can discover just by looking! When we take the time to look closely at art, we can actually learn more about ourselves and others, which is a great way to practice empathy. First, look at the artwork for about 20 seconds then talk about it with a friend or adult.

- What do you see? What does it make you think about? What does it make you wonder?
- Compare this photograph with the space that you're in right now. What is similar about these places? What is different?
- Use your senses to imagine how it would feel to be in this space. What would you see/touch/hear/smell/taste? What do you see that makes you say that?
- How would you feel if you were in this space? What mood do you think you would be in and why?

INFORMATION

This picture shows the artist Latoya Ruby Frazier's grandmother's kitchen, which was an important place that she spent a lot of time in when she was growing up. This is just one of a group of photographs that the artist took of her hometown of Braddock, Pennsylvania, a small town outside of the industrial city of Pittsburgh. All of the photographs were grouped in a book titled *The Notion of Family* because the artist said that she wanted to create a type of family album that could also show a counter-story, or a story that's not often told, in American history. Her counter-story is the perseverance and resilience of people of color.

MOVEMENT ACTIVITY: FULL MOON BREATH

Empathy is when you know and care about how someone else is feeling. We need to first understand how we experience feelings before we can start to understand others. Meditation is a tool to help us discover the thoughts, experiences, and sensations that go with different feelings. For example, when you're feeling excited, you may be thinking about a fun event, like a holiday that's coming up. Your excitement might come from the colorful decorations that are up around your space, or the foods that you eat during a celebration. Your body may respond with a smile, dancing feet, or you might even feel like your heart is getting warm!

When you meditate, you try your best to focus on how your body feels by getting rid of distractions and noticing any thoughts that might pop into your head. Full moon breath is a type of meditation that uses breathing--something that usually happens without us having to think about it--to calm us down and help us concentrate. For other ways to meditate, visit: <https://tinyurl.com/295ezdkx>.

- Start by taking a deep breath in through your nose, then breathe out through your mouth, sticking your tongue out and making a "HAI!" sound. This is called "lion's breath" and it gets out all the stale breath, cools us down, and allows fresh air to come through our bodies and give us energy.
- Now try breathing in deeply through your nose and breathing out through your nose. Do this as many times as you would like. You can change your pace, going slow or fast and notice how that might change how you feel.
- Try closing your eyes so that you can focus only on the sensations of your body. Start from the ground and move up and check-in with yourself. How do your toes feel? Are they bare and cold? Are they cushioned in some slippers? Do they feel sore from standing? Or, maybe you have a painful blister from a long walk? Keep going up your body checking in with your legs, hips, stomach, fingers, arms, shoulders, neck, head, and face.. How does your body feel?
- Once you've scanned your whole body, you can start to add movement. The next time you breathe in, sweep your arms slowly up over your head. Try to go slowly so that your hands meet above your head right before you breathe out. Maybe you even try holding your breath for a second or two. As you breathe out, bring your arms slowly back down and try your best to have your arms touch your side when you finish breathing out.
- Keep matching your breath to your arm movements. For an extra challenge, try counting in your head. Breathe in for 1, 2, 3, then hold your breath and your arms above your head for 1, 2, 3, before breathing out for 1, 2, 3.
- Repeat this breathing for as many times as you like. Once you're finished, do another body scan from the ground up. Do your toes, legs, stomach, fingers, arms, neck, head, and face feel any different after practicing full moon breath? Ask a friend or family member how they feel after meditating.

ART ACTIVITY: MOOD DRAWING

With meditation, we can understand *how* our body is feeling, but we might not know *why* we're feeling that way unless we pay attention to our mood. A mood can come from our environment or how others are treating us. When you meditate, you may have closed eyes to get rid of distractions, but with this exercise, we want to really get curious about what's around us using our senses: sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.

Drawing what you are sensing will help you pay close attention to where your feelings are coming from. If you know how your surroundings make you feel, you can start to be more thoughtful about changing your mood. For example, if you are noticing that you are feeling sad, you might know that seeing a friend, touching a pet, hearing an upbeat song, or tasting your favorite meal will put you in a better mood. Once you start to pay attention to what can change your own mood, you can start to do the same for friends, neighbors, or your family--that's empathy!

Materials

Paper, any thickness or color, and something to draw with--it can be a pencil, marker, or crayon. Colored pencils, markers, or crayons to enhance the drawings are optional.

Steps

1. Start by noticing what you might see. Look all the way around your space: high, low, side-to-side, in front of you, and behind you.



2. Once you've found something that you want to draw, place the object in front of you. If it's something that can't easily be moved, get closer.



3. Start to draw the object by looking closely, slowly following the lines of the object with your eye and try to match this speed with your hand as you draw. Try looking at the object more than your paper. It's OK if the lines get a little squiggly! It's more about noticing than making a perfect drawing.



4. Once you've finished drawing what you see, you can repeat step 2 for all of your senses. Feel the different textures in your space--hard, soft, warm, cool, bumpy, smooth. Listen closely for any loud or quiet sounds. Breathe through your nose to take in any smells.. Take a sip of water or get a snack to taste. Draw something for each of your senses.

5. After your drawings are complete, you can outline in marker, add details, or color in your drawings.



6. Give your artwork a title by choosing the mood that it best expresses. As you're choosing your mood, think about how noticing your space using your senses made you feel? If you need some suggestions of different moods, you can use a Mood Meter like this one: <https://tinyurl.com/6csmseuw>.