If you have ever said the words, “I hate goodbyes,” or, “It’s not goodbye - it’s just see you later,” then you understand the emotional difficulty surrounding goodbyes in our culture. While it may not be everyone’s favorite topic, goodbyes are a part of every relationship we have and thus something worth giving some attention to. How we “detach” is as important as every other part of a relationship. So, this week we will spend some time practicing how to say goodbye in a healthy way.

While every goodbye will look different, here are some basic principles of healthy goodbyes:

- Allow plenty of time to say goodbye.
- Be direct and clear about the relationship(s) ending without leaving false hope or “wiggle room.”
- Honor and remember the good by sharing positive memories.
- Acknowledge any and all emotions that arise.
- Share what you appreciate about the other person/people and lessons learned together.
- Communicate expectations for future communication.

If you’re brave enough to say goodbye, life will reward you with a new hello.

—Paulo Cohello

Healthy Goodbyes

Level: Upper Elementary (3-5)
Timeframe: 15-20 minutes
Concepts: • Saying Goodbye  
• Grief & Loss

Big Ideas For This Lesson

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Essential Vocabulary

Appreciate
Healthy Goodbye
Relationship

Materials

(Optional) You may choose to give each student a small “token” or “goodbye object.” Something simple like a small rock or special object can be a great reminder of positive memories and another example of a healthy goodbye.
Preparation

Spend some time reflecting on what to say when it is your turn to say goodbye. What did you learn this year? What was one of your favorite memories? What will you miss about your students?

Teaching Script

BUILDING BACKGROUND KNOWLEDGE & CONCEPT MODELING (I DO)

Teaching note: This lesson is best taught in a circle so that all students can participate. Consider the timing of this lesson; by starting the goodbye process 2-3 weeks before the last week of school you will allow students plenty of time to process their emotions and grieve as necessary. There are many ways to facilitate a goodbye discussion, so use this as a starting point and feel free to include variations and additions.

Begin by asking the class, “How many of you do not like goodbyes?”

Typically, most students will raise their hands. Take some time here to ask students,

What is difficult about saying goodbye? What emotions do you feel when you say goodbye?

Acknowledge and validate students’ responses, and then explain,

While goodbyes can feel difficult or sad, they are also an important part of every relationship we have – whether we are just saying goodbye for short time or forever. When we avoid saying goodbye because we do not want to feel uncomfortable, we are actually missing out on a beautiful chance to learn, grow, and bring closure to our relationships. Since goodbyes are so common, it makes sense to learn how to do them in a healthy way.”
GUIDED PRACTICE (WE DO)

Today we will each have a chance to share ‘healthy goodbyes’ in our circle. There are many ways to say goodbye. It is important to remember that there is no ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ way to do this. Goodbyes are best when they come from the heart, so the best goodbyes are usually whatever comes naturally to you. The important part is actually taking the time to say goodbye.

If you are not sure what to say you can think about what you would like to hear from someone else, or you could share...

- A positive memory you shared with that person
- Something you learned from that person
- Something you will miss about that person
- A hope you have for that person in the future

Provide appropriate sentence starters for your grade level as needed. Examples include:

- One thing I learned this year is...
- One thing I will miss is...
- One thing I appreciate is...
- One positive memory I have is....
- One hope I have for you is...

For younger grades, keep the focus on positive memories and appreciations. Rather than sharing to the whole group, have each student turn to their neighbor and share one thing that they appreciate about their neighbor.

For older grades, emphasize the importance of actually saying goodbye. Many students will find it difficult or silly to say “goodbye,” but using those specific words is important practice. Ask each student to conclude his or her share by actually saying “goodbye.”
REINFORCING LESSON CONCEPTS (YOU DO)

When sharing is complete take time to model a healthy goodbye. Share your feelings about the school year ending. Explain some of the things you have learned and appreciate about your students. Let them know that they will be missed.

Finally, allow time to process some of the following questions as a class, in small groups, or in journals:

a. *How did it feel to say goodbye?*
   b. *What was easy/hard about saying goodbye?*
   c. *What are some other ways you can say goodbye?*
   d. *How does your family say goodbye?*
   e. *What will you change about how you say goodbye?*

EVIDENCE OF CONCEPT ATTAINMENT

Reflect on it

- Why are healthy goodbyes important?
- What makes a goodbye, “healthy?”
- How did it feel to say goodbye?
- What was easy/hard about saying goodbye?
- What are some other ways you can say goodbye?
- How does your family say goodbye?
- What will you change about how you say goodbye?

Journal it

Imagine saying goodbye to someone you care about. Using what you learned about healthy goodbyes, describe how you would say goodbye to them. What would you say or do? How would this feel different from your usual goodbye?
**EXTENSIONS**

**Classroom**
- Research goodbyes in various cultures. Assign students to present on how different cultures say goodbye or practice different cultural goodbyes as a class.
- Make it a daily practice to say goodbye to your students – just as you greet them in the morning.

**School-wide**
Plan school wide events and assemblies to celebrate the end of the year.

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**REFERENCES**