

It's Okay Not to Know

Counselor Toolkit

Based on the picture book *It's Okay Not to Know* by Brenda Do



Helping children turn mistakes and uncertainty into learning, self-compassion, and compassion for others

Ages: 3–8 (PreK–Grade 2)

Extended use: Grades 3–5 counseling discussions

Preparation time: Under 5 minutes

Lesson length: 15–30 minutes

About this resource

When children don't know something or make a mistake, it's easy for them to feel discouraged and judge themselves.

They may think:

- I'm not good at this
- I'm not smart enough
- Everyone else knows how but me
- I can't do it

It's Okay Not to Know helps children see these moments differently. Instead of viewing mistakes and uncertainty as something bad, children learn that they are opportunities to:

- Learn something new
- Practice self-compassion
- Support others who are struggling

The story's message is simple: not knowing and making mistakes help us discover, ask questions, and grow.

Learning objectives

Students will:

- Understand that not knowing is a normal part of learning
- Recognize that mistakes provide information rather than proof of failure
- Practice replacing self-judgment with curiosity
- Develop greater self-compassion during challenges
- Build empathy for others who are struggling

Inside the toolkit

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The Bink Learning Framework

When students don't know something, feel uncertain, or experience an "uh-oh."

- 1. Learn:** "What can I discover?"
- 2. Be kind:** "It's okay not to know."
- 3. Help others:** "How can I help someone else who feels this way?"

This framework can be revisited throughout the school year whenever students encounter challenges.

Quick start guide

If you have 10 minutes

1. Read the book
2. Ask three discussion questions
3. Complete a quick reflection

If you have 20 minutes

1. Open with discussion
2. Read the book aloud
3. Ask guided questions
4. Do worksheet activity
5. Spend a moment reflecting

If you're working with a small group

Consider focusing on:

- Fear of mistakes or the unknown
- Self confidence
- Trying new things
- Supporting peers

Age-based implementation guide

PreK–Kindergarten

Focus:

- Feelings
- Trying new things
- Being kind to yourself

Questions:

- Looking at the first three pages, how did Bink feel?
- Have you ever felt that way?
- What would help you feel better

Activity: Draw something you are still learning to do

Grades 1–2

Focus:

- Growth
- Curiosity
- Self-compassion

Questions:

- What did Bink learn?
- Why does the story compare not knowing to a present?
- What can we tell ourselves when something feels difficult or scary?

Activity: Worksheet

Grades 3–5 extension

Although the book is written for younger children, older elementary students often connect with simple stories that explore important ideas.

Focus:

- Self-talk
- Learning from mistakes

- Managing uncertainty
- Empathy

Questions:

- Why do people sometimes judge themselves when they're struggling?
- How does self-compassion help us keep learning?
- Why is it easier to help others when we've learned to be kind to ourselves?

Activity: Turn things around worksheet

Before reading discussion

Raise your hand if you've ever:

- Made a mistake
- Didn't know an answer
- Felt frustrated while learning

Ask:

- How did that feel?
- What did you do next?
- Can learning happen when we don't know something?

Read-aloud discussion guide

Pause point: "It's easy to feel down."

Ask:

- How is Bink feeling?
- Have you ever felt this way?

Pause point: "Not knowing gives you a chance to learn something new."

Ask:

- What is something you didn't know before but know now?
- What helped you learn it?

Pause point: "Not knowing is like getting a present."

Ask:

- Why do you think the author compares not knowing to a gift?
- What might be inside that gift?

Pause point: "You get a chance to learn what is and what isn't."

Ask:

- What is something you discovered when you didn't know something?

Pause point: When Bink helps someone else

Ask:

- What changed about Bink?
- How is helping others connected to learning?

Discussion questions

- What was your favorite part of the story?
- What was Bink learning?
- What is something you don't know yet?
- What is something you're curious about?
- What would happen if mistakes helped us learn?

- How can we help a friend who feels discouraged?
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20-minute SEL lesson

Objective

Students will understand that mistakes and uncertainty create opportunities for learning, self-compassion, and helping others.

Materials

- *It's Okay Not to Know*
- One worksheet

Procedure

1. Opening discussion (3 minutes)
Discuss what it feels like not to know something
2. Read-aloud (5 minutes)
Read the story
3. Guided discussion (5 minutes)
Use the discussion questions
4. Worksheet activity (5 minutes)
Complete one worksheet
5. Reflection (2 minutes)
Finish the sentence: Today I learned _____.

Common student scenarios

"I'm not good at this."

Potential response: *You may not know it yet, and that's okay.*

Follow-up question: *What have you learned so far?*

"Everyone else knows how, but me."

Potential response: *Everyone learns different things at different times.*

Follow-up question: *What is something you know that someone else might not know?*

"I don't want to try."

Potential response: *Trying something new can feel uncomfortable.*

Follow-up question: *What is one small step you could take?*

"My friend said, 'I can't do it!'"

Potential response: *What could we say to help them turn things around?*

Follow-up question: *What would you want someone to say to you if you felt that way?*

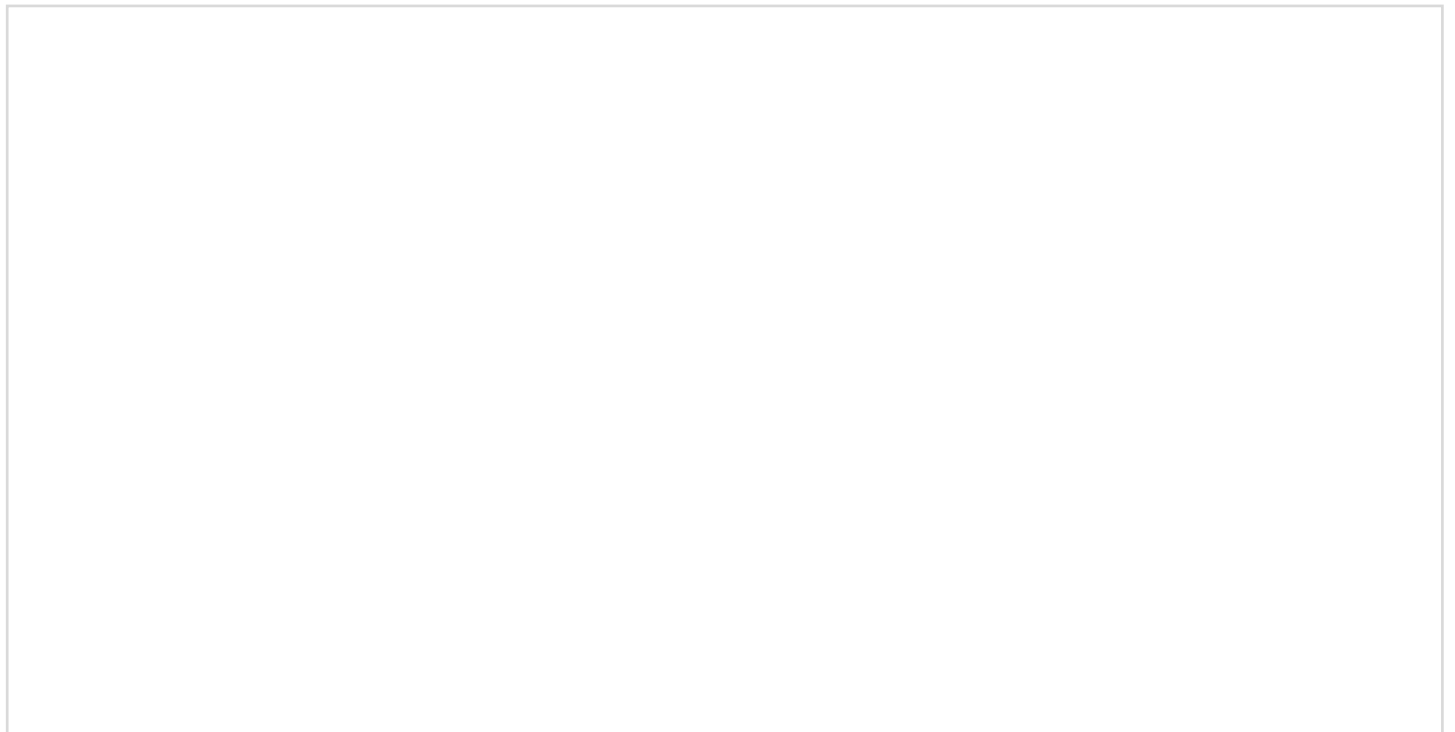
What's inside the present?

Bink learned that not knowing can be like getting a present. When we don't know something yet, we get a chance to discover something new.

What is something you don't know yet?

What do you think you might discover?

Draw what's inside your present.



What is and what isn't

Sometimes we think something is true, and then we learn something new.

Example

I thought thunderstorms were scary.

Now I know they bring rain to help plants and animals live.

Your turn.

What did you think?

What do you know now?

What did you learn?

Choose curiosity

Sometimes not knowing something gives us a chance to learn something new.

Something I'm wondering about:

A question I have:

Something I want to learn:

Turning things around

Bink learned that everyone has uh-ohs sometimes. And when we do, it's easy to feel down. But making mistakes and not knowing are part of learning. When we are kind to ourselves, it's easier to keep trying and discover something new.

What could you say to help turn things around?

When I make a mistake, I can tell myself:

When a friend says, "I can't do it," I can tell them:

What kind words did you use?

Small-group counseling extension

Invite students to reflect on a time when they didn't know something, felt uncertain, or experienced an "uh-oh."

Potential topics

- Not knowing what to expect
- Mistakes and setbacks
- Trying new things
- Friendship challenges
- Big changes and transitions
- Feeling uncertain
- Encouraging yourself and others

Discussion prompt

- What helped them turn things around?
- What did they learn about themselves?

Optional follow-up questions

- What was the hardest part?
- How did you feel at the beginning?
- What surprised you?
- What helped you keep going?
- What did you discover?
- What would you tell someone else in a similar situation?

Closing reflection

Ask students to complete this sentence:

"Something I don't know yet is _____."

Then ask:

"How can curiosity, kindness, or asking for help support you while you learn more?"

Extend the learning

In classrooms

Yet wall

Students complete: I can't _____ yet.

Display responses and revisit them throughout the year.

Curiosity corner

Students post questions they are curious about and explore answers together.

Helping hands board

Students share ways they helped someone learn something new or feel encouraged.

At home

Ask your child:

- What was Bink learning?
- Why is not knowing like a present?
- What is something you're still learning?
- How can we help someone who feels discouraged?

Family challenge

Each family member shares:

- One thing they don't know yet
- One thing they learned from a mistake
- One way they helped someone this week

Additional resources

Find free teacher, counselor, and family resources at:

www.brendado.com/resources

About Bink

Bink reminds children that mistakes and uncertainty are part of learning.

By choosing curiosity instead of self-judgment, children can build confidence, practice self-compassion, and extend kindness to others.

Because when we learn to be kinder to ourselves, we become better at helping others grow too.