

**our minds
matter**

elementary school resources

How to use OMM materials at your elementary school

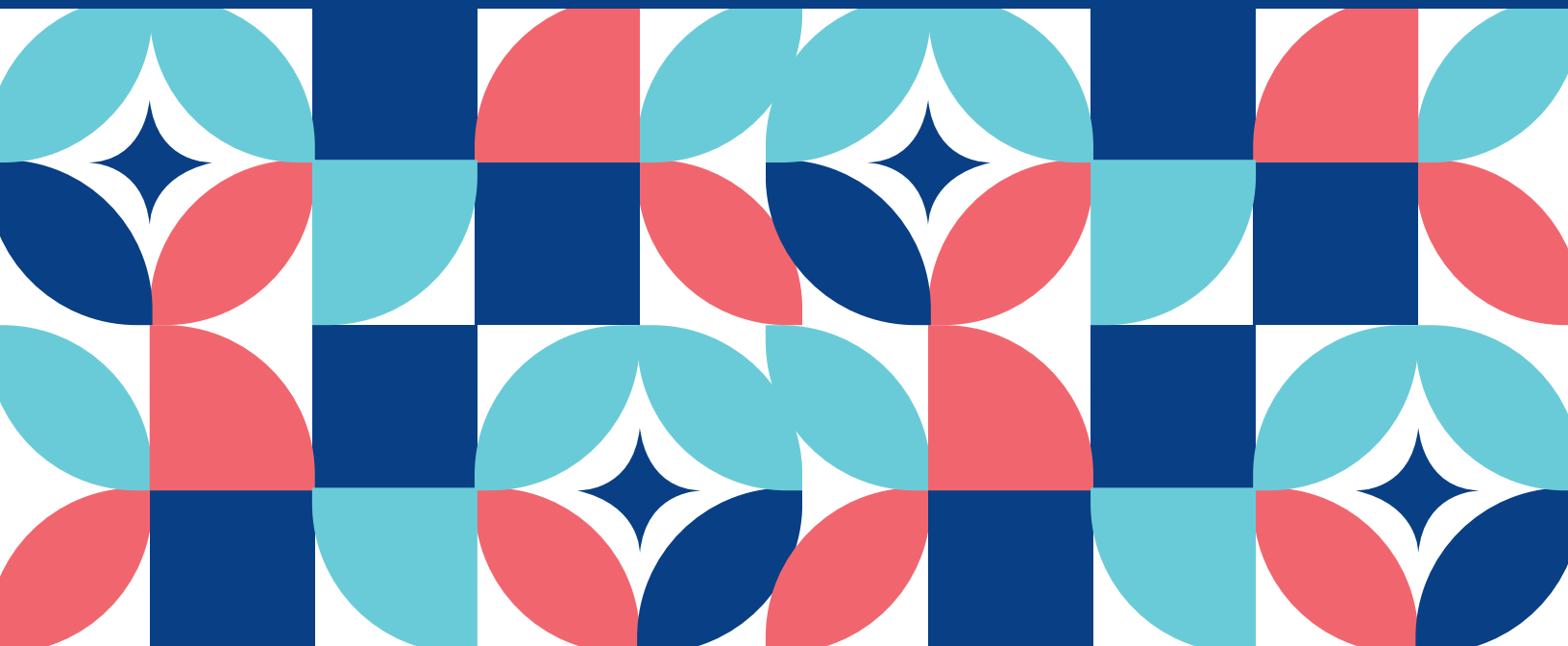


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what is our minds matter?

Our Minds Matter (OMM) is a teen-led movement working to change the school culture around mental health. Through our club-based model, teens in middle schools and high schools facilitate activities and school-wide campaigns to improve their own mental wellness and that of their peers. OMM's evidence-informed curriculum builds the following protective factors in youth that have been shown to improve mental health and reduce the risk that a young person will turn to suicide: help-seeking behaviors, social connectedness, prosocial skills, and self-care and healthy habits. Learn more about each of these protective factors below:

help-seeking

Mental health is just as important as physical health, yet adolescents often do not seek the help they need because of shame, stigma, fear of judgment or not knowing where to turn. OMM programming aims to spread messages that break down stigma and encourage adolescents to seek help when stress or mental health challenges become overwhelming.

social connectedness

A system of support is vital to maintaining our mental wellness because we can't always do it alone. OMM participants learn the importance of fostering relationships with friends, family and even pets to lean on in times of struggle. OMM also encourages trusted adults in the community to be supportive and understand how to promote youth mental wellness.

prosocial skills

Equipping youth with skills to provide appropriate peer-to-peer support is essential since they are more likely to first approach their friends rather than adults or professionals when experiencing life challenges. Additionally, engaging in prosocial behaviors has been proven to boost overall well-being. OMM participants learn various skills to be able to support their peers, know when to get an adult for help, and how to promote a culture of kindness in their community.

self-care and healthy habits

How we take care of our bodies and minds affects how we feel. OMM participants experiment with coping techniques to reduce stress and maintain a positive self-image. The goal is for adolescents to be mindful of their current well-being, take time for self-care, and to use healthy coping mechanisms when faced with challenges.

how to use this resource

While we do not currently have a program for elementary schools, we do have activities that work at the middle school level that can be adapted for students in 4th-6th grade. This can be done via a school club, a social emotional learning lesson in the classroom, or embedded into the day in another way that works for your school. We encourage you to adapt activities to fit your students' needs, school policies, and what makes sense for your school day!

A typical OMM club meeting will include an opening connection, an activity, and a mindful closing (in that order), but feel free to use each independently as you see fit.



Opening Connection

Each club meeting begins with an opening connection which provides structure to club meetings as well as time for club members to connect with each other. Ideas for opening connections are provided in this handbook, so you can switch it up weekly or stick with a few favorites.



Activities

This is the heart of an OMM meeting. Activities focus on a variety of mental health topics such as help-seeking, coping skills, prosocial skills, & social connectedness. Instructions for the activities are provided in this handbook but can be adapted to suit your students.



Mindful Closing

This is a great way to end each meeting or session, so folks leave feeling grounded. Ideas for mindful closings are provided in this handbook, so you can switch it up weekly or stick with a few favorites.

omm guiding principles

Use the OMM guiding principles to establish expectations and a shared understanding of the purpose of these resources.

our minds matter is:

- A meeting to be open about struggles
- Mindful of privacy
- Raising awareness
- Sharing resources
- Practicing coping skills
- Promoting connection
- Creative problem solving
- Having fun!

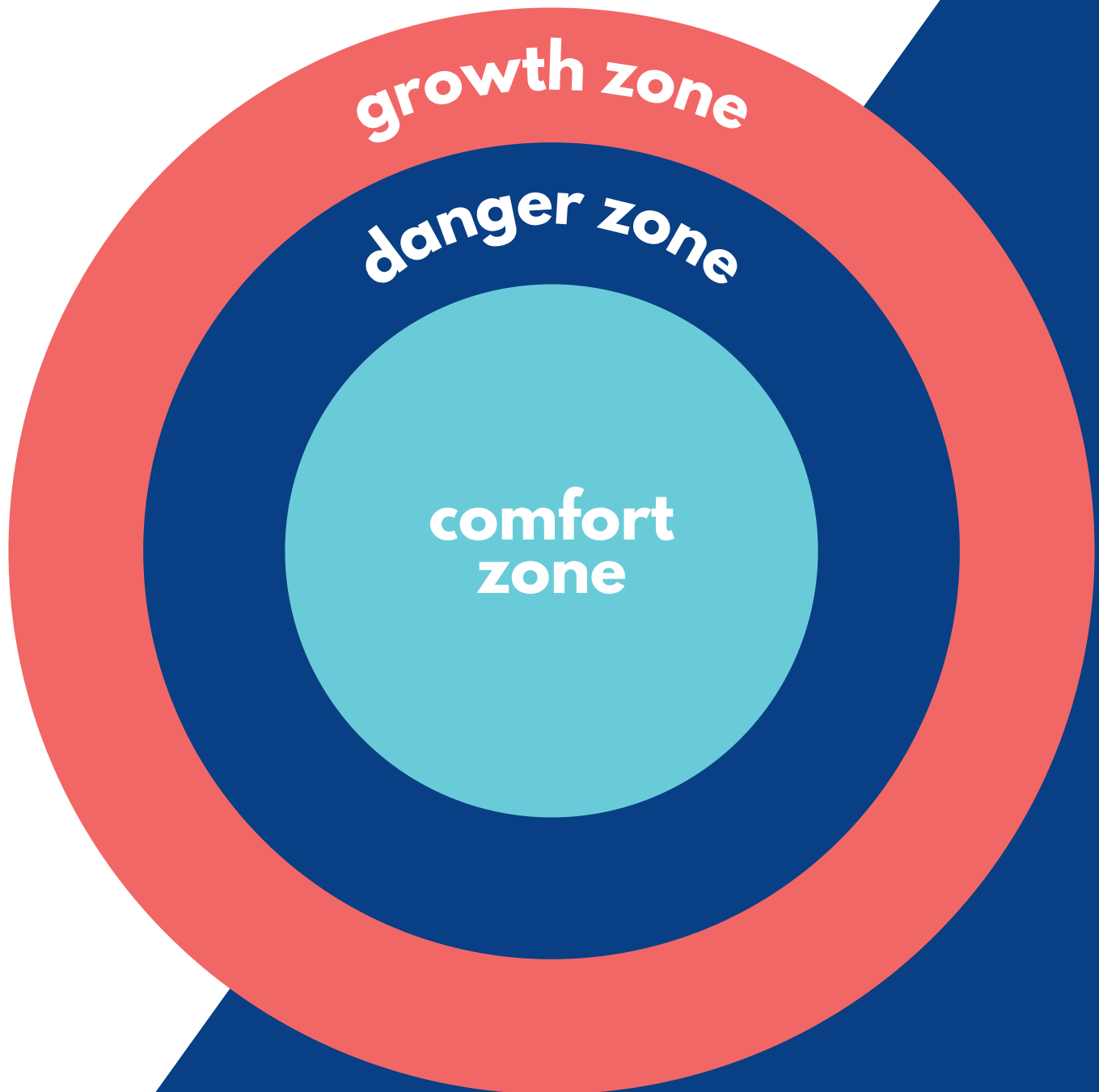
our minds matter is NOT:

- Therapy, because that requires special training & privacy protected by law
- A classroom, because it's more personal than class. We are not referencing a text book, but we are connecting & growing together
- A meeting to deeply explore your personal symptoms. If you need a space for this, talk to a trusted adult

**our minds
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mind your zones



In OMM club meetings we never want you to be in your danger zone. Talk to your club sponsor or trusted adult immediately if you find a topic triggering.

mind your zones

what is a zone?

growth zone

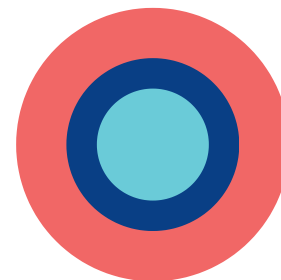
In your growth zone, you might experience a little stress, but you feel safe. You are learning something new. Your growth zone is your window of tolerance.

danger zone

In your danger zone, you may lose control, shut down, and feel unsafe. This is when it is time to take a break or seek help.

comfort zone

In your comfort zone, you feel safe and controlled. In that moment, you may feel low risk, familiarity, and certainty.



opening connections

We encourage you to begin your meeting with an opening connection which provides time for students to connect with each other. Here is a list of opening connections you can try with your students. Feel free to adapt them to fit your students and your school environment.

high, low

Students are asked to share their high and low from the day or week:

- High = something that went well or is going well for them
- Low = something that did not go well or is not going well for them

rose, thorn, bud

Students are asked to describe a rose, thorn, and/or bud that happened today or during the week as follows:

- Rose = one positive thing that made them feel good or happy
- Thorn = something that is not going well or is bothering them
- Bud = something that they are looking forward to

filling your bucket

Students name one thing that is:

- Filling their bucket = giving them energy and/or positively impacting their mood
- Draining their bucket = depleting their energy and/or negatively impacting their mood

smoke, spark, fire

Students share the following:

- Smoke = something that has been clouding their mind recently
- Spark = something that they recently have become interested in
- Fire = something that they have enjoyed for a long time

opening connections

speed friending

Students spread out in two lines facing each other and read/answer the following questions to get to know each other better. Each pair will have 60 seconds to answer before moving to the next partner.

- What do you like to do on the weekends?
- What is your favorite book or movie?
- If you were a superhero, what power would you want?
- What is your favorite part about your favorite holiday?
- If you could travel anywhere, where would you want to go?
- If you could be an animal, what would you be? Why?
- What makes you laugh the hardest?
- What do you most look forward to every day?

phone a friend

Start by reminding students that we all go through tough times when we need to reach out to others for help. Then ask them to “phone a friend” by sharing responses to the following:

- Who in your life can you call when you need help?
- What makes them a person you feel comfortable talking to?

blobs & lines

Students gather either in “blobs” based on something they have in common (e.g., same colored clothing) or line up in some particular order (e.g., by birthday, last name) in order to build social connection by discovering things they have in common.

i love me

Students are asked to draw a heart and fill it with the characteristics about themselves that make them feel strong, resilient, confident, and a good friend to others.

activities

After the opening connection, you can move into your activity. Activities focus on a variety of mental health topics such as help-seeking, coping skills, prosocial skills, & social connectedness. Feel free to adapt these activities to work with your students and school community.

all about me

A fun and easy platform for students to share information about themselves with each other

time estimate: 20-30 minutes

supplies:

- [All About Me slides](#)
- [All About Me printout](#) (below)
- Writing utensils

goals:

- Build confidence by sharing information about themselves
- Continue to build supportive, social relationships with one another

instructions:

- Have each student fill out the All About Me printout or just write responses on a regular piece of paper
- After they are done, shuffle the papers and have each student choose one randomly
- Have the students take turns sharing about each other until everyone has gone

discussion:

- What were some things you learned about each other?
- What things did you have in common?
- How did you choose the 3 words to describe yourself? What do you think they represent about you?

All About Me printout on the following page

all about mei

my favorites:

subject:

book:

food:

candy:

tv show:

hobby:

movie:

my 3 words:

1

2

3

name:

birthday:

apples and actions

Symbolize how our words have consequences and how everything we say can make an impact on someone else
(If it's nice out, this is a great one to do outside!)

time estimate: 20-30 minutes

supplies:

- Apple
- Knife (plastic)

goals:

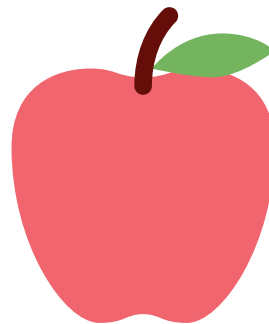
- Understand the consequences of using hurtful words

instructions:

- Pass the apple around and, as you do, have each student insult it (make sure you set ground rules on what can and can't be said) and drop it on their desk or the ground.
- After every student has dropped the apple and said something mean to it, cut the apple in half to show your students all of the bruises inside.
- Explain to them that our words have consequences and that everything we say has an impact on someone else. Just like how insulting and dropping the apple can bruise it, being mean to a peer can have big effects on them, even if you can't see it.
- Ask participants to think about & share aloud something kind they could say to the apple instead.

discussion:

- What does this have to do with mental health?
- Why do you think kindness is important for people your age?
- How can you try to be just a little bit kinder to someone tomorrow?
- What are some ways you plan to take what you've learned here into your day-to-day life?



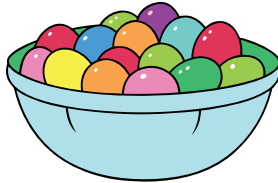
candy for thought

Share memories and talk about emotions while enjoying some tasty candy

time estimate: 20-30 minutes

supplies:

- Colored candies of your choice (e.g. skittles or m&m's)



goals:

- Express your feelings in a comfortable space
- Support an environment of connection and friendship
- Show empathy and understanding for others

instructions:

- Each student will choose a colored candy at random.
- After choosing their colored candy, the participant will talk about a time they experienced the feeling associated with the color of the candy. Feel free to swap or change colors around as you see fit!
 - Red - anger, frustration
 - Orange - happiness, joy
 - Yellow - surprise, hope
 - Green - envy, jealousy
 - Blue - sadness, disappointment
 - Purple - worry, anxiety
 - Brown - peacefulness, acceptance

discussion:

- How have your emotions changed from when the situation first happened to now?
- How did you handle the emotion when you felt it, whether it was good or bad?
- Are there any emotions you have an easier time releasing? Which ones?
- What emotions would you like to feel more of? Less of?

can you hear me now?

A challenge to practice effective communication to complete a task using only your listening and speaking skills

time estimate: 20-30 minutes

supplies:

- Picture cards (2) (below)
- Chairs
- Paper
- Writing utensils

instructions:

- Have a student select a partner (or just have them turn to the person next to them)
- Ask student pairs to sit in chairs so they are facing back-to-back
- Assign one student to be the “Communicator” and the other student to be the “Receiver”
- The Communicator is given a picture card and asked to describe the picture clearly
- Without looking at the picture card, the Receiver should try to draw what is being shared by the Communicator
- Note: Receivers are not allowed to ask clarifying questions
- When finished, the Communicator and Receiver face each other and compare pictures
- They should take a minute or two to discuss what went well and what didn't
- Students switch roles and complete the task again with the second picture

goals:

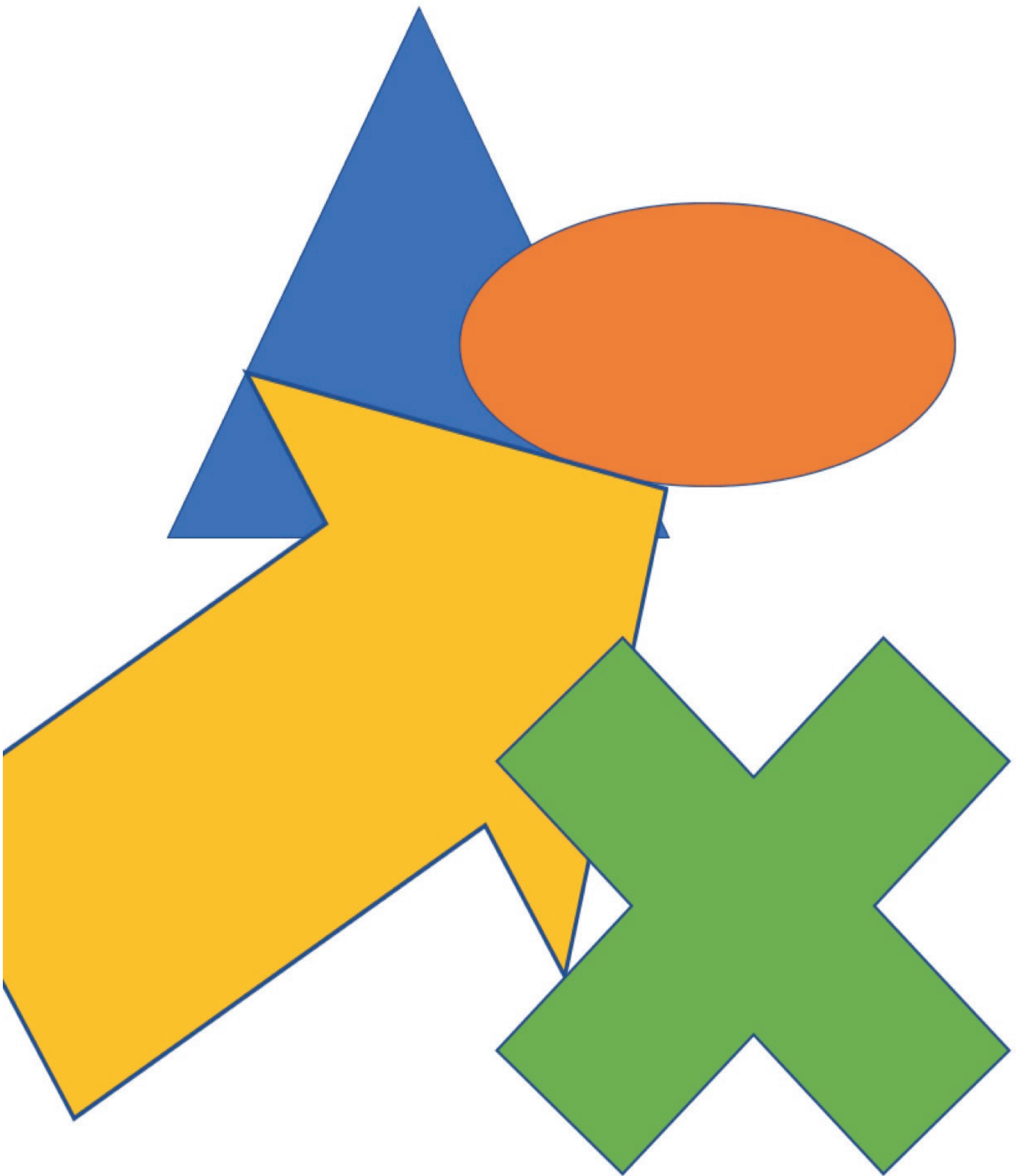
- Learn the importance of clear communication and active listening in order to connect with others and work toward a shared goal
- Increase social connection with one another

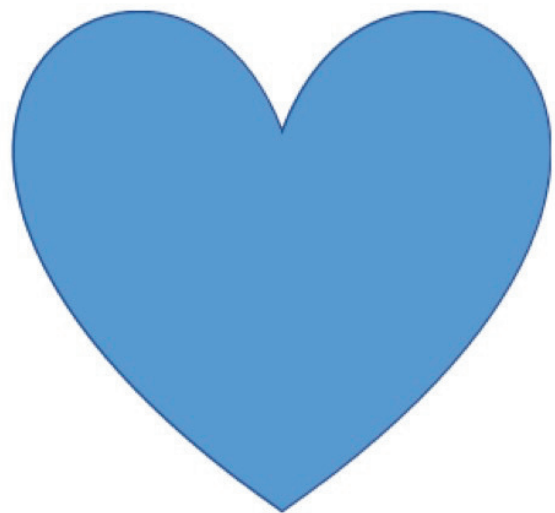
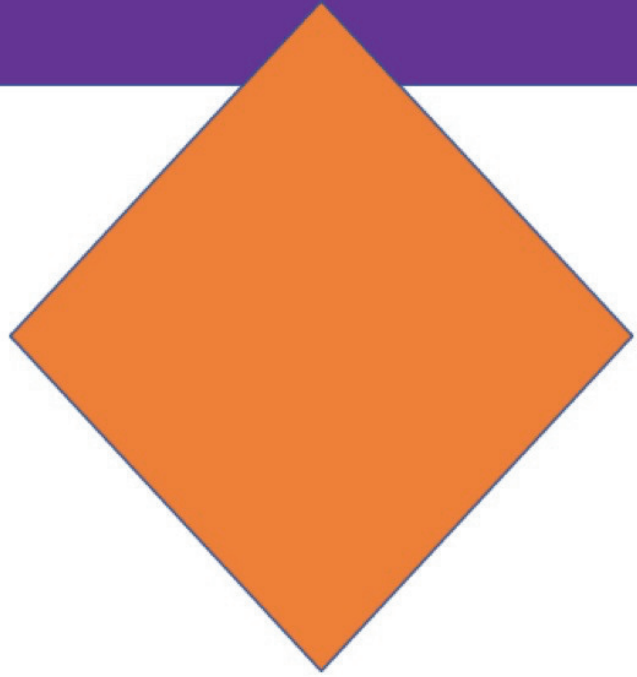
discussion:

- What was the outcome of your drawings? How different was the second round compared to the first?
- What was the most important skill you needed to be an effective Communicator? A Receiver?
- What does good communication have to do with mental health?



Picture cards on the following pages





cheer-a-peer

Spread joy, kindness, and thoughtfulness to others

time estimate: 20-30 minutes

supplies:

- Various writing utensils & art supplies
- Colored paper
- Stickers and other decorations
- Optional: student laptop

instructions:

- Encourage students to write positive notes and cards to their peers. Examples:
 - “You are special.”
 - “You make the world a better place.”
 - “You belong here.”
- This can include writing messages to friends as well as encouraging notes to the school community
 - If you allow students to choose who to write to, we recommend making sure everyone gets a note!
- Students are able to participate using electronic and/or paper-pencil formats
- Students can hand-deliver or email their messages to specific people, or drop random messages to others in their lockers, around the school, etc.

goals:

- Improve mental wellness and prosocial skills by spreading positivity through kind messages with classmates
- Create cheer throughout the school

discussion:

- What do you hope your messages will provide to other students?
- What would it mean to you to receive a positive note from a classmate?



conversation hearts

Break down social barriers and find community with this connection activity

time estimate: 20-30 minutes

supplies:

- Boxes of conversation hearts
- Conversation prompts
- A bowl for your candy



goals:

- Create a positive group atmosphere
- Get to know your peers in a creative way
- Support an environment of connection and friendship

instructions:

- Makes sure you have all of the supplies listed
- Unbox your conversation hearts and place them in the round plastic bowl
- Sit in a circle and place the conversation prompts and the candy bowl in the center
- Feel free to change or swap out questions as you see fit!
- To begin, the first person will grab a conversation heart from the center and answer the question
- For example, if the first person got “#1 LOVE,” their question would be: Do you play any sports? If so, which ones?
- The student will answer the question and then place the conversation heart back into the bowl
- This student cannot answer the same question again and must redraw on their next turn
- The second person continues drawing a new piece of candy, continuing the process around the circle
- Once everyone has answered, the first person can pick another piece of candy and start again
- If students prefer to eat the candy hearts after selecting one from the bowl instead of putting them back, the game can end when the candy is gone! This would mean only one game with that pack of hearts C:

Conversation prompts on the following page

conversation hearts prompts

#1 LOVE - Do you play any sports? If so, Which ones? If not, what's your fav hobby?

1 4 3 - Hot drinks or cold drinks?

ALL MINE - What was your favorite game as a kid?

AMORE - Have you been to any other countries? If yes, which ones? If not, where do you want to go?

ANGEL - What's your favorite holiday?

ASK ME - What's your favorite class?

BE HAPPY - Could you eat pizza every day?

BE MINE - Where were you born?

BEST DAY - If someone gave you a million dollars, what's the first thing you would buy?

CALL ME - How do you decompress after a stressful day?

DATE NIGHT - What is your favorite flavor of ice cream?

DREAM BIG - What is the last thing you dreamt about?

FIRST KISS - Have you ever been on a boat?

GIGGLE - What's your favorite dad joke?

HOLD HANDS - What's the last movie you saw in theaters?

HUG ME - Have you ever done or would you ever do hot yoga?

I LOVE YOU - What's your favorite color?

KISS ME - What's your favorite TV show right now?

LET'S KISS - Do you collect anything?

LET'S READ - What's your favorite book?

LIVE N LOVE - What's something you're secretly good at?

LOVE BUG - What bug creeps you out the most?

LOVE ME - Do you have any siblings?

MARRY ME - What is your favorite board game?

MELT MY ♥ - What's your least favorite thing to do?

MISS YOU - What is your least favorite food?

MY LOVE - What is your favorite season?

OCCUPY MY ♥ - What celebrity inspires you?

PUPPY LOVE - Do you have any pets?

QT PIE - What is your favorite dessert?

REAL ♥ - What is your favorite scent?

SAY YES - What's been your hardest class this year?

SHINE BRITE - Where did you first learn about mental health?

SMILE - What's your favorite genre of music?

SOUL MATE - When was the last time you had a self-care day? What did you do?

SWEET LOVE - What is your favorite kind of candy?

SWEET PEA - Breakfast for dinner or dessert for breakfast?

SWEET STUFF - If you could have any superpower, what would it be?

SWEET TALK - What's your favorite animal?

TRUE LOVE - Do you speak any other languages?

TXT ME - What is your favorite restaurant?

UR HOT - What's your favorite social media site?

URA STAR - If you could have one wish, what would it be?

WICKED COOL - Sunshine or snow?

WINK WINK - What brings you joy?

XOXO - How many more years until teleportation is invented?

YOU & I - What's your dream vacation destination?

YOU ROCK - Which is scarier: deep space or the deep sea?

Other/Can't Read - Choose a question above to answer

daily gratitude

Learn about the mental health benefits of gratitude by engaging in daily journaling.

time estimate: 20 minutes

supplies:

- Paper or personal journal
- Pens or other writing utensils
- Optional: Stickers, paints, or other art supplies to add creativity

instructions:

- Provide examples of journal entries and writing prompts to club members. Examples may include:
 - Describe your favorite moment of the day.
 - Describe your favorite person and list some of their greatest qualities.
 - Write about a random act of kindness from another person.
 - Write about something that cheers you up when you feel down.

resources/tips:

- [Additional Journal Prompts](#)
- If students are having difficulty writing, provide sentence stems for them to complete or have them draw to express their gratitude

goals:

- Learn about the benefits of practicing gratitude which includes:
 - Better relationships
 - Improved physical and psychological health
 - Increased empathy
 - Healthier sleep patterns
 - Improved self-esteem and resiliency

discussion:

- How did reflecting on gratitude help you become more appreciative of what is occurring in your life?
- What other lessons did you learn from journaling? Did anything surprise you?
- Is this an activity that you would incorporate into your daily routine?



fidget spinner mayhem

Students use a fidget spinner and game board to learn more about their fellow club members.

time estimate: 20 minutes

supplies:

- Fidget spinners or a pencil that can be spun
- [Fidget Spinner Question Board](#)
- Tape

instructions:

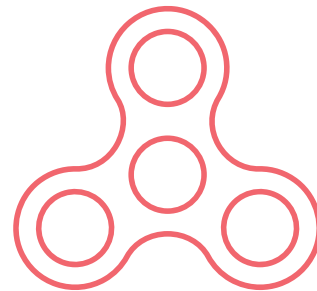
- Print out as many copies of the question board as you'd like. Each small group should have one board.
- Place a piece of tape on one of the wings of the fidget spinner. This will serve as a way to determine where the fidget spinner stopped. If a fidget spinner is unavailable, you can simply spin a pencil on the boards you printed out.
- Students take turns spinning the fidget spinner. When the fidget spinner stops, the student should try their best to answer the question on the board. Folks can always pass if they don't feel comfortable with a question.

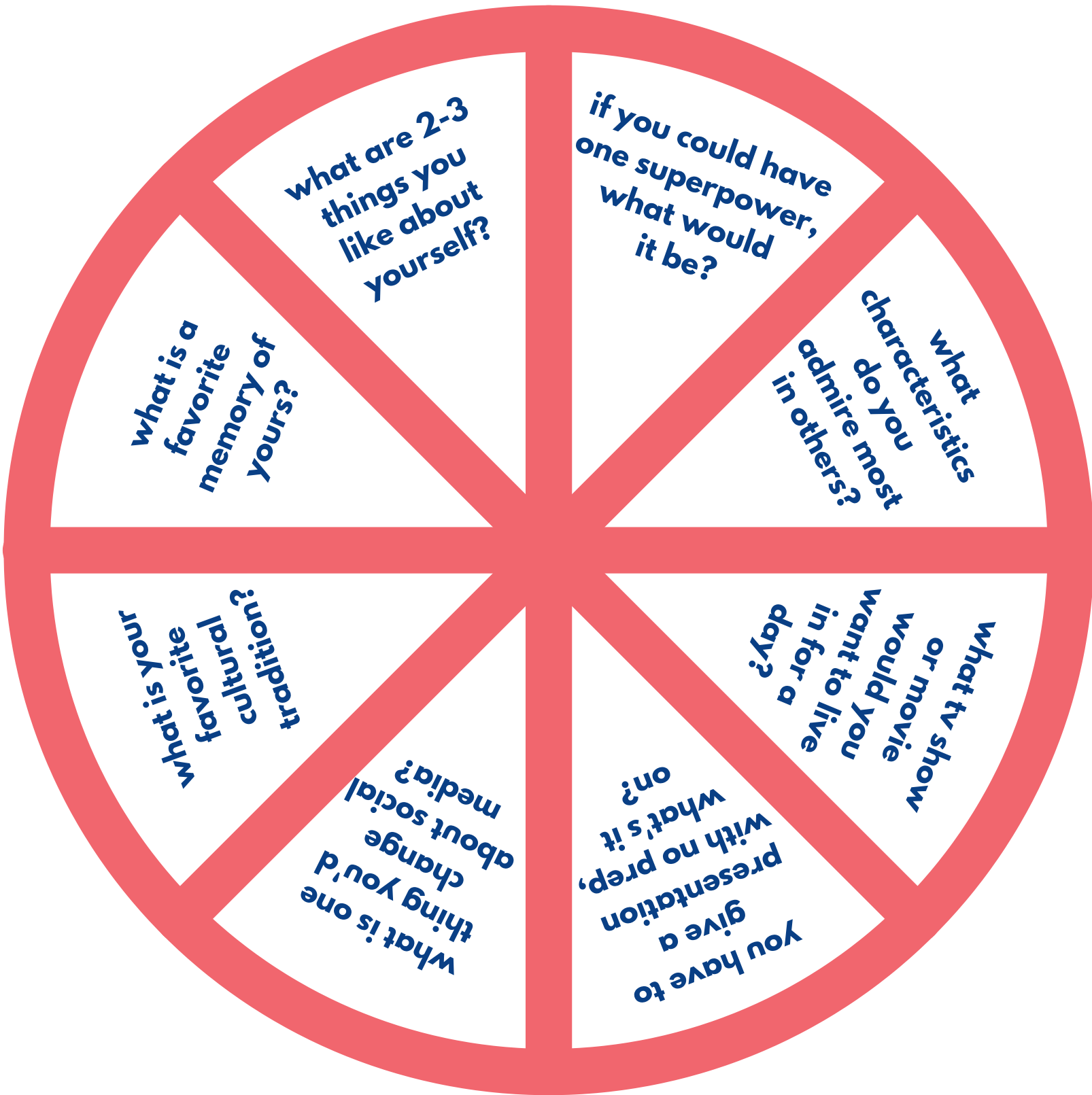
goals:

- Continue to form personal connections and friendships with one another
- Reflect on values, how they feel about themselves, and things they enjoy

discussion:

- What was one interesting thing you learned about a fellow club member?
- Are there additional questions you would like to ask each other based on your conversations?





**what are 2-3
things you
like about
yourself?**

**if you could have
one superpower,
what would
it be?**

**what
characteristics
do you
admire most
in others?**

**what tv show
or movie
would you
want to live
in for a
day?**

**you have to
give a
presentation
with no prep,
what's it
on?**

**what is one
thing you'd
change
about social
media?**

**what is your
favorite
cultural
tradition?**

**what is a
favorite
memory of
yours?**

filling your cup

Explore self-care strategies with ping pong balls and buckets

time estimate: 20-30 minutes

supplies:

- Plastic buckets
- Ping pong balls
- Sharpie
- Candy

instructions:

- Have the students set up buckets in a line or however they see fit with treats inside each bucket
- Be sure to have a few ping pong balls pre-written with general coping skill ideas (e.g. go outside, talk with someone, etc.) and have each student practice using one of those first and writing in their own for the second toss
- Students should try to get a ping pong ball into the bucket and either share what they have written on it or share an example of the general thing written in order to actually toss the ball
- If a student gets the ball into the bucket, they can take a piece of candy

goals:

- Learn about coping skills to fill your cup
- Practice sharing positive habits with peers

discussion:

- Why does filling your bucket matter?
- Can others help you to fill your bucket and can others help you when you don't have any ideas?
- What new ideas for self care and regulation did you learn here?



getting to know you

Learn more about each other and establish social connection

time estimate: 20 minutes

supplies:

- [Slide Deck](#)

instructions:

- Present the shared slides and have students share in one of the following ways based on the amount of folks in attendance:
 - If you have a small group, let each student take turns answering each question.
 - If you have a large number in attendance, have students break into smaller groups and guide the groups through each question to ensure everyone has a chance to share.
- Kindly let students know that they are welcome to “pass” if they would rather not answer a question.
- Challenge students to ask follow-up questions and make positive comments to peers’ responses when appropriate.

goals:

- Engage in a social activity to learn more about one another and foster social connectedness
- Build confidence in sharing about themselves through an activity with minimal social risks

discussion:

- What was your favorite part of this activity?
- Name something that you learned about another student.
- Did you have a common interest or response with another club member?

the gift of compassion

Write letters to a selected group that is important to your school community to build compassion and prosocial skills.

time estimate: 20 minutes

supplies:

- Writing paper or electronic document
- Basic art supplies.

goals:

- Students will experience the psychological benefits of showing care and compassion to others.
- Students will build prosocial skills and learn the importance of community care.

instructions:

- As a group, explore and select a group within your community to write compassionate or gratitude letters
- Here are a few ideas:
 - Gratitude letters to teachers or support staff in your school
 - Thank you letters to local animal shelter employees
 - Thank you letters to local healthcare or medical staff
 - Cheerful messages to a local senior center
 - Gratitude letters to parents
 - Compassion letters to friends/loved ones
- Once you have selected a group, allow students to work individually or in groups to compose their letters
- Encourage students to be creative and decorate the letters with any art supplies you have available
- Not sure what to include in the letter? Here are some suggestions:
 - List why you are thankful
 - Describe what makes the person/group special to you and/or their impact on you
 - Describe traits and characteristics they embody that you greatly admire
- Once they are finished, you can handle the logistics of mailing or delivering the letters
- Be sure to provide a return address in case anyone wants to write back!

(View more on next page)

the gift of compassion

resources/tips:

- If students are having difficulty with writing, provide sentence stems and/or a word bank for them to use OR help them write the letter but have them add drawings and decorations

discussion:

- The group we chose to show gratitude to serves our community in one way or another. How have you served your community in the past?
- What was it like to write the letter? How did it make you feel?
- Why is it important to show kindness to others?

heal from stress

Design and color bandages while sharing ways you “heal”
from stressful times

time estimate: 20-30 minutes

supplies:

- Paper bandages OR Real adhesive bandages
- Markers
- Pens
- Stickers
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks or Tape

goals:

- Promote social connectedness and remind folks that everyone struggles with stress at some point in time
- Foster a welcoming environment where students feel comfortable discussing their stressors and self-care habits
- Offer a sense of community support

instructions:

- Introduce the purpose of the activity - promoting mental health awareness, healthy coping mechanisms, and share support within the school community
- Open up a discussion about the importance of healing and coping strategies while in a stressful or difficult situation. Ask the group about their experiences, and let them share for 5 minutes or so
- Then, pass out the bandage cutouts or the adhesive bandages to each participant
- Pass out supplies like markers, pens, and stickers for decorating
- Ask everyone to write short coping strategies that they use on the bandages
- Encourage them to decorate the bandages too!
- Examples could include: journaling, exercise, music, cuddling a pet, talking to a friend, etc.
- Play background music to set the scene for a calming activity and encourage folks to talk to their peers about how they “heal”
- Folks can stick their bandages on their bag or a notebook

heal from stress

resources/tips:

- [Inspirational quotes and messages](#), also helpful examples of safe ways to recover while facing stress link
- [Inspiration for decoration on bandages from pinterest](#)

discussion:

- Can you share a time when you felt stressed and what did you do to feel better/recover?
- How does engaging in activities, like this one, help manage stress?
- Do you think creating art is a form of healing?
- How can we as a school community support and allow each other to heal in times of stress?

kindness challenge

Reflect on kindness and light up someone else's day with a random act of kindness

time estimate: 20 minutes

supplies:

- Paper
- Writing utensils

goals:

- Discuss and recognize the impact that small interactions can have on the larger outlook of someone's day
- Take action by participating in acts of kindness around your community

instructions:

- Have the students take turns sharing their response to this prompt:
 - Describe a time when someone showed you kindness. How did this make you feel?
- As a large group, go through the discussion questions listed in the following section
- Following your discussion, have each person select a number 1-10
- Assign each person their random act of kindness, corresponding with the numbered acts below:
 1. Let someone go ahead of you in line
 2. Talk to someone in your family about how they are doing
 3. Do a job/chore that someone else would otherwise have to do
 4. Ask someone who is sitting alone to sit with you at lunch
 5. Compliment someone you have a difficult relationship with
 6. Give a personal note to someone important to you
 7. Say hello to strangers or peers you are not already friends with
 8. Clean your room without being asked
 9. Help someone before they ask you
 10. Pick up trash in your neighborhood
- Alternatively, you can also write these down on strips of paper and place all strips (folded) into a hat and invite students to pick one out of the hat

(View more on next page)

kindness challenge

instructions:

- Have students write down their challenge on their piece of paper with the intention of completing their act of kindness before you meet next
- The next time you meet, make sure to take 5-10 minutes to check in on their experience after completing the kindness challenge

resources/tips:

- [Benefits of Kindness](#)

discussion:

- What does kindness mean to you? What does it look like or manifest as?
- How do random acts of kindness make you feel when you receive them?
- How do random acts of kindness make you feel when you provide them?
- Prosocial acts have been shown to boost mental health, well-being, and life satisfaction - why do you think that is?

positive vibes

Reflect on and share about things that bring you joy,
affirmation, and gratitude

time estimate: 20 minutes

supplies:

- Bulletin Board Paper, Poster, or Whiteboard
- Post-It Notes
- Markers or other writing utensils

instructions:

- Hand out 5 Post-It notes to each student
- Each student should answer the following questions on their Post-It notes (1 response per note):
 - Something I do well is...
 - This week I felt joy when...
 - I am grateful for...
 - I am good at...
 - I am proud of...
- After you have completed your Post-It notes, post them on the blank piece of bulletin board paper, poster, or whiteboard
- As a group discuss the following discussion questions

goals:

- Identify and express the feelings of joy, affirmation and gratitude
- Share what sparks these feelings for you with your community to inspire others to identify these feelings within themselves

discussion:

- Was it difficult to think of answers to these questions? Why or why not?
- How did you feel while writing down your answers?
- Are there other answers on the paper/poster/board that resonate with you?
- We feel a variety of emotions throughout the day, and all feelings are important to get our needs met. What is one thing you can do this week to hold space for your difficult feelings?

the power of music

Explore identifying and expressing emotions through music by creating playlists of songs that align with various emotions.

time estimate: 30 minutes

supplies:

- [Feelings Wheel](#) (printable)
- [Slide Deck](#)
- High tech:
 - Computer with access to music (YouTube, iTunes, Spotify) OR Phones with the ability to play music
- Low tech:
 - Paper
 - Writing utensils

goals:

- Identify their emotions and understand the range of emotions people feel.
- Describe the importance of healthy emotional expression for their mental health.
- Practice the healthy emotional expression strategy of listening to music as it relates to their current mood.

instructions:

- Show students the “Feelings Wheel” on the slide deck and ask them to identify 2 to 3 words that depict how they are feeling at this moment
- For easier viewing, you can also print and hand out the feeling wheel to each student or group of students
- Ask students to share out loud as a group or with a partner next to them
- Follow the slide deck to expand upon the feelings wheel, how people manage their feelings in healthy and unhealthy ways, & introduce music as a coping skill
- Break students into groups and let each group choose a different emotion such as excited, calm, sad, angry, or stressed
- Ask groups to create a music playlist with songs to match that emotion
- High-tech options: Students can curate a playlist on a smartphone, tablet, or computer (Spotify, Apple Music, iTunes, Amazon Music, Youtube)
- Low-tech options: Students to write down a list of songs and artists on paper
- Invite groups to share some of the songs they selected and how they relate to the emotion the group chose
- Depending on your tech options and time, invite each group to play one of their song selections for the larger group on phones or computers.

(View more on next page)

the power of music

discussion:

- How does identifying and expressing emotions relate to our mental health?
- What can happen if we don't recognize our emotions? Or bottle them and don't express emotions?
- How can music influence our emotions?
- What are other healthy ways to manage emotions?

resources/tips:

- Encourage students to include a diverse array of music genres in their playlists
- Clubs can share their playlists with the larger school community on social media to have a larger impact
- Affirm that music has the power to bring people together and heal AND it can be deeply personal and associated with unique moments and memories.
- Encourage being curious and nonjudgmental to different responses to music.
- [How music can improve your mental health](#)

rain game

Practice active listening and build connection

time estimate: 20 minutes

supplies:

- Open space

goals:

- Practice active listening with peers
- Understand the importance of community and collaboration to achieve a common goal
- Break the ice and have fun!

instructions:

- Instruct students to arrange themselves in a circle and say the following (you don't have to read it like a script, feel free to make it your own!):
 - To form relationships, build community, and work toward a common goal, a safe and supportive environment is needed, which is why we're in a circle where we can all see each other
 - While individually we can all make an impact in changing our school's culture around mental health, coming together and working as a community can create a bigger impact and make us all feel less alone too!
 - The Rain Game is an example of a group creating something together
 - To begin, we need to be silent and follow the next 10 steps as I call them out
 - We'll perform each step for approximately 10 seconds before moving on to the next step
 - Rub your fingers together
 - Rub your hands together
 - Snap your fingers
 - Clap softly
 - Clap loudly
 - Pat your chest
 - Pat your legs
 - Stomp your feet
 - Stomp and clap at the same time, add "crashing" noises with your mouth
- Then go backward, taking the noises away one by one until we are back to rubbing fingers together
- The Rain Game showed us that together, we can work toward an outcome that is stronger and louder than what we could do on our own

(View more on next page)

rain game

resources/tips:

- Be mindful of the varying abilities of the students. Let everyone know that it's okay if someone has to skip/modify a step for any reason and that they are still making just as big of an impact!

discussion:

- Where you surprised at how loud the “rain storm” sound was as a group when individually rubbing your fingers together doesn't make that much noise? What does that say about the power of a group?
- How can we take what we learned about working together and apply it to the work we want to do in our school community?

recreate your safe space

Use art to create a personal safe space and invite students to explore what makes them feel safe

time estimate: 20 minutes

supplies:

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Magazines
- Markers/crayons
- Any other art supplies you want or have!

goals:

- Identify a safe space and explore why it feels safe
- Use imagination and creativity in recreating this space
- Explore how elements of the safe space can be brought into other spaces

instructions:

- Invite everyone to take 1-2 minutes to identify a safe space, real or imagined, where they feel most comfortable. They can close their eyes while imagining if they are comfortable. A few guiding questions you can ask while students are imagining include:
 - Where does this space exist?
 - What is in this space? Other people? Pets? Special objects?
 - What about this space makes you feel safe?
 - What does it sound like? Smell like? Feel like?
- Give students 10-15 minutes to create a version of their safe space using the art materials. Alternatively, students can use graphic design software on their computers if they'd prefer/are able.
- As students recreate their safe space or "happy place," encourage them to consider not only what the space looks like but also what it sounds like, what they feel/touch in their safe space, and what they might taste or smell in their safe space
- Feel free to play some chill music on low volume while students create
- Once everyone is finished, move on to the discussion questions

(View more on next page)

recreate your safe space

discussion:

- How do you think identifying and creating all the different elements of a personal safe space can help you in the future?
- How can a safe environment help someone dealing with trauma or another mental health struggle? What about someone who is just having a bad day?
- What steps can you take to turn your creative safe space into a reality? If you can't make the whole space a reality, what pieces of it can you bring into your world?

mindful closings

Mindful closings are a great way to end each meeting to leave students feeling grounded. Here are a few examples of how you can mindfully close your meetings.

checking in

Choose one of these for each student to answer to close out your meeting.

- Name one thing that you find positive about yourself
- What is your favorite way to show love to someone you care about?
- What is your favorite way to receive love from someone you care about?
- What is something that brings you joy? If you're not feeling joy, what brings you comfort?
- What is one way you plan to take care of yourself this week?
- What is one thing you're grateful for today?

positive news roundtable

Hold a "Positive News Roundtable" where students can take turns sharing positive news occurring in their life.

Bonus: Strategies-in-Action Alert!

- Students share a time during the week where they used a mental health strategy to support themselves or a friend

take 5

Invite students to take a moment to be still, take a deep breath, and then silently name the following:

1. Five things you can see.
2. Four things you can touch.
3. Three things you can hear.
4. Two things you can smell.
5. One thing you can taste.

Take three deep breaths before gently inviting them back to the space and wrapping up. If you have time, you can ask folks to share one word for how that exercise made them feel.

mental health glossary

These are common terms associated with mental health and the OMM program.

Included are brief, easy-to-explain definitions for students to understand.

Please note: This is not a complete list of all mental health disorders and terms.

affirmation

An affirmation is a positive and kind thing you say to yourself to help you feel good and believe in yourself. It's like giving yourself a little pep talk! For example, saying, "I am brave" or "I can do hard things" are affirmations that can help you feel strong and confident.

ally

An ally is someone who supports and stands up for others, especially people who may need assistance or are treated unfairly. For example, if someone sees another person being bullied, an ally would support them by speaking up, offering kindness, or making sure they are safe. Being an ally means being a good friend and treating everyone with respect.

anxiety

Anxiety is a feeling of worry or nervousness that can happen when you're scared, unsure, or thinking about something that might be hard. It's like your heart beating fast when you're about to do something new or challenging or your stomach hurting when you're worried about something. Everyone feels anxious sometimes, and it's okay! Talking to someone you trust can help.

body positivity

Body positivity means loving and accepting your body just the way it is. It's about feeling good about yourself, no matter how you look or what size you are. Everyone's body is unique, and being kind to yourself helps you feel happy and confident. We should celebrate all bodies!

compassion

Compassion means caring about other people and wanting to help them when they feel sad, hurt, or need support. It's like being kind and understanding, even if you don't feel the same way they do. For example, giving a friend a hug when they're upset is showing compassion.

coping skills

Coping skills are things you can do to help yourself feel better when you're upset, worried, or mad. They're like tools in a toolbox to help you handle tough feelings. For example, taking deep breaths, drawing a picture, or talking to someone you trust are all coping skills. They help you stay calm and feel stronger.

depression

Depression is a strong and long-lasting feeling of sadness that makes it hard to feel happy or enjoy things, even the things you usually like. It's more than just feeling sad sometimes—it's when the sadness stays for a long time and makes it hard to do everyday things. If someone feels this way, it's important for them to talk to a grown-up they trust, like a parent, teacher, or counselor, so they can get help and feel better.

empathy

Empathy means understanding how someone else feels and caring about their feelings. It's like putting yourself in their shoes and imagining how you would feel if the same thing happened to you. For example, if a friend is sad, empathy helps you understand why they're upset and show kindness to help them feel better.

gratitude

Gratitude means being thankful for the good things in your life. It's about noticing and appreciating things like a sunny day, a kind friend, or a tasty meal. Saying "thank you" and feeling happy for what you have are ways to show gratitude!

grounded

Feeling grounded means feeling calm, safe, and steady, like a tree with strong roots in the ground. It's when you feel connected to the present moment and in control of your feelings. Doing things like taking deep breaths, holding something soft, or thinking about something that makes you happy can help you feel grounded.

help-seeking

Help-seeking means asking for help when you need it. It's about talking to someone, like a teacher, parent, or friend, if you're feeling confused, upset, or need support with something. It's okay to ask for help—everyone needs it sometimes! Asking for help can make you feel better and solve problems faster.

inclusivity

Inclusivity means making sure everyone feels welcome, accepted, and included, no matter who they are. It's about being kind and fair so that everyone has a chance to join in and feel like they belong. For example, inviting someone new to play or making sure everyone has a turn shows inclusivity!

meditation

Meditation is a way to help calm your mind and relax your body. It often involves sitting quietly, focusing on your breathing, and thinking about peaceful things.

Meditation can help you feel calm, focused, and happy. It's like giving your mind a little break!

mental health

Mental health means how we feel, think, and act every day. It's about how we take care of our mind, just like how we take care of our body. When we feel happy, calm, and safe, our mental health is good. It's also okay to feel sad or worried sometimes, and talking to someone you trust can help you feel better.

mental health awareness

Mental health awareness means learning about how our feelings and thoughts can affect us, just like our bodies can feel good or sick. It helps us understand that it's okay to feel happy, sad, worried, or angry, and that talking about our feelings is important. Being aware of mental health means knowing how to take care of our minds, asking for help when we need it, and being kind and supportive to others when they need help with their feelings too.

mental health disorder

A mental health disorder is when someone's thoughts, feelings, or behaviors are different in a way that makes it harder for them to do everyday things, like going to school or playing with friends. It can make them feel really sad, worried, or confused for a long time, or they might have trouble focusing or staying calm. Just like how we can feel sick in our bodies, sometimes our minds can feel sick too. People with a mental health disorder may need extra help from doctors, counselors, or their family and friends to feel better.

mental health professional

A mental health professional is a person who helps people feel better when they are feeling sad, worried, or upset. They are trained to listen, understand, and give advice or support. Examples of mental health professionals are counselors, therapists, and psychologists. They help people take care of their feelings and mental health, just like a doctor helps take care of your body!

mindfulness

Mindfulness means paying attention to what's happening right now, in the present moment, without worrying about the past or future. It's about being aware of your thoughts, feelings, and what's around you. For example, when you eat a snack, you can notice how it tastes, smells, and feels instead of thinking about other things. It helps you feel calm and focused!

neurodivergence

Neurodivergence means that someone's brain works differently than most people expect. This can include things like how they think, learn, or understand the world around them. Some people who are neurodivergent might find it harder to focus, communicate, or handle certain feelings, but they also might have special strengths or talents. Everyone learns and interacts with the world in their own way. Neurodivergent people may need extra help with some things but not with others, and it is different for every person. Some examples of neurodivergence are ADHD, Autism Spectrum Disorder, and Dyslexia.

peer

A peer is someone who is about the same age as you or is in the same grade. Peers are your classmates, friends, or people you see at school or other places. You might share similar experiences or activities with your peers, and you can help each other learn and grow!

prosocial

Prosocial means doing things that help others and make the world a better place. It's about being kind, sharing, helping, and working together. For example, when you help a friend with their homework or pick up trash to keep your school clean, you're being prosocial!

resilience

Resilience is the ability to bounce back and keep going when things are tough. It's like when you fall off your bike but get back up and try again. Resilience helps you stay strong and keep trying, even when things don't go as planned. Everyone has the ability to be resilient!

safe space

A safe space is a place where you feel comfortable, respected, and free to be yourself. It's a place where you don't have to worry about being judged or hurt. For example, your classroom or a friend's house can be a safe space if everyone is kind and supportive there. It's important to have a safe space where you can share your thoughts and feelings!

self-awareness

Self-awareness is when you understand your own feelings, thoughts, and actions. It means knowing what makes you happy, sad, or excited, and being able to think about how you act in different situations. When you're self-aware, you can tell if you need a break, if you're feeling mad, or if you need help. It helps you make better choices and understand how your actions affect others, too!

self-care

Self-care means taking care of yourself to feel good and stay healthy. It's about doing things that help you feel happy, calm, and strong, like getting enough sleep, eating healthy food, playing, or taking time to relax. When you practice self-care, you're looking after both your body and your mind!

self-esteem

Self-esteem is how you feel about yourself and how much you believe in your own worth. When you have good self-esteem, you think you're important, capable, and worthy of love and respect. It's like thinking, "I can do this!" or "I'm proud of who I am!" Taking care of yourself and being kind to yourself helps build your self-esteem.

self-regulation

Self-regulation is the ability to control your feelings, thoughts, and actions, especially when you feel upset or excited. It's like being able to pause and think before you act, so you can make better choices. For example, when you're feeling really mad, self-regulation helps you calm down instead of shouting or hitting. It also helps you stay focused on a task, like doing homework, even if there are distractions. Self-regulation is a skill you can practice to feel more in control of your emotions and actions!

social connectedness

Social connectedness means feeling like you belong and have friends or people you care about around you. It's about being part of a group, like your family, friends, or classmates, and sharing moments with them. When you feel connected, you feel supported, happy, and less alone!

stigma

Stigma is when people judge or treat someone unfairly because of something they can't control, like how they look, where they come from, or something they are going through. It's important to remember that everyone deserves kindness and respect, no matter what. We should try to understand and support others instead of judging them.

stress

Stress is the feeling you get when something feels too hard, too busy, or makes you worried. It can happen when you have a big test, a lot of homework, or if something is making you upset. Your body might feel tense, your heart might beat faster, or you might feel nervous. It's normal to feel stress sometimes, but talking to someone you trust or doing something relaxing can help you feel better.

stressor

A stressor is something that causes you to feel stressed or worried. It could be a problem, like a big test, a busy day, or an argument with a friend. Stressors are things that can make you feel upset or nervous, but finding ways to handle them can help you feel better.

symptom

A symptom is something that shows you might not be feeling well. It's a sign that something is happening in your body or mind. For example, if you have a fever or a sore throat, those are symptoms of being sick. If you feel really sad or tired all the time, that can be a symptom of something that might need help too. Symptoms help you understand how you're feeling and when to ask for help.

trauma

Trauma is when something really scary or hurtful happens that can make you feel upset, scared, or sad for a long time. It might be an accident, losing someone you care about, or something else that feels really tough. People who go through trauma might need help to feel better, and it's important to talk to a trusted adult if you ever feel this way.

trust

Trust means believing that someone will be honest, kind, and do what they say. It's like knowing that your friend will keep a secret or that your teacher will help you when you need it. When you trust someone, you feel safe and comfortable with them. Trust is important in friendships and in all relationships!

trusted adult

A trusted adult is someone you can rely on and feel safe talking to when you need help. This could be a parent, teacher, school counselor, or another grown-up who listens to you, cares about you, and helps you with problems. A trusted adult is someone who will always try to help and keep you safe.

mental health resources

crisis

- Text "MIND" to 741741 for 24/7 support from Crisis Text Line
- Call 988 for the 24/7 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline
- Call or Text [The Trevor Project](#) at 1-866-488-738 for LGBTQ+ specific support

finding help

- [Find a Therapist](#): Search to find insurance covered and sliding scale providers
- [Inclusive Therapists](#): Find a therapist tool for marginalized folks
- [National Queer & Trans Therapists of Color Network](#)
- [Start Your Recovery](#): Learn about drug and alcohol problems and options for treatment and recovery
- [National Alliance for Eating Disorders](#): Call 866-662-1235 9-5:30 Monday-Friday to speak with a licensed therapist specialized in eating disorders or use their [Find ED Help Tool](#).
- [RAINN National Sexual Assault Hotline](#): 800-656-4673 or chat online
- [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#): 1800-799-7233

for youth of color

- [The AAKOMA Project](#): Meeting the mental health needs of Youth of Color
- [AANHPI](#): Finding an Asian, Native Hawaiian, or Pacific Islander Provider
- [BEAM](#): Removing barriers to Black healing
- [We R Native](#): a health resource for Native youth by Native youth
- [NAMI Compartiendo Esperanza](#): A bilingual 3-part video series that seeks to reduce stigma in Latinx communities

for LGBTQ+ youth

- [Trans Lifeline](#): A trans-led hotline and non-profit organization offering direct emotional and financial support to trans people in crisis.
- [True Colors United](#): For LGBTQ+ youth experiencing homelessness to safely access housing and understand their legal rights.
- [Trevor Space](#): An affirming international community for LGBTQ+ folks ages 13-24.

check out ourmindsmatter.org/resources for more