

Topic

Mental Health  
Awareness

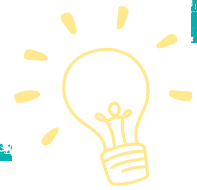
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# Mental Health Awareness

## Learning Objectives:

Students will be able to understand the various ways they can support their mental health, identify the signs of mental illness, and understand the stigma surrounding mental illness and its impact.



## Topic Overview:

### What is Mental Health?

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes their potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, work productively, do well, and fully enjoy life.

Everyone has mental health

Mental health is not just about the absence of mental illness. Just as everyone has physical health (even with a cold or a broken leg), everyone has mental health even when dealing with stress or being diagnosed with a mental illness.

### What is Mental Illness?

Mental illness is a change in thinking, mood, or behaviour, accompanied by distress and impaired functioning over time. Mental illness is a medical condition diagnosed by qualified mental health professionals.

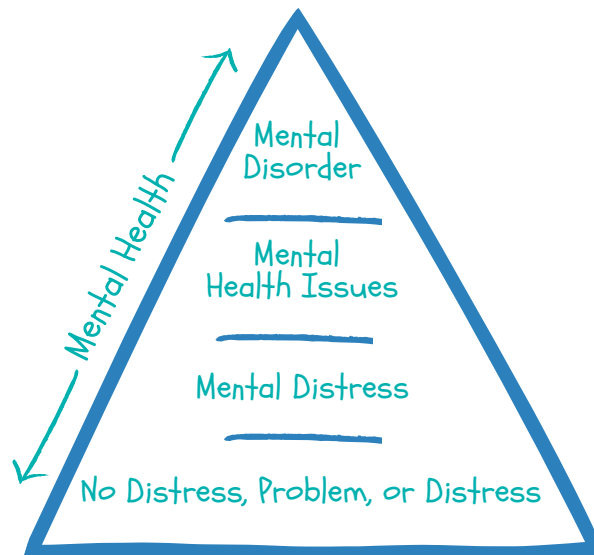
## Examples of Mental Illness

- Mood Disorders (Depression and Bipolar Disorder)
- Anxiety Disorders (Generalized Anxiety, Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder)
- Psychotic Disorders (Schizophrenia)
- Substance-Related Disorders
- Eating Disorders (Anorexia and Bulimia)

## Relationship Between Mental Health and Mental Illness

### Mental Health Pyramid

Mental health encompasses the entire pyramid. Everyone exists somewhere on the pyramid and everyone has mental health.



### No Distress, Problem, or Distress

Everything is going fine and you are generally enjoying life.

### Mental Distress

Mental distress occurs when someone encounters everyday problems that create a stress response. These are common, expected, and normal responses that are necessary for adaptation and building resilience (e.g. writing a test, arguing).

### Mental Health Issues

This occurs when a person is faced with a larger stressor than usual. These are difficult times that may require additional support but often do not require medical treatment (e.g. dealing with the death of a loved one, or the loss of a relationship).

### Mental Disorder

A mental disorder or illness is a medical condition with specific criteria diagnosed by trained health professionals.



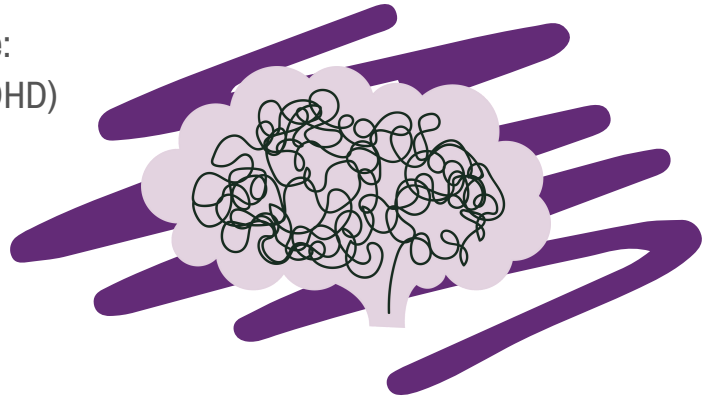
## What is Neurodiversity?



Neurodiversity is the idea that there are natural variations in how brains are wired and function especially related to learning, sociability, mood, attention, and other mental functions.

Examples of neurodivergent conditions include:

- Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder (ADHD)
- Autism Spectrum Disorder
- Dyslexia
- Dyscalculia
- Dyspraxia



## Causes of Mental Illness

### Neurotransmitter Theory:

Neurons communicate and send messages to each other through chemicals called neurotransmitters. Mental illness can occur when there is an imbalance in brain chemistry.

### Genetic Predisposition:

If a family member has a mental illness they may pass on the susceptibility to the illness through genetic material. It is important to note that not all mental illnesses have a genetic link and having a genetic link doesn't guarantee you will experience the mental illness.

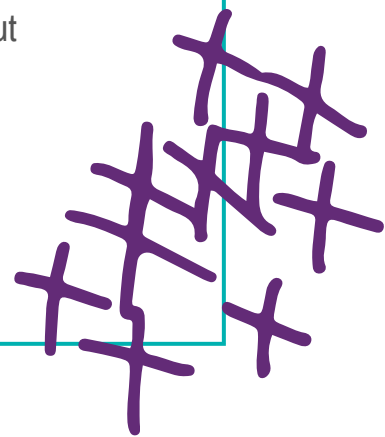
### Environmental Factors:

These may include alcohol, drugs, abuse, loss, death, bullying, physical illness, stress, trauma, natural disaster, extreme poverty, or adverse childhood experiences. Environmental factors alone may not cause a mental illness but they can make them worse.

The key point for students to understand is that there are many ways in which mental illness can occur.

## Impacts of Mental Illness

Thinking	Mood	Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Excessive worries or fears</li> <li>• Experiencing confused thinking or a reduced ability to concentrate</li> <li>• Thinking something is wrong with you</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling sad or anxious</li> <li>• Being confused or frustrated</li> <li>• Feeling sensitive or irritable</li> <li>• Overwhelmed easily</li> <li>• Extreme moods or mood swings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Becoming withdrawn or isolated</li> <li>• Losing interest in activities usually enjoyed</li> <li>• Being less productive</li> <li>• Acting out</li> </ul>



## What Is Stigma?

Stigma is the negative attitudes and beliefs that motivate the general public to fear, reject, avoid, or discriminate against people with mental health problems and mental illness. It can include discrediting or showing prejudice against someone because of a characteristic they have (e.g. using words like psycho, nuts, or crazy to refer to someone with mental health problems or mental illness).

Stigma can result in youth feeling shame, guilt, or being afraid to talk about their experiences and can lead to increased spread of misinformation over time.



## Stomp Out Stigma



### Language Matters

Pay attention to the words you use and whether they help or hurt. Be mindful of words such as "crazy" as they can perpetuate negative ideas about mental illness.



### Educate Yourself

Learn more about mental illness including the facts and fiction.



### Be Kind

Treat a person with mental illness with kindness just as you would people with any other illness.



### Educate Others

Talk about mental illness with friends, family, peers, coworkers, and teammates.



Check out the following video for your own education or to share with students:



Have that Talk - Reducing Stigma: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eio-l8PbdDk>

Please always preview videos before sharing them with students.

## Stigma Self-Assessment<sup>3</sup>

Before you engage your students in learning about mental health, take some time to check your personal attitudes towards mental health and mental illness and understand whether stigma has affected any of your perceptions.

Examine the following statements:

- "People should work out their own mental health problems."
- "People with mental illness are generally violent and dangerous."
- "You can tell by looking at people whether they have a mental illness."
- "The term mental illness is used as an excuse for bad behaviour."
- "Mental Illness only happens to certain kinds of people."
- "Most people will never be affected by mental illness."

If you agreed with any of these statements, your perception of mental health and mental illness may be impacted by stigmatizing information. Take some time to read the facts here:

People should work out their own mental health problems.

False

Just as you would go to a doctor for a physical illness, sometimes we need professional assistance for a mental illness.

People with mental illnesses are generally violent and dangerous.

False

People with mental illness are generally no more violent than the rest of the population.

You can tell by looking at someone if they have a mental illness.

False

Generally, no, you cannot tell if someone has a mental illness based on appearance.

The term mental illness is used as an excuse for bad behaviour.

False

Mental illness is a diagnosable health concern, plus many people can live productive and successful lives with a mental illness.

Mental illness only happens to certain kinds of people.

False

Mental illness occurs due to a variety of reasons and can happen to anyone.

Most people will never be affected by mental illness.

False

1 in 5 people in Canada will have a mental illness. Everyone will be affected by mental illness at some point whether it is by having the experience themselves or by knowing someone with a mental illness.

Note:

This self-assessment is designed for teachers to check their assumptions. Use the Mental Health Fact vs. Fiction for students.  
(Activity #8, page 54)



1 Can We Talk. (2016). Personal Attitudes Survey. Retrieved September 15, 2022, from <https://canwetalk.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/COOR-79I-2016-03-CWT-lesson-plans.pdf>

## Pathways to Recovery

- Seek help from trusted professionals
- Medication
- Learn more about mental health concerns and mental illness
- Explore therapeutic techniques
- Build a strong support team
- Practice self-care

## Activities:

- 1: What is Mental Health?
- 2: Mental Health Vocabulary
- 3: Mental Health Spectrum
- 4: Iceberg
- 5: Signs of Mental Illness
- 6: Lego Activity
- 7: Someone Else's Shoes
- 8: Mental Health Fact vs. Fiction
- 9: Stigma
- 10: Mental Health Origami Conversation Starter
- 11: Wellness Wheel
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- 15: Community of Support
- 16: Mini Books



# Activity 1: What is Mental Health?



**Time Requirement**  
15 - 30 minutes



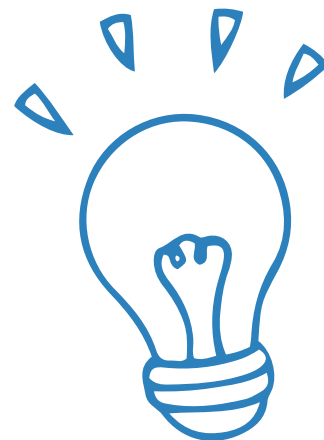
**Materials Required**  
White paper, pencils (optional)

## Activity Information

Use this activity to assess where students' knowledge level and attitudes around mental health currently exist. Some misinformation or gaps in understanding may present themselves. This isn't the time to correct every assumption, but instead, note areas where students may need more support or knowledge.

## Student Instructions:

- **THINK** – Students first individually brainstorm ideas that come to mind when they think about mental health.
- **PAIR** – They then get into partners or small groups and discuss what they have come up with.
- **SHARE** – Activity wraps up with a class discussion about what was brainstormed individually and as a group.



# Activity 2: Mental Health Vocabulary



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
None

## Activity Information

This activity allows students to learn and understand common words or phrases associated with mental health. This can be important to lay the groundwork for other activities.

## Student Instructions:

Have students brainstorm words or phrases associated with mental health. These can be things they already understand or things they want to learn more about.

Go through the words and ensure that students understand the terms. If there are any that seem unclear, students should brainstorm as a group what that word means in the context of mental health.

## Suggested Words:

- Stress
- Stigma
- Balance
- Mental illness
- Health or healthy
- Emotional
- Well-being

Students may bring up words related to mental illness. This can be a good time to begin discussions around the relationship between mental health and mental illness.

Further activities can be used to introduce more learning about mental illness and stigma.



# Activity 3: Mental Health Spectrum



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



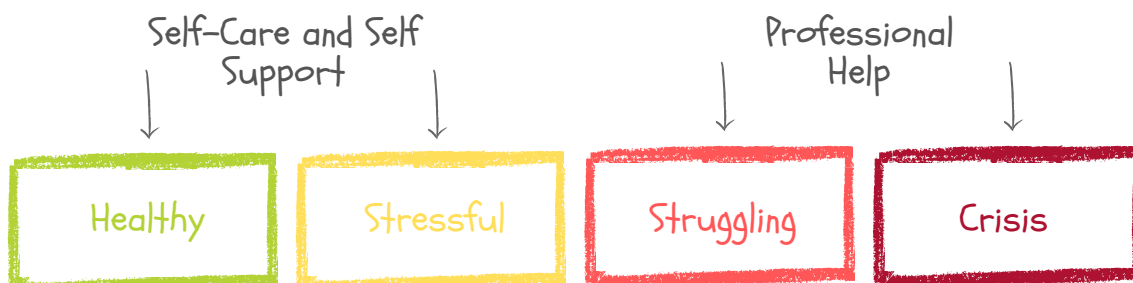
**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

This activity builds the idea that health is more complicated than good or bad, sick or healthy through the use of the mental health spectrum.

## Student Instructions:

- Introduce the mental health spectrum to students<sup>4</sup>
  - o Everyone has mental health and it can be helpful to think of mental health as being on a spectrum. Depending on what we are going through, our health can shift
  - o When something stressful happens, our mental health may shift to the right. When we do something that calms us or makes us healthy, it might shift to the left
  - o The spectrum can be a helpful visual to understand that a mental health struggle may feel intense and challenging, but there are always ways to shift our mental health positively



## Activity 3: Mental Health Spectrum

- It can be helpful to use a physical health example to help students understand the spectrum
  - o Getting a good sleep might move you into the green and staying up super late might move you to the yellow
  - o Breaking your leg could move you into the orange, but once you see a doctor, you could be in the green with your cast on (you are still healthy with a broken leg!)

<sup>2</sup> YouthSMART. Mental Health and Mental Illness. Retrieved September 15, 2022, from <https://www.youthsmart.ca/mental-health-mental-illness/mental-illness/>.

# Activity 4: Iceberg



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

This activity helps students to identify that there is often more to a person than can be easily seen. When it comes to stress or mental health problems, individuals may have to dig deeper to understand what a person is going through.

## Discussion Questions:

- What are some things that people wouldn't know about you if they didn't ask?
- Can people tell if you are having a bad day?
- Have you ever hidden how you were feeling from the surface?

## Student Instructions:

- Sometimes certain things about us are not so easily seen. Think about a time when you felt a certain way, but it wasn't obvious to those around you
- We have to understand that we don't always know what is going on with everyone around us and we can't assume that we know the full story
- Use the student worksheet to brainstorm things people know about you and things that may not immediately be obvious

# Activity 5: Signs of Mental Illness



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

Students must understand the various signs of mental illness. Mental illness often affects someone's thinking, mood, or behaviour.

Mental illnesses are diagnosed by qualified mental health professionals. Mental illness looks different for everyone, but mental illness can be **any major change from what was once typical**.

## Student Instructions:

- Students use the worksheet to brainstorm how mental illness can impact someone's thinking, mood, or behaviour
- Once students fill out the worksheet individually or in groups, discuss answers and clarify any questions students may have

## Discussion Questions:

- Why is it important to understand the signs of mental illness?
- Does having one or two of these signs automatically mean someone has a mental illness?
- What can you do if you recognize these signs in a friend or family member?

# Activity 6: LEGO Activity



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
LEGO or other small item, dice

## Activity Information

This activity helps students understand that everyone has different strengths and different needs. It builds the connection that everyone needs different supports to be successful.

## Student Instructions:

- Have students complete a simple task that you know all students will be able to accomplish (e.g. writing their name with a marker, or tying a shoe)
  - o Ask them how that task felt for them and most students will consider it easy
- This task represents completing basic life tasks or dealing with normal stressors or challenges
- Then students are randomly assigned challenges.
  - o Option – Roll a die to find out how many LEGO pieces they get
- Have them hold the pieces of LEGO in their hand.
  - o At this moment is it hard to hold? Most students will say no or might be experiencing small challenges holding onto it depending on how many they got or the size of the LEGO
  - o Remind students that the LEGO represents mental health challenges they might experience. We all experience different levels at various times. And we all react differently to these challenges

If LEGO pieces are small, you may want to roll the dice twice to make the activity more effective.

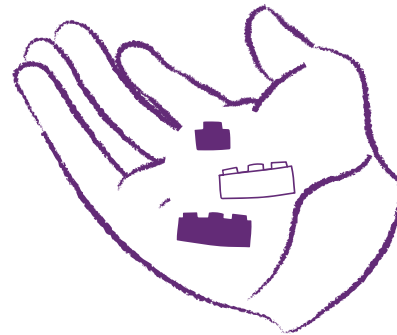


## Activity 6: LEGO Activity (cont.)

- Now have them hold the LEGO and try to do the simple task again
  - How did they feel this time? Ask students who had various numbers of LEGO's to compare their experiences
- Have students help to brainstorm mental health supports
- Roll a die to see how many supports they have. This number allows them to put down a certain amount of LEGO. This can represent social support or treatments. Not all of the LEGO should be out of their hand, but perhaps now they can manage better
- Have them try the task again. It still might be difficult but it should be easier. Plus, over time they would be more comfortable, skilled, or adapted to doing the task with the LEGO in hand

### Debrief:

- What happened and why?
- How does this relate to mental health?



### Reminder:

We all face different experiences and we all need different supports as a result.

# Activity 7: Someone Else's Shoes



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

Empathy: The ability to understand what others feel, see things from their point of view, and imagine yourself in their place. Essentially it is putting yourself in someone else's position and feeling what they are feeling.<sup>5</sup>

## Warm Up Activity:

- Empathy is easier when students have developed relationships with each other
- Use an icebreaker activity if you feel students would benefit from spending some time learning more about their classmates

## Examples of Icebreakers:

- Get to know someone bingo
- A great wind blows

## Student Instructions:

- Students will work through the various situations and decide how they may feel if that happened to them
- Once students are complete, they should compare answers with a partner or small group. This will allow them to see the different emotions someone may feel in the same scenario

## Activity 7: Someone Else's Shoes (cont.)

### Debrief:

- Were any situations difficult to pair with an emotion?
- Are there situations in which people disagreed on what emotion would be felt? Why?
- Are there any 'wrong' emotions?



<sup>3</sup> Cherry, K. (2022, July 21). What is empathy?. Very well Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-empathy-2795562>.



# Activity 8: Mental Health Fact vs. Fiction



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet

## Activity Information

This activity can demonstrate where students are unclear about mental health knowledge and introduce discussion around common misconceptions about mental health and mental illness.

**Mental Health:** A state of well-being in which every individual realizes their potential, can cope with normal stresses of life, work productively, do well, and enjoy life.

Mental health is the way children think and feel about themselves and the world around them. It affects how children cope with life's challenges and stresses.<sup>6</sup>



**Mental Illness:** A change in thinking, mood, or behaviour, accompanied by distress or impaired functioning over time.

- Explain that mental illness is like other physical illnesses – except the mind doesn't feel well
- Not every bad feeling is a symptom of mental illness (all feelings, both comfortable and uncomfortable, are part of being human)

4 Raising Children Network (2022). Good Mental Health for Children. Retrieved September 15, 2022, from <https://raisingchildren.net.au/school-age/health-daily-care/mental-health/children-s-mental-health#:~:text=Mental%20health%20is%20the%20way,with%20life's%20challenges%20and%20stresses.>

5 Campbell, L. (2021, December 6). How to Speak with Your Kid About Mental Health. Psych Central. <https://psychcentral.com/health/parent-central-how-to-talk-with-your-kid-about-mental-illness.>

## Activity 8: Mental Health Fact vs Fiction (cont.)

### Student Instructions:

- To introduce this activity, ask students what the difference between mental health and mental illness is. A variety of answers may be given
- Have students start in the middle of the room. Read out a statement and have students walk from one side of the room if they believe it is fact and another if it is fiction
- If space is an issue, you can also have students stand for a fact and remain seated for fiction. Ensure students know it is okay if they get answers incorrect

### Debrief:

This activity can help clarify some of the different ideas surrounding mental health and mental illness.

It is important to give students time to ask questions or for clarification about any of the statements that were brought up.

- Did anything surprise you?
- Why do you think some of these false statements exist? How can we prevent this?

# Activity 4: Stigma Telephone Game



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
May change depending on the activity chosen, white paper, and pencils

## Activity Information

This activity aims to demonstrate how misinformation can be repeated and spread. While the misinformation is a silly statement or image in this activity, students can begin to draw the connection to the impact that would be felt if it was a serious topic or information that could hurt someone.

## Student Instructions:



## Versions of Telephone Game

### Classic:

- Start with everyone sitting in a circle
- Player 1 whispers a phrase into player 2's ear
- The message gets repeated as it goes around the circle. Once it has made its whole way around the circle the message is said out loud and compared to the original message

### Drawing:

- The first player draws the clue. The next player writes a sentence describing that image. They then fold the paper so that the drawing is not seen
- Players always alternate between writing or drawing
- Once everyone has had a turn, compare the final result to the original idea

## Activity 4: Stigma Telephone Game (cont.)

### Charades:

- Students stand in a line, all facing one direction
- Player 1 (back of the line) gets a phrase they must act out
- When they are ready, they tap on the player in front of their shoulder (player 2). That player turns around and player 1 acts out the phrase to player 2.
- All other players should have their backs to this interaction
- Player 2 then taps on the player in front of them (player 3) and again acts out the phrase
- In the end, compare the final action to the first phrase

### Debrief:

- How did the message change over time?
- Although this is a fun lighthearted game, how could this impact someone if the message was a serious topic or information that could hurt someone?
- How does this relate to the mental health fact versus fiction activity?
  - For example, some of these statements may have started as harmless comments that spread over time
  - Or a statement may have been based on something true, but over time has shifted into misinformation

### Reminder:

Stigma is negative attitudes or disapproval towards someone. Because of stigma and a lack of understanding, many students don't know how to get help or can be embarrassed to discuss their feelings. We can reduce stigma by normalizing conversations about mental health, educating ourselves and others, and watching our language or the words used to talk about mental illness.

# Activity 10: Mental Health Origami Conversation Starter



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, scissors

## Activity Information

It is important to have conversations about mental health and mental illness. This reduces stigma and increases healthy behaviour as well as reaching out for support.

The origami conversation starters can be used as an extra tool to increase mental health conversations among students.

Included is an example you can print, fold, and use, or a blank template for students to create their own.

## Conversation Starter Ideas:

- What does a good mental health day look like for you?
- How do you pick yourself up after a challenging day?
- When I am upset it looks and feels like \_\_\_\_\_. How does it look for you?
- What does mental health mean to you?
- What do you do to take care of your mental health?
- Do you think mental health is as important as physical health? Why?
- Who can you go to if you are needing extra support?
- How can I help you if you are struggling?
- How can you tell if someone needs support?
- What are some healthy ways you cope with stress or other challenges?
- What do you wish someone knew about you?
- How do you cheer yourself up?
- What are 3 things you are grateful for?

## Activity 10: Mental Health Origami Conversation Starter

- How are you really doing?
- What was challenging about today?
- What are you looking forward to this week?
- If you could change anything in your life, what would it be?
- What makes you feel calm?
- Is there anything you'd like to talk about?

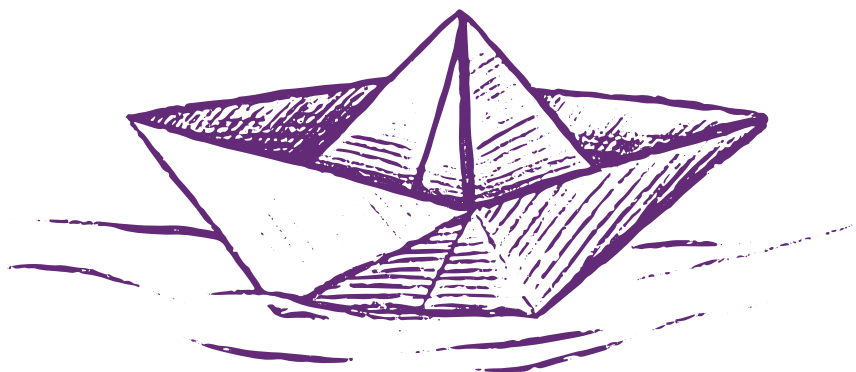
### How To Use:

- Students should work in pairs to ask each other one question, then swap partners. This continues on for as many rounds as desired
- Pick a colour and open the page the number of times corresponding to the letters in that colour. For example, the colour blue has four letters, so you would move the paper four times
- Then pick a number and move the paper that many times
- Then pick a final number, open it, and start the conversation based on the prompt

### Video Resource:



Folding and Movement Instructions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrYcNFKi3A>



# Activity II: Wellness Wheel



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Optional student worksheet,  
markers

## Activity Information

There is a worksheet that can be used as an alternative to this activity, for kids to do on their own, or if the space does not allow for the chart paper version.

## Student Instructions:

- Students will walk around the room and list as many ideas as possible on how to take care of themselves under each category
  - o For example, under physical wellness, they may write “go for a walk” and for emotional wellness, they might write “listen to music”. It is okay if some ideas are in more than one category, as things can help more than one area of our wellness
  - o If the answer is already written, students can add a checkmark or smiley face beside it, but should be encouraged to try and add new suggestions



# Activity 11: Wellness Wheel (cont.)

## Dimensions of Wellness

### Environmental

Living in and supporting a clean and safe environment.  
(e.g. Going for a walk or cleaning your room)



### Occupational

Satisfaction with career or academic work, feeling safe and secure in the job or school environment, financial security.  
(e.g. Doing homework, or asking for help from your teacher)



### Emotional

Positive feelings, optimistic view on life, ability to express and process emotions. (e.g. Listening to music, or journaling)



### Intellectual

Stimulated with activities, growing knowledge and abilities, and learning new skills. (e.g. Reading a book, or trying a new hobby)





# Activity 11: Wellness Wheel (cont.)

## Dimensions of Wellness

### Physical



Physical health and activities.  
(e.g. Going for a walk, or getting a good night's sleep)

### Social



Positive connection and relationships with family, friends, and community;  
supporting others and asking for help when needed.  
(e.g. Making plans with friends, or spending time with a pet)

### Spiritual



Connections to one's meaning and purpose  
(e.g. Mindfulness or volunteering)

# Activity 12: Gratitude



## Time Requirement

Varies, depending on the activity format. See notes for more information.



## Materials Required

Varies – whiteboard, markers, white paper, optional student worksheet

## Activity Information

Gratitude means more than saying thank you. Instead, it is focusing on what is good in your life and being thankful for the things you have.

## Gratitude Benefits:<sup>8</sup>

- **Physical:** Stronger immune systems, lower blood pressure, increased participation in exercise, and other activities that take care of your health
- **Psychological:** Higher levels of positive emotions, reduced anxiety and depression, increased optimism and happiness
- **Social:** Greater generosity and compassion, increased capacity for forgiveness, fewer feelings of loneliness and isolation

## Gratitude Activity: Classroom Compliments Project

### Student Instructions:

- Have one individual sit in front of the whiteboard or another surface that can be written on. They should be facing away so they cannot see the board
- The rest of the students will come up and write a compliment or a reason they are grateful for that person on the whiteboard. Over time the individual will be surrounded by positive compliments
- Once complete, the individual should turn around and read what is written about them
- **Bonus:** Take a picture of them sitting with the compliments behind them so they can keep the photo

## Activity 12: Gratitude (cont.)

### Notes:

- This is a project best done once the students know each other well
- It is important to have a conversation about the types of comments that are respectful and appropriate and that there is no tolerance for anything unkind
- Students may resort to vague comments such as “you are nice,” especially for students they aren’t as close with. Encourage kids to dig deep and write something more personal
- Depending on class size, this may be something you do over various days or weeks, picking a few students at a time
  - Alternative options include: Passing paper with the students' names on top so everyone works simultaneously or "Valentine" style, where the students make a box or envelope to drop off notes. This will make it harder to keep an eye on what students are writing so only do this format if you trust it will remain respectful and appropriate

### Additional Gratitude Practices:

- **Gratitude Journal:** Write down 1 - 3 things they are grateful for at the end of each school day
- **Gratitude Circle:** Have a gratitude circle on Friday afternoon in which each student shares something they are grateful for
- **Gratitude Bingo:** Small gratitude tasks to complete (see student worksheet)



<sup>6</sup> Fountain, S., Lantieri, L., Baker, M., & Zayas King, C. (2017). Nurturing Gratitude from the Inside Out. Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley. [https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC\\_Gratitude\\_Curriculum\\_Elem.pdf](https://ggsc.berkeley.edu/images/uploads/GGSC_Gratitude_Curriculum_Elem.pdf)

# Activity 13: Resiliency



**Time Requirement**  
30 - 45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
Pylons, hula hoops, spot markers, white paper, and pencils

## Activity Information

Resiliency is the ability to bounce back after challenging circumstances. We all face difficult situations, but resiliency is about facing a challenge and trying again. It is a skill that takes practice.

## Student Instructions:

### Warmup Activity:

Have students write a couple of sentences down using their non-dominant hand.

- What happened
- What did you feel?
- What internal thoughts were you facing?
- How did you overcome these thoughts?
- Did it become easier over time?
- How does this relate to resilience?

### Teamwork Challenge:

- Have students participate in a teamwork challenge. This will put their resiliency to the test. They may face challenges or setbacks but must figure out a way to proceed
- Try out the Hot Chocolate River teamwork challenge on the next page

## Activity 13: Resiliency (cont.)

### Hot Chocolate River Instructions:

- Have two markers (pylons, rope, etc.) a good distance apart (~20 feet). This marks the banks of the hot chocolate river
- Have students line up on one side. They must get their team across the hot chocolate river, but it is too deep and too hot to swim or walk across
- The only safe way to get across is to use the marshmallows provided (hula hoops, spot markers, etc.)
- The current in the river is so strong it will sweep the marshmallow away if someone is not holding it or stepping onto it
- Once marshmallows are placed in the river they begin to melt, so they cannot be picked up and moved to a different spot

### Video Resource:



Hot Chocolate River Instructions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j4RnyNiJhpA>

### Tips:

- The number of marshmallows you should give the group will depend on the team size and space you are using. You do not want to give too many as it will be too easy, but too few will be a challenge. Try 8 or 9
- Keep an eye on the marshmallows and be prepared to sweep them away if no one is touching them
- Allow groups to try the challenge and to start over and re-group if necessary. If groups are struggling, you may need to add more marshmallows

### Debrief:

- What worked? What didn't work?
- Did you notice signs of resilient behaviour?
- How can we apply this to real-life situations?



# Activity 14: Mindfulness



**Time Requirement**  
15 minutes



**Materials Required**  
White paper, pencils, and drawing materials

## Activity Information

Mindfulness is taking the time to slow down, pay attention, and become aware of one's thoughts, feelings, or bodily sensations.

Mindfulness is impactful in the classroom as it helps students focus, regulate emotions, reduce stress, and tackle challenges.<sup>9</sup>

There are a variety of ways to incorporate mindfulness into the classroom.

## Student Instructions:

### 5-4-3-2-1 Journaling (5 senses)

This activity is helpful because of its variety of applications. It can be a quick grounding exercise without pen and paper, or it can be a written/drawing exercise.



5 Things  
I Can See



4 Things  
I Can Feel



3 Things  
I Can Hear



2 Things  
I Can Smell



1 Thing  
I Can Taste

Mindfulness works best when it is practiced often. Find activities that work for your students and make them a part of your classroom's routine.

Additional ways to incorporate mindfulness in the classroom:

- YouTube videos, breathing exercises, journaling, calm place visualization

7 Mindful Schools. Research on Mindfulness. Retrieved September 15, 2022, from <https://www.mindfulschools.org/about-mindfulness/research-on-mindfulness/>.

# Activity 15: Community of Support



**Time Requirement**  
30 minutes



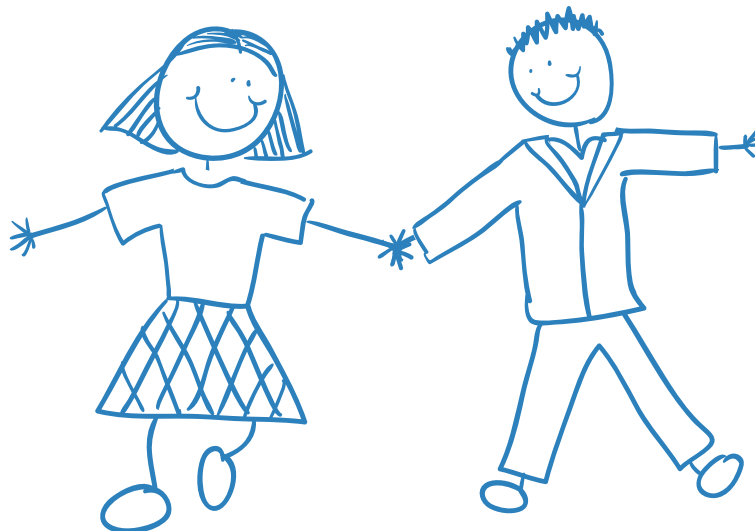
**Materials Required**  
Student worksheet, pencils

## Activity Information

Humans are social people! We rely on others for positive relationships and support during tough times. It is important that we do not attempt to handle all of our challenges on our own.<sup>10</sup>

## Student Instructions:

- Who can you reach out to for support? It is important to have a variety of people who provide different types of support. For example, a friend may be able to cheer you up on a bad day and a trusted adult may support you more formally
- Use the student worksheet as an opportunity to brainstorm who you can go to for support



8 YouthNet. (2022). Relationships and Peer Support. <http://ynra.ca/learning-hub/relationships-peer-support/>

# Activity 16: Mini Books



**Time Requirement**  
45 minutes



**Materials Required**  
White paper, scissors, pencils, and markers

## Activity Information

This activity is an effective way to summarize many of the learnings that come from the Mental Health Awareness section. It is important to ensure students understand the following concepts before beginning this activity:

- Mental health spectrum
- Coping strategies
- How to take care of their mental health
- Who can be a support when in need

Use the following discussion questions to assess and summarize learning.

## Discussion Questions:

- What is mental health? What does good mental health look like for you?
- How can we cope with challenging situations? Are all coping strategies healthy? Review the Wellness Wheel if they need examples of how to take care of their mental health
- Who can you go to for support?





## Activity 16: Mini Books (cont.)

### Student Instructions:

- Students will make mini resource books of the things and people who can support their mental health. This book can be a resource they can carry with them and reference anytime
- Using one sheet of paper, students can make a mini book with 8 pages (including cover and back)

### Ideas for the pages include:

- Cover page
- What good mental health looks like for them (2 pages)
- Coping strategies (2 pages)
- People to go to for support
- Phone numbers for organizations/helplines
- Back page

There are videos online explaining how to fold these books. This may be useful for students instead of the written instructions.



### Mini Book Folding Instructions:

- Fold the paper into 8ths. This can be done by folding the paper first in half long edge folded to the long edge (hotdog/horizontal fold), then folding it in half short edge to short edge (hamburger/vertical fold), and again short edge to short edge (hamburger/vertical fold)
- Unfold the paper. It should be 8 separate sections
- Fold the paper short edge to short edge (hamburger/vertical fold)
- Place the paper so the folded edge is facing you. Cut the paper from the fold to the next section (hotdog/horizontal fold). You are not cutting it the whole way across
- Unfold the paper. There should be a slit down the center of the paper
- Do one more fold from the long edge to the long edge (hotdog/horizontal fold)
- Turn your paper so the cut edge is up in the air. Push the two ends together so it begins to fold into a book

9 Wiki How. (October 8, 2022). How to Make a Paper Book. <https://www.wikihow.com/Make-a-Paper-Book>



Mental Health and Resiliency Worksheets  
for Grades 4 - 6 Students

Mental Health Awareness



Canadian Mental  
Health Association  
Calgary  
*Mental health for all*



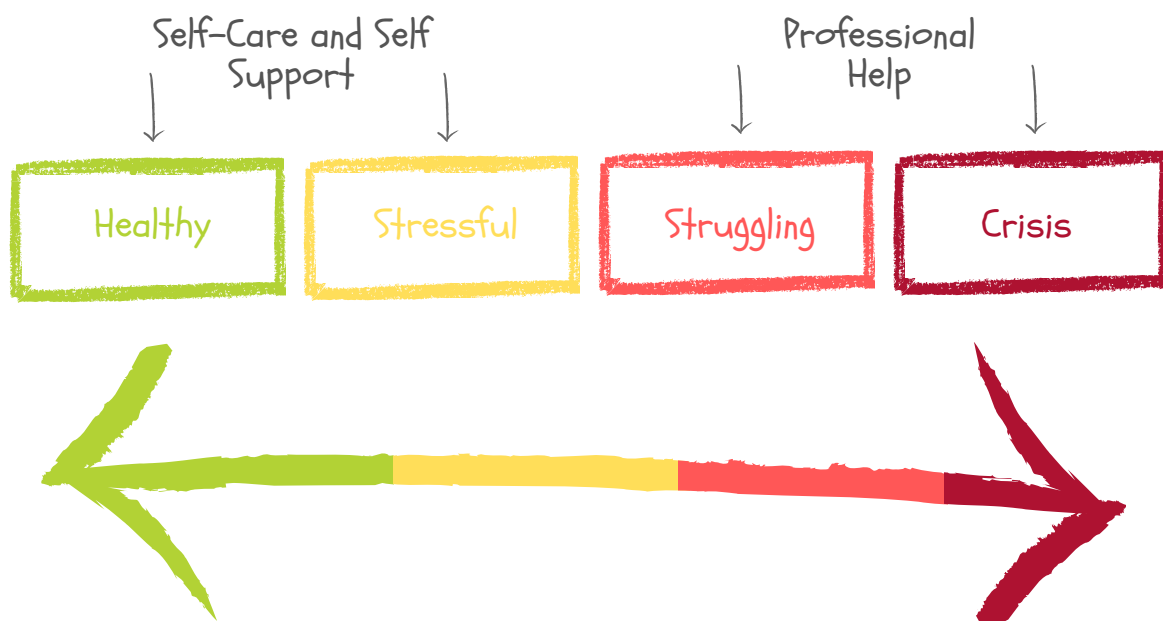
## Activity 3: Mental Health Spectrum

Everyone has mental health. Mental health can shift depending on what we are experiencing or the challenges we are facing.

It can be helpful to think of mental health as a spectrum. Our mental health is more than just good or bad, it can be anywhere in between.

The spectrum can shift to the right when something stressful happens, but when we do an activity that makes us happy we may shift to the left.

A drastic change that is harder to deal with on our own might shift us much further to the right. It is important to remember that being mentally "healthy" looks different for everyone.



Place yourself on the spectrum with an X, based on how you are feeling today, at this moment.

## Activity 3: Mental Health Spectrum (cont.)

What are some things that impact your mental health positively (e.g. move you towards the green zone?)

What are some factors that might impact your mental health negatively (e.g. move you towards the yellow or maybe the orange zone?)

Who could you go to for help if you or a friend were in the orange or red zone?

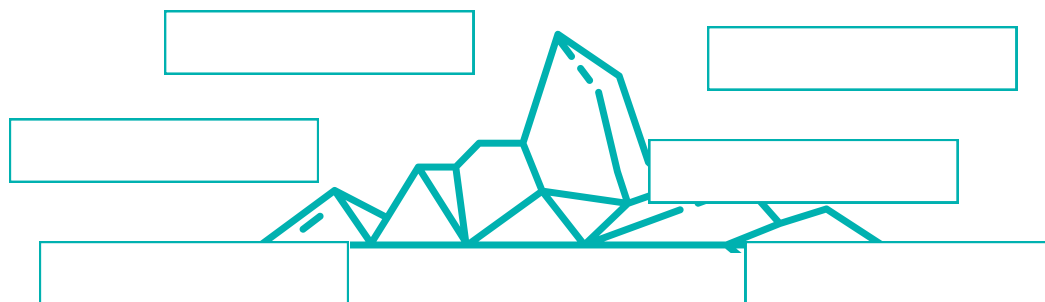
# Activity 4: Iceberg

Not everything about you can be seen from the surface. Fill in the iceberg with things people can see or easily know about you (above the water) and things others cannot see so easily (below the water).

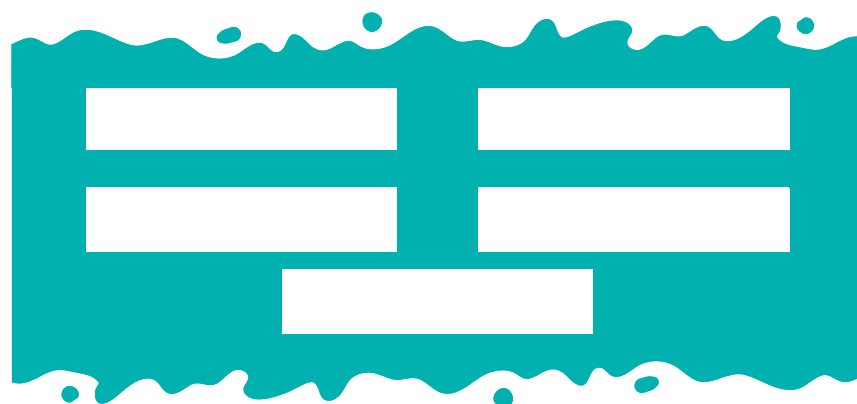
Use this information to better understand others and how to help them. Sometimes what we can see (e.g. someone being grumpy) can be a sign of something more.

Many mental health issues or stressful experiences are hidden under the surface. We have to remember that what we see doesn't tell the full story. Our friends don't always show us what they are struggling with and we can't assume.

Things people can see or easily know about me



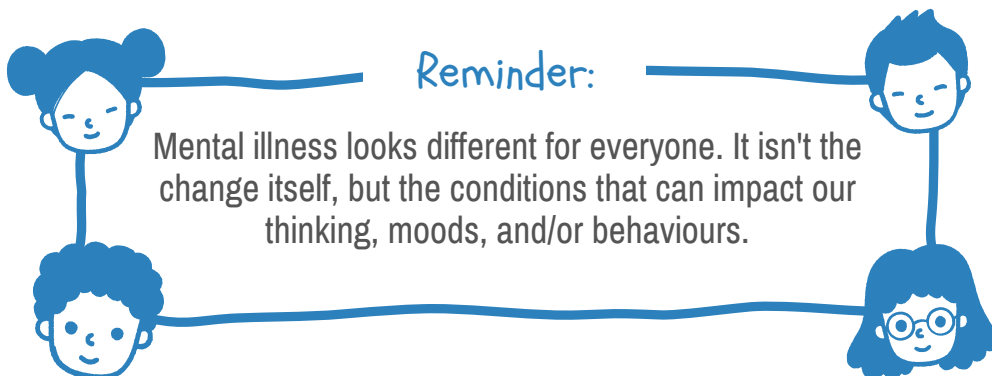
Things others cannot see so easily



## Activity 5: Signs of Mental Illness

Mental illness can affect someone's thinking, mood, or behaviour. Brainstorm how you think someone might be impacted by mental illness or some common signs you may see:

Thinking	Mood	Behaviour
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Thinking something is wrong with them</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Easily upset</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Avoiding activities they used to enjoy</li></ul>





# Activity 7: Someone Else's Shoes

Practice putting yourself into someone else's shoes by identifying how they might feel in the following situations. These situations can be complex – maybe they are feeling more than one thing.

Identify how the person in the situation might be feeling. How could you help them if this was a friend?

Optional: Use the feelings list to help you identify what they could be feeling.

Angry	 Happy	Sad	Scared	Calm	
Irritated	Optimistic	Upset	Confused	Content	
Frustrated	Joyful	Disappointed	Helpless	Relaxed	
Annoyed	Enthusiastic	Lonely	Anxious	Caring	
Jealous	Proud	Uncertain	Rejected	Amused	

## Note:

These are just some examples of emotions. There may be other words you prefer to use to describe how you are feeling.



# Activity 7: Someone Else's Shoes (cont.)

Scenarios:

How would they feel?

Just got a new bike	
Going on vacation	
Late for school	
Got an answer wrong in front of everyone	
The soccer team lost the championship game	
Won hockey tournament	
Asked to join a game and was told no	
Called a mean name	



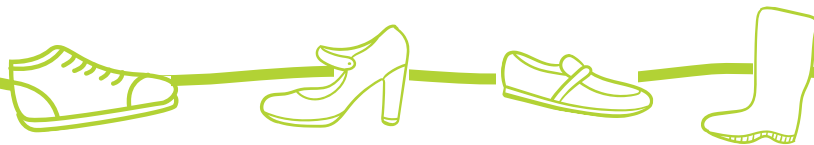


## Activity 7: Someone Else's Shoes (cont.)





Made a new friend	
Not chosen to be in anyone's group when it's time to pick partners	
Trying a new activity after school	
Someone doesn't want to be friends with them anymore	

### Reminder:

There is no wrong emotion to feel. It is about understanding the variety of emotions that we can experience, as well as learning to see something from someone else's perspective.



## Activity 8: Mental Health Fact vs Fiction

Statements	True or False
<p>Everyone has mental health.</p> 	<p><u>True</u></p> <p>Everyone has mental health, regardless of whether they have a bad day or whether they have a mental illness. </p>
<p>You can catch a mental illness from someone.</p> <p>(e.g. it is contagious)</p>	<p><u>False</u></p> <p>Mental illness is not contagious. </p>
<p>If you are feeling sad one day, you are depressed.</p>	<p><u>False</u></p> <p>Everyone experiences happy and sad emotions. Feeling sad doesn't mean depression. </p>

## Activity 8: Mental Health Fact vs Fiction (cont.)

People should not talk about mental illness.

Shh!

False

Talking about mental illness means people can share their experiences with others and they can also receive better support.



Exercise can boost your mental health.

True

Many things can positively improve our mental health and well-being including exercise.



Mental illness is something that only happens to adults.

False

Children can experience mental illness too. Many mental illnesses will be discovered before the individual turns 18.



## Activity 8: Mental Health Fact vs Fiction (cont.)

If you see someone having a bad day you should give them space.

False

The best thing to do is to ask how they are feeling. If they ask for space then you should give them space.



Sleep is important for mental health.



True

Sleep is very important for kids and teens who are still growing and developing.

Getting a good night's sleep can help you feel rested and ready to handle the challenges of the day.



You can help someone with a mental illness.

True

There are a variety of ways you can support someone. Most importantly, you can help by being a good friend and being there for them.

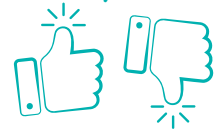


## Activity 8: Mental Health Fact vs Fiction (cont.)

You have control over whether you are in a positive or negative mental health space.

### True & False

There are many things you can do to make yourself feel better when you are feeling out of sorts and a little blue. However, if you have a mental illness such as depression, sometimes your mental health is out of your control.



You should reach out for help if you feel sad or worried.



### True

You should always reach out for help when you are having a hard day, whether it's a small moment or it's a continued feeling. People who care about you want to know how you are feeling and how they can help.



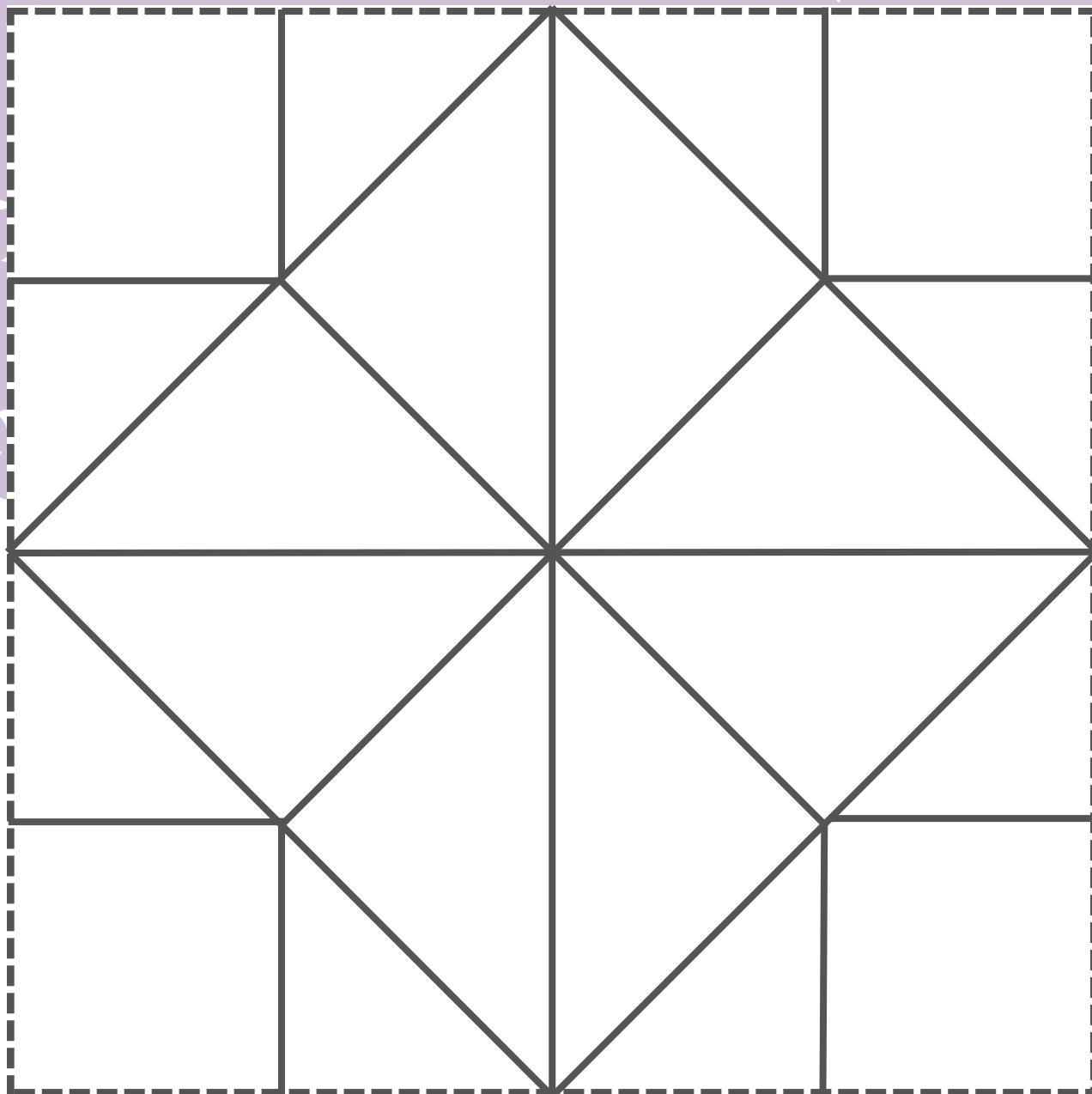
# Activity 10: Mental Health Origami Conversation Starter

	8	1	
7	How do you pick yourself up after a challenging day?	What does mental health mean to you?	2
What was challenging today? What went well?		How can you tell if friends need support?	
6	Who can you go to if you need support?	3	What are 3 things you are grateful for?
What do you do to take care of your mental health?		How are you really doing?	
	5	4	

## Colours:

- Blue
- Green
- Teal
- Purple

# Activity 10: Mental Health Origami Conversation Starter



## Activity 10: Mental Health Origami Conversation Starter

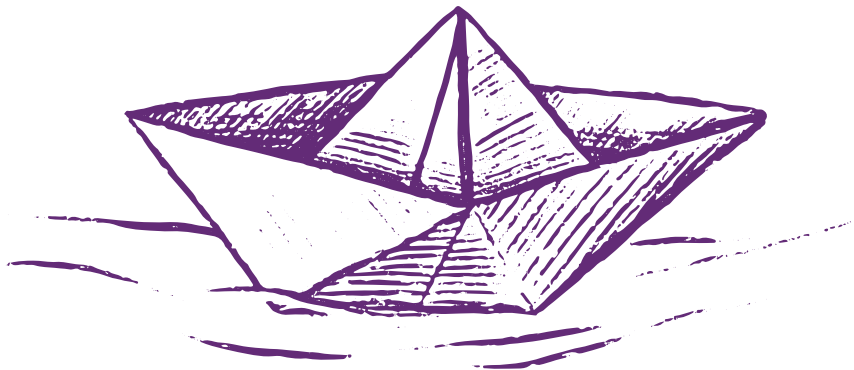
### Folding Instructions:

- Fold top right corner to bottom left corner to create a triangle shape. Unfold and repeat with other side (top left corner to bottom right).
- Flip paper over so words are facing down. Fold all corners so that coloured sections are brought to the centre point.
- Flip paper over and fold all corners into centre again. The numbers should be facing you once folds are complete.
- Fold in half and open the pockets.

### Video Resource:



Folding and Movement Instructions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FrfYcNFKi3A>





# Activity II: Wellness Wheel

List as many ideas as possible on how you take care of yourself in each area of wellness.

## Environmental

Living in and supporting a clean and safe environment.



## Occupational

Satisfaction with career or academic work, feeling safe and secure in the job or school environment, financial security.



## Emotional

Positive feelings, optimistic view on life, ability to express and process emotions.



# Activity 11: Wellness Wheel (cont.)

## Intellectual



Stimulated with activities, growing knowledge and abilities, and learning new skills.

## Physical



Physical health and activities.

## Social



Positive connection and relationships with family, friends, and community; supporting others and asking for help when needed.

## Spiritual



Connections to one's meaning and purpose.

# Activity 12: Gratitude Bingo

What are 5 things you couldn't live without?	Help someone who has helped you in the past	For each letter of the alphabet try to name something you are grateful for	Tell a friend why you are grateful for them	Reminisce on the memory you are grateful for
Share your favourite food with someone who might enjoy it	Share something you love with a friend	Find a way to help someone who has helped you	Take photos of things you are grateful for	Name a challenge you faced that you are now thankful to have experienced
What is something tiny you are grateful for? What about really large?	Write a story about something you are grateful for	Free Space	Make a gratitude jar with your family	What in nature are you most grateful for?
Send someone a note, text, or email about why you are grateful for them	Find 5 things you wouldn't normally notice that make a big difference in your life	Who are 3 people you are grateful for?	Practice turning any negative thoughts into positives for a whole day	Give out 10 compliments today
Complete an act of kindness	List 5 things you are grateful for using each of your senses	What are 2 great things that happened today?	Thank someone for something they have done for you	Start a gratitude journal



# Activity 15: Community of Support

It is important to identify those in your life that can support you.

Place yourself in the middle and draw the web of people and resources you have access to.



Suggestions of people to add to your list:

- School Staff
- Coach
- Therapist or Medical Professional
- Kids Help Phone or other confidential resources

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