



Mental Health & Wellness



Teacher's Guide (for Grades 7-12)

CLASS ACTIVITIES

LOOK TO YOUTHSPEAK FOR SELF-CARE STRATEGIES, RESOURCES, INFO AND MUCH MORE!

www.youthspeak.ca

(905) 967 - 0604

office@youthspeak.ca



@YouthSpeakCan



@YouthSpeakCan



@YouthSpeakCan



YouthSpeak
Performance Charity

Introduction

PURPOSE

At YouthSpeak, our vision is to inspire and empower youth to live resilient and meaningful lives. Our mission is to assist youth facing challenges through leadership training and empowering them by sharing personal stories in order to promote mental health, well-being, empathy, and hope in assemblies and workshops. We aim to make sure no child or youth feels alone, and those who are struggling with mental health or challenges are connected to available support tools to improve their overall well-being.

The purpose of this teacher guide is to provide valuable and easy-to-follow awareness-building activities. This teacher's guide is a resource that teachers can use in their classrooms with their students. The activities in this teacher guide are exclusively for the Intermediate/Senior divisions but may be modified for your unique classroom.

HOW TO USE

This teacher guide has six activities that are designed to support mental health and wellness. They can be used in the classroom to help students understand and explore important topics on self-care and coping skills from a young age. Each activity has an estimated time frame and a material list at the top of the page. The specific steps on how to run the activity are under it. There are also virtual alternatives for each activity so you can use these activities in your online teaching as well. Teachers do not need to follow every step for each activity and can revise the steps to suit their unique classroom.

SAFE SPACE

Please remind students that the classroom is a safe space and encourage them to have open discussions about mental health and wellness. Discussing these topics can bring up strong thoughts and feelings, and it is important to let them know that if students are experiencing any difficult feelings and need help, that the teachers, administration, and other caring adults are always there to listen and support them.

1. Brilliant Brainstorm

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 7 to 12

TIME: 10 -15 minutes

MATERIALS: Blackboard/ whiteboard/ chart paper

OBJECTIVE

To brainstorm with students what mental wellness means to them. By the end of this activity, students will be familiar with the multiple ways to promote positive mental health.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have the students arrange themselves into small groups of 5-6. Initiate a whole class discussion on what mental health is, by using the suggested brainstorming prompts.

Prompts:

- a. What comes to mind when you hear "Mental Health?"
- b. What does positive mental health look like to you?
- c. What do you do when you feel stressed? Anxious? Sad? Upset?
- d. How can you work towards having positive mental health?

2. In their small groups, have students come up with positive coping mechanisms and how to maintain positive mental health. Examples: physical activity, arts and

crafts, listening to music, playing an instrument, yoga, meditation, deep breathing, and talking to someone you trust.

3. Have the groups brainstorm their ideas on a piece of chart paper with illustrations.

4. Have students present their ideas to the class. A follow-up class discussion can also be initiated. Chart papers can be placed around the classroom.

MODIFIED VIRTUAL CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS

1. During a google meet, initiate a class discussion on what mental health means to the students, using the following brainstorming prompts.

Prompts:

- a. What comes to mind when you hear "mental health?"
- b. What does positive mental health look like to you?
- c. What do you do when you feel stressed? Anxious? Sad? Upset?
- d. How can you work towards having positive mental health?

2. Arrange the students into small groups of 5-6 in a breakout room. Have students come up with positive coping mechanisms and how to maintain positive mental health. Examples: physical activity, arts and crafts, listening to music, playing an instrument, yoga, meditation, deep breathing, and talking to someone you trust.

3. Have the groups brainstorm their ideas on a google doc/google slide that can be worked on collaboratively and shared with the rest of the class afterwards.

4. Have students present their ideas to the class. A follow-up class discussion can also be initiated.

2. I See What You See In Me

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 7 to 12

TIME: 10-15 minutes

MATERIALS: Writing utensils, paper

OBJECTIVE

To promote a positive classroom community and to encourage kindness to oneself and others.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have each student write their name at the top of a piece of paper.
2. Tell students to crumple up their paper and gently toss them across the room on the count of three.
3. Instruct students to pick up a piece of paper (not their own), flatten it, and to return back to their desks to write something positive about that student in 30 seconds (i.e., an attribute, compliment, or something they admire). Teachers can use this time to walk around the class to ensure comments are positive.
4. Have students re-crumple their papers and pass these papers in a rotation to the next person for them to write something positive on their sheet (if students receive their own, they can feel free to write something positive about themselves). Remind students to be unique and creative when writing positive things - do not be repetitive!
5. Repeat Step 4 until the rotation of papers is complete and all the students have had a chance to write one positive thing on everyone's paper.
6. Students can then retrieve their own paper and read all the positive comments. Students can feel free to share the comments to their classmates or keep it to themselves!
7. Encourage students to use these papers as a great reminder of all the positive ways people see them, especially when they have a hard time recognizing these positive attributes in themselves.

MODIFIED VIRTUAL CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS

1. Have each student create their own google slide within a classroom google presentation with their name. They can include small graphics and personalize it if they want as well.
2. Instruct students to go through all of the different slides, starting with the slide directly after their own, and to write something positive about each student. They will have 10 minutes to complete the activity and will want to write positive comments for as many students as possible in that time.
3. For each student, they will use either a coin that they have or an electronic

coin flipper such as <https://www.google.com/search?q=flip+a+coin> to determine how many positive compliments they will be writing on that particular person's google slide. If the coin lands on heads, they will be writing 1 positive compliment, and if it lands on tails, they will be writing 2 positive compliments.

4. The students can write these positive compliments by adding text to the google slides.
5. Once the ten minutes are up, students can look at their own google slide. This can be done by presenting the entire google slides presentation using screen share during the google meet, or by allowing the student to view them in their own time and read them out if they feel like sharing.
6. Encourage students to save their individual google slide by printing it or saving it to their personal electronic device.
7. A follow-up discussion can occur, to discuss how hearing positive compliments felt, or whether they enjoyed getting to write them for their peers.

Prompts:

- a. Why is it important to give compliments and praises to your peers?
- b. How did it feel to receive compliments and praises, and to give them as well?
- c. Why would it be especially important for students that have a hard time recognizing these positive attributes in themselves?
- d. Can you always tell if someone is having a bad day, and would they benefit from a positive compliment?

3. Stop the Stigma

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 7 to 12

TIME: 20–30 minutes (This activity can be completed over multiple days).

MATERIALS: Whiteboard/blackboard/ paper /chart paper, writing utensils

OBJECTIVE

To understand the term "stigma" and the current negative attitudes towards mental illness. To establish ways to stop the stigma around mental health and individuals coping with mental illness.

INSTRUCTIONS

Part 1: Understanding Stigma around Mental Health (10 minutes)

1. Have a class discussion about what the meaning of "stigma" is. You can create a word cloud on the whiteboard/blackboard of students' responses.
2. You can extend this word cloud to the students' responses of stigma around mental health.

Part 2: Attitude Survey (10–15 minutes)

3. Have students complete the "Attitude Survey" (see page 9). Feel free to alter these questions or make them more relevant to your classroom dynamic. These surveys can remain anonymous (if preferred/appropriate).
4. Complete a "Secret Vote" of the students' answers. Ask students each question one by one. Have students close their eyes and use their hands to display their answers. You can assign numbers to each gesture. (E.g., Fist = Not sure, 1 Finger = Disagree, 5 Fingers = Agree). Record the data on the board.
5. As a class, analyze these results and identify whether there is a positive stigma present in the classroom around mental health. Discuss any

misconceptions present in the data.

Part 3: Stop the Stigma (time may vary)

6. Put students into groups to write down on chart paper how to stop the negative stigma around mental health in the school, at home, and in the community (i.e., students can create school or community programs to help understand mental health and to help students dealing with mental illnesses). EXTENSION: The teacher can turn this into a lengthier project by asking students to create an infographic, app, organization, charity, etc., to stop the stigma around Mental Health.

MODIFIED VIRTUAL CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS

Part 1: Understanding Stigma around Mental Health (10 minutes)

1. Have a class discussion about what the meaning of "stigma" is. You can create a word cloud on a google document of students' responses.
2. You can extend this word cloud to the students' responses of stigma around mental health.

Part 2: Attitude Survey (10-15 minutes)

3. Have students complete the "Attitude Survey" (see page 9). Feel free to alter these questions or make them more relevant to your classroom dynamic. These surveys can remain anonymous (if preferred/appropriate).
4. During a google meet, complete a "Secret Vote" of the students' answers. Ask students each question one by one. Have students close their eyes and use their hands to display their answers. You can assign numbers to each gesture. (E.g., Fist = Not sure, 1 Finger = Disagree, 5 Fingers = Agree). Record the data on a google document.
5. As a class, analyze these results and identify whether there is a positive stigma present in the classroom around mental health. Discuss any misconceptions present in the data.

Part 3: Stop the Stigma (time may vary)

6. Put students into small groups in breakout rooms to write down on paper or a

google document how to stop the negative stigma around mental health in the school, at home, and in the community (i.e., students can create school or community programs to help understand mental health and to help students dealing with mental illnesses). EXTENSION: The teacher can turn this into a lengthier project by asking students to create an infographic, app, organization, charity, etc., to stop the stigma around Mental Health using a program such as google slides or Canva.

Attitude Survey

Check off the appropriate box	Agree	Disagree	Not Sure
1. People should work out their mental health problems on their own.			
2. Once you have been diagnosed with a mental illness, you have it for the rest of your life.			
3. Females are more likely to have a mental illness than males.			
4. Medication is always the best treatment for mental illnesses.			
5. Individuals who have a mental illness are generally violent and dangerous.			
6. Adults are more likely to have a mental illness than teenagers.			
7. You can tell by looking at someone whether they have a mental illness or not.			
8. Anyone can be diagnosed with a mental illness.			
9. Individuals who have a mental illness are generally shy and quiet.			
10. I would be comfortable being close friends with someone who had/has a mental illness.			

Attitude Survey Answers

1. Not true. People should talk to trusted people or even seek professional help.
2. It is true that most mental illnesses are lifelong. However, they are episodic, and symptoms are not always present.
3. Not true. Men and women are both equally affected by mental illnesses.
4. Although medication can be effective, there is a wide range of appropriate supports, like counselling, that may be more suitable. It really is case by case.
5. Not true. Many studies show no correlation between mental illness and violence.
6. The majority of mental illnesses begin to appear during adolescence and early adulthood.
7. You cannot usually tell if someone is dealing with a mental illness based on their appearance. However, individuals may display acute episodes.
8. True. It is likely that most people will experience a mental illness in their lives.
9. There is no scientific relationship between mental illness and being shy/ quiet. However, people may avoid/ limit social contact during certain episodes.
10. Answers may vary. Note: a mental illness does not define the person. It should not affect how someone views them or impact their friendship.

4. One Step At A Time

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 7 to 10

TIME: 20-30 minutes

MATERIALS: Chart paper / large construction paper and writing utensils

OBJECTIVE

To foster a safe classroom community and assess strategies for managing mental wellness. To understand the healthy choices that can be made to positively influence our physical, emotional and mental well-being

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Place students into 4 groups.
2. Each group will be responsible for a different topic in dealing with mental health. When assigning these topics, give each group a piece of chart paper or a large piece of construction paper. What each group should discuss and write down is outlined next to their topic: Students can use their devices or Chromebooks if needed for the following topics.
 - a. "Recognition" - Emotions, feelings, and symptoms for individuals experiencing anxiety and/or depression.
 - b. "Thinking Right" - helpful thoughts or empowering statements that can help individuals through these experiences (i.e., " I can get through this", "Stop worrying about the things I can't control, and get a hold of the things I can control ", etc.).

- c. "Active Steps" - any form of activity that individuals can take or coping strategies that can help individuals face anxiety and/or depression in short-term and long-term situations (i.e., physical activity, connecting with trusted friends or family members, etc.).
 - d. "Relaxation Tool " - exercises to help promote calmness and lower stress levels for individuals faced with anxiety and/or depression, along with a resource list
3. Each group will present their topic to the class and promote a class discussion in creating an open environment for mental health.
 4. Students can turn their work into a poster or an infographic to be posted in the classroom as resources for all students.

MODIFIED VIRTUAL CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS

1. Assign the students into four different groups. They can meet as a group in breakout rooms on google meet.
2. Each group will be responsible for a different topic in dealing with mental health. The students can record their brainstormed ideas using a google document, where they can work collaboratively.

Topics include:

- a. "Recognition" - Emotions, feelings, and symptoms for individuals experiencing anxiety and/or depression. Students can talk about possible triggers through personal experiences if comfortable discussing.
- b. "Thinking Right" - helpful thoughts or empowering statements that can help individuals through these experiences (i.e., "I can get through this," "Stop worrying about the things I can't control and get a hold of the things I can control," etc.).
- c. "Active Steps" - talking about any form of physical activity that individuals can take or coping strategies that can help individuals face anxiety and/or depression in short-term and long-term situations (i.e., physical activity, connecting with trusted friends or family members,

- etc.).
- d. "Relaxation Tool " - discussing exercises to help promote calmness and lower stress levels for individuals faced with anxiety and/or depression, along with a resource list thing I can control ", etc.).
3. Each group will present their topic to the class and facilitate a class discussion.
 4. Students can turn their work into a poster or an infographic using google slides or Canva that can be saved to their personal devices for future reference and shared within the google classroom for all students to see.

5. You Are Not Alone

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 7 to 10

TIME: 15-20 minutes

MATERIALS: Sticky notes (at least 2 per student), background music (optional)

OBJECTIVE

To foster a safe classroom community where students can recognize similarities between themselves, empathize with each other's concerns, and support one another.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Give each student 2 sticky notes.
2. Have students write anonymously:
 - a. One thing they are concerned or worried about in this course or school year on one sticky note.
 - b. One thing they are looking forward to or feel positive about in this course or school year on the other sticky note.
3. Designate one area of the room to be for the "Concerns" and a separate area to be for the "Positives."
 - a. The areas should be wide enough for all students to post their sticky notes
 - b. E.g., Walls, whiteboards, blackboards, chart paper, etc.
4. Have students post their sticky notes (next to each other in rows) to the appropriate space (concerns vs. positives) and instruct them to spread them out.

Feel free to play soft background music for Step 5-8

5. Have students quietly walk around the class with a writing utensil and:
 - a. Read all the sticky notes (Concerns and Positives) AND
 - b. On at least one sticky note of each type, write a checkmark if you relate to it or a positive/sympathetic expression (e.g., same, me too, I know right?).
6. Pause the class and ask them to:
 - a. Take one sticky note from the "Concerns" board to their own desks AND
 - b. Anonymously write a positive, encouraging, supportive comment (could be a piece of advice or how you relate to it).
7. Have students return and post the sticky note back on the "Concerns" area. Students can go back to the board and retrieve their original "Concerns" sticky note and read over the comments.

MODIFIED VIRTUAL CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS

1. Create Kahoot off the website Kahoot.com and ask questions surrounding mental health and popular concerns adolescents may have.
 - a. How do you feel today?
 - i. Good
 - ii. Bad

- iii. Great
- iv. Okay
- b. Are you concerned about the school year?
 - i. True
 - ii. False
- 2. Kahoot allows students to create anonymous usernames, allowing them to feel more comfortable picking their honest answer.
- 3. When ready to do the activity, provide the students with the pin so that they can participate in the quiz.
- 4. After completing the Kahoot, have a discussion with students about the answers and explain that what they are feeling is normal, to reassure them that they are not alone.

6. Gratitude List

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 7 to 10

TIME: 10–20 minutes

MATERIALS: Lined Paper, writing utensils

DELIVERY: This activity can be completed both in class, and virtually by using google documents.

OBJECTIVE

To recognize and appreciate things to be grateful for; to build positivity and optimism.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Give each student a sheet of blank paper and have them write numbers 1–10 on the left side of the sheet in a column.
2. Give the class about 3 minutes to write down all the things they are grateful for. These things can include people, moments, experiences, etc.
3. Discuss as a class what they wrote down and why they are grateful for those things.

* This can be a weekly activity. Students will have an opportunity to remember and reflect on the things they are grateful for regularly.

EXTENSION:

1. Give students a period of time for informal writing.
2. Based on the items on their gratitude list, students can be creative with their journal entry.
3. Students can freely write, write a letter directed to someone they are grateful to have in their lives, or simply blog about a positive memory.

SHARE RESEARCH FINDINGS:

- If we bring up emotions of gratitude, thankfulness, and appreciation, we

release hundreds of different chemicals that help rebuild our body.

- This creates a stronger immune system, new genes and hormones that positively affect different cells and tissues that are out of balance.

MODIFIED VIRTUAL CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS

1. Tell each student to open a word or google document on their personal device. Have them write the numbers 1-10 on the left side of their document in a column.
2. Give the class about 3 minutes to write down all the things they are grateful for that day. These things can include people, moments, objects (i.e., food), experiences, etc.
3. Discuss as a class what they wrote down and why they are grateful for those things.

EXTENSION:

1. Give students a period of time to write an informal journal entry.
4. Based on the items on their gratitude list, students can be creative with their journal entry.
5. Students can freely write. They can pretend this is a letter directed to someone they are grateful to have in their lives, or simply write about a positive memory.

Book Lists to Check Out

21 YA Books to Read During Mental Health Awareness Month for May

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/rachelstrolle/mental-health-awareness-month-books-ya-reading>

YA Books About Mental Illness and Mental Health

<https://bookriot.com/ya-books-about-mental-illness/>

11 Enlightening and Empathetic YA Novels About Mental Illness

<https://www.readbrightly.com/enlightening-empathetic-ya-novels-about-mental-illness/>

18 YA Books to Read During Mental Health Awareness Month

<https://www.epicreads.com/blog/books-for-mental-health-awareness-month/>

8 Young Adult Books That Will Change The Way You Think About Mental Health

<https://www.mghclaycenter.org/parenting-concerns/grade-school/8-young-adult-books-holiday-anytime-giving-will-change-way-think-mental-health/>

Reality Scoop: Promoting Mental Wellness with YA Literature

<http://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/2016/02/02/reality-scoop-january-is-mental-wellness-month/>

You're Not Alone: Mental Health Nonfiction Picks for Teens

<http://www.yalsa.ala.org/thehub/2019/09/09/mental-health-nonfiction-picks-for-teens/>

Resources

- Kids Help Phone: Text- 686868 (24/7 support)
<https://kidshelpphone.ca/>
- Find trusted, culturally competent therapists that know *our* feelings and can help navigate being a strong, black woman.
<https://therapyforblackgirls.com/>
- Black Youth Helpline: serves all youth and specifically responds to the need for a Black youth specific service, positioned and resourced to promote access to professional, culturally appropriate support for youth, families and schools.
<https://blackyouth.ca/> +1416-285-9944 / +1833-294-8650
- Youth Line offers confidential and non-judgmental peer support through our telephone, text and chat services.
<https://www.youthline.ca/> +1647-694-4275
- If you or someone you know is in crisis or requires immediate support, please contact 310-COPE at 1-855-310-COPE (2673) or visit your nearest emergency department.
- ConnexOntario is focusing on mental health and addiction services in the province 1-866-531-2600

Apps for Students:

- Calm: This app teaches activities to help you sleep, breathe and relax.

- HelloMind: Young worriers can significantly benefit from HelloMind, an app which helps change negative thought patterns.
- Smiling Mind: It is designed to help children through the stresses, and challenges of daily life. It offers programs for a variety of age groups, including 7-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16-18 and adults.
- MindShift: Scientifically proven strategies based on Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) to help you learn to relax and be mindful, develop more effective ways of thinking, and use active steps to take charge of your anxiety.

Want to Get Involved and Help Empower Other Youth and Inspire Change?

Here are some ways you can support:

- Join an event committee
- Attend our events
- Join our Board of Directors
- Follow us on social media



@youthspeakcan



YouthSpeak



YouthSpeakCAN



@youthspeakcan

- Donate to Canada Helps
 - You can click the “Donate” Button on the www.youthspeak.ca homepage
 - OR this link will take you straight to the donation page https://www.canadahelps.org/en/charities/youthspeak-performance-charity-organization/?utm_expid=.Z0WUQV4rT9mKtKTXtGPdnw.0&utm_referrer=https%3A%2F%2Fyouthspeak.ca%2F
- Share your special skills with our team of youth to help build their leadership
- Perform administrative tasks that are important behind the scenes work

www.youthspeak.ca

905-967-0604

volunteers@youthspeak.ca