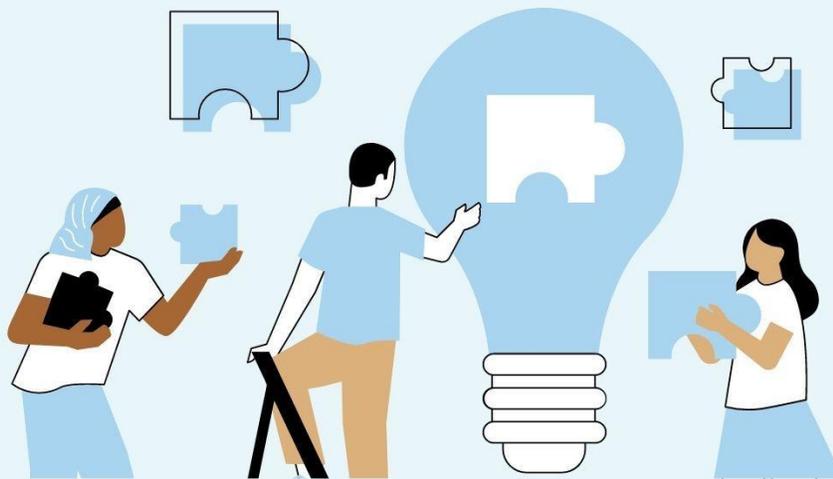




School Survival Guide



Teacher's Guide (for Grades 8-9)

CLASS ACTIVITIES

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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 other related challenges are connected to available support to improve their overall well-being.

The purpose of this Teacher Guide is to provide valuable and easy-to-follow awareness-building activities for teachers to use in their classrooms. These activities have been compiled by our team of youth.

HOW TO USE

This Teacher Guide has numerous activities that are designed to support the students' transition from elementary into secondary school related to their mental health, overall well-being and sense of belonging. They can be used in the classroom to help students understand and explore important topics on self-care and coping skills. Each activity includes an estimated timeframe, a list of materials needed, and specific steps on how to run the activity. 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 anti-racism and inclusivity. Discussing these topics can bring up strong thoughts and feelings, and it is important to let them know that if students are experiencing any negative feelings and need help, that the teachers, administration, and other caring adults are always there to listen and support them.

1. Remarkable Role Models

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 8 to 9

TIME: 15-20 minutes

MATERIALS: Blackboard / whiteboard / projector / paper

OBJECTIVE

To introduce students to diverse role models that have had major impacts on our society in the past and present. By the end of this activity, students will be aware of the amazing contributions that the role models have had on a national and international level. Additionally, the introduction of diverse role models has the ability to promote resilience among students of marginalized communities.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Gather images of inspiring diverse role models for students. Try to get a wide range of professionals! This will have the ability to demonstrate to students that they can be anything they want to be!
 - a. Suggestions: professors/teachers that have changed the world of academia, activists, professionals in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), lawyers, etc...
2. Have students choose a role-model of their liking and write a description about why they chose this role model and how this inspires them to be what they want.
3. Have students present their ideas to the class. A class discussion can also be initiated.

MODIFIED VIRTUAL CLASSROOM INSTRUCTIONS

1. Create a PowerPoint that can be viewed by students that feature images of inspiring diverse role models, and profile summaries with links to further

information (websites, videos). Try to get a wide range of diverse professionals. This will have the ability to demonstrate to students that they can be anything they want to be!

- a. Suggestions: professors/teachers that have changed the world of academia, activists, professionals in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM), lawyers, etc...
2. Explain to students the importance of each individual.
3. Have students choose a role-model of their liking and ask them to create a Google Slide explaining what they found inspiring about the role model they have chosen. They can include pictures, and text either by typing or using the audio-to-text feature.
4. Follow up whole-class discussion: Encourage the students to share their pages, and screen share the Google Slides of the students who have volunteered to share.

Discussion prompts: What did you learn from external sources such as the video and website links?

2. You Are Not Alone

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 8 to 9

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 about when they are at school.
 - 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.

3. I See What You See In Me

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 8 to 9

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?

4. Subdue the Stress

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 8 to 9

TIME: 25-30 minutes

MATERIALS: Blackboard/ whiteboard/ chart paper / markers / poster board

DELIVERY: This activity can be completed both in class, and virtually over google meets.

OBJECTIVE

To conceptualize the differences between healthy and unhealthy forms of stress management. This activity will provide a reflection on the many ways one can manage their stress and provide students an opportunity to come up with their own Ten-Step formula to combat stress. This activity will also provide students an opportunity to create a communal Ten-Step routine for stress reduction to use within their own classroom.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Before initiating this activity, be sure to remind students of the difference between stress and depression. Stress is a feeling that you are under too much mental or emotional pressure. It is often triggered by something in your life that feels too much for you to personally handle, regardless if others can or can't do the same. Depression can develop in response to unresolved issues and sometimes occur for weeks, months or even years. Though it may appear similar on the surface, depression is a medical condition.

2. Ask:

- "Let's talk about stress... What does stress mean?"
 - Stress is often defined as any situation that is either positive (ex. getting a new promotion, moving, applying to university) or negative (ex. Family members falling ill, overwhelming homework, fighting with friends or family) that have an impact on an individual's emotional and physical state.
- "What are some stressors that you face in your life?"

- “How do you know when you are actually feeling stressed? What are the symptoms or signs involved?”
- “What are some ways that you deal with stress?”
 - Have students record their responses.
 - Additional ideas can include:
 - Keep a journal
 - Strive for excellence not perfection
 - Do something you find creative
 - Get a proper amount of sleep
 - Say “no” more often; this means knowing your boundaries and do no volunteer for everything because you think you have to
 - Listen to music or dance to it
 - Break large tasks into smaller sized portions
 - Visualize yourself succeeding at the task
 - Taking a long bath
 - Ask for help
 - Exercise
 - Practice deep breathing techniques

3. Once students have completed their own list, have them share them during group discussion. Write them out on the board or in a shared google doc as students provide their answers. As a class, have everyone vote on their favourite ways to deal with stress from the list of possibilities provided.

4. Record the students’ top ten stress-reducing strategies on a poster board and put it on display within the classroom (or readily accessible on the google/virtual classroom).

5. Assertive Communication

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 8 to 9

TIME: 10–20 minutes

MATERIALS: Lined Paper, writing utensils

DELIVERY: This activity can be completed both in class, and virtually using google docs

OBJECTIVE

To understand passive, assertive and aggressive communication. At the end of this activity, students will comprehend how effective using the appropriate communication can be.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. As a class, discuss what passive, assertive and aggressive communication is.
 - a. Passive Communication is a style in which individuals have developed a pattern of avoiding expressing their opinions or feelings, protecting their rights, and identifying and meeting their needs.
 - b. Assertive Communication the ability to express positive and negative ideas and feelings in an open, honest and direct way.
 - c. Aggressive Communication is a style in which individuals express their feelings and opinions and advocate for their needs in a way that violates the rights of others.
2. Break students into groups and have them come up with examples of all 3. After 2 minutes, bring the class together and see if their examples are correct.
 - a. Passive Communication examples → being too nice, overly compliant, putting oneself down.
 - b. Assertive Communication examples → being firm but polite, compromising, standing up for oneself.

c. Aggressive Communication → being mean or harsh, bullying or trampling others.

3. Put students back in their groups and have them think of three situations where they used assertive communication and reflect on the emotions they felt after each situation.
4. Instruct students discuss the importance of using assertive communication.

6. Digital Dilemmas

ORGANIZATION

GRADE: 8 to 9

TIME: 25-35 minutes

MATERIALS: Blackboard/ whiteboard/ television/ handout/ school/personal computer (optional)

DELIVERY: This activity can be completed both in class, and virtually over google meets.

OBJECTIVE

To reflect on how our relationships are affected by devices and the internet. At the end of the activity, students will be able to identify the qualities of healthy and rewarding relationships. Ultimately the goal is to have students gather new strategies to set boundaries in order to navigate the challenging dynamics of relationships fostered through technology.

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Initiate a whole class discussion on how personal devices and social media affect students' relationship with their peers with the following prompts:

- How many students use social media?
- How many students use social media as a means of communicating to one another?
- How often do you chat with your friends? Every hour? Day? Week?
- How has this usage affected the dynamic of your relationship?
- Are these effects more positive or negative?

2. Have students break off into pairs and distribute *Boundaries within Friendships* Handout. For part 1, each student in a pair will have the option to choose either one of the following resources below to review. Students are to capture their thoughts and share a summary of their resources. If not all students have access to school/personal computers, consider playing the following videos to the entire class

or astutely pairing students with those that have personal devices to play the videos with students that do not possess the same devices.

Resource 1: [Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn7ZQ2x0cOE>

Resource 2: [That's Not Cool](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2ogq_UczAw&t=68s

After conducting their review of the resource, they are to share their notes with their partner. After a few minutes of partner discussion, Invite students to share their notes in a group discussion. Take the time to highlight any comments that you want your students to capture (either on the board or display) and allow time for your students to copy them down.

3. Introduce the following activity by informing students that, when something happens within a relationship that makes an individual feel worried, sad, anxious or uncomfortable, it is called a red flag feeling. This feeling is a warning sign that something off might be going on.

Explain to students that when you experience a red flag feeling that it is important that they do not quickly make reactive decisions but take a moment to slow down and think about how they are feeling. The following routine is meant to provide a 4 step process that supports reflective decision making and supportive social skills when dealing with digital dilemmas.

- a. Identify: *Who is actually involved in this situation? What is the digital dilemma they are facing at this moment?*
- b. Feel: *What could each person in this situation be feeling? Why might it be difficult for them to handle this dilemma?*
- c. Imagine: *Consider the options available for this situation to be dealt with. Be creative! There is never one single "right" answer. Choose the options you think may actually lead to a positive outcome, where the most "good" may occur.*
- d. Act/Say: *Aftering reflecting on what could be done, think about how it will be done. What would people say or do to resolve this dilemma? How would they say/do it? What is the most appropriate medium?*

Have students return to the handout and follow the instructions for part 2. Provide students with a scenario involving a digital dilemma. After 7–10 minutes, have students share their responses using the 4 step routine.

Optional Activity: An alternative or additional component to part 2 of this activity can involve having students create their own scenario involving a digital dilemma. In small groups (3–4), students will have to write a script for a scenario that involves red flag feelings. Students will have to develop the problem and resolve it using the 4 step Feeling Routine. Students will then role-play and present this scenario to the whole class while submitting a written reflection on the thought process behind their scenario.

Digital Dilemma (Handout)

Part 1 Instructions

In pairs, each member will choose **one** of the resources below. Record what the source says about meaningful relationships and whether you agree with these points as you review the resource. Write down your thoughts in the space provided. Share your thoughts with your partner.

Resource 1

Watch: [Healthy vs Unhealthy Relationships](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gn7ZQ2x0cOE>

Resource 2

Watch: [That's Not Cool](#)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_2ogq_UczAw&t=68s

Resource #	What does the source say about positive relationships?	How do you feel about the source's key points? Do you agree, or disagree? Why?

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Part 2 Instructions

Read the following digital dilemma and use the 4 step Feelings Routine to brainstorm possible strategies for navigating a potentially unhealthy relationship.

Digital Dilemma

Identify:

Feelings:

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Imagine:

Part 1: List the options available

Part 2: Underline or circle the option you feel is best

Action:

Part 1: How would they carry out this option?

In person

Text

Direct Message

Video call (facetime)

Email

Other: _____

Part 2:

What would they say? Who are they saying it to? Write out the conversation.

Book Lists to Check Out

31 Young Adult Books with Diverse Characters Literally Everyone Should Read

<https://www.buzzfeed.com/jemimaskelley/diverse-ya>

Diverse and Inclusive Books to Inspire Young Adults

<https://www.scholastic.com/teachers/teaching-tools/book-lists/resources/diverse-young-adult-book-list.html>

25 Must-Read Young Adult Books with Diverse Characters

<https://www.xoxoerinsmith.com/blog/ya-books-with-diverse-characters>

61 LGBTQIA+ Young Adult Books to read all year long

<https://www.epicreads.com/blog/lgbtq-ya-books-pride/>

Indigenous Books

<https://www.strongnations.com/books/>

Why Kids and Teens Need Diverse Books and Our Recommended Reads

<https://resilienteducator.com/classroom-resources/diverse-childrens-books/>

10 Best Young Adult books by Latina authors to read now

<https://www.themujerista.com/the-blog/10-best-young-adult-books-by-latina-authors-to-read-now>

51 Young Adult Novels by Authors of Asian Descent

<https://readingmiddlegrade.com/asian-ya-novels/>

Novels for Young Adults with Neurodivergent Characters

https://www.goodreads.com/list/show/93649.Neurodivergent_YA_Novels

12 Books for Soon-to-Be High Schoolers

<https://www.readbrightly.com/books-for-high-schoolers/>

Resources

- Kids Help Phone: Text- 686868 (24/7 support)
www.kidshelpphone.ca
- Therapy for Black Girls: Find trusted, culturally competent therapists that know *our* feelings and can help navigate being a strong, black woman
www.therapyforblackgirls.com
- Hope for Wellness: offers immediate help to all Indigenous peoples across Canada 1-855-242-3310 (24/7 support)
www.hopeforwellness.ca
- 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.
www.blackyouth.ca +1416-285-9944 / +1833-294-8650
- Youth Line offers confidential and non-judgmental peer support through our telephone, text and chat services.
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.
- Community Resources for Immigrant and Refugee Youth offers resources for Newcomers
www.kidsnewtocanada.ca/health-promotion/youth-resources
- The 519 offers counseling, programs and other services for families, children and youth in the 2SLGBTQ community.
[www.the519.org/programs/category/family-children-and-youth /](http://www.the519.org/programs/category/family-children-and-youth/)
[www.the519.org/programs/category/counselling-services /](http://www.the519.org/programs/category/counselling-services/) +416-392-6874

Apps for Students

- *Calm*: This app teaches activities to help you sleep, breathe and relax.
- *HelloMind*: Worriers can significantly benefit from HelloMind, an app which helps change negative thought patterns.
- *Smiling Mind*: It is designed to help children and adults through the stresses, and challenges of daily life.

- *MindShift*: An app to help teenagers and young adults cope with anxiety. It offers strategies to manage symptoms of anxiety such as writing down your feelings and tracking them. It helps students start to use positive coping skills with reminders and a place to store information.
- *Mindful Gnats*: This app helps develop mindfulness and relaxation skills. It offers lots of choice, such as choosing how long you would like to do deep breathing for, and how long you would like each breath to be.

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



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- **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

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