



## Building Self-Care Toolkit



Funding provided by:



An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

Thank you for joining us to support your children's well-being through a forest adventure with our friends Rory and Skippy.

## ABOUT YOUTHSPEAK

YouthSpeak is a registered charity that trains youth who have lived experience with mental health and related challenges to create important conversations promoting well-being, compassion and hope. Our vision is for all youth to be inspired and empowered to live resilient and meaningful lives.

### Purpose of this program –

The Building-A-Self-Care-ToolKit program is a fun, interactive, youth-led early learning experience that helps children develop happy & healthy ways to express and manage their emotions. This six-week program will focus activities & themes of various evidence-informed tools:

1. Understanding Feelings
2. Coping Tools
3. Kindness to Self and Others
4. Problem-Solving
5. Gratitude
6. Confidence

By engaging in these tools and relevant activities, children and parents will learn in a positive, safe and most importantly, fun environment.

### Format –

Each session will have accompanying visuals on a PowerPoint to support the storyline, key learnings and engagement. Facilitators will explain the tools used to encourage self-care, and overcome and persevere through obstacles. Each session includes 1-2 tools.

Every session will include:

- Storyline
- Tools and Activities
- This workbook (which can be shared with parents)

## How to Use This Workbook –

This workbook provides information on the key messages and coping strategies the children will learn during the six weeks. The integration of these strategies is most effective when parents, educators, and other caring adults in a child's life build upon and use this experience to launch further conversations related to self-care, coping and well-being.

If your child prefers to have printed material to follow along with, you may want to print this out along with the printable toolkit in advance. If you print in advance you can have a look at the tools and conversation starters in order to familiarize yourself and your child with the material that will be presented.

Set up your space to allow for some movement during the program and enjoy!

If you haven't already, **print the following:**

- Gratitude Tree and leaves- pages 16, 17
- Paddle Challenge- page 18
- Kindness Calendar- page 19
- Self-Care Toolkit Cards- page 20-23

These tools are for your child to utilize right away. These pages can be hole-punched and hung on a key ring so everyone in the family has easy access to them whenever needed.

## Printable Self-Care Toolkit Cards–

The toolkit on **page 19-22** is used to help your child choose the strategies that best help them navigate their feelings. It can help them feel independent and teach them to take care of themselves!

**Instructions:**

- Print pages 19 - 22.
- If possible, you can laminate them and create a ring book, staple them together or have them make a small box to keep them in
- Explain to your child/ren the importance of each tool and how they can use this book
- There are 2 empty cards that your child/ren can use to come up with their own self-care activities

- Practicing these activities with your child/ren will help them use them more and more!

## WEEK ONE – UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

**Summary** - This week students will be introduced to the facilitators, meet Skippy and Rory, and get familiar with the interactive tools being used throughout the workshop.

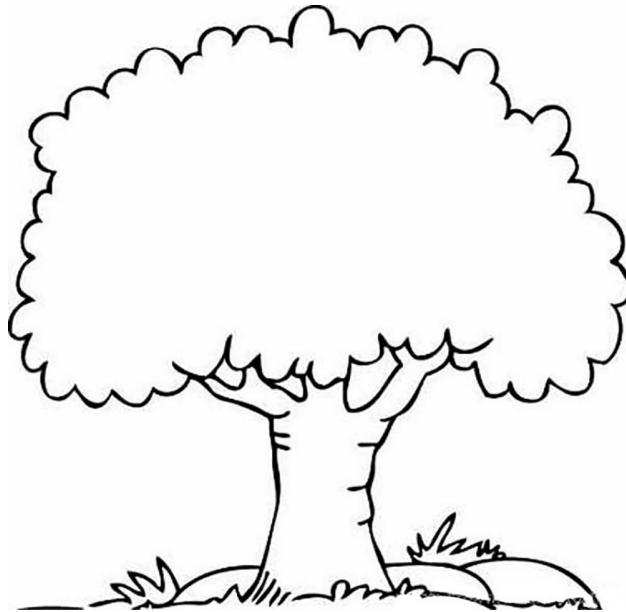
### Conversation Starters -

- What are the names of the friends that you met?
- What was your favourite part of the story today?
- What was your favourite tool ?
- What was something new you learned?

### Tools -

- Gratitude Tree
- Kindness Calendar

### GRATITUDE TREE



**The gratitude tree is a fun and interactive way to visualize things that your child is grateful for in their lives!**

Gratitude has been linked to positive feelings towards oneself and others. It increases positive relationships by making us more likely to help others while improving emotional, physical, and mental well-being!

**Instructions:**

- Print out full-size Gratitude Tree and leaves from **pages 16 and 17**
- Cut out leaves and have your child write one thing they are grateful for on each leaf
- Paste leaves onto the tree and attach the page somewhere they can see it regularly

## KINDNESS CALENDAR

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Give someone a high five	Wave hello	Hold the door open for somebody	Make a friend with a classmate	share! sharing is caring		

### Instructions:

- Print out the full-size kindness calendar on **page 18**
- Have your child practice one act of kindness per day
- Think of new daily acts of kindness and fill them in on the empty spots

## WEEK TWO – COPING TOOLS

**Summary** - This week we begin our adventure with Skippy and Rory! As they go through the forest, they will face obstacles and challenges. To overcome their fears, Skippy and Rory will use new self-care tools to make them feel strong, brave, and calm.

### Conversation Starters -

- What was your favourite part of the story today?
- What was your favourite tool?
- What tool would you use if you felt anxious or worried?
- What was something new you learned?

### Tools -

- Butterfly-Breathing
- Self-Hug

## BUTTERFLY BREATHING



**Butterfly Breathing or Deep Breathing is one of the best ways to lower stress in the body for all ages!**

Butterfly breathing has been known to lower heart rate, slow down breathing and reduce high blood pressure. This self-care tool can relieve panic attacks, anxiety and stress. Butterfly breathing increases the calming feeling, and encourages relaxation.

**Instructions:**

- Use your stomach to breathe in deeply (It helps to place your hands on your belly to feel it balloon up and down as you breathe)
- Breathe in for 3 counts and out for 5
- If you can't get a deep breath in, try to focus on breathing out slowly
- You can also try grounding yourself through 5 senses by labelling:
  - 5 things you can see
  - 4 things you can touch
  - 3 things you can hear
  - 2 things you can smell
  - 1 thing you can taste

## SELF HUG



The self-hug increases self-compassion and lowers cortisol levels (the stress hormone). This self-care tool makes it easier for children to accept themselves as they are and soothe themselves after hardships and or making a mistake. The self-hug has been known to reduce pain and encourage feeling safe and secure.

**Instructions:**

- Fold your arms around your body in a way that feels soothing and comfortable
- Rest your hands on your shoulders or upper arms
- Think happy and positive thoughts about yourself and others
- Squeeze yourself with the right amount of pressure to create the comfort you are looking for
- Hold this for at least 5 seconds or as long as you want.



## WEEK THREE – KINDNESS TO SELF AND OTHERS

**Summary** - Skippy and Rory continue their adventure and go deeper into the forest. This time, they are stopped by a big, intimidating mountain. With the help of new self-care tools, Skippy and Rory are able to persevere up the mountain, and continue on their journey.

### Conversation Starters -

- What was your favourite part of the story today?
- What was your favourite tool?
- Does anyone remember what tool Skippy and Rory used at the mountain?
- What was something new you learned?

### Tools -

- Tree Pose
- I Am So / You Are So
- Rollercoaster-Breathing

### TREE POSE



This pose increases flexibility and helps grow parts of the brain. The tree pose brings stress responses under control. Both the breathing nerve, and the sympathetic nervous system fire at the same time, therefore children can modify their breathing in order to modify their stress response.

This self-care tool allows participants to focus on their mental resources, enhance self-awareness, process information quickly and more accurately, and hold information more effectively.

**Instructions:**

- Start with both feet planted on the ground, and your arms at your side
- Slowly bend one leg on the calf or higher as they choose and rest your raised foot on the leg still planted to the floor
- Once you have your balance, slowly bring your hands together and raise them above your head, standing tall like a tree

**I AM SO & YOU ARE SO**



**I Am So**

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**You Are So**

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I Am So is for promoting self-kindness by attaching positive attributes with oneself, such as: “I am so beautiful,” “I am so smart,” “I am so kind,” “I am so great,” etc. (any positive word can be used.) You Are So is for promoting kindness towards others with positive attributes, such as: “You are so beautiful,” “You are so smart,” “You are so kind,” “You are so great,” etc.

This activity can be used to improve self-esteem and develop a positive relationship to stress by reminding ourselves that we have what it takes to face our problems. A regular practice of this can also reduce heart rate, improve the immune system, help us feel less judged and turn negative thought patterns into positive ones.

**Instructions:**

- Sit with your child and have them write something positive about themselves on the “I Am So” above. This can be attached with tape anywhere that they can see it regularly to remember positive traits about themselves.
- After that, have them think of something positive about someone else to write on the “You Are So” above and give it to that person (they may also take a picture to send it to them virtually!).

## ROLLER-COASTER BREATHING



When we are calm, our bodies are in what is known as “rest and digest” mode. Breathing is normal, muscles are relaxed, and heart rate is normal. It's how we would be when watching a show and relaxing. When we experience a stressful event, our bodies automatically go into what is known as “flight, fight or freeze” mode. Heart rate increases, stomach stops digestion, and breathing becomes more shallow. The goal of breathing exercises is to get from “flight, fight or freeze” mode back to “rest and digest” mode. Deep breathing helps get more oxygen into your bloodstream, opening up your capillaries. It has a physical effect on your body to help you calm down and lower stress.

### Instructions:

- Hold out your hand in front of you so you're looking at your palm. Envision your hand as a rollercoaster going up and down
- With the other hand, trace around each finger, inhaling as you move up a finger to its tip, and exhaling as you move down a finger towards the palm
- The breathing we want kids to do is deep belly breaths, not shallow chest breaths. When they breathe in, their belly should expand, and when they breathe out, their belly should contract

## WEEK FOUR – PROBLEM-SOLVING

**Summary** - This week, Skippy and Rory continue on their adventure. It isn't long until they run into pesky bugs and misplace their boat paddle, which causes them to retrace their steps back in the forest. Along the way, they will share new calming techniques to make this journey fun and exciting.

### Conversation Starters -

- What was your favourite part of the story today?
- What was your favourite tool?
- Which tool can we use to help calm us down?
- What was something new you learned?

### Tools -

- Squishy Squeezy
- Hawk Wings

## SQUISHY SQUEEZY



**This activity is a great way to practice grounding by sending a signal to your brain that relieves anxiety in stressful situations.**

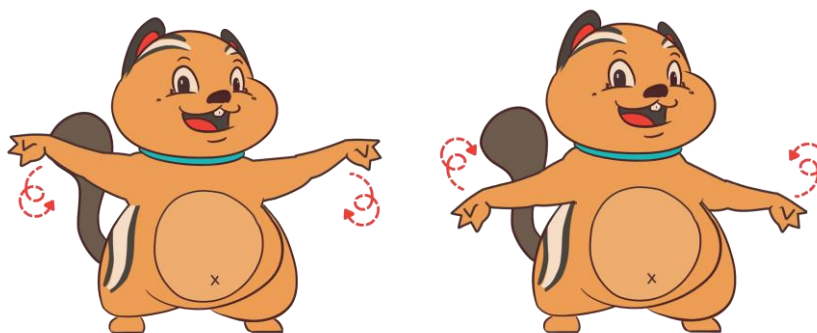
This tool is known as an EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique). Several factors play a role in anxiety reduction in EFT. Acupoint tapping accelerates the extinction of fear memories. Stress reduction after acupoint tapping can decrease the expression of genes implicated in the stress response, normalize brain wave patterns, and cause hormonal changes in stress reduction. Tapping can also help strengthen memory reconsolidation and depotentiation of neural pathways that maintain inflexible emotional learning.

**Instructions:**

- Apply a little pressure to the sides of each fingernail and go through all the fingers
- If you like you can count your fingers as you do it
- This technique comes in handy as its very easy to do in all kinds of situations
- Squishy Squeezy can send happy signals to your brain!

Grounding is a type of coping strategy that helps bring our attention away from our thoughts and into our bodies. It is a great strategy for immediate relief of stress and works best when practiced over time.

## HAWK WINGS



### **Stretching and exercising has been shown to:**

- Help develop your child's fundamental movement skills (i.e. physical literacy)
- Improve motor skills (such as hand-eye coordination), better thinking and problem-solving, stronger attention skills and improved learning
- "Feel-good" chemicals in the brain, known as endorphins, are released by the brain during physical activity and help to improve mood, energy levels and even sleep. Together, these positive effects help to improve self-confidence and resilience. Kids who get active every day are also better sleepers
- Through physical activity and stretching, an anxious child can break the cycle by focusing on the demands of the physical activity, developing new skills and achieving a sense of accomplishment.
- Seeing and appreciating what their body can do, rather than how it looks, is a great way for a child to build a positive body image and self-esteem. It is important to help your child develop this awareness as early as possible and to play your part in promoting a healthy body image through your own behaviour.

### **Instructions:**

- This stretch can be completed standing up or sitting down
- Extend both arms out to the side
- Move your shoulders and hands in a circle motion, going back and forth.

## **WEEK FIVE – GRATITUDE**

**Summary** - This week, Rory and Skippy will begin their journey across the river in their boat. To get across the river, they will have to work together as a team. Once across, Skippy and Rory confidently continue their journey through the forest and have many laughs, and discover the importance of sharing.

### **Conversation Starters -**

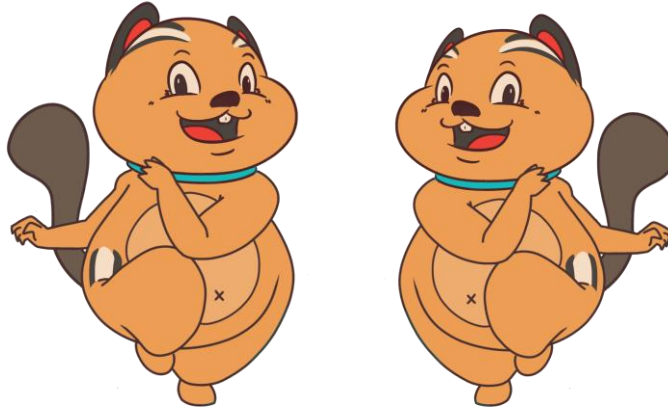
- What was your favourite part of the story today?
- What was your favourite tool?
- When can we use the tools that we've learned?

- What was something new you learned?

### Tools -

- Rowing Your Boat

## ROWING YOUR BOAT (CROSS CRAWLS/CROSS PATTERNING)



### Cross Crawls/Cross Patterning has been shown to:

- Offer an effective way to reboot your nervous system and re-integrate mind and body. You can use it regularly to both discharge and recharge your attention and energy. It's a great break from over- focusing and it works just as well to bring body and mind online.
- As a stress buster or a warm-up for doing your best, the exercise has significant social-emotional benefits:
  - Increased self-awareness
  - Situational insight
  - Clarity of thought
  - Impulse control
  - Improvements in general physical coordination to help with social skills during recess, gym class, and free play.
- The ability to do cross-lateral movements with the body literally lays the foundation for other cognitive abilities, such as readiness for fine motor academic work.

### Instructions:

- Stand with your feet apart and your arms open parallel to the ground.
- Shift your weight to your right foot, lift your left knee and touch it with your right hand.
- Step back to both feet and immediately shift weight to your left foot as you lift your right knee and touch it with your left hand.
- Repeat this several times in a comfortable, upbeat, rhythmic way.

- Remember to breathe fully and enjoy.



## WEEK SIX – CONFIDENCE

**Summary** - Skippy and Rory feel triumphant as their adventure in the forest is coming to an end. To celebrate, they laugh, dance, and have fun. Rory and Skippy use new tools to build their confidence for their long journey home back through the forest. With the help of their new self-care tools, they feel brave and excited to embark on the adventure home.

### Conversation Starters -

- What was your favourite part of the story today?
- What was your favourite tool?
- How do the tools make you feel when you use them?
- What was something new you learned?

### Tools -

- Power Poses
- Forest Dance

## POWER POSES



**“Power Stances” are simple ways to decrease our anxiety, handle stressful situations, and boost our confidence!**

### Power poses have been shown to:

- Change the way we feel, and also the way we are perceived by others.
- In fact, doing these poses for at least 2 minutes a day can help boost your testosterone levels in your body that can help boost your confidence!

### Instructions:

- Think of your favourite superhero and copy how they stand.
- You can plant your feet and raise your arms up or place hands on hips (as shown above).

- You can also sit with your back straight and hands stretched behind your head.
- This method is a great way to start your day or before an event where you might get stressed!

## FOREST DANCE

**Dancing and being active has been shown to:** improve physical, mental, and emotional health, regulate sleep and reduce stress. Any amount of exercise that one gets will have a positive effect on our well-being.

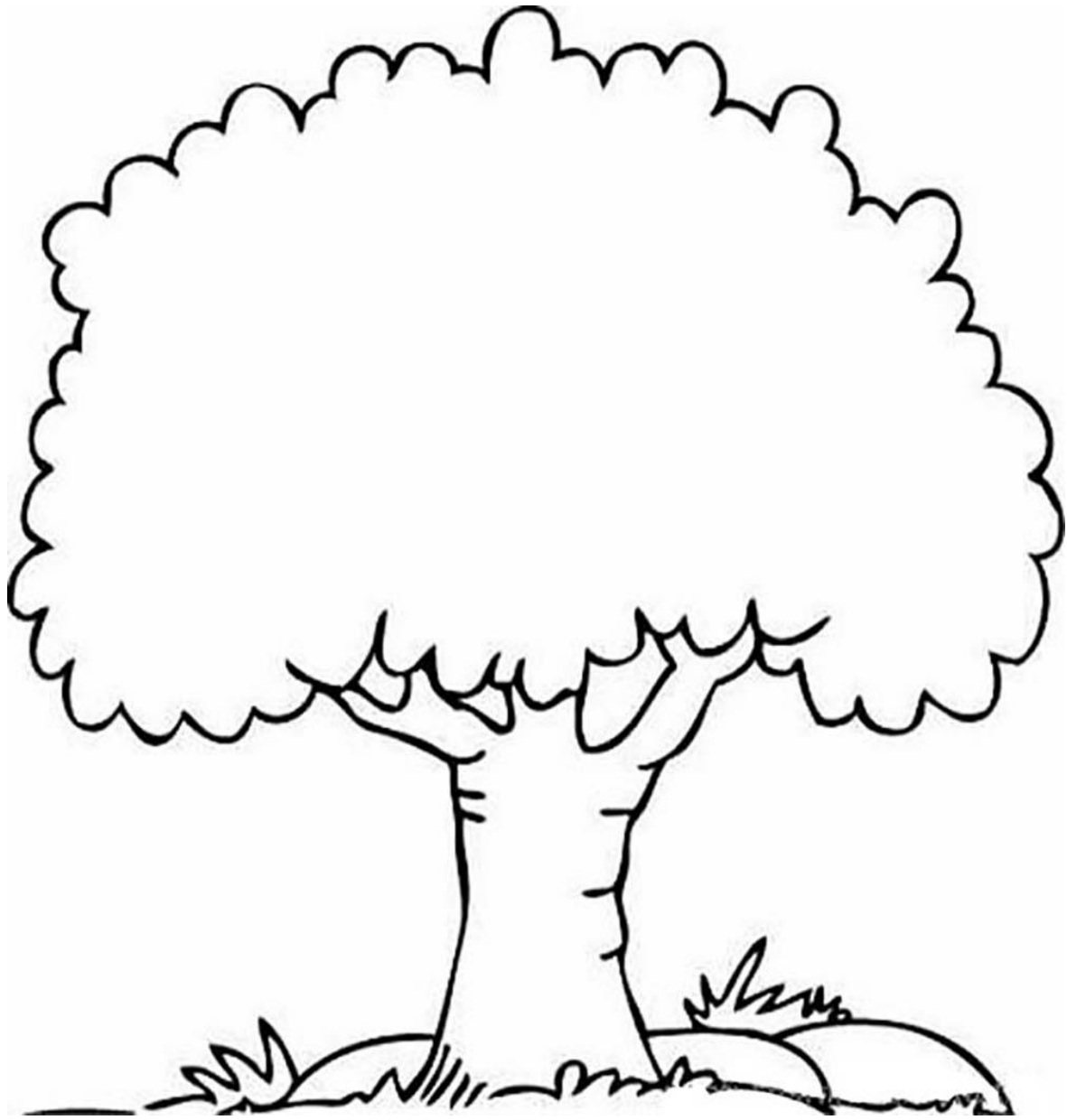
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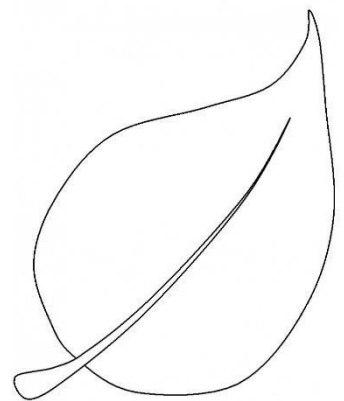
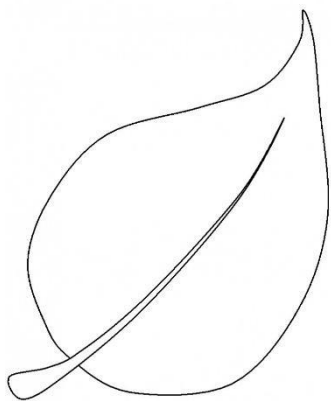
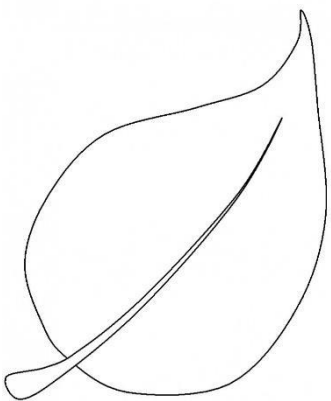
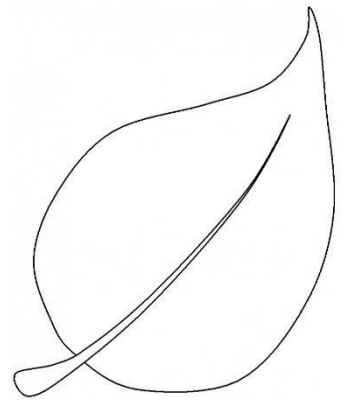
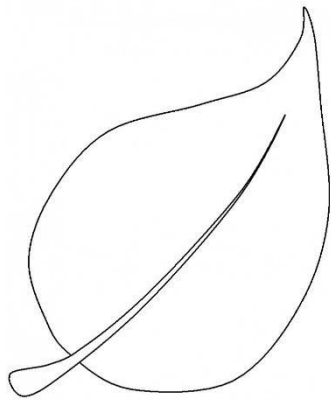
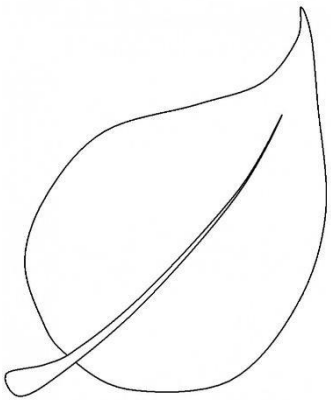
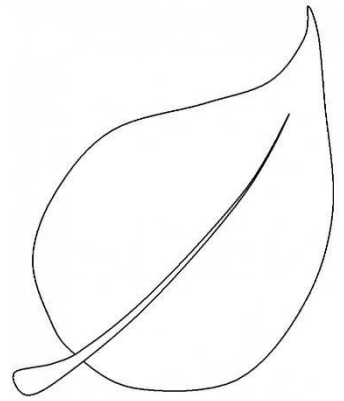
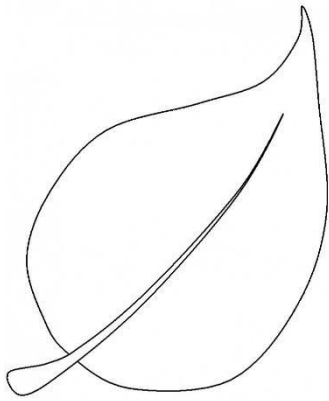
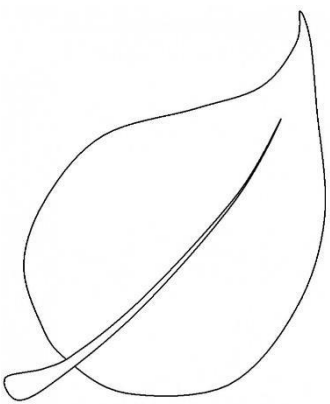
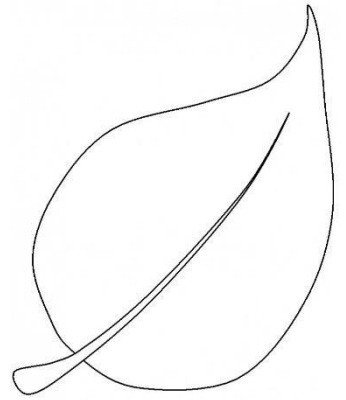
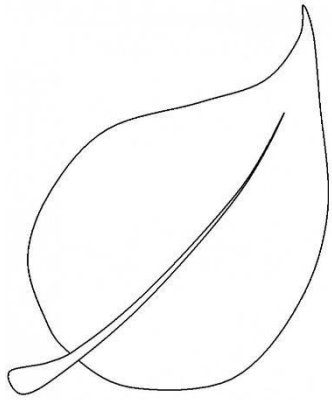
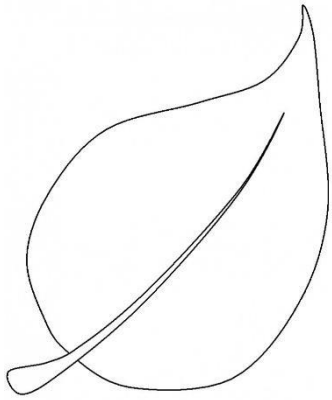
- We have broken down this strategy into three simple movements, but remember these movements can be done in whatever way is most comfortable for each persons' body

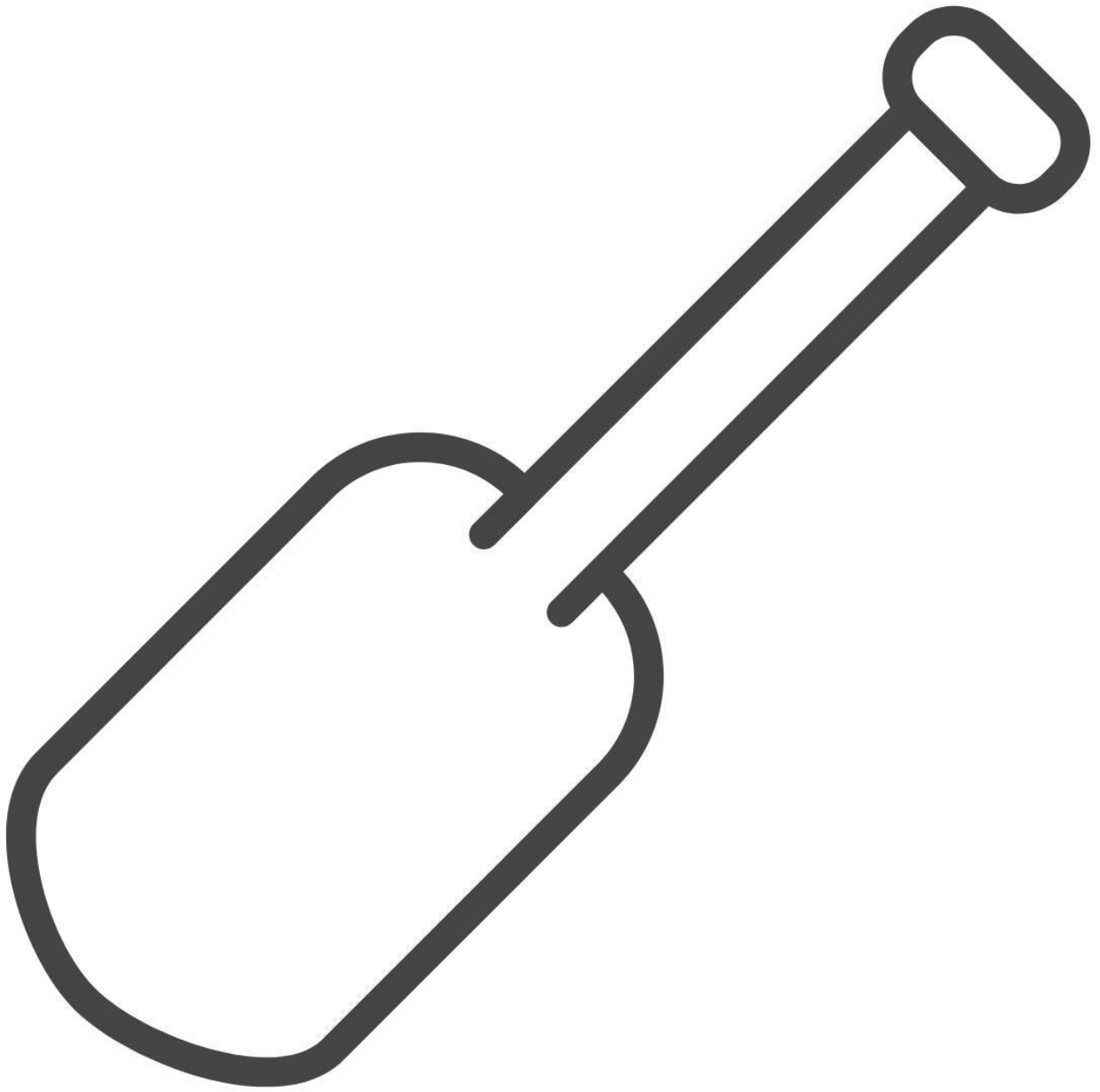
There are stickers that match this activity that can be purchased for a nominal price.

To inquire, please contact [office@youthspeak.ca](mailto:office@youthspeak.ca)









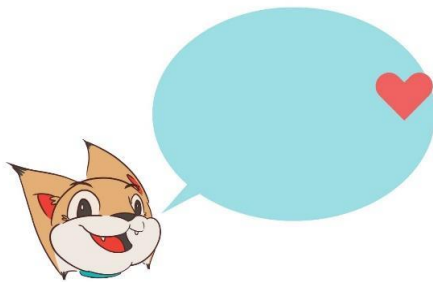
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Give someone a high five	Wave hello	Hold the door open for somebody	Make a friend with a classmate	share! sharing is caring		



Sometimes we feel upset and we might not know what to do. Don't worry, we can help ourselves! We can do things that help us feel better and calm. Here are some ways you can take care of yourself!



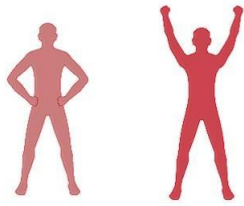
**SQUISHY SQUEEZY**



**I AM SO/ YOU ARE SO**



**KINDNESS CALENDAR**



**POWER STANCE**



**GRATITUDE TREE**



**TALK TO SOMEONE  
YOU TRUST**



**DRAW OR PAINT**





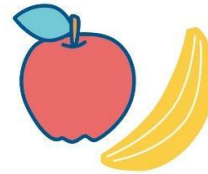
**LISTEN TO MUSIC**



**WRITE**



**ASK FOR HELP**



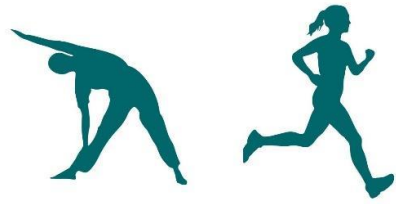
**EAT HEALTHY**



**GIVE A HUG**



**NAME YOUR FEELINGS**



**STRETCH OR EXERCISE**



**PLAY A GAME**



**DRINK WATER**



**TAKE A SHOWER**

