# Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource

**Easy-to-implement, evidence-informed mental health practices for Kindergarten to Grade 8 classrooms**

School Mental Health Ontario
Santé mentale en milieu scolaire Ontario

ETFO FEEO

2020

For more information, visit **smho-smso.ca/everydaymh**

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# Stress management and coping skills


## PAUSE AND REFLECT

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## CALM CLASSROOM

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## GUIDED IMAGERY

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## SUPPORT SEEKING

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# Inspiration from all

TIME **5–10 minutes**
plus prep and discussion

LEVEL **I**

MATERIALS
Photocopies, access to technology

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide an opportunity to note what makes something inspiring and how different people can be inspired in different ways |
| **Instructions** | • Each day a student is responsible for providing a source of inspiration for the class, like sharing a quote OR a YouTube video (under two minutes) OR an Instagram post (these must be previewed and approved before sharing with the class).<br>• Discuss the concept of "inspiration" with the group when introducing the practice and arrange a schedule outlining when each student will contribute.<br>• Provide opportunities for students to use technology to research and find inspirational quotes. |
| **Adaptations** | • It can be helpful to discuss the concept of inspiration since it might mean different things to different groups (e.g., spoken word poetry, visual images, organization techniques, puppies).<br>• Create a class calendar for students to sign up on in pairs for the two- to three-minute presentations so they can explore and share sources of inspiration together. |

# Inspiration from all

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | School life can be busy and stressful for intermediate students. Taking a few minutes each day to pause and reflect can be helpful for stress management (Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009). Sharing student views about inspiring content can help to create a positive emotional climate in the classroom that models caring behaviour and honours diverse views (Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2013). |

# Two-minute mindfulness

TIME **2–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Guided meditation/breathing exercises; chime/music (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students become more present in their daily interactions with others |
| **Instructions** | • Have a mindful message every day, during morning announcements or during transition times and take two minutes for mindfulness. For example, encourage students to tune into their breathing, do a body scan activity to relieve tension, or engage in positive self-talk/affirmations. (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice for ideas.)<br>• Play quiet music or sound a chime to begin moments of silence and stillness. During this time, students are encouraged to say a mantra quietly in their minds.<br>• Debrief/check in at the end of the two minutes of mindfulness to determine if the moment was helpful for students or not. |

# Two-minute mindfulness

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • This can be done school-wide during morning announcements or as a class. Consider incorporating mindfulness practices with parents/guardians during after-school events.<br>• Videos can be used to support this practice which would permit educators to participate with their class.<br>NOTE: Mindfulness isn't for everyone and might trigger certain students. Know students' needs and be prepared to offer an alternative. |
| **Evidence** | Mindfulness allows students to practice acceptance of their internal states, their external environment, and their peers. Students who engage in mindfulness at school demonstrate improvements in focus, maintaining attention, regulating emotions, and have more favourable social interactions (Felver, Celis-de Hoyos, Tezanos, & Singh, 2016). |

# End of day

TIME **3–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Chime/timer app

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students focus their attention, calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | Use a chime to begin the end of day quiet reflection.<br>Ask students to stand in front of their desk. Say:<br>• It's time to organize our desks for tomorrow.<br>• Take a quiet breath through your nose and slowly let it out.<br>• Stand up straight and take two more breaths in the same way. (PAUSE)<br>• Place items that you won't be bringing home in your desk. (PAUSE)<br>• Stand behind your chair.<br>• Stretch your arms to the left as you breathe out. Breathe in as you stretch your fingers toward the sky.<br>• Breathe out as you stretch your arms to the right. Breathe as you bring your arms back to center.<br>• Continue breathing gently as you lower your arms to your sides.<br>• Roll your shoulders, stand up straight, and smile. |

# End of day

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • The script can be modified to suit your students' developmental level and the classroom setting.<br>• This practice can be used as an alternative to the circle in the morning.<br>• As the students become more familiar with the script, do this activity without reading the script aloud.<br>• Consider implementing this practice schoolwide. |
| **Evidence** | Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# Inspiration from all

TIME **5–10 minutes**
plus prep and discussion

LEVEL **I**

MATERIALS
Photocopies, access to technology

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide an opportunity to note what makes something inspiring and how different people can be inspired in different ways |
| **Instructions** | • Each day a student is responsible for providing a source of inspiration for the class, like sharing a quote OR a YouTube video (under two minutes) OR an Instagram post (these must be previewed and approved before sharing with the class).<br>• Discuss the concept of "inspiration" with the group when introducing the practice and arrange a schedule outlining when each student will contribute.<br>• Provide opportunities for students to use technology to research and find inspirational quotes. |
| **Adaptations** | • It can be helpful to discuss the concept of inspiration since it might mean different things to different groups (e.g., spoken word poetry, visual images, organization techniques, puppies).<br>• Create a class calendar for students to sign up on in pairs for the two- to three-minute presentations so they can explore and share sources of inspiration together. |

# Inspiration from all

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | School life can be busy and stressful for intermediate students. Taking a few minutes each day to pause and reflect can be helpful for stress management (Chambers, Gullone, & Allen, 2009). Sharing student views about inspiring content can help to create a positive emotional climate in the classroom that models caring behaviour and honours diverse views (Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2013). |

# Two-minute mindfulness

TIME **2–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Guided meditation/breathing exercises; chime/music (optional)

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|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students become more present in their daily interactions with others |
| **Instructions** | • Have a mindful message every day, during morning announcements or during transition times and take two minutes for mindfulness. For example, encourage students to tune into their breathing, do a body scan activity to relieve tension, or engage in positive self-talk/affirmations. (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice for ideas.)<br>• Play quiet music or sound a chime to begin moments of silence and stillness. During this time, students are encouraged to say a mantra quietly in their minds.<br>• Debrief/check in at the end of the two minutes of mindfulness to determine if the moment was helpful for students or not. |

# Two-minute mindfulness

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • This can be done school-wide during morning announcements or as a class. Consider incorporating mindfulness practices with parents/guardians during after-school events.<br>• Videos can be used to support this practice which would permit educators to participate with their class.<br>NOTE: Mindfulness isn't for everyone and might trigger certain students. Know students' needs and be prepared to offer an alternative. |
| **Evidence** | Mindfulness allows students to practice acceptance of their internal states, their external environment, and their peers. Students who engage in mindfulness at school demonstrate improvements in focus, maintaining attention, regulating emotions, and have more favourable social interactions (Felver, Celis-de Hoyos, Tezanos, & Singh, 2016). |

# Snowstorm in a bag

TIME **Variable, as needed**

LEVEL **P/J**

MATERIALS

Straws, baggies, Styrofoam pieces, clean recycled items as appropriate, bottles

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To encourage students to engage in deep breathing using a fun technique |
| **Instructions** | • Select a container where a straw can be inserted and sealed, and items will move easily. Discuss the concept of deep breathing and why it's done. (See "Deep belly breathing" practice.)<br>• Encourage students to breathe deeply through the straw (in from the room, then out into the bag). Repeat eight to ten times. Ask students to reflect on how they feel following the exercise.<br>• Students can say the word(s) in their minds as they inhale and exhale with each breath (e.g., "I am brave!" (inhale) and "I am loved." (exhale)). |
| **Adaptations** | • Other items could be placed in the baggie/box to change the experience (e.g., feathers, glitter, tissue paper), or you could use a bottle or jar instead of a bag. It can be part of a calming box or calming space. (See "Calming box" and "Calming spaces/havens" practices.)<br>NOTE: When selecting items for the baggie/box, consider the age and the skill set of the student to ensure safety.<br>• Energy may be high when introducing this practice; however, over time it should create a sense of calm. This can be a group activity, or students can use it individually to calm down.<br>• See the website version of this practice for further suggestions. |

# Snowstorm in a bag

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Taking time to mindfully breathe and attend to internal states helps students manage emotions that arise in the classroom (Felver, Celis-de Hoyos, Tezanos, & Singh, 2016), so they can effectively regulate emotions, and refocus their attention on learning (Blair & Diamond, 2008). |

# Calming spaces/havens

TIME **2–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Items to mark the area, calming boxes, noise-cancelling headphones

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide a calming space in the classroom for students to manage difficult feelings |
| **Instructions** | • Use tents/sheets or other ways to mark an area of the classroom as a calming space.<br>• Students may access the calming spaces when they feel stressed or frustrated.<br>• Discuss with students ahead of time on how to use this space (predetermine use and time allotted per student. An extension may be requested if needed).<br>NOTE: It is important that these spaces are in a location that can be easily supervised. Also, be aware that in some schools there may be health and safety concerns with the use of tents/sheets. |
| **Adaptations** | • Older students may not want a designated area, but there could be virtual "spaces" in the school day (e.g., times when students are permitted to listen to music while they work). |
| **Evidence** | Having spaces or times for calming in the classroom normalizes emotions, and allows students to manage emotions, so they can refocus and engage in learning (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, & Munro, 2007). |

# Calming boxes

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

A range of low-cost materials

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students focus, calm down or bring up their energy, and practice self-regulation |
| **Instructions** | • Encourage students to play with materials in the calming box from time to time, especially when they (or you) are having difficulty regulating their emotions.<br>• This practice can be self-directed, or educator directed.<br>NOTE: Set common expectations with the students for the use of the calming box. |
| **Adaptations** | • Can be used with older students if the materials are age appropriate (e.g., fidget toys, mindful colouring pages, worry stones) and/or use a calming idea jar with several suggested activities for calming.<br>• You may wish to encourage students to bring things from home that they find calming.<br>• Students understand the box is for when they are feeling anxious. Some may wish to use it all the time, so establishing criteria for using the box is important (e.g., being sensitive to student needs, some may require personalized objects). |

# Calming boxes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Having designated space or time for calming in the classroom normalizes emotions, and allows students to manage emotions, so they can refocus and engage in learning (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, & Munro, 2007). |

# Stress buster bulletin board

TIME **2–5 minutes per day**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

Index cards, markers, bulletin board

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To encourage support seeking, which is an important skill for personal resiliency |
| **Instructions** | • Explain that everyone experiences stress and that some stress is necessary and normal, but when we become overwhelmed, we need to find ways to manage this. Let students know they have resources to manage stress and that they will be creating a bulletin board of ways that can inspire others as well.<br>• Students can do research on the subject, articles can be provided, or they can draw on personal experience.<br>• They can create an index card with lettering and images explaining their positive stress management idea (e.g., listen to music, draw, go for a run, pet an animal, talk to a trusted friend or adult, etc.). Post these ideas on an accessible bulletin board. |
| **Adaptations** | • Instead of cards on a bulletin board, post ideas on Post-it Notes for people to take as needed (this could also happen in a change room or washroom). |

# Stress buster bulletin board

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students may feel stressed and overwhelmed without realizing it or may be aware of these feelings, but unsure of what to do to manage these feelings. Normalizing stress through psychoeducation can reduce the impact of stress on well-being and development (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008; Van Daele, Hermans, Van Audenhove, & Van den Bergh, 2012). Sharing strategies in the classroom helps model that we all need to develop the coping skills that will allow us to be resilient in the face of stress. |

# Creating collaborative classroom norms

TIME **1 or 2 periods**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Paper, pencils, sentence strips, chart paper, markers, tape

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To establish norms as a group and to identify what matters to students as a group/classroom |
| **Instructions** | **Think:**<br>• Independently, students make a list of classroom expectations (e.g., trying new things, attentive listening, keeping the room clean, etc.).<br>**Pair:**<br>• In pairs, each student shares their list and identifies ideas they find important.<br>• The pair selects their top four or five expectations and joins another pair.<br>• In small groups, repeat the process.<br>• The small groups select their top four or five expectations and write these clearly on sentence strips.<br>**Share:**<br>• Groups present their sentence strips.<br>• As a class, students select the top five or six most important norms.<br>• The selected norms are written on chart paper, so they are visible for everyone. |

# Creating collaborative classroom norms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • To be done at the beginning of the school year or the start of a new group project.<br>• Ask students what classroom norms are important to them by using Wordle. |
| **Evidence** | Establishing explicit classroom norms of inclusion, respect for diversity, compassion, and collaboration will help create a classroom with a positive and safe emotional climate, in which students can effectively engage in learning (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011; Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2013). |

# Deep belly breathing

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Music (optional)

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students develop a deeper mind/body connection, self-regulation, awareness of emotions, and resiliency by practicing deep breathing | |
| **Instructions** | Select a breathing practice that appeals to your group of students and your comfort level.<br>For each practice, stand/sit with your back straight and keep your shoulders and head relaxed as you gaze forward. | |
| | ***Deep belly breathing*** | • Place your hands flat on your stomach.<br>• As you breathe deeply in through your nose, send this breath all the way to your stomach.<br>• Feel your stomach expand and your hands move out.<br>• Breathe out. Feel your stomach contract and your hands move in. |
| | ***Hot chocolate*** | • Place your hands together as if there is a cup of hot chocolate between them.<br>• As you breathe in, pretend to smell the hot chocolate.<br>• As you breathe out, pretend to blow on the steam. |

# Deep belly breathing

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Instructions** (continued) | ***Breathing kindness*** | • As you breathe in – breathe in kindness. Send this kindness to the centre of your body.<br>• As you breathe out – breathe out negativity. Send this breath out and away from you. |
| **Adaptations** | • Try this with students lying on their backs. Younger students may find it helpful to put an object on their stomach to watch it go up and down as they take a deep breath. Coach them on the breathing by counting in for four and then exhaling for four. | |
| **Evidence** | Guided breathing exercises are an effective tool to help students regulate emotions (Metz et al., 2013). These interventions decrease physiological arousal, so the emotion and anxiety students feel becomes less intense (Gregoski, Barnes, Tingen, Harshfield, & Treiber, 2011), and students can refocus their attention on learning. | |

# Take five breathing

TIME **2–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Paper and pencil (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide students with a tool to calm their anxious feelings and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | 1. Spread the fingers of your hand, just like a star, and use the index finger of the other hand to follow its contours.<br>2. Starting at the bottom of your thumb on the outside of your hand, slide your index finger up your thumb and pause at the top. Then slide your finger down the other side. Now slide your index finger up your second finger, pause, and slide down the other side. Continue tracing your fingers like this until you have reached the outside of your pinky.<br>3. Now add breathing. Breathe in through your nose slowly while going up, and out through your mouth while coming down.<br>4. Repeat step two.<br>5. Prompting debriefing questions: Do you feel calmer now? Would you like to take another five? |

# Take five breathing

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Instead of tracing their hand, students can draw a hand on paper and trace it if they find the sliding of their finger uncomfortable. Or, the image of a hand can be distributed.<br>• Another option, instead of your hand, use the image of a star, or a cut-out star, and give to each student. Each point is a hold-in breath, exhale along each line of the star, alternate with an inhale and an exhale. |
| **Evidence** | Guided breathing exercises are an effective tool to help students regulate emotions (Metz et al., 2013). These interventions decrease physiological arousal, so the emotion and anxiety students feel becomes less intense (Gregoski, Barnes, Tingen, Harshfield, & Treiber, 2011), and students can refocus their attention on learning. |

# Breathe with the bell

TIME **2–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Chime, bell, singing bowl, or calming sound from an app

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students notice what their mind/bodies tell them, so they can adopt strategies that will help them focus, self-regulate and calm feelings of anxiety when needed |
| **Instructions** | Discuss the importance of listening to our bodies.<br><br>Ask students:<br><br>• Why is listening to your mind/body important?<br>• What do you hear when you listen to your mind/body?<br>• What could those things tell you about your day? Your feelings? Your thoughts?<br><br>Then introduce a simple breathing exercise as a strategy to regulate.<br><br>Ask students to:<br><br>• Sit in a comfortable position.<br>• Keep your back straight and your shoulders relaxed.<br>• You can close your eyes if you want or simply look down.<br>• At the sound of the bell, breathe in through your nose.<br>• When you think the sound has stopped, exhale.<br>• Repeat.<br><br>After the activity, have students reflect on how they feel now. |

# Breathe with the bell

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • For older students, you may consider adding an inspirational quote or a positive affirmation to accompany the breathing practice (this can serve as added reflection). |
| **Evidence** | Guided breathing exercises are an effective tool to help students regulate emotions (Metz et al., 2013). These interventions decrease physiological arousal, so the emotion and anxiety students feel becomes less intense (Gregoski, Barnes, Tingen, Harshfield, & Treiber, 2011), and students can refocus their attention on learning. |

# Snowstorm in a bag

TIME **Variable, as needed**

LEVEL **P/J**

MATERIALS

Straws, baggies, Styrofoam pieces, clean recycled items as appropriate, bottles

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To encourage students to engage in deep breathing using a fun technique |
| **Instructions** | • Select a container where a straw can be inserted and sealed, and items will move easily. Discuss the concept of deep breathing and why it's done. (See "Deep belly breathing" practice.)<br>• Encourage students to breathe deeply through the straw (in from the room, then out into the bag). Repeat eight to ten times. Ask students to reflect on how they feel following the exercise.<br>• Students can say the word(s) in their minds as they inhale and exhale with each breath (e.g., "I am brave!" (inhale) and "I am loved." (exhale)). |
| **Adaptations** | • Other items could be placed in the baggie/box to change the experience (e.g., feathers, glitter, tissue paper), or you could use a bottle or jar instead of a bag. It can be part of a calming box or calming space. (See "Calming box" and "Calming spaces/havens" practices.)<br>NOTE: When selecting items for the baggie/box, consider the age and the skill set of the student to ensure safety.<br>• Energy may be high when introducing this practice; however, over time it should create a sense of calm. This can be a group activity, or students can use it individually to calm down.<br>• See the website version of this practice for further suggestions. |

# Snowstorm in a bag

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Taking time to mindfully breathe and attend to internal states helps students manage emotions that arise in the classroom (Felver, Celis-de Hoyos, Tezanos, & Singh, 2016), so they can effectively regulate emotions, and refocus their attention on learning (Blair & Diamond, 2008). |

# Tense and relax (neck/turtle)

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To have students develop the skills to notice how their body feels when they are tense and relaxed, and to learn how to relieve tensions and to self-regulate |
| **Instructions** | Help students notice how they feel when they tense their muscles and when they relax them. Discuss how each area of the body feels before the exercise, then discuss how it feels afterward.<br>• Push your shoulders up to your ears (as if you were hiding inside a turtle shell).<br>• Hold this for the count of one-two-three.<br>• Now relax your shoulders slowly for the count of one-two-three.<br>• Repeat. |
| **Adaptations** | • Once this is an established practice in your classroom, you may choose to have students lead the activity.<br>• You can add more body parts as students learn to isolate different areas. |

# Tense and relax (neck/turtle)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Understanding the difference in how the body feels under tension and in a relaxed state is a helpful tool to identify and regulate emotions. When students have the opportunity to simulate what it feels like to relieve tension, they can become more mindful of their emotions, and learn to effectively self-regulate (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Klingbeil et al., 2017). |

# Tense and relax (hands/lemons)

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To have students develop the skills to notice how their body feels when they are tense and relaxed, and to learn how to relieve tensions and to self-regulate |
| **Instructions** | Help students notice how they feel when they tense their muscles and when they relax them. Discuss how each area of the body feels before the exercise, then discuss how it feels afterward.<br>• Squeeze your hands together into fists (as if you were squeezing lemons).<br>• Hold this for the count of one-two-three.<br>• Now relax your hands slowly for the count of one-two-three.<br>• Repeat. |
| **Adaptations** | • Once this is an established practice in your classroom, you may choose to have students lead the activity.<br>• You can add more body parts as students learn to isolate different areas. |

# Tense and relax (hands/lemons)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Understanding the difference in how the body feels under tension and in a relaxed state is a helpful tool to identify and regulate emotions. When students have the opportunity to simulate what it feels like to relieve tension, they can become more mindful of their emotions, and learn to effectively self-regulate (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Klingbeil et al., 2017). |

# Tense and relax (stomach/fence)

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To have students develop the skills to notice how their body feels when they are tense and relaxed, and to learn how to relieve tensions and to self-regulate |
| **Instructions** | Help students notice how they feel when they tense their muscles and when they relax them. Discuss how each area of the body feels before the exercise, then discuss how it feels afterward.<br>• Squeeze your stomach in as if you were trying to squeeze through a fence.<br>• Hold this for the count of one-two-three.<br>• Now relax your stomach slowly for the count of one-two-three.<br>• Repeat. |
| **Adaptations** | • Once this is an established practice in your classroom, you may choose to have students lead the activity.<br>• You can add more body parts as students learn to isolate different areas. |

# Tense and relax (stomach/fence)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Understanding the difference in how the body feels under tension and in a relaxed state is a helpful tool to identify and regulate emotions. When students have the opportunity to simulate what it feels like to relieve tension, they can become more mindful of their emotions, and learn to effectively self-regulate (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Klingbeil et al., 2017). |

# Tense and relax (feet/mud)

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To have students develop the skills to notice how their body feels when they are tense and relaxed, and to learn how to relieve tensions and to self-regulate |
| **Instructions** | Help students notice how they feel when they tense their muscles and when they relax them. Discuss how each area of the body feels before the exercise, then discuss how it feels afterward.<br>• Push your feet down into the floor (as if you were squishing mud).<br>• Hold this for the count of one-two-three.<br>• Now relax your feet slowly for the count of one-two-three.<br>• Repeat. |
| **Adaptations** | • Once this is an established practice in your classroom, you may choose to have students lead the activity.<br>• You can add more body parts as students learn to isolate different areas. |

# Tense and relax (feet/mud)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Understanding the difference in how the body feels under tension and in a relaxed state is a helpful tool to identify and regulate emotions. When students have the opportunity to simulate what it feels like to relieve tension, they can become more mindful of their emotions, and learn to effectively self-regulate (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Klingbeil et al., 2017). |

# Tense and relax (arms/push-pull-drop)

TIME **5-10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To have students develop the skills to notice how their body feels when they are tense and relaxed, and to learn how to relieve tensions and to self-regulate |
| **Instructions** | Help students notice how they feel when they tense their muscles and when they relax them. Discuss how each area of the body feels before the exercise, then discuss how it feels afterward.<br>• Students are seated in chairs and hold the edges of their seat.<br>• First, push into the seat.<br>• Then pull up against the seat.<br>• Finally, drop hands down to sides.<br>• Repeat. |
| **Adaptations** | • Once this is an established practice in your classroom, you may choose to have students lead the activity.<br>• You can add more body parts as students learn to isolate different areas. |

# Tense and relax (arms/push-pull-drop)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Understanding the difference in how the body feels under tension and in a relaxed state is a helpful tool to identify and regulate emotions. When students have the opportunity to simulate what it feels like to relieve tension, they can become more mindful of their emotions, and learn to effectively self-regulate (Blair & Diamond, 2008; Klingbeil et al., 2017). |

# Let go and stretch (side stretch)

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To build a regular practice that helps students focus their attention, calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | • Practice these steps ahead of implementing them with students.<br>• Stand up straight and tall with shoulders relaxed. Take a deep breath and let it out with a sigh.<br>• Now breathe silently. Bring your palms together above your head and stretch them as high as you can. Relax your shoulders as you breathe out. Keeping your arms stretched high, breathe in and gently lean to one side, from your hips.<br>• On your next breath out, stretch a little bit further. Breathe in and out as you center yourself. Breathe in and tilt from your hips to the other side.<br>• On your next breath out, lean a little further, then centre yourself again.<br>• Remind students to keep breathing. Model these actions as you go through your instructions. |

# Let go and stretch (side stretch)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Stretching can be modified to suit your students' developmental level. Keep adapted activities on hand to suit the needs of students who have mobility challenges.<br>• A simple mantra or intention can be useful to guide the practice, mentioned at the beginning, end or throughout the process of stretching. |
| **Evidence** | Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions, and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# Let go and stretch (twist)

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To build a regular practice that helps students focus their attention, calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | • Practice these steps ahead of implementing them with students.<br>• Shape your hands into fists and place them on your hips. Breathe in and stand tall, shoulders relaxed. Now twist from your waist to one side, as you breathe out.<br>• Take another breath and then twist a little further as you breathe out. Breathe in as you come back to the center. Breathe out and twist a little further from your waist to the other side. As you breathe in, come back to the center.<br>• Bring your hands to your heart. Notice if you feel a little more relaxed or strong.<br>• Remind students to keep breathing. Model these actions as you go through your instructions. |
| **Adaptations** | • Stretching can be modified to suit your students' developmental level. Keep adapted activities on hand to suit the needs of students who have mobility challenges.<br>• A simple mantra or intention can be useful to guide the practice, mentioned at the beginning, end or throughout the process of stretching. |

# Let go and stretch (twist)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions, and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# Let go and stretch (tree stretch)

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To build a regular practice that helps students focus their attention, calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | • Practice these steps ahead of implementing them with students.<br>• Stand tall, stretch your arms up and away from your sides as far as feels comfortable, and relax your elbows and shoulders. Shift your weight onto your right foot and lift your left foot off the ground. Gently place the sole of your left foot against the inside of your right leg, avoiding your knee. For balance, focus your eyes on the floor or keep your arms at your side instead of raising them.<br>• Imagine you are a tree, and you are growing arm branches out towards the sun.<br>• Bring your left leg down and repeat with the right leg.<br>• Remind students to keep breathing. Model these actions as you go through your instructions. |

# Let go and stretch (tree stretch)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Stretching can be modified to suit your students' developmental level. Keep adapted activities on hand to suit the needs of students who have mobility challenges.<br>• A simple mantra or intention can be useful to guide the practice, mentioned at the beginning, end or throughout the process of stretching. |
| **Evidence** | Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions, and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# Stretch in your chair (mountain)

TIME **5–10 minutes** LEVEL **P/J/I** MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide students with a tool to calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | • Remind students to keep breathing and to avoid holding their breath.<br>**Say to students:**<br>• Sit up tall in your chair. Keep your feet flat on the ground, your back straight and your shoulders relaxed.<br>• Breathe in through your nose, and as you breathe out, stretch both arms over your head as you connect the palms of your hands. Keep your shoulders down.<br>• Breathe in for a three count, breathe out for a three count.<br>• Take a deep breath in again. As you breathe out, bring your arms down to resting position. |
| **Adaptations** | • Once this practice is well established in your classroom, you may wish to ask students to lead it.<br>• This can be practiced during transition times, before or after a test, or as a movement break. |

# Stretch in your chair (mountain)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions, and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# Stretch in your chair (owl)

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide students with a tool to calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | • Remind students to keep breathing and to avoid holding their breath.<br>**Say to students:**<br>• Breathe in through your nose. As you breathe out, bring one arm behind the back of your chair while your other arm folds over your chest (like the wings of an owl).<br>• Breathe in as you gently turn your head and gaze in the direction that your fingers resting on your chest are pointing in, breathe out.<br>• Breathe in. As you breathe out, return your arms to resting position and your head to look forward.<br>• Repeat the sequence. |
| **Adaptations** | • Once this practice is well established in your classroom, you may wish to ask students to lead it.<br>• This can be practiced during transition times, before or after a test, or as a movement break. |

# Stretch in your chair (owl)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions, and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# Stretch in your chair (go limp)

TIME **5–10 minutes** LEVEL **P/J/I** MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide students with a tool to calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | • Remind students to keep breathing and to avoid holding their breath.<br>**Say to students:**<br>• Breathe in through your nose. Breathe out for a three count, fold your body over to rest on your lap, and let your arms, shoulders and head hang.<br>• Relax as you take a breath in for a three count, and a breath out for a three count.<br>• Let all your tension and stress fall out and onto the floor.<br>• Breathe in and slowly return to sitting position for a three count; breathe out for a three count.<br>• Take one last deep breath in for a three count, take a breath out for a three count and smile. |
| **Adaptations** | • Once this practice is well established in your classroom, you may wish to ask students to lead it.<br>• This can be practiced during transition times, before or after a test, or as a movement break. |

# Stretch in your chair (go limp)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions, and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# End of day

TIME **3–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Chime/timer app

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students focus their attention, calm feelings of anxiety, and manage stress |
| **Instructions** | Use a chime to begin the end of day quiet reflection.<br>Ask students to stand in front of their desk. Say:<br>• It's time to organize our desks for tomorrow.<br>• Take a quiet breath through your nose and slowly let it out.<br>• Stand up straight and take two more breaths in the same way. (PAUSE)<br>• Place items that you won't be bringing home in your desk. (PAUSE)<br>• Stand behind your chair.<br>• Stretch your arms to the left as you breathe out. Breathe in as you stretch your fingers toward the sky.<br>• Breathe out as you stretch your arms to the right. Breathe as you bring your arms back to center.<br>• Continue breathing gently as you lower your arms to your sides.<br>• Roll your shoulders, stand up straight, and smile. |

# End of day

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • The script can be modified to suit your students' developmental level and the classroom setting.<br>• This practice can be used as an alternative to the circle in the morning.<br>• As the students become more familiar with the script, do this activity without reading the script aloud.<br>• Consider implementing this practice schoolwide |
| **Evidence** | Students who engage in physical activity and/or breathing exercises during the school day are able to focus, and maintain attention throughout the day, as these tasks stimulate executive functions and allow students to regulate emotions experienced in the classroom (Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# Visualization and body scan

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Visualization script

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students learn to soothe their body and mind and regulate emotions during times of stress |
| **Instructions** | Ask students to sit comfortably.<br>During the body scan, notice whether you feel tense or relaxed in a particular area. If tense, focus on relaxing the area by sending a breath there.<br>1. Start the body scan at the crown of the head, followed by the forehead, eyes, nose, cheeks, jaw, mouth, chin and ears.<br>2. Next, focus on the neck and shoulders.<br>3. Now pay attention to your arms, elbows, wrists, hands and fingers.<br>4. Shifting to the chest area, notice the rise and fall of the chest when you breathe in and out.<br>5. Afterwards, notice your stomach, lower back, hips, and your sitting bones.<br>6. Now move your attention to your thighs, knees and calves, noticing how your muscles feel.<br>7. Finally, move your attention to your toes, heels, tops and bottoms of your feet.<br>8. Now, taking one or two deeper breaths, widen your focus by paying attention to your entire body, noticing whatever is present. |

# Visualization and body scan

| | |
|---|---|
| **Instructions** (continued) | Follow up with a discussion. Prompts may include: What sounds did you notice? Did your mind wander to other things? Did you fall asleep? Was this activity helpful? Relaxing? Difficult? |
| **Adaptations** | • Some students may not be comfortable with this practice.<br>• For primary students, the script may need to be simplified.<br>• When beginning, instructions for students must be explicit (e.g., clench/tense and relax body parts or breathe into the tension).<br>• The sequence of relaxation can start at their feet and travel up to their head.<br>• This practice could start more generally and then grow to be more specific. |
| **Evidence** | Exercises that attune students to their internal states, and help them cope with stress, train the mind to respond efficiently to distractions or feelings of intense emotions or anxiety (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007; Felver, Celis-de Hoyos, Tezanos, & Singh, 2016). |

# Imaginary walk

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Visualization script, music (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To teach students a way to calm feelings of tension or anxiety before tests or transitions |
| **Instructions** | Have students sit comfortably and take a slow breath in through their nose and imagine what you read. Begin to read:<br>• Breathe out and soften your gaze. Imagine that you are standing in a safe, peaceful forest. Birds are singing in the trees and bushes all around you. You can hear the soothing, gentle songs behind you…to your left…to your right…in front of you…and in the trees above. You breathe in deeply and your nose tells you that it has rained recently. Everything smells alive and full. Up ahead you notice flowers growing beneath the trees. You walk over and lean in to look more closely at one flower. Notice the rich colour of the petals. Is it different from the colour at the flower's center?<br>• Looking around, you notice that you have walked into a clearing filled with tall grass and a rainbow of flowers. You hear a creek in the distance, and crickets in the meadow. Dragonflies dance across the tall grass. Looking down at your hands, you notice the warm glow of sunlight on them. |

# Imaginary walk

| | |
|---|---|
| **Instructions** (continued) | • Close your eyes and bring your hands full of sunlight to your heart. Breathe in calm. Breathe out calm. When you are ready, focus your eyes. |
| **Adaptations** | • Some students may not be comfortable with the visualization experience, so you may wish to have peaceful images out on their desks or projected for them to reflect on instead.<br>• Use different scripts throughout the year to keep the practice engaging.<br>• For some, it may be helpful to draw the visualization script.<br>• See the website version of this practice for further suggestions. |
| **Evidence** | Exercises that attune students to their internal states, and help them cope with stress, train the mind to respond efficiently to distractions or feelings of intense emotions or anxiety (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007; Felver, Celis-de Hoyos, Tezanos, & Singh, 2016). |

# Ask three, then me

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students understand the importance of asking questions and asking for help |
| **Instructions** | **Discuss:**<br>• The importance of asking questions and asking for help.<br>• All questions are good and that other students might be wondering the same thing.<br>**Practice:**<br>• Before any activity, clarify that if students have any questions, they need to ask three students nearby, before coming to you.<br>• If a student asks you a question, before you respond, ask: "Did you ask three before me?"<br>• If the student has asked three and doesn't have a satisfactory answer, then answer the question and praise the student for asking three before asking you.<br>**Feedback:**<br>• At the end of the activity, use feedback to reinforce how students demonstrated effective use of the practice.<br>• Remind students to make use of this practice in an ongoing way. This will help to develop this skill. |

# Ask three, then me

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Cooperative learning engages students in beneficial social interaction by providing a structured opportunity to share and discuss ideas, organize their thoughts, and work with other students (Success for All Foundation, 2010). These opportunities for structured collaboration result in increases in grades, higher retention of information, improvements in peer relationships, intrinsic motivation, time on task, and overall attitudes in the classroom (Slavin, 1995). |

# Stress buster bulletin board

TIME **2–5 minutes per day**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

Index cards, markers, bulletin board

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To encourage support seeking, which is an important skill for personal resiliency |
| **Instructions** | • Explain that everyone experiences stress and that some stress is necessary and normal, but when we become overwhelmed, we need to find ways to manage this. Let students know they have resources to manage stress and that they will be creating a bulletin board of ways that can inspire others as well.<br>• Students can do research on the subject, articles can be provided, or they can draw on personal experience.<br>• They can create an index card with lettering and images explaining their positive stress management idea (e.g., listen to music, draw, go for a run, pet an animal, talk to a trusted friend or adult, etc.). Post these ideas on an accessible bulletin board. |
| **Adaptations** | • Instead of cards on a bulletin board, post ideas on Post-it Notes for people to take as needed (this could also happen in a change room or washroom). |

# Stress buster bulletin board

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students may feel stressed and overwhelmed without realizing it or may be aware of these feelings, but unsure of what to do to manage these feelings. Normalizing stress through psychoeducation can reduce the impact of stress on well-being and development (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2008; Van Daele, Hermans, Van Audenhove, & Van den Bergh, 2012). Sharing strategies in the classroom helps model that we all need to develop the coping skills that will allow us to be resilient in the face of stress. |

# Identification and management of emotions

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## UNDERSTANDING


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# What's my temperature?

TIME **30 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Cardboard, paper, glue, crayons

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To teach students to take their emotional temperature, so they learn to recognize and regulate their emotions |
| **Instructions** | • Discuss:<br>  • A range of emotions that you want students to be able to identify.<br>  • How might a thermometer be used to measure an emotional feeling?<br>• First, students make an emotion thermometer.<br>• Then, co-create an emotional vocabulary word bank for each emotion (happiness, sadness, love, disgust, anger, fear, and surprise).<br>• Demonstrate how to use the thermometer (e.g., identify their emotion and determine where they are on their thermometer).<br>• Students can use their emotion thermometer to gauge their emotion levels or to help them communicate their emotions to their educator.<br>  • Recognizing and acknowledging when emotions are intensifying are important steps toward emotion regulation. |

# What's my temperature?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Students can also learn to express their feelings using emojis.<br>• Increase emotional vocabulary by introducing or reviewing a variety of ways to describe different levels of a particular emotion (e.g., annoyed, frustrated, irate, livid, furious, and outraged, etc. are different levels of anger).<br>• See the website version of this practice for further suggestions. |
| **Evidence** | Using group activities to recognize and manage emotions engages students in beneficial social interaction, normalizes experiences of emotions, and provides students with a structured opportunity to share, and work with other students to improve their self-regulation abilities (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007; Slavin, 1995; Success for all Foundation, 2010). |

# Re-focusing

TIME **1–2 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Drum (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students learn techniques to notice their energy and emotion levels, and to regulate and refocus |
| **Instructions** | • Patterned clapping<br>  • Lead a clap sequence and students repeat it.<br>• Orchestra leader<br>  • Mimic a conductor and students pretend they are playing an instrument. Students follow the tempo created.<br>• Count to 10<br>  • Raise hands and count slowly to 10 and then back to one, while students follow.<br>• Drumbeats<br>  • Beat a drum or tap desk slowly. Students stand and walk around the room following the tempo.<br>• Reflect as a class on the reason for re-focusing, make the link to students' emotional state. |

# Re-focusing

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Consider using materials that will support the cultural identity of your students. Take a moment to discuss the significance of the instrument (e.g., Indigenous drum and association with heartbeat). |
| **Evidence** | Behavioural self-regulation involves focusing attention, engaging working memory, and controlling sudden responses that can disrupt the emotional climate of the classroom, and inhibit learning (McClelland et al., 2007). Students who participate in these types of group-based refocusing activities demonstrate improvements in behavioural self-regulation, and academic outcomes (Diamond, Barnett, Thomas, & Munro, 2007; Tominey & McClelland, 2011). |

# Daily check-in

TIME **5-10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Check-in visual prompt (emotion thermometer, zones bins, check-in board, etc.)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students manage their energy and stress, so they are ready to learn |
| **Instructions** | • Begin each day with an opportunity for students to self-assess and reflect on their emotions and energy levels and remind them of the variety of daily practices they can use, if needed.<br>• This could be done as a group (circle time) or by using a wall chart in primary grades.<br>• Older students could carry out a personal self-reflection quietly at their desks.<br>NOTE: it is important to be aware of and monitor students who struggle to complete the daily check-in. For students who might be experiencing difficulty, follow up individually to determine if they need more support. |
| **Evidence** | Students enter school with varying levels of self-regulation, which impact their ability to learn, and their success in academics (Blair & Razza, 2007; McClelland et al., 2007). Classroom activities that give students an opportunity to identify and manage emotions improve academic productivity, and overall classroom climate (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007). |

# Growing happy feelings

TIME **20 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J**

MATERIALS

Paper plates, construction paper, crayons, glue, other decorative materials

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To illustrate how we need to nurture positive feelings |
| **Instructions** | This practice can be introduced during springtime with younger children, or while learning about planting seeds and helping them grow.<br>• Educators create one or more large flower shapes with five to ten separate petals, in a range of colours.<br>• Introduce the core idea of nurturing happy feelings in ourselves, and in others, to help them grow.<br>• Brainstorm things that help people grow happy feelings (e.g., when someone is nice to me, my friends, singing, giving presents, playing with my dog).<br>• Each idea is placed on a petal and added to the flower, which can be decorated by students.<br>• The class flower can be posted as a reminder to look for opportunities to nurture happy feelings in ourselves and others. |

# Growing happy feelings

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Prepare individual flowers and decorate them. Everyone hangs their flower on the wall with their name on it as a reminder about how they can also help their classmates grow happy feelings. |
| **Evidence** | Students' emotional states in the classroom are an important part of their learning. When students associate their learning environment with positive feelings, they are more engaged in learning, as happiness broadens our scope of attention (Huntsinger, 2013), and happy, optimistic moods are associated with creative thinking on knowledge-driven tasks (Fredrickson, 2001). |

# Emotion charades

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Paper, pens, container for slips of paper, timer

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students practice expressing emotions with their whole body and recognize body language and facial expressions in others |
| **Instructions** | Introduce the concept of charades.<br>• Students take turns as actors and draw charade ideas out of a bowl (start with basic emotions and increase the level of difficulty as the year progresses).<br>• The student acts out the emotion charade without using words.<br>• After each round, have a short discussion about what clues led students to guess that emotion.<br>NOTE: There are many ways to act out the same emotion because everyone experiences emotions differently. Some people can be reserved, while others are more expressive. |

# Emotion charades

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • To extend the practice, lead a discussion about how the students would handle each emotion:<br>  • What makes you feel better when you are sad?<br>  • What would you say to someone that made you angry? etc.<br>Different Version: "How do you feel when…?"<br>• Instead of emotions, have students write down situations that would elicit an emotion (e.g., a birthday, watching a scary movie), and have them act out the emotions they would experience in those situations. |
| **Evidence** | Children proficiently recognize emotional expressions, and they increasingly use emotional information to understand their environment, and navigate social interactions with their peers, as they get older (Batty & Taylor, 2006). Students who understand emotions in themselves and others demonstrate higher quality peer interactions, and more prosocial behaviours (Caputi, Lecce, Pagnin, & Banerjee, 2012). When students are given opportunities to practice this skill it improves over time (Pons, Harris, & Doudin 2002). |

# Emoji emotions

TIME **20–30 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Emoji images

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students recognize and discuss their feelings |
| **Instructions** | • Review with the students how emojis represent emotions.<br>• Ask the students to imagine they are emoji developers. Their company is looking for a new emotion emoji.<br>• Students create an illustration of the emoji that includes a label describing the emotion.<br>• Students share their emoji and what emotion it is depicting.<br>• Display the emojis in the classroom.<br>• Students then make use of the emojis as part of daily reflections and to let others know about their feelings. |

# Emoji emotions

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Each student is given a popsicle stick with their name on it. Emojis can be put in a "pocket chart". Students take turns putting their stick in front of the face that corresponds to how they feel.<br>• Play "Guess the emotion": have students guess the emotion based only on the image.<br>• Emojis can be used to check in with students about their feeling as an "exit ticket" (post lesson, class or day). |
| **Evidence** | The extent to which students understand emotions in themselves and others is highly related to the quality of their peer interactions, and their propensity to engage in prosocial behaviours (Caputi, Lecce, Pagnin, & Banerjee, 2012). Using group activities to recognize and manage emotions engages students in beneficial social interaction, normalizes experiences of emotions, and provides students with a structured opportunity to share, and work with other students to improve their self-regulation abilities (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007; Slavin, 1995; Success for all Foundation, 2010). |

# Emotion portraits

TIME **10–15 minutes**
(can be extended if desired)

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS
Paper, drawing or painting materials, mirror

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students identify what certain emotions look like based on facial expressions |
| **Instructions** | • If students do not have mirrors, first start by partnering them up.<br>• Have a bowl with basic emotions (happy, sad, scared, angry, jealous etc.) filled out on pieces of paper, or a list that they can choose from. Ask each student or pair to pick an emotion.<br>• In pairs, a student demonstrates the facial expression associated with the emotion they chose, while the other student draws their partner's facial expression. Partners can switch roles after a set amount of time.<br>• If working individually, students can use the mirror to imitate the facial expression associated with the emotion they chose and draw their facial expression.<br>• Have the class guess the emotions being expressed in the portraits.<br>• Lead a follow-up discussion:<br>  • Are there some emotions that are easier or more difficult to draw than others? Why?<br>  • Why is it important to be able to recognize someone's emotions based on their facial expressions?<br>  • Are there other ways of identifying a person's emotions? |

# Emotion portraits

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Have students look through old magazines to identify emotions that are demonstrated by facial expressions (e.g., find a picture of someone who is smiling to demonstrate 'happy').<br>• Have students work in groups to create an emotions collage.<br>• The practice can be extended by encouraging students to talk about ways to manage strong emotions (e.g., things they can do, things the educator can do to help). |
| **Evidence** | Children proficiently recognize emotional expressions, and they increasingly use emotional information to understand their environment, and navigate social interactions with their peers, as they get older (Batty & Taylor, 2006). The extent to which students understand emotions in themselves and others, is highly related to the quality of their peer interactions, and their propensity to engage in prosocial behaviours (Caputi, Lecce, Pagnin, & Banerjee, 2012). |

# Realistic thinking and feeling

TIME **25–30 minutes**

10 minutes to introduce;
15-20 minutes for the activity

LEVEL I

MATERIALS

Blank "TEA Triangle" worksheets, scenarios

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To reinforce that thoughts, feelings, and actions are interrelated and that breaking the negative thinking cycle can help students feel happier and healthier |
| **Instructions** | Explain the realistic-thinking concept. (See "Evidence" section.)<br>• Give an example that illustrates how easy it is to misinterpret the emotions and behaviours of others. Emphasize that when we make negative assumptions, it can make us think negative thoughts, and feel negative emotions.<br>• Use a TEA Triangle (Thoughts/Emotions/Actions) worksheet to highlight common negative thoughts, and how these can lead to negative feelings and actions. (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice.)<br>• Ask students to brainstorm alternative thoughts that are more realistic/helpful and discuss how these impacts their emotions and actions.<br>• Give students a chance to work in pairs or small groups to complete the worksheet.<br>• Students can generate and record problem situations on cards. |

# Realistic thinking and feeling

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • This practice can be done regularly when students can write down/discuss their ideas on a topic.<br>• Scenario ideas: your friend played with someone else today, educator did not call on you when you had your hand raised, did not do well on a test, was not selected for the school play. |
| **Evidence** | Thoughts and emotions are bi-directionally influential, which means that emotions influence students' thoughts about a situation, and their thoughts influence their emotional reaction to a situation (Clore & Palmer, 2009; Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 2014). Understanding this phenomenon is the first step in developing the skills to manage this cycle, by changing the way students think about situations (Webb, Miles, & Sheeran, 2012). |

# Mood diary

TIME **15–30 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Journal, anchor chart of emotion vocabulary

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students recognize their feelings and become aware of their resulting emotions |
| **Instructions** | • Discuss the function of a mood diary (e.g., to learn about yourself and to help notice patterns of thoughts and emotions you are experiencing).<br>• Brainstorm ideas on how students might document their emotions, such as:<br>  • Write a story, comic strip or answer a specific question asked by the educator.<br>  • Draw an image that symbolizes students' mood in the moment.<br>  • Look at magazines and cut out scenes, images, or phrases that express feelings in the moment. This can be done periodically throughout the week.<br>• Ask students to select how they would like to keep a mood diary.<br>NOTE: There may be opportunities where students wish to share their reflections or where you may wish to consult with or seek out supports through your school referral process or through parent/guardian discussions. |

# Mood diary

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • You can also answer specific questions orally with a partner, or in writing, such as:<br>  • How am I feeling both physically (where is the emotion located in my body) and emotionally?<br>  • Has anything happened to make me feel this way?<br>  • When I feel this way, what do I need?<br>  • When have I felt this way in the past?<br>  • When is the first time I remember feeling this way?<br>• Primary students can use a symbol or circle as visual. |
| **Evidence** | All students have characteristic patterns of thoughts that result in both positive and negative emotions and affect moods (Oatley & Johnson-Laird, 2014). Understanding these personal patterns is an important step to regulating emotions, as students who can change the way they think about situations, can efficiently manage their emotions, and stay on task (Lagattuta, 2014; Webb, Miles, & Sheeran, 2012). |

# Positive motivation and perseverance


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# The power of yet

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students adopt a growth mindset when faced with challenges |
| **Instructions** | • Whenever students encounter challenges, remind them of the power of yet! Reframe any negative self-talk that you hear, and replace the student's statements with a more optimistic, growth perspective.<br>  • I can't do that…yet.<br>  • I don't understand…yet.<br>• Watch for students using "yet" language and reinforce them for taking this learning stance. |
| **Adaptations** | • Consider using 'the power of yet' posters or other visuals around the classroom.<br>• Could be used to encourage collaboration and empathy for individual differences.<br>• This practice may be helpful when introducing new skills and concepts.<br>• Teaching the concept of growth mindset in the classroom before introducing this practice may be helpful. |

# The power of yet

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Taking a growth mindset appears to be a helpful tool for facing challenges. It provides a space for learning through difficulties, and for thriving in spite of hurdles (Dweck 2006; Dweck, 2008). Though the evidence base is young in this area, encouraging a growth mindset seems to hold promise for reframing negative life events and inspiring positive action. |

# Inspirational learning

TIME **5–10 minutes** per day

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS Large poster cardboard, art supplies

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide visual reminders of key growth mindset concepts to support student learning and motivation in the classroom |
| **Instructions** | Use statements that help remind students about what a growth mindset looks like:<br>• "The point isn't to get it all right away. The point is to grow your understanding step by step. What can you try next?"<br>• "That feeling of math being hard is the feeling of your brain growing."<br>• "If you catch yourself saying, 'I am not a math person,' just add the word 'yet' to the end of the sentence."<br>Invite students to design and create a poster about the statement of their choice. Display the art in the classroom to support a welcoming, inclusive environment that inspires and promotes a positive mindset. |

# Inspirational learning

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • This could be done on recipe cards and kept on student desks, or as part of a journal, as a personal reminder to be gentle with ourselves as learners.<br>• Provide examples of growth mindset statements, then discuss using this mindset in daily experiences.<br>• Inspirational quotes can be written on the board each morning.<br>• This may be a good initial growth mindset lesson for students. |
| **Evidence** | Taking a growth mindset appears to be a helpful tool for facing challenges. It provides a space for learning through difficulties, and for thriving in spite of hurdles (Dweck 2006; Dweck, 2008; Boaler, 2013). Though the evidence base is young in this area, encouraging a growth mindset seems to hold promise for reframing negative life events and inspiring positive action. |

# Illusions

TIME **15–20 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Images of illusions (printed or displayed on SMART board)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students consider things from another's perspective, to inspire flexible thinking and reframing |
| **Instructions** | • Find an image that has an illusion. (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice for examples.) Ask the class what they see. If students have difficulties seeing the illusion, give them two choices to select from. You may wish to have a discussion of which group is "right", which is "wrong" and why. The important message is that both groups are right…it simply depends on the perception.<br>• Further discussion can introduce our different lenses or biases in a situation and trying to understand one another, even if we have conflicting views. |

# Illusions

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • The images and messages can be tailored according to age and development.<br>• You may wish to tabulate responses and show this on a simple graph.<br>• This is a great activity for occasional teachers. |
| **Evidence** | Negative thoughts are often an automatic response to stressors; reframing can provide a coping strategy to help gain perspective on the situation. The skills developed through reframing support self-awareness, self-monitoring, communication of thoughts/feelings/behaviours and are needed for a healthy emotional state. Reframing is a skill best taught in an interactive way in which students can practice the skills and consider how to use them in the future. Students who participated in an activity to collaboratively identify a positive reframing of negative thoughts (based on a scenario provided), were better able to provide "advice for a chronic negative thinker" at the end of the activity than those who listened to a lesson on reframing negative thoughts (Hughes, Gourley, Madson & Le Blanc, 2011). |

# Four finger affirmation

TIME **5-10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students think positively in the face of stress or challenges by using affirmations to promote confidence, a growth mindset, self-regulation and resiliency |
| **Instructions** | • Provide students with an explanation of affirmations.<br>• Ask students to write or think of a four-word affirmation. Consider brainstorming examples together ("I can do this", "I can do division", "I'll try my best", "I am loved today", "I believe in me", "Today will be awesome", "I know my alphabet", "I can decode words").<br>• Say "Each word you have chosen will match a finger in your hand. As you say your affirmation in your head, match each finger with your thumb; one finger per word."<br>• Invite students to use their four finger affirmation privately to feel more confident in stressful situations. |

# Four finger affirmation

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • With older students, explain how thoughts are linked to emotions and behaviour. You can acknowledge that it is sometimes difficult to battle negative self-talk and that it takes practice to think more positively. |
| **Evidence** | There is extensive evidence to show the relationship between thoughts, feelings, and actions. Practising using positive thoughts can influence our emotions and behaviours in helpful ways and can help with reframing negative events and providing a more optimistic outlook (Sherman, et al., 2013; Brandy, et al., 2016). |

# The book of gratitude

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Scrapbook, template

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students intentionally notice the positive elements in their day and shift the balance towards optimism |
| **Instructions** | • Over the year, have students document things they are grateful for (notes, images, pictures, etc.) and compile them as an individual or class keepsake (book, box, binder, website, etc.).<br>• Post in a collaborative collage on a class board.<br>• Encourage students to also read the comments of others from past classes. |
| **Adaptations** | • Provide students with a template to follow that is developmentally appropriate.<br>• Assign or have students volunteer to monitor and complete the class scrapbook.<br>• An occasional teacher could have students create a page of things they are grateful for in their classroom/with their educator and have students "leave" it for the classroom educator to find when they return. |

# The book of gratitude

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Gratitude is a concept related to the positive psychology movement and reflects the value that has been shown in holding an optimistic worldview. Many evidence-based programs that are designed to enhance optimism and reduce depressive symptoms have activities that help students to "find the silver lining".<br><br>Toepfer, et al. (2012) found that writing letters of gratitude had, over time, a positive impact on individual well-being and supported a decrease in depressive symptoms (not a measure of major depression). Identifying gratitude and sharing it with another was found to benefit not only the individual but also the receiver (Kleinman, et al., 2013). |

# Gratitude journal

TIME **2–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Journal or binder

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students intentionally notice the positive elements in their day and shift the balance towards optimism |
| **Instructions** | To frame the practice, consider reading the suggested supplementary resource (see the website version of this practice) as a class or in small groups, and ask students to pick out key ideas through a "think, pair, share".<br>• During the day, ask students to write down/draw in their journal, two things they are grateful for.<br>• May be combined with a gratitude moment/circle, in which case students can also prepare to share one thing they feel grateful for with the class. |
| **Adaptations** | • Gratitude can be expressed through drawings, quotes, pictures, etc., or by having a "gratitude wall" where students can add Post-its describing what they are grateful for that day.<br>• This tool can also be private for each student. It can be referred to if the student is struggling or if they need a positive motivation during their day. |

# Gratitude journal

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Gratitude is a concept related to the positive psychology movement and reflects the value that has been shown in holding an optimistic worldview.<br><br>Students who were "counting blessings" reported more gratitude, optimism, life satisfaction and decrease in negative emotions and negative self-concept. The impact, however, was greatest on the increased feelings of school satisfaction (Froh, Sefick & Emmons, 2008).<br><br>Toepfer, et al. (2012) found that writing letters of gratitude had, over time, a positive impact on individual well-being and supported a decrease in depressive symptoms.<br><br>NOTE: This is not a measure of major depression, nor is it meant as a treatment for depression. |

# Gratitude moment

TIME **5–20 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students intentionally notice the positive elements in their day and shift the balance towards optimism |
| **Instructions** | • Introduce the practice.<br>  • We are going to take a few minutes, as a class, to share what we are grateful for today.<br>  • I will start. Today I am grateful for…<br>• Give everyone a chance to contribute. Some students may choose to "pass" as this may be a new experience and will take time to feel comfortable with it. |
| **Adaptations** | • Rather than sharing gratitude out loud, you may choose to have students write one to three things they are grateful for in a journal at the end of each day.<br>• This can also be done at the end of the day, either on a sticky note or verbally, and can be added to a classroom kindness wall or gratitude wall. |

# Gratitude moment

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Gratitude is a concept related to the positive psychology movement and reflects the value that has been shown in holding an optimistic worldview. Many evidence-based programs that are designed to enhance optimism and reduce depressive symptoms have activities that help students to “find the silver lining”.<br><br>Identifying gratitude and sharing it with another was found to benefit not only the individual but also the receiver (Kleinman, et al., 2013). Experiencing gratitude makes someone more likely to help others, possibly creating more opportunities for others to experience gratitude (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). |

# Try, try again

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To teach students the concept of perseverance, to keep going and never give up, even when things are hard |
| **Instructions** | Brainstorm with students: "What does it mean to have perseverance or a 'never-give-up' attitude?"<br>Present a quote often attributed to Thomas Edison about his work on the light bulb, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that won't work." And then have students<br>• Think-pair-share how different life might be if Mr. Edison had chosen to quit after his first few attempts to invent the light bulb.<br>• Write their own quote that will help them to persevere.<br>• Share the quotes with the class and post them. |

# Try, try again

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | For older students:<br>• Have students discuss things they do well. Do those things require practice? How much?<br>• Ask them if they dream of being really good at something. What does it take to become an expert? How is perseverance a part of becoming an expert?<br>• Ask students to develop ways to encourage others to keep trying. Discuss ways they can encourage themselves through positive self-talk.<br>• Students can write a positive message to themselves as a reminder for the day.<br>• Create a bulletin board with positive affirmations for student reference. |
| **Consideration** | Discuss how changing your goal is sometimes necessary. Sometimes changing the course should not be seen as giving up but persevering in a creative or more appropriate way. |
| **Evidence** | The ability to try again, to 'stick to it' and to persevere all require self-discipline. A student with strong self-discipline has been shown to have stronger academic achievement than those with just a higher IQ (Duckworth & Seligman, 2005). Further to this, a student's resilience is key (Yeager & Deweck, 2012). |

# Positive Post-its

TIME **3–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Post-its, pens, comment box, recycled paper, bulletin board

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To support the development of kind interactions |
| **Instructions** | • Provide context for the practice. (See "Evidence" section.)<br>• Offer guidelines on what is considered a "positive comment". The educator can model this activity for the first few days before the students try it.<br>• Both educators and students anonymously write something nice about someone in the class. In a designated space or on paper specifically labelled with each individual's name, post the comment. |
| **Adaptations** | • There can also be a focus on class positives instead of individual ones (for example, we walked quietly to the gym).<br>• The educator can write positive messages on Post-its and leave them on students' desks (for example, at the beginning of the year, during tests, in the morning).<br>• Distribute a class list to each student to fill in their positive comments then cut apart the list to deliver to their peers. The comments could also be collated and printed out as a summary page for each student. |

# Positive Post-its

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** (continued) | • Coaching might be particularly beneficial for students who find it challenging to say something positive about others. |
| **Evidence** | Student perceptions of kindness at school are key in developing their understanding of the climate in their school. School climate considers the environment and its impact on psychological well-being of school members (students and staff). Activities that support the development of kind interactions for staff and students can support the goals of a safe and positive school climate to foster learning and prosocial behaviours.<br>NOTE: Students usually indicate a decrease in perceived kindness over the grade four to eight years and therefore, activities such as this may be especially key in these years (Binfet et al., 2016). |

# Inspirational snowball fight

TIME **5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Recycling paper, technology, music, timer

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide a fun way for students to send each other positive affirmations and to encourage an optimistic outlook amongst others |
| **Instructions** | • Ask students to write a positive affirmation on the recycling paper (model what an appropriate message looks like).<br>• Next, crumple the paper and toss it. Keep picking up and tossing the "snowflakes" until the music stops. Remind students to keep the "snowflakes" moving and not to aim them at someone.<br>• Then pick one up and read it to yourself. Repeat the message to yourself a few times if desired. Then embrace that concept for the day!<br>• Wrap up by having students sit with their affirmation paper and take a few deep breaths to reflect on the ideas. |

# Inspirational snowball fight

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Could make the snowball fight theme focused (e.g., today we are going to share ideas for ways to reduce feelings of stress, or today we are going to share ideas for welcoming new students).<br>• Another alternative is to have a few students read their affirmation aloud. |
| **Evidence** | Noticing joy and positivity, and sharing kindness, can be helpful in maintaining an optimistic worldview. Many evidence-based programs that are designed to enhance optimism and reduce depressive symptoms have activities that help students to "find the silver lining".<br>Optimism serves to help any individual as: 1) a protective factor for both mental and physical health, 2) a support for resiliency, 3) it correlates with positive coping skills, 4) it predicts both positive outcomes after adverse events and peer acceptance in early adolescents and 5) it benefits overall health and well-being (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). |

# Healthy relationship skills


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# Pay it forward

TIME **5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Post-it Notes or cards

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students build empathy and compassion by noticing good qualities in others and reinforcing that kindness so that their peers feel valued |
| **Instructions** | Review and model what a positive affirmation looks like.<br>• Include examples of affirmations, such as: "You are so patient. You took the time to show your friend how to solve the math problem when he wasn't getting it."<br>• Add notes of affirmation on lockers, desks, cubbies when you notice or are thinking of someone.<br>• Use Post-it Notes or cards. If students receive a positive message, it should prompt them to give one too, to pay it forward. |

# Pay it forward

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Students can make 'buckets' and notes are dropped into the buckets.<br>• Create a "pay it forward" bulletin board where students can post thank you notes when someone does a kind deed for them, or when they witness another student performing a random act of kindness.<br>• For older students: Ask students to reflect on a vision of the world if everyone worked to "pay it forward" whenever they could. This could be done as a journal writing activity.<br>• To extend the practice, ask students: "How did it feel to give positive comments? How did it feel to receive comments?" |
| **Evidence** | Encouraging students to notice kind actions and appreciate their peers contributes to an emotionally positive and safe climate in the classroom, which allows students to stay connected to school (Blum & Libbey, 2004), regulate emotions, and effectively focus on academics (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). |

# Kindness wall

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Coloured markers, chart paper, Post-it Notes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students practice acts of kindness |
| **Instructions** | **Discuss:**<br>• The goal of creating a kinder classroom/school by being kinder people.<br>• Why should we spread positivity and kindness at our school?<br>• What do acts of kindness look like, and why are they important?<br>**Instruct:**<br>• On chart paper, brainstorm kind acts students have seen or would like to see in the class/school (e.g., saying something kind to a peer, making a new friend, sitting with someone who is alone).<br>• Tape the chart paper up in a visible place in the class.<br>• Provide all students with Post-it Notes.<br>• Write down the kind acts that students have witnessed others perform.<br>• Review and repeat. |

# Kindness wall

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • This could be an opportunity to support social skill development through modelling.<br>• Brainstorming ideas will allow students to practise thinking about what is of value to others. |
| **Evidence** | Encouraging students to notice kind actions and appreciate their peers contributes to an emotionally positive and safe climate in the classroom, which allows students to stay connected to school (Blum & Libbey, 2004), regulate emotions, and effectively focus on academics (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). |

# Kindness jar

TIME **1–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Jar, beans/marbles/jellybeans

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To encourage kindness and respect in the classroom |
| **Instructions** | • Beans are added to the jar for each kind act that is observed.<br>• Students can nominate others for "Bean Awards" when they notice or experience an act of kindness.<br>• When the number of beans in the jar reaches a certain level, there is an acknowledgement associated with that level.<br>NOTE: Kindness beans CANNOT be removed.<br>After this practice has been in place for a period of time and a class reward has been enjoyed, have students reflect on how it feels to contribute toward a common goal and to recognize/acknowledge the kind behaviour of others. |

# Kindness jar

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Could be done as a "filling buckets" activity, but this is not essential. In this variation, students make 'buckets' and notes are dropped into the buckets. (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice.) |
| **Evidence** | Encouraging students to notice kind actions and appreciate their peers contributes to an emotionally positive and safe climate in the classroom, which allows students to stay connected to school (Blum & Libbey, 2004), regulate emotions, and effectively focus on academics (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). |

# High five to friendship

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P**

MATERIALS

Paper, markers

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students identify ways that they can become a better friend |
| **Instructions** | • Brainstorm some characteristics of good friends as a class (e.g., sharing, kindness, truthfulness, etc.).<br>• Have students take two pieces of paper and trace both their right and left hands.<br>• On one hand, have them write five strengths/characteristics that make a good friend. If students have trouble doing this on their own, they can partner up to come up with more ideas.<br>• On the other hand, have them write five areas where they think they have room to grow to become a better friend.<br>• Ask students to select one item per hand to put into practice that week (set a small goal).<br>• Share/reflect weekly (as a group or in a journal).<br>• Repeat. |

# High five to friendship

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Have others identify what makes you a good friend.<br>• To extend this practice, students can choose one of the areas that they think they could improve and set a small goal that would help them to build on those skills.<br>• Have students create an acrostic poem with their name using each letter to describe themselves as a friend or have them work in pairs and have each partner describe the other as a friend in an acrostic poem. |
| **Evidence** | Students who have quality friendships are less likely to both engage in, and be victims of bullying, even if they have a tendency to act out or be socially withdrawn (Bollmer, Milich, Harris, & Maras, 2005). This is because students can use quality friendships to learn to regulate their emotions and behaviour in a socially appropriate way (Caspi, Henry, McGee, Moffitt, & Silva, 1995; Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). Encouraging students to engage in more quality friendships will encourage prosocial behaviour in the classroom. |

# Networking

TIME **10–20 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Writing materials

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To invite students to extend their network of friends by including students with whom they do not usually interact |
| **Instructions** | **Discuss:**<br>• Everyone needs to feel that they matter and having fun with friends can help us feel that way.<br>• What does it mean to be a good friend?<br>**Ask:**<br>• Students to write who they feel their friends are and hand in to the educator. This lets the educator know which students have good peer networks and those who don't.<br>• Students to reach out and "be a good friend" to someone who wasn't on their list.<br>NOTE: This can be done as a group rather than a one-on-one activity.<br>**Discuss:**<br>• How did this make them feel? What they learned? What will they do differently?<br>NOTE: It is important that students feel included in the process and that they aren't "voluntold" to be friends with others. |

# Networking

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • This can also be a “checking in activity”, i.e., make sure you check in “as a good friend” during recess. This also ties in well with the concept of inclusivity. |
| **Evidence** | Students who have quality friendships are less likely to both engage in, and be victims of bullying, even if they have a tendency to act out or be socially withdrawn (Bollmer, Milich, Harris, & Maras, 2005). This is because students can use quality friendships to learn to regulate their emotions and behaviour in a socially appropriate way (Caspi, Henry, McGee, Moffitt, & Silva, 1995; Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). Encouraging students to engage in more quality friendships will encourage prosocial behaviour in the classroom. |

# That's me!

TIME **10 minutes**

LEVEL **I**

MATERIALS

Pre-made statements

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help improve group cohesion in the classroom |
| **Instructions** | **Instruct:**<br>• Someone starts with an appropriate statement about themselves – what they like to eat, their favourite hobby, TV show, book, etc. (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice for ideas.)<br>• If the statement is true for someone else, they stand up and say: "That's me!"<br>• Repeat until everyone has the opportunity to participate and share a statement.<br>**Discuss:**<br>• Did you learn something new about your classmates?<br>• How did it feel to be standing at the same time as others?<br>• What about standing alone or only with a few students?<br>• Sometimes we like to be a part of a group, but there is always value to being unique.<br>NOTE: In the unlikely event of a disclosure, be aware of your internal process to access services for the student. |

# That's me!

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Explore ways in which we can learn about, understand and celebrate each other's differences, unique likes, interests, families, cultures, religions etc.<br>• Students can make suggestions for the next activity. Teacher must review statements before the next activity to ensure appropriateness. |
| **Evidence** | Students are naturally motivated to understand and engage with those who they perceive to be like them (McLoughlin & Over, 2017). Drawing attention to the similarities between those of different friendship groups, races or cultures mitigates this tendency by explicitly modelling inclusion (Qian et al., 2017). |

# Creating collaborative classroom norms

TIME **1 or 2 periods**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Paper, pencils, sentence strips, chart paper, markers, tape

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To establish norms as a group and to identify what matters to students as a group/classroom |
| **Instructions** | **Think:**<br>• Independently, students make a list of classroom expectations (e.g., trying new things, attentive listening, keeping the room clean, etc.).<br>**Pair:**<br>• In pairs, each student shares their list and identifies ideas they find important.<br>• The pair selects their top four or five expectations and joins another pair.<br>• In small groups, repeat the process.<br>• The small groups select their top four or five expectations and write these clearly on sentence strips.<br>**Share:**<br>• Groups present their sentence strips.<br>• As a class, students select the top five or six most important norms.<br>• The selected norms are written on chart paper, so they are visible for everyone. |

# Creating collaborative classroom norms

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • To be done at the beginning of the school year or the start of a new group project.<br>• Ask students what classroom norms are important to them by using Wordle. |
| **Evidence** | Establishing explicit classroom norms of inclusion, respect for diversity, compassion, and collaboration will help create a classroom with a positive and safe emotional climate, in which students can effectively engage in learning (Brackett, Reyes, Rivers, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2011; Rivers, Brackett, Reyes, Elbertson, & Salovey, 2013). |

# Cup stack challenge

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

Per group: six cups, elastic bands, six pieces of string (about 60 cm long)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To promote team building, to learn about one another's strengths and to enhance communication skills |
| **Instructions** | • Student teams receive a stack of six cups, an elastic, and a piece of string for each person.<br>• The challenge is to unstack the cups collaboratively without using their hands, then re-stack them into a pyramid using the same strategy.<br>Follow up:<br>• How could this be a metaphor for life?<br>• What worked in this team activity?<br>• What would have made it easier or harder (e.g., no talking)? |
| **Adaptations** | Try "Toxic waste"<br>• Materials: six cups, elastic bands, six strings, one cup with pompoms<br>• Students use the same strategy to move an upright cup of pompoms (i.e. toxic waste) and dump out one pompom at a time into each storage facility (the other cups) without spilling any. |

# Cup stack challenge

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | As children learn to work together in the classroom, their communicative abilities become increasingly important. The ability to communicate emotions and express social desires is related to the ease with which students navigate social situations (Beck, Kumschick, Eid, & Klann-Delius, 2012), and giving students the opportunity to practice these skills improves the quality of their interactions, and the emotional climate of the classroom (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). |

# Finding solutions

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Chart paper, markers

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide students with ways to find win/win solutions when disagreements arise |
| **Instructions** | Brainstorm with students about why conflicts arise. Discuss and identify when it is necessary to seek the help of an adult.<br>Create a list of steps to engage in when involved in disagreements:<br>1. **Identify the issue** – what do we disagree about?<br>2. **Listen** actively to each other's side. (See "Listen hear" practice.)<br>3. **Clarify** using "I" messages and a calm tone.<br>4. **Swap sides** – think about the disagreement from both sides.<br>• How would you feel? What would be important to you if you were the other person?<br>5. Try to **stay calm** until you have a win/win solution. |

# Finding solutions

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Ask students to think about a time over the past week (or that day) when there was a difference of opinion or conflict and how they made use of the conflict resolution model. |
| **Evidence** | Allowing students to practice understanding others' perspectives helps them regulate their emotions, so they can engage in healthy social dialogue (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1995). Specifically modelling productive conversations about others' thoughts and emotions, is related to positive emotion during conflict, and reduced post-conflict distress (Randell & Peterson, 2009). |

# Pay it forward

TIME **5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Post-it Notes or cards

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students build empathy and compassion by noticing good qualities in others and reinforcing that kindness so that their peers feel valued |
| **Instructions** | Review and model what a positive affirmation looks like.<br>• Include examples of affirmations, such as: "You are so patient. You took the time to show your friend how to solve the math problem when he wasn't getting it."<br>• Add notes of affirmation on lockers, desks and cubbies when you notice someone being kind.<br>• Use Post-it Notes or cards. If students receive a positive message, it should prompt them to give one too, to pay it forward. |

# Pay it forward

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Students can make 'buckets' and notes are dropped into the buckets.<br>• Create a "pay it forward" bulletin board where students can post thank you notes when someone does a kind deed for them, or when they witness another student performing a random act of kindness.<br>• For older students: Ask students to reflect on a vision of the world if everyone worked to "pay it forward" whenever they could. This could be done as a journal writing activity.<br>• To extend the practice, ask students: "How did it feel to give positive comments? How did it feel to receive comments?" |
| **Evidence** | Encouraging students to notice kind actions and appreciate their peers contributes to an emotionally positive and safe climate in the classroom, which allows students to stay connected to school (Blum & Libbey, 2004), regulate emotions, and effectively focus on academics (Eisenberg, Fabes, Guthrie, & Reiser, 2000). |

# Walking in your shoes

TIME **30 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Journal (optional), How would you feel? resource

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students become more understanding and compassionate towards others |
| **Instructions** | **Discuss:**<br>• What does it mean to "put yourself in someone else's shoes"?<br>• What actions can you take to help you understand someone's feeling/situation?<br>**Read:**<br>"How would you feel?" (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice.)<br>**Reflect:**<br>• How do Finn, Mike, Suri and Meegan feel following the actions/comments of their friends?<br>• What could Jacob, Durrell, Tina and Valerie have done to put themselves in their friend's shoes?<br>• When would they have needed to put themselves in their shoes?<br>• If they had done so, would the situation have ended differently? If so, how?<br>Ask students to set a small goal to practice understanding someone else's situation. These experiences can be captured as a class or individually in a journal. |

# Walking in your shoes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Write in any format (e.g., comic strip, skit, short story, poem, song, script).<br>• Use fractured fairy tales.<br>• Other possible stories: Flipped, Eleanor & Park, All the Bright Places |
| **Evidence** | Understanding our differences, and the unique perspectives others bring to situations is highly related to empathy and quality peer relations (Caputi, Lecce, Pagnin, & Banerjee, 2012). Students who are taught to attend to, and value these differences are more proficient in regulating their own emotions, so they can respond to peers with compassion and empathy (Barnett et al., 2008; Eisenberg & Fabes, 1995). |

# Listen hear

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To teach students to actively listen to each other, which helps them feel valued and understood |
| **Instructions** | Discuss active listening skills:<br>• Look at the speaker.<br>• Listen without interrupting.<br>• Take turns to speak.<br>• Use actions to show understanding.<br>In pairs:<br>• Sit facing each other. Choose a topic to discuss, with which you each have familiarity.<br>• Partner one whispers information about the topic, while partner two models one aspect of active listening.<br>• Partners switch roles and return to the circle (or desks) when finished. |

# Listen hear

| | |
|---|---|
| **Instructions** (continued) | Discuss with students:<br>• Did they look at their partner when speaking?<br>• Did they wait until their partner was finished speaking before taking their turn?<br>• Could they hear what their partner was saying?<br>• Did they use actions to show understanding? |
| **Adaptations** | • This practice can be used with any curriculum topic.<br>• Try the practice in groups of three: speaker, listener, and observer to summarize the listening skills. |
| **Evidence** | Reactivity to others' emotions is highly related to empathy and prosocial behaviour (Flournoy et al., 2016). Engaging in active listening can help students practice empathically responding to others' thoughts and emotions, which fosters a safe community of empathic concern, and compassion in the classroom (Pace et al., 2013; van Schaik & Hunnius, 2016). |

# Purposeful listening

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To teach students to actively listen to each other, which helps them feel valued and understood |
| **Instructions** | • Review and role model the components of active listening with students.<br>• Identify a topic area for discussion.<br>• In groups of six, assign the following roles to students one to six:<br>  • S1: is the speaker<br>  • S2: mirrors emotions<br>  • S3: paraphrases<br>  • S4: asks clarifying questions<br>  • S5: summarizes the content and feelings<br>  • S6: responds non-verbally<br>• Students assume these roles as they discuss the assigned topic, and rotate roles so that each has an opportunity to experience all roles.<br>NOTE: **Attending/focussing** is an active listening strategy that is used in conjunction with all the other strategies, it ensures the listener is paying attention to the speaker. |

# Purposeful listening

<table>
<tr>
<td>Adaptations</td>
<td>Students can use an active listening strategy chart:
<table>
<tr><th>ACTIVE LISTENING STRATEGIES</th><th>LOOKS LIKE</th></tr>
<tr><td>Mirroring emotions</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Paraphrasing</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Asking clarifying questions</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Summarizing</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Using non-verbal responses/gestures</td><td></td></tr>
<tr><td>Attending/focussing</td><td></td></tr>
</table>
</td>
<td>An ‘exit pass’ is used at the end of the activity
<table>
<tr><th>EXIT PASS:</th></tr>
<tr><td>One active listening strategy that I use well:<br><br>One active listening strategy that I will work on:<br><br>I can practice this strategy in these situations:</td></tr>
</table>
</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence</td>
<td colspan="2">Reactivity to others’ emotions is highly related to empathy and prosocial behaviour (Flournoy et al., 2016). Engaging in active listening can help students practice empathically responding to others’ thoughts and emotions, which fosters a safe community of empathic concern, and compassion in the classroom (Pace et al., 2013; van Schaik & Hunnius, 2016).</td>
</tr>
</table>

# Self-awareness and sense of identity

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# Self-advocacy cards

TIME **Several days**
May be done in segments over several days

LEVEL **I**

MATERIALS
Index cards (1 or 2)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students be aware of their own needs and preferences, to self-advocate, and to build their help-seeking behaviours |
| **Instructions** | Students will reflect on the following questions and will share with their educator.<br>• How do I know when things are not going well for me? (Things that I do/ways that I feel.)<br>• How could someone else tell when things are not going well for me?<br>• What can I do to help myself cope in school?<br>  • Listening to music<br>  • Take a walk<br>  • Self-affirmations/Mantras<br>  • Deep breathing<br>  • Tangles/Silly putty<br>  • Journaling/Doodling/ Mandalas<br>  • Self-talk/mindfulness<br>  • Reading<br>  • Other: _____<br>• If the coping strategies listed above are not helping, my next step is: _____<br>• What I wish my educator knew about me.<br>NOTE: there might be self-disclosures, please know your responsibility to access support.<br>Revisit at least every three months. |

# Self-advocacy cards

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Help-seeking in the classroom "allows students to constructively re-engage in academic activities when they run into difficulties." (Marchand & Skinner, 2007). Highly motivated students are more likely to seek help, therefore, allowing them the opportunities for increasingly challenging learning. Those students who do not seek help are likely to then conceal their difficulties. This impacts not only their classroom learning but also their school connection/ engagement. Motivation for help-seeking in the classroom can be attributed to student's internal motivation, anxiety (both error or public knowledge of difficulty) or educator support (Marchand & Skinner, 2007). |

# Inspirational outdoor graffiti

TIME **20 minutes** LEVEL **P/J/I** MATERIALS

Sidewalk chalk

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To welcome others to the school and to allow students to share ideas |
| **Instructions** | • Select a theme for the sidewalk art (e.g., an eco-team may want to promote "recycling", different languages saying "welcome" for an open house, etc.).<br>• Students generate ideas for the graffiti (e.g., using quotes, keywords, translations).<br>• Students use sidewalk chalk to create the messages.<br>• Take photos/share. |
| **Adaptations** | • The graffiti may be done on posters.<br>• Images can be hashtagged and tweeted. |
| **Evidence** | This practice links together the protective factor of school belonging/mattering and the benefits of expression through art. Activities, as such, also develop student decision-making skills, and allow a student to create as an individual or alongside a peer – creating potential reasons for increased social relationships (Roorda, et al., 2011; Ronkko & Lepisto, 2016; LaPorte, 2016). |

# What's new?

TIME **Ongoing**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Cue cards

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To celebrate and acknowledge things going on in each of our lives |
| **Instructions** | • Introduce the bulletin board (alternative: binder, media wall, blog).<br>• Brainstorm with students what are appropriate things to share, contribute and celebrate (e.g., Sarah has a hockey tournament on the weekend, Mohitt passed a piano exam, Ari's family got a dog, Caleb finally finished the "Harry Potter" series, Trish shares her family holiday tradition, etc.).<br>• Highlight any new item on the board to the class or follow up individually with a student about an event that happened (e.g., Anthony, did you win your basketball tournament?). |
| **Adaptations** | • Instead of creating a bulletin board, a class journal of "exciting news" could be used. Students can write in the journal when they have news to share. The students have access to the journal to write in or to read. |

# What's new?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Early in their education children form their own perceptions of themselves as individuals, learners, and classmates. They develop a perspective of values and success for themselves and others. It is beneficial to allow students an opportunity to socially share experiences of value to them and their successes, supporting a chance to receive positive feedback on them, thus supporting positive self-perception (Määttä, et al., 2016). This opportunity is also aimed at allowing students to find new common ground with other peers, therefore encouraging the development of peer relationships based on shared interest (Wentzel, 2003). |

# The "I" in image

TIME **5-10 minutes**
plus prep

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS
Stock photos (nature, people, animals, random)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To provide students with an opportunity to express and explain a personal choice and perspective, to hear and learn about others' views and to bolster critical thinking skills in the process |
| **Instructions** | • Place four pictures/images/quotes in 'four corners' to facilitate small group discussion.<br>• Ask students to stand near the picture they see themselves in the most.<br>• Ask these groups to briefly share why they selected the photo.<br>• Encourage students to use active listening skills to learn about what others will share. |
| **Adaptations** | • Emotions, famous works of art, book covers, pictures of facial expressions or words could also be used.<br>• Use pictures of historical art, statues, monuments, etc., from around the world. |
| **Evidence** | A student's confidence in their knowledge of themselves sets the stage for their interest in others, ability to interact/build relationship with others and the world around them. The knowledge of oneself is foundational to many other skills related to mentally healthy selves. Being known by others, being engaged in social interactions and having an opportunity to develop peer relationships all contribute to a student's self confidence (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Verschueren, Doumen & Buyse, 2012; DeWit, Karioja & Rye, 2010). |

# Show and share

TIME **Time may vary**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

An item from home

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students identify important aspects of themselves, to practice sharing pieces of their identity with classmates and to understand the value of uniqueness and diversity |
| **Instructions** | • A few students per day can share something about themselves using a circle approach.<br>• Students can bring in an item that tells something about themselves to share with the class, they may tell a story or say something they feel happy about, or there can be a theme (favourite songs, what they are grateful for, etc.).<br>• Ensure all students get a chance to show and share. They can also 'pass' if they choose to.<br>• Model first to set the right tone and length for sharing.<br>• End each student's share with a brief positive acknowledgement. |
| **Adaptations** | • This practice can be used as a way to get to know new students or when there is an educator change during the year, to get to know students or for the students to get to know the educator. |

# Show and share

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students being known, understood and cared for by educators and peers supports their development of key relationship building skills needed for lifelong social success. These skills begin developing very early in life but are constantly changing and will need to be further developed throughout the school years (Verschueren, Doumen & Buyse, 2012; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). |

# Guess who?

TIME **25–30 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Cardstock (about 4x5), technology (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To introduce the class to one another or to the rest of the school community |
| **Instructions** | • Fold the cardstock in half to create a card that opens from the bottom.<br>• On the outside of the card, students list information about themselves (e.g., favourite foods, family information, after school activities, etc.).<br>• On the inside of the card, students write their name and attach a photo/self-portrait.<br>• On the bulletin board, add the cards and instructions to read the outside of the cards, guess, and then peek inside.<br>• Ask students what they learned/what surprised them about their peers.<br>• Repeat. |
| **Adaptations** | • Modify the requirements for primary students.<br>• Library pockets or hanging pocket organizers could be used to hold the cards. |

# Guess who?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students and staff benefit from being known. This supports a sense of belonging to school (Bergin & Bergin, 2009), confidence that you matter (Marshall, 2001), and cultivates educator-student and classmate relationships (Verschueren & Koomen, 2012; Verschueren, Doumen, Buyse, 2012). |

# Adjectives about me

TIME **5-15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Paper, writing tools, glue, old magazines

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students learn about themselves and that they matter by describing their positive traits with help from their peers |
| **Instructions** | • Brainstorm examples of positive adjectives with the class.<br>• Ask students which positive adjectives best describe them (e.g., funny, kind, athletic).<br>• Hand out pieces of paper and ask students to write "About me…" at the top of their page.<br>• Have students creatively display their adjectives on their piece of paper.<br>• Invite students to display their "About me…" posters in the classroom or post them on a bulletin board. |
| **Adaptations** | • Each student draws a name and, on a Post-it Note, writes one positive attribute about that student. When the educator says go, they place the note on the person's desk.<br>• Students could put their name in the middle of the page and write the adjectives around their name.<br>• Primary students, can share verbally or draw a picture of their attribute. |

# Adjectives about me

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students benefit from knowing that they matter to an adult as well as their peers. Encouraging students to develop relationships with both staff and students will set them on the path of increased connectedness at school and create opportunities for increased learning, skill development and the overall benefits from healthy relationships (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Roorda, et. al., 2011; McNeely & Falci, 2004). |

# VIP

TIME **2-10 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students to feel special and that they matter and belong within the classroom |
| **Instructions** | Identify an educator's helper for the day (or week). All students must have a turn.<br>Consider what makes this role special:<br>• Offering students special seating.<br>• Students can lead a calendar/lesson.<br>• Creating a VIP poster board with pictures that tell the class something about them (they present it and then it is posted in the class for one week). |
| **Adaptations** | • This could be done as an "All about me" book.<br>• For older students, the VIP poster could be done as a photovoice project. |

# VIP

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students who experience a strong bond to school are those who feel secure and valued; they feel they are known and liked. This is not directly dependent on academic success but on the relationships students have at school. Students with a strong school bond are likely to have increased academic interest/engagement, which impacts the potential for their success in school. Adolescent students specifically noted the value of educator-student relationship in their class engagement and enjoyment (Bergin & Bergin, 2009). |

# Daily greetings

TIME **1–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To acknowledge and welcome students and show them that they are valued, to celebrate diversity and uniqueness, and to model the importance of taking time for relationship building at school |
| **Instructions** | Greet students each day as they come into the school/class and during transitions (e.g., coming in from recess).<br>**Greetings may include:**<br>• Apply the 5 x 10 rule:<br>  • If someone is within 10 feet, make eye contact and smile.<br>  • If they are within five feet, say hi!<br>• Give students a high five.<br>• Greet students using their first language.<br>• Use a visual prompt/poster with different types of greetings and let students choose (e.g., fist bump, handshake, smile, dance, high five). Post it at entrance to classroom. |

# Daily greetings

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Take time to brainstorm creative ways to greet one another.<br>• Ask students how they would like to be greeted, let them choose the language and/or action. |
| **Evidence** | Students benefit from knowing that they matter to an adult as well as their peers. Encouraging students to develop relationships with both staff and students will set them on the path of increased connectedness at school and create opportunities for increased learning, skill development and the overall benefits from healthy relationships (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Roorda, et. al., 2011; McNeely & Falci, 2004). |

# 2 x 10

TIME **2 minutes**
repeated multiple times

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS
N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help build rapport and a relationship between educator and student, and to let the student see they are genuinely cared about as a person |
| **Instructions** | The 2x10 strategy requires you to spend two minutes per day for 10 days talking with a student about anything they would like to talk about.<br>NOTE: The caring adult who will take ownership of the 2x10 strategy with a student would ideally be an individual who is different from the student's homeroom educator. This will help to broaden the number of adults that the student is connected to within the school. |
| **Adaptations** | • At the beginning of the school year, it might be useful for school staff to proactively flag students who may be at risk for attendance issues. The purpose is to proactively engage with these students. Adopting the 2x10 strategy with these youth helps prevent truancy. |

# 2 x 10

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Educator-student relationships have a significant impact on a student's academic engagement and achievement. Students who experienced negative educator-student relationships were more significantly impacted by the negative outcomes than students who had positive relationships. At-risk students (SES, special needs, new students, etc.) were significantly more at risk of experiencing a negative student-educator relationship, which indicates the immense value and benefit for both educator and student of developing relationships together (Roorda, et. al., 2011). |

# Critical and creative thinking (executive functioning)


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- Keeping track of things tip card 191

# Check it off

TIME **5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Mural paper, markers

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students plan for effective and balanced use of their time |
| **Instructions** | **Brainstorm:**<br>• What are the activities, responsibilities and commitments that are typical for the students in your class (e.g., homework, projects, school activities, sports, commitments with friends, etc.)?<br>**Discuss:**<br>• How do they manage all of their commitments?<br>• How are they prioritizing their different responsibilities?<br>• Do they use checklists to help organize their time/commitments/responsibilities?<br>  • If so, how does it feel to check items off the list?<br>• Finally, as being organized is a learned skill, determine how this skill will be developed in class:<br>  • Will there be a class responsibility checklist?<br>  • Will students have the opportunity to create a personal checklist?<br>  • Will there be a combination of both options? |

# Check it off

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students of all ages should constantly be furthering their organization and self-management skills as the demands for these changes based on developmental level and environment. This becomes particularly evident as students reach higher grades when they are required to manage their own time. Educators at every grade level can do their students a great service by adding these skills into their planning. Students with strong skills will be able to do things like get homework in on time, take the opportunity for extra help when needed, and be able to perform to their best at school and elsewhere (Boller, 2008). These skills all further support ongoing mental health!<br><br>"Efficient organization and time management is the first step to becoming an independent learner; however, students must also develop and use effective self-management skills, including self-monitoring, self-evaluating, and self-reinforcing, as needed." Paulsen & Sayeski (2013) |

# Stop and think

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students learn to be aware of their actions by monitoring their reactions |
| **Instructions** | **Lead a game of "Simon says".**<br>• Instructions begin with "Simon says" or not.<br>• When students hear "Simon says" they do the action, otherwise, they don't.<br>• If students copy an action that was not preceded by "Simon says" they sit down.<br>• Continue for five to ten minutes.<br>**Discuss:**<br>• If students needed to sit out, what might have happened? Were they paying attention? Were they having too much fun?<br>• Brainstorm other times when students might get distracted instead of paying attention.<br>• As a class, think of ways/strategies to help them "stop and think" and stay focused.<br>Repeat game of "Simon says" to let students improve their skill to "stop and think". |

# Stop and think

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Have students monitor when they DID stop and reflect i.e., “catch them doing good”.<br>• Students could take turns being “Simon”.<br>• Modify the speed at which actions are presented, to change the difficulty of the game. |
| **Evidence** | Self-control and managing impulsivity are skills children develop gradually throughout their childhood and even small improvements in these skills have the potential for large impacts long term for both the student and society as a whole. Diamond & Lee (2011) identify that children, ages 3 to 11, with strong self-control, less impulsivity, and better attention tend to have better health, earn more, and commit less crime than those who lack these skills. |

# Paying attention

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

Chart paper, markers (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students become better problem solvers and become better judges of what and how they learn |
| **Instructions** | **Practice:**<br>• Inform students that, following the lesson, they'll need to identify what the three key ideas of the lesson were.<br>• Provide tips for active listening:<br>  • Look at the speaker.<br>  • Ask clarifying questions.<br>  • Make connections to prior knowledge (e.g., "This reminds me of…" or "How does this change my thinking about?").<br>• Following the lesson, ask students to write down three key ideas.<br>**Discuss:**<br>• Ask students to share the three key ideas of the lesson.<br>• Ask students to self-check how closely theirs matched the intended learning goals. |

# Paying attention

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Using stems such as: I'm thinking; I'm wondering; I'm noticing… can help students pay attention. You may also want to add the stem: I'm feeling… |
| **Evidence** | Goal setting and self-monitoring, in an academic learning environment, are critical skills to effective organization for a student. Organization skills are intricately linked to academic achievement and therefore, any organization skills taught to a student further their potential for success! (Anderson, Munk, Young, Conley & Caldarella, 2008; Boller, 2008).<br><br>NOTE: Engaging in active listening can help students practice responding to the thoughts and emotions of others with empathy. This can support building a community of empathy and concern for others in the classroom (Pace et al., 2013; van Schaik & Hunnius, 2016). |

# Small goals

TIME **2–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Post-it Notes

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students develop goal-setting skills and understand that goals have lots of smaller steps |
| **Instructions** | Provide each student with a Post-it Note.<br>**Instruct students to:**<br>• Identify a goal for the lesson/period (e.g., I will complete the outline for my paragraph).<br>• Write the goal on the Post-it Note.<br>**Support:**<br>• While students are working, circulate and identify what the student intends to complete and discuss the goal as appropriate.<br>**Reflect:**<br>• Ask students to review their goal.<br>• Self-assess if the goal was realistic or not.<br>• Determine what they might do differently or what is left to do next time. |

# Small goals

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Use a graphic organizer or journal to regularly set goals.<br>• Place a mini white-board, sticky notes or a notepad on each desk and make this a regular activity. |
| **Evidence** | Goal setting and self-monitoring, in an academic learning environment, are critical skills to effective organization for a student. Organization skills are intricately linked to academic achievement and therefore, any organization skills taught to a student further their potential for success (Anderson, Munk, Young, Conley & Caldarella, 2008; Boller, 2008). |

# Paying attention

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

Chart Paper, markers (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students become better problem solvers and become better judges of what and how they learn |
| **Instructions** | **Practice:**<br>• Inform students that, following the lesson, they'll need to identify what the three key ideas of the lesson were.<br>• Provide tips for active listening:<br>  • Look at the speaker.<br>  • Ask clarifying questions.<br>  • Make connections to prior knowledge (e.g., "This reminds me of…" or "How does this change my thinking about?").<br>• Following the lesson, ask students to write down three key ideas.<br>**Discuss:**<br>• Ask students to share the three key ideas of the lesson.<br>• Ask students to self-check how closely theirs matched the intended learning goals. |

# Paying attention

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Using stems such as: I'm thinking; I'm wondering; I'm noticing… can help students think about their thinking. You may also want to add the stem: I'm feeling… |
| **Evidence** | Goal setting and self-monitoring, in an academic learning environment, are critical skills to effective organization for a student. Organization skills are intricately linked to academic achievement and therefore, any organization skills taught to a student further their potential for success! (Anderson, Munk, Young, Conley & Caldarella, 2008; Boller, 2008).<br><br>NOTE: Engaging in active listening can help students practice responding to the thoughts and emotions of others with empathy. This can support building a community of empathy and concern for others in the classroom (Pace et al., 2013; van Schaik & Hunnius, 2016). |

# What am I thinking?

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

Journal/other formats (mind maps, blogs, wikis, lists, emojis etc.)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students become better problem solvers and become better judges of what and how they learn |
| **Instructions** | Help students monitor their own thinking with personal learning journals, where students reflect on HOW, rather than WHAT they learned.<br>Reflection questions might include:<br>• What was easiest for me to learn this week? Why?<br>• What was most challenging for me to learn? Why?<br>• What study strategies worked well as I prepared for my exam?<br>• What strategies for exam preparation didn't work well? What will I do differently next time?<br>• What study habits worked best for me? How?<br>• What study habit will I try or improve upon next week? |

# What am I thinking?

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Metacognition (thinking about/reflecting on one's thinking) is an essential skill in the development of a student's learning and key in facilitating such processes as problem solving, using learning strategies, and the movement to taking responsibility for learning (Garcia, Rodriguez, Gonzalez-Castro, Alvarez-Garcia & GonzalezPienda, 2016). When considering skills such as studying, which are key to the culmination of learning, those students with strong metacognition are able to identify their need for studying, to make a study plan and to evaluate their study strategies. They will be able to adjust their studying based on the demands and make wise decisions about study time (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). |

# A thought on that

TIME **10–15 minutes**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students become better problem solvers and become better judges of what and how they learn |
| **Instructions** | When introducing a new concept, at the end of the lesson/period, discuss with class:<br>• What was most confusing about the material we explored today?<br>• How did that make you feel?<br>• What did you do to try and better understand the material? (e.g., did you ask someone for help?)<br>• Help students to understand it's the process that is important, i.e., the "power of yet", they don't have it yet.<br>When students are asked to think this way, it helps metacognitive processing. This also creates a classroom culture that acknowledges confusion as an integral part of learning.<br>NOTE: This practice can be done in a group setting once a safe culture has been established. |

# A thought on that

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Use a thumbs-up, thumbs sideways or thumbs-down process with the questions above. Ask the students to think about why they are responding that way.<br>• Consider an "exit card" or personal learning journal approach. |
| **Evidence** | Metacognition (thinking about/reflecting on one's thinking) is an essential skill in the development of a student's learning and key in facilitating such processes as problem solving, using learning strategies, and the movement to taking responsibility for learning (Garcia, Rodriguez, Gonzalez-Castro, Alvarez-Garcia & GonzalezPienda, 2016). When considering skills such as studying, which are key to the culmination of learning, those students with strong metacognition are able to identify their need for studying, to make a study plan and to evaluate their study strategies. They will be able to adjust their studying based on the demands and make wise decisions about study time (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). |

# Organizing pause

TIME **20 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Relaxation app (optional), binders, Keeping track of things tip card

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students develop the skills to better organize their surroundings, enhance their confidence and develop a sense of mastery over their environment |
| **Instructions** | Organization is a skill that is developed. Provide context for the practice. (See "Evidence" section.)<br>Teach organization skills:<br>• Provide a list of what should be kept in students' binders.<br>• Share examples on how to label folders, title documents and sort papers for easy access.<br>• Review "Keeping track of things tip card" with students. (See "Keeping track of things" practice.)<br>While being sensitive to individual students' developmental and temperamental needs, offer time to:<br>• Organize their binders: sort papers, ensure that work is titled and secure, etc.<br>• Clean out desks and lockers. |

# Organizing pause

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students of all ages should constantly be furthering their organization and self-management skills as the demands for these changes based on developmental level and environment. This becomes particularly evident as students reach higher grades when they are required to manage their own time. Educators at every grade level can do their students a great service by adding these skills into their planning. Students with strong skills will be able to do things like get homework in on time, take the opportunity for extra help when needed, and be able to perform to their best at school and elsewhere (Boller, 2008). These skills all further support ongoing mental health!<br><br>"Efficient organization and time management is the first step to becoming an independent learner; however, students must also develop and use effective self-management skills, including self-monitoring, self-evaluating, and self-reinforcing, as needed." Paulsen & Sayeski (2013) |

# Organize your mind

TIME **2–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Relaxation app, music (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students dedicate time to build their skills to organize their thoughts and to promote calmness |
| **Instructions** | Provide one to two minutes to allow students to set a personal goal for the upcoming lesson/task/test (students can write down their goal if they wish).<br>Then, to help students calm their minds and get ready for a lesson/task/test, ask them to:<br>• Sit comfortably and to either lower their gaze or close their eyes.<br>• Be aware of their breath and the oxygen it brings their body, and to visualize positive energy entering their body and the release of stress or negative thoughts as they breathe out.<br>• Breathe in for four counts and out for six counts for about two minutes. |
| **Adaptations** | • Use a relaxation app or calming music. |

# Organize your mind

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Mindfulness education in schools has been increasingly supported based on the evidence linking it with an increase in optimism, social competence and self-concept for students (Schonert-Reichl & Lawlor, 2010). The benefits of social-emotional learning programs, taught in school, seem to also be increased through adding a mindfulness component. Students who received teaching in both social-emotional skills and mindfulness showed significant improvements in well-being, and prosocial behaviors (Schonert-Reichl, et al., 2015). Educator reports indicate that integrating mindfulness programming into the classroom is both easy and beneficial, making this a practical and manageable addition to classroom tools for supporting the mental health of everyone in the classroom. |

# Check it off

TIME **5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Mural paper, markers

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students plan for effective and balanced use of their time |
| **Instructions** | **Brainstorm:**<br>• What are the activities, responsibilities and commitments that are typical for the students in your class (e.g., homework, projects, school activities, sports, commitments with friends, etc.)?<br>**Discuss:**<br>• How do they manage all of their commitments?<br>• How are they prioritizing their different responsibilities?<br>• Do they use checklists to help organize their time/commitments/responsibilities?<br>  • If so, how does it feel to check items off the list?<br>• Finally, as being organized is a learned skill, determine how this skill will be developed in class:<br>  • Will there be a class responsibility checklist?<br>  • Will students have the opportunity to create a personal checklist?<br>  • Will there be a combination of both options? |

# Check it off

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students of all ages should constantly be furthering their organization and self-management skills as the demands for these changes based on developmental level and environment. This becomes particularly evident as students reach higher grades when they are required to manage their own time. Educators at every grade level can do their students a great service by adding these skills into their planning. Students with strong skills will be able to do things like get homework in on time, take the opportunity for extra help when needed, and be able to perform to their best at school and elsewhere (Boller, 2008). These skills all further support ongoing mental health!<br><br>"Efficient organization and time management is the first step to becoming an independent learner; however, students must also develop and use effective self-management skills, including self-monitoring, self-evaluating, and self-reinforcing, as needed." Paulsen & Sayeski (2013). |

# Stop, think, go

TIME **5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

Poster of a traffic light (optional)

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help develop problem-solving skills |
| **Instructions** | Introduce the concept of traffic lights and how this can help develop problem-solving skills. Walk the students through the process of the "Stop, think, go" practice.<br>• **Red = Stop!**<br>  • What is the problem?<br>• **Yellow = Think!**<br>  • Slow down!<br>  • Brainstorm possible solutions.<br>  • Think about what might happen for each of your possible solutions.<br>• **Green = Go!**<br>  • Try out your solution.<br>Post the visual as a class reminder and make use of the practice as often as opportunity arises. |

# Stop, think, go

| | |
|---|---|
| **Adaptations** | • Before accessing critical and creative thinking skills, it is important to develop self-regulation and calming skills in order to increase the former's effectiveness.<br>• Consider adding a breathing prompt at the red light (i.e., Red = Stop! = Breath!) before determining what the problem is. |
| **Evidence** | Self-control and managing impulsivity are skills children develop gradually throughout their childhood and even small improvements in these skills have the potential for large impacts long term for both the student and society as a whole. Diamond & Lee (2011) identify that children, ages 3 to 11, with strong self-control, less impulsivity, and better attention tend to have better health, earn more, and commit less crimes than those who lack these skills. |

# Solve that problem

TIME **2–5 minutes**

LEVEL **P/J/I**

MATERIALS

N/A

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students develop better problem-solving skills |
| **Instructions** | To support students' problem-solving skills, provide opportunities to:<br>**Use reflective thinking and discussion:**<br>• "What is the problem? What are we trying to accomplish?"<br>• "Have you ever done/experienced something like this before? Can you tell yourself what to do this time?"<br>**Brainstorm:**<br>• Possible solutions with the students and discuss/predict the 'pros and cons' of each before doing anything else. Offer suggestions.<br>**Experiment:**<br>• "Try that and tell me how it works out".<br>• "What might have made it work out better for next time?"<br>• Let students learn from their experience. |

# Solve that problem

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Problem-solving is an everyday skill that impacts all parts of a student's academic and personal success. Students with strong problem-solving skills are more able to approach problems positively. Ideally, students develop a foundation of social problem-solving skills that allow them to manage choice making and complex social interactions with skilled decision making through repeated practice (Daunic, et. al, 2012; Diamond & Lee, 2011). |

# Work that memory

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

Working memory tip card

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students develop practices to improve their working memory and their ability to keep key knowledge in their mind |
| **Instructions** | **Ask:**<br>• What are the strategies students use to remember something new?<br>• Students to read the "Working memory tip card". (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice.) Ask students to identify if this is an area of strength or a challenge for them.<br>• Students can pick examples of self-talk that they have either used in the past or think might be helpful to them.<br>  • They can add their own tips and self-talk as well.<br>**Next steps:**<br>• Ask students to identify one new strategy they wish to try for the week.<br>• Follow up with them to see how their experiment went and if they want to continue this strategy or try something new.<br>• Repeat. |

# Work that memory

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Working memory is the “ability to retain and operate information in our minds” (Dias & Seabra, 2016). Educators model the use of working memory constantly - every time they answer a question or provide a new lesson. Students at all levels need to use working memory to manage their learning. Their learning, especially their ease of learning, depends on strong working memory skills. Dias & Seabra (2016) saw that educator supported working memory development was carried on by students one year later.<br><br>Higher working memory skills allow students to better manage everyday tasks such as following instructions, and tasks that require holding information in the mind such as literacy and numeracy (Mann, et al., 2017). |

# Working memory tip card

When you develop practices to improve your working memory, you will improve your ability to keep key information in your mind.

| Tips | Self-talk |
|---|---|
| • Use coloured markers to highlight instructions (use different colours to signal different things, such as green for the most important, red for things I might forget). | • "Am I forgetting anything?" |
| • Set reminders with time and sound cue on my smartphone. | • "Check my list." |
| • Make checklists. | • "Check my agenda." |
| • Visualize a picture of something to connect with what I need to remember. | • "What picture did I make of that in my mind?" |
| • Find ways to connect information in ways that make sense to me. | • My own idea: |
| • Teach it to someone else so I also learn it. | |
| • Repeat it. | |
| • Do all work on my iPad or tablet so it's always with me. | |
| • Other strategies: | |

Adapted from Peg Dawson & Richard Guare, *Coaching Students with Executive Skills Deficits*, 2012

# Keeping track of things

TIME **5–10 minutes**

LEVEL **J/I**

MATERIALS

Keeping track of things tip card

| | |
|---|---|
| **Purpose** | To help students develop the skills to be better organized and to keep track of information and materials |
| **Instructions** | • Ask students to read the "Keeping track of things tip card". (See "Supplementary resources" in the website version of this practice.)<br>• Ask students to identify if this is an area of strength or a challenge for them.<br>• Instruct students to highlight, or circle, tips and examples they think might be helpful. They can also add any of their own ideas to their tip cards. |

# Keeping track of things

| | |
|---|---|
| **Evidence** | Students of all ages should constantly be furthering their organization and self-management skills as the demands for these changes based on developmental level and environment. This becomes particularly evident as students reach higher grades when they are required to manage their own time. Educators at every grade level can do their students a great service by adding these skills into their planning. Students with strong skills will be able to do things like get homework in on time, take the opportunity for extra help when needed, and be able to perform to their best at school and elsewhere (Boller, 2008). These skills all further support ongoing mental health!<br><br>"Efficient organization and time management is the first step to becoming an independent learner; however, students must also develop and use effective self-management skills, including self-monitoring, self-evaluating, and self-reinforcing, as needed." Paulsen & Sayeski (2013). |

# Keeping track of things tip card

Have a system for keeping track of information and materials, especially the things I need every day (homework, notebooks, keys, phone, sports equipment, etc.), so when I look for it, I know where to find it.

| Tips | Self-talk |
|---|---|
| • Spend five minutes every day staying organized. | • "A place for everything and everything in its place." |
| • Use a daily agenda. | • "Do I have it together?" |
| • Use laptop or iPad for managing information/ assignments/class notes. | • "Do I have what I need to do my work?" |
| • Use a note organizer app. | • "Did I think about where I was putting my items and how I would find them?" |
| • Other strategies: | • My own idea: |

Adapted from Peg Dawson & Richard Guare, *Coaching Students with Executive Skills Deficits*, 2012