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CILA Children's Immigration Law Academy

Emotional Wellness Workbook for Youth

Children's Immigration Law Academy (CILA)
A Project of the American Bar Association
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www.cilacademy.org

Open Letter to Youth:

We want to acknowledge the difficult and an incredible journey you've embarked on, leaving behind your home and everything familiar. You had your reasons, and they are valid. Maybe it was to seek safety, to reunite with family, or to fulfill dreams and goals. Maybe all of these reasons apply. Perhaps someone suggested this workbook to you because they recognized how incredibly challenging it can be to adapt to a new life and environment and wanted to offer you an extra hand of support.

Perhaps this is the first time you have explored your mental health or maybe you have known its importance but have never before had the opportunity to explore it. It is also possible that this is something unfamiliar to you as it wasn't openly discussed in your family or culture.

As you go through this workbook, remember that it might bring up tough emotions. If you're feeling overwhelmed by the workbook, it's okay to take a break. Reach out to someone you trust whether it's a trusted friend, a family member, or a professional and talk about how you're feeling. When you're ready, you can come back to the workbook and continue at your own pace.

It's also natural if there are parts of this process that you don't understand or that feel uncomfortable with you. Your feelings and perspectives are valid, and you have the power to decide what resonates with you. If this workbook brings up or reminds you of a situation, a moment or a person that doesn't feel right or safe for you, take a moment to reflect on why that might be. It's all part of understanding yourself better. Remember, you're not alone in this. You have advocates, mentors, and a community that believes in your potential and your right to a happy, healthy, and safe life.

(*You can choose to use this workbook independently or with a trusted adult. Whether you choose to do it independently or with someone, always have someone that can be available to support, guide or answer any questions you might have as you navigate this workbook.)*

It's important to emphasize that this workbook is not a substitute for the assistance of a mental health professional and should only be used as a tool:
This workbook is designed to offer support, guidance, and strategies for various aspects of emotional well-being. It is not a substitute for professional mental health evaluation, diagnosis, or treatment. While the exercises and information provided within this workbook are intended to promote self-awareness and personal growth, they should not replace the expertise of a licensed mental health provider.

Your safety is the most important aspect of this workbook. If you are a youth who is experiencing significant emotional distress, mental health challenges, or are in need of therapeutic intervention, we strongly encourage you to seek the assistance of a qualified mental health professional. A mental health provider can offer personalized assessment and treatment tailored to your individual needs.

If you are in crisis:
If you find yourself in a mental health crisis, it is essential to prioritize your safety and well-being. If you are experiencing suicidal thoughts, **please do not hesitate to seek immediate help by calling 911 or contacting the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (https://988lifeline.org/chat/) by calling or texting 988 for immediate assistance. We have also included more mental health **resources** at the end of this workbook. Remember, you are not alone, even if at times it feels as if you are. There are people out there willing to support and help during challenging times. It is important to reach out for support when you need it, and to keep reaching out until you find it!

Please use this workbook responsibly and in conjunction with appropriate professional guidance. Your well-being is our highest concern, and we encourage you to prioritize your mental health and seek help when needed.

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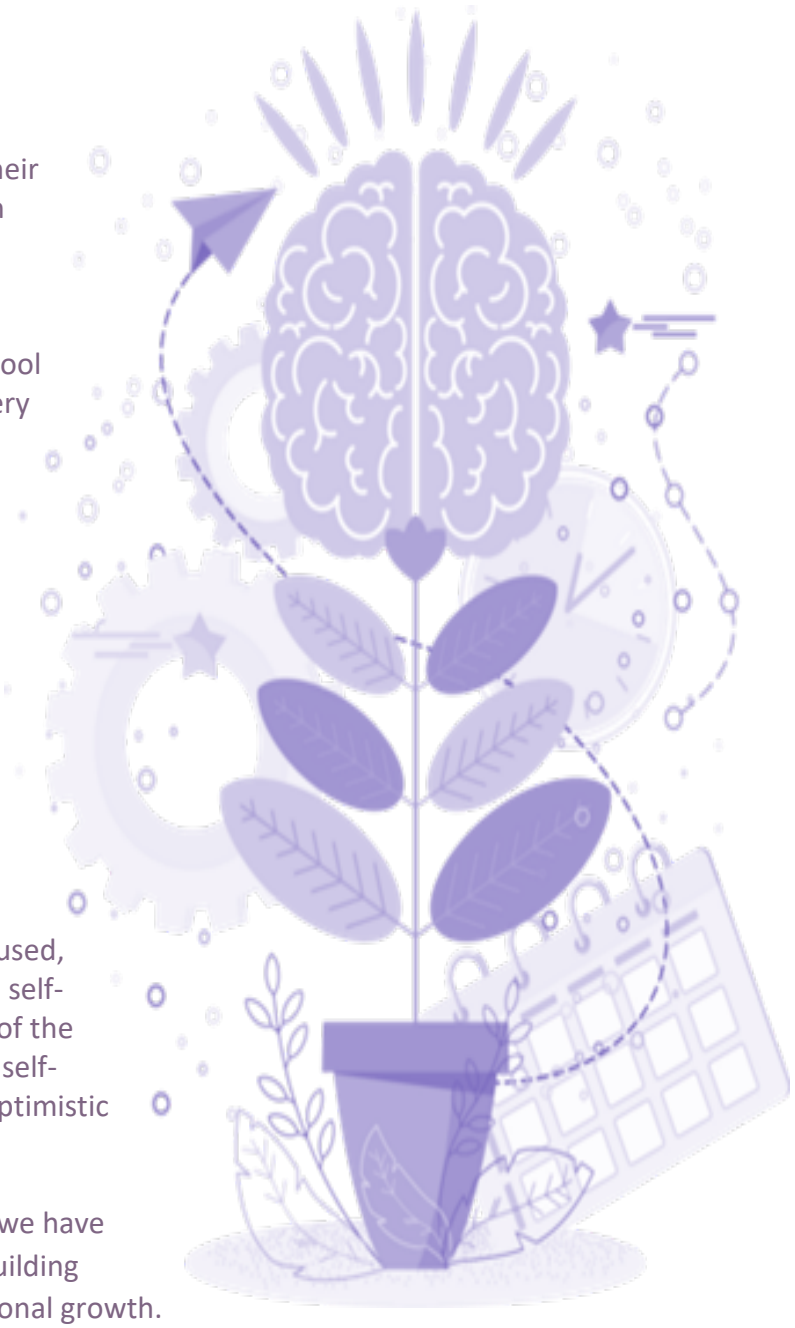
1. Introduction

Welcome to the Emotional Wellness Workbook for Youth! Adolescence can be a time full of excitement and possibilities, but it is also a time that can bring about many challenges and stressors. This especially rings true for newly arrived immigrant adolescents. This workbook was created for youth and as a tool for the advocates who offer their unwavering support to these youth through challenging times!



Because we understand that navigating the complexities of adolescence, migration, school and/or work, relationships, and self-discovery can feel overwhelming at times this workbook offers practical tools and activities that encourage and empower youth to take an active role in their emotional well-being and growth.

This workbook focuses on **self-care** practices that encourage prioritizing mental, emotional, and physical health. We have included many activities developed to resonate with the unique experiences and interests of youth. This workbook includes mindfulness exercises that can help youth to stay present and focused, creative journaling prompts that encourage self-expression, and many other activities. One of the goals of this workbook is to also encourage self-awareness, **emotional regulation**, and an optimistic outlook on life.

In addition to exploring self-care practices, we have included techniques for managing stress, building healthy relationships, and enhancing emotional growth.

***In this workbook, you'll notice words highlighted in **PINK** font. Clicking on these words will lead you to a glossary, providing definitions for better understanding. Additionally, you'll find words in **PURPLE** font, serving as links to different sections within the workbook. Furthermore, words in **BLUE** font signify external links, guiding you to websites outside of this workbook.*

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2. How To Utilize This Activity Workbook

For Youth:

This activity book can be a valuable tool for you to use independently, but it is always better and recommended to also have the support and guidance of a mental health professional or someone who can provide support and guidance as you navigate your mental and emotional health. This workbook offers self-guided activities for you to explore your emotions and develop coping mechanisms on your own terms and at your own pace. As you work through the activities, you can learn to manage stress and anxiety and how to regulate your **emotional**. This approach encourages you to take an active role in your personal growth and emotional well-being, giving you a sense of control and ownership over your mental health journey.

(*Before starting any of the activities, have some clean sheets of paper or a notebook and something to write or color with handy.*)

For Advocates:

As an advocate you can utilize this activity book as a resource in your work with youth by incorporating the exercises and techniques during one-on-one meetings or sessions. The workbook offers a structured approach to help youth explore their emotions, understand the mind-body connection, and develop coping skills. Advocates can guide youth through the activities, encouraging them to express their feelings, thoughts, and concerns openly. By doing so, you can offer a safe and supportive environment, allowing youth to build trust and gain a deeper understanding of themselves.

(*Before starting any of the activities with the youth, have some clean sheets of paper or a notebook, and something to write or color with handy.*)

3. Glossary Of Terms

There might be some terms that are new to you or difficult to understand. We have included explanations for some terms throughout the workbook, but we wanted to include some here for easier access if needed.

- **Act of Kindness:** This is when you do something nice or thoughtful for someone else without expecting anything in return. It could be as simple as giving a compliment or helping someone with a task.
- **ADHD, or attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder**: It's a condition that can affect a person's ability to focus and control their impulses.
- **Advocate:** Someone who stands up for and supports others, including social and legal services staff at legal service providers to youth.
- **Anxiety:** It's a feeling of worry or fear that can be overwhelming and interfere with daily life. It's normal to feel anxious from time to time, but for some people, anxiety can become a constant, affecting their day-to-day life.
- **Assertive:** It's referring to expressing yourself and speaking up for what you believe in a confident (but respectful) manner.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD):** It's a condition that can affect the way a person communicates, interacts with others, and experiences the world around them.
- **Boundaries:** These are the guidelines and limits we set for ourselves in relationships and interactions with others, helping us set up healthy and respectful relationships.
- **Coping Skills:** Things we do to help ourselves feel better when we're upset or stressed, like deep breathing or drawing.
- **De-escalation:** It's a way to calm down a tense or difficult situation. This can be done by providing reassuring words and actions where everyone can feel safe and comfortable.
- **Depression:** It's more than just feeling sad. It's a serious mental health condition that can make you feel low for a long time. It can make it hard to find joy in things you used to enjoy, and it might make it tough to even get out of bed in the morning. It can also affect a person's sleep, appetite, and energy levels.
- **Emotional regulation:** It's the process of being able to understand what you are feeling and why you are feeling it and finding a healthy way to manage those emotions.
- **Emotionally centered:** It a sense of feeling calm and balanced inside. Being emotionally centered helps us understand our feelings better as it allows us to explore one feeling at a time.
- **Emotions:** The feelings we have, like happiness, sadness, or excitement, just to name a few.
- **Empathy:** It's being able to understand the feelings of someone else. It's like being able to step into their shoes and see the world from their perspective.
- **Grounding:** This can be techniques or activities that help us stay in or come back to the present moment, when you are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or disconnected.

- **Here-and-Now:** It means being fully present and really paying attention to what's happening in front of you, right at the moment that it's occurring, instead of thinking about the past or the future.
- **Mindfulness:** It's practice of intentionally focusing on the present moment, like in the here and now. It's about paying attention to thoughts, emotions, sensations, and surroundings.
- **Positive Affirmations:** This are kind and positive things we say to ourselves to feel good and confident.
- **Post-traumatic growth:** The lessons learned or emotional growth that occurs during and after a traumatic or challenging time.
- **Resilience:** It's the process of being able to emotionally bounce back from a difficult situation and challenges. It's about growing and adapting from these difficult experiences.
- **Safe Space:** A place where we feel comfortable, secure, and free to be ourselves.
- **Self-care:** Taking care of ourselves physically and emotionally, like getting enough sleep, eating well, and doing things we enjoy.
- **Self-compassion:** It means being kind and understanding with yourself when you make mistakes or when things are hard. It's about treating yourself with the same kindness and care you would treat a friend or loved one during similar circumstances.
- **Self-esteem**: It's how you feel about yourself. Positive self-esteem is about recognizing your own worth and believing in your abilities and strengths.
- **Support system:** This refers to the people who care about us and help us such as family, friends, and teachers. People who are there to help when we need them.
- **Toxic positivity:** Toxic positivity is when people try to only focus on positive things, even when someone is going through a tough time. While positivity is great, it's important to also acknowledge, to allow yourself to feel and work through difficult feelings as well.
- **Triggers:** This is when something causes a strong emotional reaction in response to something that reminds us of something that happened before. This can be a reminder of something traumatic or challenging.
- **Visualization:** It involves using our imagination to vividly picture something in our mind, often to help achieve a goal, overcome a challenge, or reduce stress.

4. Triggers, Coping Skills, and Strategies

Activity 1 - One: Exploring coping skills

Coping skills are our internal tools that consist of thoughts and actions used to manage stressful events or emotional discomfort. These tools can help us manage stress, emotions, and challenges in a healthy way. They can also help us take a pause or step back from our immediate reaction and give us time to take a better look at the situation and find a better approach. There are both positive and negative copings skills. Positive coping skills contribute to positive mental health and our overall well-being, while negative coping skills may provide temporary relief but can have harmful long-term effects. Below are examples of both:

Negative Coping Skills:

Aggression
Social withdrawal
Substance use
Self-Harm
Over or under eating
Over or under sleeping

Positive Coping Skills:

Deep Breathing
Physical Exercise
Social Support
Art and Creative Expression
Problem-Solving
Listening to Music

Now take some time to brainstorm your coping skills: List as many coping skills as you can think of. These can include emotional coping skills, physical coping skills, and cognitive coping skills: *(You can use a separate piece of paper if you need more room to write.)*

Example:

- Emotional Coping Skills: *Talking to a friend, journaling, deep breathing*
- Physical Coping Skills: *Exercise, yoga, taking a walk in nature*
- Cognitive Coping Skills: *Challenging negative thoughts, positive affirmations*

Emotional Coping Skills	Physical Coping Skills	Cognitive Coping Skills

Activity 1 - Part Two: Exploring coping skills

Personal Coping Skills: Identify coping skills that you currently use or have used in the past. Write down which coping strategies have been helpful for you.

Example:

Talking to a friend and practicing deep breathing have been helpful coping skills for me in the past.

Personal Coping Skills

Coping Skills Inventory: Rate each coping skill on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being not helpful and 5 being very helpful. Consider which coping skills you might like to try or explore further.

Example:

Talking to a Friend - 5
Deep Breathing - 5
Exercise - 3
Taking a Walk in Nature - 4
Challenging Negative Thoughts - 4

Coping Skills	Rate Your Coping Skills

Activity 1 - Part Three: Exploring coping skills/strategies

A **trigger** is like a memory button for our feelings. Sometimes things around us, like a smell or sound can press this button activating all sorts of memories. These can be happy memories, or they can also be sad or even scary ones. You probably have had a smell that reminded you of a special place or person or a loud noise that startled you because it reminded you of a scary time. Being triggered is just like that!

Identify triggers and pair them with a coping skill: Reflect on common situations or events that trigger stress or intense emotions for you. Write down some of these triggers below and then pair the coping skills you listed on **page 11** that could be most effective in managing the triggers you have listed below.

Triggers	Healthy Coping Skill or Strategies
Example: Being in a crowded place	Deep breathing or redirecting my focus to something else, like looking at my watch.
Example: Family argument	Talking to a supportive person and practicing deep breathing.

Your Trigger	Your Preferred Coping Skill/Strategy

Healthy coping can help you manage or control stress, anxiety, or **de-escalate** intense **emotions** both positive and negative ones. We encourage you to practice your coping skills regularly, even when you are not in distress. Regular practice of these skills during calm moments will allow you to learn them better and make them feel more natural. It's like when someone physically trains for a race to build physical endurance. In this case, you are training to strengthen your emotional "muscle" response.

Activity 2: Learning new coping skills

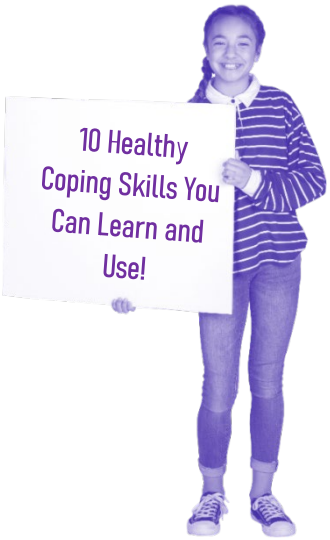
We encourage you to try out different coping skills and strategies to find what works best for you. Once you have identified what works best for you, practice these skills regularly. Below are some ideas for different types of coping skills. See if there's anything that resonates with you.

Deep Breathing: Practice slow and controlled breathing to reduce stress and anxiety.

Mindfulness Meditation: Focus on the present moment and observe thoughts and feelings without judgment.

Physical Exercise: Engage in activities like running, dancing, or yoga to release tension and boost mood.

Journaling: Write about thoughts, feelings, and experiences to gain clarity and process emotions.



Art Therapy: Use creative expression through drawing, painting, or crafts to cope with emotions.

Nature Walks: Spend time in nature to improve your mood and reduce stress.

Coping Statements: Develop positive statements to counter negative thoughts and build resilience.

Music Therapy: Listen to or create music as a form of emotional release and relaxation.

Limit Social Media: Set boundaries with social media to reduce exposure to stressors and negative content.

Humor and Laughter: Engage in activities that make you laugh or watch funny videos to boost your mood.

Activity 3 - Part One: Trying new coping skills

Choose one or two coping skills that you haven't tried before and want to explore further. Plan to incorporate these coping skills into your daily routine or when facing specific stressors to find out how they work out for you. (See **Activity Two** for ideas.)

- Make a list of the coping skills you would like to try.

- Create a coping skills journal to track your experiences with different coping skills. Write about how you felt before and after using each coping skill and how effective it was in managing your stress or **emotions**.

Coping Skill	How I Felt Before	How I Felt After	Did It Work?

Activity 3 - Part Two: Trying new coping skills

- Celebrate your efforts in exploring and using coping skills to manage stress and emotions. Recognize the positive impact coping skills can have on your well-being. Make a list of the new coping skills you are willing to continue using because they showed to work for you!

Coping skill, I want to continue using	It helps me with….

Be patient with yourself when trying new coping strategies. Initially it might feel awkward or strange as many things do when doing them for the first time. If after trying it a few times, it still feels like that, then move on with a different one until you find what works best for you. Also, if you find it challenging to manage stress or emotions, don't hesitate to seek support from a counselor, therapist, or a trusted adult. They can help you explore coping strategies and offer more guidance.

5. Grounding Skills and Strategies

Activity 4: Breath awareness

Breath awareness is a **grounding technique** that can help center your mind, calm your **emotions**, and bring your attention to the present moment. Give it a try by following the steps below. We encourage you to include breath awareness in your daily activities or whenever you feel stressed, overwhelmed, or need to reconnect with the present moment.

Start Here

Body: Sit in a comfortable position, either on a chair with your feet flat on the ground or cross-legged on a cushion.

Breath: Close your eyes gently or focus them on a point in front of you. Allow your body to relax. Soften your facial muscles, relax your shoulders, and let your arms rest comfortably.

Observe: Notice the sensation of the air as it enters your nostrils, travels through your throat, and fills your lungs. Notice the rise and fall of your chest and contraction of your abdomen. Be fully present with each inhalation and exhalation, observing the natural flow of your breath without trying to change it.

Focus: Your mind may wander, and that's okay. When you notice your thoughts drifting away, gently bring your attention back to your breath. If it helps, you can silently count your breaths, focusing on each count from one to ten and then starting again.

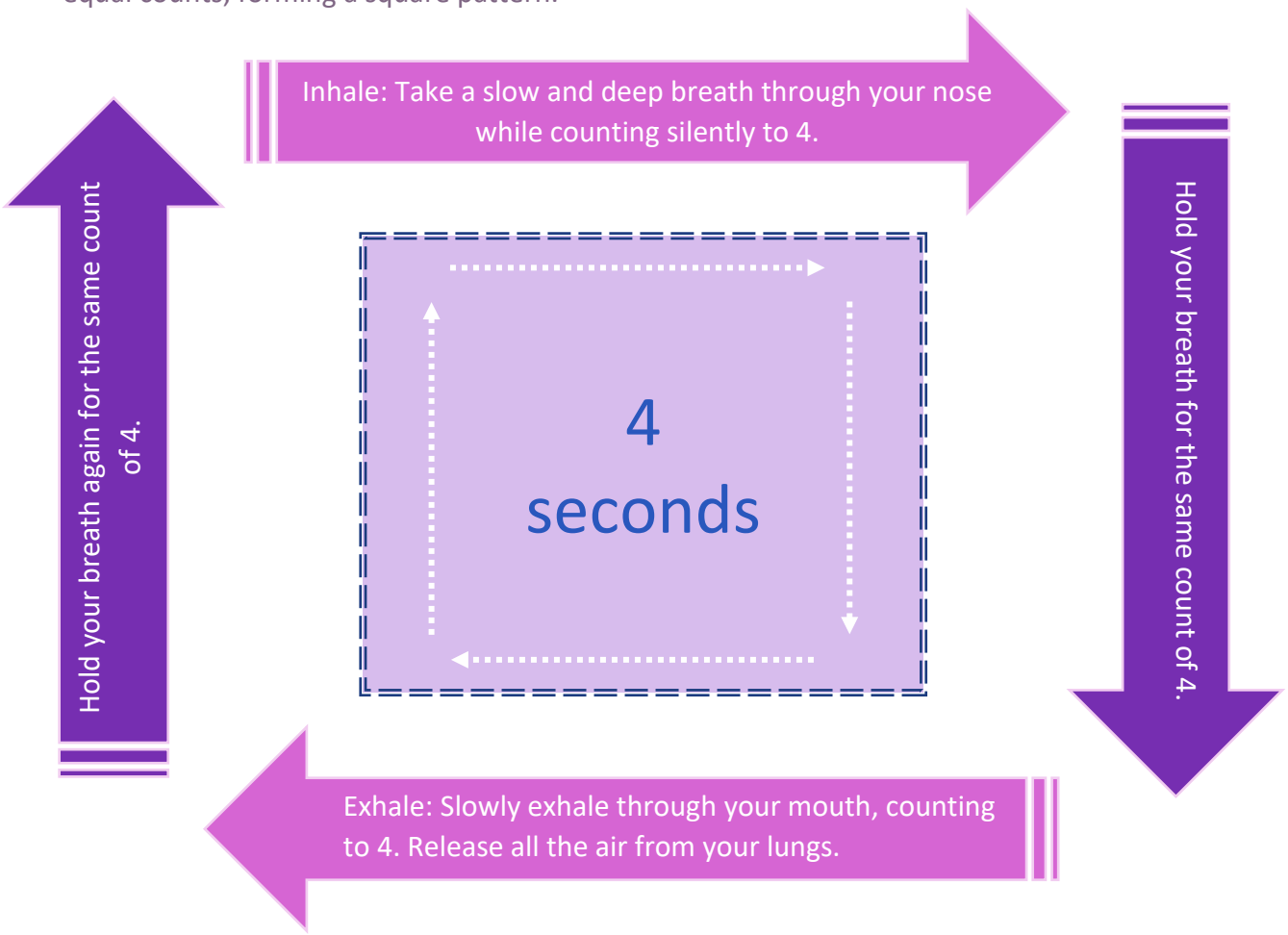
Practice: Start with just a few minutes of breath awareness practice and gradually increase the duration as you become more comfortable. Aim for five to ten minutes initially, and then extend the practice to fifteen or twenty minutes over time.

End mindfully: When you're ready to conclude your practice, take a few deep breaths and gradually bring your awareness back to your surroundings. Take a moment to appreciate the stillness and peace you have cultivated within yourself.

By regularly practicing breath awareness, you'll develop a valuable tool for grounding yourself in any situation. As you progress, you can explore different breathing techniques such as **box breathing** and **mindful breathing**.

Activity 5: Box breathing

Box breathing is a simple and effective **mindfulness** breathing exercise that can help calm your mind and reduce stress. It involves breathing in, holding, breathing out, and holding again for equal counts, forming a square pattern.

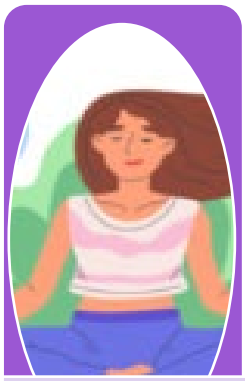


Continue the square breathing pattern for several rounds. Inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts, and hold again for 4 counts. While practicing square breathing, pay attention to the sensation of your breath. Notice the coolness of the air as you inhale and the warmth as you exhale. If your mind wanders, gently bring your focus back to breathing and counting. Don't judge yourself for any distractions; it's normal for thoughts to come and go.

Incorporate square breathing into your daily routine or use it whenever you feel stressed, anxious, or overwhelmed. Box breathing gives you a moment of pause in stressful situations. This pause will allow you to respond to challenges more thoughtfully and less impulsively.

Activity 6: Mindful breathing

This is another mindful awareness activity. This guided mindfulness activity can help you focus your attention on the present moment and find a sense of tranquility. You can use this activity whenever you need a moment of grounding, calm, or clarity in your day. Follow this step-by-step guided script for mindful breathing:



Inhale deeply through your nose, feeling the breath fill your lungs, and exhale slowly through your mouth, releasing any tension or stress. (*Repeat this step a second time.)*

Shift your attention to the sensation of your breath entering and leaving your body. Notice the coolness of the air as you inhale, and the warmth as you exhale. Feel the gentle rise and fall of your chest or the subtle expansion and contraction of your abdomen with each breath.

When you notice your mind wandering, simply acknowledge it without judgment, and gently guide your attention back to your breath. The breath serves as an anchor, bringing you back to the present moment.

Be fully present with each inhale and exhale, observing the natural rhythm, without trying to change anything. If it helps, you can silently count your breaths, from one to ten, and then start again. (*Pause for a few moments*.)

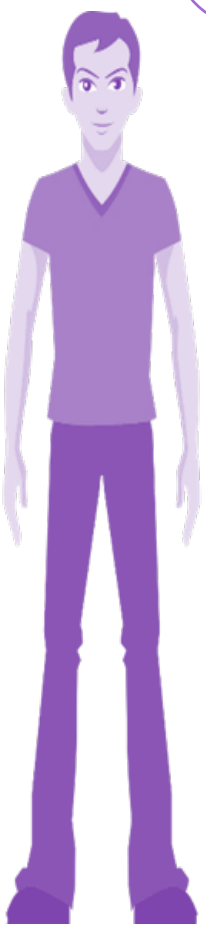
Take a slow, deep breath in, feeling your abdomen expand, and then exhale slowly, allowing your body to relax. Inhale deeply again, feeling your chest and abdomen rise, and exhale fully, releasing any tension or tightness in your body.

When you're ready, gently bring your attention back to your surroundings. Wiggle your fingers and toes, allowing your body to reawaken. Take a final deep breath in, and as you exhale, slowly open your eyes if they were closed

Mindful breathing can be useful not only in times of anxiety, but also in everyday life. We encourage you to explore the power of your breath. Allow each mindful breath you take serves as a reminder that you are alive, that you matter and that you have the strength in you to face any challenge that comes your way.

Activity 7: Progressive muscle relaxation

Progressive muscle relaxation is a **mindfulness/grounding** technique that helps with body awareness. It can help us in finding out how our body feels, so that we learn to listen to our bodies. This is important because it can help us know when we feel tense and need to use our coping skills, like deep breathing or other grounding activities. With time and practice, you'll become more attuned to the sensations in your body and develop a plan on how to make yourself feel better.



1. START with finding a quiet and comfortable space. Sit or lie down in a comfortable position.
2. Close your EYES and take a few slow, deep breaths to calm your mind and bring your focus inward. Inhale deeply through your nose, filling your lungs, and exhale slowly through your mouth, releasing any tension with each breath.
3. Move to your ARMS and SHOULDERS. Take a deep breath and gently lift your shoulders toward your ears, tensing the muscles in your upper arms and shoulders. Hold the tension for a few seconds, and then release, allowing your shoulders to drop and your arms to rest comfortably at your sides. Feel the relaxation spreading through your arms and shoulders.
4. Focus on your FACE. Scrunch up your face, wrinkling your forehead, squeezing your eyes shut, and clenching your jaw. Hold the tension for a few seconds, and then release, letting your face become smooth and relaxed. Pay attention to the release of tension in your facial muscles.
5. Proceed to your CHEST and ABDOMEN. Take a deep breath and hold it, tensing the muscles in your chest and abdomen. Hold the tension for a few seconds, and then exhale slowly, allowing your breath to carry away any remaining tension as your chest and abdomen relax. Observe the sensation of relaxation spreading throughout your torso.
6. Move to your LOWER BODY. Tense the muscles in your buttocks and thighs by squeezing them tightly. Hold the tension for a few seconds, and then release, letting your lower body become loose and relaxed. Feel the weight of your legs sinking into the support beneath you.
7. SCAN your body. Take a moment to scan your entire body, from head to toe, and notice any remaining tension that may still be present. If you identify any areas of tension, focus on those specific muscle groups, tensing and then releasing them, until you feel a sense of relaxation.

Well done! Allow yourself to enjoy this moment of calmness and peace. Each time you engage in this activity, you are nurturing your mental and physical well-being. Keep practicing and remember you have the power to create moments of peace!

Activity 8: Active mindfulness cards

Active mindfulness means being present in the **here-and-now** and really paying attention to whatever you are doing even when eating, walking, or even talking or playing with a friend. You can use the following active mindfulness activity cards to practice. First, pick a card that looks interesting to you. Then, do what it suggests. Whether it's breathing, walking, or eating, really focus on the activity. Pay attention to the smells or sounds and how they make you feel.

Mindful Movement

Describe an activity that involves mindful movement, such as walking, dancing, or playing a sport.
How did you feel during the activity? Did you notice any changes in your mood or energy levels?

Mindful Eating

Recall a meal or snack that you ate mindfully.
What did you notice about the taste, texture, and smell of the food? How did this experience differ from regular eating habits?

Focused Attention

Choose a task or activity that you approached with focused attention. It could be studying, doing homework, or a creative project.
How did active mindfulness affect your ability to concentrate and stay engaged?

Mindful Listening

Recall a time when you actively listened to someone without distraction.

How did this affect your understanding of the conversation and your relationship with the other person?

Mindful Pause

Describe a moment when you paused before reacting to a challenging situation.

How did this moment of active mindfulness help you respond more calmly and thoughtfully?

Reflection

Take a few moments to reflect on your overall experience with active mindfulness.

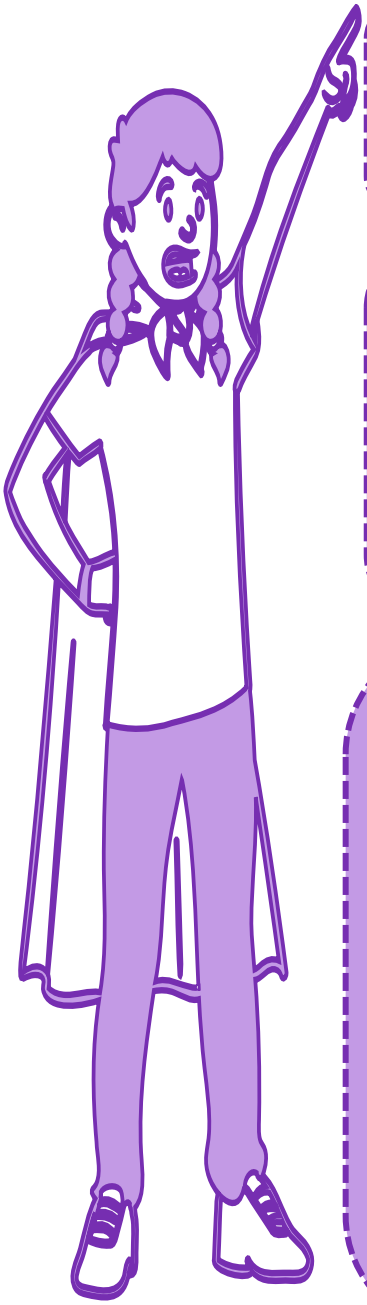
What were the most significant insights or changes you noticed in yourself?

You can cultivate a deeper sense of awareness and connection to yourself and others by embracing your day-to-day life with mindfulness. Welcome each moment with curiosity and openness to enhance your overall mental and emotional **resilience** and **growth**.

Activity 9 - Part One: Body appreciation

Body appreciation means valuing and respecting your body just as it is. It's about embracing and celebrating your physical self, being grateful for all the amazing things your body allows you to do and focusing on the positive aspects of your appearance and abilities.

Use the following activity to explore how to develop a healthier relationship with your body and build self-confidence and self-acceptance. We encourage you to embrace your uniqueness and focus on the positive aspects of your body.



Step One: Begin with a short mindful breathing exercise to help you become present and **emotionally centered**. Take deep breaths and focus on the sensation your breath entering and leaving your body. (If you need help with this, see **Activity 6**).

Step Two: Close your eyes and slowly scan your body from head to toe, paying attention to any sensations, tension, or areas of comfort. (If you need help with this, see **Activity 7**, for an idea). Make sure you acknowledge your thoughts about your body. What does your body mean to you? It's completely normal to have moments of insecurity about certain parts of our bodies. If you have any negative thoughts about your body during this activity, it's crucial to practice **self-compassion** and remind yourself that beauty and worth are not defined by our appearance or physical condition.

Step Three: **Positive affirmations** related to body appreciation are uplifting statements that remind you of the beauty and strength within your physical self. They encourage you to celebrate your uniqueness, focusing on the things you love about your body and appreciating all the incredible things it allows you to do: "I love and appreciate my body just as it is," and "My body is strong and capable." Now come up with some of your own positive affirmation statements:

Activity 9 - Part Two: Body appreciation

Step Four: Stand in front of a mirror and observe your reflection without judgment. We encourage you to focus on the positive aspects of your appearance and appreciate their unique qualities.

Step Five: Write down five things you are grateful for about your body. Be specific and thoughtful in your entries:

"I am grateful for my eyes that allow me to see the beauty of the world around me, the colors of nature, and the faces of my loved ones."

"I am thankful for my strong and flexible legs that enable me to dance, run, and explore new places, filling my life with movement and adventure."

Write down five things you are grateful for about your body:

Activity 9 - Part Three: Body appreciation

Step Six: Now take a couple of deep breaths while you reflect on this activity:

- Visualize your body in a positive and grateful light.
- Take a moment to appreciate the strength of your body. It carries you through each day, allowing you to do amazing things.
- Express gratitude for your senses. Your eyes allow you to see the world's beauty, your ears let you hear the sounds of nature and laughter, and your skin lets you feel the warmth of a hug.
- Embrace your body's uniqueness. *"It's unlike anyone else's because it's mine and that's what makes it extraordinary."*
- End with a loving thought towards your body. Say to yourself, "I am grateful for my body and all it does for me. I am worthy of love and appreciation."

How did you feel during the activity?	Did you notice any changes in your attitude towards your body?

Body appreciation is about embracing and respecting our bodies, recognizing their unique qualities, and celebrating their abilities. If negative body image significantly impacts your mental well-being or daily life, seeking help from a mental health professional can be immensely beneficial. They can provide guidance, support, and coping strategies tailored to your unique situation.

Activity 10 - Part One: Nature mindfulness

Nature mindfulness is like giving your mind a vacation. This can help you feel more connected to the outside world, and it can reduce stress and enhance overall well-being along the way. Find a quiet and comfortable spot in nature to practice mindfulness. We understand that not everyone has access to nature and if that's your case you can still practice mindfulness by using the environment around you or you can use **visualization** to imagine a place of nature. Your place of practice may be a quiet spot indoors, like a cozy corner in your room, or a spot outside in the backyard. Once you have found the spot, focus on the sounds, sights, the feelings that come up.

1. Where did you choose to practice nature mindfulness?

2. Describe the setting and what elements of nature surrounded you.

3. Take a moment to see the sights around you. *What do you see? Describe the colors, shapes, and movements in nature.*

4. Listen carefully to the sounds of nature. What do you hear? Note any bird songs, rustling leaves, or other natural sounds.

5. Pay attention to the scents in the air. *What do you smell? Identify any natural fragrances or aromas that stand out.*

6. Feel the textures of nature. *What did you touch? Describe the sensations of grass, leaves, rocks, or anything else you encounter.*

7. Take a few moments to focus on your breath. *How did mindful breathing help you connect with nature more deeply?*

Activity 10 - Part Two: Nature mindfulness

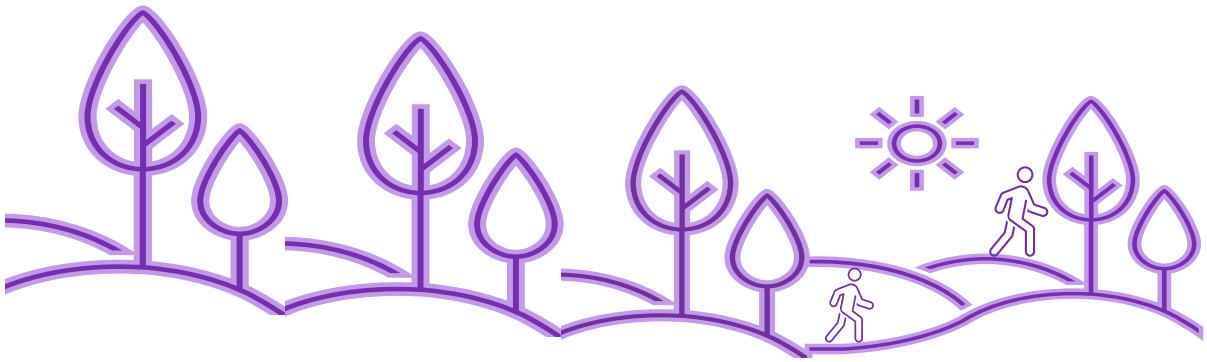
8. *Did you use any grounding techniques to stay present in the moment? If yes, describe your experience with the grounding activity.*

9. What emotions or thoughts arose during your nature mindfulness practice? Were there any patterns or recurring themes?

10. Take a moment to express gratitude for your nature mindfulness experience. *What are you grateful for at this moment?*

11. Reflect on any insights or lessons you gained from being mindful in nature. *How can you apply these lessons to your daily life?*

12. Set an intention for future mindfulness practices in nature. *How do you plan to incorporate nature mindfulness into your routine moving forward?*



Nature mindfulness can help develop a sense of calm and balance, as well as a greater awareness of your emotions and thoughts. Spending time in nature can provide a break from the constant stimulation of technology, allowing you to slow down and connect with the sights, sounds, sensations of the environment around you. Embrace these moments of connection with yourself and your environment!

Activity 11: 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding

The 5-4-3-2-1 **grounding technique** is a tool to help you stay present and reduce stress or anxiety by engaging all your senses. Use this worksheet to engage your senses and explore the world around you during this grounding activity. Sit or stand and take a few deep breaths before starting.

Number	Things	Draw or write	How did it make you feel?
5	**Take a few moments to look around you and identify five things you can see.**	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.	
4	**Now, focus on your sense of touch. Identify four things you can touch or feel around you.**	1. 2. 3. 4.	
3	**Listen carefully to the sounds around you. Identify three things you can hear.**	1. 2. 3.	
2	**Pay attention to any scents or smells in your environment. Identify two things you can smell.**	1. 2.	
1	**Think about or recall one thing you can taste or a taste that you enjoy.**	1.	

After completing the 5-4-3-2-1 grounding activity, take a moment to reflect on how you feel. Did this exercise help you feel more **emotionally centered** and present? How did focusing on your senses impact your thoughts and emotions? What other situations or settings could you use this technique in to help manage stress or anxiety?

Activity 12 - Part One: Rainbow visualization

The rainbow **visualization** is a grounding technique that can help focus your mind by imagining a beautiful rainbow in your mind and picturing each color one by one. This activity can be used whenever you need a moment of relaxation and positiveness, or you can incorporate it into your daily routine.

Activity 12 - Part Two: Rainbow visualization

Red: Focus on the color red. Imagine it as a vibrant and energizing color. Picture a red beam of light gently touching your body, filling you with strength and determination. ***What positive qualities do you associate with red?***

Orange: Visualize an orange glow surrounding you, exuding creativity, and positivity. Feel this warmth spreading through your body, inspiring you with new ideas and a bright outlook. ***What positive qualities do you associate with orange?***

Yellow: Imagine yellow radiating like sunshine, filling you with confidence and happiness. Embrace this joyful energy, knowing you are capable and worthy. ***What positive qualities do you associate with yellow?***

Green: Visualize a lush green glow wrapping you, symbolizing growth, and renewal. Feel the sense of freshness and rejuvenation washing over you. ***What positive qualities do you associate with green?***

Activity 12 - Part Three: Rainbow visualization

Blue: Next, concentrate on the color blue. Imagine a peaceful blue light covering you, bringing calmness and serenity to your mind and soul. ***What positive qualities do you associate with blue?***

Indigo: Shift your focus to the color indigo. Visualize a deep indigo shade surrounding you, enhancing your intuition and wisdom. Embrace your inner knowledge and trust in your decisions. ***What positive qualities do you associate with indigo?***

Violet: Finally, concentrate on the color violet. Imagine a soft violet light embracing you, spiritual connection, and inner peace. Feel a sense of harmony and oneness with the universe. ***What positive qualities do you associate with violet?***

As you reflect on each color and its associated qualities, allow the entire RAINBOW to wrap you with its vibrant and positive energy. Bask in the warm glow of the rainbow, feeling its rejuvenating and uplifting effects. Gently bringing yourself back to the present moment. Take a moment to reflect on your Rainbow Visualization experience:

- *How did this exercise make you feel?*
- *Did you notice any changes in your emotions or outlook?*
- *How can you incorporate the qualities of the rainbow into your daily life to promote positivity and well-being?*

Remember, this worksheet is a tool for your personal growth and self-discovery. Embrace the rainbow's beauty and symbolism as you navigate through life's challenges, finding strength, joy, and inspiration within.

6. Strategies for Challenging Negative or Intrusive Thoughts

Activity 13 - Part One: Worry planning

Worrying is a normal part of life, but excessive worrying can be overwhelming. Use this worksheet to explore your worries, identify realistic solutions, and develop a worry plan to manage the things that preoccupy you effectively.

Step One: Identify Your Worries

Write down your worries in the spaces below. Be as specific as possible about what is causing you to worry.

Worry 1:
Possible cause:

Worry 2:
Possible cause:

Worry 3:
Possible cause:

Step two: Rate the Worry

On a scale of 1 to 10 (1 being minimal worry and 10 being extreme worry), rate the level of anxiety each worry that you listed above is causing you.

1. Worry 1: _____ (1-10)
2. Worry 2: _____ (1-10)
3. Worry 3: _____ (1-10)

Activity 13 - Part Two: Worry planning

Step Three: Challenge Your Worries

For each worry, ask yourself: "Is this worry realistic, or is it an exaggeration?" Write down a more balanced and realistic perspective for each worry. For the worries that require practical solutions, explore possible actions you can take to address them. Write down your potential solutions in the spaces below. See examples below:

> ***Worry:*** *"I do not want to go to school because everyone is going to make fun of me for not speaking English."*
>
> ***Realistic Perspective:*** *"I Know that there will be students who make fun of me for not speaking English, but I also know that not everyone will. Some might be curious or try to be helpful and I also understand that learning a new language takes time and practice.*
>
> ***Possible Solution:*** *I'll keep trying by best and seek help when needed to improve my English skills and eventually I'll feel more confident speaking in class.*

Worry 1:
Realistic Perspective:
Possible Solution:

Worry 2:
Realistic Perspective:
Possible Solution:

Worry 3:
Realistic Perspective:
Possible Solution:

Activity 13 - Part Three: Worry planning

Based on your realistic perspectives and potential solutions, create a worry plan. Write down the steps you will take to address your worries and manage them effectively. See example below."

Worry: "I adjusting to life here in the U.S. has been overwhelming and I feel lost most of the time."

Worry Plan:

- *I will research local customs, traditions, and cultural norms to gain a better understanding of my new living environment. I can start by visiting my school or community library to look for books about customs. Attending school, church, or community center can also open my eyes to the traditions and cultural norms in my new community.*
- *I will seek English language classes or language exchange groups to improve language skills gradually.*
- *I will reach out to school counselors, teachers, or community organizations that help immigrants and refugees. They can offer guidance and support in navigating various challenges.*
- *I will connect with other newcomers or individuals from similar backgrounds to build a supportive network and share experiences.*
- *I will practice self-care activities such as meditation, exercise, or hobbies to manage stress and support mental well-being.*

Your Worry Plan #1:

Activity 13 - Part Four: Worry planning

Your Worry Plan #2:

Step Six: Coping Techniques

Practice mindfulness and coping techniques to help manage worries. Choose at least three techniques from the list below that you would like to try:

• *Mindful breathing (pg. 18)*
• *Progressive muscle relaxation (pg. 19)*
• *Rainbow visualization (pg. 27)*
• *Nature Mindfulness (pg. 24)*
• *5-4-3-2-1 grounding (pg. 26)*
• *Breath awareness (pg. 16)*
• *Box breathing (pg. 17)*
• *Talking to a friend*
• *Physical exercise*
• *Challenging negative thoughts*

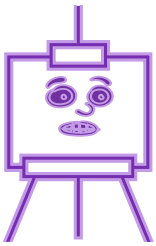
Use this worksheet whenever you feel overwhelmed by your worries. Remember that it's normal to worry. Be patient with yourself as you work through your worries and consider seeking support from a trusted adult or a mental health professional if needed.

Activity 14 - Part One: Externalizing anxious thoughts

Externalizing your anxious thoughts is a technique that can help you break the anxious thinking pattern. This is done by humanizing your worries and treating them as separate people from you. This allows you to see the thoughts more clearly, making it easier to understand and manage them. This process allows you to challenge negative thoughts and replace them with more balanced and realistic ones.

Step 1: Write down a recent situation that triggered anxious thoughts. Describe the thoughts that came up.

Situation	Anxious Thoughts
Example: *"Friends are going to a party."*	*"If I go, no one will talk to me, and I'll be alone."*



Step 2: Give your anxious thoughts (your worry) a name or character. Draw a simple representation of what it might look like.

Example: *Name your thought "Doubtful Javier" and draw a simple character representing your anxious thought.*

Activity 14 - Part Two: Externalizing anxious thoughts

Step 3: List the characteristics of this character. Is it loud, critical, or repetitive?

Example: Doubtful Javier is a tiny, nagging voice that fills my head with negativity.
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.

Step 4: Write down evidence that disproves your anxious thought. Counteract it with logical arguments and facts.

Example: Evidence - "I've had good conversations with my friends before. Javier is just exaggerating."

Step 5: Imagine you're giving advice to a friend who has the same worry. What would you tell them?

Example: Advice to Friend - "It's natural to have doubts, but remember you've had fun at previous parties."

Activity 14 - Part Three: Externalizing anxious thoughts

Step 6: List times when your worries didn't come true or were less severe than expected.

Example: Past Experiences - "I worried about a school event, but it turned out much better than I expected."

Step 7: Create alternative, balanced thoughts that consider both positive and negative outcomes.

Example: Balanced Thought - "While Doubtful Javier says I'll be alone, I also know I can connect with friends there."

Step 8: Write down a compassionate message to yourself, acknowledging that worrying is a natural response.

Example: Self-Compassionate Message - "It's okay to feel anxious, but I'm more than Doubtful Javier's worries."

Activity 14 - Part Four: Externalizing anxious thoughts

Step 9: Choose a specific time each day to address your worries. This helps prevent them from interfering throughout the day.

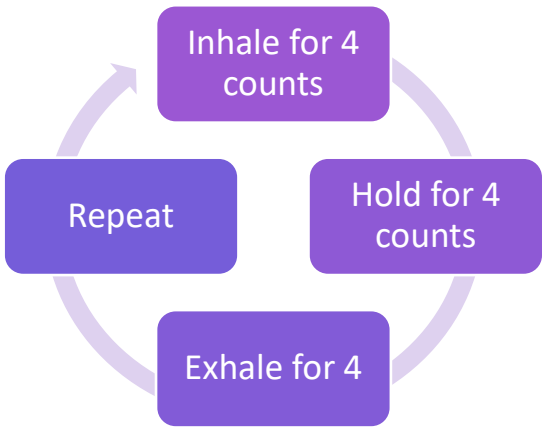
Example: Set aside 10 minutes before bed to address worries. Remind yourself that outside this time you are focusing on the present. **Write your plan here:**

Step 10: Practice mindful breathing to help manage anxious feelings when worries arise.

Example: Practice mindful breathing – inhale for 4 counts, hold for 4 counts, exhale for 4 counts. Repeat if needed.

See the following activities for help with mindful breathing:

Box Breathing, Mindful Breathing and Breath Awareness



Activity 14 - Part Five: Externalizing anxious thoughts

Step 11: Keep a journal to track how effectively you're externalizing and managing your anxious thoughts.

Example: Journal Entry - "I was able to explore and externalized my worries and used mindful breathing before the party. I enjoyed talking to friends and had a good time."

My Journal

By externalizing your worries and viewing them as separate from yourself, you can control how you view these worries. Remember, practice is key to combating and controlling your anxious thoughts. Incorporate this technique anytime you encounter an anxious thought or into your daily routine.

Activity 15 - Part One: Changing negative thoughts

Negative thoughts can significantly impact our emotions and behaviors. This worksheet will guide you through the process of identifying and challenging negative thoughts, replacing them with more positive and realistic alternatives. Follow the steps below:

Identify a negative thought: Write down a specific negative thought that you often experience. Be as specific as possible.

Example: **Negative thought-** *"I'll never be good enough to succeed."*

Challenge the negative thought by examining the evidence that supports or proves it false. Write down the evidence that contradicts the negative thought.

Example: **Evidence-** *"I have been successful in the past, got positive feedback, and was able to face the challenge. Everyone has strengths and weaknesses."*

Activity 15 - Part Two: Changing negative thoughts

Reflect on how this negative thought affects your emotions and behaviors. Write down the emotions and behaviors that are influenced by this thought.

Example: **Impact-** *Feeling discouraged, lacking motivation, avoiding challenges.*

Generate alternative thoughts that are more positive, balanced, and realistic. Write down at least three alternative thoughts that provide a different perspective.

Example: **Alternative thoughts-** "I am capable of learning and growing." OR "I have achieved success before, and I can do it again."

Activity 15 - Part Three: Changing negative thoughts

Choose the alternative thoughts that feel most realistic and helpful to you for each negative thought. Write down the selected new thoughts.

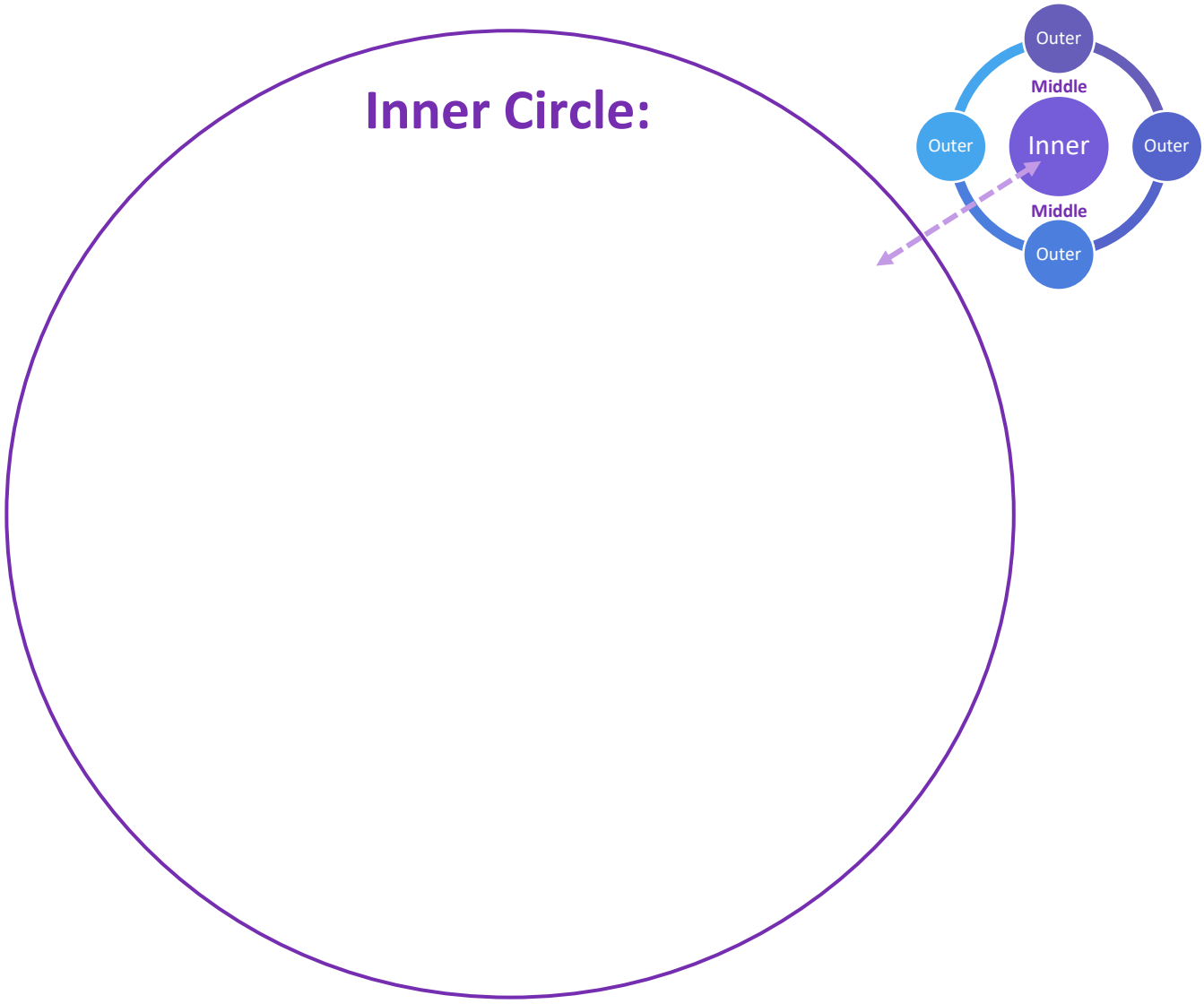
Practice using the new thought in challenging situations. Repeat it to yourself when negative thoughts arise. Over time, it will become more automatic and natural.

Remember, changing negative thoughts takes time and practice. Be patient with yourself and celebrate the small victories along the way. Use this worksheet whenever negative thoughts arise to challenge and replace them with more positive and realistic alternatives.

Activity 16 - Part One: Exploring your circle of control

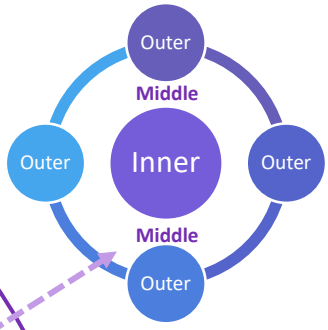
In life we all have control over some things, influence over others, and no control over some. This activity can help you to visualize these areas and ultimately help you prioritize your energy and attention where it matters most.

Step One - Inner circle: Write down things you have full control over. For example, your attitude, effort, and reaction towards others/things/situations.



Activity 16 - Part Two: Exploring your circle of control

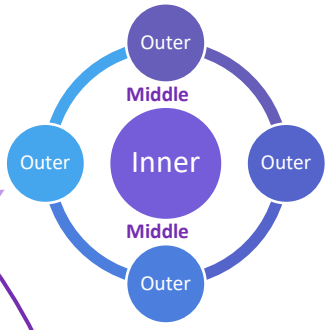
Step Two – Middle circle: Write down things you have **some control** over. For example, your relationships and school performance.



Middle Circle:

Activity 16 - Part Three: Exploring your circle of control

Step Three - Outer circle: Write down things you **do not have control** over. For example, the weather and other people's opinion.



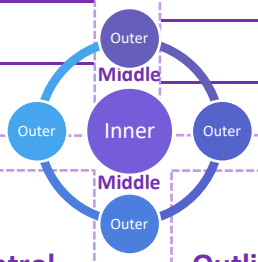
Outer Circle:

Activity 16 - Part Four: Exploring your circle of control

Step Four - Outer boxes: Reflect, understand, and come up with a plan.

Write down scenarios currently in your life. *Like a friend canceling plans*. How would you categorize the situation? Do you have control over it, some control or none?

Brainstorm ways you can cope with situations you can't control and what positive actions you can take instead.



Put your energy on the areas you have control or some control. Pick an item from inner and middle circle you want to focus on:

Outline specific steps you can take to work on these areas of focus:

Remember that not everything is within your control. Empower yourself by focusing on those areas where you can make a difference. This shift in focus can help you become more skilled in managing your stress and making positive choices that will improve your overall well-being.

Activity 17 - Part One: Understanding and managing emotions

Sometimes certain emotions can feel scary or overwhelming. To learn how to manage these emotions it is important to understand how the brain works during these difficult moments. Think of the brain like a container with a lid. When calm, the lid is on, and we can think clearly. When overwhelmed, the lid flips, and we react- physically or emotionally or both.

List common triggers that can "flip your lid" (*ex., conflict, stress, or criticism*):

List common things that can help you stay calm (lid-on) (ex., **box breathing**, or **mindful breathing**):

Activity 17 - Part Two: Understanding and managing emotions

Write scenarios that might trigger an emotional reaction (ex., being reprimanded by a parent, criticized by a friend, or losing a game).

Brainstorm healthy coping strategies you can use when your lid is flipped (ex., deep breathing, taking a break, talking to a friend).

Create a plan for when you feel your lid is about to flip. Pick one of the scenarios and a healthy coping strategy that could help. Practice by role playing with someone or with yourself.

Remember, exploring and reflecting on your emotions can help you understand how they impact your behavior and empower you to choose healthy coping strategies. By recognizing when the lid is about to flip, you take a pro-active approach by implementing a positive coping skill. This will allow you to manage an emotional challenge more effectively.

Activity 18 - Part One: My mental health crisis plan

Navigating life's problems and challenges is a journey of courage, determination, and hope. Each person has different abilities to face challenges. Those abilities just need to be explored, identified, and implemented. This activity can help you explore and identify your unique warning signs, triggers, and coping strategies. By understanding these patterns, you are empowering yourself to take a pro-active step towards overall well-being!

Recognizing Warning Signs: List specific physical or emotional signs that show you might be entering an emotional crisis. This could include rapid heartbeat, racing thoughts, extreme sadness, or feelings of hopelessness.

Identifying Triggers: Write down situations, events, or thoughts that may trigger a crisis for you. This could be academic stress, family conflicts, or specific social situations.

Thoughts and Feelings: Describe the thoughts and emotions you experience during a crisis. For instance, you might feel overwhelmed, anxious, or have negative self-talk like *"I can't handle this."*

Activity 18 - Part Two: My mental health crisis plan

Physical Sensations: List any physical sensations you experience during a crisis. This could be a racing heart, tense muscles, shortness of breath, or feeling lightheaded.

Safe Environment: Identify a safe space where you can go to calm down. This could be a specific room, a park, or a friend's house.

Trusted Contacts: List the names and contact information of people you can reach out to for support. Include family members, friends, or mental health professionals.

Coping Strategies: Write down techniques that help you relax and refocus. Deep breathing exercises, grounding techniques, or engaging in a creative activity are some examples.

Emergency Hotlines: Include contact details for local crisis hotlines or national helplines, like the **988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline**, where you can dial or text to 988. These are available 24/7 for immediate support. **You can also call 911 in case of an emergency.**

Professional Contacts: List the names and contact information of mental health professionals, therapists, or counselors you can turn to in times of crisis. Check out the **Resource** pages on pages 107-108 on how to find mental health services.

Activity 18 - Part Three: My mental health crisis plan

Self-Care Activities: Make a list of self-care practices that help you feel grounded and at ease. This could include taking a warm bath, going for a walk, or listening to calming music.

Distraction Techniques: Write down activities that can divert your focus from distressing thoughts. This might involve reading a book, drawing, or solving puzzles.

De-escalation Strategies: Describe methods you can use to calm yourself down when feeling overwhelmed. This might involve progressive muscle relaxation or **mindfulness** exercises.

Activity 18 - Part Four: My mental health crisis plan

Follow-Up Plan: Write down actions to take after a crisis has passed, like scheduling an appointment with a mental health professional for further support.

Reaching Out for Help: Outline steps to take if you feel you need immediate assistance, such as calling a trusted person, a crisis hotline, or seeking help at a local hospital.

Use this crisis plan to guide and help you recognize, address, and manage these challenges in an effective manner. Allow this insight to empower you to use your plan to regain a sense of control and calmness. Remember, to update your crisis plan regularly and share it with a trusted person who can support you when needed. If you find yourself in a crisis or emergency, do not hesitate to reach out for help!

Activity 19 - Part One: Navigating anger

Anger is a normal emotion that arises when we face a situation that we perceive as bad or difficult. Even though anger is a natural response, if it gets out control it will affect not only our emotional well-being but our relationships with others. It is important to understand the connections between causes, triggers, thoughts, physical sensations, and behaviors, to learn coping techniques to control it.

Can you recall a recent incident that made you angry?

How did that incident made you feel emotionally and physically? (*Ex., emotionally: disappointed, sadden, frustrated. Physically: heart racing, flushed face, or clenched fists*)

Thinking back at that moment, can you identify what triggered your anger?

Ex. trigger	Friend canceled plans.
Ex. thought	*"They don't care about me at all."*

What was your trigger:

What were your thoughts:

Activity 19 - Part Two: Navigating anger

How did you react? *(ex., shouting, made verbal threats, or hit something or someone)*

Challenge your triggering thoughts using more rational perspectives.

Ex., trigger	Friend canceled plans.
Ex., irrational Thought	*"They don't care about me at all."*
Ex., challenge your irrational thought	*"My friend might have a valid reason for canceling."*

Challenge your irrational thought:

Explore healthier ways to manage anger. *(For example, deep breathing, talking to someone, or taking a break.)* Write down these strategies.

Activity 19 - Part Three: Navigating anger

Reflect on what you have learned and how you plan to manage anger differently in the future.

Write down your plan

Remember to take the time to explore and reflect on the patterns and triggers that lead to anger. Identifying these patterns or triggers can also lead to identifying coping strategies to help you prevent or manage these moments more effectively.

Activity 20 - Part One: Understanding your hidden layers of emotions

Anger, like an iceberg, often conceals deeper emotions beneath the surface. By recognizing the hidden layers of your anger, you can address the underlying issues, leading to more effective way of managing your emotions. This can help prevent anger and promote healthier emotional responses. This activity will help you explore the underlying causes of your anger and develop healthier ways to manage it.

List recent situations where you felt angry and describe how you expressed it outwardly.

"I got into an argument with my parent. I slammed the door shut and muttered in frustration."

Reflect on what deeper emotions might be hidden beneath your anger. Are there feelings of hurt, disappointment, or fear?

"Beneath the anger about the argument, I felt sad and worried that my parent sees me as a burden."

Activity 20 - Part Two: Understanding your hidden layers of emotions

Identifying **triggers** (what sets you off): Write down specific situations, people, or events that tend to trigger your anger.

***Trigger** - Receiving criticism from a teacher or parent.*

Underlying thoughts: Consider the beliefs or thoughts that might be contributing to your anger. Are there recurring patterns in your thinking?

***Core Belief** - "I have to be perfect to be valued."*

Understanding your anger iceberg is a crucial step towards better **regulating your emotions**. Remember, it's normal to feel anger, but exploring and understanding the deep reasons for this emotion empowers you to respond in ways that are more aligned with your true feelings.

Here are some tips:

1. *Practice deep breathing or take a short break when you feel anger rising.*
2. *Communicate your feelings calmly and assertively.*
3. *Seek support from trusted individuals if you're struggling to navigate your emotions.*

By using the iceberg symbolism, you're exploring the complexities of your emotions, ultimately leading to more meaningful and authentic connections with yourself and others.

Activity 21 - Part One: Managing anger

Anger is a natural emotion but managing it in a healthy way is essential for overall well-being. Use this activity to explore your anger triggers, practice coping strategies, and develop effective ways to manage your anger.

Step 1: Identifying Anger Triggers

Think about situations or events that often trigger your anger. Write them down here:

Step 2: Recognizing Physical Signs

When you start feeling angry, your body may give you warning signs. Identify the physical signs you experience when you get angry.

Check the ones that apply:

[] Clenched fists
[] Stomach tension
[] Racing heart
[] Tight muscles
[] Flushed face
[] Headache
[] Rapid breathing
[] Others (write them down):

Step 3: Practicing Calming Techniques

Choose three calming techniques from the list below that you can use when you feel angry. Practice them regularly to find out which ones work best for you.

- *Mindful breathing (pg. 18)*
- *Progressive muscle relaxation (pg. 19)*
- *5-4-3-2-1 grounding (pg. 26)*
- *Breath awareness (pg. 16)*
- *Box breathing (pg. 17)*

Activity 21 - Part Two: Managing anger

Step 4: Communicating Assertively

Practice assertive communication to express your feelings and needs without aggression. Use "I" statements to express how you feel and what you need in a calm manner. Write some "I" statement below.

For example: *"I feel frustrated when I'm interrupted. Can you please give me a chance to finish speaking?"*

Practice writing "I" statements:

Step 5: Positive Self-Talk

Challenge negative thoughts that fuel your anger with positive and realistic self-talk that encourages self-growth and awareness. Write down a positive statement you can tell yourself when you feel angry.

For example: *"I am in charge of my reactions, and I choose kindness!"*

Positive Self-Talk:

Activity 21 - Part Three: Managing anger

Step 6: Reflecting on Outcomes
After practicing the calming techniques and assertive communication, reflect on how you handled recent anger-triggering situations. Were you able to manage your anger more effectively? What can you do differently in the future?

For example: *"After using calming techniques, I noticed a significant shift in my mood. Instead of reacting impulsively, I took a moment to breathe and regain control."*

Reflection:

Managing anger is not an easy thing to do as it takes time and practice to learn to manage this emotion. Use this worksheet as a guide to explore your anger triggers, learn calming techniques, and develop healthier ways to express and manage your anger. Remember that seeking support from trusted adults or a mental health professional can be helpful in navigating through challenging emotions.

7. Navigating Shelter Life Challenges

Activity 22 - Part One: Understanding shelter fatigue

Shelter fatigue is a term sometimes used by **advocates** to describe the feeling of exhaustion, frustration, or helplessness that some youth feel who have been living in shelter for an extended period. It often arises due to the feeling of uncertainty, limited personal space, and lack of control over one's living situation. Some might also find the shelter environment uncomfortable or overwhelming to their senses, either due to the sounds, smells, textures, lighting, taste of food or the newness of it all. Youth may miss the comfort of their own home, the freedom to make choices, and the sense of stability. Use this worksheet to explore shelter fatigue and coping strategies that can help youth with it.

(If you are struggling to get started or need help to coordinate some of these activities, we encourage you to ask for help from an advocate or a shelter staff (e.g., clinician, case manager or shelter supervisor.)

Write down situations or moments when you've felt restless, irritable, or overwhelmed by being indoors for extended periods.

List specific situations or factors that contribute to your shelter fatigue, like the lack of outdoor time or monotony of indoor environment, for example.

Activity 22 - Part Two: Understanding shelter fatigue

Reflect on how shelter fatigue affects your mood, motivation, and overall well-being. Consider moments when it influenced your interactions with others.

Brainstorm activities that can alleviate shelter fatigue. Include indoor and outdoor options like reading, walking outside, and listening to music, for example.

Activity 22 - Part Three: Understanding shelter fatigue

Acknowledge that it's normal to feel restless during extended periods indoors. Remind yourself that taking breaks is essential for your mental well-being.

Select one or two coping strategies from your list. Outline when and how you'll incorporate them into your routine. (*For example, 15 minutes of stretching in the morning, or reading for 30 minutes before bed*).

Identify ways to introduce variety into your indoor environment. (*For example, you might consider rearranging furniture, trying new hobbies, and exploring different rooms for work or relaxation*).

Activity 22 - Part Four: Understanding shelter fatigue

Set specific times for outdoor activities, even if it's just for a short walk or spending time in a garden. Write down your preferred times and then adjust the times as you figure out which works best for you. (*This might take collaboration with shelter staff. Ask shelter staff to help you plan and coordinate.)*

Schedule regular virtual chats/or telephone calls with friends or family. Engaging in conversations and activities together can alleviate feelings of isolation. Write down the names of people who are in your list of contacts you would like to talk to. (*This might take collaboration with shelter staff.)*

Activity 22 - Part Five: Understanding shelter fatigue

Journal about how applying these coping strategies has influenced your overall mood and sense of well-being. Celebrate any positive changes you notice.

Remember, it's normal to feel shelter fatigue, especially during extended periods indoors. By recognizing it and applying these coping strategies, you're taking steps to nurture your emotional well-being. Keep trying different skills to find what works best for you.

Activity 23 - Part One: Building resilience

Shelter fatigue happens because living in a shelter can be challenging. You may miss the comfort of your own home, the freedom to make choices, and the sense of stability. This activity worksheet focuses on building resilience and helping you explore and identify your inner strengths and adaptability while navigating shelter life.

Write down the personal strengths or qualities you admire in yourself.

"I am determined and resourceful."

Identify one short-term and one long-term goal.

***Short-term** might be identifying and implementing a daily routine.*
***long-term** might involve learning a new language.*

Short-term goal:

Long-term goal:

Activity 23 - Part Two: Building resilience

Create a routine plan.

Outline a daily schedule that includes activities like mealtimes, self-care, seeking resources, and relaxation.

Do not be afraid to ask for help. Seek support.

Identify at least two sources of support within the shelter (ex., staff members, fellow residents, support groups).

Incorporate self-care.

List three self-care activities you enjoy and can easily incorporate into your daily routine (ex., journaling, stretching your muscles, deep breathing exercises).

Activity 23 - Part Three: Building resilience

Engage in group activities or initiate conversations with fellow residents. Building a sense of community can provide crucial emotional support.

Identify at least two activities you can practice (ex., playing a board game with peer or talk with a peer about the movie you just watched).

Set healthy boundaries.

Reflect on situations where you've felt uncomfortable. Identify specific boundaries you can put in place to protect your well-being.

Reflect on your growth.

Think of an unexpected change you experienced in the shelter. Reflect on how you adapted to it and what you learned from the experience. Journal about how you've grown or changed since being in the shelter. Celebrate the progress you've made, no matter how small it may seem.

You have taken important steps towards building resilience and growth during your time in the shelter. Keep nurturing these skills and know that you have the ability to overcome challenges and create positive change in your life.

Activity 24 - Part One: Managing overwhelming emotions

Shelter fatigue can intensify feelings of anxiety, sadness, and frustration due to the prolonged exposure to challenging living conditions and uncertainty about the future. This activity can help explore and manage intense emotions that might come up during this time.

List emotions you find most overwhelming in the shelter *(ex., anxiety, sadness, frustration).* *"I often feel anxious and frustrated."*
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Identify situations or factors that trigger these intense emotions. *"I feel anxious when I don't know what will happen next."*

Activity 24 - Part Two: Managing overwhelming emotions

List techniques for managing emotions, (ex., deep breathing, or progressive muscle relaxation). List what works best for you:
1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.
7.
8.
9.
10.

Create an "intense emotion toolkit" with your preferred strategies for each overwhelming emotion. What would you include? *"Box breathing really helps me during times of worry."*

Creating a sense of control within the shelter can help you regain a feeling of stability and reduce shelter fatigue. Small changes in your daily routine can make a big difference in how you feel. Practicing these techniques and including them in your shelter routine will help you navigate the challenges that arise.

Activity 25: Finding support and connection in the shelter

Being in a shelter for an extended period can result in a sense of isolation and disconnection from one's **support system**. This can sometimes lead to feelings of anxiety, sadness, frustration and even anger. This activity can help explore and guide you through the emotional struggles you may encounter in the shelter. It also can also encourage you to build a support system by reaching out to others for guidance and support.

List people in the shelter that could be someone of support, such as staff or a peer.
"I can talk to a staff member when I'm feeling down."

List techniques for managing emotions, (ex., journaling, or progressive muscle relaxation).
"When I'm feeling down it helps writing what I'm feeling in my journal."

Offer support to others. Being supportive to fellow peers can foster a sense of community and strengthen your connections.

Ask others how they're doing and offer a listening ear. Simple gestures like offering to help with a task can also go a long way.

Seek support from staff or clinicians. Don't hesitate to reach out to them for guidance or support. They are there to help you navigate your time in the shelter.

Schedule a one-on-one meeting with a counselor to discuss any concerns or questions you may have about your stay.

Try talking to someone new in the shelter. Taking the first step in initiating conversations can lead to meaningful connections. Consider conversation starters like asking about shared experiences or interests.

"Hi, I noticed we both enjoy reading. Do you have any book recommendations?"

Participating in group activities can be a great way to meet new people and share experiences.

Look for flyers, notices, or announcements about upcoming events or activities within the shelter. Consider attending those that interest you.

Remember, building connections takes time, and it's okay to take things at your own pace. By taking these steps, you're working towards creating a supportive environment for yourself during your time in the shelter.

Activity 26 - Part One: Coping with grief and loss

Grief is the process of emotional adjustment to a big loss. Often this big loss is the loss of someone or something we love. It can also be felt when some experience significant life changes like the changes that occur during migration. Leaving behind familiar environments, routines, and sometimes even close relationships can evoke feelings of loss. It's important to note that not everyone experiences grief in the same way and that's ok. Use this worksheet to explore your emotions, memories, and coping strategies related to grief.

Step 1: Write down the details of the loss you are experiencing, such as the loss of person, or situation that you loved.

Loss:

Step 2: Explore the emotions you are experiencing due to the loss.

Check all that apply:

[] Sadness [] Anger [] Guilt [] Confusion [] Loneliness
[] Relief [] Numbness
[] Other: (List below)

Step 3: Choose a creative way to express your feelings about the loss:

[] Write a letter to the person/pet/situation about what has the loss meant to you.
[] Create a poem or song expressing your emotions.
[] Draw or paint a picture that represents your feelings.
[] Share a favorite memory with a trusted friend or family member.

Activity 26 - Part Two: Coping with grief and loss

Step 4: Identify healthy coping strategies that can help you deal with grief and loss. Check all that resonate with you:

[] Talk to a friend or family member about your feelings.
[] Seek support from a counselor or therapist.
[] Engage in physical activities like exercise or sports.
[] Create a memory box or scrapbook to honor the loss.
[] Join a support group to connect with others who might be going through something similar and might relate with you.
[] Express yourself through writing or journaling.
[] Other: (List below)

Step 5: Be gentle with yourself during this time of grief. Write a compassionate and encouraging message to yourself, acknowledging your feelings, and giving yourself permission to grieve.
Self-Compassion Message:

Step 6: Reflect on your favorite memories of the person or about what you miss. Write down at least three cherished memories in the spaces below:

Even though grieving is a natural process, it does not mean it's easy. Everyone's healing process is different but if you feel that this is very difficult for you to handle alone, please remember that it's ok to seek support from friends, family or even from a professional, like a mental health therapist. Most importantly, be kind and patient with yourself as you navigate this difficult time.

Activity 27: Managing migratory grief

Missing your home country can bring about feelings of longing and sadness. Use this worksheet to explore healthy ways to cope with these emotions and find a sense of connection and comfort.

List specific triggers that evoke feelings of longing and sadness about your home country. These could be certain smells, sights, foods, or memories.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Write down the emotions you experience when you're missing your home country. For example, do you feel sad, nostalgic, or a mix of different emotions?

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Take time to remember positive memories from your home country. Write about experiences that bring you joy and comfort.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Create a memory box to have a tangible connection to your roots. Gather items that remind you of your home country, such as photos, souvenirs, or letters. Make a list of what you would include.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Explore cultural activities from your home country that you can participate in wherever you are. This could include cooking traditional meals, listening to music, or practicing customs.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Reach out to friends and family from your home country. Share your feelings and reminisce about shared experiences. Make a list of who you want to connect with.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Develop a daily routine and set future goals that includes activities you enjoy and goals you want to accomplish in general. This can give you something to look forward to.

Monday: _____
Tuesday: _____
Wednesday: _____
Thursday: _____
Friday: _____
Weekend: _____

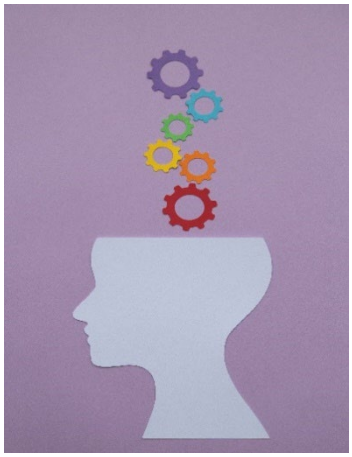
Be kind to yourself. It's okay to feel sad and miss your home country. Allow yourself to experience these emotions without judgment. If your feelings of longing and sadness become overwhelming, consider talking to a mental health professional who can provide guidance and coping strategies.

Immigration is a journey of courage and many sacrifices. Even though longing is a natural part of this journey it does not mean it's easy. We encourage you to engage in activities that connect you to your culture and seek support as needed. You might have left many elements of your culture behind but remember, it is still within you and that's something no one can take away.

8. Setting Healthy Boundaries and Building Your Self-Esteem

Activity 28 - Part One: Building your self-esteem

Self-esteem is about valuing and believing in yourself. Use this worksheet to explore your self-esteem, identify areas of improvement, and build a more positive self-image.



Reflect on your thoughts and feelings about yourself. Answer the following questions honestly:

What are three things you like or appreciate about yourself?

1.
2.
3.

What are three areas you feel less confident or struggle with?

1.
2.
3.

List at least five positive qualities or strengths you have. These can be your talents, skills, or personal traits.

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.

Identify any negative thoughts or self-critical statements you often tell yourself. Challenge these thoughts by writing a more realistic and compassionate response.

Negative Thought: "I'm not good at this."

Positive Response: "I'm learning and making progress."

Activity 28 - Part Two: Building your self-esteem

Set one or two achievable goals that will help improve your self-esteem. These goals should be specific, measurable, and within your control.

Goal 1: *"I will practice a deep breathing exercise for 5 minutes each morning."*

Action Steps to Achieve Goal 1:

Goal 2: *"I will walk for 15 minutes, 3 times a week to improve my physical and mental health."*

Action Steps to Achieve Goal 2:

Create **positive affirmations** that you can repeat daily to boost your self-esteem. Write at least three affirmations below: *"I'm confident in my abilities and trust in my unique strengths and talents."*

1.
2.
3.

Take a moment to celebrate your past achievements, no matter how big or small. Write down at least three achievements you are proud of.

1.
2.
3.

Develop a **self-care** plan that includes activities or practices that promote self-esteem and well-being. Write down your self-care plan below:

Building self-esteem is a journey that requires patience and **self-compassion**. If you find it challenging to improve self-esteem on your own, consider seeking support from a trusted adult or a mental health professional who can provide guidance and encouragement on your journey to developing a positive self-image. Remember you are valuable, worthy, and deserving of love and acceptance – including from yourself.

Activity 29 - Part One: Setting healthy boundaries

Setting healthy **boundaries** is an important skill that contributes to your well-being and self-respect. Use this worksheet to explore your boundaries, communicate them effectively, and practice **assertiveness**.

Step 1: Reflect on your personal limits and values. What are some situations or behaviors that make you uncomfortable?

Example:

"I feel uncomfortable when someone invades my personal space without permission."

1.
2.
3.

Step 2: Identify three types of boundaries: physical, emotional, and time related. Provide examples for each.

Examples:

Physical: *"Not allowing anyone to touch me without my consent."*
Emotional: *"Choosing not to share personal feelings with someone I don't trust."*
Time-Related: *"Enjoying time for myself to relax and recharge without interruptions."*

1.
2.
3.

Step 3: List situations or behaviors that trigger discomfort or stress. These are cues that indicate a boundary might be needed.

Example:

"I get stressed when someone constantly asks about my personal life."

1.
2.
3.

Step 4: Write down your needs in various areas of your life, such as friendships, school, family, and personal time.

Example:

"I need quiet time after school to decompress and do my own activities."

1.
2.
3.

Activity 29 - Part Two: Setting healthy boundaries

Step 5: Practice role-play scenarios where you might need to set boundaries. Practice assertive communication by using "I" statements.

Example:

Practicing saying, "I appreciate your interest, but I prefer to keep some things private."

1.
2.
3.

Step 6: List things that you absolutely will not tolerate in any relationship or situation. These are your non-negotiable boundaries.

Example:

"I will not tolerate anyone disrespecting my opinions or belittling me."

1.	4.
2.	5.
3.	6.

Step 7: Create your boundary Plan. Choose a situation where you need to set a boundary. Define what the boundary is, why it's important, and how you'll communicate it.

Example:

Situation: Discussing feelings with friends.
Boundary: *"I won't share certain personal feelings that make me uncomfortable."*
Importance: Protects my emotional well-being.
Communication: *"I'd rather not talk about that topic right now, but I'm happy to discuss something else."*

Situation:	
Boundary:	
Importance:	
Communication:	

Step 8: Anticipate possible pushback when setting boundaries. Brainstorm assertive responses to maintain your boundaries.

Example:

Pushback: *"Why can't you just share like everyone else?"*
Response: *"I appreciate your curiosity, but some things are personal to me. I hope you understand."*

Pushback:	
Response:	
Pushback:	
Response:	

Activity 29 - Part Three: Setting healthy boundaries

Step 9: Practice saying “no.” Write down polite but firm ways to say "no" when you need to decline something that crosses your boundaries.

Example:

"Thank you for inviting me, but I can't make it this time."

1.
2.
3.

Step 10: Describe a recent situation where you successfully set a boundary. How did it make you feel? What did you learn from the experience?

Example:

"I set a boundary with my friend when they wanted me to lend them my belongings without asking. It felt empowering to stand up for my personal space."

1.
2.
3.

Step 11: Write down a **positive affirmation** that reinforces your right to set and uphold healthy boundaries.

Example:

Affirmation: *"I have the right to set boundaries that protect my well-being and comfort."*

1.
2.
3.

Step 12: Apply what you’ve learned. Choose one situation where you'll apply your newfound boundary-setting skills this week. Write down your plan of action.

Example:

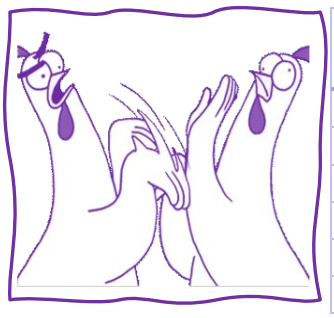
Situation: When a friend pressures you to do something you're uncomfortable with.
Plan: *"I'll calmly explain that I have my own limits and won't do something that goes against them."*

Situation:	
Plan:	
Situation:	
Plan:	

Remember, these are just examples. Your boundaries will be unique to your preferences and values. Setting healthy boundaries is an act of self-respect and self-care. By understanding your limits, communicating assertively, and consistently enforcing your boundaries, you're developing healthy relationships and ensuring your own well-being.

Activity 30 - Part One: Conflict resolution

Conflict is a natural part of relationships, and how we manage it makes a difference. This worksheet can help you navigate conflicts and disagreements in a healthy and constructive way. Follow the steps below to understand the conflict, communicate effectively, and work towards a resolution.



Describe the situation or issue that led to the conflict. Be specific about what happened and how it made you feel.

Identify and write down your emotions about the conflict. Are you feeling angry, hurt, frustrated, or something else?

"I felt frustrated and unheard during the argument."

Consider the other person's point of view. Write down what you think they might be feeling and why.

"They might have been concerned, which led to their strong reaction."

List three "I" statements that express your feelings and needs without blaming or accusing the other person.

"I felt frustrated because I believe I am responsible enough to stay out later with my friends."

Write down one question you can ask the other person to better understand their perspective. Listen without interrupting.

" Can you share why you think I should have an early curfew?"

Activity 30 - Part Two: Conflict resolution

Identify areas of agreement or shared interests. Write down a couple of points where you both can find common ground.

"I could get lost as I'm new to this city and we both want my safety."

Identify areas of agreement, pros, and cons for both. Write down a couple of points with common ground.

Youth: "I agree to an earlier return home on the weekdays, but I would like to negotiate a little later return on the weekends. To not worry you, I would always communicate where I'm at and with who."

Adult:" I agree to try your suggestions, but you would need to communicate with me who you are with and where."

Select the solution that seems most fair and beneficial to both parties. Outline the steps you'll take to put the chosen solution into action. Set a time to meet with each other to check how everything is working out. Reflect on how effective communication and collaboration can lead to positive outcomes.

Follow up to discuss how the compromise agreement is working.

"We agreed on a compromise, a slightly later curfew on weekends and check-in in two weeks to see how the curfew arrangement is working for both."

Conflicts can be a great opportunity for growth as it teaches us about other's perspectives and how to communicate better. An effective conflict resolution plan is one where everyone involved understands each other's perspectives, communicates openly, and works together to find a resolution. We encourage you to approach conflict resolution with openness and the willingness to listen as it can lead to a healthy relationship.

9. Building A Support System

Activity 31 - Part One: Creating a support system

Building a **support system** in a new country as a newcomer can help make the transition and adjustment smoother. A support system in your new environment can provide an understanding of your experiences and can offer valuable guidance. We encourage you to reach out and engage with your local community. Consider joining language classes, participating in cultural events, and finding groups centered around interests similar to yours. Use this worksheet to identify potential sources of support and create a plan to set up connections and relationships in your new community.

List three areas in which you might need support (e.g., language learning, school, emotional well-being).
1.
2.
3.

Are there any family members or friends already in the new place?	If yes, how can you strengthen your connection with them?

Write down the names of teachers, classmates, or co-worker you can approach for academic or professional support.	Research local community organizations, cultural centers, or clubs that align with your interests or background. ***Identify organizations that you can reach out to for potential support or involvement.***

Consider finding language exchange partners to practice the local language and share your own language.	Are there individuals in your field of interest whom you admire? How can you connect with them for guidance and mentorship?

Activity 31 - Part Two: Creating a support system in a new place

Explore online platforms or social media groups for newcomers in your community. ***List online communities you can join to connect with others and seek advice.***	Look for volunteer opportunities that align with your interests. Volunteering can help you meet like-minded individuals and contribute to the community. ***List volunteer opportunities.***

Research if there are counseling services or support groups available for newcomers or youth in your area. *(You can ask a local school, or community clinic for suggestions.)* ***How can joining such groups provide you with emotional support and a safe space to share?***

Based on your identified sources of support, create a plan detailing how you will reach out and initiate connections. ***Set a goal to connect with at least one potential source of support within the next week.***

Write down your thoughts on the importance of building a support system in your new place. ***How do you think having a support system can enhance your well-being and overall experience?***

Establishing a support system in your new community is a valuable step towards creating a sense of belonging and well-being. Remember, seeking support and reaching out to others, you're taking proactive measures to ensure you have the support and sense of belonging you need in your new community.

Activity 32 - Part One: My journey of adaptation

This activity can help you reflect on your journey of adapting to a new community and life. Take your time to answer the questions and consider the emotions and experiences you've encountered.

When did you arrive in this new country?	What were your initial thoughts and feelings when you first arrived?

List two challenges you've encountered since arriving in this new country.	How have these challenges made you feel? (e.g., frustrated, overwhelmed, determined)

Identify one cultural difference that you've noticed between your home country and your new country.	How has this difference impacted your daily life and interactions?

Recall a positive experience or achievement you've had since arriving.	How did this moment make you feel? What did it teach you about your strength and resilience?

Activity 32 - Part Two: My journey of adaptation

Who are the people who have supported you in this new journey? (e.g., parents, family, friends, mentors, teachers)	How have their support and encouragement made a difference in your adjustment process?

List one short-term goal (one you can achieve in the next few weeks).	List one long-term goal (one you can achieve in the next 6-12 months).

Write down several **self-care** activity you can do when you're feeling overwhelmed or homesick.

Remember that adjusting to a new country takes time, and it's okay to have both challenging moments and positive experiences along the way.

Activity 33: Navigating an environment

Adjusting to a new environment can be challenging, but it's also an opportunity for growth and new experiences. This worksheet will guide you through practical steps to help you get aquainted with and adapt to your new surroundings.

Take some time to explore your new neighborhood. Familiarize yourself with nearby stores, parks, and public transportation. Consider taking short walks or bike rides around the area to become more familiar with it. ***List your favorite:***

Learn basic local language phrases. Knowing a few basic phrases can be immensely helpful in daily interactions. Start with greetings, common questions, and polite expressions. Use language learning apps, online tutorials, or seek out English classes (ESL). ***List some words you have learned:***

Seek community resources. Research and make a list of local resources such as community centers, libraries, and cultural organizations that can offer support and opportunities for connection. Visit the local community center or library to learn about events or programs they offer for newcomers. ***List the resources you have found:***

Join cultural or language exchange groups (like English classes). Connecting with people who share your background or language can provide a sense of belonging and a support system. Check out the public library or community center where such groups might advertise meetings or events. ***List the groups or events you have found:***

By exploring your surroundings, learning key language phrases, seeking community resources, and establishing a structured routine, you're taking proactive steps towards adapting to your new environment.

Activity 34: Building connections in a new community

Moving to a new place, especially as a youth to a new country, can feel intimidating and lonely. Building connections and a **support system** that understands the challenges you face can make the adjustment to your new environment feel less intimidating and lonely. These connections also bring opportunities for learning, growth, and exposure to new things which can positively impact your overall well-being. Use this worksheet to explore ways you can connect with others and create a sense of belonging in your new community.

List three hobbies or activities you enjoy or would like to try.	How can you explore these interests in your new community?

Most towns have a community center. Research upcoming cultural events or celebrations in your area.	How can taking part in these events help you connect with people who share your cultural background?

Look for volunteer opportunities that allow you to contribute to your new community.	How can volunteering help you connect with others and make a positive impact?

Write down one step you will take this week to connect with someone new or engage in a community activity.

Remember building connections and seeking out opportunities to connect with others are important steps towards creating a support network and fostering a sense of belonging in your new home.

Activity 35: Establishing daily routines

Having a structured routine can provide a sense of stability and purpose, especially in a new environment. This worksheet will guide you through creating a daily routine tailored to your needs.

Determine the most important activities in your day, such as work, your classes, language learning, **self-care**, and leisure. **Make a list of activities and prioritize them based on their significance and urgency.**	1. 2. 3. 4. 5.
Mark specific time for each activity in your schedule/calendar. This helps create a sense of structure and ensures that you have time for essential tasks.Use a planner or a scheduling app to visually organize your day. **Write down the times and day you would like to do this activity.**	Activity 1 (day and time): Activity 2 (day and time): Activity 3 (day and time): Activity 4 (day and time): Activity 5 (day and time):
Create a balance between productive tasks and relaxation. Both are crucial for a healthy routine. ***Productive example:*** *Learning a new skill* ***Relaxing examples:*** *Quiet time, stretching, deep breathing, or a brief walk.* **Write down a relaxation activity for every productive task.**	Productive Task: Relaxing Task:
Regularly reflect on your routine to assess if it's meeting your needs. Adjustments may be necessary as you settle into your new environment. Set aside time weekly to review and adjust your routine based on what's working and what needs improvement.	What worked? What needs improvement?

Remember, it's good to seek support and make adjustments along the way. Your ability to adapt and thrive is a testament to your resilience and strength.

10. Gratitude and Self-Care

Practicing gratitude is an important part of nurturing your **self-care** routine as it allows you to acknowledge the small moments of joy, kindness, and progress, even during moments of difficulty. These moments of gratitude can boost your mood, reduce stress, and make you feel more content.

Activity 36 - Part One: Gratitude practice

Use this worksheet as a starting point to develop your gratitude practice and integrate it into your self-care routine. Over time, you'll find that the simple act of recognizing and appreciating the positive aspects of your life can contribute to your overall well-being and bring a sense of joy to each day.

My Gratitude Plan

Three Things I'm Grateful for Today:

1.
2.
3.

Reflect on Why You're Grateful:

Why are you grateful for the first thing you listed above?

What makes you appreciate the second thing you listed?

How does the third thing you listed bring positivity into your life?

Activity 36 - Part Two: Gratitude practice

One Small Act of Kindness I Can Do:

Choose a simple act of kindness you can do today for someone else:

How does this act of kindness contribute to your gratitude practice?

My Gratitude Ritual:

Describe a daily or weekly gratitude ritual you'd like to establish. *For example, you could make writing what you are grateful for that day or week in your journal as your ritual:*

How do you think this ritual will influence your outlook and well-being?

Visual Representation:

Draw or find an image that symbolizes gratitude to you. This could be a drawing, a photo, or a printed image.

Review and Reflect:

Take a moment each week to review your gratitude practice. Reflect on how it's impacting your perspective and overall mood.

We encourage you to continue with your gratitude journaling journey. Practicing gratitude can shift your focus from what's lacking in your life to the positive things you do have in your life. This does not mean you can't develop or want new dreams and goals. Appreciating and highlighting the positive aspects of life does not mean that you ignore or invalidate your real feelings. We will explain this further in the next activity on page 90.

Activity 37 - Part One: Avoiding "toxic" positivity

Emotions are a natural part of being human. It's essential to recognize that not all emotions are positive, and there's nothing wrong with that. This worksheet will help you understand **toxic positivity**, why it's important to acknowledge your true feelings, and how to navigate guilt and dismissive attitudes towards your emotions.

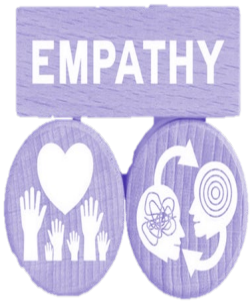
Reflect on moments when you or others have encountered toxic positivity.	For instance, maybe someone told you to "just be happy" when you were feeling down. **How did it make you feel?**

Feeling sadness, anger, or fear is a natural part of life. These emotions serve a purpose and should not be ignored or dismissed. When you feel sad, acknowledge it without judgment.	Say to yourself, "It's okay to feel sad right now." You might also find a quiet space to sit and allow yourself to fully feel the emotion. **How would this look for you?**

Sometimes, people feel guilty for experiencing negative emotions, especially when they believe they should always be happy. Remind yourself that it's okay to feel sad, and that your emotions are valid.	Challenge the guilt by asking, "Why do I feel this way, and is it justified?" For example, if you feel guilty for feeling sad on a sunny day, remind yourself that your emotions are not bound by the weather. **How would this look for you?**

Activity 37 - Part Two: Avoiding "toxic" positivity

Bottling up or hiding your real emotions can lead to increased stress, anxiety, and depression.	Find a healthy outlet to express your emotions. This could be talking to a friend, writing in a journal, or even engaging in creative activities like drawing or painting. **How would this look for you?**



Just as your emotions are valid, so are the feelings of others. Dismissing or downplaying someone else's emotions is not empathetic. Practice active listening when someone shares their feelings. Offer support and empathy rather than trying to "fix" their emotions.	For instance, if a friend tells you they're feeling down, you might say, "I'm here for you. Would you like to talk about it?" **How would that look for you?**

Ignoring your problems and hiding painful emotions won't make them disappear. It's essential to address challenges and seek solutions.	Identify one issue or problem you've been avoiding. Take a small step towards addressing it, even if it feels challenging. For example, if you've been avoiding a difficult conversation with someone, you might start by writing down your thoughts and then plan a time to talk.

It's natural to experience a wide range of emotions, including sadness and anger. Embrace your true feelings and be kind to yourself and others as you navigate the complex world of emotions. Remember, it is also natural and more than ok to seek help from a trusted friend, adult or professional if you need help navigating your mental health, especially if your feelings or emotions are becoming overwhelming.

Activity 38: Ideas for building your self-care plan

Now that we've explored many types of activities and strategies to support your well-being, it's time to bring it all together and build your personalized self-care plan. Consider the activities that resonated with you the most, the areas of self-care you want to focus on, and the routines that align with your daily life. Your self-care plan should reflect your unique needs and preferences, designed to support your physical, emotional, and mental health. You can use the following chart as a guide as you create your own self-care plan.

Self-Care Category	Examples/Ideas
Identify Personal Needs and Preferences: Reflect on activities, practices, and experiences that make you feel happy, relaxed, and rejuvenated. Consider hobbies, interests, and things that bring you joy.	• *Listening to music that you enjoy* • *Spending time with pets* • *Playing a musical instrument* • *Exploring new hobbies like painting or cooking*
Physical Self-Care: Include activities that nourish your body, such as regular exercise, getting enough sleep, eating balanced meals, and staying hydrated.	• *Going for a jog or walk outside* • *Getting 7-9 hours of sleep each night* • *Trying a new healthy recipe* • *Drinking enough water*
Emotional Self-Care: Focus on strategies that support your emotional well-being, such as journaling, expressing feelings through art, engaging in mindfulness or meditation, and talking to friends or family.	• *Keeping a journal to express your thoughts and feelings* • *Watching a funny movie or TV show* • *Practicing deep breathing exercises* • *Talking to a friend or family member about your day*
Social Self-Care: Prioritize spending time with people who uplift and support you. This can include connecting with friends, family, or joining clubs or groups that align with your interests.	• *Organizing a virtual game night with friends* • *Spending quality time with family members* • *Joining a club or group related to your interests* • *Participating in volunteer activities in your community*
Intellectual Self-Care: Engage your mind by reading, learning new skills, solving puzzles, or pursuing creative activities that challenge and stimulate your thinking.	• *Reading a book that interests you* • *Solving puzzles, crosswords like Sudoku* • *Learning to play a new instrument* • *Exploring online courses in subjects you enjoy*
Spiritual Self-Care: Incorporate practices that nurture your sense of purpose and	• *Spending time in nature and taking walks*

connection, such as spending time in nature, practicing gratitude, or exploring meditation and prayer.	• *Practicing gratitude by listing things you're thankful for* • *Engaging in mindfulness meditation* • *Engaging in a spiritual practice that resonates with you*
Relaxation and Stress Reduction: Include techniques like deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, taking a warm bath, or engaging in hobbies that help you unwind.	• *Taking a warm bath with soothing scents* • *Trying progressive muscle relaxation exercises* • *Engaging in creative activities like drawing or crafting* • *Doing a guided meditation for relaxation*
Setting Boundaries: Learn to say no when you need to and set boundaries to protect your time and energy. This can prevent burnout and overwhelm.	• *Politely declining invitations when you need personal time* • *Allocating specific hours for schoolwork and leisure* • *Limiting social media use during designated times*
Digital Detox: Set time to disconnect from screens and technology. Consider setting specific hours for electronic free activities.	• *Designating an hour before bedtime as screen-free* • *Having device-free meals* • *Going for a walk without bringing your phone*
Seeking Support: Recognize the importance of reaching out for help when needed. Identify trusted adults, friends, or professionals you can talk to about your feelings.	• *Talking to a school counselor about your worries* • *Reaching out to a close friend for a chat* • *Having a heart-to-heart with a family member you trust*
Daily/Weekly Schedule: Outline a routine that includes self-care activities. Balance different areas of self-care throughout your week.	• *Monday: Go for a jog in the morning* • *Tuesday: Attend an online art class* • *Wednesday: Practice mindfulness for 10 minutes* • *Thursday: Connect with a friend over a video call* • *Friday: Treat yourself to a favorite snack or dessert*
Progress Tracking: Regularly assess how your self-care plan is impacting your well-being.	• *Note how your mood improves after practicing self-care*

Make note of what's working well and what might need adjustment.	• *Reflect on what activities provide the most relaxation*
Kindness to Yourself: Be gentle and forgiving with yourself. Remember that self-care isn't about perfection, but about prioritizing your well-being.	• *Remind yourself that it's okay to have off days* • *Practice self-compassion and avoid self-criticism*
Emergency Self-Care: Create a list of quick self-care activities you can turn to in times of acute stress or distress.	• *Listen to a favorite song* • *Take three deep breaths* • *Practice grounding exercises like the 5-4-3-2-1 technique*

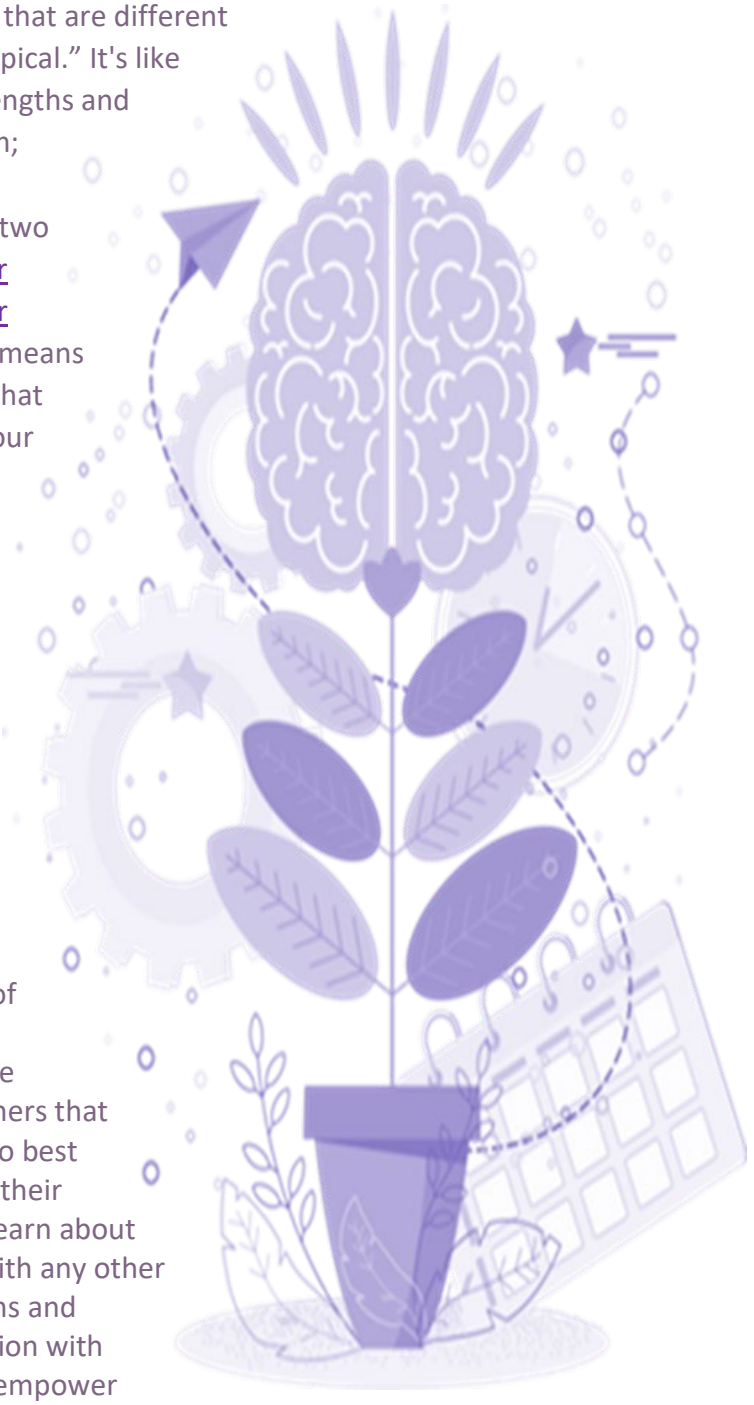
Feel free to customize these examples to suit your preferences and lifestyle. Your self-care plan should reflect activities that resonate with you and bring you comfort, joy, and relief during times of stress. Use the following space to get you started or use a notebook or clean sheets of paper to expand your self-care plan:

My Self-Care Plan

Just like your needs will likely change from time to time, so should your self-care plan. Reevaluate your needs as your life or circumstances change and create a plan that nurtures those needs. Remember, self-care is a way to show kindness and compassion to yourself, helping you to navigate life's challenges. Tap into your internal resources to create a plan that supports your overall wellness!

11. Embracing Your Unique Mind (Neurodiversity)

For Youth:



You are probably wondering what neurodiversity or neurodivergent means. Neurodivergent refers to someone whose brains function in ways that are different from what society considers "typical" or "neurotypical." It's like having a unique operating system that brings strengths and challenges. Being neurodivergent is not a problem; it's a natural part of human diversity. There are various conditions that fall under neurodiversity, two of those conditions are Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Embracing your neurodivergent identity means understanding your strengths, finding strategies that work for you, and celebrating the amazing way your brain operates. If you're curious about whether you might be neurodivergent, or if you ever feel like your differences are causing challenges, there are professionals who specialize in this area and can help you figure things out. We'll be exploring neurodiversity and some of the challenges further in this section in case you are curious to explore this further with yourself.

For Advocates:

Advocates play a crucial role in supporting youth through challenging moments in their lives. One of these challenges might include navigating their neurodiversity. Neurodivergent youth may include those with conditions like ASD and ADHD, and others that influence how their brains process information. To best support these youth, advocates should approach their role with empathy, patience, and a readiness to learn about their individual experiences, just as they would with any other client. This means steering away from assumptions and expectations but instead approaching each situation with an open mind, prepared to adapt strategies that empower them based on their unique circumstances.

Activity 39 - Part One: Exploring your neurodivergent identity

Remember, you are not defined by any label. Whether you're **neurodivergent** or not, your uniqueness is something to be celebrated and embraced. This worksheet can help you navigate your feelings and thoughts about the possibility of being neurodivergent. Take your time to reflect on your experiences and explore your identity.

Take a moment to write down any specific experiences or situations where you've felt different from others. These could be related to social interactions, sensory experiences, learning styles, or emotions.

"I've noticed that I struggle with maintaining eye contact during conversations, and I often find loud environments overwhelming."

List your unique strengths, talents, and qualities. Reflect on how these traits contribute positively to your life and the lives of those around you.

"I'm really good at focusing on details and noticing patterns that others might miss. This helps me excel in art and problem-solving."

Write down your feelings about the idea of having a diverse mind. Are you curious, worried, relieved, or something else? Allow yourself to express your emotions openly.

"I feel reassured to consider that my differences might have an explanation. But I'm also worried about how others might react."

Activity 39 - Part Two: Exploring your neurodivergent identity

Write down any questions you have about neurodiversity and how it might relate to your experiences. Consider questions about your strengths, challenges, and what you'd like to learn more about.

"Why do certain noises and textures bother me more than they bother my friends? Could this be related to being neurodivergent?"

Think about who you feel comfortable talking to about your thoughts. This could be a friend, family member, teacher, or counselor. Write down their names and how you might start the conversation.

"I've noticed I learn and communicate a bit differently than my peers. I was wondering if I can talk to you about this?"

Research neurodiversity to learn more about the range of experiences it involves. Write down any facts, stories, or insights that resonate with you.

"I learned that neurodiversity celebrates the unique ways our brains work. It's not about being 'normal' but about embracing diversity."

Identify books, articles, websites, or support groups that provide information and personal stories about neurodiversity. Consider how these resources might help you on your journey.

"I found a website that shares stories of neurodivergent individuals excelling in various fields. Their experiences resonate with me."

Activity 39 - Part Three: Exploring your neurodivergent identity

If you're interested in pursuing a diagnosis or assessment, write down your thoughts on seeking guidance from a mental health professional who specializes in neurodiversity.

"I'm open to discussing this with a mental health professional who specializes in neurodiversity. Their expertise could provide clarity."

Create a positive affirmation that acknowledges your unique qualities and the importance of embracing your identity, whatever it may be.

"I am a unique individual with my own strengths and qualities. I embrace my identity and am on a journey of self-discovery."

Reflect on the idea that understanding your neurodivergent identity is a journey. There's no need to rush or have all the answers right now. Embrace the process and take it one step at a time.

"Understanding myself is a process, and I'll take the time I need to explore. It's okay not to have all the answers right away."

If you decide you want to explore this further, seeking guidance from a professional, such as a psychologist or psychiatrist who specializes in neurodiversity, can be helpful. They can provide assessments and insights that might help you better understand your experiences. Remember, there's no rush to label yourself, and you're not defined solely by any diagnosis. What's most important is that you're taking steps toward better self-awareness and self-acceptance. Embrace your unique qualities, talents, and interests, and know that you have a community of people who share similar experiences and who appreciate you for who you are.

Activity 40 - Part One: Navigating anxiety with a diverse mind

Anxiety affects everyone differently, especially someone with a diverse mind. Use this worksheet to explore how anxiety manifests for you and develop personalized strategies to manage it effectively.

Reflect on how anxiety shows up for you. Describe physical sensations, thoughts, and triggers you've noticed. For example:

"My anxiety often feels like a tightness in my chest and racing thoughts, especially before social situations."

Physical Sensations:

Thoughts:

Triggers:

List sensory triggers that contribute to your anxiety (e.g., loud noises, bright lights, crowded spaces). For example:

"Bright lights and sudden loud noises trigger my anxiety. They make me feel overwhelmed and uneasy."

Identify places where you feel calm and secure. Describe what makes these spaces soothing. For example:

"My bedroom with dim lighting and soft blankets is my safe space. It helps me relax when I'm feeling anxious."

Practice a brief mindful exercise where you observe your anxiety without judgment. Write down your observations. For example:

"During mindful awareness, I noticed my heart racing and my breathing becoming shallow when I thought about an upcoming social event."

List sensory tools or activities that help you cope with anxiety. For example:

Sensory Tools: Fidget spinner, stress ball, textured fabric.
Activities: Deep breathing exercises, listening to calming nature sounds or music.

Activity 40 - Part Two: Navigating anxiety with a diverse mind

Close your eyes and visualize a peaceful scene that brings comfort. Write a description of this mental safe space. For example:

"I imagined myself sitting by a peaceful lake surrounded by trees. The sound of water and birds made me feel at ease."

Create a daily routine that balances structured activities and downtime. Explain how routine can contribute to managing anxiety. For example:

"I'll have structured study time, followed by a walk in the park, and then relaxing with a favorite book."

Outline how you'll communicate your anxiety to trusted individuals (e.g., parents, teachers) and what support you might need. For example:

"I'll let my teacher know that loud unexpected noises activate my anxiety. I might need to step out briefly if this occurs."

Gradually face anxiety-triggering situations in manageable steps. Describe how you plan to expose yourself to these situations with support. For example:

Situation: *Attending a social group event.*
Steps: *"I'll start by spending a short time close but in a safe distance, gradually getting closer as I feel more comfortable."*

Write down instances when you successfully managed your anxiety. What strategies did you use? How did you feel afterward? For example:

"I managed to attend a family gathering by using deep breathing exercises. It felt empowering to face my anxiety."

If your anxiety significantly impacts your daily life, jot down thoughts on seeking guidance from a counselor or therapist. Check out our list of resources on pages 108-109.
For example:
"If my anxiety continues to interfere with school and daily life, I'll consider talking to a counselor."

Activity 40 - Part Three: Navigating anxiety with a diverse mind

Create a positive affirmation that acknowledges your strength in navigating anxiety. For example:

"I am resilient and capable of managing my anxiety. I am strong in embracing my neurodivergent identity."

Remember, these examples are meant to inspire your personal reflections and strategies. Adapt them to your experiences and preferences. Advocating for yourself, seeking support from understanding individuals, and embracing your strengths can empower you to navigate anxiety or depression while embracing your neurodivergent identity. Consult with mental health professionals who have experience working with neurodiverse youth. They can provide tailored strategies and support that consider your specific needs.

Navigating anxiety is not easy, remember to explore your triggers, identify your coping grounding skills like mindfulness, and utilizing calming techniques, you can develop an effective plan to manage anxiety. Do not forget to reach out to your support system for guidance and help!

Activity 41 - Part One: Navigating social interactions

Socializing can be challenging, especially for neurodivergent youth. It is important to recognize that socializing is a personal choice for everyone, including neurodivergent youth. If you are a youth who has a desire to socialize, you can use this worksheet to guide you through practical steps to help you feel more confident and comfortable in social situations.

Embrace who you are, including your neurodivergent traits. Recognize that you have unique strengths and qualities.
Write down three things you appreciate about yourself.
"I am creative, kind, and organized."

Recognize situations where you feel most comfortable and at ease.
Make a list of places or activities where you feel relaxed and can be yourself.
This could be a quiet park, a favorite hobby, or a certain room in your home.

Learn to recognize and interpret non-verbal cues like facial expressions and body language.
Watch videos or use apps that provide practice in identifying different social cues and their meanings. What are somethings you learned?

Practice conversational skills. Engaging in conversations is a key social skill. Start with small, low-pressure interactions. Practice with a friend or family member.
Make a list of places or activities where you feel relaxed and can be yourself.
Ask open-ended questions like, *"What do you enjoy doing in your free time?"*

Activity 41 - Part Two: Navigating social interactions

The following are scenarios where **sharing** might be necessary:
How would you feel in each of these scenarios? Write down a sentence about your feelings:
Sharing a toy/item during a game or sharing an idea in a group activity.

Scenario 1:

Scenario 2:

The following are scenarios where **taking turns** might be necessary:
Write down how you would manage each situation and why it's important.
Taking turns speaking in a discussion or waiting your turn to use a computer.

Scenario 1:

Scenario 2:

It's okay to ask for help and support from trusted individuals. They can offer guidance and encouragement. Identify someone you trust, like a family member, teacher, or counselor, and let them know you're working on improving your social skills. They can provide valuable insights and support.
Using the scenarios from the previous step or choose a scenario you want practice role playing having to take turns or having to share something with someone else.
Write down how it felt playing each role?

Sharer:

Turn taker:

Set achievable social goals. *You can start with a goal like, "I will introduce myself to one new person this week."*

Take time to reflect on your social interactions. Acknowledge your efforts and achievements. Keep a journal where you record positive social experiences, no matter how minor. Celebrate these wins!

Remember, improving social skills is a gradual process. Seek out the support you need and be proud of your progress. Every step forward is a step toward greater confidence and connection with others.

12. Conclusion

For Youth

Congratulations on completing this workbook! You've taken a big step towards knowing and understanding yourself better. We want to provide you with several tips and words of encouragement as you embark on this journey. These tips serve as a reminder of the strength that exists within you.
Be compassionate with yourself and continue to nurture your mind, body, and soul.

- Acknowledge and celebrate even small victories. Every step forward counts!
- Remember, personal growth takes time. Be patient with yourself and trust the process.
- Lean on trusted friends, family members, or mentors when you need guidance or someone to just listen.
- Take the strategies and insights gained from this workbook and apply them in your daily life.
- You'll probably make mistakes but do not let this discourage. "Mistakes" always have something to teach us. Learn from them, apply what you learned and move forward.
- Regularly engage in activities that nourish your physical, emotional, and mental well-being.
- Set realistic or attainable goals. Break down larger goals into manageable steps. Trying to run a marathon before learning to walk can set you for disappointment.
- Keep an open mind and be open to learning different perspectives or ideas.
- Do not forget to take moments to reflect on your journey. This self-awareness will help you learn about your strengths and areas for growth.
- Believe in yourself, in your abilities and trust that you have the power to shape your own future.

As you move forward, it's important to remember that the journey doesn't end here. In fact, it's just the beginning do not hesitate to reach out for help, guidance and support from your support system and professional mental health providers.

For Advocates

Child immigration work as you probably already know is not easy! Your commitment as an advocate is invaluable and we hope you'll choose to stay doing this work for a long time. We encourage you to build community and support by collaborating with other advocates as there is strength in numbers.
Your role as an advocate is vital in guiding and uplifting youth through the difficult journey they have embarked on. Remember to encourage them to take an active role in their life and use their problem solving skills as they navigate challenges. This will foster independence and self-confidence. Do so always with a culturally curious and humble approach!

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to positively impacting the lives of children and youth!

13. Resources

This workbook was prepared by the Children's Immigration Law Academy (CILA) to support immigrant youth in their journey of self-discovery, resiliency, and well-being. Visit our website to learn more about our services and resources:

- CILA's Youth Page (https://cilacademy.org/information)/.
    - Where you'll discover guidance on navigating the immigration process and other challenges.
- CILA's Youth written resource, *A New Path: My Toolkit for Navigating Life in the United States* - (https://cilacademy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/06/2023.06.15-PDF-FINAL-Youth-Toolkit-English-1.pdf).
    - This toolkit not only provides insights on life as an immigrant youth in the United States but also provides information on social service resources, including essential mental health support and resources.

Additionally, we have included a list of national or online resources. We encourage you to explore these resources and to reach out to them if you want to learn more or need help!

Online Resources
988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: https://988lifeline.org/?ref=w3use. You can also dial, or text 988. To find support in a mental health crisis.
National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)-Navigating a Mental Health Crisis: https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Individuals-with-Mental-Illness. To learn more about mental health and how to navigate a mental health crisis.
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) treatment Locator: https://findtreatment.gov/. 1-800-662-4357. To find local mental health services, including substance use services.
Informed Immigrant: https://www.informedimmigrant.com/help/. To find mental health services in your area and to learn about other resources for immigrants.
Take Action for Mental Health: https://takeaction4mh.com/.To learn about mental health and to find resources.
Latinx Therapy: https://latinxtherapy.com/resources/. To find a Spanish speaking mental health provider and low cost.
Kids Health-Teens Health-Grief: https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/someone-died.html. To learn about grief and how to manage it.

Dougy Center: https://www.dougy.org/program-finder. For resources on grief and loss and where to find local support, including local support groups.
La Inteligencia Migratoria-manual para inmigrantes en dificultades (only available in Spanish): https://zoboko.com/read/la-inteligencia-migratoria-manual-para-inmigrantes-en-dificultades-lmrxqlp8?hash=303e7d68d636020db394188a31d39b81. To learn about migratory grief.
Child Mind Institute-What is Neurodiversity: https://childmind.org/article/what-is-neurodiversity/. To learn about ADHD, autism and learning disorder.
Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (CHADD): https://chadd.org/understanding-adhd/**.** Information and resources for adults (including youth) with ADHD.