



Supporting the social-emotional wellbeing of adolescents during the COVID-19 crisis is a critical challenge for high school educators. Our hope is to provide you with various advisory activities to help meet the needs of the students you serve. This guide will help you use these activities to meet your advisees' social/emotional needs and build positive rapport with your advisees whether we find ourselves in a face-to-face setting or in a distance learning scenario.

Why Students Need Advisories Now More Than Ever

Social Connections During COVID-19

Adolescents are incredibly social people. Their lives are centered on social activities and efforts to build connections with their peers. The term “social distancing” implies disconnecting socially from all but our immediate family. This can be difficult for anyone to handle and even harder for adolescents, for whom those social connections are so important. We must find a way to maintain the physical distance required by social distancing, but still, foster social and emotional connections and closeness between adolescents and their school communities.

A Buffer Against Trauma

The COVID-19 pandemic and related school closures are exposing many students to trauma. For students who may already experience trauma at home, school closures significantly increase their risk of exposure. Other students may be experiencing trauma for the first time as they stay at home with increasingly stressed and anxious family members, such as parents who are trying to balance work and childcare, or who may have lost jobs, or who may be caring for others who are ill. All students are managing the stress of being isolated from their peers at a development stage that relies on socialization. Left unaddressed, these traumas can lead to toxic stress and long term academic, social, and physical health issues.

Fortunately, educators can be an important buffer against trauma during this crisis. Schools can provide a supportive sanctuary where students can build strong connections with adults and safely talk about feelings. These connections and communication channels can create positive experiences that counteract the effects of trauma.

Building Connection In Your Advisory Group

Keep it simple

Advisory is, at its core, all about building relationships. Place your advisees at the center of your planning. What do they need? How can you reach them? Do the best you can to connect with them through whatever channels you have available, but don't overthink things. The more complex and stressful students -- and you -- find the advisory experience, the less effective it will be for building relationships.

Make it your own

Research shows that successful advisories are customized to meet the unique needs of their students. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. An advisory program, whether it be remote or face-to-face, has two areas of customization:

- The Structure: How will you engage with students? How will students engage with each other? Figuring out how this will work for you and your students within the constraints of time and technology is critically important.
- The Content: What activities will you and your students engage in during advisory? What topics do you want to cover? What will your students respond to? You may not have the answers to these questions right now. Feel free to experiment until you find something that works and when in doubt, involve your students in the planning process. They often know what they need and are just waiting for someone to ask.

These lessons do not have to be delivered sequentially, but can be chosen according to your interests, what is happening in the news, or in response to the needs of your community.



Advisory Check-Ins

The heart of social connection

Overview & Purpose

One of the simplest yet most effective ways to connect with students and foster a sense of community is through weekly check-ins. Providing a space for students to share a little bit about what they're up to and how they're feeling can be very valuable to them.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Check-In

1. Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. These are just a few examples, feel free to come up with more! (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)
 - a. **What's one thing you did last weekend that you'd like to tell us about?**
 - b. **What's one challenge you encountered and one success you experienced this week?**
 - c. **Name something you're looking forward to.**
2. Announce important dates, schedule changes, or special events (such as birthdays or important family celebrations) coming up during the week.
3. Have students discuss what homework/projects they are working on this week. Ask if anyone needs additional support or if they're struggling with a particular topic/subject.



Coping with Emotions

Objective

Identify ways to cope with emotions.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

1. Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)
 - **Tell us about a time you felt nervous or worried. What did you do to help yourself feel better?**
 - Examples could be: *Spoke to a mentor. Told myself I could do it.*

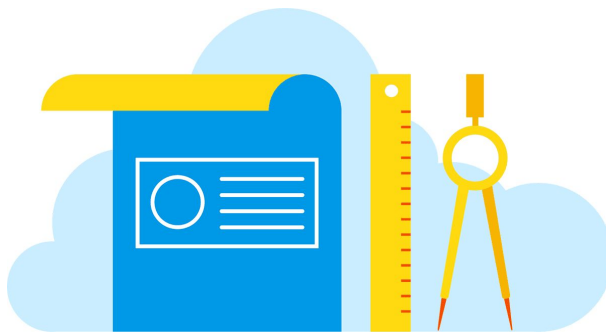
Discussion

As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **If you feel frustrated, what do you do to help yourself feel better?**
- **If you feel sad, what do you do to help yourself feel better?**
- **If you feel lonely, what do you do to help yourself feel better?**

Reflection

1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **Pick another uncomfortable emotion. Think about what makes you feel better when you experience that emotion. Think about what you can do to handle that emotion (i.e. strategies to cope)**
2. Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Happy Thoughts

Objective

Identify things that make you happy.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

1. Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)
 - **Tell us about the last time you felt happy.**

Discussion

As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **What are some things that make you feel happy?**
What's the difference between happiness and joy?
- **When you're happy, how do others around you seem to feel?**
- **What do you do when you're feeling sad, but you want to be happier?**

Reflection

1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **Why is it useful to think about things that make you happy?**
2. Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Digital Friendships

Objective

Analyze online friendships and identify their challenges

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)

- **What are some ways that people socialize online?**

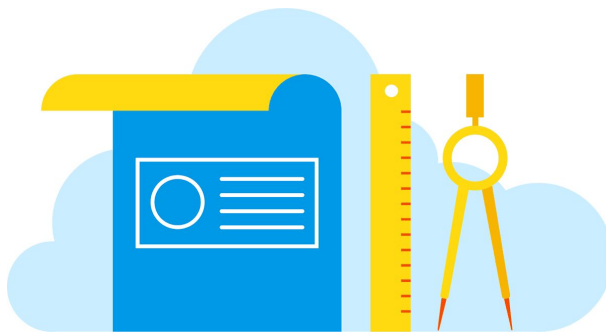
Discussion

As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **Tell us about something fun you did with friends completely online.**
- **Do you have any friends that you mostly socialize with online? How is it different from the way you socialize when you're not online?**
- **What can make it difficult to maintain a friendship online? What can you do to help make it easier?**
- **What are some things you need to be careful about when you socialize online?**

Reflection

1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **Which do you prefer, socializing online or in-person? Why?**
2. Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Feeling Anxiety

Objective

Recognize the causes of anxiety and ways to respond to it.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)

- **What's one thing here at school that makes you feel anxious or stressed out?**
 - Examples could be: *Tests. Making friends. Fitting in. Math.*

Discussion

As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **What things outside of school make you feel anxious?**
- **Would you describe yourself as highly anxious, moderately anxious, or rarely anxious, and why?**
- **Explain how you feel anxiety in your body and your mind?**

Reflection

3. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **What's one thing you do to feel better when you're anxious?**
4. Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Getting Calm

Objective

Recognize that calming down can help you when you're angry.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)

- **What are some things that can make you upset?**
 - Examples could be: *Failing at something. People being rude. Embarrassment.*

Discussion

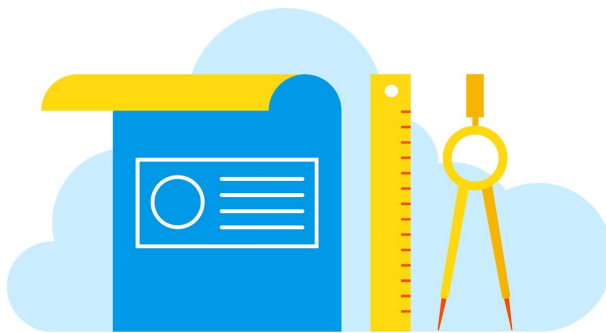
As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **How can feeling angry help you?**
- **How can feeling angry make things more difficult for you?**
- **Is it okay to show that you're angry when you feel angry? What are some safe and respectful ways you can show you're angry?**
- **What are some things that aren't okay to do when you're angry?**

**Pro tip: Anger is just an emotion like all of our other emotions. They are not good or bad. They just are.*

Reflection

- Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - **How can calming down help you when you feel angry?**
- Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Online Bullying

Objective

Increase students' awareness about online bullying.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

2. Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)
 - **Have you ever witnessed people being mean online (social media, texting, video gaming, etc)? Have you ever joined in?**
**Important to emphasize there's no judgment if the answer is yes.*

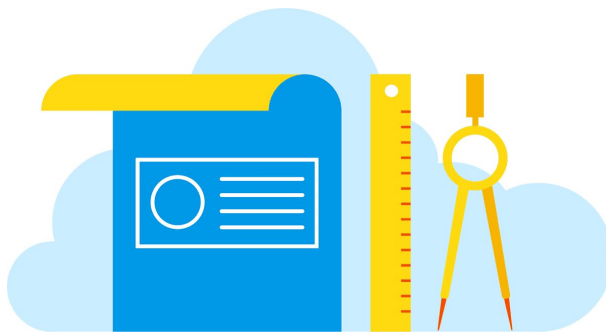
Discussion

As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **Tell us about a time you witnessed someone getting picked on online. What happened and what caused it to stop?**
- **In one 2017 survey, 15% of students ages 12-18 who reported being bullied online or by text. How can the effects of bullying be amplified when they happen online?**
- **Who can you go to for help if you witness online bullying? Why would you go to that person?**

Reflection

1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **Many times, people bully others online because they think they're anonymous and no one will know who they are. In reality, nothing you do online is ever really anonymous. What do you think could happen to people who are discovered to be secretly bullying others online?**
2. Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Recognizing Emotions

Objective

Recognize different emotions and how they affect us.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

1. Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)
 - **In one word, describe how you're feeling today.**
 - Examples could be: *Happy. Sad. Excited.*

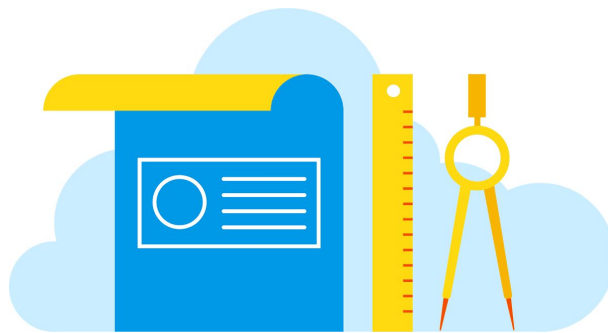
Discussion

As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **Why are you feeling the way you feel today?**
- **Tell us about something that makes you happy. Describe why it makes you happy.**
- **Tell us about something that makes you angry. Describe why it makes you angry.**
- **Have you ever cheered someone up who was feeling sad? How did you do it?**

Reflection

1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **What do you do to cheer yourself up when you're feeling sad?**
2. Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Social Media Experiences

Objective

Recognize different emotions and how they affect us.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

2. Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)
 - **Who here has one social media account? Who has two? Three or more?**
 - **What do you enjoy about using social media?**
 - Examples could be: *I can keep in touch with my friends who live far away. I can find out what's going with people.*

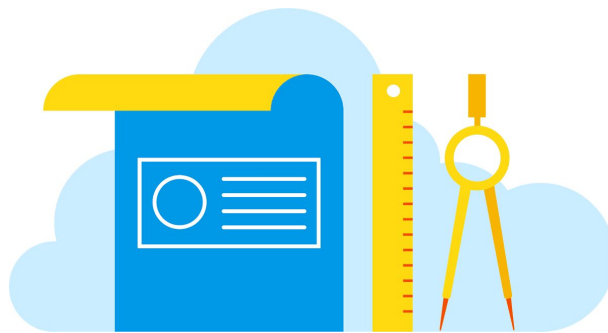
Discussion

As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **How can you use your social media profiles to show your values?**
- **What can make a social media experience negative?**
- **Do you think it's easier for people to be mean to each other online than it is in person?**

Reflection

2. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **Think of two things you can do online to make using social media better for you and your friends/**
2. Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Try Something New!

Objective

Analyze how purpose, trying new things, and improving your skills are connected.

Preparation

1. If possible, seat the students in a circle.
2. Sit where you can participate comfortably in the discussion.

Advisory Meeting Instructions

Warm-Up

1. Have everyone in the group (including you!) briefly answer any of the following questions. (If students are uncomfortable talking in front of a group, don't force them to share)
 - **Think of a time when you tried something new. What happened? Did you succeed? Did you struggle?**

Discussion

As a class, discuss one or more of the following prompts, as time allows:

- **Why is it important to try new things?**
- **Have you ever discovered you have a strength from trying something new?**
- **How can trying new things influence your sense of purpose?**

Reflection

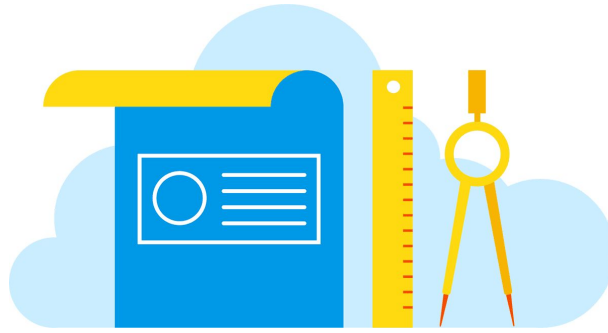
1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **Think of one new thing you want to try this year. How will you handle the challenges that might come with it?**
2. Invite advisees to share if they feel comfortable and if time allows.

Advisory Challenges

Finding ways to have fun with friends is crucial for students during this time.

Advisory challenges provide a great opportunity to help students enjoy friendships in a safe, supportive environment. Advisory challenges also provide students with novel experiences during a time when they may be feeling bored or distant.

*If unable to combine advisories with another group, the following challenges can be adapted to fit within a normal advisory setting.



Anxiety Triptych

Objective

- Use art to explore ways to handle stress and anxiety.

Materials

- 3 pieces of blank paper and art supplies for each student.

Preparation

- Allow at least 15 minutes for this activity. If time runs out, continue when time allows.

Activity Instructions

Introduction

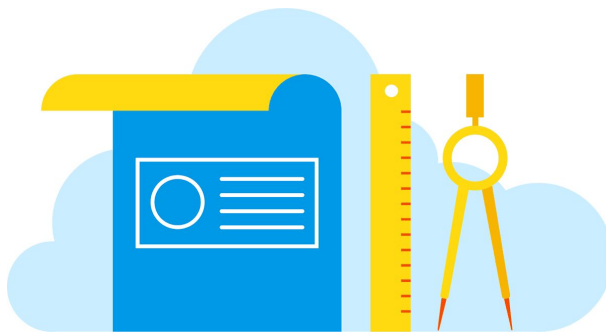
Present the activity: **A triptych is a set of three illustrations that tell a story. Today, each of you will create your own triptych about anxiety.**

Steps

1. Hand out materials to students.
2. Have students create a picture that represents how they feel when they're anxious or something that can cause them to feel anxious or stressed. These illustrations can be any form and can be realistic or abstract.
3. On a separate piece of paper, have students create a picture that represents what they do to stay calm when they're feeling anxious, using the same style as the first picture.
4. On the third piece of paper, have students create a picture that represents how they feel after they've calmed down.
5. Have students show their triptychs to the group (if they feel comfortable sharing).

Reflection

1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **What are some similarities you see between your triptych and someone else's? Why do you think these similarities exist?**
2. Invite advisees to share their thoughts if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Calm Preserver

Objective

- Identify coping strategies for stress.

Materials

- 1 sheet of blank paper and drawing supplies for each group.

Preparation

1. Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 or 4
2. Allow at least 10 minutes for this activity. If time runs out, continue when time allows.

Activity Instructions

Introduction

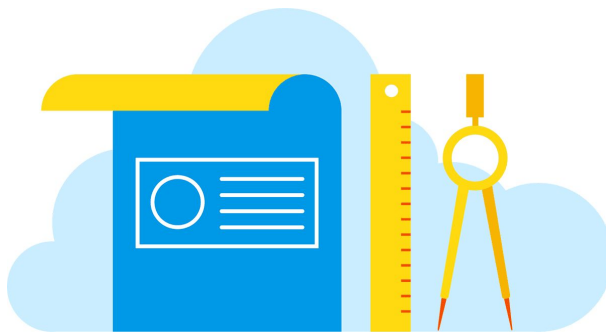
Present the activity: **Many things can cause you to feel stressed or frustrated. Being aware of what those things are and what you can do to handle stress can help you when it happens.**

Steps

1. Hand out materials to students.
2. Have the groups draw a life preserver (a large circle with a smaller circle inside) on their papers. This will be their “Calm Preserver.”
3. Outside the Calm Preserver, have groups list or draw pictures of things that cause them stress.
4. Near the stressors, but on the Calm Preserver itself, have students list or draw pictures of things that help them cope with or reduce stress.
5. Have groups show and explain their drawings to the class.

Reflection

1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - a. **What’s one new strategy to handle stress you heard about today that you might try in the future?**
2. Invite advisees to share their thoughts if they feel comfortable and if time allows.



Conflict Word Web

Objective

- Work together to identify the underlying causes of common conflicts and possible solutions.

Materials

- 1 large sheet of blank paper and markers for each group.
- Wall space where large sheets of paper can be posted temporarily.

Preparation

1. Before advisory, choose a conflict that students might encounter (for example, name-calling, academic dishonesty, gossiping, conflict with a friend/boyfriend/girlfriend, etc.) and write it on the board.
2. Write the same conflict in the center of each of the large sheets of paper.
3. Divide the group into smaller groups of 3 to 4.
4. Allow at least 15 minutes for this activity. If time runs out, continue when time allows.

Activity Instructions

Introduction

Present the activity: **Take a look at the conflict on this board. This is a conflict I (we) might see here at school. You're going to work in groups to create word webs that identify the possible causes of this conflict.**

Steps

1. Hand out materials to students.
2. Have each group create a word web by brainstorming causes of the conflict, writing them down, and connecting them to the words in the middle of the paper. If time allows, have groups identify causes for the causes and add those to the sheet as well.
3. Post each group's sheet of paper on a wall or the board. Give students a few minutes to quietly review what the other groups wrote.

Reflection

1. Have the group reflect quietly about the following prompt:
 - **Now that you've identified the possible causes for this conflict, what's something you could do to help prevent it, and conflicts like it, from happening in the future?**
2. Invite advisees to share their thoughts if they feel comfortable and if time allows.

