

Children's Mental Health Week Toolkit

**Created by a group of Georgian College
Social Service Worker (SSW) students in partnership
with New Path Youth and Family Services in Orillia**

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LAUGHING MEDITATION

PURPOSE:

- To relieve students of stress during school hours and give them an opportunity to lift their spirits

GOAL:

- By the end of this activity students will successfully participate in a positive experience with their classmates

TASKS:

- Introduce that this is a group activity for fun
- Instruct students to laugh as if they were the person or thing that you say
- Ex, instruct students to “laugh like Santa Claus”. Then students will proceed to laugh in whatever way they imagine Santa Claus to laugh
- (*from Laughter Meditation, 2012*)

SUGGESTIONS:

- You may use the following examples and any others that you can think of:
 - Laugh like a hyena
 - Laugh your squeakiest laugh
 - Laugh your snort laugh
 - Laugh your best echo laugh
 - Laugh your silliest laugh
 - Laugh like your nose is plugged
 - Laugh like you’re the jolly green giant
- It is suggested that you engage in a breathing activity or a cool down activity following the laughing meditation.

LINKS TO CURRICULUM:

- This activity could be linked to a drama lesson
- The arts offer students unique opportunities to engage in imaginative and innovative thought and action and to develop the ability to communicate and represent their *thoughts, feelings*, and ideas in numerous ways (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.txt>

RED TO GREEN THOUGHT

PURPOSE:

- To allow students to recognize how to change unhelpful thoughts to helpful thoughts.
- To develop a helpful way to think about or resolve an issue.

GOAL:

- For students to gain an ability to derive a helpful thought from an unhelpful thought.

TASKS:

- Explain the difference between helpful (green) and unhelpful thoughts (red) by using examples from the handout “Helpful and Unhelpful Thoughts” **(See Appendix A)**
- Play the “Pass the Parcel” game **(See Appendix B)**
 - Place the students in a circle (may need to create smaller groups).
 - Cut out the questions listed on the handout and place in box (i.e. Kleenex box).
 - Have the students pass the Kleenex box around (This could be done to a song and when the song stops, the student takes a question from the box).
- - Have the student try to answer the question (help can be given from other classmates if needed).
- *(from Barrett, P (2009). FUN FRIENDS)*

SUGGESTIONS:

- Students should be reminded that red thoughts are normal yet it is possible and important to search for green thoughts in all situations.
- This concept can be incorporated into daily classroom discussions in that a student can be encouraged to create a green thought when they express a red thought.

LINK TO THE CURRICULUM:

- Can be incorporated into a literacy lesson
 - Through exploration of movement children will develop an understanding of some of the factors that contribute to healthy physical and *emotional* development (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
 - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/language18currb.txt>
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SIMON SAYS RELAX

PURPOSE:

- For students to have an active relief from a stressful work day or study period

GOALS:

- For the students to learn relaxation strategies.

TASKS:

- Use the below muscle relaxation strategies to facilitate a game of Simon Says
- Ex: “Simon says squeeze your arm muscles like a body builder!”

RELAXATION STRATEGIES:

- (Simon says) Tuck your head in your shell like a turtle and try to touch your shoulders to your ears!
- (Simon says) Squeeze your hand muscles tight like you’re squeezing lemons to make lemonade!
- (Simon says) Squeeze your arm muscles like a body builder!
- (Simon says) Make your stomach muscles hard!
- (Simon says) Squeeze your toes like there’s sand between them
- (Simon says) Pucker your lips like you ate something sour
- (Simon says) S-T-R-E-T-C-H your mouth with a big yawn like a tiger
- (Simon says) There’s a fly on your nose so wiggle it to make the fly go away
- *(from Bonner, B., 2004)*

SUGGESTIONS:

- There is no winning or losing to this game; students can participate for the sole purpose of feeling more relaxed.
- Feel free to make up your own examples.

LINKS TO CURRICULUM:

- This activity could be linked to health and physical education as well as self-regulation and emotional intelligence building
 - Through exploration of movement children will develop an understanding of some of the factors that contribute to healthy physical and *emotional* development (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
 - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/health18curr.txt>
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WE ALL MATTER

PURPOSE:

- To provide a visual representation of unity among students.

GOAL:

- Students will gain a sense of equality and community within their classrooms and by extension the school.

TASKS:

- Allot a certain amount of time for students to colour in a picture of themselves, however they would like to (**See Appendix C**)
- Once completed, students will cut out the picture
- Next, individually or as a class, connect the pictures to form a circle and unite everyone

SUGGESTIONS:

- Use whatever craft materials are available (ie. Glue, buttons, yarn, googly eyes, pencil crayons, crayons, glitter, etc.)

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

- This activity could be linked to an art lesson
- Education in the arts is essential to students' intellectual, social, physical, and emotional well-being
- <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.txt>

“WELLNESS” TREE

PURPOSE:

- To encourage students to think of ways to keep themselves physically and emotionally well.

GOAL:

- Students to become familiar with strategies and supports that they can use to keep themselves well.

TASKS:

- On any wall, post a template of a tree.
- Have students write on a leaf template a sentence or phrase that represents how they keep themselves well (i.e. go for a walk, talk with a friend, etc).
- Students will then post their leaf to the tree on the bulletin board. This will then create a “wellness tree” of ideas for the class.

SUGGESTIONS:

- It is optional to facilitate a class discussion on the importance of self-care and to brainstorm other ways for this to be done.
- It is optional for students to include their name on their entry, keeping in mind that their work will be posted for the class to see

LINKS TO THE CURRICULUM:

- Links to literacy skills and self-regulation
 - “Language development is central to students’ *intellectual, social and emotional* growth and must be seen as a key element of the curriculum.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
 - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/language18currb.txt>
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FEELINGS CHARADES

PURPOSE:

- For students to explore various feelings and how they may be expressed
- For students to understand that when they pay attention to their feelings, and can identify them, that they will be in more of a position to manage them

GOALS:

- Students will have a deeper understanding of their feelings in order to become more aware of them and be able to be in control of them

TASKS:

- Students can be placed into small groups or this can be done as a full class activity
- Have students take turns picking one of the feelings from the chart (see **Appendix D**) and acting it out
- The rest of the group guesses the feeling the student is acting out
- Each person in the group should keep a copy of the feelings chart for some hints
- An alternative option is to have the students draw the pictures to illustrate the feeling word instead of acting it out. The rest of the group would then guess the feeling they are drawing
- *(from Barrett (2013). My FRIENDS Youth Skills for Life: Activity Book for Youth)*

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

- This activity could be linked to a drama lesson
- The arts offer students unique opportunities to engage in imaginative and innovative thought and action and to develop the ability to communicate and represent their *thoughts, feelings*, and ideas in numerous ways (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/arts18b09curr.txt>

UNHELPFUL TO HELPFUL THOUGHTS

PURPOSE:

- To allow students to recognize unhelpful thoughts in order to create more helpful thoughts.
- To develop a helpful way to think about or resolve an issue

GOAL:

- For students to gain an ability to derive helpful thoughts from unhelpful thoughts.
- Learn how to spend more time in “wise mind” instead of “emotional mind”.

TASKS:

- Introduce the students to the idea of “Unhelpful” (Emotional Mind) and “Helpful” (Wise Mind)
 - Emotional Mind: occurs when we generate automatic and negative thoughts about ourselves, our future, our world, or all of these
 - Wise Mind: Begin to recognize the self-defeating thoughts generated by your emotional mind and challenge them by looking for evidence. You will then be able to re-evaluate your thoughts, feelings and behaviours and develop new and helpful ways of looking at your situation.
 - See “Thought Spectrum” (**Appendix E**) to find more examples of what thoughts occur in emotional vs. wellness mind
- Place the students in groups of 3-4 and have them complete the “Emotional vs. Wellness Mind” (**See Appendix F**).
- Take up the answers as a class and allow for more open discussion to ensure understanding. .

SUGGESTIONS:

- Students should be reminded that unhelpful thoughts are normal yet it is possible and important to search for evidence in order to create more helpful thoughts in all situations

LINK TO THE CURRICULUM:

- Can be incorporated into a literacy lesson
 - “Language development is central to students’ intellectual, social and emotional growth and must be seen as a key element of the curriculum.” (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
 - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/language18currb.txt>
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IDENTIFYING STRENGTHS

PURPOSE:

- For students to analyze their thoughts and emotions towards themselves

GOAL:

- Students will develop a deeper sense of self-worth and esteem
- Help students see the positive in other people.

TASKS:

- Introduce students to the importance of seeing the positive in other people and themselves.
- Instruct the student to write their names in an artistic way on a sheet of paper.
- Around their name, have students write down a detailed list of characteristics that they know to be true about themselves (i.e. kind, thoughtful, etc).
- Put students in a group of at least four people
- Have the students rotate their sheets of paper with one another (one person at a time) and have them write down strengths and positive characteristics about the person.
 - Ex. She is always there to help me with my school work.
 - Ex. He always asks about my day.
- Continue this until everyone has had a chance to write down ideas on each person's paper.

SUGGESTIONS:

- If comfortable, students can share what was written about them with the class.

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

- This activity can be linked to positive body image
 - It is important that students identify the physical, interpersonal, and emotional aspects of healthy human beings (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
 - <http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/curriculum/elementary/healthcurr18.txt>
-

TO THIS DAY

*** Activity intended for **Intermediate** students only. Warning that this video contains challenging material and should be screened by the teacher first to determine if appropriate for their classroom***

PURPOSE:

- To introduce students to the vast concept of bullying and its consequences

GOALS:

- Students will have a deeper knowledge of bullying and its consequences
- Students will develop a deeper sense of empathy

TASKS:

- Facilitate a discussion based on the video, “To This Day”:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltun92DfnPY>
- Ask students to disclose areas of this motivational piece that stand out, speak to, or mean something to them
- You may disperse the poem to groups and have them read along as you show the video.
In this case you could also:
 - Ask students to highlight sentences of the poem that stand out, speak to, or means something to them
 - As a class ask individuals to discuss which lines they highlighted and why it was important to them

SUGGESTIONS:

- More discussion questions could include:
 - What different types of bullying are there in this video?
 - Why do people bully each other?
 - Is bullying a big problem in your school?
 - Have you ever been bullied?
 - What advice would you give to someone who is being bullied?
 - What can be done to prevent bullying?
 - What do you know about cyber bullying?
 - What advice could you give to someone being bullied online?

LINK TO CURRICULUM:

- This activity could be linked to self-exploration, reading for meaning, and the prevention of bullying
 - It is important for students to demonstrate their understanding of increasingly complex texts by summarizing important ideas and citing a variety of details that support the main idea (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
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APPENDICES



APPENDIX A: Green Thoughts vs Red Thoughts

Appendix 3
Sessions 5 & 6

"Green" Thoughts vs "Red" Thoughts



"GREEN" thoughts are the things you say to yourself in your head that make you feel good feelings (e.g. happy, confident, brave, and calm), so they are **HELPFUL** thoughts.

Examples of "GREEN" thoughts:

- ☺ I can do it! I'll give it a try.
- ☺ I can try my best.
- ☺ I am brave.
- ☺ I'll help Mom/Dad/my sister.
- ☺ My teacher or Mom/Dad can help me.
- ☺ I'm good at lots of things.
- ☺ I'll do my best, but it doesn't matter if I make a mistake.
- ☺ I have lots of friends.
- ☺ I'm going to have a good day. I am looking forward to....
- ☺ I'll ignore people who tease me.
- ☺ I'll try this game, because it will be fun.
- ☺ Mommy always picks me up at the end of the day. She won't forget.

More advanced "green" thoughts (to develop over time):

- ☺ It doesn't matter if I make a mistake. Everyone makes mistakes and they can be a chance to learn something new.
- ☺ I don't have to be perfect. I just have to try my best and enjoy myself.
- ☺ Sport isn't all about winning. It's about having fun, getting fit, and being with friends.
- ☺ Just because one person is nasty to me, it doesn't mean I have no friends. I'll pay attention to the people who treat me like a friend.
- ☺ That person may annoy me sometimes, but there are lots of good things about them.
- ☺ I may feel scared at first, but it gets easier and I will have a great day at kindergarten playing with friends and doing fun activities.
- ☺ New things make me feel worried, but I can gradually give them a try because I know when I try new things I usually end up having fun.



"RED" thoughts are things you say to yourself that make you feel unhappy feelings (e.g. worried, sad, angry, and stressed out) or make you feel less confident, so they are **UNHELPFUL** thoughts.

Examples of "RED" thoughts:

- ⊗ I can't do this.
- ⊗ I don't want to go, because I won't have fun.
- ⊗ No one likes me.
- ⊗ I got something wrong, so I'm dumb.
- ⊗ I'm silly.
- ⊗ I'm not good at this.
- ⊗ I have to win.
- ⊗ People will laugh at me.
- ⊗ I'm going to have a bad day.
- ⊗ I don't like that person. He is awful!
- ⊗ I want to play a computer game and not help Mom or Dad.
- ⊗ I have the worst sister in the world!
- ⊗ I don't want to do something new. It's too scary!
- ⊗ I can't do it without Mom or Dad.
- ⊗ Reading is too hard.
- ⊗ I'll look silly if I do that!
- ⊗ Mommy will forget to pick me up at the end of the day!



APPENDIX B: Pass the Parcel

Appendix 10

Session 12

Pass the Parcel!

Play the "Pass the Parcel" game during the party.

What could you do to feel brave
on the first day of school?

What are some things
that you can do to stay
calm and relax?

Come up with a "green" thought to
fight this "red" thought: "Mommy
will forget to pick me up".

Come up with a "green" thought
you could think if you were
left out of a game.

Act brave and not brave
(the group is to guess which
one you are acting).

When we are brave, what
should we give ourselves?

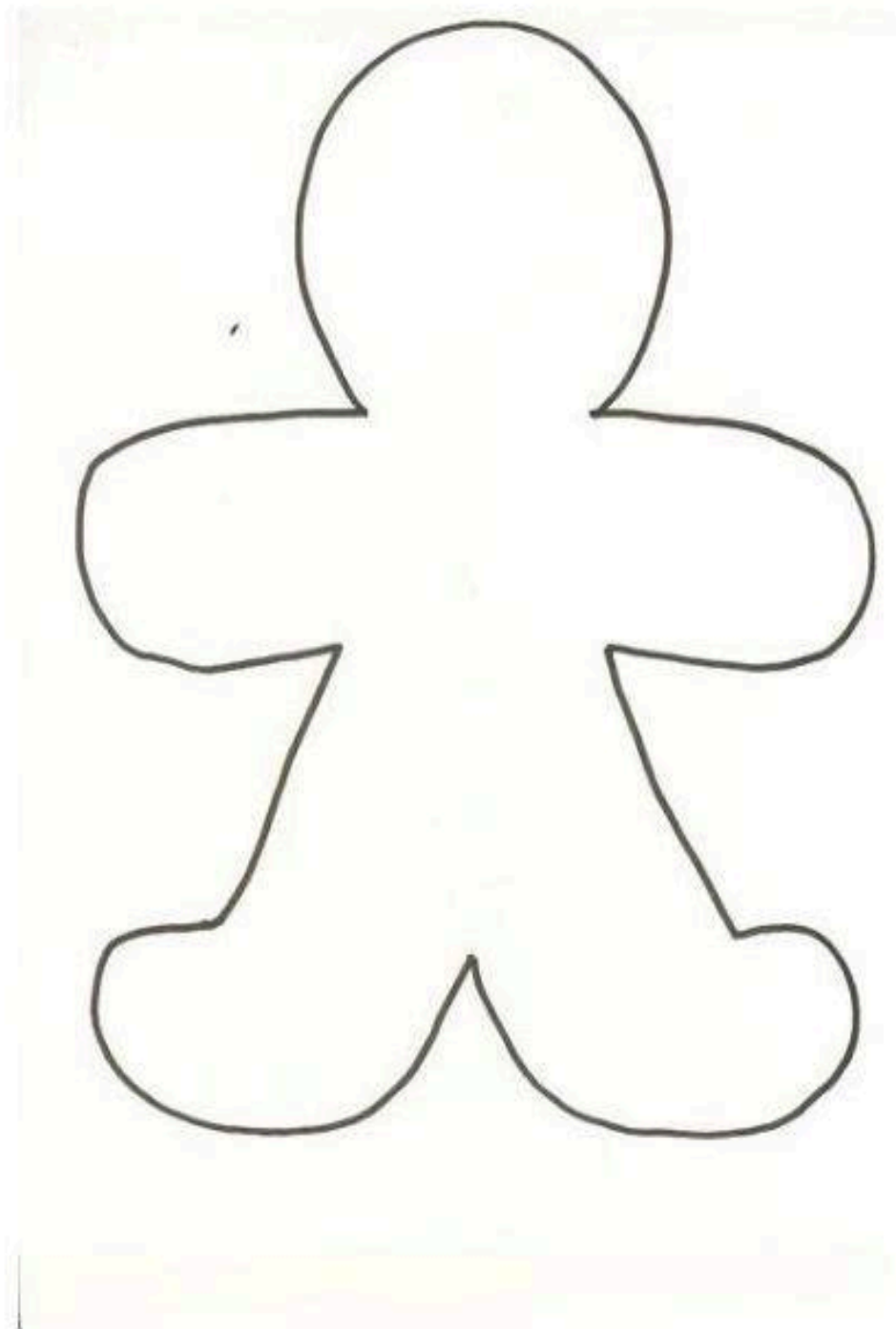
What could you do to help
someone if they felt sad on
their first day of school?

What can you do to be
a good friend?

What can you do if
you feel worried?

What can you do to
make a new friend?

APPENDIX C: We All Matter



ACTIVITY 2

Feelings Charades

Appendix D

Take turns picking one of the following feelings and acting it out. The rest of the group guesses the feeling you are acting. For some hints, each person in the group should keep their activity book open to the feeling words list below.

Alternatively, draw pictures to illustrate the feeling word instead of acting out the word. The rest of the group must guess the feeling you are drawing.



Stressed	Confident	Afraid	Interested
Jealous	Happy	Lonely	Bored
Relieved	Sad	Angry	Guilty
Amused	Brave	Calm	Excited
Embarrassed	Mischievous	Depressed	Surprised
Exhausted	Concerned	Curious	Cheerful
Friendly	Discouraged	Shy	Lonely
Suspicious	Ashamed	Disgusted	Relaxed
Confused	Proud	Satisfied	Anxious



APPENDIX E: Thought Spectrum

Thought Spectrum

Always
Completely
Should/ Must
Everything
Every time

Sometimes.
Possibly
Situational
Based on FACTs,
Realistic thoughts
Are there exceptions?

Never
Nothing
Based on
Opinions

Emotional Mind

Wellness Mind

Emotional Mind

To use your wellness mind ask your self questions like

“ where is the proof these thoughts aren't true 100% of the time”

“are there any exceptions? “

“Is there an alternative reason this could be happening”

“ Am I thinking about all the options”

“ what advise would I give to someone I cared for if he/she was in this situation”

Emotional vs Wellness Mind

Thought	Emotional or Wellness mind?	Possible Feeling?	Possible Behavior?
This class is so hard. I know I'm going to fail it.			
I probably won't make the team. There are so many kids that are better than me.			
I need to try harder next time. I want to do the best I can.			
Whats the worst thing that can happen? If I ask her to dance, she might say no. But she might say yes. I won't know unless I try.			
Everyone here is so unfriendly. I wish we had never moved to this town.			
I'm a littler anxious about being here, but there are so many new kids to meet.			

WEB LINKS

TO THIS DAY

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ltun92DfnPY>

This is an incredibly motivational speech and illustration created to represent bullying and its effects on youth

TO THIS DAY

http://tothisdayproject.com/the_poem.html

This is the poem in written form. Use in the case that you wish students to read the poem for themselves

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