



Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility

Crisis Support Bundle

Activities to Address the
Subway Attack & Other
Upsetting Events

Teaching After a Violent Event:

Many educators are struggling to find ways to talk with young people about the shooting that took place on a Brooklyn subway on April 12.

The shooting is especially upsetting for both young people and adults because it comes amid a pandemic and increased violence both here and abroad. In New York City, subways and streets were already places of anxiety for many, including people in the Asian American community, who are facing a rise in racist attacks. Just a few days before the subway shooting, a 16-year-old was shot on her way home from school in the Bronx.

It may be tempting to avoid bringing up upsetting news like the subway shooting with your students. But if it's on their minds, discussing it can provide comfort in the moment, let students know they are not alone, and help build a supportive community in the long term. Self-care and community care are also a priority after events like this one.

Here, we offer a collection of activities and guidelines to help you discuss the attack and provide individual and collective support for students and adults in the wake of this tragic event.

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Discussing Tragic Events in the News

July 8, 2016

Morningside Center

Here are some basic questions to help students share thoughts and feelings about an upsetting event, and additional guidance.

When upsetting things happen in the world, it can be very helpful to give young people a chance to share their feelings and thoughts about it. While we adults may be tempted to avoid bringing up upsetting news, if it is on students' minds, it's present in the classroom, whether we talk about it or not. When we create a safe, supportive space where students can discuss sensitive issues and events constructively, we can turn those events into powerful teachable moments, and foster a stronger sense of community among our students in the process.

Below are some basic questions to help students share thoughts and feelings after a violent incident has been in the news. Below that are two formats you might use to structure this discussion - a listening circle and a microlab.

For more suggestions on handling difficult issues in your classroom, please see our guidelines, [Teaching about Controversial or Difficult Issues](#) and [Suggestions for Discussing Violent Events in the News](#).

Questions for discussing a violent incident in the news:

1. What thoughts and feelings have you had?
2. What thoughts might you want to share with the victims of the violence, their friends and families, and with others who are feeling vulnerable right now?
3. What is one thing we could do - individually, as a group, or as a society - to show love for one another in the wake of this event?
4. What do you want to say about [the issue]? What's on your mind?
5. What would you like to do for our community or the world to address [the issue or problem]?

Formats for discussion:

Listening Circle

(all ages)

When upsetting events happen, a listening circle can be helpful for young people of all ages, as well as for adults. Listening circles give people a chance to say what they are thinking and feeling, and can help engender mutual understanding and support.

The format is simple: Arrange chairs in a circle. Provide an introduction to the issue at hand, and to the format of the circle. Then invite each person in turn to share what they are thinking and feeling.

Give each person a few minutes to say whatever they want to say - or to pass. When one person is speaking, the others in the group should pay close attention but not comment. The circle is over after every person has had a chance to speak. Often going around the circle more than once allows those who pass on the first go-round to collect their thoughts and feelings so that they can share in the next round.

Microlab

(grades 4 and up)

One way to support young people (4th grade and older) in dealing with emotionally laden and controversial issues is to start with a small group experience called a "microlab." In a microlab, people gain understanding through speaking and listening. It is not a time for discussion or dialogue; rather each person has a short time (one to three minutes depending on students' age) to speak in response to a question. When a person is speaking, the others in the group - usually only two or three others - should listen only and not interrupt.

1. Divide the class into groups of three or four using puzzle pieces, number cards, or by counting off.

Ask participants to arrange themselves in their small groups so that each person can easily see and hear everyone else in the group.

2. Before you begin, explain the guidelines for a microlab:

- It's okay to pass if you need more time to think or would rather not respond.

- This is a timed activity. I will let you know when it is time to move on to the next speaker. You will each have one [or two or three] minutes to speak.
- Speak from your own point of view.
- Be your own barometer - share as much as you feel comfortable sharing.
- Confidentiality is important, especially when we come back together as a large group. We need to agree that what we share among ourselves in the small group will stay private.

3. Introduce your first microlab question.

(Use the questions above or create your own.) In introducing each question, it's usually helpful to say the question, then give some specifics about the question or model answering the question yourself, and then repeat the question again. This gives participants some time to think about what they would like to say. In between microlab questions, you may want to remind people to try not to interrupt or engage in dialogue.

4. Reconvene the full group.

Ask students how the microlab was for them. Then ask for volunteers to share something they said or felt in their microlab. Remind participants of the need for confidentiality - each person should only speak from his or her experience.

This sharing may lead to a wider classroom discussion. If the issue is a volatile one, discussions can sometimes get heated. If you decide to open up the topic, it would be a good idea to establish some guidelines for discussion or "community practices" ahead of time.

You may want to end the session by having the students brainstorm about questions they have on the issue that would lead to gathering information and further study.

Closing Quotes

"Darkness cannot drive out darkness: only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate: only love can do that." (Martin Luther King Jr.)

"The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong." (Mahatma Gandhi)

"In the face of hate and violence, we will love one another." (President Obama)

More resources:

Guidelines for handling difficult issues in the classroom:

[Responding to an Act of Violence in the News](#)
[Teaching about Controversial or Difficult Issues](#)
[Interrupting Oppressive Behavior](#)
[5 Tips for Teaching Current Events to Younger Students](#)

More information on formats for discussions:

[An Introduction to Circles](#)
[Engaging Your Class Through Groupwork](#)
[Listening Circles](#)
[Microlab for Exploring Tough Issues](#)

Handling feelings:

[Awareness of Anger](#) (elementary school)
[Metaphors for Expressing Feelings](#) (middle school)
[Coping Strategies: Managing Feelings](#) (middle school)

Suggestions for Discussing Violent Events in the News

July 8, 2015

[Marieke van Woerkom](#)

General guidelines for talking sensitively with students who may be upset about recent acts of violence in the news.

Below are general guidelines for talking with students who may be upset about recent acts of violence in the news.

Don't ignore issues. If students are concerned about what they've been seeing and hearing in the news, the issue is present in the classroom, whether you talk about it or not. If you, the adult, provide a supportive environment in which to address challenging and sensitive issues constructively, they can become powerful teachable moments. If you don't, these very same issues can become disruptive and divisive in similarly powerful ways.

Be present and available. When upsetting or frightening things happen, students need to know that the adults in their lives are present and are available and ready to provide support when needed.

Provide structure. At times of uncertainty, it is especially important to structure how information is shared (such as through talking circles, pair shares, microlabs and/or fishbowls) and to re-emphasize community norms. These structures and norms can provide some comfort and reassurance for kids to hold on to when they feel shaken. This is especially true if these structures have been used before and will continue to be used regularly. See [engaging your class through groupwork](#) for more information on these formats.

Invite student feelings and thoughts. When students are worried or upset, it is helpful for them to know that they are not alone. (The same is true for us as adults, of course.) Feeling a sense of connection and support is more reassuring than a detailed explanation of what happened. Consider providing a space where all students have the opportunity to share their thoughts and feelings about the issue in question. You might do this through a "talking circle": pass an object (a talking piece) around the circle. See this [introduction to the circle process](#).

Beware, as students' share their feelings, that sometimes grief and anger, though normal and healthy responses, can easily get misdirected. Share with students that we need to avoid making generalizations or fuel feelings of hatred and revenge that could promote a backlash against innocent groups of people (eg, Muslims and Arabs).

Listen and paraphrase. Acknowledge students' feelings and thoughts. It is important, especially in difficult times, for students to know they are being heard without judgment. Listening, paraphrasing, and acknowledging students' feelings and thoughts allows students to process their feelings and possibly move beyond some of their worries so that they can begin to explore the issue and generate questions that might further understanding.

Normalize student feelings and thoughts. Let students know they are not alone in feeling confused, upset or angry. Many people feel this way in times of crisis. It is not at all unusual and talking about it will help kids understand that they are not alone.

Check in with individual students. Some students will reach out themselves when they are struggling. Others need to be encouraged. Look for kids who are acting out of the ordinary, because even if they are not reaching out verbally, there may be behavioral telltales that they are struggling.

Encourage students to generate questions. Generate lots of questions, open-ended questions, questions from different perspectives. (For more on how to generate good questions, see Alan Shapiro's [Thinking is Questioning](#).) The world is a complex place and the tools we use to engage it should embrace that complexity, rather than ignore it. It's easy to resort to black-and-white thinking, assuming that things are either good or bad. But this thinking promotes polarization and pits people against each other. Instead, try to promote thinking that recognizes not only shades of gray but the spectacular colors that bring the real world into view, accepting and respecting a multitude of varied thoughts and opinions.

Brainstorming open-ended questions that do not assume answers (especially not "the one right answer"), cultivates critical thinking and encourages students to think creatively, without judgment or fear of giving the wrong answer. A classroom environment that emphasizes good questions rather than right answers prepares students for the complexity of today's world and the wealth of information that is available to them if they know to look for it.

Promote dialogue. Too often young people are only taught to debate issues. And though debating skills are useful to have in today's world, dialogue is perhaps a more valuable skill when it comes to better understanding complex issues. Debate is about competition and convincing your opponent. Dialogue, on the other hand, is about cooperation, understanding your partner and opening up new ways of thinking. Dialogue promotes a

widening of horizons and openness to change. (For more on teaching on controversial issues, see our guidelines for [Teaching about Controversial or Difficult Issues](#).)

Memorialize the victims. Consider a moment of silence for the victims or find other ways that students and staff can memorialize and honor the victims. Coming together in this way can promote solidarity and support among survivors and allies. It can help encourage a sense of social recovery, healing and inclusion when approached thoughtfully and with sensitivity, possibly nipping thoughts and feelings of hatred and revenge in the bud.

Look for the helpers. Consider sharing the following Fred Rogers quote:

"When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who are helping.'"

Ask students what they've heard about people helping out and any acts of solidarity in the wake of recent violent events. How does that make them feel? Is there anything they'd like to do beyond the conversation today that may make help them and others impacted by the violence feel supported?

5 Tips for Teaching Current Events to Younger Students

October 17, 2012

Jinnie Spiegler

Talking with children about current events can be rough terrain but it's important because it provides a way to build compassion and critical thinking and, at the same time, address their most important questions. Here are a few strategies that I have found useful in undertaking current event topics with elementary-age students.

Semantic Web and Research

To begin exploration of a current event topic, start with a semantic web. For example, if you want to discuss Hurricane Isaac in the Gulf Coast, start off by writing the word "Hurricane Isaac" and draw a circle around it. Ask students: What do you know about Hurricane Isaac? What are words and phrases that come to mind? How do you feel? What are your thoughts? Record everything they say and ask clarifying questions to get them to dig deeper. Draw connecting lines where appropriate. Then ask: What questions do you have about Hurricane Isaac? What do you want to know more about? Record the questions and use them to further investigate the topic. For younger children in grades K-2, have them go home and interview their parents to see what they know about Hurricane Isaac. For older children in grades 3-5, have them identify a specific question, do more research, and write a report on it.

Connect to All Areas of the Curriculum

Whatever the topic is, find connections in reading, writing, math, art, etc. If you are discussing the presidential election, read children's stories like *Grace for President* or *Vote*. Tie in writing by having older students write a persuasive letter to the newspaper about which candidate they support or a newspaper article endorsing their candidate. Younger kids can write a letter to president about something they want him to do. To integrate math, look at opinion polls or create your own school-wide poll, study money by

analyzing fundraising by the candidates, and link probability by looking at electoral votes needed to win. An art project could be the design of election posters or buttons.

Debate

Getting children to choose different sides of an issue can sharpen their critical thinking skills, help them understand other points of view, and open their eyes to the concept of "agreeing to disagree." For younger children, you can do this by doing an opinion continuum. For example if you are discussing the Chicago teachers strike, designate different areas of the room: "strongly agree," "agree," "not sure," "disagree," and "strongly agree." Then read statements like: "The teachers had a good reason to strike" or "When teachers go on strike, it sets a bad example for kids" and have students move to the part of the room that best describes their opinion on that statement. The students then explain their reasons for having that point of view. (For more information on this strategy, see Teachable Moment lesson Think Differently). For the older students, have them conduct a mock debate on the Chicago teachers strike. Assign different opinions and have them conduct internet and library research in order to prepare for the debate and convey their arguments.

Service Learning

For young children, current events and the news can sometimes be scary or upsetting. This doesn't mean we shouldn't discuss the news, but we should find ways to overcome feelings of despair. It is helpful to give children ways to feel more in control of the situation by doing something about it. For example, if you are discussing the increase of homeless children nationally (a recent story in the news), brainstorm ideas with students of what you can do about it. They could write letters to the mayor or other elected officials, asking them to provide more funds for housing. They could organize a card or bake sale in the school to raise money for a local shelter. As a class, you could go to a homeless shelter and volunteer. The most important thing is that the ideas come from your students and you do something that is age-appropriate and empowering.

Create a News Program

A great culminating activity is to produce a news show about the topic. This can be a simple role play for the younger children and a more elaborate video for the older students. If, for example, your topic is the recent law banning large-size sugary drinks in

NYC, you can assign different roles to your students: researchers to learn more, experts to be interviewed such as the NYC mayor who proposed the ban and a nutritionist, a news anchor, regular people on the street who have an opinion. In addition, you can include roles for the production of the show including a director, artist, and writer of the script. Share these with the rest of the school and parents.

When you discuss current events with elementary-age children, remember to be sensitive to the specific students in your classroom, make it interactive and engaging, use age-appropriate strategies, and set up a safe, respectful and supportive tone in your classroom. Convey to your students that you want to discuss what's going on in the world and no topic is off limits. And be sure to let the parents know what you are doing and invite their participation.

This piece originally appeared on [Teach Hub](#).

Looking for the Good during Challenging Times

April 19, 2021

[Teresa Ann Willis](#)

Students practice identifying and using stress management strategies to better cope with upsetting news.

To the Teacher:

In this lesson, students engage in an activity designed to strengthen their self-management skills—specifically their ability to identify and use stress management strategies to better cope with their strong feelings. This exercise aims to inspire students to find additional ways to manage the upset they feel in response to the chaos plaguing our nation.

Note: The lesson is designed for an in-person classroom, but can be adapted for a virtual classroom.

Self-Management During Chaotic Times

Effectively learning to manage our emotions, thoughts, and behaviors, especially during times of unrest and upheaval, is, for some, a lifelong journey. What follows is a week-long activity you can use with students to help them reframe their thoughts and shift their perspective on things that previously seemed overwhelming or debilitating.

At the beginning of class (as soon as the bell rings and you've settled in), have students stand in a circle.

Let students know that, for the next five days, they'll take a few minutes at the beginning of class to pay attention to how their thoughts and perspectives about what's happening in the world around them can impact how they're feeling and behaving.

On the first day, before students enter, place on each student's desk a copy of the word cloud below and in [this pdf](#).



As they stand in circle, have students glance at the word cloud.

Tell students: Even though the violence, shootings, racism, lies, and fear jump out at you when you look at this image, there's so much more going on. Yes, there are lies, but there's also truth. Yes, there's hatred, but there's also love and kindness. Yes, there's ugliness, but there's also beauty, hope, inspiration, and more.

Next have each student locate the word "gratitude." Once they've located it, have them put their word cloud on the floor and place their hands gently over their heart to signal that they've located "gratitude."

Once everyone has signaled, you will begin the day's gratitude circle by stating one thing for which you're grateful.

Model for students how to succinctly state one thing they're grateful for, then have each student do the same, going in the order in which they're standing.

Once each student has shared and the gratitude circle is complete, thank them for their participation. For example, *"I want to thank each of you for taking the time to look for the good and for giving voice to what's good. For me, seeing the good and acknowledging that it's always there gives me a sense of hope."*

Lastly, let them know that they'll repeat this exercise during the next four days. On most days, the circle will take no more than 4 to 6 minutes.

Looking for the Good and Giving Voice to What's Good

Day One: Have students find the word "grateful" and offer this prompt: Name one thing you're grateful for.

Day Two: Have students find the word "kindness" and offer this prompt: Share an act of kindness you recently showed to someone or an act of kindness someone recently showed you.

Day Three: Have students find the word "inspiration" and offer this prompt: Name one thing that has inspired you, either recently or at any time in your life.

Day Four: Have students find the word "hope" and offer this prompt: Name one thing that gives you hope.

Day Five: Ask students if the "seeing the good" morning activity has helped them see things differently, and if so, how.

Closing Challenges

At the close of the five days, give students a couple of challenges:

- Have students come up with one additional strategy for coping with upsetting world events. Ask them if they'd be willing to share their strategy with the class.
- Have students bring in an uplifting, inspiring news story. Once the class has shared and collected several stories, print out copies of the story headlines. Have students work together to make a collage (or some other creative artwork) out of the headlines.

Resources

The websites below feature daily uplifting news stories.

- <https://www.inspiremore.com/>
- <https://www.goodnewsnetwork.org/>

Additional Supports

There's Hope by india.arie <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=COE6YHIK-pU>

Hands by Jewel: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfsS3pIDBfw>

Two Quick Techniques for Calming Down

July 6, 2021

[Jenny Seaquist](#)

These practices can help both young people and adults stay grounded when anxiety arises.

It can be helpful for us, and for our students, to learn simple practices we can use to calm ourselves when we are feeling tense or anxious.

The activities described below, 5-Sense Memory and 2:1 Breathing, both activate the body's parasympathetic nervous system, which decreases heart rate, blood pressure, and muscular tension, preparing the body for rest, sleep, or digestion.

Consider doing these two activities together, in either order.

5-Sense Memory

This is a good technique for grounding yourself during moments of anxiety.

Keep your eyes open and go through this process whenever needed, in whatever space you're in.

Sit comfortably with your feet on the floor, your hands on your legs, your spine comfortably straight. Close your eyes if you can. Otherwise, focus on a spot in front of you. Take a deep breath and let it out slowly. Repeat.

Imagine one of your favorite places from any part of your life. As you remember it, start to walk toward it in your mind.

As you walk into it, find...

- 5 things that you can see
- 4 things you can touch
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

Acknowledge and take in all of the positive feelings this place holds for you.

Know that it is forever with you and you can come back here anytime you want to.

As you back away from this memory, take the gifts of this memory with you to help and sustain you today.

2:1 Breathing

2:1 breathing is simply exhaling for twice as long as one inhales. For example if you inhale on a count of 3, you would exhale for a count of 6. If you inhale for 4, exhale for 8, etc.

- Sit in a comfortable position with your feet flat on the floor, spine comfortably straight. Hands can be in your lap or resting gently on your belly. You can close your eyes or not. If your eyes are open, try to focus on a point in front of you.
- To begin, take a couple of deep gentle abdominal breaths. Don't worry about what the count is at this point. The objective is to just calm the breath.
- Now, take a deep gentle abdominal breath in for 3 seconds. Hold it for a count of 1. Then release it for a count of 6. Hold for a count of 1 and then repeat for at least 3 breaths. Do the counting in your mind and let the numbers flow softly and easily.
- To help extend the exhale, make sure to use your abdominal muscles to gently push out all of the air. Your shoulders should not be helping you breathe. They move as a consequence of being on top of your abdomen, not to help you draw in a breath.
- As you exhale, let the tension in your body leave with your breath. Let it drain down from your head, your shoulders, your hands, your legs, your feet.
- As you inhale, bring in calm, peaceful energy.

Variations

If this activity follows the 5-Sense Memory, breathe in the positive feelings from that memory.

As you inhale, you can breathe in your intent for the rest of the day, and let it fill you. Each breath

in of your intent will fill you further. Fill your arms, your legs, your hands, feet, neck, and face.

When doing the activity with a group of people, model the technique, then tell participants that you'll be doing the activity for a certain range of breaths (perhaps 3-4) - and ask them to find their own rhythm.

Check out [SEL Tip: Physiological Sigh](#), [Teach Deep Breathing](#), and our [self-care page](#) for more breathing exercises.

Teaching Self-Care for Grades K-2: Music

May 10, 2020

[Marieke van Woerkom](#)

Music can be healing, uplifting, and calming for both adults and children. This lesson has young people experience how we can use music to care for ourselves during times of stress.

To the Teacher:

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to play out and schools remain closed, we're hearing from teachers and students alike that the long-term reality of the situation is sinking in.

This new Covid world is lasting longer than most of us had anticipated. The changes and losses so far have been hard to handle, overwhelming at times. And, as is too often the case, they've been disproportionately devastating for poor families and families of color. And now the uncertainty around when this will all be over, how we will transition out of it, and what will be on the other end, is starting to dawn, and wear, on people. It's uncomfortable and brings with it further anxiety, stress and exhaustion.

Young people are absorbing all this, including the changing moods of the adults in their lives, as family members are forced to do hazardous work, are laid off, face illness or death. Some are also struggling with new responsibilities, uncertainty, isolation, and grief.

[Self care for us](#), the adults, is key so we can stay strong and healthy ourselves to support our children at this time. Self-care may also be one of the most important things we can teach young people at a time like this. In this part four of our [series](#) of lessons and activities for the corona age, we'll focus on self-care practices for all of our K-12 students, from the youngest to the oldest.

About Self Care with Students

In the process of engaging young people in social and emotional learning (SEL) and mindful awareness practice, we naturally begin to teach them about self-care. One of the core competencies of SEL is "self awareness." With increased self-awareness, students can begin developing practices and skills that they can employ to take care of themselves. This can include learning how to center themselves, stay grounded and

present, calm themselves down, gain insight and perspective, and decide on possible next steps to meet their needs – all while recognizing and respecting the needs of others.

Rather than telling young people what to do and how to do it, our goal should be to support students in cultivating the awareness, skills and practices, that *they* find useful. They need to be able to make their own choices in the moment about how to handle themselves and the situation at hand – whether we, as adults, are around or not. Building on the activities already shared in our [Covid series](#) (especially those around recognizing and naming feelings and then managing those feelings, a.k.a “naming to tame our feelings”) the activities below support young people in developing the capacity for self-care.

Before we continue, you might consider the [tree of contemplative practices](#) created by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. Consider the multiple branches as ways to practice different kinds of self (and community) care and healing.

Think about your own practices. What has worked for you? How did you come to that practice? Now think about your students, their life experiences, their personalities, and who they are in the world. What might work for them? Have you asked? Have you given them opportunities to try different ways, to share practices that have worked for them perhaps?

Consider this series on self-care as a joint exploration with your students so that you can all learn together.

Brainstorm: Things That Help Us When We Feel Sad, Angry, Anxious ...

Consider beginning this brainstorming activity by having students watch a segment of the cartoon on [“Emotions”](#) by StoryBots that begins at 2:07 and ends at 4:10. It includes two parts: The first includes advice from young people when one of the bots is feeling blue, the second is a song about different ways to handle feeling blue.

Next (or to begin with), let students know that our feelings are “all okay.” And there are many things we can do to when we feel sad, angry, or anxious. Brainstorm with students a list of things we can do when we’re feeling this way. Ask students what works for them.

You may want to chart what students share, if you can. You might end up with a list that reads:

- Getting a hug from my mom (or others)
- Petting my dog
- Playing with my cat
- Having a good cry

- Listening to the birds outside my window singing a happy/sad song
- Listening to music
- Singing (ask students if they have a particular song)
- Dancing
- Yoga
- Taking deep breaths or belly breaths
- Counting to 10
- Counting backwards
- Squeezing and releasing different muscles
- Remembering the things I love about myself
- Having a parent tuck me in at night
- Keeping my nightlight on
- Playing with my baby sibling
- Having a snack
- Drawing a picture (of how I feel)
- Throwing a ball or Frisbee with a sibling or parent, kicking a ball, running around the courtyard outside
- Going to the park (while keeping our distance from others)
- Staring out the window
- Doodling on a piece of paper, etc.

Note: Make sure that the things on the list are helpful in that they don't cause harm in the short or long term, like punching walls, or eating too much junk food.

And if it's hard to get students to start brainstorming, consider coming up with a list of your own and invite students to respond by standing up, raising their hands or finding other creative ways that work for your students to show that this is something they do or have tried before.

Facilitate a discussion about what students have tried before and how that's worked out for them. Ask students if they're interested in doing some of the things on this list together in the coming weeks? Maybe different students can share out with their peers how they practice these different things and then they can practice together.

And while it's important to ask young people for the practices that work for them and give them opportunities to share with peers, you can also introduce a range of helpful practices to your students. The lesson below focuses on self-care through music, movement and connection.

Music, Movement and Connection

Music can be soothing. It can lift our spirits, hold us in our sadness, and even assuage our fears. Music can be both rejuvenating and relaxing.

As elementary school teachers, we know that the right kind of music can help generate excitement in our students and get them moving. It can also shake out some of their wiggles, concerns, and anxieties. At the same time, music can sometimes be an effective noise cancellation tool, offering children a way to filter out the distracting, sometimes unwelcome, sounds around them.

Sing-alongs can help our students connect with their teachers and their peers, which is important especially during this time of Covid-19 when physical distancing is the norm. Social connection is increasingly seen as a core human need and research is showing that absence of connection can actually cause distress and disease in people. Whether through music or in other ways, social connection is now recognized as being essential to nearly every aspect of health and well-being.

So music can be nurturing and healing. Throughout history, singing (in community) has also been a way to empower, protest, and resist. Music and song can be used as a direct form of resistance and show of resilience. According to indigenous scholar and media maker [Jarrett Martineau](#): "It's ... the opportunity for us to come together and elevate and amplify what's happening on the ground, to the community, and also to inspire people for change."

In these many diverse ways, music holds power and has health benefits. The right kind of music, moreover, can help us to slow down and center ourselves, which can help with focus. Of course, simply turning down the stimulation for the youngest of our students doesn't mean they will magically slow down, calm and center themselves. Students need practice to help them do that. Music can help with that, too.

Move to the Music

To practice self-regulation, you can start by encouraging students to simply listen and/or move to some soothing jazz, a slow blues number, or some rhythmic Samba or Bossa Nova, in a seated or standing position. You can invite them to close their eyes, if they're comfortable doing so. If not, simply ask them to pick a spot on the floor or wall in front of them to rest their gaze.

If using movement, invite students to slowly make their movements bigger as you turn the music up. As you slowly turn the music back down, students' movements should get smaller. Model how it's done by participating yourself if possible. Turn the music all the

way up, with big movements, and all the way back down making movements smaller and smaller.

When the music is turned down all the way, this is the sign for you and your students to quiet your bodies fully, sitting or standing in place without moving.

Consider a few different “rounds” of this, inviting students to move along according to the volume of the music. And as you wrap up (with our without movement) ask students what that was like for them? How did they feel at the start? How do they feel now?

Using Music to Shake Out Your Wiggles and Sillies

If you’d like to motivate students to shake out their wiggles and sillies, consider some of the following artists with their shaking-out sing-alongs:

- The [Super Shaker Song](#) by The Culture Queen
- [Shake Your Sillies Out](#) by Jose Paolo Liwag
- [Dinosaur Rap](#) by Barefoot Books
- [Arriba, Abajo, Up Down](#) (English-Spanish) by Basho & Friends

Of course if you want your students to settle after shaking out their wiggles, you may need to intentionally slow down their movements, their bodies and their heartbeat, as they sit down and possibly take some deep, slow breaths.

- A song that allows students to get some of their wiggles out, while transitioning into a calmer, more focused space, is Nancy Kopland’s [“Walk Around.”](#)

Sing-Alongs and Drumming to Connect with Peers

Sing-alongs and whole-body drum-alongs can help promote connection and harmony among students.

Ask them for their favorite songs and/or consider introducing some of the following for students to hum, sing, and move along to, in community:

- [Ubuntu Train](#) by Gigi Gumspoon

- [Gotta Be Me](#) by Secret Agent 23 Skidoo
- In [I'm Doing the Hambone](#) Uncle Devin teaches us the Hambone, an African American rhythm technique that uses the whole body as a “drum set” to produce different sounds and rhythms.
- [Over in the Meadow](#) and [Knick, knick, Paddy, Whack](#) are counting songs that both have beautiful Barefoot Books imagery in the video. [The Animal Boogie](#), [Walking through the Jungle](#) and [The More We Get Together](#) are other sing along songs that use colorful Barefoot Books imagery.

Get Student Feedback

After each sing or drum along, consider asking students questions like:

- What was that like for you?
- How did singing/drumming together make you feel?
- How did you feel before the singing/drumming? How do you feel now?

Use student feedback to guide you in what songs and/or other self care practices to introduce going forward. And if time allows and energy remains, ask:

- How did you feel about the words we sung together?

Following the Ubuntu Train song you may ask students:

- Who has heard of the word Ubuntu? What does it mean?

The concept of **Ubuntu** comes from the Zulu language of Southern Africa. It is often translated into English as: “I am a person through other people. My humanity is tied to yours. I am because we are.” According to [Archbishop Desmond Tutu](#) of South Africa: Ubuntu speaks to the interconnectedness of humanity. It is the essence of being human. You can explain to young people that it’s about us all being connected to each other and to the world.

Following the Gotta Be Me song you may ask students:

- What makes you you?
- What makes you feel good about you? What makes you proud?
- What makes us the same?
- What makes us different?

Following any of the Barefoot Books songs, ask students also about the imagery, what they noticed, liked, and what it made them think of.

Note to the Teacher:

Remember that when using music with young students, you don't need to limit yourself to music specifically composed for them. There is a range of beautiful and inspiring music from different cultures that we can use to expand young people's horizons and/or have students see their heritage reflected in your teaching.

Consider playing jazz classics, blues greats, inspirational songs of the civil rights movement, soothing reggae songs, South and Central American rhythms, folk, rock, or other music that allows your students explore music from around the world in all its richness.

A master teacher in Atlanta, Mr. Holingworth, often put on [Ain't No Stopping Us Now](#) by McFadden and Whitehead right after his pre-K class had nap time. Slowly his students would rise from their cots, rubbing their eyes, stretching a little. Then they made their way to the rug and started bopping along with the music. As the words kicked in, they used gestures they'd been taught along with the lyrics: They put up their right hand for "ain't no stopping us now," made a running in place motion for "we're on the move," and wiggled their hips and arms for "we've got the groove." It was heartwarming to see these little people find such joy in this inspirational classic.

Teaching Self-Care for Grades 3-5: Music

May 10, 2020

[Marieke van Woerkom](#)

Music can be healing, uplifting, and calming for both adults and children. This lesson has young people experience how we can use music to care for ourselves during times of stress.

To the Teacher:

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to play out and schools remain closed, we're hearing from teachers and students alike that the long-term reality of the situation is sinking in.

This new Covid world is lasting longer than most of us had anticipated. The changes and losses so far have been hard to handle, overwhelming at times. And, as is too often the case, they've been disproportionately devastating for poor families and families of color. And now the uncertainty around when this will all be over, how we will transition out of it, and what will be on the other end, is starting to dawn, and wear, on people. It's uncomfortable and brings with it further anxiety, stress and exhaustion.

Young people are absorbing all this, including the changing moods of the adults in their lives, as family members are forced to do hazardous work, are laid off, face illness or death. Some are also struggling with new responsibilities, uncertainty, isolation and grief.

[Self care for us](#), the adults, is key so we can stay strong and healthy ourselves to support our children at this time. Self-care may also be one of the most important things we can teach young people, at a time like this. In this part four of our [series](#) of lessons and activities for the corona age, we'll focus on self-care practices for all of our K-12 students, from the youngest to the oldest.

About Self Care with Students

In the process of engaging young people in social and emotional learning (SEL) and mindful awareness practice, we naturally begin to teach them about self-care. One of the core competencies of SEL is "self awareness." With increased self-awareness, students can begin developing practices and skills that they can employ to take care of themselves. This can include learning how to center themselves, stay grounded and

present, calm themselves down, gain insight and perspective, and decide on possible next steps to meet their needs – all while recognizing and respecting the needs of others.

Rather than telling young people what to do and how to do it, our goal should be to support students in cultivating the awareness, skills and practices, that *they* find useful. They need to be able to make their own choices in the moment about how to handle themselves and the situation at hand – whether we, as adults, are around or not. Building on the activities already shared in our [Covid series](#) (especially those around recognizing and naming feelings and then managing those feelings, a.k.a “naming to tame our feelings”) the activities below support young people in developing the capacity for self-care.

Before we continue though, you might consider the [tree of contemplative practices](#) created by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. Consider the multiple branches as ways to practice different kinds of self (and community) care and healing.

Think about your own practices. What has worked for you? How did you come to that practice? Now think about your students, their life experiences, their personalities, and who they are in the world. What might work for them? Have you asked? Have you given them opportunities to try different ways, to share practices that have worked for them perhaps?

Consider this series on self-care as a joint exploration with your students so that you can all learn together.

Brainstorm: Things That Help Us When We Feel Sad, Angry, Anxious ...

Consider beginning this brainstorming activity by having students watch a segment of the cartoon on [“Emotions”](#) by StoryBots that begins at 2:07 and ends at 4:10. It includes two parts: The first includes advice from young people when one of the bots is feeling blue, the second is a song about different ways to handle feeling blue.

Next (or to begin with), let students know that our feelings are “all okay.” And there are many things we can do to when we feel sad, angry, or anxious. Brainstorm with students a list of things we can do when we’re feeling this way. Ask students what works for them.

You might chart what students share, if you can. You might end up with a list that reads:

- Getting a hug from my mom (or others)
- Petting my dog
- Playing with my cat

- Having a good cry
- Listening to the birds outside my window singing a happy/sad song
- Listening to music
- Singing (ask students if they have a particular song)
- Dancing
- Yoga
- Taking deep breaths
- Talking belly breaths
- Counting to 10
- Counting backwards
- Walking the dog
- Squeezing and releasing different muscles
- Affirmations, alone or with a family member
- Having a parent tuck me in at night
- Keep my nightlight on
- Playing with my baby sibling
- Having a snack
- Drawing a picture (of how I feel)
- Throwing a ball or Frisbee with a sibling or parent, kicking a ball, running around the courtyard outside
- Going to the park (while keeping our distance from others)
- Staring out the window
- Doodling on a piece of paper, etc.

Note: Make sure that the things on the list are helpful in that they don't cause harm in the short or long term, like punching walls, or eating too much junk food.

And if it's hard to get students to start brainstorming, consider coming up with a list of your own and invite students to respond by standing up, raising their hands or finding other creative ways that work for your students, to show that this is something they do, or have tried before.

Facilitate a discussion about what students have tried before and how that's worked out for them. Ask students if they're interested in doing some of the things on this list together in the coming weeks? Maybe different students can share out with their peers how they practice these different things and then they can practice together.

And while it's important to ask young people for the practices that work for them and give them opportunities to share with peers, you can also introduce a range of helpful practices to your students. The lesson below focuses on self-care through music, movement and connection.

Music, Movement and Connection

Music can be soothing. It can lift our spirits, hold us in our sadness, and even assuage our fears. Music can be both rejuvenating and relaxing.

As elementary school teachers, we know that the right kind of music can help generate excitement in our students and get them moving. It can also shake out some of their wiggles, concerns, and anxieties. At the same time, music can sometimes be an effective noise cancellation tool, offering children a way to filter out the distracting, sometimes unwelcome, sounds around them.

Sing-alongs can help our students connect with their teachers and their peers, which is important especially during this time of Covid-19 when physical distancing is the norm. Social connection is increasingly seen as a core human need and research is showing that absence of connection can actually cause distress and disease in people. Whether through music or in other ways, social connection is now recognized as being essential to nearly every aspect of health and well-being.

So music can be nurturing and healing. Throughout history, singing (in community) has also been a way to empower, protest, and resist. Music and song can be used as a direct form of resistance and show of resilience. According to indigenous scholar and media maker [Jarrett Martineau](#): "It's ... the opportunity for us to come together and elevate and amplify what's happening on the ground, to the community, and also to inspire people for change."

In these many diverse ways, music holds power and has health benefits. The right kind of music, moreover, can help us to slow down and center ourselves, which can help with focus. Of course, simply turning down the stimulation for the youngest of our students doesn't mean they will magically slow down, calm and center themselves. Students need practice to help them do that. Music can help with that, too.

Move to the Music

To practice self-regulation, you can start by encouraging students to simply listen and/or move to some soothing jazz, a slow blues number, or some rhythmic Samba or Bossa Nova, in a seated or standing position. You can invite them to close their eyes, if they're comfortable doing so. If not, simply ask them to pick a spot on the floor or wall in front of them to rest their gaze.

If using movement, invite students to slowly make their movements bigger as you turn the music up. As you slowly turn the music back down, students' movements should get smaller. Model how it's done by participating yourself if possible. Turn the music all the

way up, with big movements, and all the way back down making movements smaller and smaller.

When the music is turned down all the way, this is the sign for you and your students to quiet your bodies fully, sitting or standing in place without moving.

Consider a few different “rounds” of this, inviting students to move along according to the volume of the music. And as you wrap up (with our without movement) ask students what that was like for them? How did they feel at the start? How do they feel now?

Using Music to Shake Out Your Wiggles and Sillies

If you want to motivate students to further shake out their wiggles and sillies, consider some of the following artists with their shaking-out sing-alongs:

- [Move and Freeze](#), a brain break action song, by the Learning Station
- [The Good Day, Cha, Cha](#) by Narwhals & Waterfalls (Good Morning song for kids)
- [Trolls: Can't Stop The Feeling](#), by Go Noodle
- [Learn African Dance Moves for Beginners](#), by Hip Shake Fitness
- [Arriba, Abajo, Up Down](#) (English-Spanish) by Basho & Friends.

Of course, if you want your students to settle down after shaking out their wiggles, you may need to intentionally slow down their movements, their bodies, and their heartbeat, as they sit down and possible take some deep, slow breaths.

- [I Am Here](#) by Narwhals & Waterfalls (SEL Movement Song for Kids) allows students to move at a slightly slower pace, transitioning students into a calmer, more focused space.

Sing-Alongs and Drumming to Connect with Peers

Sing-alongs and whole-body drum-alongs can help promote connection and harmony among students.

Ask students for their favorite songs and/or consider introducing some of the following for students to hum, sing, and move along to, in community:

- [The Mood Song](#) by Narwhals & Waterfalls (SEL Song for Kids)
- [Gotta Be Me](#) by Secret Agent 23
- [Secret Superhero](#) by Secret Agent 23
- [Alpha Four](#), Body Percussion by Jim Solomon

- In [I'm Doing the Hambone](#) Uncle Devin teaches us the Hambone, an African American rhythm technique that uses the whole body as a “drum set” to produce different sounds and rhythms
- [A Hole in the Bottom of the Sea](#), [\[LM1\] Space Song Rocket Ride](#) and [The More We Get Together](#) are other songs that use the beautiful Barefoot Books imagery.

Get Student Feedback

After each sing or drum along, consider asking students questions like:

- What was that like for you?
- How did singing/drumming together make you feel?
- How did you feel before the singing/drumming? How do you feel now?

Use student feedback to guide you in what songs and/or other self care practices to introduce going forward. And if time allows and energy remains, ask:

- How did you feel about the words we sung together?

With The Mood Song you may ask students:

- What is your mood today? (Consider asking this before and after the song and see if it changed?)
- Are there moods in the song that students can relate to?
- Talk about a time recently that you felt one of these moods?

Following the Gotta Be Me song you may ask students:

- What makes you you?
- What makes you feel good about you? What makes you proud?
- What makes us the same?
- What makes us different?

Following the Secret Superhero song, you may ask students about superpowers.

- What superpowers did they like in the video?
- What superpowers do they have?
- What superpowers would they like to have.

Following any of the Barefoot Books songs, ask students also about the imagery, what they noticed, liked, and what it made them think of.

Note to the Teacher:

Remember that when using music with young students, you don't need to limit yourself to music specifically composed for them. There is a range of beautiful and inspiring music from different cultures that we can use to expand young people's horizons and/or have students see their heritage reflected in your teaching. As an example, you might consider the new covid era variation on Miriam Makeba's 1967 classic Pata Pata, a song the BBC recently called "one of the most infectious songs ever made" and possibly "the world's most defiantly joyous song." A global compilation of song and dance can be found at [Pata Pata by Angélique Kidjo | UNICEF](#)

Also, consider playing jazz classics, blues greats, inspirational songs of the civil rights movement, soothing reggae songs, South and Central American rhythms, folk, rock, or other music that allows your students explore music from around the world in all its richness.

A master teacher in Atlanta, Mr. Holingworth, often put on [Ain't No Stopping Us Now](#) by McFadden and Whitehead right after his pre-K class had nap time. Slowly his students would rise from their cots, rubbing their eyes, stretching a little. Then they made their way to the rug and started bopping along with the music. As the words kicked in, they used gestures they'd been taught along with the lyrics: They put up their right hand for "ain't no stopping us now," made a running in place motion for "we're on the move," and wiggled their hips and arms for "we've got the groove." It was heartwarming to see these little people find such joy in this inspirational classic.

Teaching Self-Care for Middle & High School: Music

May 13, 2020

[Marieke van Woerkom](#)

This lesson has young people explore how we can use music to care for ourselves during times of stress - and share music they find calming with their peers.

To the Teacher:

As the coronavirus pandemic continues to play out and schools remain closed, we're hearing from teachers and students alike that the long-term reality of the situation is sinking in.

This new Covid world is lasting longer than most of us had anticipated. The changes and losses so far have been hard to handle, overwhelming at times. And, as is too often the case, they've disproportionately impacted poor families and families of color. And now, the uncertainty around when this will all be over, how we will transition out of it, and what will be on the other end, is starting to dawn, and wear, on people. It's uncomfortable and brings with it further anxiety, stress and exhaustion.

Young people are absorbing all this, including the changing moods of the adults in their lives, as family members are forced to do hazardous work, are laid off, or face illness. Some are also struggling with new responsibilities, uncertainty, loss, isolation and grief.

[Self care for us](#), the adults, is key so we can stay strong and healthy ourselves to support our children at this time. Self-care may also be one of the most important things we can teach young people, at a time like this. In this part four of our [series](#) of lessons and activities for the corona age, we'll focus on self-care practices for all of our K-12 students, from the youngest to the oldest.

About Self Care with Students

In the process of engaging young people in social and emotional learning (SEL) and mindful awareness practice, we naturally begin to teach them about self-care. One of the core competencies of SEL is "self awareness." With increased self-awareness, students

can begin developing practices and skills that they can employ to take care of themselves. This can include learning how to center themselves, stay grounded and present, calm themselves down, gain insight and perspective, and decide on possible next steps to meet their needs – all while recognizing and respecting the needs of others.

Rather than telling young people what to do and how to do it, our goal should be to support students in cultivating the awareness, skills and practices, that *they* find useful. They need to be able to make their own choices in the moment about how to handle themselves and the situation at hand – whether we, as adults, are around or not. Building on the activities already shared in our [Covid series](#) (especially those around recognizing and naming feelings and then managing those feelings, a.k.a “naming to tame our feelings”) the activities below support young people in developing the capacity for self-care.

Before we continue though, you might consider the [tree of contemplative practices](#) created by the Center for Contemplative Mind in Society. Consider the multiple branches as ways to practice different kinds of self (and community) care and healing.

Think about your own practices. What has worked for you? How did you come to that practice? Now think about your students, their life experiences, their personalities, and who they are in the world. What might work for them? Have you asked? Have you given them opportunities to try different ways, to share practices that have worked for them perhaps?

Consider this series on self-care as a joint exploration with your students so that you can all learn together.

Music, Movement and Connection

Music can be soothing. It can lift our spirits, hold us in our sadness, and assuage our fears. Music can be both rejuvenating and relaxing.

We know that the right kind of music can help generate excitement and get us moving. It can help us shake out some of our concerns, anxieties, and stress as well. At the same time, we can use music as a noise cancellation tool, as a way to filter out the distracting, sometimes unwelcome, sounds around us.

Coming together in song can help our students connect with their teachers and their peers, it can help us build and maintain community remotely, as different communities around the country and world have shown these past few months. Cities have encouraged sing alongs: in [Chicago](#) (skip ad) and in New York [here](#) and [here](#). Resistance choirs have organized as well (such as [here](#) and [here](#)).

Music in general can bring people together, which is important especially during this time of Covid-19 when physical distancing is the norm. Research has shown that absence of connection can cause distress and disease in people. Social connection, the antidote, is a core human need. In fact, social connection is increasingly recognized as being essential to nearly every aspect of health and well-being.

Throughout history, singing (in community) has also been a way to empower, protest, and resist. Music and song can be used as a direct form of resistance and show of resilience. According to indigenous scholar and media maker [Jarrett Martineau](#): "It's ... the opportunity for us to come together and elevate and amplify what's happening on the ground, to the community, and also to inspire people for change."

In these many diverse ways, music holds power and has health benefits. The right kind of music, moreover, can help us to slow down and center ourselves, which can help with focus. Of course, simply turning down the stimulation may not be enough sometimes.

Regular practices like listening to music, moving to music, and coming together in song can help us with the uncertainties that Covid-19 presents us with.

Opening Ceremony

Invite students to spend some time watching or just listening with eyes closed to [this video](#) of nature sights and sounds, which many might find calming. You might start with just a few minutes if it's hard for students to be still.

Alternatively, consider simply playing some relaxing music for students to sit with and listen to.

Defining Self-Care

Ask students what the term "self care" means to them. Does it conjure up the idea of buying somethings to pamper yourself? Or does it mean something else to you?

Work with students to come up with a definition that includes some of the following ideas:

"Self care refers to a series of activities and practices that we engage in on a regular basis to calm, heal, and preserve ourselves, physically and psychologically, and to reduce stress in our lives so we can be our best selves under any given circumstances."

Brainstorm Different Ways of Self-Care

Brainstorm a self-care list with students.

- Ask, what are they doing to keep sane and fit during this Covid time? Chart students' responses.

Get a show of hands of how many students practice self-care on a regular basis. Ask how that is working for them.

Note: Make sure that the things on the list are helpful in that they don't cause harm in the short or long term, like punching walls or eating too much junk food.

If it's hard to get students to start brainstorming, consider coming up with a list of your own and inviting students to respond by standing up, raising their hands, or finding other creative ways that work for your students to show that this is something they do or have tried before.

Facilitate a discussion about what students have tried before and how that's worked out for them. Gauge student interest in practicing some of the things on the list together in the coming weeks.

Maybe student volunteers can share out with their peers how they practice specific forms of self-care, so that they can practice together as a community.

And while it's important to ask young people for practices that work for *them* and give them opportunities to share with peers, over the coming weeks, we'll also be sharing different practices for you to explore with students. Part 1, below, touches on self-care through music.

Moving, Singing & Connecting through Music

Before coming together for this session, ask students to think about the music that has helped them during the pandemic so far, or during other difficult times. It might be music that helps lift their spirits, holds them in sadness, or assuages their fears. Music perhaps that's rejuvenating or relaxing, or simply serves as a noise cancellation tool.

Also ask them to think about songs that they like to sing along to, that they like to sing with others, or that they think the class might like to sing together. Ask them to find, if they can, a link to a video of the song, or just the lyrics to share with the class.

Introduce music to students as a means of self-regulation. Encourage students to simply listen and/or mindfully move along to some soothing jazz, a slow blues number, or some rhythmic Samba or Bossa Nova, in a seated or standing position.

Alternatively, consider some of the following ways in which we, with our students, can possibly shake out or move with some of our sadness, fears, concerns and anxieties:

- [Learn African Dance Moves for Beginners](#) by Hip Shake Fitness
- [Dance at a Distance](#) has a range of different resources to get students moving to music
- [Mindful movement, dance and meditation](#) by Marjolein Burgerhout

And if movement is not where your students are at, consider **listening to music while watching time-lapse visuals** of flowers (or other soothing imagery online):

- [Flowers can Dance](#) with more upbeat music (1:46 minutes)
- [Blooming Flowers Time Lapse](#) with calming piano music (2:41 minutes)
- [Time Lapse Dandelion Flower to Seed Head](#) with calming strings (1:40 minutes)

Consider showing the following BBC report [The Social Movement to Sing against Coronavirus](#) to introduce and frame the idea of coming together in music and song.

- Ask students to think about what was shared in the video about how the coronavirus is affecting people and how music can support us.

Now ask students to share songs they thought of that ahead of time that they'd like to play and perhaps have everyone sing along to. Have students introduce the songs they picked and invite them to speak to what the music has meant to them. Share the lyrics and **sing, hum and/or move together in virtual space.**

Other songs to consider, that have been used to bring people together in cities across the country are:

- New York, New York by Frank Sinatra, watch snippets on social media [here](#).
- Lean on Me by Bill Withers, watch snippets on social media [here](#) and [here](#).
- You've Got a Friend by Carole King, watch a clip [here](#) on Fox9 in Minneapolis.

And if you want to combine song with dance, consider a new covid era variation on Miriam Makeba's 1967 classic Pata Pata, a song the BBC recently called "one of the most infectious songs ever made" and possibly "the world's most defiantly joyous song"

- A global compilation of song and dance can be found at [Pata Pata by Angélique Kidjo | UNICEF](#)

You may also use one of the virtual choir and musical cast postings on the internet to sing along with. Consider starting with [The Aelolians Oakwood University Alumni 2020 "We Shall Overcome"](#) and reflect on and discuss the introduction and images at the start of the video:

- [Rise Up](#) a collaboration of the Boston Children's Choir, with Denver Children's Choir, Children's Chorus of Washington, DC, Gondwana Choirs, Sydney, and Cincinnati Boychoir. Lyrics can be found [here](#).
- [You'll Never Walk Alone](#), from the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, Carousel, performed by 300 people from 15 different countries in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic. Lyrics can be found [here](#).
- [True Colors](#) by Camden Voices, and lyrics can be found [here](#).
- [You've Got a Friend](#) by the worldwide cast of BEAUTIFUL for The Actors Fund.
- [You've Got a Friend](#) by London Voices Choir, campaigning for Women's Aid. Lyrics can be found [here](#).
- [Alexander Hamilton](#) by Original Broadway Cast and guests. Lyrics can be found [here](#).

Note: If students are interested in making a virtual choir video like the ones above, check out these resources:

- [12 Amazing Virtual Choirs to Come Out of Covid-19](#)
- [How to Make a Virtual Choir](#)
- [Virtual Choirs: Two Reasons We Hate Them \(and the Benefits of Them\)](#)

If your students are more interested in **connecting through rhythm**, consider some of the videos below. And remember, get students engaged in the sharing and the teaching. Some of these videos are complex and can be intimidating for some of us. Invite young people to step into the teacher's shoes by engaging their peers in ways they may not have considered before:

- [Body Percussion](#) by Rhythm Works
- [Body Percussion](#) by The Percussion Show
- [Body Percussion - The 6/8 Time](#) by Rhythm and Body Percussion
- [The Cup Game / Beat - How to Play - "Cups"](#) by Pitch Perfect

Closing

After any of these experiences with music, get a sense from students what it was like for them. Ask them:

- What was the activity like for them?

- How did they feel before the activity and how they feel now?

This series is meant for students to explore different kinds of self-care, so reflecting on what works, what doesn't, and why is important.

Crafty Self-Care for You & Your Students

February 11, 2022

[Sara Carrero](#)

Making time for students to do a bit of crafting can provide joy and comfort - and brighten up your classroom.

People do all kinds of things for self-care. For some it may be a breathing practice, or taking long baths, or meditating. I find it nearly impossible to clear my mind and be in the moment while also being still—I need to keep my hands busy. This usually means crafting.

Consider introducing your students to this crafty form of self-care. It may turn out to be a source of joy and comfort for them for years to come. And it can make your classroom a brighter place right now.

Some general guidelines about crafting as a form of self-care – whether for yourself or your students:

1. Take off the pressure. While it's satisfying to learn a new skill, it's okay if you or your students have no desire to become experts in a type of craft. It can be about play and joy, not about the finished product.

2. Short periods of time are valuable. If you can only set aside ten minutes a day, that's fine! Having even a small amount of time and space to disconnect from everything else going on in the classroom (and the world) to just be in the moment can go a long way.

3. It's okay if you're not feeling creative. I have heard so many people claim that they're not creative. That doesn't necessarily mean that art and crafting can't be enjoyable! If you're not feeling inventive, use patterns and templates and let your creativity come through in other ways. There are countless ways to create.

4. Consider making something that you can enjoy as a community. Create something together that will brighten up your classroom as the year goes on. Consider:

- Decorated construction paper garlands to drape around your classroom
- Paper stars that students decorate to hang from the ceiling
- Origami creations to display on classroom shelves
- Paintings or drawings to display on a gallery wall in your classroom

Students can also create items for their own enjoyment – from knitted scarves to beaded necklaces.

Here's one idea that you can apply to a whole array of crafts, and it can be an ongoing project.

Temperature Craft Project

Decide on a craft project or projects that students can work on either individually or as a collective effort – using supplies you can get access to (construction paper, markers, glue, perhaps beads and yarn in various colors).

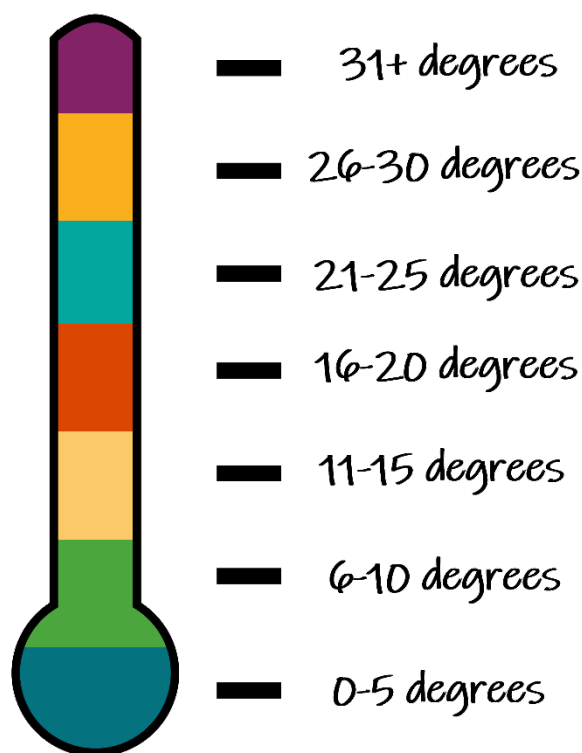
Set a time each week, or several times each week, when students will have at least 15 minutes to work on their craft project.

Step 1: Choose your projects! I have a couple of suggestions below. Also choose a time frame. Are you going to do this for a week? A month? Three months?

Step 2: Draw a blank thermometer or [use one of these](#). As a class, you can fill in degrees that will be likely in your area for the span of your project.

Step 3: Distribute blank thermometers to the class (or have them draw their own). Each student can decide what colors they want to represent each temperature range, and fill in their thermometer accordingly, using markers or whatever coloring supplies you have. If you have colorful paper or other collage materials on hand, you can glue them to the thermometer instead of coloring it in. Older students may want to incorporate more colors, maybe representing every 2-3 degrees.

Step 4: Start the project! In each craft session, check the day's temperature. No matter what collective or individual project students are working on, they'll be using the day's temperature (or temperature range) to determine the color of their work that day.



If the work is [fiber arts](#), someone might knit or crochet 2-3 rows of a blanket each day, with a color that represents the temperature outside that day. Or, apply the color code to a collage, a series of drawings, a bracelet with 2 beads added each day, origami, or a construction paper garland.

This type of project could go on for a week, a month, a year – and it will enable you and your students to sit down and focus on a craft while skipping the need to figure out what to make.

Mood Thermometer Project

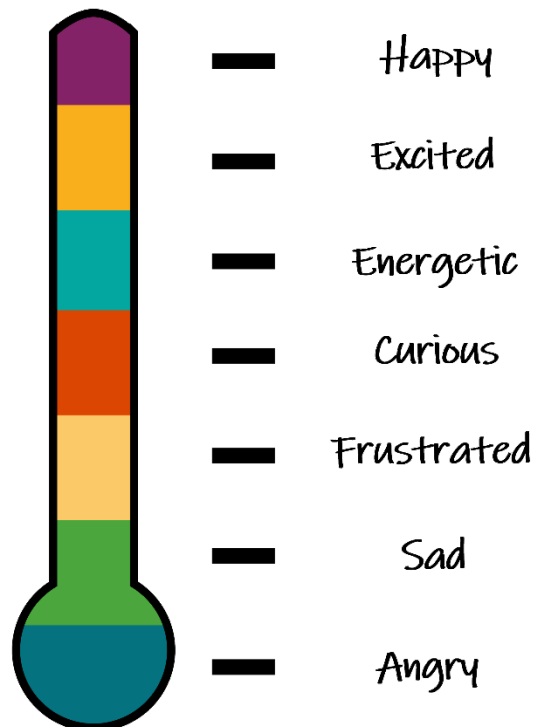
For a social and emotional learning twist, take the same concept but use a mood thermometer instead.

Brainstorm feelings words as a class, and introduce the mood thermometer to them.

Give each student a [blank thermometer](#), and invite them to fill in for themselves a range of emotions and colors they associate with each emotion. Maybe for them, joy is yellow, excited is purple, and gloomy is green. Invite students to go beyond “happy” and “sad” to consider a wider range of emotions and feelings words.

Consider having students share the words and colors they’ve chosen. It can be a chance to practice emotions language in your classroom, and explore different aspects of feelings. It can also provide insight into how your students (and you!) are feeling over a period of time.

During each craft session, each student can assess how they’re feeling that day, and work with the color, or range of colors, associated with that feeling on their personal mood thermometer. And on days when they’re feeling more than one thing, that’s fine. You may want to decide on a class how many emotions can be incorporated each day.



For older students, you can dig deeper into each emotion and create thermometers with more words and colors in the mix. Go beyond “happy” and examine if that happiness is feeling optimistic, valued, or maybe proud.

Example Craft: Paper Star Garlands

For this project, you can make paper stars for each day and string them together. Depending on the time you have, each student might make one star each day, or maybe three. This will also depend on the length of the project – if it’s a week, I’d suggest more than one each day, if it’s a month, one a day might be plenty.

Making Your Stars

Cutting out the stars: Decide on what paper students will be working with. For youngest students, cutting out stars might be a challenge in and of itself (if so, any shape will do!). Your students can draw and cut out their stars, or you can use [these templates](#) to cut out or trace on their own papers.

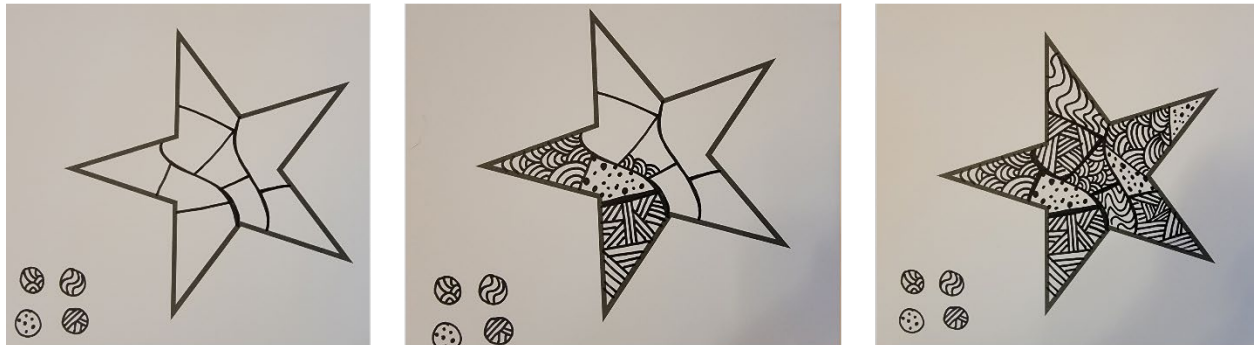
Adding the colors: Each session, students can decorate their stars with the color based on their thermometer. This could be as simple as decorating each one with markers or it could be a collage. You could even add glitter, if you dare! For the youngest students, tearing construction paper into small pieces and gluing them onto the shape is a good option (see the pink star photo to the right). If you have the supplies on hand, the way you decorate could change throughout the project.



Stringing the stars: After the decorating is done (and the glue is dry!) you can use a hole puncher to make holes in each star and add it to a piece of ribbon or string. I’d suggest doing this after each session, so students can watch their garlands grow!

A note: If you’re drawing on the stars each session and students are struggling to think of ways to decorate them, consider introducing them to “zentangle” doodling. They’re simple patterns used in a repetitive manner to create amazing designs. Here’s an example of a star where I used four different types of patterns (see the circles on the

bottom left corner of the page) to decorate a star. The lines could be done in the color for the day, or the white space could be filled in.



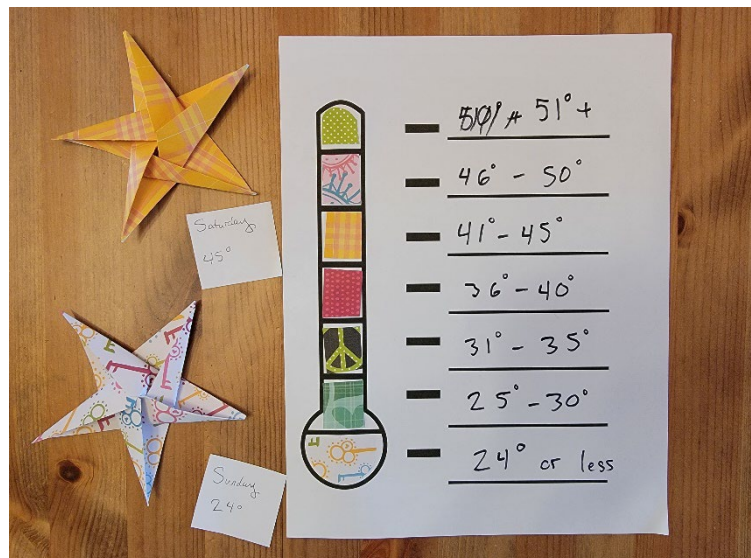
For more examples of zen doodle patterns, check out [Zentangle Art for Kids Project](#) or [Zentangle Doodling: 4 Steps](#).

Origami Stars for Older Students

You can complicate this by making origami stars, rather than cutting them out. See [these instructions for a folded 5-point star](#). You can use [this template for the stars](#), or have students measure out a hexagon to work with.

I'll admit, this one can be difficult the first time around (the video helps) but once you've made a couple of stars, it gets easier.

Use different color paper each session (not cardstock), color the paper, or decorate the star once it's folded. Colorful/patterned paper makes the project more fun. If you have paper with a pattern on one side, the patterned side should be facing down when you start folding your star.



Then, after each session, new stars can be strung on a piece of ribbon or string to create a garland. See pictures below for examples.



Self-care for Educators & Caregivers

March 31, 2020

[Marieke van Woerkom](#)

Self-care at a time like this is key. We can't be available for our children if we don't have the energy or bandwidth ourselves, worse still if we get sick. For this reason we've pulled together our resources at Morningside Center for you to have at your fingertips: 12 ways to best take care of yourself in the coming weeks and months.

1. Pay attention to how you're feeling. Check in and recognize what's going on for you. Whatever you're experiencing, whether anxiety, sadness, worry, or fear, remember it's okay not to be okay. This is a normal response to the abnormal stress-inducing reality created by the Covid-19 pandemic. Rather than trying to make yourself and others "feel better," it's often more helpful to tune in and actually experience your feelings—uncomfortable though that might be. Pushing feelings down and ignoring them doesn't serve anyone, least of all you. It may help to let go of the notion that when you're feeling pain, sadness, or fear of any kind, you're weak. Recognize feelings, instead, as a natural part of being human. Try to be present with your feelings. And if people sincerely ask how you are, let them know how you're feeling, for real. It could open up a new connection that can support you through these difficult times. See also Point 12, which describes "the Listening Exchange," a format to share how you're feeling with others, because as the saying goes, "shared grief is halved grief."

2. Limit your news intake. It's understandable that you want to stay informed, but consuming news all day long, especially at times like these, tends to increase stress and anxiety levels. Do stay abreast by tuning in to reputable news sources at set times, but don't get caught up in the endless devastating news cycle, especially not right before bed. For accurate, updated information, add the [Centers for Disease Control](#) (CDC) and the [World Health Organization](#) (WHO) to your news feeds. And remember that your thoughts produce your feelings and that those thoughts can be shaped by an overexposure to negative media stories. So be intentional about the information you consume. As Mr. Rogers said: "When I was a boy and I would see scary things in the news, my mother would say to me, 'Look for the helpers. You will always find people who

are helping.” Paying attention to this kind of news may help you produce a different set of feelings.

3. Be kind and forgiving, embrace do-overs. Though continued high expectations, no matter the setting, are important for the sake of our children, we also need to recognize that we do not necessarily have the tools or supports needed to move into this new space of remote learning without glitches and delays. So remember to be gentle and kind with yourself. Forgive yourself when things aren’t going the way you’d hoped or planned. Do-overs are part of learning for us as well as our students. Look at this time as an opportunity to model what do-overs look like—with grace, if you can! This is a great time to all be learners together, making mistakes and being patient with one another as we all adapt, adjust, and make mistakes.

4. Be generous with others and yourself. These might be trying times for people living in close quarters with others. Try to see the best in others and the situation you find yourself in. Practice kindness, compassion, and generosity with others as best you can, while having realistic expectations of who they are and what they’re capable of. And if you live by yourself, practice that same kindness, compassion, and generosity with yourself. Consciously choose to see the best in yourself and others.

5. [Remember to breathe.](#) Throughout it all, remember to breathe. Simple though it may sound, breathing deeply from your stomach is not something that comes naturally to many of us. Natural, deep breathing involves the large muscle in your abdomen known as the diaphragm. It causes your stomach to expand on the in-breath and fall on the out-breath. Try it by placing your hand on your stomach as you slow down and deepen your breath. By breathing this way from your stomach, you signal your nervous system to calm down, which can help to combat your stress and anxiety.

6. [Focus on gratitude.](#) Practicing gratitude on a regular basis has been associated with lower levels anxiety, stress, and depression. First thing in the morning (or at any point in the day), think of some things you’re grateful for. It could be anything, large or small, like feeling gratitude for waking up in a warm bed, having hot water for your morning shower, or having a good cup of coffee to start your day. You might feel gratitude for your family, supportive colleagues, your children, or your health. Whatever it is, direct your mind to go there. Then check into how it makes you feel. Take a few minutes to sit with that feeling before moving on to the rest of your day. And where practicing gratitude can brighten our

day, take a minute to spread some of that joy during these dark times -- who in your life are you grateful for? Reach out to let them know.

7. Keep a journal. Some people prefer to keep a gratitude journal, or use journaling in general to help them slow down, daily. Morningside Center Senior Program Manager Daniel Coles shares a variation on journaling called [morning pages](#), a free-write journaling practice for right after you wake up. It is about committing to paper (yes this is about old fashioned long hand!) whatever it is that crosses your mind first thing in the morning. This can help us clarify for ourselves what is happening and how we are feeling, and can sometimes lead to helpful problem-solving.

8. Maintain a regular contemplative practice. There is a range of contemplative practices that you may already be using to be more intentionally present, in the moment, full of curiosity, and without judgment. These are important to keep us grounded and connected. Research shows that a regular mindful practice can trigger hormones that relieve stress and anxiety, while improving our mood, self-awareness, mental concentration and emotional self-regulation. They can also help us regulate psychological and emotional swings. A few minutes of mindful breathing or practices such as yoga or tai chi, several times a week, can make a noticeable difference. Below, you'll find some resources Morningside Center staff have shared around contemplative practices.

9. Move and exercise daily, if you are able. As much research has established, staying active helps us to stay fit not only physically, but mentally. It can help lift our mood, improve our cholesterol, lower our blood pressure, improve the quality of our sleep at night and manage our stress—all useful in combating the challenges both of loneliness and living on top of each other in small apartments (or larger living spaces for that matter). So build some movement into your daily schedule, with or without your children, indoors, in the yard, or in uncrowded outdoor spaces that you have access to. Below, you'll find some resources Morningside Center staff have shared to help us stay active.

10. Seek out nature, fresh air, and sunlight. Studies indicate that it's good for us to spend time in nature. Being in nature lowers stress, combats depression, and promotes positivity. It is good self-care practice to spend time in the outdoors. Of course, this is easier for some of us than others, depending on where we live. But whether you're able to go for a hike outdoors, head into the yard, or simply open your windows to hear the birds, seek out your own slice of nature. And if you're looking for things to do with kids, you might want to do some planting, in the yard or on your windowsill.

11. Nourish your body and soul. While cooped up at home, remember to eat as healthily as you can. If cooking is something you enjoy, consider cooking as a contemplative practice—fully present and with intentionality, you can chop, sauté, stir, taste, season, cook, bake, etc. It's a great way to slow down. And if you do not have that association with food or its preparation, think about what does bring a smile to your face. Is it music, poetry, scented baths, hot showers, petting a dog or cat, listening to birds outside your window, online gatherings with friends or family, virtual dance parties? Then build that into your daily schedule. And remember, as always: drink lots of water.

12. Distance yes, but only physically. Connection is a core human need, so reach out to friends, family, and neighbors through text, social media, phone calls, online gaming, video chats, virtual happy hours, and dance parties. Also, turn to trusted friends and family members to process your fears, concerns, and anxiety. Consider a process called “the listening exchange.” In this process, two people who might be life partners, close friends, or trusted colleagues, take turns listening mindfully to each other for equal amounts of time. No interrupting. What's shared in the listening exchange is confidential. After a listening exchange, people often comment about how wonderful, and rare, it is for someone to give them their full attention without interrupting, even for five minutes.

Additional Resources:

- * Urban Yoga offers free online meditation and movement classes. Go to www.urbanyogafoundation.org to look at the calendar and register.
- * Alvin Ailey extension offers [online dance class videos](#)
- * Jose Limon offers [dance classes live on instagram](#) daily at 3PM
- * 26 favorite [cheap and easy meals](#) from The Simple Dollar



Self-care for Educators & Caregivers

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- 4 Be generous with yourself and others.
- 5 Remember to breathe.
- 6 Focus on gratitude.
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