



Morningside Center for Teaching Social Responsibility

# Winter Holidays Bundle 2022

**Holiday Feelings & Self-Care**

**Collected TeachableMoment lessons by:**

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# Winter Holidays Bundle

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# Honoring Feelings During the Holidays

Students share holiday traditions and experiences, and acknowledge the range of emotions that accompany the season.



Kwanzaa Celebration. [Reginald James](#)

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## To the Teacher

Before engaging in this activity, if possible, survey students to find out which holidays they celebrate in their communities. You can use this information to further personalize the lesson.

## Introduction

Share with students that today, as we enter one of the busiest holiday seasons of the year, we'll take some time together to share our holiday traditions and experiences, and acknowledge the range of emotions that accompany the season.

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## Circle Activity

### Community Agreements

Form a circle. (If you are new to the circle process, see this [Introduction to Circles](#).)

Share suggested community agreements or norms for the circle, or arrive at them together within the circle. Some to consider might be:

- Speak and listen from the heart
- Lessons leave, personal stories stay (honor confidentiality)
- Honor the right to pass (participants can choose not to speak when the talking piece comes to them)
- Consider the impact of what we are saying and care for each other

### Share Reflections

Share this quote with students:

“The joy of brightening other lives, bearing each other’s burdens, easing each other’s loads and supplanting empty hearts and lives with generous gifts becomes for us the magic of the holidays.” – W. C. Jones

Using a talking piece or speaking order, invite each person in the circle (including yourself) to respond to this prompt:

- What connections do you have with the quote? Did anything about it resonate for you? For example: Who brightens your life? Whose life do you brighten, and how? Whose burdens would you like to ease? What gifts of generosity have filled your heart?

## Holiday Traditions in Our Lives

Again, using a talking piece or speaking order, invite each person in the circle (including yourself) to respond in turn to some or all of these prompts:

- What is your favorite holiday? Why?
  - During the holiday season, which traditions from your family and/or culture do you value and hold onto?
  - Which traditions, if any, no longer suit you (or never did suit you)? Have you outgrown them? Do they no longer fit into your life?
  - What would make this holiday season easier/better for you? What can you do that is within your control? What might others do to make it easier or better for you?
  - Have you started any new traditions – or are there new traditions you would like to start? For instance, new traditions to honor family members and/or friends who are no longer with you?
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## Closing

As a closing, share the following quote:

“This holiday season give yourself the gift of self-love and self-acceptance. Your season will bloom into ultimate bliss.”— Amy Leigh Mercree

Additionally, or as an alternate closing, invite students to share a word or phrase about how they’re feeling at the close of the circle.

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## Extension Activities

- **What do you bring?** Ask students to consider the idea that “Everyone is needed for what they bring.” Invite them to think about a particular friend or family member. What does that person bring to holiday gatherings or to the holiday season (physically, emotionally, etc.)? Then consider: What is your role? What do you

bring?

- **Holiday Favorites:** Invite students to share about a favorite song, TV special, movie, food, etc. that they enjoy during a holiday they celebrate.
- **Holiday Display:** Consider a way to honor each holiday that is celebrated and represented in your classroom community. Perhaps you can create a holidays wall, or a classroom-created photo album or souvenir book.
- **Holiday Resources:** Create a classroom list of learning resources based on the holidays that are celebrated by all within the class.
- **Holiday Playlist:** Create a classroom holiday playlist where each student contributes a song. Play one selection daily during a transition or other appropriate time.

### **Resources for Kwanzaa**

Kwanzaa is cultural, non-religious holiday that is observed from December 26 through January 1. It is a celebration of African roots, observed by people of all faith backgrounds. For more information, see:

[Video: What is Kwanzaa?](#)

[Kwanzaa History from Oprah Daily](#)

[Kwanzaa Traditions](#)

# For the Holidays: Handle Feelings by ‘Naming to Tame Them’

The holidays can be a stressful time. Here are some simple steps to help us and our students handle heightened emotions - now or any time.

December can be a month of heightened emotions and stress. This is as true for us as educators as it is for the young people in our care. Sometimes these feelings are joyous, cheerful, and upbeat—feelings the media promotes with images of happy families coming together for the holidays, sharing festive meals, gifts, and good times. There is excitement mixed in for some of our students, and that can sometimes bubble over.

But we all know that the holidays can also bring up feelings of anxiety, grief, and loneliness. Many families are worried about finances, about keeping a roof over their head and food on the table, let alone partaking in the holiday shopping frenzy. These feelings can create stress that young people pick up on and absorb. Young people may even feel a sense of responsibility and worry about the family finances themselves.

Spending additional time with erratic or dysfunctional families over the holidays can also be stress-inducing. And for those whose family members are absent, or no longer with us, loneliness and depression may set in. It doesn't help that these upsetting emotions are coming at a time when people are expected to be festive and jolly.

For all these reasons and more, we and our students may be more easily triggered during this period. When that happens, the “fight, flight or freeze” stress response kicks in and we risk “flipping our lids.”

Here are some simple steps you and your students can take to cope with these heightened emotions:

- **Step 1:** Make sure you yourself are calm before you help your students. Use techniques that have worked for you in the past, like deep breathing, self-talk, or acknowledging how you are feeling in the moment, e.g. “I feel annoyed” or “I feel worried” or “I feel upset.” You can say it inside your head, or quietly under your breath. And if you want it to be a teachable moment, you can say it out loud, modeling for your students how self-talk helps you calm down. Note how saying “I feel annoyed” is different from saying “I am annoyed.” By recognizing this as a feeling, not as a quality that is part of our identity, we acknowledge that the feeling is temporary and that we can move beyond it.

- **Step 2:** Connect with the young person who is being triggered. Meet them at their level, literally, without crowding their space. This might mean crouching down to be face to face with them. Try to connect by calmly and quietly using their name, and perhaps putting your hand on their shoulder or arm. This can help the student's system stabilize because they no longer feel alone.
- **Step 3:** Next, recognize the feeling that the student seems to have, and name it, e.g. "You look like you're feeling frustrated" or "It sounds like you are feeling angry" (or "sad" or "nervous"). Whatever the feeling may be, "name it to tame it."

As neuropsychologist Dan Siegel explains, naming our feelings – or having a supportive person name them for us – sends soothing neurotransmitters to the lower, more primal part of the brain that is designed to trigger our stress response. Calming down this more agitated part of the brain allows us instead to have access to the more recently developed upper parts of the brain that are involved in processing and synthesizing complex information. It is this part of the brain that supports our amazing capacity to learn, focus, make good decisions, moderate our social behavior, and even feel empathy. It can also help us think pro-actively about the holidays; what we might do and who we might reach out to when the going gets tough.



# Holidays: Sometimes Happy, Sometimes Not

The holidays are not always a joyful occasion, especially for those facing hardship or stress. In this activity, students share their feelings about the upcoming holidays and consider how they might provide some encouragement for those who are struggling.



## To the teacher

As the holidays approach, many people are looking forward to spending time with family and friends and sharing in the joys of the season. It is easy to take for granted that everyone is in this happy frame of mind and that all our students are excited to be getting time off from school. This is, after all, the image that the media and advertisers bombard us with from all directions—this time of year is supposed to be joyous.

Unfortunately though, the holiday season may well bring up negative feelings for students and colleagues from broken or unhappy homes. Some may have lost a family member. Many families are still struggling to keep their heads above water in this economy—they are worried about finances and keeping a roof over their heads. For many people, the holidays can be accompanied by grief, stress or loneliness.

It's important to take all this into consideration as we talk about the holidays in the classroom. Below is a brief classroom activity aimed at helping students recognize the less joyous side of the holiday season and providing some encouragement for those who will be facing hardship this holiday season.

## Gathering

**(10 minutes)**

Ask your students: What is a word that comes to mind for them as they look ahead to the holidays?

Explain that the holiday season is often associated with positive images, especially in the media. Yet for many people and for many reasons, the holidays are not necessarily joyous. In a go round, ask all students to share a word, image or feeling—positive or not—that comes up for them as they look ahead to the holidays.

Alternatively ask a few volunteers to share their words, images, or feelings, with the rest of the group.

## Agenda

**(5 minutes)**

Explain that in today's lesson, students will share some of their feelings about the holidays.

## Holiday Feelings

**(30 minutes)**

Create a feelings "barometer" in your classroom by posting feelings like Stressful, Worried, Sad, Lonely, Depressed, Irritated, Aggravated, Angry, Jealous, etc. on one side of the room and feelings like Joyful, Thankful, Happy, Excited, Delighted, Fulfilled, etc. on the other side of the room. Use a sheet of paper per feeling with plenty of space underneath for students to add marks to the sheet. Post a couple of blank sheets on each side of the room for students to add additional feelings themselves.

Next ask students to look around the room and notice the various feelings you posted. As students think of their upcoming holiday (Thanksgiving, Diwali, Al-Hijira, Ashura, Hanukkah, Christmas, Kwanzaa, Yule, or other holiday that they may or may not observe/celebrate in the coming months), ask them to take a few minutes to think about what feelings they expect to experience during the holiday.

Next ask students to get up out of their seats and either mark anonymously (with a checkmark or star) or with their name the feelings they expect to experience. They can choose as many or as few feelings as they expect to experience.

When students are done marking the feelings they expect to experience during the holidays, ask them to walk around the room and quietly to take in the results. This is known as a gallery walk. Next reconvene the whole class to debrief this activity.

Ask students:

- What was it like having to think ahead to the holidays and marking the feelings you think you'll be experiencing?
- What did you notice about which feelings people marked?
- Which feelings have the most marks? What does that tell us about how students in our classroom are feeling about the upcoming holidays?
- What are some reasons some people might feel sad or lonely on a holiday?
- What are things that the rest of us might be able to do to help people who are feeling this way?

## Closing

**(5 minutes)**

Ask students to think of a message of encouragement they might give to someone who is feeling lonely or sad in the holiday season.

# Bah Humbug? A Quick Lesson on Holiday Consumption

Some facts and questions about how much many Americans buy and waste over the holidays - and how we feel about it.

Around this time of year many Americans are enveloped in a world of giving and receiving presents. Here are some facts about the (mostly Christmas) present-giving and other festivities to brighten your holidays:

## 1. Holiday spending

According to the Gallup Poll, the average American will spend \$830 on gifts this holiday season. Retail companies depend on this holiday gift-buying to boost their bottom line. All this consumption also brings jobs, though many are temporary: According to the National Retail Federation, stores will hire over 700,000 seasonal workers to handle the holiday crush this year.

But a survey by SunTrust Banks showed that 46% of Americans felt pressure to buy more presents than they can afford. A separate poll by T. Rowe Price asked parents if they agree with the statement, "I spend more for my kids over the holidays than I should have." 62% agreed with that statement. 16% said that they dipped into retirement or emergency funds to buy presents.

### Discussion questions:

- If your family tradition is to buy gifts this time of year, do you feel pressured to buy more than you should?
- How do you balance the joy of children receiving gifts against the financial (and psychological) stress that this gift-giving brings?
- Are there ways to bring joy without the stresses?

Bonus statistics question: How useful is a national average?

Take a closer look at the Gallup poll which found that the average American will spend \$830 on gifts this year. What questions would you like answered about this statistic?

Possible responses:

- Were people who buy no presents included in the average?
- Are two parents of children counted separately?
- Since an average is given, not a median, is there a significant difference between the spending of wealthy people and those who are poor?
- Were children included in the poll?

## 2. Waste

Americans are no slouches in the garbage department. According to the EPA, we each generate an average of 4.38 pounds of it per day - nearly 1600 pounds per year. That makes us world leaders in waste.

Americans generate more than 25 million extra tons of waste during the holiday season.

### Discussion questions:

- What accounts for the extra waste?
- What are some ways we could reduce the waste? Possible responses:
  - Reuse wrapping paper, ribbons, etc.
  - Give a gift that involves your time rather than a bought item.
  - Reduce food waste over the holidays.
  - Avoid disposable dishware, shopping bags, etc.
  - Use energy-efficient lighting and reduce number of hours of lighting.
  - Buy more durable presents--those that will still be useful one, two or ten years from now

## 3. Lights

Celebrating light (from yule logs to candles to Christmas lights) is an ancient tradition during the winter solstice season, the darkest point in the year.

Modern holiday lights consume a lot of energy. A survey in Britain asking about Christmas lights usage, concluded that having lights on for six hours a day for the holiday season consumes as much electricity as 23 days of total electricity usage for the household.

### Discussion question:

- What are some ways we could reduce that number, while still celebrating light over the holiday, if we want to?

## 4. The Need for Stuff

Ultimately, stopping global climate change depends on our producing less and consuming less.

Read the following passage from a column by Rosemary Randall in the Guardian:

Businesspeople tell me they only produce what the public demand. Parents tell me they only buy what their children need to fit in. In-depth interviews reveal the extent to which people's sense of identity, their desire to belong, and their need for comfort, security, self-esteem, and the respect of others, are caught up in the marketplace and in patterns of consumption. There is nothing innate or unchanging in the desires for stuff, however.

### Discussion questions:

- Do you agree that people's needs for comfort, security, self-esteem and belonging are caught up in consuming?
- Do you feel that this is true about yourself?
- What do you think Rosemary Randall means by that last sentence?
- Do you agree with her? How possible is it for us to do without "stuff"? What will it take for that to happen?

Some organizations focus specifically on reducing holiday spending. They include:

- Center for a New American Dream <https://www.newdream.org/programs/beyond-consumerism/simplify-holidays>
- Buy Nothing Christmas <http://www.buynothingchristmas.org/index.html>

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### Sources

<http://www.cheatsheet.com/money-career/holiday-spending-statistics-too-many-americans-are-overspending.html/?a=viewall>

[http://www.gallup.com/poll/186620/americans-plan-spending-lot-christmas.aspx?g\\_source=WWWV7HP&g\\_medium=topic&g\\_campaign=tiles](http://www.gallup.com/poll/186620/americans-plan-spending-lot-christmas.aspx?g_source=WWWV7HP&g_medium=topic&g_campaign=tiles)

<http://www.independent.co.uk/environment/christmas-lighting-equal-to-228-days-electricity-2132113.html>

<https://nrf.com/resources/holiday-headquarters>

<http://www3.epa.gov/region9/waste/recycling/index.html>

<http://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/consumption-patterns-behaviour-change>

[http://www3.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/2012\\_msw\\_fs.pdf](http://www3.epa.gov/epawaste/nonhaz/municipal/pubs/2012_msw_fs.pdf)

# Fostering Joy & Building Strength in Today's Moments

This lesson for middle and high school students is intended to offer joy and inspiration, and the opportunity to be in community with peers.



*Carina Nebula, from NASA's [James Webb Telescope](#).*

## Introduction

### Opening Quote

Share with students the following words from author Cole Arthur Riley (aka @Blackliturgies):

“Grief is not the destroyer of beauty. It's okay to look up from the debris long enough to catch your breath on something beautiful.”



## Student Share

Use one or both of the following questions to invite students to reflect and share with regards to the quote. This can be done as an independent journaling activity, or journaling followed by a share out.

1. In response to the quote, what are your IFETS (impressions, feelings, expressions, thoughts, sensations), and/or any connections to the quote?
  2. What is a thing of beauty that you have experienced recently? This could be beauty in any form, and utilizing any of the senses.
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## Activities

Engage students in one or more of the following activities.

### Nature

Nature can help us to remember that we are a part of something greater than ourselves, and that there are wondrous and beautiful elements in the world for us to discover and to be inspired by.

1. Look at the following links from NPR, depicting the [images](#) and accompanying [story](#) on the James Webb Space Telescope.
  - Invite students to share their thoughts on why such elements and phenomena in nature resonate with so many people.
2. Have students pick a post that speaks to them from the @Nature account on Instagram, and share out about it.

### News Headlines

While progress toward racial justice can feel nonexistent or slow at best, sometimes we hear a story that provides a glimmer of hope.

1. This update on [Tulsa race massacre survivors](#) reminds us of one reason why we must keep fighting for justice.
  - Invite students to share their thoughts on “the difference between generosity and justice,” which is mentioned in the article.
  - What are students’ thoughts on what justice could look like in this case?
2. Read about the descendants of Charles and Willa Bruce and their fight to regain the land taken from their family, [here](#), and in this short post on [Upworthy](#).
  - Why is it important to continue fighting for justice, restitution, and reparations? And why specifically in this case?

### **Good News**

The social media accounts *@so.informed* and *@upworthy* share posts featuring good news, weekly and daily, respectively. Have students browse the accounts and share out about a story that resonates with them.

### **Poetry & Words**

Share one of the following with students and invite them to share IFETS and connections that come up for them.

1. Elizabeth Acevedo’s [Dreaming for Them](#)
2. Toni Morrison's phrase, "You are your best thing."

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### **Closing**

Share this 1-minute [video](#) that Adrienne Maree Brown recorded in May 2022, following a racist massacre in Buffalo. In it, she reminds us, when facing tough times, to “[harness] anger into things that can keep us safe.”

Invite students to consider what and who allows them to feel safe, and to journal or share out as they feel comfortable.

## Extended learning

1. Invite students to share responses to the question/s:
  - What keeps you going?
  - What have you come across that made you instantly happy, wondrous, dreamy, etc.?
2. In another video from Adrienne Maree Brown, she invites us to ask ourselves, “Who am I in relationship with? Who can I reach out and hold onto? Is there a skill that I need to learn?” as well as the reminder, “Don’t let terror take your time.” Allow students to journal or share out in response, if they would like.

# Crafty Self-Care for You & Your Students

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.

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## Temperature Craft Project

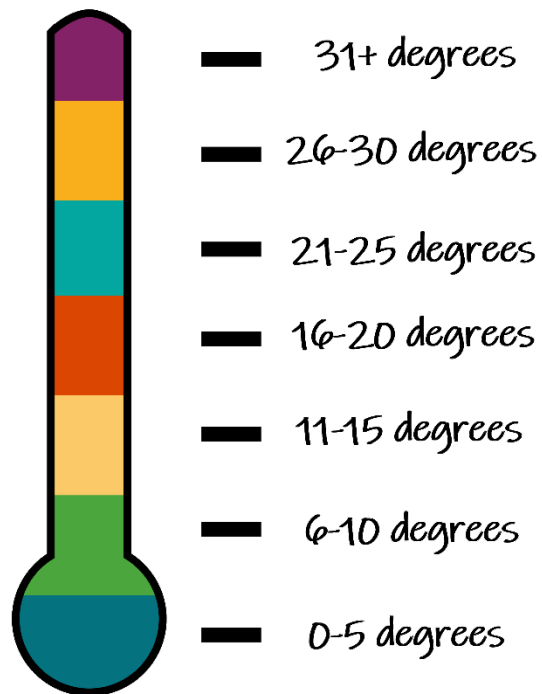
Decide on a craft project or projects that students can work on either individually or as a collective effort – using supplies you can get access to (construction paper, markers, glue, perhaps beads and yarn in various colors).

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.

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## Mood Thermometer Project

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

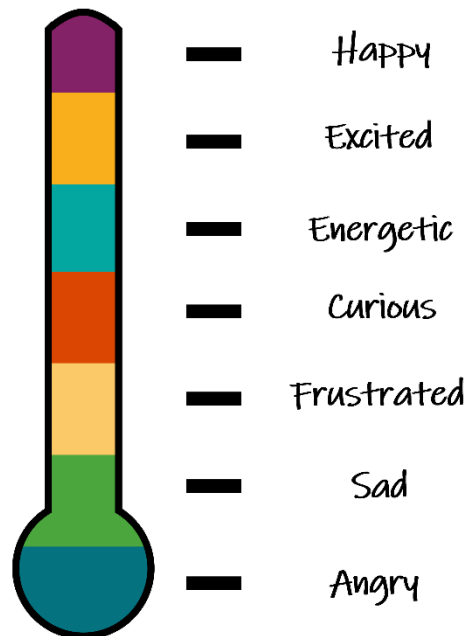
Brainstorm feelings words as a class, and introduce the mood thermometer to them.

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

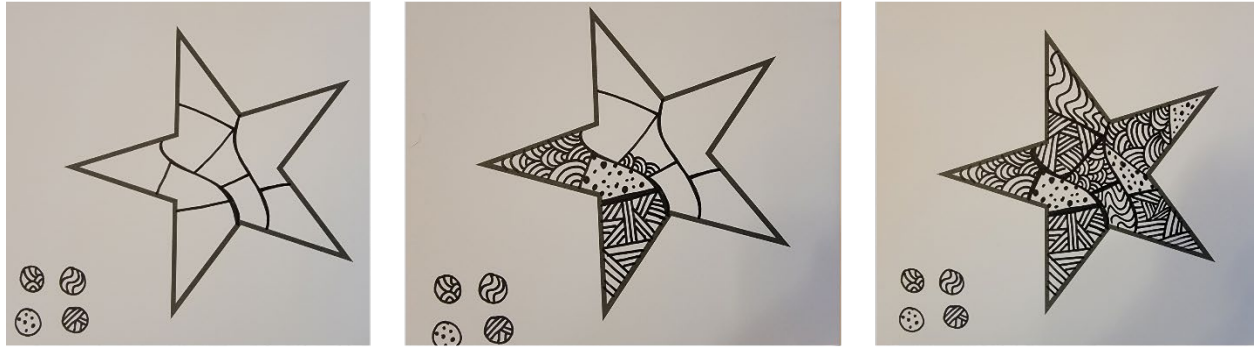
**Cutting out the stars:** Decide on what paper students will be working with. For youngest students, cutting out stars might be a challenge in and of itself (if so, any shape will do!). Your students can draw and cut out their stars, or you can use [these templates](#) to cut out or trace on their own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

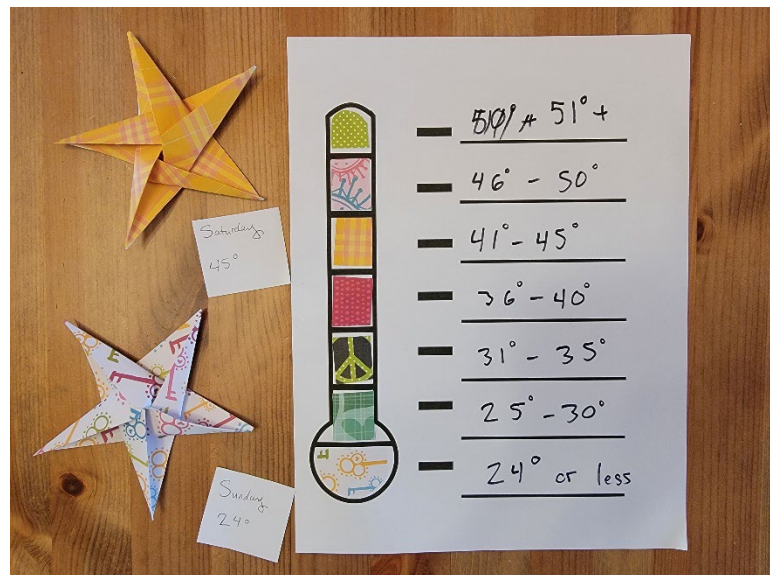
## Origami Stars for Older Students

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.





## Two Quick Techniques for Calming Down

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.

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## 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 will 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.

# Looking for the Good during Challenging Times

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

## **To the Teacher:**

During the past weeks and months, our nation has witnessed an onslaught of upsetting and, at times, triggering events. Many are feeling heightened stress, uncertainty, and overwhelm.

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.

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## 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.

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## 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.

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## 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.
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## 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>