



Emotional Wellbeing 2

Activities to
support the
teaching of the
updated Junior
Cycle SPHE
Curriculum 2023



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

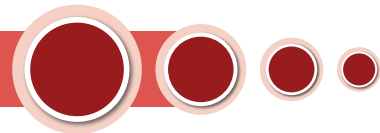
An tSeirbhís Náisiúnta
Síceolaíochta Oideachais
National Educational
Psychological Service



This unit of learning was developed by the University of Limerick, HSE Health and Wellbeing, the National Educational Psychological Service of the Department of Education and is supported by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.

With special thanks to the schools, teachers and second-year students involved in piloting the activities:

- Le Chéile Secondary School, Dublin
- St. Joseph's Patrician College, 'The Bish,' Galway
- Killorglin Community College, Kerry
- Kinsale Community School, Cork.



Introduction

The aim of the SPHE as set out in the NCCA specification for Junior Cycle is to:

“build students’ self-awareness and positive self-worth; to develop the knowledge, understanding, skills, dispositions and values that will enable them to lead fulfilling and healthy lives: empower them to create, nurture and maintain respectful and loving relationships, with self and others; and enhance their capacity to contribute positively to society”.

This unit of learning continues to develop the skills and practices that can nurture wellbeing. These skills and practices typically comprise five key elements of social competencies: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision making. For more information see <https://casel.org>.

This unit of learning is linked to Strand 4: Emotional Wellbeing and focuses on nurturing emotional wellbeing and promoting positive mental health. The learning in emotional wellbeing units is underpinned by approaches used in cognitive behavioural therapy, such as recognising the link between our thoughts, feelings and behaviour and approaches in positive psychology, such as, gratitude and mindfulness techniques. More information on CBT is available see: <https://positivepsychology.com/cbt-cognitive-behavioral-therapy-techniques-worksheets/> and for more information on positive psychology see <https://positivepsychology.com/what-is-positive-psychology-definition>.

These activities are designed to be taught with reference to the SPHE/RSE Toolkit, developed by the NCCA (see <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/junior-cycle/short-courses/sphe/sphe-2023/overview-course/>). It includes guidance on teaching SPHE in a safe and effective way and includes an explanation of the experiential learning cycle that is recommended for use in SPHE and is the framework used in the activities in this resource.

All learning in SPHE is underpinned by three cross-cutting elements that are foundational for effective teaching and learning in SPHE; awareness dialogue and reflection and action. It is important that the teacher is consciously creating opportunities for the students to become more self-aware and aware of others; creating lots of opportunities for classroom dialogue and prompting students to reflect on what they are learning and what it means for their lives now or in the future.

The activities presented here are a guideline only. Every classroom is different, and teachers are best placed to decide on what will be most effective in their classroom. Each of the activities includes exercises suitable for group work, with suggestions for active learning techniques, and these suggestions are not prescriptive. These activities are designed to be delivered sequentially (Activity 1 - 8). Guidance to support SPHE teaching practice (e.g., effective pedagogical approaches) is available from the **SPHE Toolkit (2023, www.curriculumonline.ie)** at the following link <https://www.curriculumonline.ie/junior-cycle/short-courses/sphe/sphe-2023/sphe-toolkit/sphe-teaching-approaches/>.



Some of the activities presented include mindfulness, reflection, relaxation and visualisation exercises. We have provided opportunities for a **Mindful moment** (🧠) in many of the activities. By this we mean standing back from what we are doing to press pause and engage in a moment of reflection. Teachers can select to use this should they feel that a Mindful moment is appropriate for their class at that time. While many people find these exercises beneficial, some children and young people may have difficulty with them. For example, if a student is feeling stressed, anxious, emotionally raw or has experienced a trauma, a mindfulness activity may be experienced as overwhelming as they sit with unpleasant emotions and another activity may therefore be more suitable. Also, some students and young people may struggle to sit still and may need a movement activity to help relax their bodies. It is useful to try a number of mindful, reflection, relaxation and visualisation activities that give students the option to have an alternative if they struggle with a particular activity at a given time. For more information see the List of Relaxation Techniques, published by NEPS (<https://assets.gov.ie/71764/e3d680c3f07f4008804063b15e1839a9.pdf>).

If a student becomes upset during an activity or if you become concerned about a student, you can seek advice through the normal student support structures. You may find “[The Response to Stress - Information for School Staff](#)” document published by NEPS a useful source of information on the stress response and how to support a student to regain calm. Further resources published by NEPS are available at the following link <https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/195c1-wellbeing-in-post-primary-schools-information-for-school-staff/>.

Throughout this unit students are encouraged to keep a **wellbeing journal** to encourage reflection on the activities, content and exercises in the unit. Keeping a wellbeing journal is useful for students to help them to make connections between activities, become aware of their emotional needs and identify the strategies that work best for them in maintaining their emotional wellbeing. *Wellbeing journals are for students’ reflection only and should not be used as a form of assessment.*



Learning outcomes

Learning Outcomes addressed in this unit to support the teaching of the updated Junior Cycle SPHE Curriculum 2023.

Strand	Learning outcomes (LOs)
4. Emotional Wellbeing	4.1 discuss the fluid nature of emotional wellbeing and ways to nurture and protect it 4.2 recognise and acknowledge their emotions and recognise the links between thoughts, feelings and behaviour 4.3 consider the impact of stress and draw upon a variety of techniques to help self-regulate emotions and cope with the day-to-day stresses of life 4.4 discuss ways to support themselves and others in challenging times and where/how/when to seek support, if needed 4.5 explore how emotional wellbeing can be affected by factors within our control, such as sleep, diet, exercise, substance use and online exposure, and factors beyond our control 4.9 demonstrate how to access and appraise appropriate and trustworthy information and services aimed at supporting young people's emotional wellbeing and mental health.
Additional Learning Outcome Strand 3: Relationships and Sexuality	3.1 reflect on the values, behaviours and skills that help to make, sustain and end relationships respectfully with friends, family and romantic/intimate relationships.

Learning activities

- **In activity 1, Understanding myself**, (L.O. 3.1) (pages 6-13) students identify and clarify their core values and how they are enacted. This lesson will explore connections between values and their influence on actions. Students will also build their sense of connectedness with others, recognising commonalities across shared values.
- **In activity 2, Recognising & naming emotions**, (L.O. 4.2) (pages 14-23) students will strengthen their emotional awareness by expanding their emotional vocabulary and by noticing different emotions in themselves and others.
- **In activity 3, Managing emotions**, (L.O.s 4.2, 4.3) (pages 24-35) students will be encouraged to recognise different types of emotional signals in the body, and to explore effective techniques for managing and regulating emotions in various situations, as well as the impacts of these techniques on their social and emotional wellbeing.
- **In activity 4, Understanding thoughts**, (L.O. 4.2) (pages 36-43) students reflect on what they know about the link between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. They learn to recognise common 'thinking traps' to manage unhelpful thinking patterns.
- **In activity 5, Managing thoughts**, (L.O. 4.2) (pages 44-52) students will revisit the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviours and learn a reframing strategy (Catch it, Check it, Change it) to manage unhelpful thinking patterns.
- **In activity 6, Understanding & recognising stress**, (L.O.s 4.3, 4.9) (pages 53-63) students build on their understanding of stress. Particularly, students will practice recognising their experience of stress, and identifying positive, tolerable, and toxic stress. This lesson will develop students' health literacy through the reinforcement of support-seeking.
- **In activity 7, Managing stress**, (L.O.s 4.3, 4.4) (pages 64-75) students consider healthy coping, and practice coping techniques for stressors. Students will identify and discuss healthy ways to cope with stress and prevent stress from building up, self-select appropriate stress-management techniques for healthy coping, and practice applying these to every-day scenarios.
- **In activity 8, Minding myself**, (L.O.s 4.1, 4.4) (pages 76-89) draws together the topics explored in Unit 2. Students will build a class Wellbeing Wheel and their individual 'Self-Care Toolkit', by identifying, discussing and self-selecting a series of self-management strategies to maintain emotional wellbeing and promote regular engagement in healthy habits. This lesson is framed by the Five Ways to Wellbeing from Mental Health Ireland.

Suggestions for assessment

The purpose of assessment in SPHE is to enable students to demonstrate the knowledge, skills and dispositions they have gained through their engagement in learning. Students can provide evidence of their learning through multiple means of expression, including oral, written, visual, digital and arts-based pieces.

The following are suggestions and are not intended to be prescriptive.

Get creative

Create a collage or visual display showing examples of different influences that are helpful or harmful to our emotional wellbeing. These influences can include our immediate surroundings to broader societal influences on our emotional wellbeing. Consider factors that are within or outside of our control.

Or

In a group, create a video, song or storyboard on how to recognise common thinking traps and get out of them.

Helpful tips

Create an advice sheet, leaflet or poster with advice for teenagers on one of the following:

- How to recognise different emotions, and strategies for managing emotions.
- How to recognise stress and take action to manage stress.
- How to recognise the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviours.
- How to create a recipe for self-care.

Create social media content

Many young people seek advice from online platforms and social media to support their emotional wellbeing and mental health. There is a lot of misinformation on these platforms, which can be misleading and harmful.

Your task is to **create a piece of content for social media that counters misinformation** and provides accurate information targeted at young people to spread awareness about emotional wellbeing. This can be a piece of visual or audio/visual content on a topic of choice that has been explored in Emotional Wellbeing Unit 2.

- Ensure that all information shared in your content is accurate and sourced from reliable resources such as mental health organisations (e.g., www.mentalhealthireland.ie), educational websites, and government health services (e.g., www.hse.ie).
- *You do not need to post anything to social media to complete this task.*

Activity 1 – Understanding myself (L.O. 3.1)

This activity aims to help students identify and clarify their core values and how they influence behaviour. This activity will explore connections between values and their influence on everyday actions. Students will also build their sense of connectedness with others, recognising commonalities across shared values.

Teacher's note

Thinking about the things that matter or are important to us can help us to identify our **values** – **values** guide our behaviour, decisions, and actions towards a meaningful life. Our sense of self and self-esteem can be strengthened when we recognise the values that are important to us and help us to live an authentic, happy life.

Our values can be informed by our cultural background, religion, family, education, societal norms, and even the influence of peers, role models and people who inspire us. Our values can change over time and be shaped by our personal experiences.

When completing step 2 ask students to draw their values Tree somewhere that is accessible to them (e.g., Wellbeing Journal), and encourage them to regularly add to this. **Where students speak a first language or additional language to English, students can complete this activity in their preferred language.**

Overview of 'Steps' for this activity:

Step 1: What are values?

Step 2: What are my values?

Step 3: Acting on our values

Step 4: Acts of kindness reflection

Resources/materials

The following resources will be needed for this lesson (optional where indicated):



- Slide deck: Activity 1, Understanding myself slide deck



- Worksheets: Activity 1, Understanding myself



- Flipchart paper (optional)

Teacher's note

Values guide our behaviour, decisions, and actions towards a meaningful life. They are deeply held and help us make decisions and choices. Our values are influenced by different factors like our culture, family, and experiences. Sometimes, we might not even realise what's shaping our values (e.g., widespread societal attitudes). Reflecting on our values helps us understand what's truly important to us in living a meaningful life. **Examples of values** are: Independence, Respect, Trust, Responsibility, Courage, Compassion, Loyalty, Friendship, Community, Creativity, Peace, Adventure, Balance, Leadership, Learning, Justice, Hope, Humour.

Step 1: What are values?



1. Consider starting this activity with a **Mindful moment:**



Headspace Mini Meditation
[Find Your Focus](#)

2. Discuss with the class what they think the word 'values' means.
3. Encourage students to consider the values that guide them and their actions.
4. Ask students to write/draw their response on sticky notes or use markers on the whiteboard to create a brainstorm. Alternatively, teachers can consider creating a digital word cloud with their class.
5. Ask students to share their responses.
6. Teachers should provide the definition of values and offer students examples of values.

Step 2: What are my values?



1. Project the values tree (see teacher's note) on the whiteboard as an example for students to follow (see slides).
2. Individually/in pairs or in groups ask students to write/draw examples for each part of the tree 1, 2, 3 below (students can use sticky notes, the **worksheet** provided, or their Wellbeing Journal).

1. Roots – What influences my values?

Ask students to consider what in their lives influences their values?

2. Branches – What are my values?

Ask students what are five important values to them in their lives?

3. Leaves – What are examples of my values in action?

Ask students what are examples of each of their values?

If respect is a value (2), what does this look like for you (3)?

Discussion questions

- In pairs/groups have each student choose a value from the tree and explain to their partner/group why they chose this value.
- As a class, reflect on the range of influences, values and value examples represented in the class.
- If time allows consider creating a set of class values.

Teacher's note

3. Leaves

What are examples of my values in action?

Example: "When I offer help to someone in my class who has missed out on a class"
(Kindness)

2. Branches

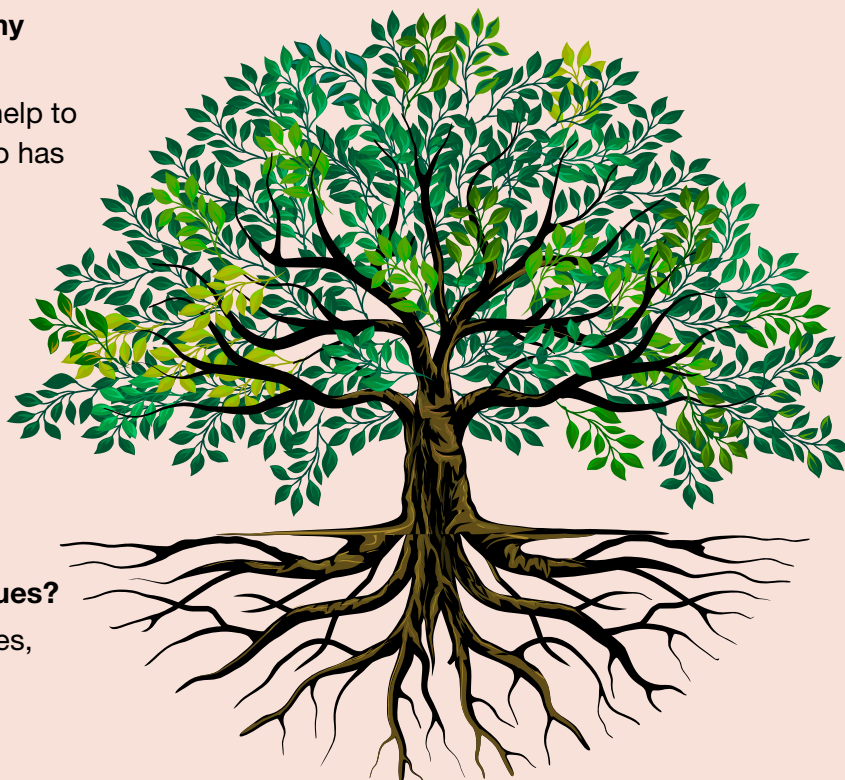
What are my values?

Example: Kindness

1. Roots

What influences my values?

Example: School, Hobbies, Religion, Family, Culture, Friends



Start here

- 1. Roots** - The roots of the tree represent the things that influence our values. You can prompt students to think about their cultural backgrounds, school, religious, spiritual or secular traditions, family traditions, friends, and people who inspire/influence them. The purpose of this part of the exercise is for students to recognise the broader influences that guide their decisions and actions.
- 2. Branches** - The branches are our values, which are shaped by the things that influence us (see roots).
- 3. Leaves** - The leaves are examples of our values. Values are present in how we behave and treat others, how we act when no one is looking, and informs our decision making.

Step 3: Acting on our values

This step of the activity utilises group discussion to help students reflect on the things that help or hinder us to act in line with our values.

1. Assign each group one of the following scenarios (1-5):

Theme	Scenario
1. Bullying	You see a student bullying another student in the corridor.
2. Homophobia	You are on a bus on your way to a football match. You hear one of your teammates make a homophobic comment about a player on the other team.
3. Relationships	A friend tells you something that they want you to keep secret, but it makes you worried about their safety.
4. Gossip	A classmate wants to share gossip about another student with you.
5. Peer Pressure	Someone wants you to send a picture of yourself that you are not comfortable sending.

2. Ask students to discuss:

- What value might be relevant to this situation?
- What would make it difficult/easy for someone to stay true to this value in the situation and why?
- What action/s would be in line with the value?

Exploring the scenarios may be uncomfortable for some students. **Remind students that nobody acts in line with their values all the time, however reflection and self-awareness can help us to live out our values as best as we can or helps us understand why we or others cannot live out or enact their values.**

Advise students that it is **always okay to seek support from a trusted adult** (e.g., teacher, guidance counsellor, parent/caregiver). The teacher may wish to remind students of named individuals in the school who can offer support if needed.

Step 4: Acts of kindness reflection

Finish this lesson with the following: Option 1, Acts of kindness reflection, and/or option 2, gallery walk.

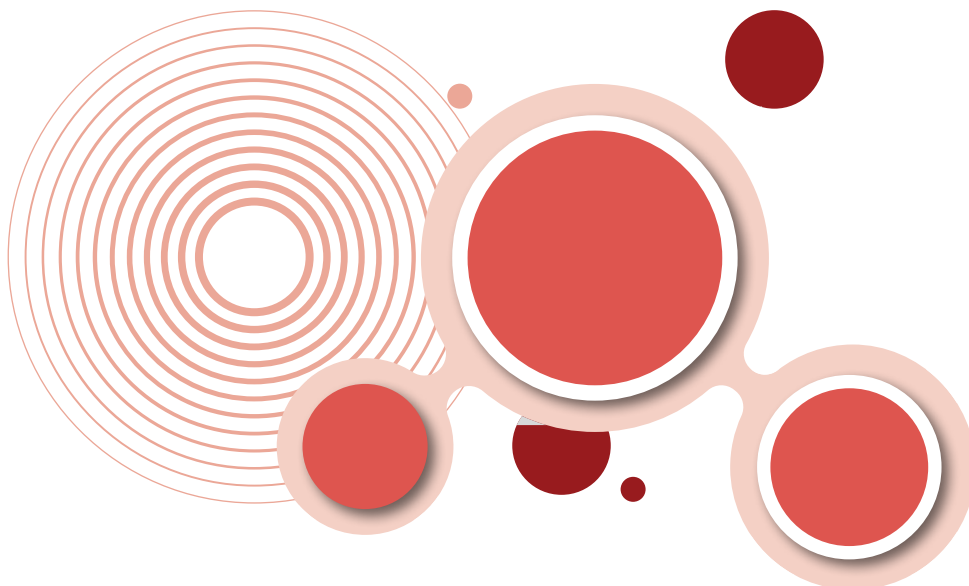
Option 1 - Acts of kindness reflection

In a blank page in their Wellbeing Journal:

1. Ask students to take a moment to vividly think about a specific time when they did something kind for someone else, or someone did something kind for them.
 - *It could be a small act of kindness, like helping a friend with homework or offering a listening ear to someone who needed it.*
2. Encourage students to write about this experience in their Wellbeing Journal or on a piece of paper. Ask them to reflect on:
 - *What they did, who it was for, and describe the kind act that they/someone else did.*
3. Ask students to write/draw in response to the following question:
 - *How did this act of kindness make you feel?*

Option 2 - Gallery walk

1. In small groups, ask students to walk around the different value trees.
2. Ask students to observe the value trees and write/name/draw one thing that surprises them and one thing they will take away.



Worksheet – Activity 1 – Understanding myself

Step 2: What are my values?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions:

1. First think about the roots of the tree, **what influences your values?**
Write/draw examples by the roots in the picture below.
2. Then think about the branches on your tree, **what are your values?**
Write/Draw examples of your values by the leave of the tree.
3. Now think about the leaves on your tree, **what are examples of your values?**
Write/Draw examples for each part of the tree below.
4. You can **create your values tree in the language that you prefer to use.**

My values tree

3. Leaves

What are examples of my values in action?

Example: "When I offer help to someone in my class who has missed out on a class"
(Kindness)

2. Branches

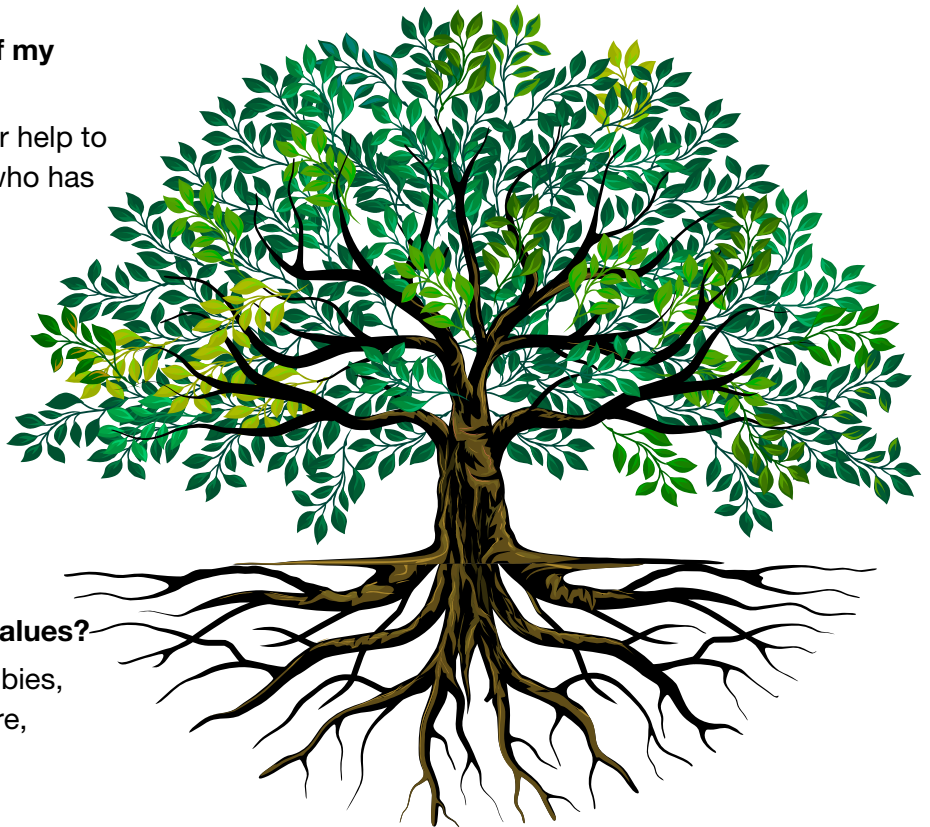
What are my values?

Example: Kindness

1. Roots

What influences my values?

Example: School, Hobbies, Religion, Family, Culture, Friends



Start here

Worksheet – Activity 1 – Understanding myself

Step 3: Acting on our values

Instructions:

1. Your teacher will ask you to read and discuss **one** of the scenarios below. Consider the following questions, and discuss with your group:
 - What is a value that might be relevant to this situation? Choose one.
 - What would make it difficult/easier for someone to stay true to this value in the situation and why?
 - What action/s would be in line with the value?
2. Write / Draw your group's thoughts in the spaces below for each question.

Situation theme	What value might be relevant?	Scenario
Bullying		You see a student bullying another student in the corridor.
Homophobia		You are on a bus on your way to a football match. You hear one of your teammates make a homophobic comment about a player on the other team.
Relationships		A friend tells you something that they want you to keep secret, but it makes you worried about their safety.
Gossip		A classmate wants to share gossip about another student to you.
Peer Pressure		Someone wants you to send a picture of yourself that you are not comfortable sending.

What would make it difficult for someone to stay true to this value in the situation and why?

What would make it easier for someone to stay true to this value in the situation and why?

What actions would be in line with the value?

Activity 2 – Recognising & naming emotions (L.O. 4.2)

This activity aims to strengthen students' emotional awareness by expanding their emotional vocabulary and by noticing different emotions in themselves and others.

Teacher's note

In Emotional Wellbeing 1, students reflect on different emotions by drawing emoticons/ images and drawing parts of the body where they may feel certain emotions (Activity 2: Recognising Emotions). In this activity, students will build their emotional awareness by expanding their emotional vocabulary and reflecting on how to recognise emotions within themselves and others.

Expanding our emotional vocabulary can help us to recognise and make sense of our own emotions and others' emotions. This helps us to deal with difficult situations, build strong relationships, solve problems more effectively and make responsible decisions.

It is important to remember that all feelings and emotions are valid, and everyone will experience a range of emotions throughout their lives. Kindly guide students to avoid using “positive” or “negative” when naming emotions and encourage them to use terms like “pleasant” or “unpleasant” emotions instead. Labelling our experience of emotions in this way (pleasant/unpleasant) helps us to avoid stigmatising certain emotions – all emotions are valid and give us feedback from the environment.

Overview of ‘Steps’ for this activity

Optional activity primer: Identify the emotion (game)

Step 1: Understanding the role of emotions

Step 2: Expanding emotional vocabulary

Step 3: Noticing pleasant emotions

Resources/materials

The following resources will be needed for this lesson (optional where indicated):



- Slide deck: Activity 2, Recognising and naming emotions



- Worksheets: Activity 2, Recognising and naming emotions



- Flipchart paper (optional)

Optional activity primer

Students may need a little support in understanding how we recognise different emotions in ourselves and others, depending on their skill level in this area. Teachers can open the activity with this primer if they feel this is helpful for their class.

1. Choose one of the following videos:



a) '[Identify the emotion](#)' (From Pixar's Inside Out)

OR

b) '[Guessing the feelings](#)'

2. Pause the video after the clip for each emotion:

Turning to the person beside them, ask students to respond to the following questions.

- How do we recognise this emotion?
- What are the clues that we notice in our body when we experience this emotion?
- What other words do we have to describe this emotion?

Complete this step by explaining that the emotions that students identified and discussed are examples of more basic emotions. Students will practice expanding their emotional vocabulary during this lesson.

Teacher's note

Explain to students that taking time to notice and label our emotions can help us to better understand our experience of a situation, and what we can do to manage these emotions. Note that the clues that our body sends us in response to emotions could be different for each student, and this is okay. We can recognise emotions in ourselves by paying attention to the feelings and sensations in the body. By paying attention to the facial expressions, body language, verbal expression of others, we can try to understand what emotion they might be experiencing.

Step 1: Understanding the role of emotions



Consider beginning this activity with a **Mindful moment.**



Headspace calming meditation
[Shape sorter visualisation for identifying emotions](#)

Teachers should select one of the following two options for step 1:

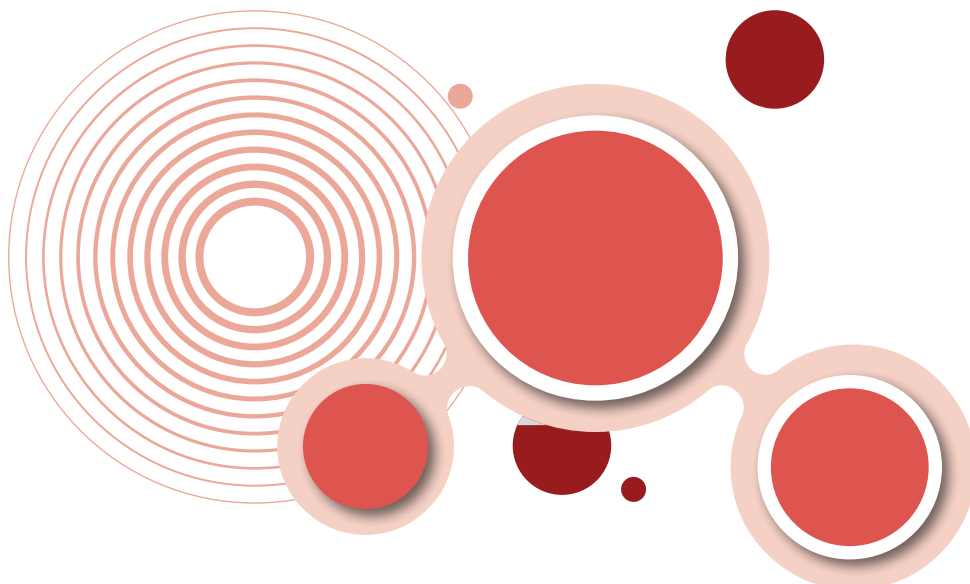
Option 1: Walk & debate

1. Designate three discussion stations reflecting “Yes,” “No,” and “In the Middle.”
2. Ask the class to reflect on the following statement, reflecting on their opinion (Yes, No or “In the Middle”).

Statement: “**Having emotions is helpful.**”

3. Ask students to move to the discussion station reflecting their rating. Students can move around as their views develop, if they wish.
4. Invite students from each of the three stations to share their views to the wider class. Use some of the prompts below to help guide this discussion.

Be mindful of ensuring that their perspectives are respected and given equal consideration. Encourage an inclusive discussion environment where all students feel comfortable expressing their views.



Discussion questions,

The following prompts may support the class discussion especially for students who may be “In the Middle”:

- What would friendships be like without emotions?
- What emotions would you miss, or not?
- What would we lose out on if we didn’t experience emotions, what would we gain?
- What would be easier/more difficult if we didn’t experience emotions?

Complete this step by explaining that emotions are an important source of information, signalling our needs, boundaries, things that matter to us, and when we might feel under threat, or things that we enjoy. By paying attention to our feelings without judgement, we are better able to understand what is happening for us in relation to a particular situation.

OR

Option 2: Group activity – draw, talk, write & share



1. Divide the class into groups of 3-5 students and provide each group with a sheet of flipchart paper, or the provided **worksheet** for this activity.
2. In their groups, ask students to think about the statement below. Encourage students to be as creative as they wish.

Statement: “Imagine what the world would be like if humans didn’t have emotions. What would this world look like?”

3. Use the prompts below to encourage discussion:

Discussion questions

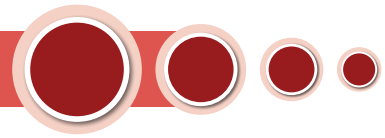
- What would sports games and competitions look like in this world?
 - What would our reaction to music be? What would our reaction to art be?
 - What would relationships with others be like?
4. When each group has finished their flipchart poster, invite students to display their posters and move around the room to view each other's work in a ‘gallery walk’ (Optional).

Complete this step by explaining that emotions are an important source of information, signalling our needs, boundaries, things that matter to us, and when we might feel under threat, or things that we enjoy. By paying attention to our feelings without judgement, we are better able to understand what is happening for us in relation to a particular situation.

Step 2: Expanding emotional vocabulary

1. Choose one of the videos in the table below for this exercise based on its relevance and appropriateness for your class group.
2. Provide each student with a blank copy of the simplified Feelings Wheel worksheet (see 'Recognising & naming emotions - Feelings Wheel.')
3. Explain the Feelings Wheel to students, including the differences between the layers (see teacher's note).
4. Explain to students that while the video is playing, you would like them to circle/highlight the emotions that they identify in the clip. Encourage them to look beyond the first layer and identify emotions in the second layer.

a. Excerpt from 'Friday Night Lights' <i>This video may not be suitable if your class is not familiar or interested in American Football. Further examples from an Irish sporting context, and Inside Out, are available below.</i> 	This clip depicts the final moments of a State Championship game for American Football – One team is making a final play to win the game, scoring a 'touchdown' at the last moment. However, the referee disallows the score, so the team who believed they won the championship have actually lost. There is no dialogue in this clip, so students will need to recognise more subtle cues.
b. Score for Mayo All-Ireland Gaelic Football Final 2016 (1 Minute Clip) 	In a battle for the Sam McGuire All-Ireland final cup (2016), this video displays a pivotal moment that brings Mayo and Dublin to a tie. Intense feelings break out when Mayo score. Play clip from 1:36:44.
c. Katie Taylor Wins Olympic Gold 	This clip shows the final moments from the Women's Boxing Final (London 2012 Olympics), where Katie Taylor (Ireland) and Sofya Ochigava (Russia) await the announcement for the Olympic Champion. Play clip from 17:06.
d. Inside Out – Guessing the Feelings 	This clip can be used as a primer for this activity, alongside one of the selected videos above, or on its own, depending on your classes' skills in recognising emotions.
e. Ted Lasso – Sam Angry at Ted for Jamie's Richmond Return 	Sam is Angry at Ted.



5. Ask the class to feed back on the different emotions they have identified. Continue the class discussion by using the Discussion questions below:

Discussion questions

- Did you find it easy/difficult to recognise the emotions?
- Are any of the words on the feelings wheel new for you? Which one(s)?
- How might you tell if someone else is feeling certain emotions (e.g., disappointed, anxious, excited) based on their body language and facial expressions?
- Are there any 'slang' terms that are commonly used to describe some of these feelings? What are they, and how would they fit with other emotions? Examples: scarlet = embarrassed, fuming/raging = angry/frustrated).

Teacher's note

The '**Feelings Wheel**' should be used as a resource to guide the discussion in response to the video clip. **In this lesson, students will explore the central and middle layers only.**

Feelings Wheel

The '**Feelings Wheel**' (adapted from the original tool developed by Dr. Gloria Wilcox, 1982) is a tool to facilitate building emotional vocabulary. The wheel has three layers and is a representation of the different types of emotions that we experience. The purpose of the Feelings Wheel tool is to help students expand their emotional vocabulary and recognise their emotions with more accuracy. It is important to note that students can feel combinations of emotions at the same time.

Calm (2024, February 20). The Feelings Wheel: unlock the power of your emotions - Calm Blog. Calm Blog. <https://www.calm.com/blog/the-feelings-wheel>.

- **Central Layer:** At the very **centre of the wheel** are the 'core' or basic emotions that we feel (e.g., happy, sad, angry, scared, surprised, disgusted). These are basic emotions that we all experience. They provide a general label for how we are feeling.
- **Middle Layer:** Moving outward, the wheel expands on core emotions with feelings that are a bit more specific but still quite general. For example, instead of "happy," it might be more accurate to use the label 'content' or 'proud'.

Teacher's note continued

The ability to identify one's own emotions and those of others is a skill that is related to emotional intelligence. When we're good at recognising emotions, we can express ourselves better and react in suitable ways. It also allows us to recognise them, pause, and regain calm. When we can name emotions more accurately, it also makes it easier to recognise what others are feeling, which is beneficial for our relationships and communication.

Explain to students that when we're good at recognising emotions, we can express ourselves better, meet our needs, and react in suitable ways. Having a wider range of words to describe emotions also makes it easier to recognise them, pause, and regain calm when necessary. When we can name emotions accurately, it also makes it simpler to understand what others are feeling, which is beneficial for our relationships and communication.

Step 3: Noticing pleasant emotions

To end this activity, students will complete a few minutes of a reflection on their experience of pleasant emotions, noticing how and when they experience them.

Noticing pleasant emotions

1. Ask students to think of a day where everything is going really well for them. Encourage them to vividly think about the emotions they associate with that day.
2. Encourage students to reflect on the following questions:
 - What is so pleasant about this day?
 - Who are you with, and what are you doing during these moments?
 - Describe the emotions you are feeling during this day. Where do you feel these emotions in your body?
 - How strong are these emotions?

Complete this step by explaining to students that often as humans we notice unpleasant feelings easily but that we can also train our brain to notice what feels pleasant. Noticing pleasant emotions more often can help us to feel happier, even in challenging times, and increase our overall wellbeing.

Conclude the activity by informing students that in the next activity (Activity 3: Managing emotions), students will learn helpful strategies for managing some of the emotions they have discussed.

Worksheet – Activity 2 – Recognising & naming emotions

Step 1: Understanding the role of emotions (Option 2)



Instructions:

Group activity – Draw, Talk, Write, Share

Reflect on and discuss the following question:

“Imagine what the world be like if humans didn’t have emotions. What would this world look like?”

Imagine...

- What would sports games and competitions look like in this world?
- What would our reaction to music be? What would our reaction to art be?
- What would relationships with others be like?

*Working in your group, write/draw or doodle below what you think the world would be like if humans didn’t have emotions. **Be as creative as you like!***

Name: _____ Date: _____

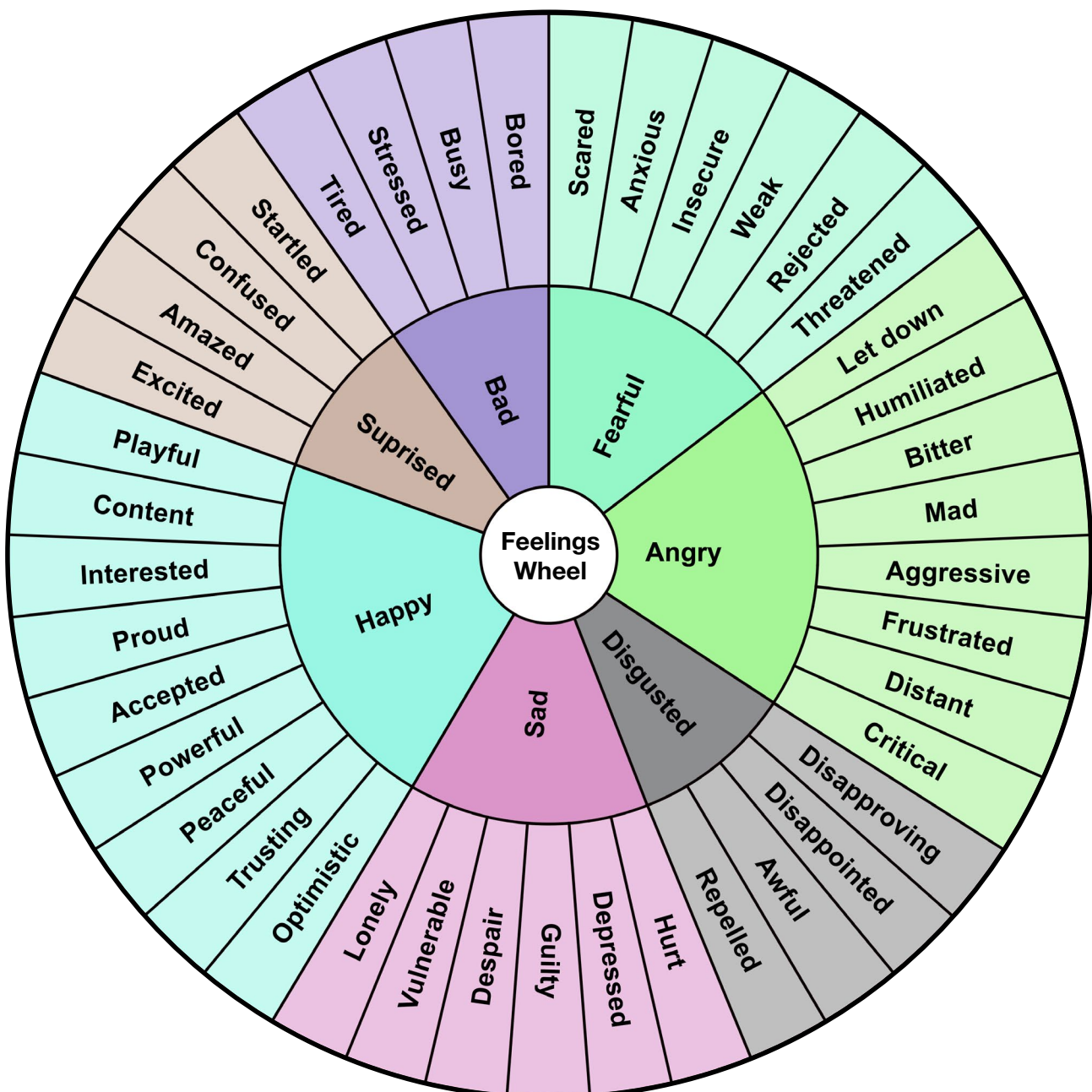
Worksheet – Activity 2 – Recognising & naming emotions

Step 2: Expanding emotional vocabulary

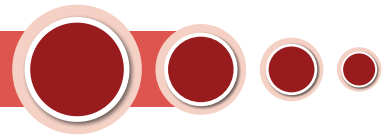
Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions:

Your teacher will play a video for you to watch. While the video is playing, circle/highlight the emotions that you identify in the clip, using the **Feelings Wheel*** below.



The **Feelings Wheel** is adapted from an idea by Dr Gloria Wilcox (1982)*



Worksheet – Activity 2 – Recognising & naming emotions

Step 3: Noticing pleasant emotions

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions:

Think of a day where everything is going really well for you. Vividly think about the emotions that you associate with this day.

Write or Draw below:

1. What is so pleasant about this day?

2. Who are you with, what are you doing during these moments?

3. Describe the emotions you are feeling during this day. Where are you feeling these emotions in your body?

4. How strong are these emotions?

Activity 3 – Managing emotions (L.O. 4.2, 4.3)

This activity aims to encourage students to recognise different types of emotional signals in the body, and to explore effective techniques for managing and regulating emotions in various situations, as well as the impacts of these strategies on their social and emotional wellbeing. Different types of emotional signals are accompanied by different physical sensations. For example, sensations such as increased heart rate, muscle tension, butterflies in the stomach, or changes in breathing patterns. By supporting students to pay attention to these signals, students can better understand how they can label their emotions to respond accordingly based on their needs.

Teacher's note

Remember to gently correct language use around labelling emotions, encourage students to use the word 'pleasant emotion' instead of 'positive emotion,' and 'unpleasant emotion' instead of 'negative emotion'. This helps us to avoid stigmatising different emotional responses. All emotions are important pieces of information that help us to understand how a situation is affecting us.

Overview of activity 'Steps'

Step 1: Emotional check-in

Step 2: Managing our emotional dashboard

Step 3: Three things that pick me up

Resources/materials

The following resources will be needed for this activity (optional where indicated):



- Slide deck: Activity 3, Managing emotions



- Worksheet: Activity 3, Managing emotions



- Resource: Emotional dashboard signals (Posters)

Step 1: Emotional check-in

It is advised that teachers begin this activity with a check-in, to put into practice some of the skills from activity 2, 'Recognising emotions.'

1. Display the slides, 'Activity 3: Managing emotions'
2. Navigate to the emotional check-in slide – choose one of the available options that you think would be most appropriate for your class group.
3. You may want to 'role model' this activity, by completing an emotional check in yourself and sharing this with the class.
4. Ask students 'Which _____ are you today?' (e.g., 'Which Tree Blob are you today?') and ask them to volunteer their answers. Alternatively, students can simply write this down in their Wellbeing Journal or reflect themselves if they prefer not to share.



5. Consider finishing this step with a **Mindful moment:**



Headspace grounding exercise

[Letting go of feelings with balloons and feather](#)

Teacher's note

Consider carrying this check-in forward to start future Activities/classes. If students prefer not to take part in the check-in, accept this and offer them a few minutes to relax during this time instead.

In activity 2: Recognising & naming emotions, **students** had a discussion on the importance of emotions and what life might be like if we didn't have any emotions. Repeat the message from the last activity that emotions are an important source of information, signalling our needs, boundaries, things that matter to us, and when we might feel under threat, or things that we enjoy. By paying attention to our feelings without judgement, we are better able to understand what is happening for us in relation to a particular situation.

Step 2: Managing our emotional dashboard

1. Explain the 'Emotional Dashboard' concept to students, including the different dashboard signals (see Teacher's note and refer to slides).
2. Set up three areas in the classroom – One to represent each of the emotional dashboard signals: "Fuel light – you need to refuel", "Speedometer – you need to slow down", "Warning Light – you need to stop."
3. **Teachers can use the Emotional Dashboard Signals: Posters PDF** or flipchart paper as an alternative to sticky notes.
4. Assign an even number of students to each of the three signs and provide each student with some sticky notes.
5. Once in their groups, ask them to think about the following questions and discuss:

Discussion questions

- What types of emotions might a person be feeling if they are receiving this signal?
 - How might a person's body communicate these feelings to them?
 - What would be some useful strategies for a person to use in this moment? (Refuel, slow down, stop).
6. Ask students to draw and/or write their ideas on their poster or stick their sticky notes on the wall representing each corner.
 7. Invite one student from each group to share the group strategies for their 'signal' to the class.
 8. Once each group has had the opportunity to share, lead a class discussion using the discussion prompts below:

Discussion questions

- Do all strategies work for all signals? If not, why not?
- What happens if we ignore the signals the body sends us about our emotions?
- Similar to how a car requires proper maintenance and fuel to function smoothly, what are some examples of things that can help maintain our emotional well-being? (e.g., sufficient sleep, regular exercise, practicing gratitude, relaxation techniques).

Teacher's note

Emotional dashboard

Our bodies are like cars, we need the right maintenance and fuel to run well. Think of emotions as the signals on your dashboard. Do we notice the signals in our bodies and act accordingly, or do we ignore them? Emotions, just like the “warning” light signal tell us when something important needs attention. Similarly, when your fuel tank is getting empty, it's a heads-up to refuel before a bigger problem occurs. Our emotions can also give us these signals. But remember, the dashboard doesn't control the car; you do. Emotions work the same way; they give us insights into our well-being and what needs attention. **However, they don't dictate our actions; we're the ones in control.** Emotional regulation is about how we react to these signals.

Dashboard signals

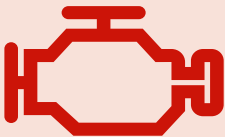
In this step, we will be using three common car dashboard signals (e.g., fuel light, speedometer, and warning light) to reflect on our emotional signals in our body and how we can regulate our emotions in certain situations.



Fuel light – The fuel light is a warning signal that tells us that we might need to pull over soon to refuel. You might need to ‘fill-up’ if you are feeling down, sick, bored, tired, low mood or low energy.



Speedometer – The speedometer is a signal that lets you know when you are going over the speed limit and may need to slow down. You might need to ‘slow-down’ if you notice you are feeling worried, overwhelmed, frustrated, annoyed, silly, excited, giddy.



Warning light – The “warning” light is a signal that lets you know that there is a major problem, and you need to stop. You may need to ‘stop and check’ if you are feeling angry, scared, intense stress, over excited (ecstatic/elated), panic, devastated, irritable, or dysregulated (out of control).

Below are some sample strategies for managing emotions:

- Practice deep breathing exercises.
- Spend quality time with family, friends or a pet.
- Eat a balanced meal or snack
- Find a form of exercise or movement.
- Spend time on an activity that you enjoy/helps you to relax
- Go for a gentle walk or step outside to slow your thoughts
- Consider if you are doing too much and what can be reduced/eliminated/postponed
- Reduce/limit caffeine consumption (e.g., energy drinks, coffee) and other stimulants as these can make our thoughts and feelings more intense or excited
- Try exercising or moving your body to move through the extra energy you are feeling or to wake your body up.
- Journal about your emotions and experiences.
- Create a self-care box that is filled with things that make you feel good e.g. choose items that stimulate all five senses
- Practice a grounding exercise (e.g., five-senses, five-finger breathing/square breathing)
- Try to step away from the space you are in (e.g., another room, go outside, explore nature)
- Talk to a trusted adult and share how you feel
- Seek support from a trusted agency or organisation that provides emotional support
- Play music, draw or write
- Make a to do list
- Try spending five minutes doing something that will help you to feel more present – like tidying your room/space, preparing food, sorting books/items on a shelf.

Teacher's note

Remind students that everyone has unique preferences, strengths, and challenges in managing their emotions and that some identified strategies may be useful for all three dashboard signals. Remind students that there are many possible strategies to try in their own time and encourage them to try some they have learned from this activity in their own time.

Some young people may be going through very challenging times and that while these strategies are helpful, more targeted supports may be needed including, but not limited to seeking support from a trusted adult or professional.

It is important to experience all of our emotions. The goal is to remain or restore calm so that we can respond rather than react to a situation that triggered the emotion – We don't want to bury, squash, or suppress our emotions. We want to recognise how we are feeling and apply appropriate strategies to regulate emotions, so that we can respond appropriately. Effective strategies help us when we need to rest, slow down, or stop. Take notice of the things that help you to feel regulated or maintain your emotional well-being.

Step 3: Things that pick me up

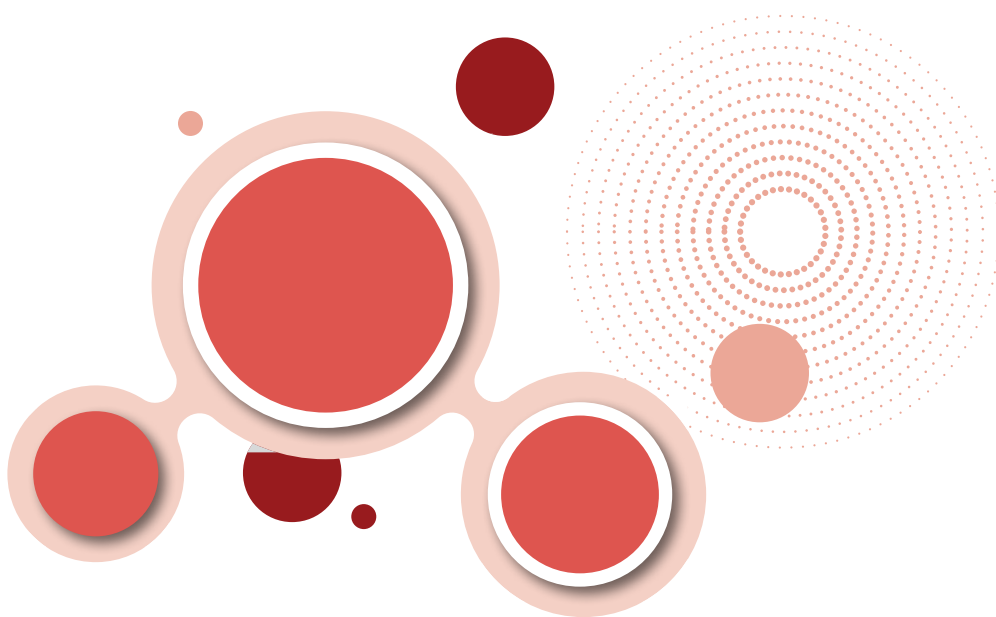
Teachers should select one of the following three options for step 3:

Option 1 - Three good things

1. Ask students to think about three good things that pick them up (this could be things that help them when they need to 1. Refuel; 2. Slow down; and 3. Stop)
2. In their Wellbeing Journal or on a blank page, ask students to write/draw these three things:
 - One thing that helps me when I need to Refuel
 - One thing that helps me when I need to Slow-Down
 - One thing that helps me when I need to STOP

Option 2 - Practice: 5-Minute Emotion regulation strategies:

1. Explain to students that they will get a chance to practice a strategy for one of three categories above (i.e., 1. Refuel; 2. Slow down; or 3. Stop).
2. Take a vote and select the self-guided strategy that receives the majority of votes. The strategies that are not selected can be introduced in another lesson if time permits.





Need to refuel? – Try moving your body!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3H0zEYDqV3U>

Regular exercise releases feel-good endorphins. Endorphins are natural brain chemicals that can improve your sense of well-being. Adding five minutes of activity (stretching, exercises, mobility) several times throughout the day has the capabilities of boosting your mood, energy, and general wellbeing.



Need to slow down? – Try progressive muscle relaxation!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GIFukn6Q20>

Progressive muscle relaxation can help you feel more calm, less tense, and more physically relaxed. It also helps with managing emotions such as anxiety, stress, and frustration. It can also help reduce physical problems such as stomach aches and headaches, as well as improve your sleep. It involves tensing and then relaxing your muscles, one by one. With practice, you can begin to tell the difference between tense and relaxed muscles. Then, when you feel your muscles tense as a response to certain emotions, you are better able to relax your muscles yourself.



Need to stop and check yourself? – Try square breathing!

[Square Breathing – Guided](#)

The square breathing, or box breathing, technique involves breathing in for 4 seconds, holding the breath for 4 seconds, and exhaling for 4 seconds, and holding for 4 seconds before inhaling again. This breathing pattern aims to reduce anxiety or help people get to sleep. This video takes you through a 5-minute guided breathing exercise, but you can do it without the video as well with calming music or noises in the background.

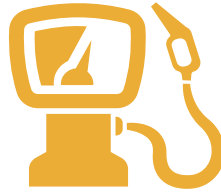
Option 3 - Songs to pick me up

Students can create a class playlist of songs that help them feel good.

1. Ask students, “**what song(s) do you have on repeat at the moment?**” - Students can share this verbally or write it down in your Wellbeing Journal.
2. Ask students “**what song(s) do you like to listen to that help to keep you happy, calm, relaxed, focused, content**”.
3. Allow students a couple of minutes to discuss with their group/seating buddy and write their song choice on a sticky note/slip of paper for the teacher to collect, or an online word cloud.
4. Collect students’ song suggestions and create a class playlist and share this playlist with students.

Resource: Emotional dashboard poster - Refuel

Tools for when we need to refuel



Refuel

Instructions:

Write/Draw responses to the below questions on this poster, or on sticky notes.

1. What types of emotions might a person be feeling if they are receiving this signal?

2. How might a person's body communicate these feelings to them?

3. What would be some useful strategies for a person to use in this moment?

Resource: Emotional dashboard poster - Slow down

Tools for when we need to slow down



Slow
Down

Instructions:

Write/Draw responses to the below questions on this poster, or on sticky notes.

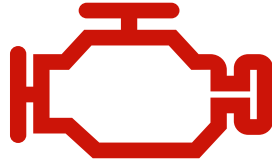
1. What types of emotions might a person be feeling if they are receiving this signal?

2. How might a person's body communicate these feelings to them?

3. What would be some useful strategies for a person to use in this moment?

Resource: Emotional dashboard poster - Stop & check

Tools for when we need to stop



Stop &
Check

Instructions:

Write/Draw responses to the below questions on this poster, or on sticky notes.

1. What types of emotions might a person be feeling if they are receiving this signal?

2. How might a person's body communicate these feelings to them?

3. What would be some useful strategies for a person to use in this moment?

Worksheet – Activity 3 – Managing emotions

Step 3: Three good things that pick me up (Option 1)

Name: _____ Date: _____



One thing that helps me when I need to Refuel:

Write or Draw in the space below:



One thing that helps me when I need to Slow-Down:

Write or Draw in the space below:



One thing that helps me when I need to STOP:

Write or Draw in the space below:

Activity 4 – Understanding thoughts (L.O. 4.2)

This activity aims to support students to reflect on what they know about the link between thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. They learn to recognise common ‘thinking traps’ that we can easily fall into that lead to unhelpful thoughts, feelings and behaviours.

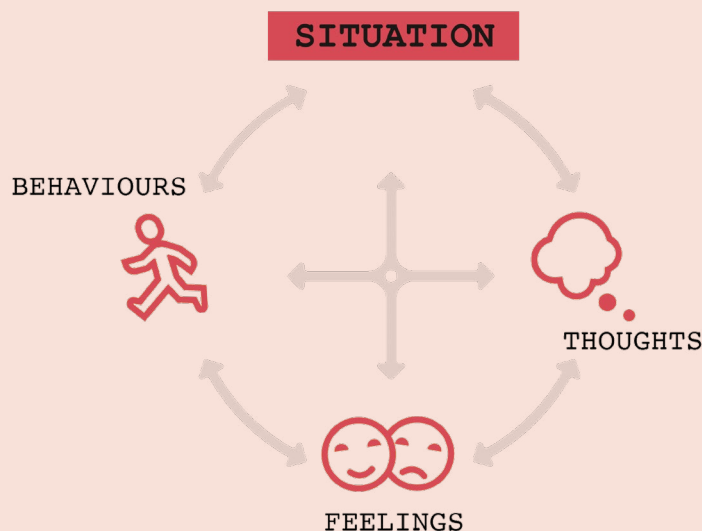
Teacher’s note

The premise of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) is that our thoughts affect how we feel and behave. The aim of this activity is to help students identify that our thoughts help us to interpret the world around us. So it's not just an event but how we interpret that event that influences our feelings and behaviour. Many of these thoughts are automatic, it's just what we as humans do, think a lot. These thoughts are like a running commentary or self-talk throughout the day. Most of these thoughts or internal self-talk are automatic, so they can be hard to notice or catch. Some of these thoughts can be positive and sometimes they can be negative, judging ourselves, focusing on the negative, or focusing on what's wrong and not noticing what's going well. Sometimes we can fall into thinking traps, interpreting events in ways that distort the facts, and this does not always serve us well.

These thinking traps can also be called cognitive distortions and it can be helpful to reframe or challenge this type of thinking pattern. Examples of thinking traps that can distort facts include "All-or-Nothing Thinking", "Negative Labelling", "Mind Reading", "Negative Filter", "Think the Worst", "Shoulds", "Fortune Telling".

Students will build on this activity in activity 5, ‘Managing thoughts’, where they will learn to challenge thinking traps thoughts for more balanced thinking.

Teacher's note continued



Recognising thought patterns is important so that we can 'get out' of thinking traps, leading to more appropriate feelings and behaviours. While we can all fall into thinking traps from time to time, a continued cycle of such thinking may not serve us well and may not be good for our wellbeing. Teaching students to recognise and identify their thought patterns and see if they engage in thinking traps can help them distinguish between helpful and unhelpful thoughts. The first step in this activity encourages them to link to Unit 1 and recall the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviours. Recognising this cycle is the first step to becoming more aware of thought patterns so that students can begin to challenge unhelpful thoughts and replace them with more balanced ones. This practice can lead to healthier emotional responses and behaviours.

Overview of activity 'Steps'

Step 1: Connecting thoughts, feelings & behaviours

Step 2: Identifying thinking traps

Step 3: Gratitude exercise

Resources/materials

The following resources will be required for this lesson (optional where indicated):



- Slide deck: Activity 4, Understanding thoughts



- Worksheets: Activity 4, Understanding thoughts



- Signs or labels around the room indicating each thinking trap (e.g., "All-or-Nothing Thinking", "Negative Labelling", "Mind Reading", "Negative Filter", "Think the Worst", "Shoulds", "Fortune Telling").

Step 1: Connecting thoughts, feelings & behaviours

In this part of the activity, students will revisit what they know about thoughts and the link to feelings and behaviours and take part in a thought observation exercise.

1. In pairs ask students to answer the following question.

- *What do they already know about the connection between thoughts, feelings and behaviours?*

2. Take feedback and discuss.

- *How are thoughts connected to feelings?*
- *How are thoughts connected to behaviour?*

3. Next play the following video (Duration 2 minutes 42 seconds):



St. Patrick's mental health service

[Observing our thoughts: notice thoughts coming & going](#)

4. Ask students about the experience of noticing our thoughts – For example, was it easy/ hard, why?
5. What feelings/behaviours (if any) accompany the thoughts?

While all students will be invited to participate, students who wish to opt out of the thought observation exercise can choose an alternative. For example:

- Open a blank page in their Wellbeing Journal.
- Offer the following journaling prompt: 'a time when I noticed my thoughts affecting my feelings and behaviour'.
- Students can write/draw/doodle or simply take a moment to reflect on the prompt.

Teacher's note

Sometimes our brain can convince us to believe thoughts that aren't necessarily true, called 'thinking traps'. These thinking traps are easy to fall into, it happens to everyone.

Thinking traps are unhelpful, automatic thought patterns that, when left unchecked, can lead to unpleasant feelings. Sometimes called cognitive distortions – they are exaggerated or irrational thought patterns that can lead us to believe things that aren't necessarily true.

By learning to identify thinking traps, we can get better at challenging and changing distorted thought cycles.

There are many thinking traps. Seven common thinking traps are:

1. **All-or-Nothing Thinking** – When you make big generalisations. (Keywords: all, always, never, none, everyone, nobody, etc.).
2. **Negative Labelling** – When you use negative labels for yourself. (Keywords: "I'm a..." followed by a negative word).
3. **Mind Reading** – When you assume you know what someone else is thinking or feeling.
4. **Negative Filter** – When you focus only on the negatives.
5. **Catastrophising** – Blowing things out of proportion; dwelling on the worst possible outcomes.
6. **Shoulds** – When you think about what you "should" (or shouldn't) do or be like.
7. **Fortune Telling** – When you predict or assume something 'bad' will happen without any real evidence.

Step 2: Identifying thinking traps

1. Pose the following question to students (available on slides):
 - ***Have you ever sent a message on WhatsApp or social media and the recipient hasn't opened it or they took a long time to respond? What were you thinking? How did you feel and behave? Take feedback and discuss.***
2. Define thinking traps for students: **Thinking traps are unhelpful, automatic thought patterns** that, when left unchecked, can lead to unpleasant feelings. They can make us believe things that aren't necessarily true.
3. Play the following video for the class on thinking traps (6 minutes 42 seconds):



Above the noise
[Thinking traps video](#)

Students should complete the 'What are Thinking Traps' handout while they are watching the video, **or**

Alternatively, you can use the accompanying slides to explain thinking traps and ask students to generate scenarios for each Thinking Trap.

Having watched the video [as far 06.42mins], students will have heard about common thinking traps. Comment to students on how just knowing about the thinking traps can help prevent negative thoughts from taking hold.

4. Next distribute scenario cards to each student.

Resource: Scenario cards

	Scenario	Thinking Trap
1.	You text your friend and they don't reply. You think: "My friend didn't reply to my text. She is clearly mad at me."	Mind Reading
2.	You share a happy moment on your social media but don't get many likes. You think: "My post didn't get that many likes. I'm a failure."	Labelling
3.	Scrolling on your social media through friend's stories. You think: "All my friends have better lives than me."	All-or-Nothing
4.	Your friend makes an emotional post on social media. You think: "My friend posted that they're feeling sad. It's my fault."	Personalising
5.	You play a match and win. Most people praise your performance but someone criticises you. You think: "I can't stop thinking about that one negative comment."	Negative Filter
6.	You have a test the next day but stay up later than usual playing video games. You think: "I was up late last night playing video games instead of studying for my test. I know I'm going to fail my test later today."	Fortune Telling
7.	You are busy and didn't have time to respond to a friend's text. You think: "To be a good friend I should respond to friends' messages immediately."	Shoulds
8.	You get less than expected on an exam. You think: "I'm such a failure. I never do well academically."	All-or-Nothing Thinking
9.	You forget to reply to a text message. You think: "I'm so rude and inconsiderate. I always let people down."	Labelling
10.	Your friend seems quiet at lunch. You think: "They must be upset with me that's why they are so quiet."	Mind Reading
11.	When you are relaxing at home doing nothing. You think: "I should be more productive during my free time."	Shoulds
12.	You give a great presentation and get lots of praise but made one minor mistake. You think: "It doesn't matter what anyone says I made a huge mess of that presentation."	Negative Filter
13.	A teacher is snappy with you in the corridor. You think: "That teacher really dislikes me."	Personalising
14.	You have to attend a social event. You think: "No-one will talk to me and I'll be uncomfortable the whole time."	Fortune Telling

5. Explain that students will walk around the room, reading the scenarios on their cards, and match them to the corresponding thinking trap signs or labels placed around the room. Emphasise that there may be more than one correct answer for each scenario, as some scenarios may involve multiple thinking traps.
6. Allow students to walk around the room, reading the scenarios on their cards and placing them under the corresponding thinking trap signs or labels.
7. Circulate around the room to provide guidance and clarification as needed.
8. Encourage students to feedback to you or each other on their reasoning after they have made their matches.
9. Have students complete the step by getting them to discuss what would be a more balanced way of thinking about each thinking trap?

Step 3: Gratitude exercise

Close this activity with a Gratitude exercise

A positive psychology tool which can help us to develop a more balanced perspective in our thinking is practicing gratitude. This gratitude exercise will help students manage their thoughts by focusing on gratitude, promoting balanced thinking and better emotional well-being.

Remind students that our thoughts influence our feelings and behaviour. **Gratitude is recognising and appreciating the good things in our lives.** Practicing gratitude, can help promote balanced thinking as we learn to focus on the positive which improves our mood and overall wellbeing. It does not take our worries away but allows us space to consider the bigger picture.

In their Wellbeing Journal, or on a piece of paper, ask students to list three things they are grateful for. Encourage them to be specific and detailed about what they are grateful for.

Example: I am grateful...

- For the teacher who said hello to me today and made school a better place to be.
- For my best friend who made me laugh this morning.
- For my breakfast that nourishes me and because I share that time with my family.

Teacher's note

Remind students that practicing gratitude daily can help them develop a more balanced outlook and better manage worrying thoughts. Teachers might consider consulting or recommending the below resource as a follow up for additional information on how we can understand our thoughts:



Verywell mind [Cognitive distortions](#)

Mind (uk) [Understanding my feelings](#)

Jigsaw [Practicing gratitude](#)

Worksheet – Activity 4 – Understanding thoughts

Step 2: Identifying thinking traps

Name: _____ Date: _____

	Things I've learned
What are thinking traps?	
What are some thinking traps mentioned [in the video / Slide deck]?	
What are some examples of the thinking traps mentioned [in the video / Slide deck]?	



Activity 5 – Managing thoughts (L.O. 4.2)

This activity aims to revisit the link between thoughts, feelings and behaviours and learn a reframing strategy for thoughts that are not necessarily true.

Teacher's note

In activity 4, 'Understanding Thoughts,' students are introduced to the types of unhelpful thought cycles that we can experience (i.e., Thinking Traps). By understanding these thinking traps, we can start to notice when we might be falling into them. The current activity focuses on an effective strategy for reframing our thoughts. This is called cognitive reframing.

Cognitive reframing is a psychological technique that involves changing the way you think about a situation to change your emotional response to it. It is a way to shift your perspective to a more balanced or realistic view of situations and can have benefits for our wellbeing. It takes practice to do it well. This will be taught as part of Step 3: 'catch it, check it, change it'. It is important to emphasise to students that thinking traps are suitable for challenge or reframing. However, thoughts and feelings that arise from trauma are not thinking traps and will need an exploration with a professional.

Overview of the activity 'Steps'

Step 1: Focusing exercise

Step 2: The cognitive triangle

Step 3: Reframing thoughts

Step 4: Having a mantra

Resources/materials

The following resources will be required for this lesson (optional where indicated):



• Slide deck: Activity 5, Managing thoughts



• Worksheets: Activity 5, Managing thoughts

Step 1: Focusing exercise

Invite the students to take part in this short focusing exercise (duration: 4 minute, 05 seconds).



Supporting Video:

[5-4-3-2-1 Focusing Exercise](#)

OR

1. While all students will be invited to participate, students who wish to opt out of this activity can choose an alternative. For example:
2. Open a blank page in their Wellbeing Journal.
3. Offer the following journaling prompt:
 - *"If there is anything stuck on your mind, you can use this space to let it go."*
 - *Students can write/draw/doodle or simply take a moment to reflect if they wish.*

Step 2: The cognitive triangle

The cognitive triangle is a visual picture that shows how our thoughts, feelings, and actions are all connected. It means that what we think can change how we feel, and how we feel can change what we do. By noticing and changing our thoughts when appropriate, we can feel better and make better choices, leading to a happier and healthier life.

1. Project the cognitive triangle onto the whiteboard.
2. Working in small groups ask students to:
 - *Take a common everyday situation from the below list (or students can generate their own) and,*
 - *Imagine themselves in this situation, name the possible thoughts, feelings and behaviours associated with the event. **Note** these can be positive, negative or neutral.*
 - *Complete the cognitive triangle worksheet by first writing the event/situation in the middle of the triangle and completing the other boxes around the triangle.*



Worksheet – Activity 5 – Managing thoughts

Step 2: The cognitive triangle

Name: _____ Date: _____

1

The event/situation what happened?

My team wins a big rugby final and I score the winning try



2

What did you do?

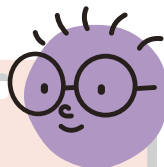
Jumped in the air / Screamed
Hugged my teammates / Cried



3

What were you thinking?

I can't believe I just did that
I'm a legend / This is amazing

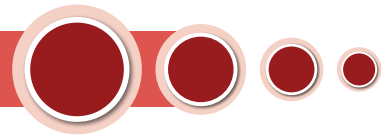


4

What were you feeling?

Happy / Proud / Excited / Confident / Elated

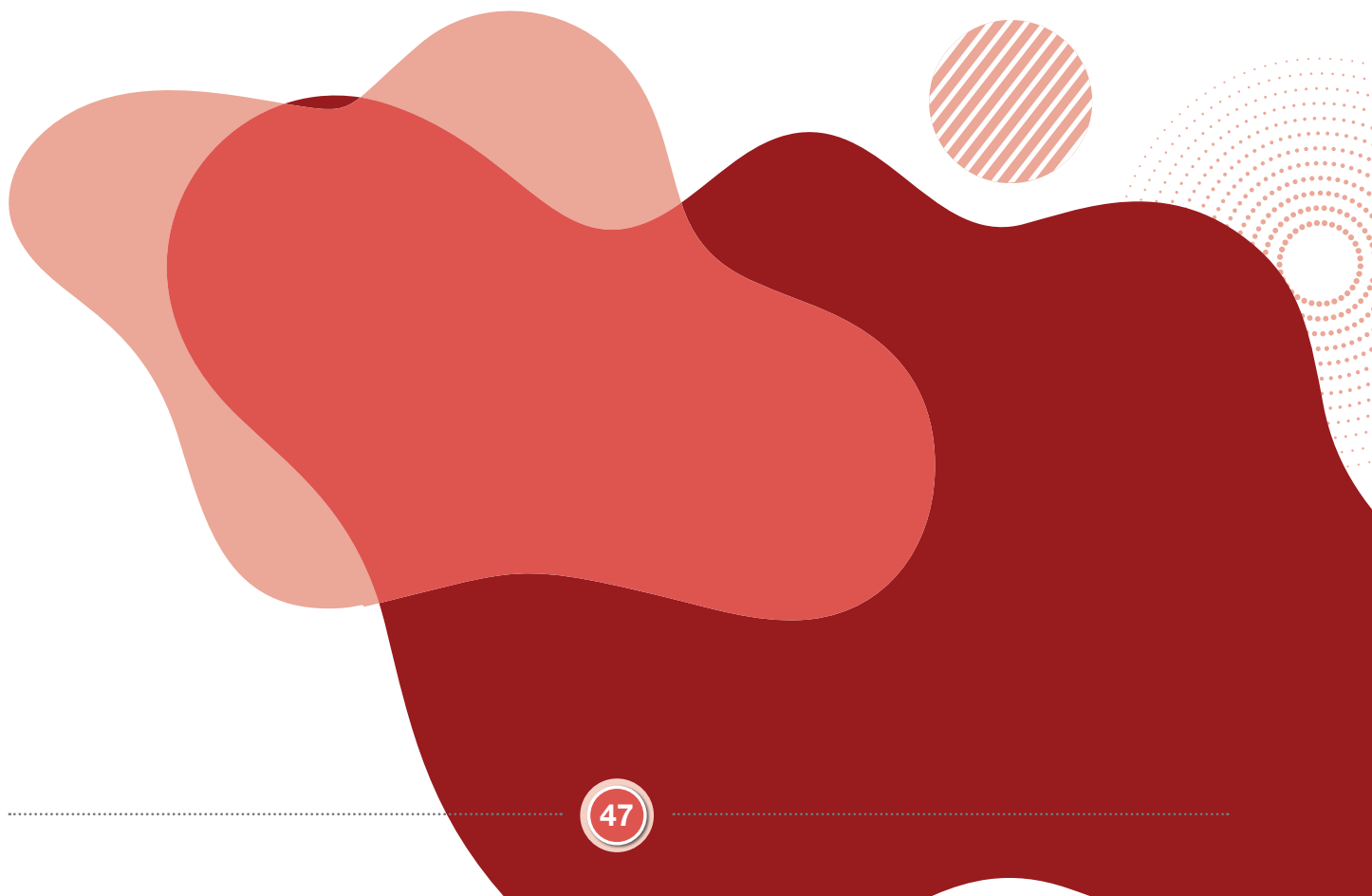


**Example of everyday events:**

- My team wins a big rugby final and I score the winning try.
- I want to play my online game with a friend but my friend won't add me to the game.
- My close friend posts a video of me on social media of me asleep and snoring.
- I get a high grade after studying for a test in a subject I find hard.
- I like someone in my class but they never say hi or seem to see me.

Step 3: Reframing thoughts**Teacher's note**

Reframing is a way to change how you think about something to think in a more balanced way about a situation which can make us feel better and act differently. Explain to students that when we fall into a thinking trap, we can use a reframing strategy to help us get out of the thinking trap. It will help students if you compare engaging in the reframing strategy as being like a detective who needs to identify the thought and examine it.



1. Explain what a reframing strategy is (see *Teacher's note*). Go through the steps of a reframing strategy. (You can use the slide deck for support).

Catch it - check it - change it

Catch it – first we need to recognise that we are in a thinking trap.

- Using your emotions and behaviours as cues - stop when you might be having negative thoughts. Ask yourself what am I thinking?

Check it – this involves using thought challengers that examine the thought. Remember it can be hard to take a step back so sometimes talking it through with someone can help. Useful thought challengers are:

- Am I assuming the worst?
- Is there evidence that this thought is true?
- Is the situation in or out of my control?
- What would I say to my best friend if they had this thought?
- Is this thought helpful?

Change it – reframe the thought so it is more balanced. Remember this takes practice.

Example of reframing

Situation: You fail a test.

Negative thought: "I'm a failure. I'll never be good at this."

Question the thought: Is it true that you're a failure just because you failed one test? Did you study enough? Can you improve next time?

Reframed thought: "I didn't do well this time, but I can study harder and do better on the next test."

2. Divide the class into small pairs.
3. Allocate a scenario to each group with a scenario (Henry, Abby, Cillian etc., see worksheet) containing negative thoughts.
4. Get them to discuss what feeling or behaviour might be associated with the thought.
5. Instruct the pair to work together to reframe the negative thought into a more balanced thought' using the Catch it – Check it – Change it reframing strategy.
6. Circulate among the groups to provide guidance and support as needed.

Teacher's note

Teachers might consider consulting the resources below as a follow up for additional information on how we can understand our thoughts:



Verywell mind [Cognitive distortions](#)

Mind (UK) [Understanding my feelings](#)

Step 4: Having a mantra

Sometimes being stuck in a thinking trap can make us feel overwhelmed, making it difficult to reframe our thoughts. Having a mantra when we are stuck in negative thinking patterns can be a useful calming strategy. Focusing on a mantra also encourages mindful thinking and greater awareness of thoughts and feelings.

To finish the activity, ask students to close their eyes and say one of the mantras (or one of their own) in their minds to see how it feels.

- I am good enough
- I am strong
- I am powerful
- I am lovable
- I deserve good things
- I believe in myself and my abilities

Note that students can create their own using words or phrases from a favourite song, poem or other text.

If time allows have students develop their mantra, add it to their Wellbeing Journal and reflect on when they might use it.

Worksheet – Activity 5 – Managing thoughts

Step 3: Reframing thoughts

Catch it, check it, change it

Name: _____ Date: _____

Catch it	Check it	Change it
Notice the negative or unhelpful thought or thinking process in the scenario. Ask yourself – “What is the mind saying or getting caught up in?”	Imagine this is you - Is thinking this way realistic or helpful? – what concrete evidence could you consider to support or oppose the thought? Is thinking this way logical – does it make sense? Can you identify what the thinking traps is? ☐ All or Nothing ☐ Mind reading ☐ Personalising ☐ Labelling ☐ Shoulds ☐ Negative filter ☐ Fortune Telling	What is a more realistic, logical and helpful way of thinking about this?

In pairs, read the scenario your teacher assigns. Reflect on the connection between the thought, feelings and behaviour. Then try to use the ‘catch it, check it, change it’ questions to reframe the thought in the scenario. After you have reframed the thought reflect again on the new possible feeling, possible behaviour.

Worksheet – Activity 5 – Managing thoughts

Step 3: Reframing thoughts

Catch it, check it, change it

Scenario	Examine the Thought – Catch it, Check it and Change it.
Example Henry's thought: "I feel like I have to change who I am to fit in with everyone else." Before: What is the possible feeling, possible behaviour? After: Now what is the possible feeling, possible behaviour?	Catch it Henry is assuming that people won't accept him for who he is. He feels insecure. Check it Possible Thinking Trap: 'Mind Reading.' Why: Henry assumes he knows what others are thinking, believing that they won't accept him as he is. Change it Everyone is different, and that's what makes people interesting. I don't need to change myself to fit in – the right people will accept me for who I am.
Abby's thought: "Everyone looks so perfect on social media. I'll never be like that." Before: What is the possible feeling, possible behaviour? After: Now what is the possible feeling, possible behaviour?	Catch it Check it Change it
Cillian's thought: "I have so much to do, and I'll never get it all done." Before: What is the possible feeling, possible behaviour? After: Now what is the possible feeling, possible behaviour?	Catch it Check it Change it

Worksheet – Activity 5 – Managing thoughts

Step 3: Reframing thoughts

Catch it, check it, change it

Examine the Thought – Catch it, Check it and Change it.	
Scenario Brendan's thought: "I have so much pressure to do well in school. I'll never be able to keep up." Before: What is the possible feeling, possible behaviour? After: Now what is the possible feeling, possible behaviour?	Catch it
	Check it
	Change it
Hazel's thought: "I hate the way I look. I'll never feel confident in my body." Before: What is the possible feeling, possible behaviour? After: Now what is the possible feeling, possible behaviour?	Catch it
	Check it
	Change it
Alex's thought: "My parents just don't understand me. We always end up arguing." Before: What is the possible feeling, possible behaviour? After: Now what is the possible feeling, possible behaviour?	Catch it
	Check it
	Change it

Activity 6 – Understanding & recognising stress (L.O. 4.3, 4.9)

This activity aims to build an important foundation for student's understanding stress. Particularly, recognising their experience of stress, and identifying positive, tolerable, and toxic examples of stress. Students will increase their emotional health literacy through the reinforcement of support-seeking behaviours.

Teacher's note

This activity will further students understanding and recognition of stress.

Stress is a mind-body reaction in response to changes, demands, and challenges (stressors) in our lives. We can understand the type of stress we are experiencing by noticing how the stress is affecting us.

Defining stress

- 1. Positive stress:** Not all stress is bad. Stress can be positive and motivate us to do things. Positive stress occurs in response to normal and essential life events. When this stress is experienced in the presence of supportive relationships the body quickly returns to a state of calm and we learn that stress can be managed. This successful outcome builds resilience which improves the ability to cope with future stressors.
- 2. Tolerable stress:** Tolerable stress occurs with more challenging events. When such events are experienced in the context of important relationships that facilitate adaptive coping, the impact of the stressful event is managed.
- 3. Toxic stress:** Toxic stress occurs in response to a very impactful event or a series of smaller ongoing stressors. In the absence of supportive relationships that could help the young person to cope, the stress response can remain activated.

Typical strategies for stress management can help, however, more targeted strategies / support may be needed.

It is also important to note that people respond differently to stressors. What is stressful for one person may not be stressful for another. And what is stressful for a young person may not be stressful for an adult.

Signs of stress in the body include:

Some signs of stress in the body include increased heart rate, increased breathing rate, sweating, cold hands, headaches, and stomach-ache.

Teacher's note continued

Teachers may wish to refer to the NEPS resource, 'The Response to Stress: Information for School Staff,' and compile a list of specific supports available in their school to signpost to students during this lesson.

Overview of the activity 'Steps'

Step 1: Stress snowballs

Step 2: Understanding positive, tolerable & toxic stress

Step 3: Identifying positive, tolerable & toxic stress

Step 4: Visualising my peaceful space

Resources/materials

The following resources will be required for this lesson (optional where indicated):



- Slide deck: Activity 6, Understanding & recognising stress



- Worksheets: Activity 6, Understanding & recognising stress

Step 1: Stress snowballs



Consider starting this activity with a **Mindful moment:**



Headspace mini-meditation
[Let go of stress](#)

Stress Snowballs

The following exercise can help students to visualise 'letting go' of stress or worries (Note: useful for minor stress or worry). It can be adapted to a sticky note exercise, Padlet or word cloud.

1. Set up an empty bin, basket or box and place it in the middle of the room.
2. Ensure that all students have a copy of the worksheet, slip of paper or a sticky note.
3. Offer students the following prompt:
 - *Draw an image that represents something that young people find stressful.*
4. Consider asking students to crumple up their piece of paper into a 'stress snowball' and 'let it go' – students can aim and throw/place their stress ball into the basket (optional).
5. Ask some students to feed back to the class, if they are comfortable doing so. Note that 'letting go' of stress and worries in this way is not always possible. Another strategy may be more effective, or the student may wish to share their concern.

Step 2: Understanding positive, tolerable & toxic stress

1. Choose one of the following video clips to play for students. Please note that clip two may be more accessible for some students or may be played directly for students if the teacher feels the video is suitable for their class.

1. RCSI Centre for Positive Psychology & Health <i>'The Science of Health & Happiness for Young People,'</i> Week 5 – 'This is What Stress Feels Like' by Dr Pádraic Dunne.	Not all stress is bad (Play clip 03:34-06:22) This video is available on the slide deck, or the full video can be accessed here. Please note that teachers can use this video to gain background information and communicate this in a manner suitable for their class if this video does not meet students' learning needs. 
2. Headspace by stride	What is stress? (Play clip 00:00-00:55) This video is available on the slide deck, or the full video can be accessed here. 

2. Ask the class to consider the following question:

- *What did you learn about stress?*

3. Ask students to share what they learned.

The key takeaway from this exercise is to recognise that experiencing stress can be good for us. However, if we feel like the stress is out of our control, this is a sign that we are reaching our 'tipping point' and we might need some support.

Step 3: Identifying positive, tolerable & toxic stress

Teacher's note

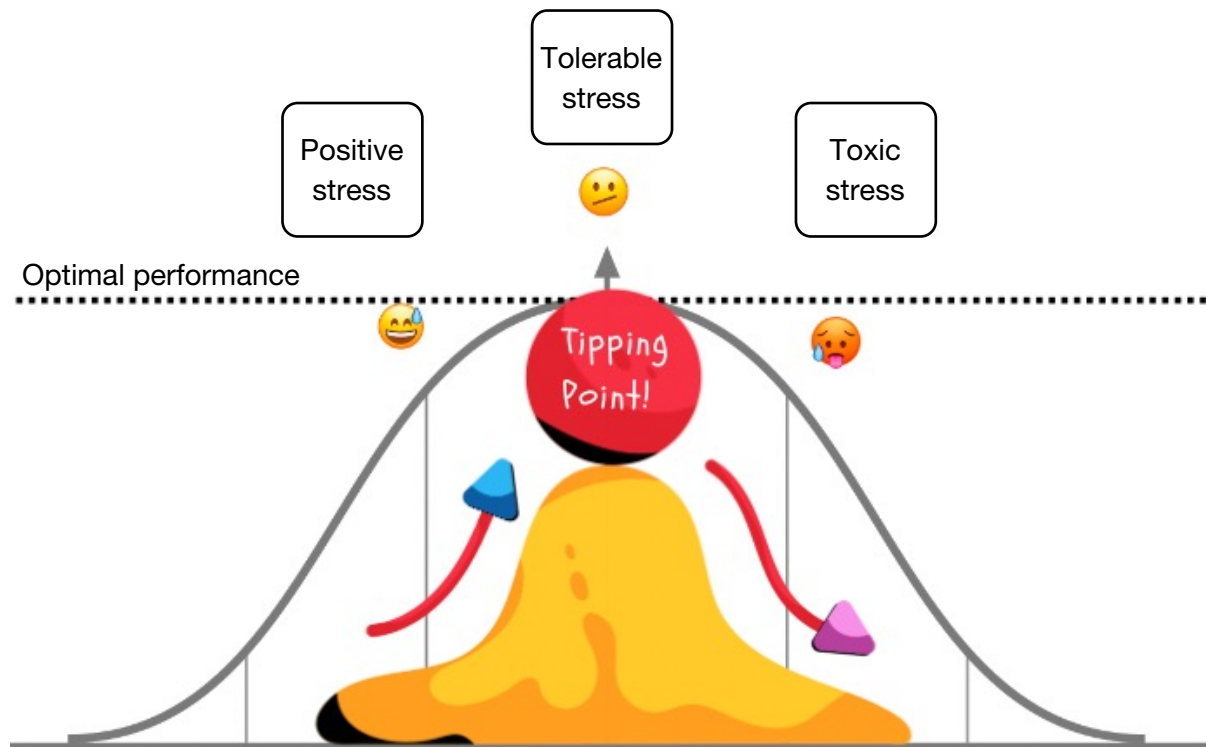
Stress can make us feel overwhelmed, worried or anxious, disrupting our concentration and our decision making. Sometimes, it is hard to notice when we are experiencing stress. Understanding the physiological and emotional reactions to stress help us to identify that we are experiencing stress and then to take supportive action.

- Positive stress can boost our motivation and help us to perform better. For example, if we are taking part in a sport/drama/music/art competition, this can be a source of positive stress.
- Tolerable stress can be handled with management strategies and/or support and doesn't impact our performance or our functioning. For example, challenging assignments and preparing for exams can motivate us to prepare, and stress can help us to manage our time well.
- Toxic stress negatively impacts our performance and functioning, especially if it lasts a long time, and if we do not have support to manage it.

This exercise will help students to recognise their experience of different types of stress. Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between stress and excitement. Stress often manifests as tension, worry, or a sense of being overwhelmed, whereas excitement typically comes with a heightened sense of energy, anticipation, and eagerness.

1. Ask students if these sources of stress resonate with them? Is there any others they would add?
2. Explain the concept of positive, tolerable and toxic stress to students (see Teacher's note).

The stress continuum



3. Ask students to draw/write examples that come to mind for a) positive, b) tolerable and c) toxic stress on the continuum (see image above. Adapted from an idea by Nash, Steenkamp, Conoscenti, and Litz (2011).
 - **Allow students to opt out of this activity, if they prefer. Offer the journal prompt:**
“If there is anything stuck on your mind today, you can use this space to let it go.”
 Students can write, draw/doodle, or reflect if they prefer.
4. Ask students to talk about the different examples of stress that come to mind for a) positive, b) tolerable and c) toxic stress on the continuum (in small groups).
5. Discuss the following question as a class, guided by the teacher’s note below:
 - *How do young people think/act/feel when they are experiencing positive stress/toxic stress?*
 - *What supports are available to them?*

Reassure students that stress is a normal part of our lives and motivates us. However, if we can notice when we are experiencing tolerable stress, we can get support that prevents us from ‘tipping’ into toxic stress or experiencing toxic stress for too long.

Supports for managing stress

1. Stress within our control

Healthy coping skills

- Teachers may remind students of the Five Ways to Wellbeing <https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/five-ways-to-wellbeing/>.
- Talking to friends who understand and offer support – Sometimes talking about things can make them feel more manageable.
- Participating in clubs, teams, or groups that provide a sense of community and belonging.
- Create playlists with music that calms me down when I'm feeling overwhelmed.
- Using a planner to keep track of my homework and other commitments, so I don't get too stressed out about deadlines.
- Getting a good night's sleep, as we can cope better with the normal demands and stresses of life if we are not tired.

2. Stress outside our control

- Speaking to a trusted adult (parent, teacher).
- Start by reaching out to your school's resources.
- Your teachers, Guidance Counsellor, and student support team are here to help. They can provide guidance, support, and resources tailored to your specific needs;
- Jigsaw, NEPS, 50808.
- [A comprehensive list of support services for teenagers](#) at this link [Cohort08at13-YP-Support-Numbers.pdf \(growingup.ie\)](#).
- Barnardo's website - [Advice and support for young people](#).

Teacher's note

Convey to students that most of the time they manage stress very well. Occasionally they might need support if they can't stop thinking or worrying about the stress, even when they are supposed to be relaxing or with their friends; if they are feeling sick a lot and it is not a medical issue (e.g., headaches, stomach aches). The stress might be overwhelming if it is affecting their life (e.g., affecting their experience of things they normally enjoy, disturbing their sleep). Stress will be different for each student, and this is okay.

It is important to acknowledge that some young people may be living in very stressful situations. This is not the young person's fault. Typical strategies for coping with stress may not bring the desired relief. This is outside of the young persons control, while these typical strategies may still be good for the young person and helpful in the long run, they may need more targeted supports to support them during the stressful time and beyond.

Step 4: Visualising my peaceful space

1. Play the following visualisation video for students:



South Tees Medical Psychology
[Safe Place Guided Exercise](#)

Students can follow along with the guided visualisation, or as a guided drawing exercise.

2. Alternatively offer students the following prompts to respond to in their Wellbeing Journal:
“Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe.”

This might be a place that you have been to before, somewhere you dream of going to, or somewhere you have seen a picture of.

- What colours are in your peaceful space? Write/Colour
- What does your peaceful space sound like? Write/Draw
- What does your peaceful space look like? Write/Draw
- Imagine a name, a word, or a phrase that you can call your peaceful space, that you can use to bring this image back any time you wish.

Worksheet – Activity 6 – Understanding & recognising stress

Step 1: Stress snowballs

Instructions:

Draw an image that represents something that young people find stressful.

Tear Here _____

**Instructions:**

Your teacher will play a video for you.

A) What are two things you learned from the video?

Write/Draw in the spaces below:

1. I learned...

2. I learned...

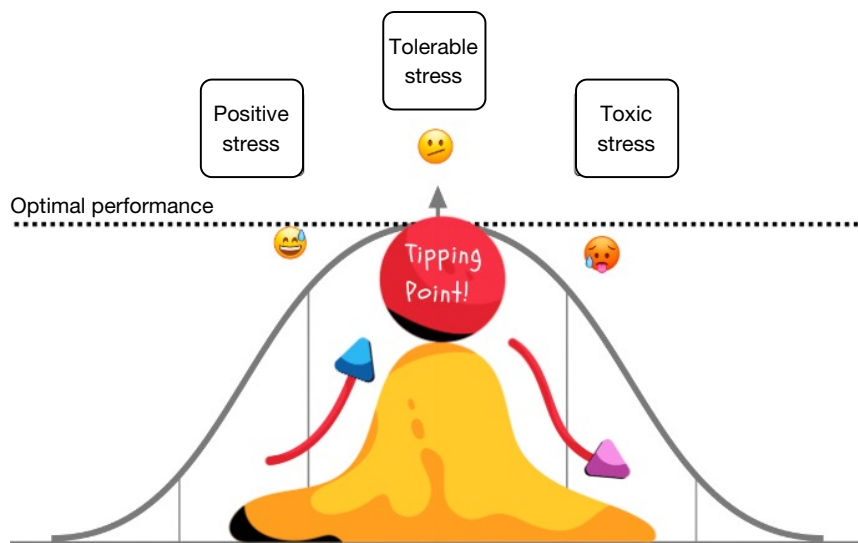
Worksheet – Activity 6 – Understanding & recognising stress

Step 3: Identifying positive, tolerable & toxic stress

The stress continuum

Instructions:

Draw/Write examples that come to mind for a) positive, b) tolerable and c) toxic stress on the continuum (see image below).



Positive stress

Tolerable stress

Toxic stress

*If you prefer to do a different exercise, complete the journaling exercise on the next page.

Worksheet – Activity 6 – Understanding & recognising stress

*Step 3: Identifying positive, tolerable & toxic stress
(Alternative exercise)*



Instructions:

“If there’s anything stuck on your mind today, use this space to let it go.”

You can write/draw/doodle for a few minutes, or just reflect if you do not want to write anything down.

Worksheet – Activity 6 – Understanding & recognising stress

Step 4: Visualising my peaceful space

Instructions:

“Imagine a place where you can feel calm, peaceful and safe.”

This might be a place that you have been to before, somewhere you dream of going to, or somewhere you have seen a picture of.

1. What colours are in your peaceful space? Write/Colour
2. What does your peaceful space sound like? Write/Draw
3. What does your peaceful space look like? Write/Draw
4. Imagine a name, a word, or a phrase that you can call your peaceful space, that you can use to bring this image back any time you wish.

My Peaceful Space looks like... write/draw below

My Peaceful Space is called... _____



Activity 7 – Managing stress (L.O. 4.3, 4.4)

This activity aims to help students understand healthy coping, and practice coping techniques for stress. Students will identify and discuss healthy ways to cope with stress and prevent stress from building up, self-select appropriate stress-management techniques for healthy coping, and practice applying these to every-day scenarios.

Teacher's note

A coping strategy is what a person does to deal with a difficult situation. Just like stress, coping strategies can be either healthy or unhealthy. Healthy coping categories are self-soothing, relaxing, or distracting activities, social support, and professional support. Unhealthy categories are negative self-talk, harmful activities (e.g., experiencing issues with appetite, aggressive behaviour, use of alcohol and/or drugs, self-harm), social withdrawal. While unhealthy coping strategies can make us feel a bit better in the moment, they make us feel a lot worse in the short and long term, triggering a cycle of further unpleasant emotions, creating additional issues that add to our stress, and preventing us from finding solutions.

It is important to practice healthy coping strategies regularly, even when you are not feeling stressed, to build resilience and prevent stress from accumulating. See the NEPS Resource, *Managing Stress and Anxiety: A Guide for School Staff* for further guidance.

Overview of the activity 'Steps'

- Step 1:** Grounding exercise: Opener
- Step 2:** Understanding coping strategies
- Step 3:** Applying coping strategies to manage stress
- Step 4:** Grounding exercise: Closer

Resources/materials

The following resources will be required for this lesson (optional where indicated):

-  • Slide deck: Activity 7, Managing stress
-  • Worksheets: Activity 7, Managing stress



Step 1: Grounding exercise: Opener

Teacher's note

Note that some students may find exercises such as square breathing or reflection uncomfortable. Ensure that students are reminded that they can take a few moments to themselves and draw/doodle if they do not wish to complete the breathing exercise. Note that there are many different ways to create a feeling of calmness include music, repetitive movement, low level cognitive activities (e.g., sorting books on a shelf, stacking, colouring in, etc).

Select one of the below activity openers.

Option 1 – Square Breathing

1. Play one of the videos below:

Guided square breathing visual (Voiceover), 3 mins	Square breathing – guided 
Five finger breathing, 2 mins	Take5 controlled breathing exercise 

2. Ask students to notice how they feel after completing this exercise

Option 2 – Letting Go of Our Thoughts (Journaling Exercise)



1. Ask students to open their Wellbeing Journals on a blank page or use the worksheet.
2. Offer the prompt: **“If there’s anything stuck on your mind today, use this space to let it go.”**

Students can write/draw/doodle/colour for a few minutes. If students do not want to write anything down, ask them to simply take a few minutes to themselves.

Teacher's note

Finish this step by explaining to students that breathing exercises, journaling etc. are examples of healthy coping strategies. We get the best benefit from these coping strategies by practicing them repeatedly. Suggest to students that they can try these exercises even when they are not feeling stressed. This means that we can get better at these coping strategies so that when we need them, we are then well practised.

Step 2: Understanding coping strategies

Teacher's note

This step is based on the Stress Bucket, an idea adapted from Alison Brabban and Douglas Turkington (2002). Encourage students to explore positive coping mechanisms such as exercise, enjoying the outdoors, mindfulness, talking to a trusted friend or adult, walking the dog, practicing relaxation techniques, or engaging in hobbies they enjoy.

Stress Bucket Analogy for Coping

Imagine you have a bucket inside your body which collects all your stress. Sometimes the bucket might feel quite empty, and other times it might feel quite full.

When we are going through a particularly difficult time, it is normal for our bucket to feel full. We all have stress buckets of different sizes; we vary in how much stress we can individually manage.

- If we notice ourselves feeling like our bucket is filling up or even overflowing (toxic stress), it is important to try to let some of the stress out, in a healthy way.
- Healthy coping strategies are like taps in the side of the bucket that we can open to let some of the stress out, or even prevent it from building up.
- Unhealthy coping strategies can seem like taps; however, these drain more stress back into our bucket and they make us feel a lot worse in the long term.

Teacher's note continued



Avoidant Coping

Some strategies that we may use to relieve our stress might not serve us well in the long term. Avoidant coping happens when we are ignoring stressful situations instead of addressing them directly. Distracting ourselves from stress (e.g., taking a break from a tough assignment) can sometimes give us more energy to return to a task or responsibility. However, if we distract ourselves for too long or with 'unhealthy' distractions (e.g., staying up late a lot with friends), this can make us feel worse in the long term. In some cases, we may resort to unhealthy behaviours (i.e., unhealthy coping strategies) to avoid immediate discomfort or if we are unsure about how to solve the stress.

It is always best to seek advice, input or guidance from a trusted adult. Try to reflect in the moment and think about the best coping strategy for you (emotional, social, reframing thoughts, problem-solving/taking action).

1. Play the following video clip for students. Ask students to note, write/draw two things they have learned from the video.



Headspace by Stride

What is Stress? (00:56-2:40)

This video is available on the slide deck, or the full video can be accessed [here](#).

2. Ask a couple of students to share what learned from the video.
3. Explain the concept of the Stress Bucket to the students (see Teacher's note).
4. Ask students to discuss the following question in pairs/small groups and write/draw a response on a sticky note or in their Wellbeing Journal.
 - ***What taps do you use to reduce your stress?***
5. Ask students to stick their notes on stress bucket image (displayed), or on some blank wall space. *Alternatively, teachers can draw a bucket on the board (with a tap) and invite groups of students to write/ draw taps with markers.' This exercise can be adapted to a poster activity or Word Cloud.*
6. Ask students to share their responses.
If unhealthy coping strategies are mentioned, gently guide the discussion towards healthier alternatives. Consider exploring the following question:
 - ***Why might these strategies feel helpful in the moment but may not serve you well if used as a regular coping strategy?***
7. Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 students.
7. Provide students with the **Healthy coping checklist** (see overleaf), or project this on the whiteboard. **Note** that this activity can be adapted to a stand-up/sit-down exercise to incorporate some movement.
8. In their Wellbeing Journals or using the checklist on the worksheet, ask students to reflect on the following questions.
 - ***What are some of the healthy coping strategies that you have used in the last month? Check these off on the checklist.***
 - ***What are some of the healthy coping strategies that you could use? Circle these or make a list in your Wellbeing Journal.***

Stress Bucket

The original publication for the adapted Stress Bucket can be found here: *Brabban, A., & Turkington, D. (2002). The search for meaning: Detecting congruence between live events, underlying schema, and psychotic symptoms. In A.P. Morrison (Ed.), A Casebook of Cognitive Therapy for Psychosis (pp. 59-75). New York: Brunner-Routledge.*

Worksheet – Activity 7 – Managing stress

Step 2: Understanding coping strategies

Healthy coping checklist	
What Healthy Coping Strategies have you used in the last month?	
Coping Strategies 	I have used this coping strategy in the last month (tick)
I talked to someone I trust about something that was/is bothering me.	
I called/video chatted/spent time with a friend.	
I challenged negative thoughts by asking myself if they're true or if there's another way to see the situation.	
I started working on a homework assignment or chore right away instead of putting it off.	
I listened to my favourite music/podcast to shift my mood.	
I took part in a group activity/ spent time with people I care about / spent time with family.	
I created a to-do list/planned my day/made a schedule to help me manage my time.	
I spent a moment focusing on my senses and grounding myself in the present moment.	
I moved my body (e.g., dancing, jogging, yoga, exercise, sport).	
I spent time outside or in nature (e.g., went outside for lunch time).	
I brainstormed ways to solve a problem.	
I said/thought something nice/encouraging to/about myself to boost my confidence.	
I tried journalling or drawing how I felt.	
I practiced gratitude/ thought about things I am thankful for.	
I made time to rest/I got a good night's sleep.	
I watched a funny video or movie to lift my spirits and distract myself.	
I tidied/organised the space around me.	
I set realistic expectations for myself and a situation.	
I asked for advice/input from a trusted adult.	
What coping strategies did your group suggest? Write/Draw these below to try later: <i>The coping strategies that I will try are...</i>	

Step 3: Applying coping strategies to manage stress

1. Explain the four different coping strategy categories.
2. Share Ethan's scenario with the class. Ask students to feedback on the different types of coping strategies that Ethan could use to help him feel better (see Teacher's note).

Teacher's note

Healthy coping strategies can be divided into four categories:

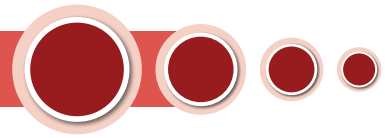
1. **Social Support** – Spend time with/around people, talk about how we feel,
2. **Emotional Coping** – Engage in activities that help us process and express our emotions,
3. **Reframing Thoughts** – Challenge negative thoughts and replace them with more realistic, ones. Practice gratitude, focus on strengths, and try to see situations from different viewpoints,
4. **Problem Solving/Taking Action** – Think of something practical that might help in the situation.

Ethan's scenario: "Ethan is anxious about an upcoming class presentation. He's worried about speaking in front of his classmates and fears making mistakes or being judged"

Solutions for Ethan's scenario...

- Ask a classmate/friend/family member to practice with him.
- Practice relaxation techniques like deep breathing or visualisation to calm his nerves to help ground himself.
- Say/Think something nice and encouraging (practice positive self-talk), replacing unhelpful thoughts about the presentation with more realistic and constructive ones. For example, instead of thinking "I'll definitely mess up," he could say to himself, "I am prepared, and I'm ready to do my best."
- Problem Solving/Taking Action: Ethan could create flashcards with key points from his presentation to refer to if he forgets what to say.

3. Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 students. Students can switch/mix groups at this point in the activity if appropriate.
4. Assign a coping scenario to each group of students. Using their Wellbeing Journals or on the available worksheet, ask students to:



Students should read the scenario and discuss the following question:

- **What could the person in the scenario do to cope with the situation to:**

- » A) Seek social support
- » B) Manage their emotions
- » C) Reframe their thoughts
- » D) Do something practical.

5. Ask one person from each group to feed back to the class.

6. Consider asking students:

- ***How can we support each other to manage our stress?***

7. Signpost some supports available in your school.

	Scenarios
1.	John feels stressed out because he's caught in the middle of an argument between two friends. He worries about losing his friends or making the situation worse by taking sides.
2.	Elena has an important assessment due in two weeks, but she finds herself constantly delaying starting on it. She spends hours scrolling through TikTok and chatting with friends. She begins to panic about not having enough time to prepare.
3.	Ró feels anxious in social situations. Ró is meeting a new friend after school, and she is worried about saying or doing something embarrassing.
4.	Ahmed has a big test coming up, and he's feeling anxious about it. He's worried about forgetting what he's studied or not doing well, even though he's prepared.
5.	Maya has a big sports game coming up, and she's feeling anxious about performing well. She worries about letting her team down and not meeting expectations.

Teacher's note - How can we support each other?

- **Active Listening:** We can support each other by actively listening without judgment when someone needs to talk about their stress or challenges. If someone is dealing with stress that is outside of their control or is too big to deal with on their own, we can encourage them to share their problem with a trusted adult.
- **Offering Encouragement:** Simple gestures like offering words of encouragement or praise can go a long way in boosting someone's confidence.
- **Sharing Coping Strategies:** We can share our own coping strategies for managing stress and encourage others to try different techniques to see what works best for them. We can invite someone to go for a walk, watch a movie or listen to music together, or share a favourite hobby.
- **Promoting Healthy Habits:** Encouraging each other to engage in healthy habits can reduce the social pressures we feel to take part in activities that are unhealthy or risky for us.

Step 4: Grounding exercise: Closer

Conclude this activity with one of the calming options not already chosen in step 1 above:

- Breathing Exercise, Journal Prompt, or 'Practice Being Present'

Ask students to make note of 1-2 new or grounding exercises that they will try this week.

Practice being present

Allow students to opt out of this activity if they wish. Offer the journaling exercise as an alternative.

1. Ask students to sit comfortably.
2. Read the following prompts aloud and ask students to write/draw/mentally note a response in their Wellbeing Journal. Pause for 20 seconds between each prompt and allow a few moments for students to note their response.

- Look around the space you are in for a moment.
- What colours are around you?
- What is one thing that you find interesting about the space around you?
- What is one small thing that you can do right at this moment to make you feel 1% better?

Taking a drink of water, stretching, standing, moving around?

Recommended preparation for Activity 8, "Minding myself"

Teachers could ask students for the next activity (Activity 8, Minding myself) to select and bring to class one image or item representing "what self-care means to me" - This could be a photo of a place where they like to relax, their favourite film, an item of cosy clothing, a cuddly toy, a photo of their pet, a hot bubble bath etc. Students can complete a gallery walk of these items at the end of this activity.

Worksheet – Activity 7 – Managing stress

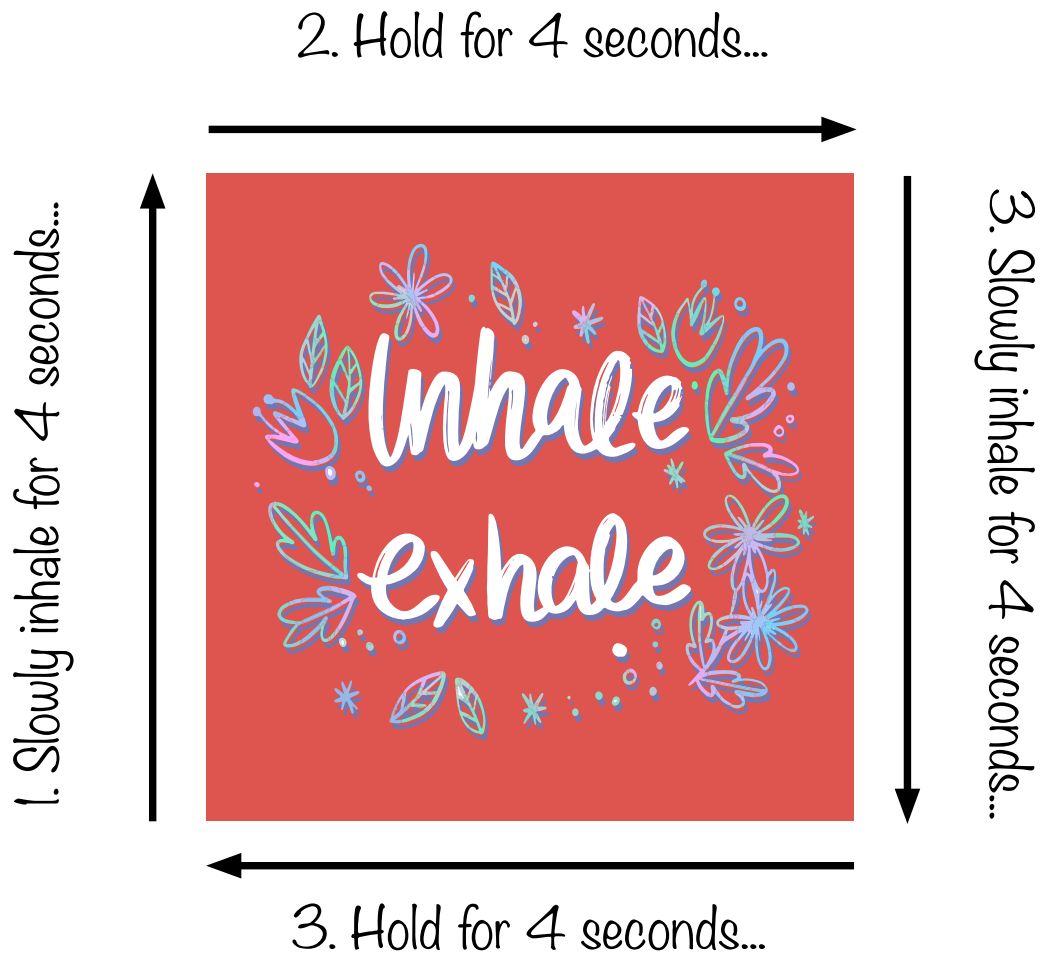
Step 1: Grounding exercise

Name: _____ Date: _____

Square Breathing Technique

Instructions:

Trace the edges of the square as you breathe. You can go at your own pace. Slowly inhale for 4 seconds, hold your breath for 4 seconds, slowly exhale for 4 seconds, hold for four seconds, repeat.



Worksheet – Activity 7 – Managing stress

*Step 1: Identifying positive, tolerable & toxic stress
(Alternative exercise)*



Instructions:

“If there’s anything stuck on your mind today, use this space to let it go.”

You can write/draw/doodle for a few minutes, or just reflect if you do not want to write anything down.

Worksheet – Activity 7 – Managing stress

Step 2: Understanding coping strategies

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions:

Your teacher will play a video for you.

A) What are two things you learned from the video?

Write/Draw in the spaces below:

1. I learned...

2. I learned...

B) The Stress Bucket



What taps do you use to reduce your stress?

Write/Draw in the space below:

Worksheet – Activity 7 – Managing stress

Step 3: Applying coping strategies to manage stress

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions:

Your teacher will ask you to read and discuss one of the scenarios below.

- **What could the person in the scenario do to cope with the situation to:**
 - » A) Seek social support
 - » B) Manage their emotions
 - » C) Reframe their thoughts
 - » D) Do something practical.

	Scenarios
1.	John feels stressed out because he's caught in the middle of an argument between two friends. He worries about losing his friends or making the situation worse by taking sides.
2.	Elena has an important assessment due in two weeks, but she finds herself constantly delaying starting on it. She spends hours scrolling through TikTok and chatting with friends. She begins to panic about not having enough time to prepare.
3.	Ró feels anxious in social situations. Ró is meeting a new friend after school, and she is worried about saying or doing something embarrassing.
4.	Ahmed has a big test coming up, and he's feeling anxious about it. He's worried about forgetting what he's studied or not doing well, even though he's prepared.
5.	Maya has a big sports game coming up, and she's feeling anxious about performing well. She worries about letting her team down and not meeting expectations.

Our Scenario: 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5? _____

	Brainstorming a Healthy Coping Action
A)	What could the person in the scenario do to cope with the situation to seek social support?
B)	What could the person in the scenario do to cope with the situation to manage their emotions?
C)	What could the person in the scenario do to cope with the situation to reframe their thoughts?
D)	What is something practical the person in the scenario could do?

Activity 8 – Minding myself (L.O. 4.1, 4.4)

This activity aims to draw from students' exploration of topics through Unit 2. Students will build a class Wellbeing Wheel and their individual 'Self-Care Toolkit', by identifying, discussing, and self-selecting a series of self-management strategies to maintain emotional wellbeing and promote regular engagement in healthy habits. This lesson is framed by the [Five Ways to Wellbeing](#) from Mental Health Ireland.

Teacher's note

It is important that students have completed Activities 1-7 inclusive before they advance to activity 8, 'Minding Myself.' Activity 8 scaffolds students to create a personal 'self-care' toolkit through active discussion and self-selection. 'Minding myself' builds on students' 'Wellbeing Workout' explored in Unit 1.

Overview of the activity 'Steps'

Step 1: Step 1: The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Step 2: Creating our wellbeing toolkit

Step 3: Building our class wellbeing wheel

Step 4: What minding myself means to me

Resources/materials

The following resources will be required for this lesson (optional where indicated)



- Slide deck: Activity 8, Minding myself



- Worksheets: Activity 8, Minding myself



- Resource: 'Minding myself' discussion station posters (optional), A3 flipchart paper can be used as an alternative.

Step 1: The Five Ways to Wellbeing

Teacher's note

This lesson is informed by Mental Health Ireland's Five Ways to Wellbeing. This is an evidence-based framework that promotes positive mental health and overall wellbeing across five core areas: 1. Take Notice, 2. Connect, 3. Be Active, 4. Learn, 5. Give.



1. Consider starting this activity with a **Mindful moment**, or a mini wellbeing-walk.



Headspace mini-meditation
[Appreciate nature](#)

2. Explain to students that the following activity will help them to create a) a class 'Wellbeing Wheel,' and b) their own 'Rest & Progress' Toolkit, based on the Five Ways to Wellbeing. It is an opportunity to reflect on all they have learned through Unit 2 SPHE.
3. Ask students:



- ***What do you understand about the Five Ways to Wellbeing?***
4. To aid recall and understanding before step 2, play the following 3-minute video for students: [The Five Ways to Wellbeing - Mental Health Ireland](#)

Step 2: Creating our wellbeing toolkit

Teacher's note

This step in the activity is dedicated to discussion stations themed according to the Five Ways to Wellbeing. At each station, students will engage in a group brainstorm according to that theme, generating ideas for how they can *Connect*, *Be Active*, *Take Notice*, *Learn*, and *Give* in their everyday lives. Students will draw symbols, pictures, and name some ways to engage with each Wellbeing behaviour. Students will 'take-away' the strategies that they consider most relevant to them to include in their personal 'Rest & Progress' toolkit on their individual worksheets.



1. Set up five discussion stations – Each station should have 1/5th of the class wellbeing wheel, labelled with one of the Five Ways, the discussion question/prompt for each station displayed, and some writing/drawing materials.
2. Divide the class into five groups and provide each student with the 'Minding Myself' worksheet. Alternatively, students can use their Wellbeing Journal.
3. Students will work collaboratively at each station to brainstorm ideas for each **Way to Wellbeing**. They will draw/write down any ideas they have. For example, at the Connect station ask them to consider what they would do to 'Connect' if they had less than 5 minutes, less than 10 minutes, and 1-hour (or more). They will then jot down their 'Wellbeing Toolkit Take-Aways,' from each station using their worksheet or Wellbeing Journal.
4. Following the discussion stations ask students to return to their toolkit worksheet and write/draw a response to the following:
 - **Reflecting on your toolkit, what tools would work best for you?**

Discussion questions

Station 1 (Take Notice): *What are some of the ways we can Take Notice of the world around us and what we are feeling? How can we enjoy the present moment?*

- In less than 5-Minutes, in less than 10-Minutes, in 1-Hour (or more)?

Station 2 (Connect): *What are some ways we can Connect with the social world around us?*

- In less than 5-Minutes, in less than 10-Minutes, in 1-Hour (or more)?

Station 3 (Be Active): *What are some of the ways we can Be Active by moving our body, engaging in exercise and other physical activities?*

- In less than 5-Minutes, in less than 10-Minutes, in 1-Hour (or more)?

Station 4 (Keep Learning): *What are some of the ways we can Keep Learning, be curious about the world, and try new things?*

- In less than 5-Minutes, in less than 10-Minutes, in 1-Hour (or more)?

Station 5 (Give): *What are some of the ways we can Give to others and show kindness?*

- In less than 5-Minutes, in less than 10-Minutes, in 1-Hour (or more)?

Teacher's note

Below are some examples of many possible activities that may be suggested at the discussion stations and included in student's Self-Care Toolkits. By considering various time intervals, students can identify and practice ways to enhance their wellbeing even during short breaks, while also recognising the benefits of dedicating time to Take Notice, Connect, Be Active, Keep Learning, and to Give. This encourages a flexible and sustainable approach to maintaining and improving our emotional wellbeing.

Examples of possible Activities

Take notice

- *Less than 5-Minutes?* Doodle, ask myself how I am feeling, write down 'three things I am grateful for today/this week,' look out a window or go outside, engage one or more of your senses by noticing what you can see, feel, smell, and hear around you, ask yourself 'what is interesting or cosy about my space'? Follow along a five-minute visualisation/meditation,
- *Less than 10-Minutes?* Sit in nature, sketch/draw, put my phone/screens/homework away for 10 minutes and rest, read a few pages of a book/magazine, listen to an audiobook/podcast/favourite music, write a story/poem, journal about my day/how I am feeling.
- *1-Hour (or more)?* Make a painting, watch an episode of my favourite tv show, read, listen to music, rest etc.

Connect

- *Less than 5-Minutes?* Text or send a nice message to a friend or family member and ask them how they are, say hello to the person sitting beside me, smile, and ask a question.
- *Less than 10-Minutes?* Spend break time with a friend or talking to a new person, play with my pet/go for a walk in nature, invite a friend to 'walk and talk.'
- *1-Hour (or more)?* Sit down with my family, organise to meet with a friend, attend sports training or a club.

Be active

- *Less than 5-Minutes?* Stand up/sit down and stretch, do a quick set of jumping jacks, go for a brisk walk, dance to your favourite song.

- *Less than 10-Minutes?* Go for a walk, do a quick tidy and clean of your room/workspace, do some light gardening, dance to your favourite music.
- *1 hour (or more)?* Take exercise – follow along with a yoga video, go for a run, go for a walk, play a game with friends, go to sports training, do a couple of household chores, spend time playing with a dog/pet/animal.

Keep learning

- *Less than 5-Minutes?* Read a short article or watch a brief educational video on a topic that interests you, ask a question in class/after class about something that interests you, practice a phrase/saying hello in a second language, learn a new word ('word of the day'),
- *Less than 10-Minutes?* Explore a new hobby or skill through a short tutorial or instructional video, research a topic of interest by reading/watching an educational video, learn some new dance moves,
- *1-Hour (or more)?* Watch a documentary you're interested in, try cooking/baking something new, set yourself a challenge to learn a new skill and set aside some practice time (e.g., knitting/crochet/sewing, guitar/ukelele/musical instrument), visit a museum/gallery, plant a flower/vegetable, and learn how to care for it, learn a new skill for a sport you play/try a new sport.

Give

- *Less than 5-Minutes?* Send a thoughtful text message to a friend or family member, expressing appreciation or offering words of encouragement. Hold the door open for someone or perform a random act of kindness, pick up litter that you see around you.
- *Less than 10-Minutes?* Volunteer to help a family member or a friend with a task or errand, such as grocery shopping or walking the dog/caring for a pet, help a sibling or friend with some homework or play a game, write a handwritten note of appreciation to a friend,
- *1-Hour (or more)?* Spend time with a family member or offer to help with some chores at home, clean your space around you, organise a virtual game night or movie marathon with friends.

Step 3: Building our class wellbeing wheel

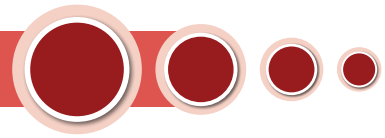
1. Ask the groups of students from each discussion station to carry their segment of the wheel together and stick it on the wall/posterboard/whiteboard one by one.
2. As each group adds their contribution, ask one member from each group to speak for a moment about the segment and what it represents (e.g., Connect), and to name some examples (e.g., one thing that can be done in 5-minutes/10-minutes/1-hour or more).
3. When the wheel is assembled, applaud the class, and ask them how they feel.
4. Ask the class to reflect and discuss the following discussion questions in a think-pair-share:
 - **What are the best ways to mind ourselves when we are feeling low/lacking motivation?** Ask students to note some of these examples as part of their 'Toolkit Takeaways' on their *Minding myself worksheet*, or in their *Wellbeing Journal*.
 - Reflecting on your toolkit, what self-care tools work best for you?

Teacher's note

Below are some examples of how we can support ourselves when we are feeling low or lacking motivation. Teachers can use these points to guide the think-pair-share discussion:

Ways to mind ourselves when we are feeling low/lacking motivation

- **Take** notice of what we are thinking, feeling and what's happening in our environment. What can we do to make ourselves feel even 1% better at this moment? Pay attention to your thoughts, feelings, and surroundings to ground yourself. Try to notice the things that feel beautiful, cosy or positive in your space. Try to make a list or to note down what you are thinking/ feeling, listen to your favourite music to boost your mood or help you to notice your feelings.
- **Connect** or reach out to a friend, family member, teachers, or trusted adult for support, input/advice and encouragement. If we are experiencing some conflict in a relationship, try to start an open conversation with this person and remember to Give and expect respect, share your thoughts and feelings in a constructive way.
- If possible – **Be active**, break the challenge into smaller, more manageable tasks. Focus on taking one step at a time rather than getting overwhelmed by the big picture. Celebrate small 'wins' along the way to stay motivated.
- Try **learn something new** – If you can't take part in an activity that you enjoy (e.g., you are injured or unwell), try a new activity or engage with something that you find interesting to boost your mood and energy.
- **Give** kindness to ourselves, and to others. When we are struggling with a challenge, or our motivation to mind ourselves is a little low, it is important to first show ourselves compassion. Be kind to yourself and acknowledge that it's okay to struggle sometimes. Treat yourself with the same kindness, understanding and empathy that you would offer to a friend in a similar situation.



Step 4: Reflecting on our wellbeing

To conclude this activity, students can use any additional time at the end of the lesson to 1. complete the reflection exercise (option 1) below, or 2. explore the Gallery walk (option 2).

Option 1 – Discussion

1. To conclude this activity, ask students to discuss the following in pairs or small groups:
 - What did you learn about minding yourself?
 - What did you enjoy the most?
 - What did you find most valuable or helpful over recent SPHE classes?
2. Encourage students to take their toolkit home, and to continue to add to it whenever they think of a new way to support their wellbeing. Encourage them to practice one or more strategies from their toolkit each day. When we practice these strategies even when we don't need them, we can get better at minding ourselves when our energy is low.

Option 2 – “What minding myself means to me” Gallery walk

If time allows and this activity is planned in advance, Teachers might ask students to bring one appropriate image or item representing “what Minding Myself means to me” and to bring this with them in advance of the class - This could be a photo of a place where they like to relax, their favourite film, an item of cosy clothing, a cuddly toy, a photo of their pet, a favourite snack etc.

1. Ask students to display their items (if they wish).
2. Ask students to walk around and discuss the items that they can see.
3. Ask students to reflect on and discuss what they learned about Minding Yourself or what they enjoyed the most/found most valuable about Unit 2 SPHE.

Teachers could also adapt this activity to a digital shared Self-Care Vision Board (e.g., using Padlet) if resources allow.

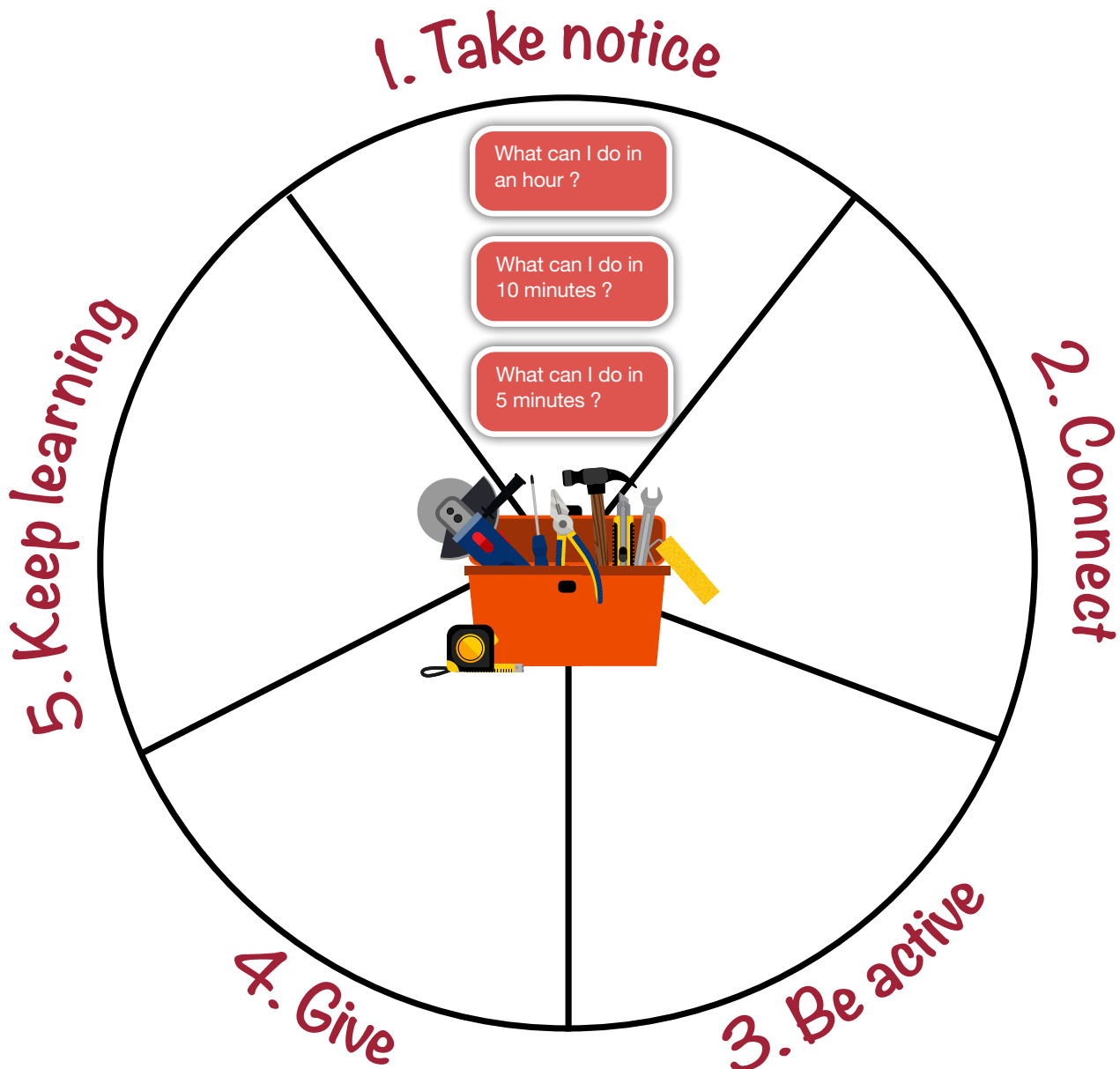
Worksheet – Activity 8 – Minding myself

Step 2: Creating my wellbeing toolkit

Instructions:

When you visit each discussion station, note some of the tools that you think are most useful for you
– **What are your Toolkit Takeaways?**

Minding myself toolkit





Worksheet – Activity 8 – Minding myself

Step 2: Creating my wellbeing toolkit

Reflecting on your toolkit, what self-care tools work best for you?

Write/Draw in the space below.

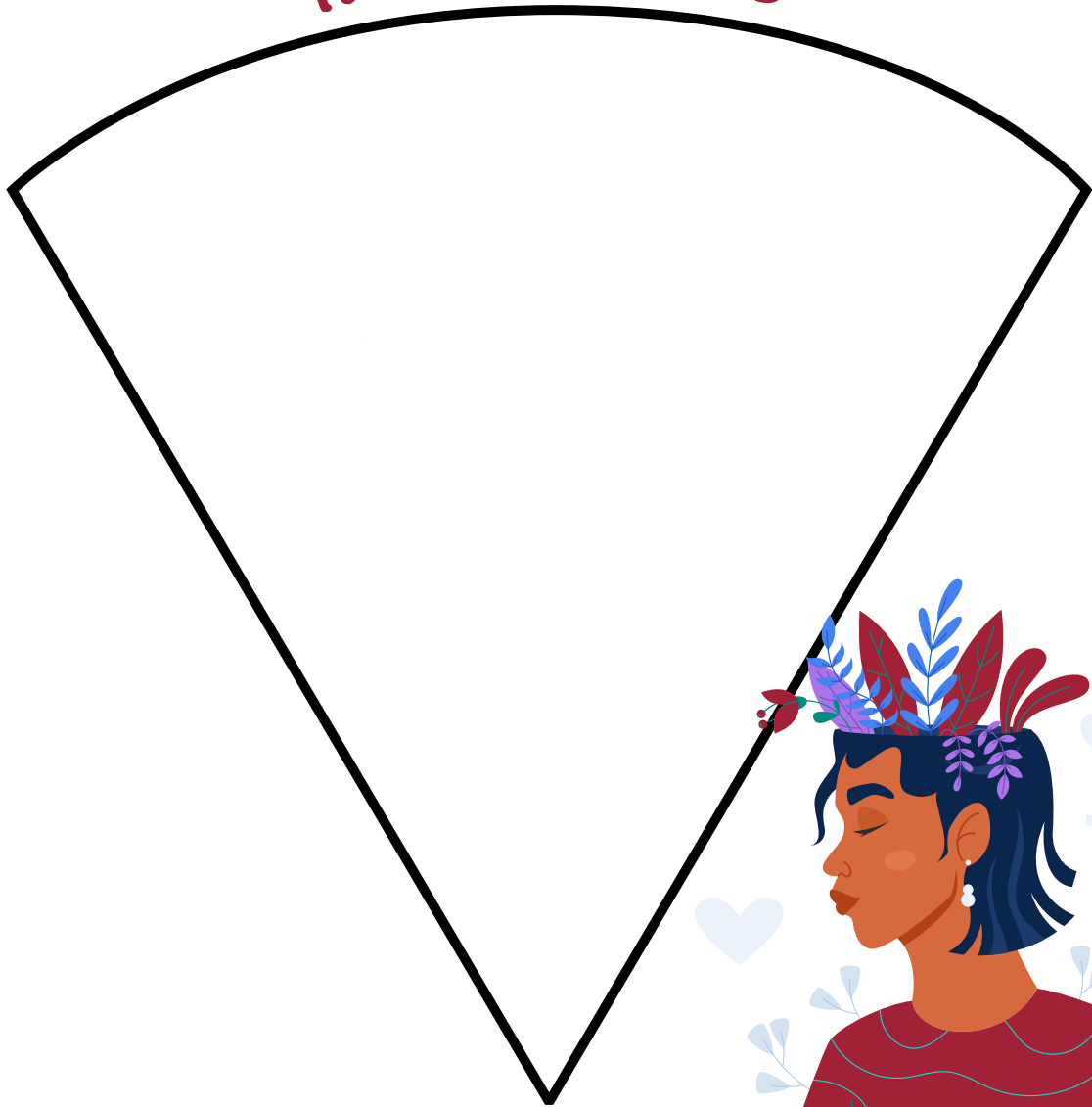
What are the best ways to mind ourselves when we are feeling low/lacking motivation?

Write/Draw in the space below

Resource – Activity 8 – Minding myself discussion station posters

Step 2: Creating our wellbeing toolkit

1. Take notice



Station 1:

What are some of the ways we can Take Notice of the world around us and what we are feeling? How can we enjoy the present moment?

Instructions:

1. Take a moment to discuss the question in your group.

What can you do to Take Notice if you have ...

Less than 5-Minutes?
Less than 10-Minutes?
1-Hour or more?

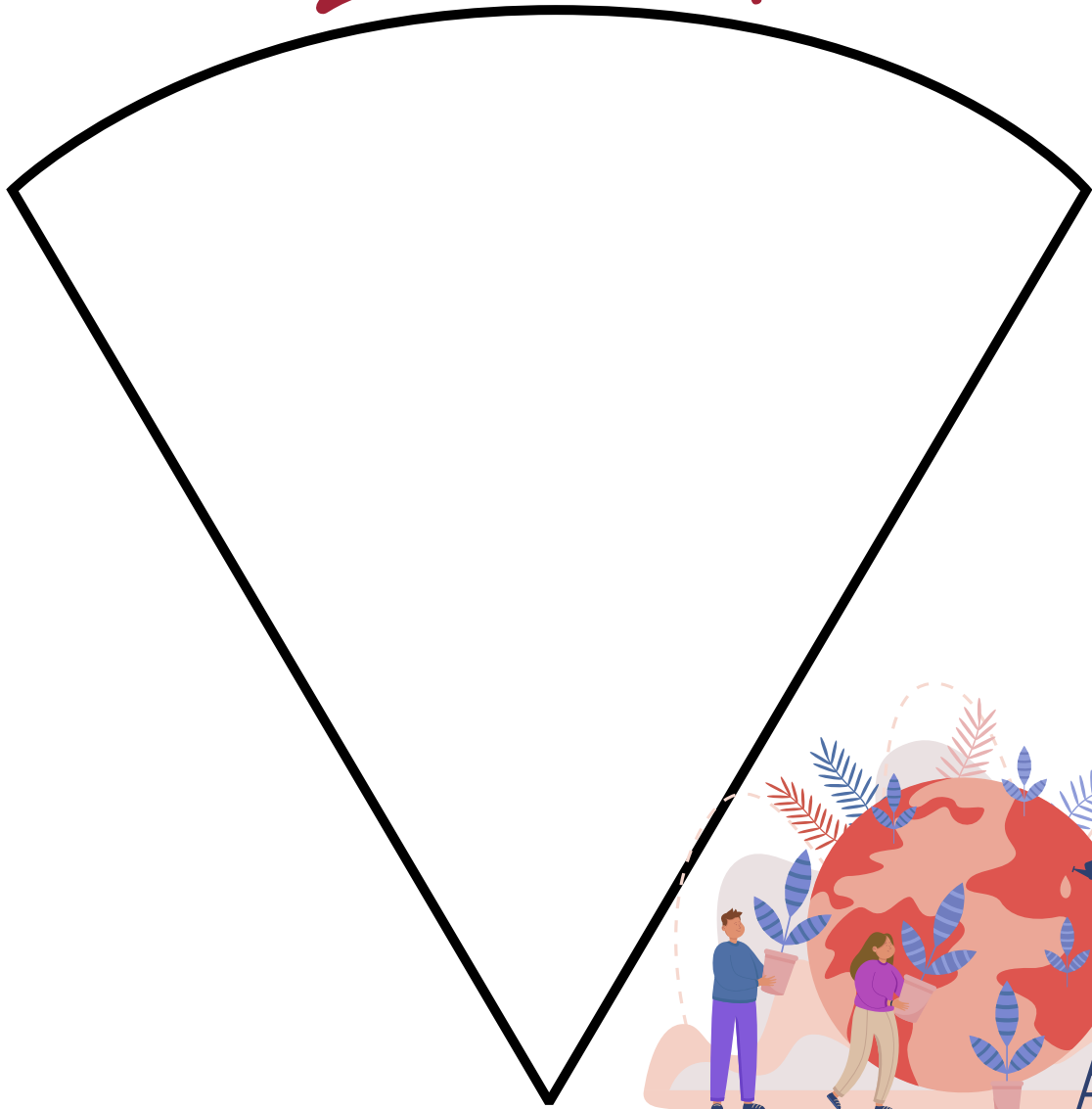
2. Write/Draw ideas on the piece of the Wellbeing Wheel.

3. Select the strategies that would work best for you - these are your **Toolkit Takeaways!** Write/Draw these on your Minding Myself Toolkit worksheet, or in your Wellbeing Journal.

Resource – Activity 8 – Minding myself discussion station posters

Step 2: Creating our wellbeing toolkit

2. Connect



Station 2:

What are some ways we can connect with nature or the social world around us?

Instructions:

1. Take a moment to discuss the question in your group.

What can you do to Connect if you have ...

Less than 5-Minutes?
Less than 10-Minutes?
1-Hour or more?

2. Write/Draw ideas on the piece of the Wellbeing Wheel.

3. Select the strategies that would work best for you - these are your

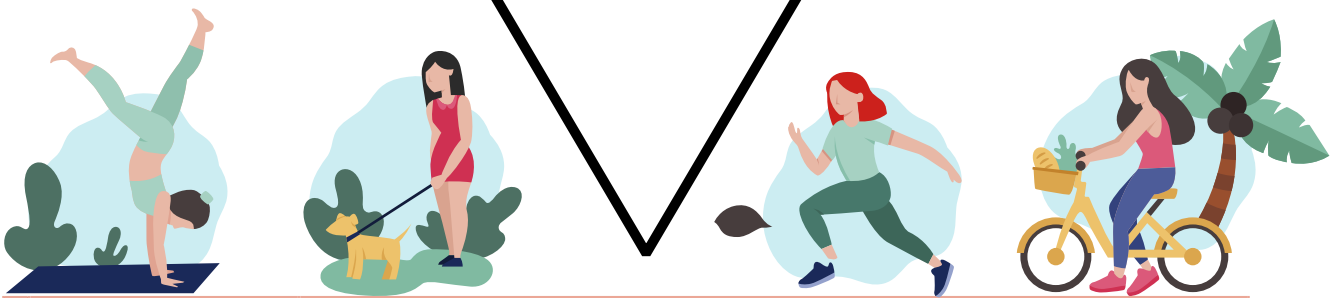
Toolkit Takeaways!

Write/Draw these on your Minding Myself Toolkit worksheet, or in your Wellbeing Journal.

Resource – Activity 8 – Minding myself discussion station posters

Step 2: Creating our wellbeing toolkit

3. Be active



Station 3:

What are some of the ways we can Be Active by moving our body, engaging in exercise and other physical activities?

Instructions:

1. Take a moment to discuss the question in your group.

What can you do to Be Active if you have ...

Less than 5-Minutes?
Less than 10-Minutes?
1-Hour or more?

2. Write/Draw ideas on the piece of the Wellbeing Wheel.

3. Select the strategies that would work best for you - these are your

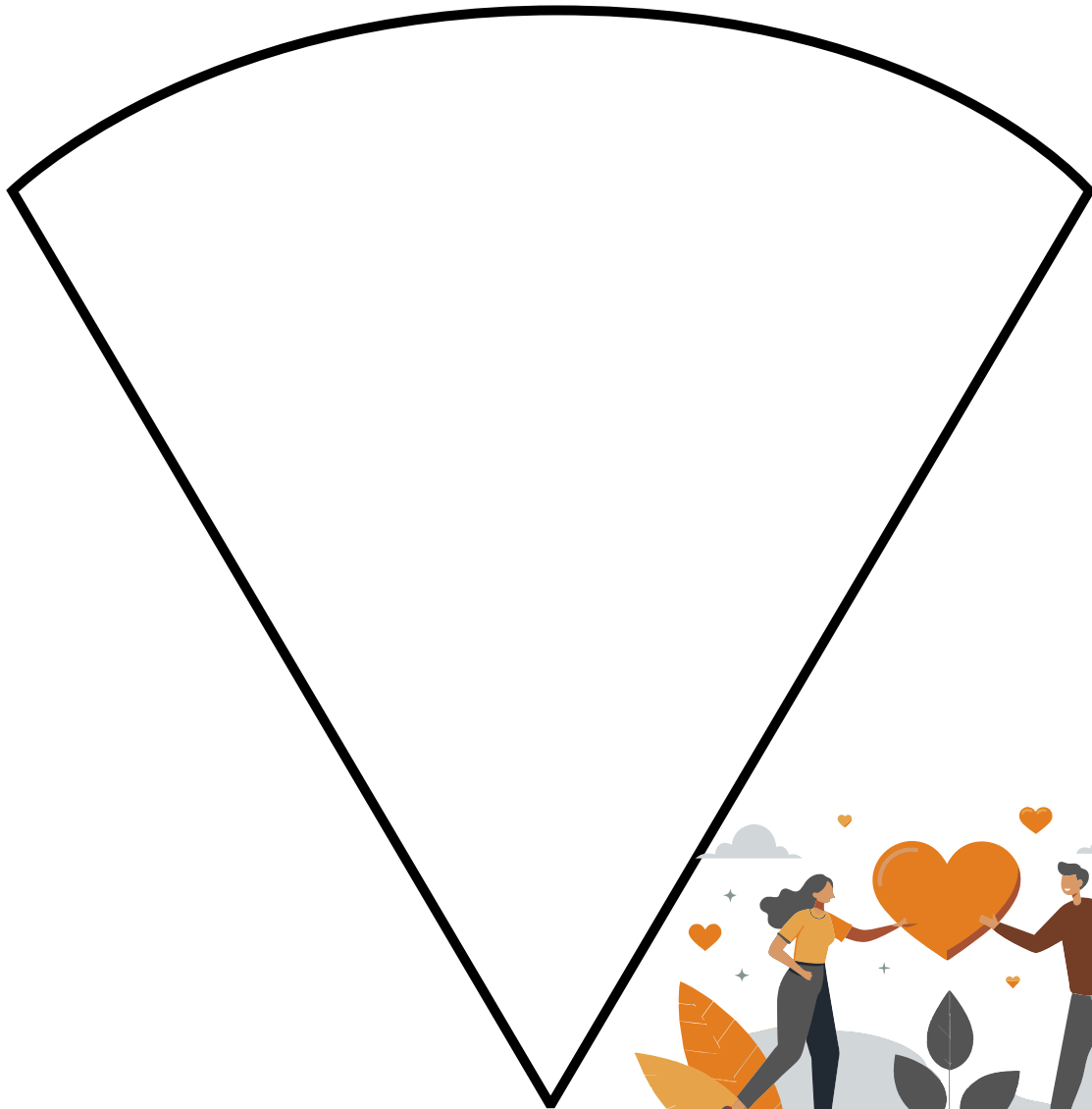
Toolkit Takeaways!

Write/Draw these on your Minding Myself Toolkit worksheet, or in your Wellbeing Journal.

Resource – Activity 8 – Minding myself discussion station posters

Step 2: Creating our wellbeing toolkit

4. Give



Station 4:

What are some of the ways we can Give to others and show kindness?

Instructions:

1. Take a moment to discuss the question in your group.

What can you do to Give or show kindness if you have ...

Less than 5-Minutes?
Less than 10-Minutes?
1-Hour or more?

2. Write/Draw ideas on the piece of the Wellbeing Wheel.

3. Select the strategies that would work best for you - these are your

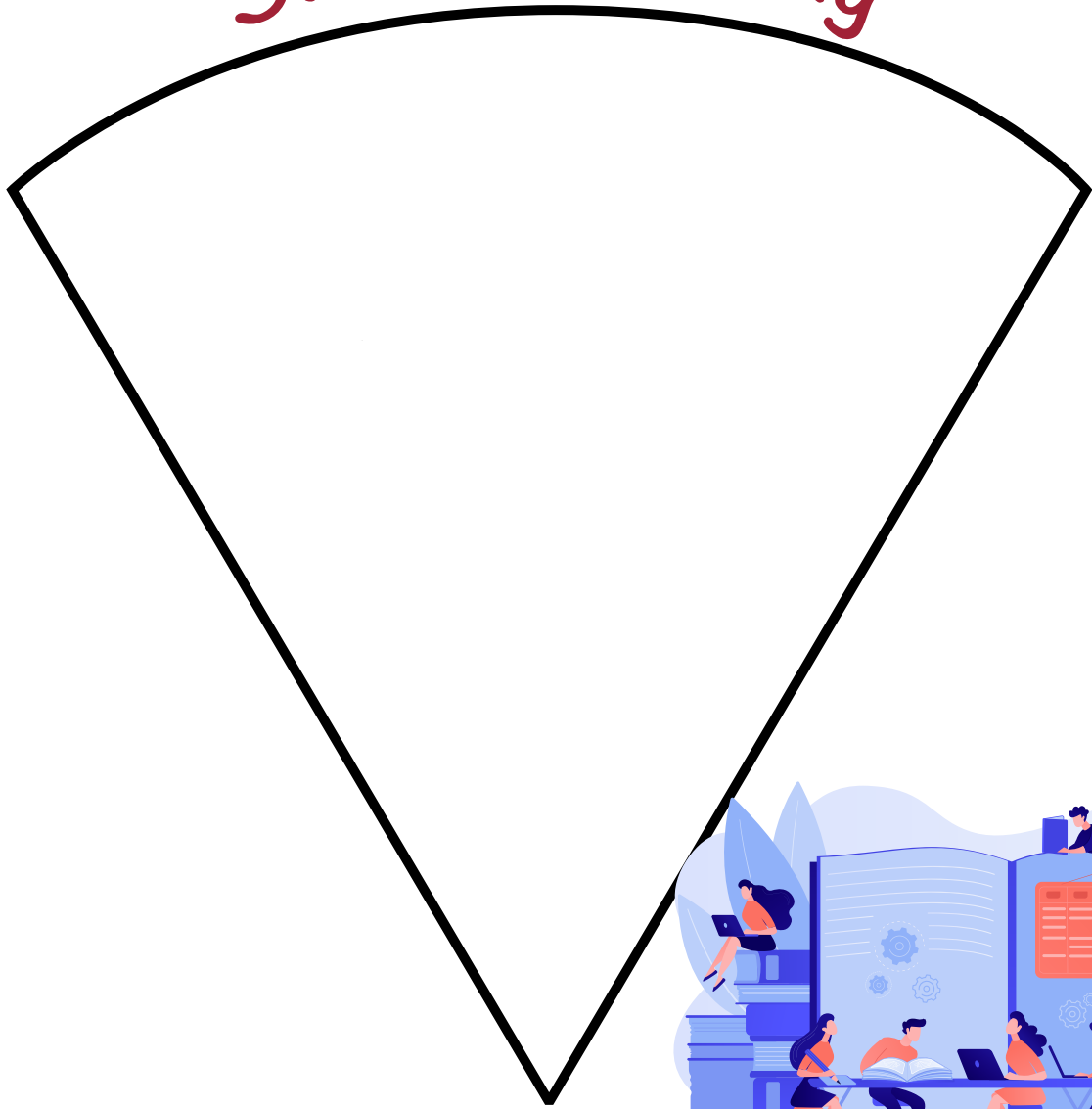
Toolkit Takeaways!

Write/Draw these on your Minding Myself Toolkit worksheet, or in your Wellbeing Journal.

Resource – Activity 8 – Minding myself discussion station posters

Step 2: Creating our wellbeing toolkit

5. Keep learning



Station 5:

What are some of the ways we can Keep Learning, be curious about the world and try new things?

Instructions:

1. Take a moment to discuss the question in your group.

What can you do to Keep Learning if you have ...

Less than 5-Minutes?
Less than 10-Minutes?
1-Hour or more?

2. Write/Draw ideas on the piece of the Wellbeing Wheel.

3. Select the strategies that would work best for you - these are your **Toolkit Takeaways!** Write/Draw these on your Minding Myself Toolkit worksheet, or in your Wellbeing Journal.

