

Restart and Renew

2C: Check-in on Student Well-being and Support Coping (Elementary Students)



Fall 2021

Funded by the Connecticut Department of Children and Families

Recommended citation: Hoover, S., Bostic, J., & Lever, N. (2021). Restart and Renew: Strategies for school mental health clinicians to support student and staff well-being and connection. National Center for School Mental Health.

Table of Contents

2C: Check-in on Student Well-being and Support Coping	3
2C: Session 1 – Check-In on Well-Being (Elementary Students)	4
Introduction to session.....	4
Introduction of participants	4
Group expectations and confidentiality.....	4
COVID impact and well-being check-in	4
My journey through COVID	5
Inside strengths and outside supports.....	6
 My Well-Being Check-In.....	7
 My Journey Through COVID.....	8
 My Inside Strengths.....	9
 My Outside Supports (Example)	10
 My Outside Supports	11
2C: Session 2 -- Coping with Worry and Change (Elementary Students)	12
Introduction	12
Connector Activity.....	12
Worries and changes	12
Ways to feel better	12
Let’s practice	13
Identify what is and is not in our control	13
Helpful thoughts	14
Routine and fun activities.....	15
Relaxation	15
Closure	17
 My Routine and Fun Activities	18

2C: Check-in on Student Well-being and Support Coping

As students return to school for the 2021-22 academic year, it will be important to **check-in** on their well-being and **offer coping supports** to foster mental health and learning.

Included is a 2-session curriculum for school mental health clinicians, called “**2C**,” to **Check-in** on student well-being during COVID and support **Coping** as students return to school.

2C may be offered as an extension of other supports (e.g., individual therapy, group interventions like Bounce Back and CBITS).

Each **2C** session is intended to be approximately 45- to 60-minutes and to be delivered in a group format with approximately 4-8 students. It could also be delivered to classrooms of more students if small groups are not feasible.

Elementary (K-5th) and secondary (6th – 12th) versions are available.

2C: Session 1 – Check-In on Well-Being (Elementary Students)

Introduction to session

Welcome! Today we are here to see how you are all doing this past year after a lot of changes because of COVID. Many of us lived in different places, did school classes from home, and may have known people who got sick. These changes can bring about a lot of thoughts and feelings. Talking about and learning how to deal with these thoughts and feelings can help you feel better. We can also learn from and help each other. This group can help you see how you've changed or grown during this year, and to share ways you coped with COVID.

Introduction of participants

First, let's take a few minutes to get to know each other.

Please say your name and something you enjoyed doing this past year. For example – My name is Tori and I liked riding my bike with my brother this year.

[Have students take turns introducing themselves.]

Group expectations and confidentiality

When you are part of a group, it is important to make sure that everyone feels safe, listened to, respected, and that what they share stays in this group.

*Some example **group rules** might be – What is said in the group stays in the group, Take turns speaking, Listen when others are talking, or Do not say mean things to others who see things differently than you do.*

What are some other rules that we can put into place to make this group safe over the next two sessions?

[Have students generate a list of expectations/rules and post in room.]

COVID impact and well-being check-in

We are now going to do a check in on our own well-being. For many of us, COVID has had some impacts on each of us, on our family members, and on others in our neighborhoods.

Do you remember when you first heard about COVID? What do you remember?

[Allow students to discuss their first memories of COVID, but do not require each student to answer this at this time.]

For many students, school changed, and you stayed at home and saw your teacher on a screen. For many families there were a lot of changes such as parents changed jobs or hours they worked, lost jobs, or worked from home, people you knew got sick, and you couldn't see your friends or family members like before.

I want you all to think about the last year and how things have been for you. I am going to pass out a handout that asks you to think about how COVID changed daily life for you and your family, such as at school, and how it affected your health. It also asks about whether you have felt worried or sad. I will not collect these, so you can keep these—they may help you remember your feelings and thoughts during this time.

[Pass out the  **My Well-Being Check-in** handout.]

Take a few minutes to fill out the worksheet by answering each of the questions.

[Allow students about 3-5 minutes to complete the handout.]

Let's discuss what you came up with. Did any of you feel that your daily life during COVID was impacted a lot? Can you share how?

Did any of you feel that your family was impacted a lot during COVID? Can you share how?

When you thought about your feelings of worry or sadness, did you worry more, less, or about the same? Did you feel sad more, less, or about the same? [Discuss student responses.]

Some students found that when COVID first started they had more trouble sleeping because they worried. Some said they had to live with relatives or friends so their parents could work. Some didn't have as much money, so they couldn't do some of the things they were used to doing, like going places or doing things or having as much food.

My journey through COVID

Each person has their own journey during COVID. Sometimes reflecting on our journey can help us tell our own story and explain to others what we have been through.

We will now have you each complete your COVID Journey Worksheet. Again, these are for you to keep.

[Pass out the  **My Journey Through COVID** handout.]

We are asking you to think about how things like school, your family, and your friendships were during COVID. We also ask you to think about how you have coped during this time and who you went to or relied on if you were worried or sad. We also ask you to think about how things in your life are different now than before COVID. And please describe how your family and community seem to be doing now.

[Allow students about 5 minutes to complete the handout.]

Let's discuss what you came up with. Find one thing on your sheet that you would like to share with the group. [Allow students share at least one thing from the handout if they are comfortable sharing.]

[Close activity by pointing out themes and normalizing challenges and stress.]

You likely noticed that others may also have had things happen to them that are like what happened to you. COVID has impacted many people, and we have all had to deal with changes that were new to us and to those in our lives.

Inside strengths and outside supports

When we go through new or difficult events, it can be useful to consider the inside strengths we have and the outside supports in our lives that can help us cope.

Inside Strengths

Let's think about and share parts of yourself that you really like. We can call these things that you really like about yourself your strengths. Your strengths can also be things that you are really good at. I will describe many strengths that people, including you, can have. We'll circle the strengths that you have, and you may have other strengths to add.

[Pass out the  **My Inside Strengths** handout.]

Would anyone like to share some of your strengths? How do you think you used your strengths this year?

Outside Supports

Now let's consider our outside supports.

[Pass out the  **My Outside Supports (Example)** handout.]

We just reviewed our inside strengths that help us. Now we are going to name people, places, or things that support us. This may be places where you feel safe, or places where you could be with family members and friends you trust. This can also be other people in your school or where you live where you could go to for help.

[Pass out the  **My Outside Supports** handout. Read each prompt and allow students to circle/draw a response on their sheet or share verbally with the group.]

- *One adult in my community I trust is ...*
- *One adult in my school I feel safe with and trust is*
- *One person in my family I feel safe with and trust is ...*
- *One friend I feel safe with and trust is ...*
- *One place that I go to in my community to feel safe is ...*
- *One place that I go to in school to feel safe is...*

Would anyone like to share some of your outside supports? How did you use your outside supports this year?



My Well-Being Check-In

How has **your daily life** been impacted during COVID:

	Not at all	A little	A lot
School			
Body health (sleep, my physical activity, nutrition, illness)			
Feelings			

What effects did it have on your school life, your body health, and how you felt :

How has **your family** been affected during COVID:

	Not at all	A little	A lot
School			
Family jobs or work			
Food or meals			
Place to live			
Family members body health (sleep, physical activity, eating, sickness)			
Feelings			

What effects did it have on your family:

Compared to before COVID, I am:

- more worried*
- less worried*
- about the same*

Compared to before COVID, I am:

- more sad*
- less sad*
- about the same*



My Journey Through COVID

These can be read aloud, and students may volunteer to complete the following sentences:

School during COVID for me has been _____
My friendships during COVID have been _____
During COVID, my well-being has _____
The hardest part during COVID has been _____
The biggest change during COVID for my family has been _____
During COVID, my playing with others has been _____
The best thing that I learned about myself during COVID is _____
The worst thing that I learned about myself during COVID is _____
The thing that surprised me the most during COVID is _____
During COVID, I have made myself feel better by _____
During COVID, helpful ways to deal with things that were different included _____
During COVID, I learned that I enjoyed _____
During COVID, I knew that I could count on/trust _____
The advice I would give to a younger student on how to deal with COVID is _____

How are things different for you now than before COVID?

What's going well? What's better?

What's not going well? What's worse?

How are others around you doing such as your family, your friends, and people who live around you?



My Inside Strengths



My strengths are:

Some strengths to consider:

Patient	Good listener	Funny	Dependable	Hardworking	Adventurous
Kind	Honest	Good Friend	Calm	Thoughtful	Funny
Sporty	Artistic	Fun	Helpful	Caring	Creative
Giving	Brave	Confident	Cheerful	Polite	Focused
Problem-Solver	Understanding	Smart	Curious	Enthusiastic	Athletic
Easy-Going	Loyal	Intelligent	Respectful	Peacemaker	Outgoing

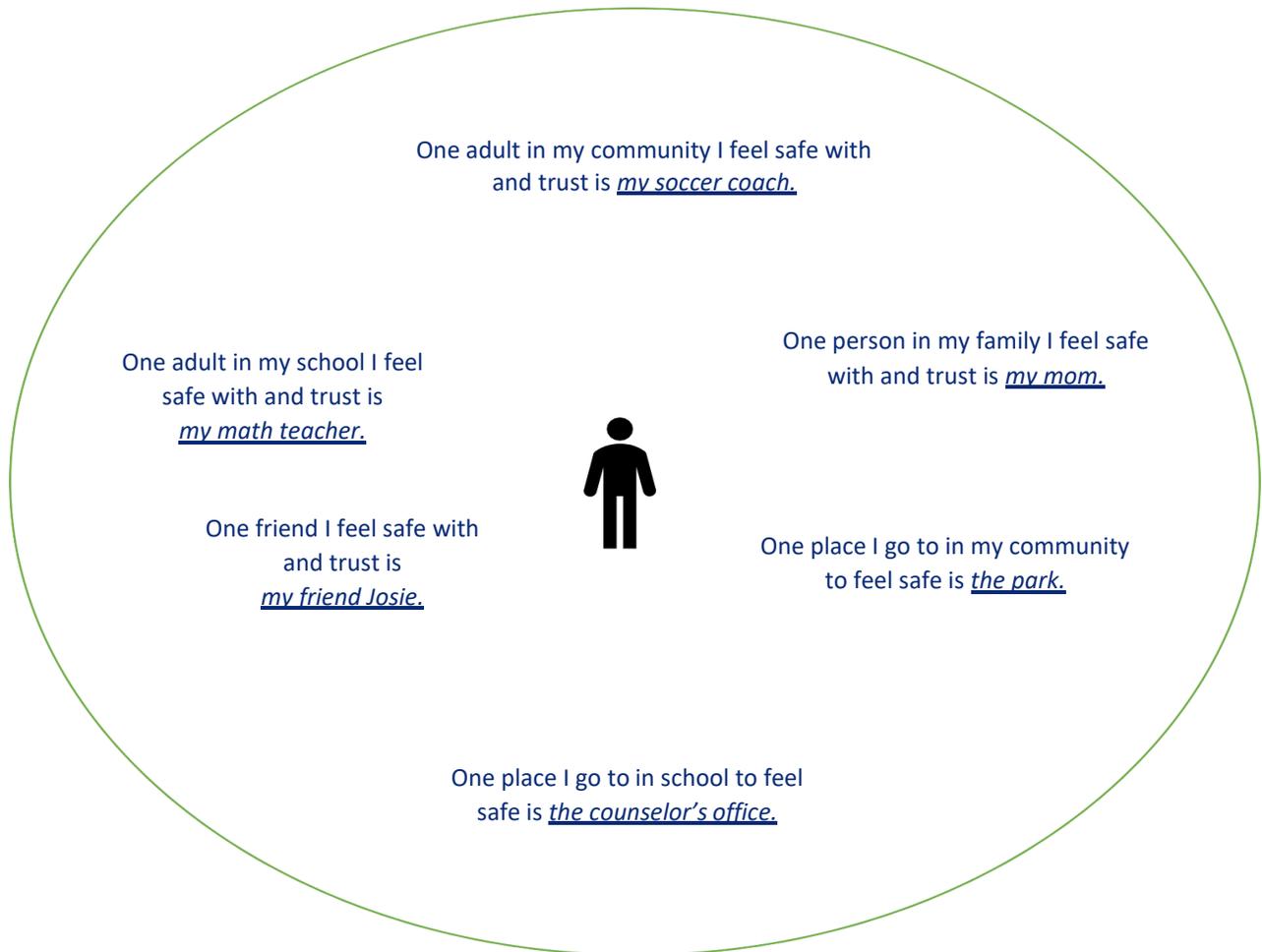


My Outside Supports (Example)

Use the prompts to list your outside supports inside the circle.

Prompts:

- One adult in my community I feel safe with and trust is ...
- One adult in my school I feel safe with and trust is
- One person in my family I feel safe with and trust is ...
- One friend I feel safe with and trust is ...
- One place I go to in my community to feel safe is ...
- One place I go to in school to feel safe is...





My Outside Supports

Use the prompts to list your outside supports inside the circle.

Prompts:

- One adult in my community I feel safe with and trust is ...
- One adult in my school I feel safe with and trust is
- One person in my family I feel safe with and trust is ...
- One friend I feel safe with and trust is ...
- One place I go to in my community to feel safe is ...
- One place I go to in school to feel safe is...

One adult in my community I feel safe with and trust is _____.

One adult in my school I feel safe with and trust is _____.

One person in my family I feel safe with and trust is _____.

One friend I feel safe with and trust is _____.

One place I go to in my community to feel safe is _____.

One place I go to in school to feel safe is _____.

2C: Session 2 - – Coping with Worry and Change (Elementary Students)

Introduction

Welcome to Session 2!

As we discussed last time, we are here to help ourselves and each other to better understand and cope with worries and changes, especially from the past year related to COVID. As we saw last session, we all may have had some difficult times or changes related to COVID. And we may have used our inside strengths and outside supports to help during Covid. Today we will practice some skills that you can use to cope better with worries and changes.

For our group to be helpful, we want everyone to feel safe and comfortable. We need to make sure that what we say here stays here, to take turns speaking and listen when others talk, and to treat others kindly even if we don't agree on something. (Add in any additional rules that were established in the first session.)

Connector Activity

Let's begin with a fun activity that helps us learn about each other. What is something you do to help you relax? (Encourage students to share.)

Thank you for sharing! Today, we are going to learn some additional ways to relax and cope.

Worries and changes

COVID has been hard for many people because of all the changes we've had to make in our lives. Our brains often prefer for things to stay the same. We like to know what will happen next and to know what to do wherever we might be to feel safe and secure. COVID has caused many of us to make a lot of changes.

Start a discussion:

What are some things that have changed in your life because of COVID?

What changes have been hardest to deal with?

If students need help generating ideas, here are some examples:

Doing school on a computer instead of at the school

Wearing masks

Not seeing family/friends

Not being able to play on sports teams or with my friends as much

Ways to feel better

When we have to make changes, we may feel more worried. It is important to have ways to help keep worries from making us feel bad or from doing the things we like.

Here are some ideas for dealing with worries and changes:

First, you can think about what you can control and also what things you cannot really control. For example, if you move to a different place, you may be able to control what clothes you take with you and wear, but you may not be able to play with the same friends or neighbors you used to play with.

Second, you can use special skills such as:

- ✓ *Coming up with helpful and less worrisome thoughts;*
- ✓ *Doing some routines every day, like brushing or combing your hair, walking with a friend, riding your bike after school, or watching a funny show after dinner;*
- ✓ *Doing things to relax and help you feel calm, like taking deep breaths, listening to music you like, or talking with someone you trust, like a parent or good friend.*

Let's practice

Shawn is a 3rd grade student who loves soccer and playing with friends, drawing, and playing video games. Shawn is liked by others and has three best friends. But, when school was closed for COVID, Shawn was sad because team soccer stopped, and Shawn couldn't see school friends or play with them after school. Shawn started having stomachaches and headaches. One of Shawn's caregivers had to quit their job, and the other started working two jobs and wasn't home much. Shawn doesn't like being at home all day and worries about family members getting COVID.

How do you think Shawn is feeling? Feelings may be emotions like sadness or anger and body feelings like shaky or achy.

What makes Shawn feel worried or sad? ("Sports won't happen, COVID make me, family, or friends sick," etc.)

Negative feelings are a part of life and part of everyone's experience with COVID. Sad and worried feelings are something we all have sometimes, and part of many people's lives during COVID. Sometimes it's hard to know what to do when one feels sad or worried. It is important to figure out what Shawn can do or control to feel less worried and to still have some good thoughts, feelings, and experiences.

Identify what is and is not in our control

What are some things that may be out of Shawn's control related to the situation? What are some things that are in Shawn's control that could help deal with stress?

(Examples of "not in control" - Whether school will be in-person or not, school rules about masks, guaranteeing no one will become ill; Examples of "in my control" – exercising to stay in shape, having a positive attitude, listening or dancing to music, hand washing and wearing masks)

Focusing on the things we cannot control can make us feel helpless. Focusing on the things we can control helps us to feel better.

Helpful thoughts

What are some more helpful thoughts Shawn could have?

("We could get COVID, but we're young and healthy, so we should be okay. I may not get to play on a soccer team right now, but I can ride my bike more. I can't see my favorite school friends, but I can play more with my cousins, who are a lot of fun.")

This might also include some changes that students like, such as "I don't have to get up early, I have more time to make pancakes in the mornings, I get to spend more time with my pets," etc. It's important for students to feel okay, and not ashamed or guilty, about noticing things they may like better during COVID.

When changes make us uncomfortable, sometimes our brains get stuck worrying and we only think about bad things happening. But if we try to think of good things, sometimes we can worry less.

Did you know that we almost always are thinking some thoughts? Sometimes they're good thoughts and sometimes they're bad thoughts. But if we try, we can usually think of good thoughts even if we've been having bad thoughts.

Let's consider some examples:

Ryan's class is sent home from school after a student has a positive COVID test.

What are unhelpful thoughts could Ryan have?

Unhelpful thought: "I might get sick from COVID. My family could get Covid from me. I may have to stay at home away from my friends for a long time."

What is a more helpful thought Ryan could have?

More helpful and believable: "I probably won't get COVID since it was just one student I didn't know very well. Even if I do have COVID, I'll do my best to keep my family from getting sick. Maybe if we all go home now for a few days, no one else will get sick and we can go back soon."

You can ask yourself some special questions if you have an unhelpful thought.

What are other ways of thinking about what happened?

What would my friends say about what happened?

What would I say to a friend if this happened to them?

Let's try to practice this together:

Jordan is coming back to school after being home from testing positive for COVID. Jordan is worried that no one will want to be friends anymore or be around Jordan.

What are other ways of thinking about what happened? (Example: "I got sick but now I'm okay, so others can see, over a few days, that it's okay to play with me.")

What would my friends say about what happened? (Example: “It’s a bummer you got Covid—are you okay now?”)

What would I say to a friend if this happened to them? (Example: “Hey, I’m glad you’re okay; is it safe for us to sit at the same table for lunch yet?”)

Routine and fun activities

Another way to cope with worries and changes is to follow regular routines and engage in enjoyable activities. Routines are things that you do pretty much the same way every day.

Let’s start with regular routines-- for example, getting good sleep each night by not staying up too late, getting ready for bed by doing the same things each night (like brushing our teeth, putting on pajamas, listening to a story), and eating three meals a day can keep us healthy. Other routines and fun activities might be having a family meal together each day when you all talk about something good or funny that happened, or doing things healthy for yourself like riding a bike, walking, doing puzzles, playing games with people in your house or neighborhood, and reading or drawing before bedtime. When you have worries, it can help to have regular, enjoyable routines you do each day.

I want you all to think about routines and activities that help you feel good. I will not collect these, so you can keep these.

[Pass out the  **My Routine Activities** handout.]

[Allow students about 5 minutes to complete the handout.]

Let’s discuss what you came up with. How would you change your routines? What enjoyable activities would you like to do more of?

Example: For changing routines, students might say, plan a time to do it, find a friend to do it with regularly on certain days/times, or they might have to ask their caregivers if they can have others over or see them in a safe place, or speak with their caregivers to allow them to do enjoyable activities.

Relaxation

Worries and changes can make our bodies tense. Relaxation exercises can help us feel better. We are now going to practice two different relaxation exercises.

Let’s begin with Deep Breathing.

Lead students in a deep breathing exercise.

We are ready to begin our first relaxation exercise, called ‘deep breathing.’ Sit down in a chair or sit on the floor. If you would like, you can lie down on the floor.

Take a deep breath in slowly through your nose... and a deep breath out slowly through your mouth. [Demonstrate.] Deep breath in, deep breath out. Deep breath in... deep breath out.

As you breathe in and out, let your body feel like it is sinking into the chair or floor. Breathe in, 1, 2, 3, and breathe out, 1, 2, 3. Breathe in, 1, 2, 3, and breathe out, 1, 2, 3. Breathe in, 1, 2, 3, and breathe out, 1, 2, 3.

Now we are going to take even BIGGER breaths. Put one hand on your stomach, and feel it go out as you breathe in. I want you to feel those breaths in, 1, 2, 3, and out, 1, 2, 3. Imagine when you are breathing in, you are getting ready to blow up a balloon, and when you are breathing out, you are slowly blowing out all of the air from the balloon. Deep breath in, 1, 2, 3, and out, 1, 2, 3. You are blowing up that balloon, breathe in, 1, 2, 3, and out, 1, 2, 3.

Some types of breathing are named after animals. Let's try bear breathing. Imagine you are a big bear. Breathe in, fill your lungs with air like you are a big bear, and then breathe out, like a big bear. Breathe in, 1, 2, 3, breathe out, 1, 2, 3. Feel your hands on your chest and stomach rise up and down. Breathe in, 1, 2, 3, breathe out, 1, 2, 3.

Lead students in a visual imagery exercise.

Next, I will introduce you to an exercise called My Calm Place.

Get yourself in a comfortable position. You can close your eyes if you'd like. Take several deep breaths in. Breathe in, 1, 2, 3 and breathe out, 3, 2, 1. Continue breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Count 3, 2, 1. [Allow students to do this for several seconds.]

Now think of a place that makes you feel happy and at peace. This could be anywhere. It can be a place that you know very well, or it can be an imaginary place. It could be a calm room, or outside in nature by water or in a field, or anywhere else that you feel happy and at peace. Get a clear picture of that place in your mind. Keep breathing slowly and deeply, 1, 2, 3 in and 3, 2, 1, out.

Now that you have a clear picture in your mind, begin adding details. What do you see there? What do you hear? How does this calm, happy place smell? How does your body feel in this place?

You feel calm and safe here. Remain still while you feel calm and relaxed. Continue taking deep breaths in and out and enjoy being in this place.... Continue breathing 1, 2, 3. 3, 2, 1. 1, 2, 3. 3, 2, 1. [Allow students to remain in the place for about a minute.]

Begin to let your body come back into this room. As you slowly leave your calm place, know that you can always think of this place any time you need to relax, feel calm, and comfortable. In a moment, I will count to three to bring you all back to this room. Don't forget to slowly inhale and exhale. One... slowly inhale in and exhale out. Two... inhale in and exhale out. Three... inhale in and exhale out.

Closure

Thank you everyone for participating today. Let's do a quick review of ways to help when we have worries or change.

What are some things you can do when you are faced with uncertainties or worries, like what we've experienced with COVID?

- 1. Identify what is in your control and out of your control.*
- 2. Use special skills such as:*
 - ✓ Coming up with helpful and less worrisome thoughts.*
 - ✓ Doing routines and fun activities every day.*
 - ✓ Doing things to relax and feel calm.*

Your well-being is very important, and I encourage you all to try to practice these steps in your day-to-day life.

As you face worries and changes in the future, keep in mind your inside strengths and outside supports, and please reach out to your supports when you need them.

It may also be helpful to connect with additional supports, when needed. These may include connections to natural supports like caregivers and teachers, programs like mentoring or skills groups, or to school or community providers. If you need help making these connections, please let me know!



My Routine and Fun Activities

ROUTINES

Sleep

Sleep on Weekdays

Bed Time:

Waking Time:

Sleep on Weekends

Bed Time:

Waking Time:

I would like to have:

- More sleep
- Less sleep
- Stay the same
- Make my sleep better (e.g., fall asleep easier, or not wake up in the middle of the night)

Meals

I need:

- To eat more
- To eat less
- Eat foods that are good for me
- Have a more regular eating schedule
- Eat fewer snacks
- Have regular meals with friends
- Have regular meals with family

Physical Activity/Play

I need:

- More physical activity/play time
- Less physical activity/play time
- The same amount of physical activity/play
- More options for physical activity/play
- More challenging physical activity/play (like new sports, jumping rope, pushups)
- More enjoyable physical activity/play (things you would like to be able to do but can't do right now or haven't done before)

Be with Friends (Social Activity)

I need:

- More time with friends
- Less time with friends
- To find new friends
- More things I can do with others
- More fun things to do with others
- Keep friends and social activities the same

Personal ("Me") Time

I need:

- More personal time
- Less personal time
- Ideas for how to spend personal time
- The same personal time

School

I need:

- To keep up with my books, papers, pencils, and things
- To do my homework better
- To get to school on time
- To get more excited about going to school
- To pay more attention during classes
- To be less distracted by other things when I am at school
- To read, write, or do more math problems when I'm at home
- To do less reading, writing, or math when I'm at home
- To worry less about school
- To go to school more
- To do what I am doing now

FUN ACTIVITIES

I would like to do more of the following:

- Listening to music
- Hanging out with friends
- Reading
- Sports
- Walking
- Biking
- Drawing/Art
- Playing games
- Spending time with family
- Cooking
- Volunteering
- Other _____
- Other _____

Based on your responses above, identify one routine and one fun activity to improve or increase:

Goals for improvement:

One **Routine** to improve:

One **Fun Activity** to increase:
