

Restart and Renew

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



Fall 2021

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

Introduction to session

Welcome! Why are we here today? These two sessions are set up to check in on students' well-being now after a year with a lot of changes at school, at home, and all around us because of COVID. 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. It can also help to do this as a group so that we can learn from and help each other. This group is being held to help you reflect on how you have changed or grown during this year, and to share some ways to cope with stress and uncertainty.

Introduction of participants

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

Please say your name and something you have learned to do or have enjoyed doing this past year. For example – My name is Tori and I have enjoyed playing cards 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 have expectations or rules to make sure that everyone feels safe, listened to, respected, and that what they share stays private.

Some examples might be – What is said in the group stays in the group, Take turns speaking, Listen when others are talking, Do not be judgmental about differing opinions.

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 significant impacts on us personally, on our families, and on our communities.

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

[Allow students to discuss their first memories of COVID.]

For many students, school was suddenly not in person and for many families there were a lot of changes related to jobs, money, illness and being with friends and family.

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 your daily life and your family have been impacted during COVID with respect to things like school, work, and physical and mental health. It also asks about whether you have felt more or less worried or sad. I will not collect these, so you can keep these.

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

Take a minute or two to reflect on your responses and then fill out the worksheet by answering each of the questions – you don't have to write in full sentences.

[Allow students about 5-10 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, more than a 5? Can you share how?

Did any of you feel that your family was impacted during COVID a lot, more than a 5? Can you share how?

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

To give you a sense of how COVID has impacted other students, some studies found that when COVID first started about 1 in 4 students slept less because of worrying and felt more unhappy or depressed. Also, many families experienced job loss and changes in their housing or ability to pay for things like food during COVID.

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 make meaning out of 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.]

As you can see, we are asking you to think about how things like school, your family, and other relationships have been during COVID. We also ask you to think about how you have coped with stress or uncertainty and what supports you have relied on. We also ask you to consider how things are different now than before COVID and how your family and community are doing.

[Allow students about 5-10 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. [Have students share at least one thing from the handout.]

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

You likely noticed that you are not alone in some of your experiences. COVID has been challenging for many people, and we have all had to face uncertainties and stress that were new to us and to those in our lives.

Inside strengths and outside supports

When we go through new or difficult experiences, 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. For this activity, I will be giving each of you a handout with a list of words that are strengths that people can have. Please list the words that are your strengths. If you would like to add additional strengths that were not included in the suggested strengths table, just write them in.

[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 student completed the worksheet with examples of places she feels safe, family members and friends she trusts and feels safe with, and adults in her school and community she can go to for help.

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

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

(On a scale of 1-10 where 1 = “has not impacted at all” and 10 = “has majorly impacted”)

The extent to which my **daily life** has been impacted during COVID with respect to:

	No impact ----->	Major impact
School	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Physical health (including sleep, physical activity, nutrition, illness)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Mental health	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Describe impact: _____

The extent to which **my family** has been impacted during COVID with respect to:

	No impact ----->	Major impact
School	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Economics (job, food, housing)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Physical health (including sleep, physical activity, nutrition, illness)	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	
Mental health	0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10	

Describe impact: _____

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

Please finish the following sentences:

School during COVID has been _____

Friendships during COVID have been _____

During COVID, my well-being has _____

The greatest challenge and benefit during COVID have been _____

The biggest change during COVID for my family has been _____

During COVID, my activity level and social life have been _____

The best thing that I discovered about myself during COVID is _____

The worst thing that I discovered about myself during COVID is _____

The thing that surprised me the most during COVID is _____

During COVID, I have dealt with stress by _____

During COVID, helpful ways to cope with stress included _____

During COVID, I learned that I enjoyed _____

During COVID, I knew that I could count on _____

The advice I would give to a younger student on how to cope 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 in your community?



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

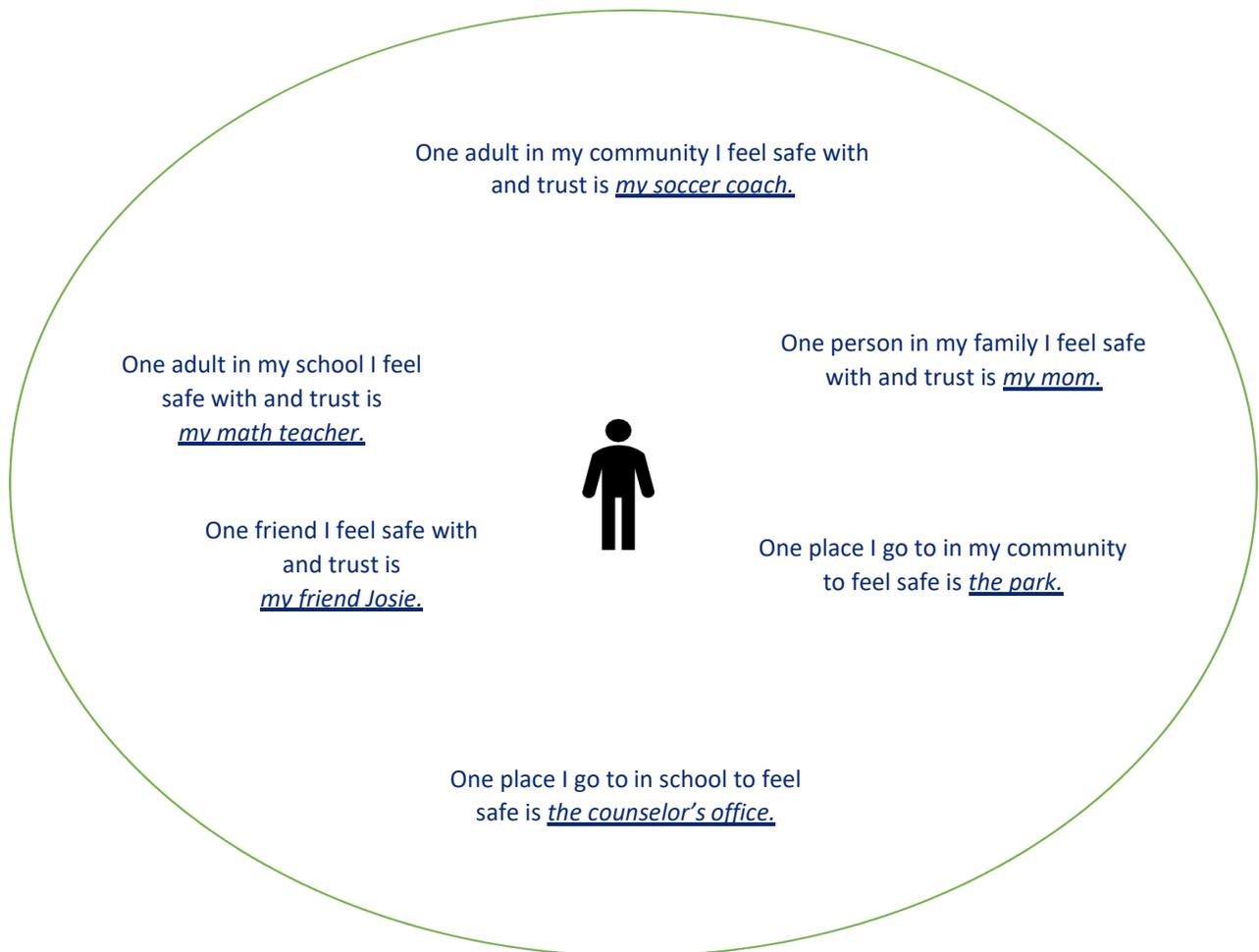


My Outside Supports (Example)

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.

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- 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 Stress and Uncertainty (Secondary 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 stress, especially stress from the past year related to COVID. As we saw last session, we all have experienced some distress and uncertainty related to COVID and we also have found and built on our internal strengths and outside supports. Our goal today is to help identify strategies that you can use to help cope with uncertainty and worry.

As a reminder, for this group to be helpful, it is important that everyone feels safe and comfortable. To help achieve that remember we need to make sure that what is said in the group stays in the group, take turns speaking, listen when others are talking, and to not be judgmental about differing opinions. (Add in any additional rules that were established in the first session.)

Connector activity

Let's begin with a quick connector activity. Take a moment – what song or music group helps you to relax? (Ask a few students to share)

Thanks for sharing and keep in mind that listening to music offers an excellent coping strategy that students can use to help manage their thoughts and feelings when they are upset.

Stress and uncertainty

One part of COVID that makes it stressful is that it has many unknowns or uncertainties. In general, our minds prefer for things to be predictable. We like to know what will happen next and to have some control over a situation and to feel safe and secure. COVID has come with a lot of unpredictability.

Start a discussion:

What are some of the things that have been uncertain for you or unknown in your life because of COVID?

What uncertainty has been the hardest for you to deal with?

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

when school would be in-person or virtual

wearing masks

seeing family/friends

whether sports team/school extracurricular activities, and special events would happen

Coping strategies

When there is uncertainty, we know that anxiety may increase. We all benefit from having strategies to help manage anxious feelings and worried thoughts so that we do not end up feeling overwhelmed.

When something is uncertain and worrisome, here are some steps that can be taken:

1. *Recognize your feelings, thoughts, and actions.*

2. *Identify what is in your control and out of your control.*
3. *Use coping skills such as:*
 - ✓ *helpful, realistic, less worrisome thoughts.*
 - ✓ *routines and enjoyable activities.*
 - ✓ *relaxation skills.*

Let's go through each of these now.

Recognize feelings, thoughts, and actions

Let's consider an example:

Shawn is a 9th grade student who loves sports, listening to music, drawing, and playing video games. Shawn wants to play soccer and join the student council. Shawn thought that since the football season may not happen, it is not worth practicing. Shawn is having stomachaches and headaches and worries about getting COVID. Shawn is missing school and soccer practices.

How do you think Shawn is feeling?

(Feelings may be emotions like sadness or anger and body feelings like shaky or achy.)

What are Shawn's anxious or worried thoughts? (Sports won't happen, getting COVID)

How are Shawn's thoughts and feelings impacting actions? (Not attending school or practice)

Negative feelings are a part of life and part of everyone's experience with COVID. The challenge becomes figuring out how to handle these feelings and thoughts so that he does not become too overwhelmed or isolated. It is important to figure out what he can do that is in his control to feel less distressed and to still have positive 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 not in control - Whether school will be in-person or not, school rules about masks, guaranteeing not become ill; Examples of control – exercising to stay in shape, having a positive attitude, being able to listen to music, safe infection control practices)

Focusing too much on areas that we have no control over can become overwhelming and lead to feeling helpless. Finding areas that we can impact can help restore a sense of power and influence and can improve how we feel.

Helpful thinking

When we are uncertain or worried, one way to cope is to come up with more helpful, realistic, and less worrisome thoughts.

What are some more helpful, realistic, and less worrisome thoughts Shawn could have?

(We may get COVID, but there are things we can do to reduce the likelihood that we will, School activities may be delayed, but hopefully not cancelled. If sports are cancelled, I can find other ways to stay in shape and still enjoy my sport)

Additional helping thinking practice

To make sure we understand what some helpful and unhelpful thoughts are, let's consider a couple of examples together.

Ryan is sent home from school with her classmates after a student has a positive COVID test.

What are unhelpful thoughts that Ryan can have? What is a more helpful and realistic thought that Ryan could have?

Unhelpful thought: I am going to get very sick with COVID, My whole family is going to get sick because of me.

More helpful and realistic: If I do have COVID, I can take precautions to help keep my family from getting sick, I probably do not have COVID, but if I do my family and my doctor will help me recover.

Jordan's school district has delayed the start of fall sports related to a spike in COVID cases in the community

What are unhelpful thoughts? What is a more helpful and realistic thought that Jordan could have?

Unhelpful thoughts: The season will never happen, and I won't get to play. My chances of being recruited for college are bad.

More helpful and realistic: Sports hopefully will just be delayed, and we will still have a season. If sports are cancelled, I can still find other ways to reach out to college recruiters.

When you have unhelpful, worrisome thoughts, you can use questions to come up with more helpful, realistic, and less worrisome thoughts.

Some questions you can ask yourself to help when you have an unhelpful thought are:

What are other ways of seeing this situation?

What would my friends say about the situation?

What would I say to a friend in a similar situation?

Let's try to practice this together:

Spencer is coming back to school after having been home for 2 weeks after having tested positive for COVID. Spencer is worried that everyone will be angry and that no one will want to be Spencer's friend anymore since many had to quarantine after the positive test.

What are other ways of seeing this situation?

Example: My friends may be cautious about being around me at first, but I'll show them I'm okay, and probably they'll gradually resume talking to me.

What would Spencer's friends say about the situation?

Example: Some people worried at first, but everyone knows you didn't do this on purpose; it could have been any of us, and we'd all want to know our friends will stay our friends.

What would Spencer say to a friend in a similar situation?

Example: Welcome back! Are you safe now? Anything we should do right now to keep us all safe, like wear a mask or not eat with you? Just let us know and we can get back to being friends...safely.

Routines and enjoyable activities

Another way to cope with uncertainty is to follow regular routines and engage in enjoyable activities.

Let's start with routines -- For example, keeping a regular sleep schedule by not staying up too late, having a regular bedtime routine and following it, and getting enough sleep can be helpful to one's mind and body. Other strategies that can help include having regular family meals together, scheduling regular physical activity, joining weekly social activities or groups, and writing in a journal each evening before bedtime.

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 Routines and 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 the enjoyable activity, find a friend to do it with regularly on certain days/times, or they might have to ask others about their schedules and enjoyable activities to find opportunities, or to have their caregivers speak with their friends' caregivers to allow them to do enjoyable activities safely.

Relaxation

Uncertainties and worried thoughts can make our bodies tense. Relaxation exercises can help reduce stress and improve how we feel, think, and act. 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 our three steps for when we are faced with things that are uncertain or worrisome.

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

- 1. Recognize your feelings, thoughts, and actions.*
- 2. Identify what is in your control and out of your control.*
- 3. Use coping skills such as:*
 - ✓ helpful, realistic, less worrisome thoughts.*
 - ✓ routines and enjoyable activities.*
 - ✓ relaxation skills.*

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 stress and uncertainty 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 like primary care or mental health professionals. If you need help making these connections, please let me know!



My Routines and Enjoyable 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
- Improve the quality of my sleep (e.g., fall asleep easier, not wake up in the middle of the night)

Meals

I need:

- To eat more
- To eat less
- Eat healthier
- Have a more regular eating schedule
- Eat fewer snacks
- Have regular meals with friends
- Have regular meals with family

Physical Activity

I need:

- More physical activity time
- Less physical activity time
- The same amount of physical activity
- More options for physical activity
- More challenging physical activity
- More enjoyable physical activity

Social Activity

I need:

- More social activity time
- Less social activity time
- To find a new or expand my current social group
- More options for social activity
- More enjoyable social activity
- The same social activity

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 be more organized
- To do my homework better
- To get to school or class on time
- To stay motivated
- To pay more attention
- To be more involved in activities
- To study more
- To study less
- To be less distracted
- To worry less about school
- To improve my attendance
- To do what I am doing now

ENJOYABLE 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 enjoyable activity to improve or increase:

Goals for improvement:

One **Routine** to improve:

One **Enjoyable Activity** to increase:
