Restart and Renew

Strategies for school mental health clinicians to support student and staff well-being and connection

Fall 2021

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Background

Connecticut leaders recognize that schools are an essential setting for the delivery of health and behavioral health services. As noted by the Child Health and Development Institute of Connecticut, Inc., the majority of children with emotional or behavioral health needs do not receive services; among those who do, approximately 75% receive services through their schools. The linkages between trauma exposure, physical health, behavioral health, and academic functioning underscore the importance of integrating trauma-informed care within educational settings.

Evidence-Based Trauma Interventions in Schools

Since 2015, the Connecticut Department of Children and Families (DCF) has worked with schools and community behavioral health partners to deliver Cognitive Behavioral Intervention for Trauma in Schools (CBITS) and Bounce Back, two evidence-based trauma interventions, in schools.

Outcomes reported include:

- Over 2,800 children have received either CBITS or BB *(data available from 2015 through December 2020).*
- Since the initiative began in 2015, 30 school districts and 16 community-based settings have offered CBITS and/or Bounce Back to their students (through *December 2020).*
- Student traumatic stress symptom scores (PTS) decreased significantly with CBITS and Bounce Back. The average score prior to treatment was well above the threshold for a likely PTSD diagnosis. Upon completion of treatment, the average scores were below that threshold.
- Prior to COVID-19, CBITS and Bounce Back groups reported an 89% completion rate, much higher than traditional outpatient clinic treatment (*data available from 2015 through June 30, 2019).*
- Children who participated in CBITS and Bounce Back groups report very high (91%) satisfaction (*data available from July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020).*

*Search the most current list of CBITS/Bounce Back providers using the **CT Evidence-Based Practices Directory.***

DCF plans to continue expanding CBITS and Bounce Back with the goal of eventually attaining statewide coverage. **Connecticut providers, schools, school-based health centers, or others interested in participating in the Connecticut CBITS initiative can get more information in the CBITS application & welcome packet or the CT CBITS Initiative pamphlet**

For more information about CBITS, contact **Diana Perry**.

Restart and Renew During COVID-19

To best support students' return to the 2021-22 school year, DCF is equipping school mental health clinicians trained in CBITS and Bounce Back and their agency and school partners with this **Restart and Renew Toolkit**. The toolkit includes three areas to extend current mental health supports in schools:

I. Student Screening
II. "**2C**" – A 2-session curriculum for school mental health clinicians to **C**heck-in on student well-being and support **C**oping as students return to school (elementary and secondary versions)
III. Facilitator Guide to Support Educators as School Restarts

"[The student] asked me to ensure that he and all students across the country would walk into welcoming environments, free from judgment, with mental health support to address the trauma they experienced."

~ U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona
Congressional Briefing, June 2021

I. Student Screening

COVID has impacted many areas of students' lives, including their mental health and well-being, their schooling, and their family and community functioning. To inform the supports that students may need, consider extending your screening process with questions that assess the impact of COVID.

Enclosed you will find:

1. Screening questions organized by domain (mental health/well-being, school, family, community)
2. COVID screening tools for youth and families
3. Supplemental screening tools for children and adolescents

To inform your screening and assessment during COVID, consider reviewing this guidance from the University of Connecticut, Collaboratory on School and Child Health, *Responding to COVID-19: Planning for Trauma-Informed Assessment in Schools*.

COVID Screening Questions by Domain

Mental Health and Well-Being
- How have your connections to friends changed during COVID? - How have your relationships been impacted by COVID? - How has COVID impacted your life as a whole? - Do you have any worries related to COVID? - Have you worried more, less, or about the same during COVID? - Have you been more sad, less sad, or about the same during COVID?
School/Academics
- How has COVID impacted your schooling? - How have your grades been during COVID? - How did learning go for you this past school year? - How do you feel about this year's school plan? Do you have any specific concerns? Is there anything you are looking forward to?
Family/Community
- Have you or someone close to you been quarantined during COVID? - Have you or someone close to you tested positive for COVID? - Have you or someone close to you gotten very sick or been in the hospital because of COVID? - Have you or any of your family had to move away from home because of COVID? - Has anyone close to you died because of COVID? - How has COVID impacted how members of your family get along with each other? - What has been most difficult for your family during COVID? - Has anyone in your family lost or changed their job during COVID? - Have you had any trouble with food or housing during COVID? - What positive opportunities, if any, have arisen for your family during COVID?
General
- (On a scale of 1-10 where 1 = "has not impacted at all" and 10 = "has impacted a lot") How has your daily life been impacted during COVID with respect to: • School • Physical health (including sleep, physical activity, nutrition, illness) • Mental health - (On a scale of 1-10 where 1 = "has not impacted at all" and 10 = "has impacted a lot") How has your family been impacted during COVID with respect to: • Work/school • Money/Financial situation • Physical health (including sleep, physical activity, nutrition, illness) • Mental health

COVID Screening Tools for Youth and Families

Instrument Name	Questions Areas	Source Information
UCLA Brief COVID-19 Screen for Child/Adolescent PTSD	- COVID exposure on self, family, community - Military family impact - Post-traumatic stress reaction	Regents of the University of California. info@reactionindex.com
Coronavirus Impact Scale – English Coronavirus Impact Scale – Spanish	- How COVID has changed your life	Research Center for Child and Family Traumatic Stress Kennedy Krieger Institute Dr. Joan Kaufman joan.kaufman@kennedykrieger.org University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus Dr. Joel Stoddard joel.stoddard@cuanschutz.edu
COVID-19 Exposure and Family Impact Survey (CEFIS) – English COVID-19 Exposure and Family Impact Survey (CEFIS) - Spanish	- COVID-19 Family Exposure - COVID-19 Family Impact	Nemours Children's Health Center Anne Kazak Anne.Kazak@nemours.org
COVID-19 Household Environment Scale (CHES) - English COVID-19 Household Environment Scale (CHES) – Spanish COVID-19 Household Environment Scale (CHES) – French COVID-19 Household Environment Scale (CHES) – Greek COVID-19 Household Environment Scale (CHES) – Mandarin COVID-19 Household Environment Scale (CHES) - Portuguese	- COVID-19 Social Distancing and Symptoms - COVID-19 on Family Conflict - COVID-19 on Family Togetherness	University of Miami Dr. Victoria Behar-Zusman Vbehar-zusman@miami.edu

Supplemental Screening Tools for Children and Adolescents

Given the impact of COVID on many areas of functioning, you may wish to consider additional screening instruments to assess areas of concern like anxiety, depression, substance use, trauma, and overall mental health. Below are commonly used screening tools to consider.

Columbia Depression Scale (CDS)
The Columbia Depression Scale (DCS) is a 22-item self-report that screens **adolescents** ages 11 and older for both depression and suicide. Questions focus on feelings & behaviors over the past four weeks. There are parallel instruments for youth and parents. Scoring directions provide a level of risk and percentage of youth who score within each risk range. This tool is copyrighted by Columbia Teen Screen but may be used at no cost with permission from the authors. Contact Prudence Fisher.

Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (CSSRS)
The Columbia Suicide Severity Rating Scale (CSSRS) can be used to screen **children and adolescents** (ages five years and older) for suicide risk. It is available in 103 languages. Completion of a 30-minute, on-line training is necessary to use the tool and provides a two-year certification. More information on the administration of the scale can be found on the main CSSRS website.

CRAFFT
The CRAFFT is a behavioral health screening tool for use with children and adolescents through age 20 years. The CRAFFT acronym comes from key words in each of the six questions developed to screen adolescents for high risk alcohol and other drug use disorders simultaneously. The CRAFFT is meant to assess whether a longer conversation about the context of use, frequency, and other risks and consequences of alcohol and other drug use is warranted. This tool is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatrics' Committee on Substance Abuse for use with adolescents. The CRAFFT is available in 10 languages. More information is available on the main CRAFFT website.

Depression Scale for Children (DSC)
The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (DSC) is a 20-item self-report for **children and adolescents ages 6 to 17 years** old that screens for depression. Questions focus on feelings over the past week and the tool takes about five minutes to complete. The tool and brief instructions for scoring are available at Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale for Children (CES-DC) .

NIAAA Screening Questions for Alcohol Abuse
The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) offers a brief, two-question screener for alcohol abuse. An age-specific risk chart guides assignment of low, moderate, or high risk. More information is available at National Institute of Health news release, "NIH releases clinician's guide for screening underage drinkers". Also available from NIAAA is the publication *Alcohol Screening & Brief Intervention for Youth: A Practitioner's Guide*.

Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ)
The Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ) is a diagnostic tool adapted from the Primary Care Evaluation of Mental Disorders (PRIME-MD), a diagnostic tool containing modules on 12 different mental health disorders. The PHQ, a self-administered version of the PRIME-MD, contains the mood (PHQ-9), anxiety, alcohol, eating, and somatoform modules as covered in the original PRIME-MD. The GAD-7 was subsequently developed as a brief scale for anxiety. The PHQ-9, a tool specific to depression, simply scores each of the 9 DSM-IV criteria based on the mood module from the original PRIME-MD. The GAD-7 scores 7 common anxiety symptoms. Various versions of the PHQ scales are discussed in the Instruction Manual. All PHQ, GAD-7 screeners and translations are downloadable from the PHQ Screeners website and no permission is required to reproduce, translate, display or distribute them.

Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED)
The Screen for Child Anxiety Related Disorders (SCARED) is a 41-item inventory rated on a 3-point Likert-type scale. It comes in two versions; one asks questions to parents about their child and the other asks these same questions to the child directly. The purpose of the instrument is to screen for signs of anxiety disorders in children. Information on the background, psychometrics, and tools with scoring are available at the Measurement Instrument Database for the Social Sciences.

Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
The Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) is a self-administered behavioral questionnaire that screens **children and youth ages 3-16 years** using 25 items on five scales: 1) emotional problems, 2) conduct problems, 3) hyperactivity and inattention, 4) peer relationships, and 5) prosocial behaviors. There are several versions to meet the needs of researchers, clinicians, and educators. The initial administration of the tool covers the last six months, while the follow-up version asks about the last month. As such, the SDQ can be used to assess the effectiveness of interventions. The SDQ is completed by teachers and parents. A parallel version is completed by youth ages 11-16 years. There is a modified version for preschool and early childhood teachers and parents of two to four year-olds. Performance is enhanced by use of multiple informants (i.e., teacher, parent, student). The SDQ has been studied extensively, has norms available from six countries, including the United States, and is available in 67 languages. Extensive information is available at Information for Researchers and Professionals about the Strengths & Difficulties Questionnaires, including a description, norms, links to journal articles, tools, and scoring.

Traumatic Events Screening Inventory (TESI-C)
The Traumatic Events Screening/Diagnostic Inventory (TESI) assesses lifetime exposure to a variety of potentially traumatic events (e.g., injuries, domestic or community violence, natural disasters, sexual abuse, neglect). The TESI includes follow-up questions about the student's emotional reaction following the event to assess DSM PTSD criterion A1/A2, as well as other aspects of the trauma, including severity and consequences. The TESI-C for children is administered as a clinician semi-structured interview or as a student/child (TESI-C) or caregiver/parent (TESI-PRR/TESI-PRR Brief) questionnaire.

II. 2C: **C**heck-in on Student Well-being and Support **C**oping

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 **C**heck-in on student well-being during COVID and support **C**oping 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 – **C**heck-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:

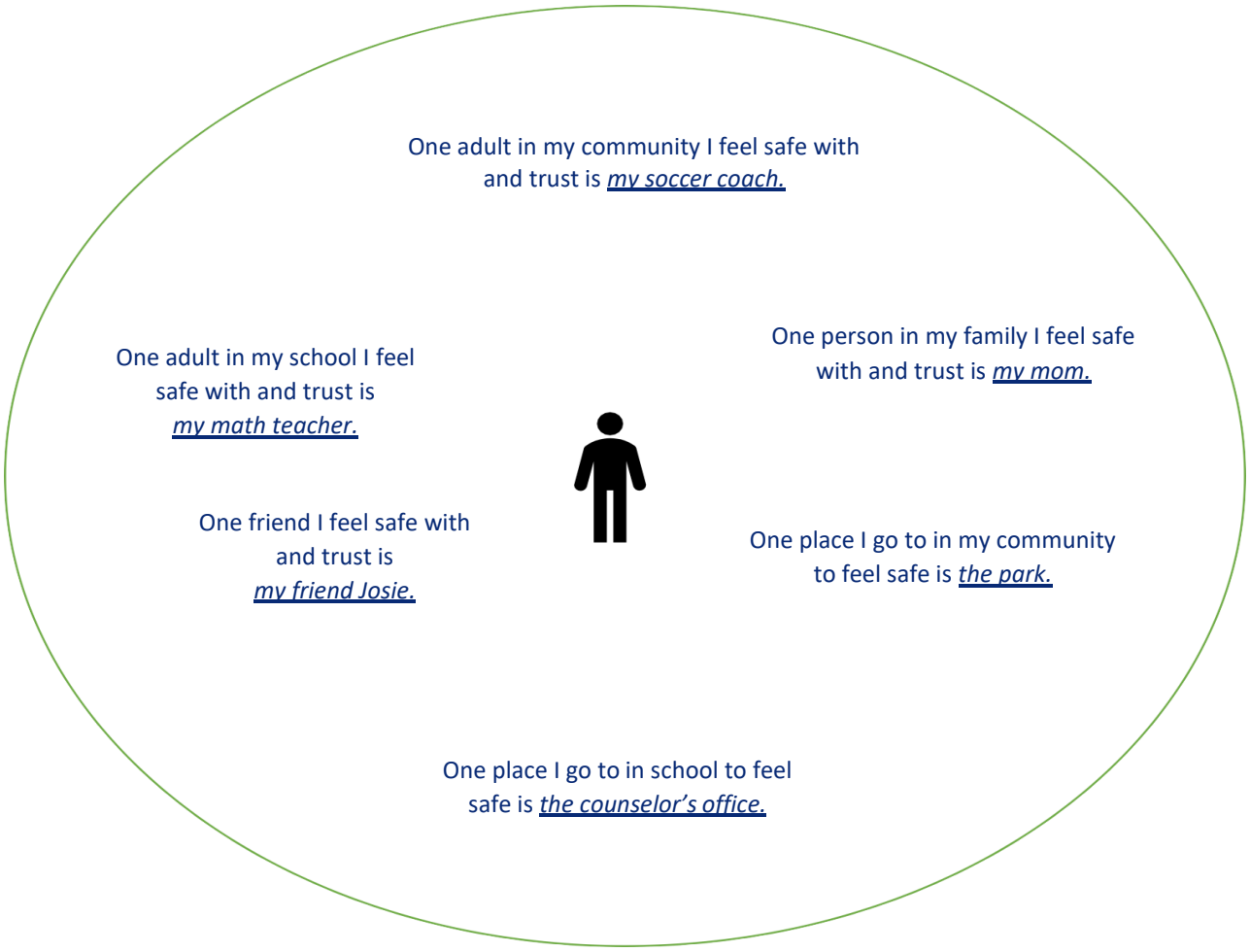
Patient	Good listener	Funny	Dependable	Hardworking	Adventurous
Kind	Honest	Good Friend	Calm	Thoughtful	Funny
Sporty	Artistic	Fun	Helpful	Caring	Creative
Giving	Brave	Confident	Cheerful	Polite	Focused
Problem-Solver	Understanding	Smart	Curious	Enthusiastic	Athletic
Easy-Going	Loyal	Intelligent	Respectful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

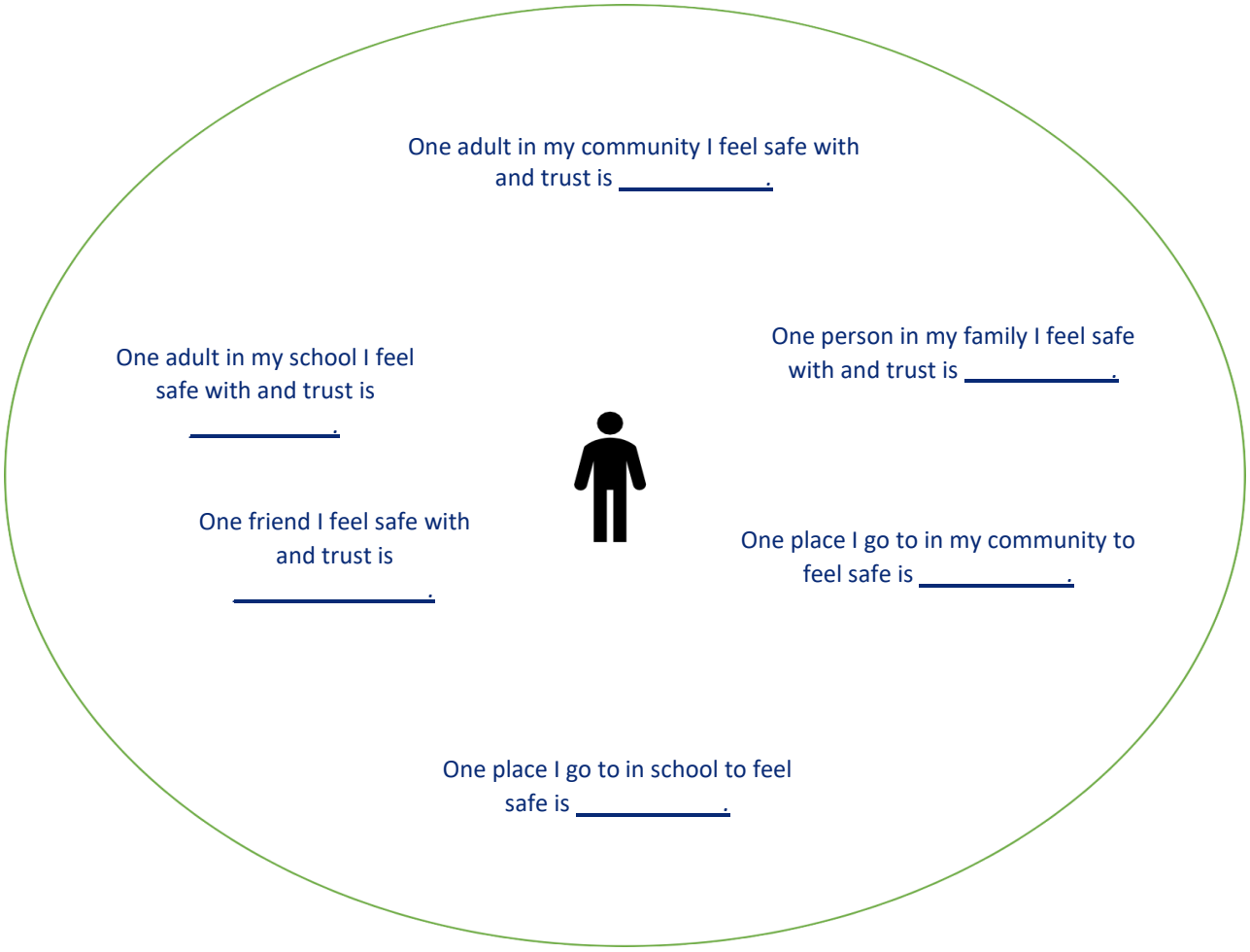


My Outside Supports

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…



2C: Session 2 - – **C**oping 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	Sleep on Weekends
Bed Time:	Bed Time:
Waking 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:

_____

_____

2C: Session 1 - **C**heck-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:

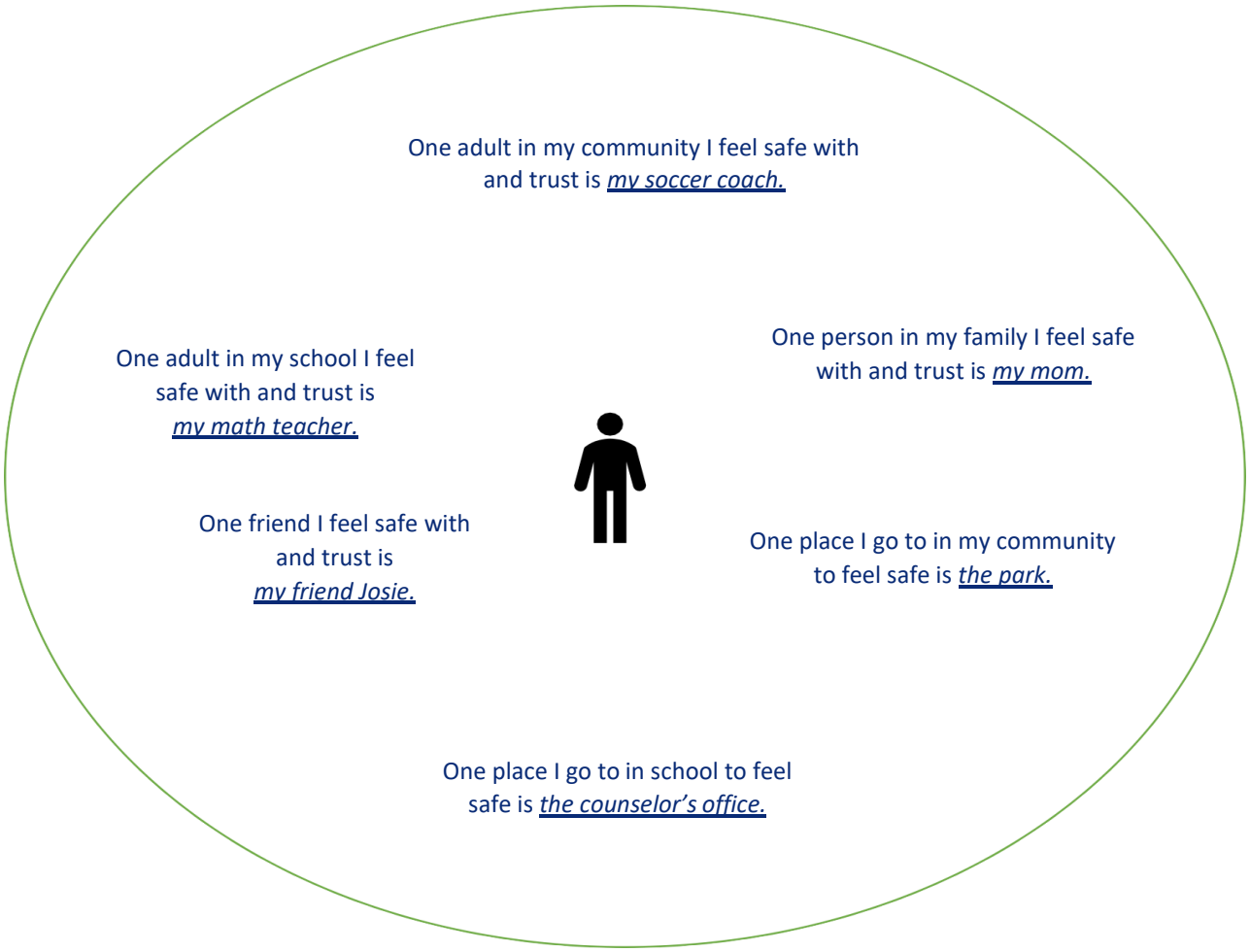
Patient	Good listener	Funny	Dependable	Hardworking	Adventurous
Kind	Honest	Good Friend	Calm	Thoughtful	Funny
Sporty	Artistic	Fun	Helpful	Caring	Creative
Giving	Brave	Confident	Cheerful	Polite	Focused
Problem-Solver	Understanding	Smart	Curious	Enthusiastic	Athletic
Easy-Going	Loyal	Intelligent	Respectful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

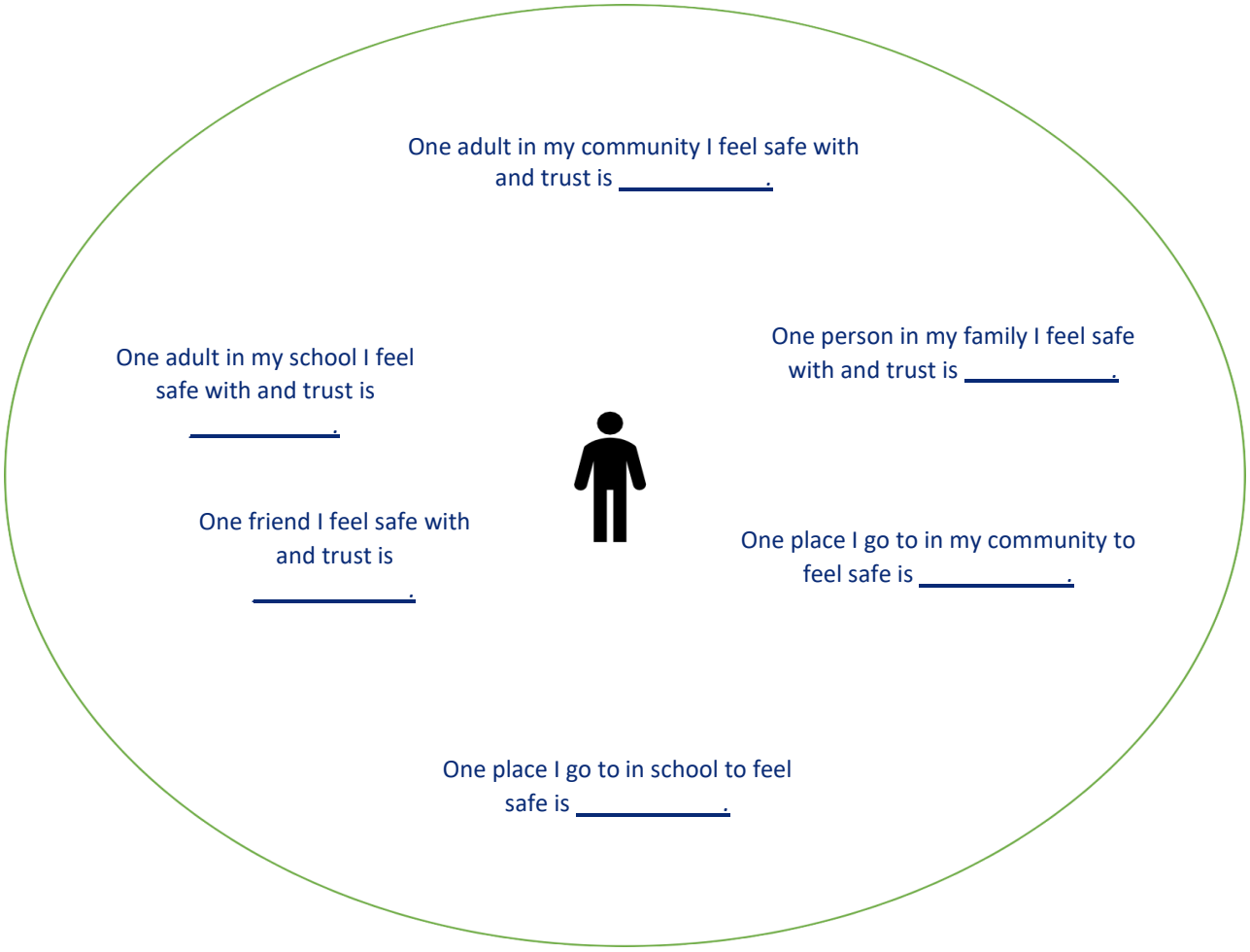


My Outside Supports

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

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…



2C: Session 2 – **C**oping 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	Sleep on Weekends
Bed Time:	Bed Time:
Waking 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:

_____

_____

III. Facilitator Guide for Supporting Teachers As School Resumes

Introduction

We are all experiencing a new beginning as we resume school. We've all created a different life and routine during the pandemic, adjusted to virtual and hybrid schooling during this time, and now we'll again "reset" to something different. And we remain uncertain about how schooling will be, and whether it will be like it had been prior to the pandemic or remain a hybrid of on-site and virtual schooling. We also don't fully know the status of the pandemic, what we'll do about masks, social distancing, and such. This is a moment when we'll resume schooling with uncertainty, and our task will be how to both navigate that for ourselves, as a school, and how we help our students during this time. School most likely will not be a time of resuming what we did before the pandemic, but something different. These circumstances of the pandemic and uncertainty, though, do provide us opportunities to rethink what's most valuable, what skills are needed for our 21st Century students, and how to partner with each other and our community to make our schools more responsive to all that we've seen and learned during this pandemic. This is a time for advancement, for renewal, and to restore meaningful routines, and specific practices that may help us best manage this pandemic, as well as other unusual events that may disrupt our daily lives in the future.

This guide is designed for a facilitator (typically, a school administrator or a school mental health clinician) to engage the staff about the impacts of the pandemic on them as they return to teaching. This will be a process for each different school. There are several ways you can initiate this process, and you can use some or all parts, and you can do these in any order, depending on what you perceive will work best at your school. You may provide:

- Self-reflection exercise for school staff where they can individually examine impacts of the pandemic on their own lives, as well as on their school (**see Self-Reflection Questions for Teachers**)
- Group meeting, such as an open (healing) circle for teachers to share their experiences (**see Teacher Group Discussion Facilitator's Guide**)
- Individual Check-in with each teacher (**see 1:1 Teacher Meeting Facilitator Guide**)
- Support strategies for teachers as they restart school (**see Teacher Support Strategies suggestions)**

Self-Reflection Questions for Teachers As They Return to School

Welcome back! As we return to school, we have all been impacted in many ways by the pandemic, including impacts on our teaching, our personal lives, our family lives, and on our school community. We have several questions to help you self-reflect on how the pandemic has impacted you, so that we can think about how to best proceed this year in our school and to support you in this significant transition from what became your daily lifestyle for these past 18 months. These questions are for you, alone, to reflect on, and you will not be expected to turn these in or to show them to anyone else. During our staff meetings, we may allocate time to discuss some of these topics, and we welcome anything you are comfortable sharing as we examine impacts of the pandemic on all of us (but you are not required or expected to share any of this information). You want to write some notes about what you think now about each question, so that you might reflect on these thoughts at later points in time.

1) How has your life changed during the pandemic? (e.g., how your routine or daily life may have changed, and both small and big changes that occurred during these 18 months)

2) How has school become different for you since the pandemic? (e.g., how did your teaching approach change, how did your engagement with other school staff and students/families change?)

3) What's been challenging about the changes during this time? (e.g., work with students/staff, childcare, social interactions, lifestyle restrictions, using commute time differently, etc.)

4) Were there any surprises? (e.g., anything unexpected that occurred, good or bad, etc.)

5) Have there been any benefits for you during this pandemic? (e.g., any good things, any additional opportunities in your life, etc.)

6) Have you discovered anything about yourself during this time? (e.g., did you notice anything about how you managed various parts of the pandemic, did others comment about any changes you made or how you appeared to others during this time, etc.)

7) Have you discovered anything about your school community during this time? (e.g., did you notice feeling differently when not here as frequently, when not seeing staff or students directly, how parents/families/guardians interacted, etc.)

Group Meeting Facilitator Guide As Teachers Return To School

Group meetings with teachers as they return to school can offer a space to both acknowledge the stress and burden of the pandemic and associated changes in personal and professional lives, and to discuss ideas about how to foster well-being and support moving forward. Facilitating this group may feel uncomfortable initially, as you may not have seen many of these staff in the past 18 months, and indeed the staff may include both many new faces and the absence of familiar faces without the opportunity for the usual celebrations as staff transition to different places or positions. At the same time, this group meeting provides an important healing opportunity for everyone returning to this school to reengage, to describe how this unexpected time apart has impacted them, and perhaps most importantly, to reconnect with others and move forward together in a supportive direction.

The "Circle" group process builds on ancient First Nation and Native American traditions of having everyone be positioned as equals within a group, to all be treated respectfully, and to share thoughts in a safe, supportive group. Modern versions provide for each participant to have an opportunity to speak and to engage in listening. Each person's truth is understood to be their truth, rather than a unified truth for everyone present.

The facilitator may employ the steps below or adapt these to best fit with the culture of the school. Often this occurs by the facilitator speaking initially with school administrators and other staff to determine what process best fits for this school group. The facilitator may wish to describe the steps at the beginning or provide them visually, particularly if this approach might be unfamiliar to this group.

STEPS:

1) Participants sit in a circle (without a table or other items/people in the middle).

2) Often a "ceremony" begins the open circle, such as a short inspirational reading, a meditation or mindfulness exercise, or other ritual (e.g., something unique to the school such as a song might be played).

3) Commonly, a "talking" piece/item is used to clarify who is speaking at a given time (the person holding the piece speaks, then passes to another person to speak, etc.).

4) Often an emphasis on values precedes purposes of the group. Efforts for the discussion to focus on the values that represent our "best self" prepares participants to be more open, vulnerable, and accepting of all that is discussed in the group.

5) The facilitator then provides prompting questions to guide the discussion. However, the facilitator is not expected to be an expert, mediator, or to resolve differences in opinion; the facilitator is to ensure that everyone has an opportunity to speak, and that all group members share responsibility for keeping the group safe and respectful for all.

Example prompting questions:

i. What strengths have you discovered about yourself during this past year?
ii. What would be most helpful to support staff well-being and connections right now/this year?
iii. Are there unique or additional supports that may be helpful for groups more impacted by the pandemic and other stressors (e.g., Black, Indigenous, Other People of Color [BIPOC], staff with underlying health complications, staff who have lost family members)
iv. How can the school restore relationships with staff? With students and families? With the community?
v. How would you like to see things different moving forward?
vi. What should the purpose of the school be this year?
vii. Can you imagine any changes we should make for the students or the school now?
viii. What challenges to these changes do you see? What ideas do you have to overcome these challenges?

6) The circle is a place for passions to be reignited and for pain to be heard, as both are needed for healing.

7) After everyone is heard, often a closing ceremony (another inspirational reading, a song, a coordinated physical movement, etc.), to signal a transition back to normal interactions.

Read more about the process of doing open and healing circles at:

https://www.mindfulschools.org/inspiration/healing-circles-for-teachers-as-a-restorative-self-care-practice/

Facilitator Guide for Meeting 1:1 With Teachers As They Return To School

A school administrator (or designee, such as a school mental health clinician) can provide a supportive individualized 1:1 check-in meeting with teachers as they return to school. This meeting should be provided to help coalesce the staff to work together as they navigate resuming school after this unusual time. This interview should not be described or perceived as a "work readiness evaluation," but instead as part of a safe, supportive effort to rebuild the school following this pandemic. The following questions may identify helpful steps the school can take to support staff, students, and families during this transition:

- What would help all our staff as they return to teaching?
- What will help our school staff feel supported as they return to working this year?
- What suggestions do you have for making the building a safe and supportive place for all our staff?
- What suggestions do you have for making the building a safe and supportive place for our students and families?
- How do you currently feel about resuming teaching in this school?
- What school supports do you feel have been helpful in the past for you to function most effectively?
- What would help you feel more supported as you return to the school building?
- What barriers or obstacles in the school should be addressed to make this transition better for our staff?
- What barriers or obstacles in the school should be addressed to make this transition better for our students and their families?
- Do you have any other recommendations to make this transition more successful?

Be aware and sensitive to teachers who may describe significant distress that may be impacting them across multiple of their life domains (such as family, friends, etc.). Universal supportive approaches may be useful, such as:

- their healthy alternatives (activities, use of music, physical movement, sleep routines, etc.);
- how they "frame" their pandemic experience ("what have I learned? What am I to take away from this pandemic experience? How might I grow from my experience with this pandemic?");
- how they are managing daily obstacles (such as problem solving to accomplish tasks); and
- what outside supports they rely on (e.g., family members, good friends, faith organization, positive activities, or groups, etc.) and the "reality checks" provided them by their supportive others.

Some teachers may require additional supports beyond what will be available at the school, so resources such as how to access the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) should be available.

Support Strategies For Teachers As They Return To School

Below are strategies for supporting teachers as they return to school. Each school may identify its own preferred combination of teacher support strategies, including some of these listed below.

Organizational Well-Being of the entire school is important to foster individual teacher well-being. Reducing stressors at the school level may help improve the well-being and work satisfaction of the staff. It is also important that teachers are not expected to simply "toughen up" to survive ongoing school stressors or a toxic work environment.

- Efforts to ensure ***equity and fairness*** are paramount in each school building. Staff need to be treated fairly and equitably, without harassment or favoritism, have trust toward coworkers, and have input on policies that affect them. Strategies to improve this include implementing policies within the district (and beyond) to promote equity and shared decision-making, pairing employees with mentors, and clarifying evaluation procedures so that staff know what is expected by supervisors.
- The ***workload*** should be reasonable, such that most staff get all tasks done, that the environment is pleasant/comfortable, with adequate resources, so that work is meaningful, and obstacles are addressed by school administration when possible. Strategies to improve staff workload include identifying if staff are mostly completing tasks within expected work hours, clarifying processes to address obstacles, identifying access to resources, and how the workload fits within the mission of the school.
- ***Role clarity*** is important to staff, knowing what is expected of them, their time is spent primarily doing the jobs they feel equipped/prepared to do, the school mission remains clear, a good plan of coverage is in place when staff are out, and they mostly are able to do what they do best. Strategies to improve role clarity include staff clarifying duties and priorities with supervisors, how absences are managed, and monitoring role expectations in other schools/districts.
- ***Managerial support*** that is regular, responsive, helpful, and feels partnered between administrators, supervisors, and teachers can improve job satisfaction and productivity among teachers. Strategies to improve managerial support include creating regular supervisory meetings and staff to access for different concerns, ensuring input provided is heard and integrated, and identifying helpful supervisory practices across schools.
- ***Time pressure*** impacts staff effectiveness, so stable and predictable priorities, reasonable deadlines, tasks fitting with the job, and being able to keep up with expectations are important. Strategies to improve time pressure include setting reasonable schedules for task completion, establishing deadlines up front, building in down time or unexpected demand time into one's schedule, identifying options to clarify priorities when tasks change, and support options/alternatives if one is consistently struggling to keep up with tasks.
- ***Community support*** for staff, including appreciation and positive status within the community, and personal career satisfaction increase staff engagement in the workplace. Strategies to improve community support include gathering parent/community perceptions,

opportunities for increasing salary/compensation, publicizing staff accomplishments, examining practices of schools with high community supports, partnering with other schools to build team successes, and supporting teacher organization efforts important to the community.

Well-Being Check-ins can be used to assess and communicate staff well-being.

- Self-assessments specifically for teachers, such as the POISE (see below) may be taken by staff as they begin the school year, and then every 2-3 months thereafter (based on factors such as pandemic surges, or changes in how the school functions [e.g., changes to hybrid or virtual schooling, or returning to on-site schooling]).
- Frequent automated check-in texts or emails can be sent to staff. Short texts are preferred for more frequent (e.g., daily) check-ins, and often accompanied by an inspirational phrase (click here for inspirational phrases for teachers: https://soeonline.american.edu/blog/25-inspirational-quotes-for-teachers; https://www.weareteachers.com/best-inspirational-teacher-quotes/), while longer multiple-item check-ins are usually limited to weekly or monthly to be a positive reminder for teachers about their well-being and self-care.
- Principal Access/Office Hours provided weekly for staff check-in may allow obstacles and solutions to more quickly be addressed in a partnered approach.
- Ongoing efforts to ensure staff well-being and achievements are regularly provided to the School Board can increase familiarity and appreciation for staff within the larger community.

Well-Being Activities can be integrated throughout the school day to enhance teacher well-being.

- Movement breaks throughout day and week are helpful to prevent sedentary behaviors, and to improve mood and energy. Simple yoga positions to start or end class, or to use at school transition times (begin the day, mid-morning break, lunch, before preparing for the bus, etc.) can keep teachers (and students) moving. Click here for example poses (https://resilienteducator.com/lifestyle/calming-yoga-poses/)
- Helping teachers identify "exercise partners" based on mutual physical activity interests (biking, gym workout, yoga, hiking, etc.) can help teachers reconnect while improving their physical well-being.
- Effective multi-tasking can help teachers both get tasks accomplished while also improving physical health. While humans are not effective at doing multiple cognitive tasks simultaneously, they are good at both walking (physical skill) and talking (cognitive) at the same time, so "meetings" that are not about confidential matters (e.g., student performance) but about curriculum or school-related tasks can occur while teachers walk about/around the building.
- Identified "social times" can help teachers reconnect. Designating certain times (e.g., certain lunch days) as times for engaging socially instead of about work activities, can provide opportunities for staff to get to know each other better in a more relaxed condition.
- Identifying and sharing of intellectual Interests between teachers can be useful to increase staff connections and sharing of intellectual ideas. Having staff write down their hobbies,

book/movie/musical interests at the beginning of the school year, with awareness that these will be shared, may accelerate staff finding like-minded souls to share common interests. If multiple staff identify similar interests, consideration of an afterschool book/movie club, or local offerings at town libraries, etc., may increase these interactions.

- Listening to music improves mood for most of us. Sharing of music playlists can be encouraged, as well as creating playlists.
- Social gathering remains complicated at this point, but a few basic principles provide guidance: (1) social gatherings should be optional and allow for those who may be at greater risk or more cautious about spread of Covid to opt out, join virtually, or participate in alternative ways (e.g., make a video to share, call in, send a message, etc.); (2) outside or easily "distanced" activities may be preferred; (3) inclusiveness for all, particularly those less able to participate remains important, so both alternatives for participating (described above) as well as inclusion after events through descriptions, pictures, sharing of products/food where safe/appropriate are important to enhance staff social well-being.
- Positive Emotion Activities, where positive ("thrive") emotions such as serenity, hope, awe, love, joy, inspiration, and gratitude are provided is important for emotional well-being. Example activities include writing gratitude letters to friends, previous teachers/mentors, or sharing pictures/readings/poems, etc., that invoke thrive emotions.

Respite Opportunities to provide staff breaks remain important during this stressful and uncertain time. Sometimes personal needs can be overwhelming, or students may require additional staff support, so identifying staff with complementary schedules (same lunch or "break"/preparation periods) may help staff know who to reach out to when needed. Click here to learn about one form of this, the Tap-In, Tap-Out model (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPtsP7pBobI).

Team Building Activities can foster connections and positive school identity as schools "reboot" after the long break associated with the pandemic. Several strategies may be helpful:

- Team Building activities can be embedded within the school schedule. Connectors (also referred to as icebreakers or common interest activities) regularly provided during staff professional development may help teachers connect with others. In addition, recognition of positive acts by teachers helps sustain these efforts.
- Pairing up teachers and creating positive school identity for staff as they return may improve school connections and support (click here for more on this topic: https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Documents/Care%20and%20Connection%20Week%20Activities.pdf).

POISE Well-Being Self-Assessment

Please ***circle*** the best answer for each item (*focusing on the past 2 weeks*), with **1=not at all (<10%), 2=a little (~25%), 3=moderately (~50%), 4=mostly (~75%), and 5=almost always (>90%).**

	Not at all →				Almost always
1. I get uninterrupted restful sleep for 6+ hours most nights.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I eat and enjoy nutritious foods and how they make me feel.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Most days I exercise/physically move for 30+ minutes (7000+ steps).	1	2	3	4	5
4. I move about so I'm not sedentary or sitting for more than 1 hour at a time during the workday.	1	2	3	4	5
5. Music and/or artistic activities are a regular enjoyable part of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
6. My work at this organization fits with and fulfills my sense of purpose.	1	2	3	4	5
7. I have a strong and reliable network of supportive others at work.	1	2	3	4	5
8. I manage my time well and complete most tasks on time.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I am able to achieve my goals despite obstacles that occur.	1	2	3	4	5
10. My supervisors and I communicate well and agree on priorities.	1	2	3	4	5
11. I stimulate my mind by reading, listening, or watching (e.g. tapes, videos, movies, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
12. I regularly explore/pursue my interests or improve my skills.	1	2	3	4	5
13. I am able to help and enjoy others more than feel depleted by obstacles that interfere with helping others.	1	2	3	4	5
14. I journal, write (e.g., poetry or music), or capture pictures and take videos of my life story.	1	2	3	4	5
15. I rely on deeply held principles or spiritual values to guide my life.	1	2	3	4	5
16. My relationships with other adults are satisfying.	1	2	3	4	5
17. I seek and benefit from the input and feedback of others.	1	2	3	4	5
18. I am aware of what annoys/triggers me, and I am aware of what I do that annoys/upsets others.	1	2	3	4	5
19. I support others and acknowledge (with words/acts) their successes.	1	2	3	4	5
20. I am able to resolve conflicts in most areas of my life.	1	2	3	4	5
21. I can stay with and tolerate my painful emotions and learn from them.	1	2	3	4	5
22. I feel calm or serene most of the time.	1	2	3	4	5
23. I have developed reliable, effective ways to cope with stress.	1	2	3	4	5
24. I can manage my emotions to stay on task or work when necessary.	1	2	3	4	5
25. I enjoy living in the present and worry little about the past or future.	1	2	3	4	5

What your answers on the POISE indicate:

There are no correct or "better" scores on the POISE. This instrument allows you both look at the broad domains of well-being (**P**hysical, **O**ccupational, **I**ntellectual, **S**ocial, and **E**motional) to get a sense of your well-being in each area, but also to examine topics within each of the broad areas that may be important to you. For example, your Physical domain score may be 21, while your Social domain may be 20, yet in fact you score "5" in all physical areas except one where you score "1" (such as sleep) while you score "4" in each area of social well-being. Broad scores can indicate your overall functioning in a well-being domain, yet any "low" individual scores may be really important to your well-being. Below are broad domains of well-being and the specific areas within each domain:

Physical (Sleep, Exercise, and Nutrition): Items 1-5

- Getting Restful, Rejuvenating Sleep
- Developing a Healthy Diet
- Getting Healthy Exercise; Living a Non-sedentary life
- Integrating Art/Music Activities into Daily Living

Occupational (Satisfaction & Rewards of Job): Items 6-10

- Recognizing and Addressing Work Environment Components
- Managing Your Time Effectively
- Overcoming Procrastination
- Negotiating Within a Hierarchical System (where you may be trying to effect system changes with staff who are in higher positions of authority than you)

Intellectual (Doing What Matters and Has Meaning; Exploring Life Opportunities): Items 11-15

- Finding Meaning in Daily Life
- Stimulating my mind and growth
- Doing activities that promote self-expression
- Comparing What I Do with My Time to What I Value Doing During this Life

Social (Positive Relationships and Getting Along Well with Others): Items 16-20

- Sustaining Good Relationships
- Managing and Deescalating Conflict
- Identifying My Friendship Triggers
- Identifying My Humor Style
- Identifying My Classroom Triggers

Emotional (Experiencing Desired Emotions and Managing Difficult Feelings): Items 21-25

- Regulating My Mood
- Coping with Stress
- Creating Calm/Serenity in My Life
- Living in the Present

You may notice that certain "areas" of your well-being are going relatively well (your scores on those 5 items are mostly 4's or 5's), and some areas are going less well (your scores are mostly 1's or 2's). Sometimes these areas remain consistent, and sometimes they may change or fluctuate over the course of a year. To read about each of these domains of teacher well-being and corresponding interventions, access the (free) Teacher Well-Being Workbook at www.medstarwise/org/teacher.