



Kindergarten–Grade 5 Resilience Activities

Purpose

These short, research-based student activities are designed to help teachers support students' coping and recovery following a crisis. Each activity focuses on a topic or skill known to support students' coping and well-being.

Delivery

Each activity is stand-alone, so teachers can choose the activities that meet their students' needs. The activities are simple, require few materials, and can be adapted for remote delivery. Some are meant to be taught once, and others will be most effective if reinforced with ongoing practice.

Teaching Notes

Students are enduring stress and uncertainty right now. These activities may trigger strong feelings or prompt students to bring up difficult topics. If students show signs of distress, allow them to take a break. Then follow up with the school counselor, social worker, or other mental health professional if necessary. If you have questions or concerns before or after leading these activities, we encourage you to seek advice or support from a school counselor or social worker. If a student discloses information that leads you to suspect abuse or neglect, follow your school's reporting policy and procedures.

This content was created as part of the Second Step® SEL for Adults Resilience During Crisis Module. Visit secondstep.org/social-emotional-learning-adults to learn more about the program.

Kindergarten and Grade 1 Activities

Creating a Support Tree

Students identify people they can go to for comfort and support. They create a “Support Tree” with each person they identify represented on a leaf.

Practicing Belly Breathing

Students practice belly breathing, a simple breathing technique that helps them calm their body and manage strong feelings.

Creating a Worry Jar

Students record their worries in words or pictures and put them in a jar to contain them so they don’t dominate their thoughts.

Grade 2 and Grade 3 Activities

Naming Feelings

Students expand their emotional vocabulary by naming feelings they’re having because of the difficult event.

Managing Strong Feelings

Students practice belly breathing and discuss other ways to calm down. Then they make a plan to use calming-down strategies to manage their strong feelings.

Telling My Story

Students use words and illustrations to create a short story that describes their experience of a difficult event.

Grade 4 and Grade 5 Activities

Starting a Gratitude Journal

Students focus on the positive things in their lives and say thank you for them by practicing gratitude.

Making Movement Routine

Students plan ways to move more during the school day as a class to help them cope with stress.

Tracking Feelings

Students generate more specific words for each of the six basic emotion categories. Then they use these words to track their feelings for one day.

Objective

Students will identify people they can go to for help and support.

Materials

- Chart paper or whiteboard
- Copies of the Support Tree handout, one per student (alternative: students can draw their own outline of a tree)
- Cutouts of leaf shapes (alternative: students can cut out their own leaf shapes or draw them)
- Writing and drawing utensils
- Scissors
- Glue

Why This Matters Now

Young students aren't equipped to cope with crisis situations or their aftermath on their own. Having people who can reassure, soothe, and support them is important for their recovery. This activity helps students identify who they can go to for support.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

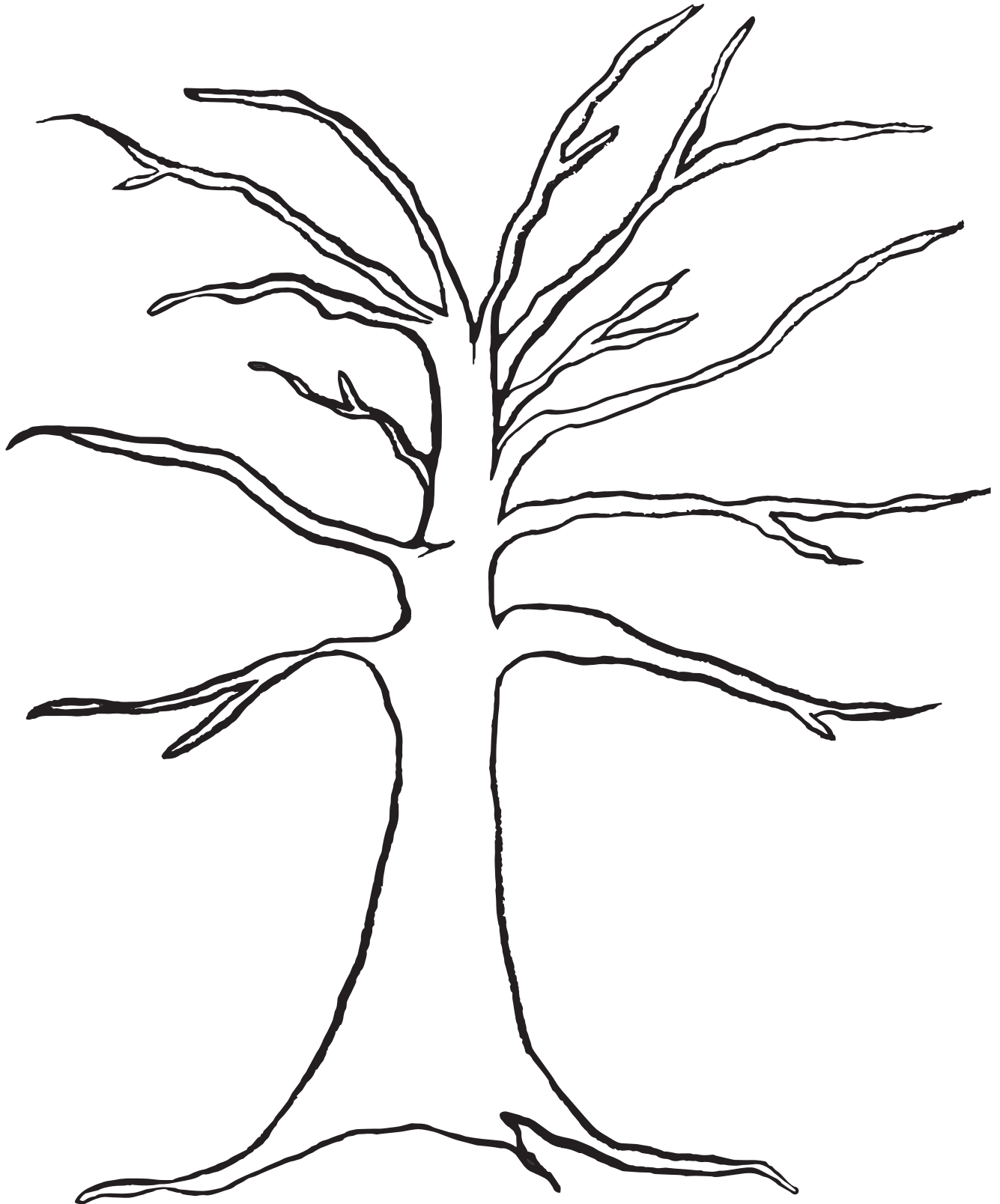
Activity Instructions (15–20 min.)

1. Introduce the activity to students: **Things have been different lately. You may feel sad, angry, or upset. All feelings are okay. There are people who can comfort you and help you feel safe. Today you're going to make a Support Tree. Every leaf you put on the tree will have the name or picture of a person you can go to for help and support.**
2. Generate ideas about who students can go to for support. **Who do you go to when you're feeling upset or sad?** Give students time to think. Invite students to tell the class their ideas. *Mom, aunt, grandpa, teacher, recess supervisor, sibling.* Help students extend their ideas to people at school or other places in their lives. Record students' ideas on chart paper or the whiteboard. **There are many people you can go to for help.**
3. Show students the materials and tell them how to use the materials to make a Support Tree.
 - **Step 1:** On a leaf, have students write the name or draw a picture of a person they can go to for help.
 - **Step 2:** Have students make a leaf for each person they can think of who they can go to for help. Have them make at least three leaves.
 - **Step 3:** Have students glue their leaves to their Support Tree.
 - **Step 4:** If time allows and students want to, have them decorate their Support Trees.
4. Distribute the materials. Circulate and assist students as needed. For example, students may need help writing the names of their adults. Make sure students identify at least three people they can go to for support.
5. Reinforce. **Today you made a Support Tree. You can look at it to remind you of who you can go to when you need help or comfort. It's important for you to feel safe and supported.**
6. Have students take home their Support Tree to share with their caregivers. Check in with students periodically to see if they're getting the support they need from the people they identified or others.

Remote Adaptation

- Send the lesson and PDF home and have students do the activity with a caregiver. If they can't print the handout, students can draw their own outline of a tree.
- Students can share their completed Support Tree with the group at your next remote meeting.

Name: _____ Date: _____



Support Tree

Objective

Students will practice belly breathing.



Bold—Teacher’s script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Why This Matters Now

Right now students may be having strong feelings, which can be accompanied by uncomfortable sensations in their body. Belly breathing helps lower blood pressure and heart rate, which calms the body. Noisy, fast breathing and breathing from the chest can make students feel more upset. It can take some time for young students to learn this technique. Continued practice will be important.

Activity Instructions (10–15 min.)

1. Introduce the activity to students. **Today you’re going to practice belly breathing. It’s a special way to breathe that helps you calm down when you’re having big feelings.**
2. Briefly discuss different kinds of breathing. **Have you ever noticed how you breathe? Take a moment now and just notice your breath. Is it fast or slow? Is it quiet or loud?** Give students time to notice their breath. Invite them to share what they notice.
3. Demonstrate belly breathing. **Belly breathing has three steps:**
 - Step 1: **Put your hands on your belly.**
 - Step 2: **Breathe in slowly through your nose. Feel your belly move out so it touches your hands.**
 - Step 3: **Breathe out slowly and quietly through your mouth. Feel your belly move away from your hands.**
4. Demonstrate belly breathing one or two more times as you say the steps.
5. Have students practice belly breathing. **Now it’s your turn to practice belly breathing.** Have students sit or lie down. Say the belly breathing steps as students do them. Reinforce the correct technique when you observe it. Have students practice two or three times.
6. Discuss students’ experience. **How did it feel to do belly breathing?** Give students think-time. Invite them to share their experience.
7. Reinforce. **We’re going to practice belly breathing together every day. You can also practice at home. You can use belly breathing to help you calm down when you’re having big, uncomfortable feelings. You can also talk to people about your feelings.** Continue to practice belly breathing regularly with students and model belly breathing throughout the day.

Remote Adaptation

Have students watch a video model of belly breathing and then practice with a caregiver. You can find a video online or create one yourself.

Objective

Students will identify and contain their worries.

Materials

- Chart paper or white board
- Copies of the Worry Jar handout, one per student
- Paper lunch bags, one per student
- Paste, tape, or stapler to attach the worry jars to the paper lunch bags
- Scissors (optional)
- Several small pieces of paper per student
- Writing or drawing utensils

Why This Matters Now

During stressful circumstances, young students may worry more or have anxious thoughts. Worry Jars help students identify their worries, detach from them, and then contain them with physical representations. This acknowledges students' feelings and allows them to be expressed, so the feelings are no longer the focus of their thoughts.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

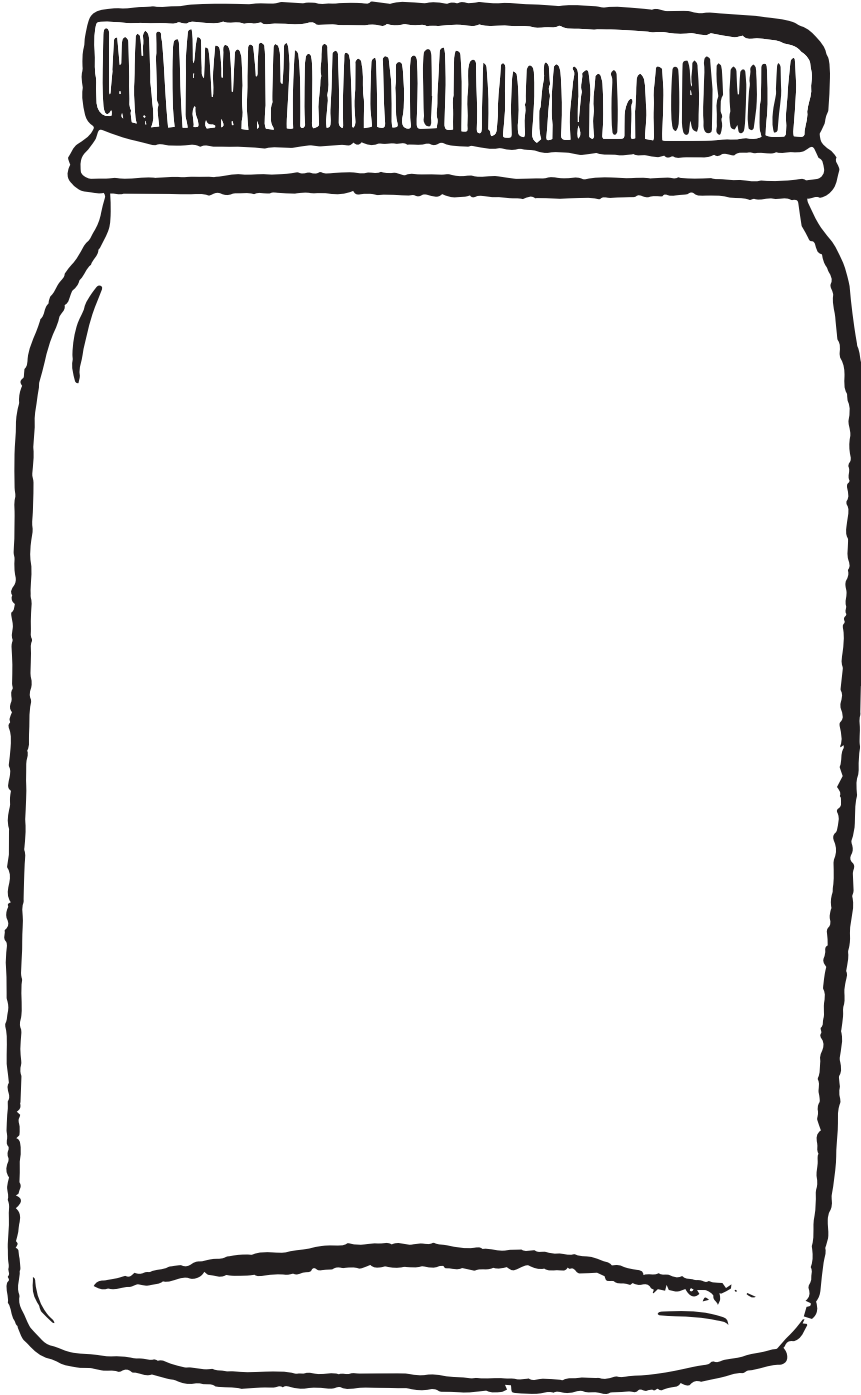
Activity Instructions (15–20 min.)

8. Introduce the activity to students: **Raise your hand if you've been thinking about problems or scary things lately.** Wait for students to respond. **It's normal to do this during difficult times. Thinking about problems or fears is called worrying. If you worry a lot, your worries can get big. That can feel uncomfortable. Today you're going to make a Worry Jar and give your worries to it! This will help stop them from getting too big.**
9. Generate examples of worries. **What are some worries you have right now?** Give students think-time. Invite them to share their worries. Record students' ideas on chart paper or the white board.
10. Show students the materials and explain how to use them to make a Worry Jar.
 - **Step 1:** Have students attach the worry jar handout to their paper bag. They can cut the jar out first if they want to.
 - **Step 2:** Have students write or draw their worries on the small pieces of paper.
 - **Step 3:** Have students put the worries into the bag. Tell them to imagine they're giving their worries away to the jar!
 - **Step 4:** If time allows and students want to, have them decorate their jars.
11. Distribute the materials. Circulate and assist students as needed. For example, students may need help writing their worries.
12. Reinforce. **Today you made a Worry Jar. It's a place to put your worries so they don't get too big. You can add to your Worry Jar any time. Talking to people about your worries can also help.**
13. Have students take home their Worry Jars to share with their caregivers. Check in with students periodically to see if they're using their Worry Jars.

Remote Adaptation

- Send the lesson PDF and handout home and have students do the activity with a caregiver. Students can use a container instead of the handout and lunch bag if they can't print the handout.
- Students can share their completed Worry Jar with the group at your next remote meeting.

Name: _____ Date: _____



Worry Jar

Objective

Students will identify and name feelings about difficult situations.

Materials

- Chart paper with two columns, one labeled “Difficult Situations” and the other labeled “Feelings”
- Markers
- Feelings Wheel handout, one per student



Bold—Teacher’s script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Why This Matters Now

Students may be dealing with a lot of emotions right now. Having more words to describe their emotional experience can help them process what they’re going through. Assigning words to emotions also engages the thinking brain, which can help students begin to calm down. This activity helps students identify a variety of feelings words for the difficult situations they’ve been facing recently.

Activity Instructions (20–25 min.)

1. Recognize students’ experiences: **Right now, lots of things have changed our lives, and some things are more difficult than they usually are. If you agree, show a thumbs-up.** Comment on the number of thumbs up.
2. Invite students to name some things that are different and difficult right now. Record their ideas on chart paper in the Difficult Situations column. *We aren’t at school. My parent is working at home. I can’t visit my friends.*
3. Have students name their feelings. **When you’re dealing with a difficult situation, it’s normal to have strong feelings. What are some feelings you’ve been having?** *Scared. Angry. Nervous.*
4. Introduce the activity: **We all have feelings. And all feelings are okay. Today we’re going to practice naming feelings. The more feelings you know, the easier it is to name them.**
5. **Let’s think of feelings for each of the difficult situations you’re dealing with now.** Distribute the Feelings Chart handout. **We can use this Feelings Chart to help us.** Read a situation from the chart paper out loud. Invite students to use the handout to help them name which feeling they would feel in that situation. Record their responses next to the situation. Repeat with other situations as time allows.
6. Reinforce. **You can use the feelings words you learned today to help you name how you feel. Talking to a trusted adult about your feelings can help you.**

Remote Adaptation

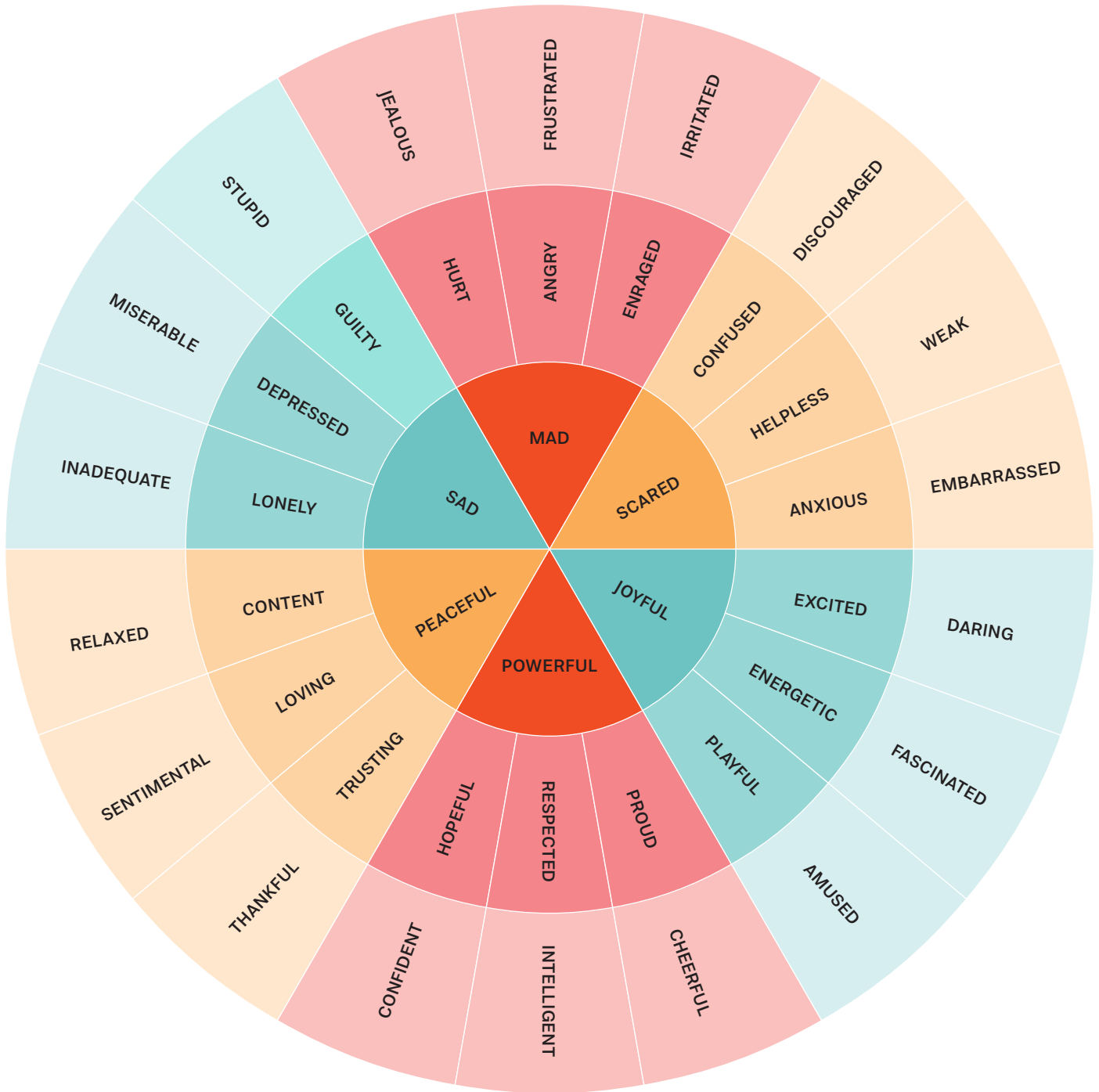
- When you meet with students remotely, create a two-column table in a document and share your screen. Type students’ responses. Post the completed lists on the online learning platform you’re using or them send home to students and their families.
- **Post the handout** on your online learning platform or email it home.



Naming Feelings

Name: _____ Date: _____

Difficult Situations	Feelings



Objective

Students will identify emotion-management strategies and plan when to use them.

Materials

- Strong Feelings Plan handout, one per student
- Prepare a Strong Feelings Plan of your own to share with students (optional)

Why This Matters Now

Students may be having strong feelings right now, which can be accompanied by uncomfortable sensations in the body. Belly breathing helps lower blood pressure and heart rate, which calms the body. Having a plan for what they can do to manage strong feelings makes it more likely students will use emotion-management strategies in the moment.



Bold—Teacher’s script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Activity Instructions (15–20 min.)

1. Introduce strong feelings. **Sometimes feelings can be really big and strong. Show a thumbs-up if you’ve been having strong feelings lately.** Comment on the number of thumbs-up.
2. Connect strong feelings to sensations in the body. **Strong feelings can feel uncomfortable in our bodies. When I’m feeling really worried, my heart beats quickly and my stomach feels wobbly. How does your body feel when you’re having a strong feeling?** Give students time to think. Invite students to share their ideas. *Hot face. Shaky hands. Weak legs. Tight chest.*
3. Introduce belly breathing. **There are ways to calm the uncomfortable feelings in our bodies. Belly breathing is one way to calm down. Let’s practice belly breathing.**
4. Demonstrate belly breathing.
 - Step 1: **Put your hands on your belly.**
 - Step 2: **Breathe in slowly through your nose. Feel your belly rise.**
 - Step 3: **Breathe out slowly through your mouth. Feel your belly fall.**
5. Repeat and have students try it with you. Practice a few times.
6. Have students share other ways they calm down. **What are other ways you like to calm down?** Give students think-time. *Count to three. Listen to music. Pet the dog.*
7. Introduce the Strong Feelings Plan. **You’re going to make a plan for what to do next time you have a strong, uncomfortable feeling.** Show students the handout. **First, pick one feeling. Draw a picture or write its name here.** Point to the blank space under “When I feel.” Distribute handouts and give students time to fill in a feeling. Circulate and assist as necessary.
8. **Next pick one way you could calm down that strong feeling. Draw a picture of it or write it down here.** Point to the blank space under “I can,” next to the strong feeling they wrote or drew.

Activity Instructions (cont.)

9. Give students time to fill in their plan. Circulate and assist as necessary. **Now you have a Strong Feelings Plan for one thing you can do when you feel that strong feeling.**
10. Repeat with other strong feelings as time allows. Have students take their plans home to share with their caregivers.
11. Reinforce. **We're going to keep practicing belly breathing every day. And you can use your plan to help you remember what to do when you're having a strong feeling. If you can't calm down, you need to go to an adult for help. I'm always here to help you. Who else can you go to for help?** Have students write the name of at least one person they can go to for help on their handout.
12. Continue to model and practice belly breathing regularly with your students.

Remote Adaptation

- Send home the lesson plan and handout and have students do the activity with a caregiver. If they can't print the handout, students can write their plan on a sheet of paper.
- Have students watch a video model of belly breathing and then practice with a caregiver. You can find a video online or create one yourself. Students can share their completed Strong Feelings Plan with the group at your next remote meeting.



Managing Strong Feelings

Student Activities
GRADES 2 & 3

Name: _____ Date: _____

Strong Feelings Plan	
When I feel ...	I can ...

I can go to _____ for help.

Objective

Students will tell a story about a difficult experience to make sense of it.

Materials

- My Story handout, one per student
- Writing utensils

Why This Matters Now

Students may be experiencing challenging situations right now. Telling the story of a difficult event can help students make sense of it, process, and integrate it, which helps with recovery.



Bold—Teacher’s script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Activity Instructions (20+ min.)

1. Introduce the activity. **One way to deal with difficult events is to tell a story about them. Today you’ll create a story about something difficult that happened to you recently.**
2. Discuss difficult experiences. **Difficult experiences are things that happen that are very upsetting. You’ll probably have very strong feelings about them. But when you make them into a story, it can help you understand what happened. This can help you feel better.**
3. Review story structure. **Your story will tell the events that happened during the difficult experience in order.**
4. Show students the handout and point to the four sections as you read their names. **This handout will help you tell the events of your story in order from 1. First, to 2. Next, to 3. Then, to 4. Last. Draw a picture and write a sentence or two in the box for each part of your story.**
5. Distribute handouts and have students begin creating their story. Circulate and assist as necessary. When students are done creating their stories, have them discuss them with the class or take them home to share with their caregivers.
6. Reinforce. **You can tell your difficult experience story at any time to help you make sense of it and feel better.**

Remote Adaptation

Send the lesson and handout home and have students do the activity with a caregiver. If they can’t print the handout, have students create their story on a sheet of paper.



Telling My Story

Name: _____ Date: _____

My Story	
1. First _____	2. Next _____
3. Then _____	4. Last _____

Objective

Students will express gratitude for positive things happening in their lives.

Materials

- Writing utensils
- Gratitude Journal handout, one per student

Why This Matters Now

Humans are naturally inclined to focus on the negative aspects of their lives. During this difficult time, it's likely there are a lot of negative things happening in your students' lives. Taking time to focus on the positives, like what they appreciate or are thankful for, can buffer the effects of stress and help students recover.



Bold—Teacher's script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Activity Instructions (15 min.)

1. Introduce the activity. **During challenging, stressful times it's normal to focus more on all the negatives in our lives. Today you're going to start a Gratitude Journal to help you notice the good things happening in your lives and say thank you for them. Expressing gratitude can change your mood and help you feel more connected to others. It also trains your brain to focus on the positive.**
2. Do a short gratitude practice. **Before you start your journal, let's share one thing we're grateful for with each other right now.** Invite students to express one thing they're grateful for. It can be a person, an event, or anything that's helping them feel better these days. Model expressing gratitude yourself first. Allow students to pass if they want to.
3. Introduce Gratitude Journals. **Now that you've practiced, you're ready to practice gratitude all week.**
 - **Step 1:** Show students the Gratitude Journal handout. Tell them they'll write at least one thing they're grateful for in the left column of the handout each day. Explain that if they're having trouble thinking of something they're grateful for, they can use the list of ideas at the bottom of the handout to help them.
 - **Step 2.** Tell students they'll explain why they're grateful for that thing in the corresponding box in the right column.
 - **Step 3:** Distribute the handout to students. Give them time to explore the journal and decide how they'll record their gratitude.
4. **You can also find other creative ways to express gratitude. For example, you can write a letter or email to someone you're grateful for. Or you can draw a picture, write a song, or make a video.**
5. Reinforce. **Practicing gratitude can help you focus on the positive and feel connected to others. We'll check in to see how it's going next week.**

Remote Adaptation

- When you meet with students remotely, introduce the activity and do the gratitude practice, then introduce the Gratitude Journal. Email students a PDF of the handout. If they can't print the handout, have them create a journal based on the model in the handout on a sheet of paper. Or they can find other creative ways to express their gratitude.
- At your next remote meeting, have students discuss how it felt to practice gratitude every day.



Starting a Gratitude Journal

Name: _____ Date: _____

Gratitude Journal

Instructions: Each day this week, list one thing you're grateful for. Use the ideas at the bottom of the journal to help you think of something if you get stuck. Then explain why you're grateful for that thing.

Day	What are you grateful for?	Why?
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		
Sunday		

Ideas

- Friends
- Family
- Food
- Health
- Body
- Teachers
- Pets
- School
- Sunlight
- Doctors
- Books
- Toys

Objective

Students will identify ways to move more during the day as a class to reduce stress.

Materials

One sheet of chart paper

Why This Matters Now

Physical activity can help ease the ill effects of stress. Finding ways to make part of your class routine will help you and your students cope better. It can also help you bond as a class.



Bold—Teacher’s script

Italics—Anticipated student responses

Activity Instructions (20–30 min.)

1. Introduce the activity. **We’ve been going through a very challenging time. You may be feeling more worried or uncomfortable. If you’ve been feeling more stressed than usual, raise your hand.** Comment on the number of raised hands, and even raise yours, too. **Moving our body is one way to reduce stress. So today we’re going to plan ways we can add movement to the school day.**
2. Generate ways to move. **How can we move in the classroom?** Give students think-time. Record students’ ideas on chart paper under the heading “How Our Class Moves.” *Dance break. Stretch high and low. Run on the spot. Hop on one foot, then the other.*
3. Decide when to move. **Those are some great ideas. When should we add movement to our day?** Give students think-time. Record students’ ideas on chart paper under the heading “When Our Class Moves.” *To start the day. After sitting for 30 minutes. When we’re squirmy. Between activities.* Add a fun title to your list, such as “We Can Really Move!”
4. Make a class commitment. **Let’s make a commitment to move more.** Have students sign the chart paper to indicate their commitment.
5. Reinforce. **We can remind each other to move more throughout the day. You can also move more at home.** Revisit your list and commitment every day, and check in with students about their stress levels.
6. You can also use a similar process to develop relaxation routines with your class.

Remote Adaptation

- When you do this activity with your students while meeting remotely, focus on ways to move while learning at home instead of ways to move in the classroom.
- **Virtual chart paper:** Instead of chart paper, create a document to capture students’ ideas. Share your screen with students and type their ideas for how and when to move. Post the completed document on the online learning platform you’re using or send it home to students and their families. Students can show their commitment by replying to the posted document with a thumbs-up emoji.

Objective


Students will generate more specific words for feelings and use them to track their feelings for one day.

Materials

- Chart paper divided into six sections labeled “Happy,” “Sad,” “Scared,” “Surprised,” “Angry,” and “Disgusted”
- Markers
- Feelings Tracker handout, one per student

Why This Matters Now

Students may be dealing with a lot of emotions right now. Having more words to describe their emotional experience can help students process what they’re going through. Assigning words to emotions also engages the thinking brain, which can help students begin to calm down. Tracking their feelings over time can help students develop an awareness of how their feelings are affecting them.

 **Bold**—Teacher’s script
Italics—Anticipated student responses

Activity Instructions (25–30 min.)

1. Recognize students’ experiences. **Things have been very challenging and stressful. If you agree, show a thumbs-up.** Comment on the number of thumbs-up.
2. Invite students to name some things that are different and difficult right now. *We aren’t at school. My parent is working at home. I can’t visit my friends.*
3. Have students name their feelings. **When you’re dealing with a difficult situation, it’s normal to have strong feelings. What are some feelings you’ve been having?** *Scared. Angry. Nervous.*
4. Introduce the activity. **We all have feelings. And all feelings are okay. Today we’re going to practice naming more specific feelings. The more feelings you know, the easier it is to name them.**
5. Introduce basic emotions. **There are six basic categories of emotions: happy, sad, scared, surprised, angry, and disgusted. Many feelings words fit into each category. For example, think of some other feelings that you’d put in the “happy” category.** Give students think-time. *Glad. Excited. Joyful.*
6. Introduce group work: **You’re going to work in groups to think of more feelings words for each category. You can also go online or use a thesaurus or dictionary.**
 - **Step 1:** Divide the class into six groups and assign each an emotion category. If group work isn’t possible, assign individual students each an emotion category and have them think of one or two feelings words in that category.
 - **Step 2:** Give groups 5 minutes to think of three or more feelings that belong in their emotion category.
 - **Step 3:** Have each group send one member to write their words on the chart paper.
7. **You worked hard with your groups to add at least three new feelings words to each category.** Read some examples.

Activity Instructions (cont.)

8. Introduce the Feelings Tracker. **This week you're going to keep track of your feelings for one whole day on a Feelings Tracker.** Show students the handout. **You'll also take notes about what was happening when you had those feelings. Keeping track of your feelings can help you be more aware of how they're affecting you.**
9. Distribute the handout to students. Have students fill in the Feelings Word Bank at the top of the Feelings Tracker with words from the list you've just created together or their own words. Explain that they can use these words to help them when they're tracking their feelings during the day.
10. Choose a day to have everyone track their feelings, and have students write the date on their handout.
11. Explain to students that starting when they wake up on that day, they'll write their feelings in the left column of the tracker, and what was happening when they had those feelings in the right column.
12. Reinforce. **As you track your feelings, see if you notice how they affected what you did, or how what you did affected your feelings. We'll talk about this after everyone's done their Feelings Tracker.** When you discuss this with students, help them connect how their sleep patterns, eating habits, physical activity, and relaxation time affected their feelings, and vice versa.

Remote Adaptation

- **Before the activity:** Email students the Feelings Tracker handout or post it on your learning platform. Have students find at least one feeling word for each emotion category on their own and record it in the Feelings Word Bank on their handout. If students can't print the handout, they can create a list on a sheet of paper.
- **During the activity:** When you're introducing the categories of emotions, say: **You've each found at least one word that belongs in each emotion category. We're going to combine those into one list. Then you're going to use them when you track your feelings for one day.** Share the Feelings Tracker handout from your screen. For each category, invite students to offer words. Students can say their words or type them in the chat feature of your online platform. Type the words into the document you're sharing. Have students add the words to their handouts, too. Then explain how to use the Feelings Tracker.
- The next time you meet remotely, have students share their completed Feelings Trackers. Discuss any patterns students noticed. For example, how did their feelings change based on what was happening at the time?



Tracking Feelings

Name: _____ Date: _____

Feelings Tracker

Instructions: Keep track of your feelings for a day. Try to use specific feelings words. Take notes about what happened when you had each feeling.

Feelings Word Bank: Write feelings words you can choose from below.

Happy	Sad	Scared	Surprised	Angry	Disgusted

Date: _____		
Time	Feeling(s)	What was happening
Wake up		
Morning		
Midday		
Afternoon		
Evening		
Before bed		