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**Mental Health Toolkit for Children Grades Kindergarten through Fifth**

Personal experience in community health and hospital settings peaked our interest in pediatric mental health concerns, especially following COVID-19. Our literature review confirmed a rise in pediatric mental health incidences following the pandemic. This finding allowed us to take a step back and think, “*How can we help this population learn about mental health?”.* To address our question and the community need, we created a toolkit filled with education, activities, and resources to help children and adolescents grades kindergarten through fifth manage their emotions and understand mental health. The toolkit below is divided into three sections: activities we found appropriate for kindergarten through fifth graders, then kindergarten through second graders, and finally, third through fifth graders. We hope you have as wonderful of a time implementing this toolkit as we did creating it. We are so excited to share this project with you as we advocate for the mental health of our pediatric populations!

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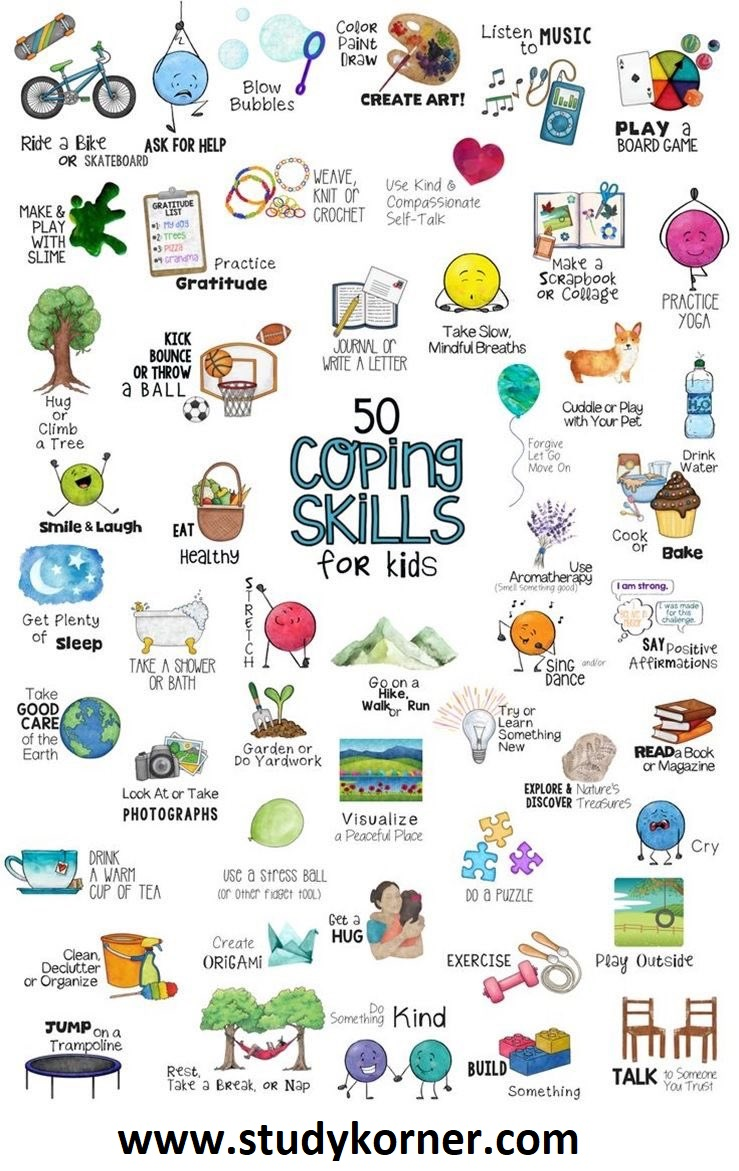
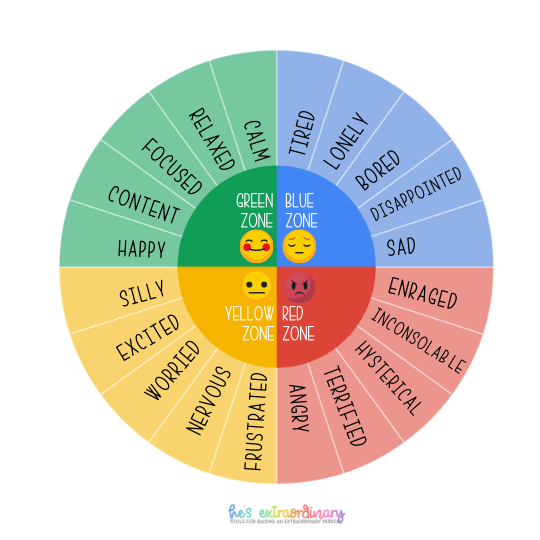
**Activities for Grades Kindergarten through Fifth**

1. ***Wellness Yoga***
   1. Total time: Ten to fifteen minutes
   2. Yoga is a great way for children to be in tune with their emotions. It allows them to take a minute to breathe, move their body, and for this activity, think or say positive words to themselves. Research has proven that this is an effective mindfulness and calm down activity for children (Burnett, 2022).
   3. Poses how to:
      1. “I am strong.” Pretend to be a surfer.
         1. To do Warrior 2 Pose: From standing position, step one foot back, placing the foot so that it is facing slightly outwards. Move your arms straight out, keeping them just below your shoulders, bend your front knee, and look forward. Pretend to be a surfer and use your strength to catch tricky waves.
      2. “I am kind.” Pretend to be a tree.
         1. To do Tree Pose: Stand on one leg, bend your knee, place the bottom of your foot on the opposite inner thigh, and balance. Sway like a tree. Think of trees being kind by offering shade, creating oxygen, and providing homes to animals.
      3. “I am brave.” Pretend to be a skier.
         1. To do Chair Pose: Stand tall with your feet hip-width apart, bend your knees, and keep a straight back. Hold your hands out in front of you, pretending to grasp ski poles as you fly down a ski run like a brave and fearless skier.
      4. “I am friendly.” Pretend to be a dog.
         1. To do Downward-Facing Dog Pose: Bend down and place your palms flat on the ground. Step your feet back to create an upside-down V shape with your hips high in the air. Straighten your legs, relax your head and neck, and look down between your legs. Think of being an eager and friendly dog.
      5. “I am wise.” Pretend to be an owl.
         1. To do Hero Pose: Drop your knees to the ground and come down to rest on your heels. Then pretend to be a wise owl perched on a tree. Twist your upper body one way and then the other.
   4. **Associated PDFs on Blackboard:**
      1. **Calm Down Yoga Routine for Kids.**
      2. **Calm Down Yoga.**
   5. [](https://childhood101.com/yoga-for-kids/)
   6. 
2. ***Mindful breathing exercises***
   1. Total time: Five to ten minutes
   2. Mindful breathing education is beneficial for the pediatric population as it allows them to take a minute to breathe before reacting to a stressful situation. This also includes a muscle tension exercise that puts emphasis on tensing and relaxing each muscle group to relieve stress. Learning this coping mechanism early can allow the children to understand their emotions and manage their reactions. This activity would be great to use for a cool-down exercise during CATCH (“Action for…”, 2021) (“Action for…”, 2022)!
   3. Additional activity: Turtle story that incorporates stopping and thinking when angry. Encourages children to stop and think before acting on their emotions. It also talks about how their reactions affect the people around them (Lentini et. al., 2005).
   4. **Associated PDFs on Blackboard:**
      1. **Mindful Breathing Exercise Cards.**
      2. **Mindful Breathing Exercise Poster.**
      3. **Tucker Turtle Takes Time Mindful Breathing PPT.**
   5. [](https://www.pinterest.com/pin/189995678010988150/)

**Activities for Grades Kindergarten through Second**

1. ***Guided meditation*** 
   1. Total time: Five to ten minutes.
   2. Mediation is a great tool to help children get in touch with their emotions and feelings. This allows the students to take a minute to breathe and center themselves in their mind, body, and feelings. Even if the meditation is brief, it allows for a few moments of mindfulness and relaxation.
   3. Explain to the students that mediation is taking a few moments to notice what you are doing with your body and your senses. For example, explain to them that meditation focuses on how you’re breathing and moving. Explain how focusing on these things that we are always doing can help them to feel rested and calm.
   4. This is a helpful resource to regulate emotions and eliminate stress.
   5. Videos of meditation on YouTube:
      1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iplZGpP2VO0>
      2. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i3OoBoY3Sek>
   6. **No associated PDF on Blackboard. Video links on Blackboard.**
2. ***Mood boosters*** 
   1. Total time: Five minutes.
   2. Another activity that you can do is help them make a list of activities that can boost their mood. Work with your kids on making a list of all the things they like to do when they're happy—such as dancing, singing, kicking a ball, or telling jokes. Those are their mood boosters.
   3. Then, when they're feeling down, encourage them to do something on their mood booster list. Even if they don't feel like doing it at first, doing something fun can help them feel better.
   4. **No associated PDF on Blackboard.**
3. **Teaching Turtle** 
   1. Total Time: Ten minutes.
   2. Teach the group that this can be used when they recognize that they feel angry.
   3. Tell them to think “Stop” to themselves. Then encourage them to go into their “shell”. The shell can be a crouched position or even the child pulling their shirt up to their face for a moment. Take three deep breaths and think calming thoughts, such as:
      1. “I can calm down,”
      2. “I am OK”
      3. “I am good at solving problems”
   4. Children can also think about relaxing their body one body part at a time. To conclude the activity, tell the students to come out of their shell when they feel calm and ready to think of solutions to the problem or stress they are facing.
      1. 
   5. **No associated PDF on Blackboard.**

**Activities for Grades Third through Fifth**

1. ***Introductory Explanation- What is mental health?***
   1. Total time: Five to ten minutes
   2. Ask the students to talk with a group of their peers (self-chosen or count off) about what they think the words “mental health” mean. Then ask for their feedback.
   3. Define mental health as the way we act, think, and feel and how we manage our emotions and the experiences we have. Explain how a healthy mind and brain are important in maintaining our overall health. Also discuss that just like we must keep our body healthy by eating the right foods and exercising, we must keep our mind healthy by understanding our emotions and how to handle them (Alperin & Benes, 2021).
   4. **No associated PDF on Blackboard.**
2. ***Coping Skills Sheet***
   1. Total time: Five to ten minutes
   2. Coping skills are activities we can do to calm our stress and make us feel less upset. By identifying what we do that can make us happy, we are taking care of our mental health. This sheet has awesome activities that are great ways to take a break and relax when we are feeling our very strong emotions.
   3. Have students talk with nursing students about what activities they like to do on this sheet, or have them list it on the back. Have students circle five of the coping skills they would like to use to help when their emotions are strong. (Study Korner, 2021).
   4. **Associated PDFs on Blackboard:** 
      1. **Coping Skills Sheet.**
   5. 
3. ***“Feeling through colors” education and activity***
   1. Total time: Ten minutes.
   2. This is a resource that the children can use to help explain their emotions. When feeling overwhelmed, excited, angry, worried, or anything in between, this color wheel can be used to visualize and show friends, family, or teachers, how the student is feeling.
   3. This could be used in the beginning of CATCH or during snack time. Give the students a blank heart to color. Give the students the color wheel and have them color the heart with the emotions they felt throughout the day (*Copy of emotion wheel,* n.d.).
   4. **Associated PDFs on Blackboard** 
      1. **Emotions Color Wheel.**
      2. **Emotions Color Wheel Blank Heart.**
      3. [](https://hes-extraordinary.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Copy-of-Emotion-Wheel.png.webp)
4. ***Emotion Charades***
   1. Total time: Ten minutes
   2. For this activity, the goal is to have the children act out emotions, and identify ways to cope with and express that feeling in a healthy way to others. Incorporate this into a CATCH game by having the kids run, hop, skip, frog hop, etc. around the gym. When you say stop they have to find a partner and make a face related to the emotion you mention. Then ask the children what they could do if feeling that emotion. At the end, talk as a group about what would be appropriate things to say to a person expressing that emotion, what to do when you are feeling that emotion, and who is someone to talk to if that emotion gets too much to handle alone. The goal of this activity is to help the children recognize emotions and identify ways to cope with them (“10 Activities…”, 2021).
5. ***My Safe Sheet***
   1. Total time: Ten minutes.
   2. Worksheet made for the children to identify people they can talk to and activities they can do if they feel that they are having a bad day or unable to handle their emotions. This resource can be completed over multiple days, but should not take more than ten minutes of time total.
      1. **Associated PDF on Blackboard:**
         1. **My Safe Sheet.**

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