

# ***Life Promotion***

## ***Wellness Portfolio Assignment***

### ***Teacher Notes***

This assignment has been adapted from ***Strengthening Our Connections to Promote Life: A life Promotion Toolkit by Indigenous Youth.***

<https://thunderbirdpf.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Life-Promotion-Toolkit-WEB.pdf>

This project is intended to encourage students to develop mindfulness and coping strategies. Strategies and mindful activities can be used to maintain balance when experiencing mental distress and mental health problems including someone who has a diagnosed mental disorder. However, practicing and implementing these strategies when there is no distress or problem better allows for natural use when one is elevated. By creating their own activities and developing strategies, students' comfort level will increase in hopes of making it a natural response.

The assignment asks students to complete at least five tasks, but you can adapt the assignment to meet your evaluation criteria. The project allows for various formats to be used. Students have chosen to create a PowerPoints and scrapbooks. We recommend that #6 Creating a self-care Kit be mandatory as once the assignment is complete, the other activities can become part of the self-care kit.

#### **Procedure:**

1. Give each student a copy of the assignment and read the "Statement on Life Promotion" section. This exposes students to Indigenous perspectives around life-promotion, resiliency and connection to land, community, self, and spirit. You may also choose to complement this assignment with a video from our speaker series.
2. Read the assignment. Emphasize the importance of nutrition, sleep and staying hydrated.
3. Project the color slide pages and go through each activity. These activities are self-explanatory and correspond with the listed numbered activity page. Have students highlight which five activities they will complete.
4. Students should begin to plan what format they want to use.
5. Dependent on your class, this project may take 3 to 5 class periods.

**\*\*We have not included an evaluation rubric as we wanted to allow flexibility for integration of subject areas and criteria**



## **LIFE PROMOTION ASSIGNMENT**

### ***Statement on Life Promotion from the Youth Action Group for Life Promotion***

When confronting obstacles in life, Indigenous people turn to Elders for guidance. Through storytelling and knowledge transfer, Indigenous communities have collected the tools and strength to overcome the hardships faced. The Life Promotion toolkit was developed in response to communities who desired to implement life promotion initiatives. As the first step to mental health, life promotion aims to build on the intergenerational strength of relations who came before us. Life promotion encourages people to strengthen a connection to land, community, self, and spirit, equipping them to live a long prosperous life.

### **Assignment:**

Using the teachings from ***The Life Promotion Toolkit*** you will create a wellness portfolio by choosing activities from the attached options provided. Think about your own mental health and what areas you feel need attention. These activities can help to create strategies that you can use all the time. Strategies can be used to maintain balance in your life when you are feeling mentally healthy but can be even more beneficial when you are experiencing Mental Distress or a Mental Health Problem.

This assignment is designed to help you recognize activities that will help with coping. It is important to note that Nutrition, Sleep and Exercise are also essential to your mental health. Please try to ensure you are drinking 8 to 10 glasses water during the day, eating well, getting at least 8 to 10 hours of sleep, and doing some sort of physical activity for at least 20 minutes per day.



**Be creative with this assignment! Make this “your own” personal well-being portfolio. Choose activities that you are comfortable doing, have meaning to you, and you enjoy. After viewing and reading through the different activity choices, circle or highlight the options you will work on.**

1. *Knowing my Response-Abilities*  
Answer the questions given in a personal journal format.
2. *Changing the Way, We Speak*  
Write a paragraph about changing your language to become more positive. Give three personal examples of how you would do this.
3. *The power of Affirmations*  
Create a list of 5 affirmations for yourself. You can simply list them or add an artistic flare.
4. *Creativity Activities*  
Complete 2 of the activities listed
5. *Fidgeting and its Importance*  
Create a fidget from the ideas given
6. *Create a Self-Care Kit*  
List what you would put into this kit and then try your best to get what is needed to create it.
7. *Morals and Values Activity*  
Sketch 5 rocks and on the face of the rock print 5 of the listed values or morals that you feel represent what you believe. Or, if you have access to real rocks, you can use a permanent marker and write directly on these. Rocks can then go into your self-care kit.
8. *Self-Reflection Activity*  
Close your eyes and think about how you are feeling today. Draw an image and then reflect on it. It can be anything real or abstract.
9. *Exploring Our Identities*  
Reflect on and answer the four essential questions.
10. *Meditation*  
Write a brief explanation about if you found meditating to be useful to you. Meditation is something that you must try a few times to feel comfortable with it. There are many free apps and videos on YouTube that can help guide meditation.
11. *Music*  
Create a song/play list that has meaning to you and can be used to help cope with different emotional states.



# Knowing My Response-Abilities

*Understanding what you're good at and what you can do.*



## Purpose of the Activity

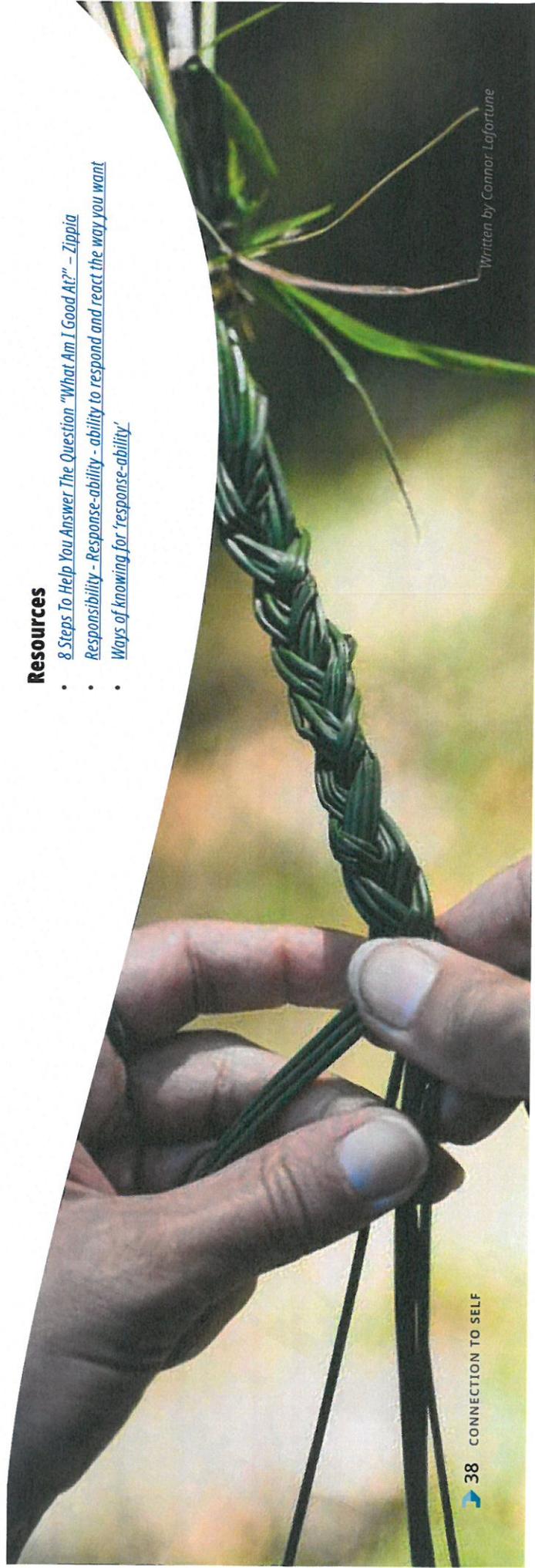
Our responsibilities often refer to our ability to respond. If we understand what we can undertake, we can better accomplish our tasks. This activity is a self-reflection, you will be presented with a list of questions and you are challenged to answer them about yourself. Your responses can be done orally, written out, or shared with a trusted person. You can choose to answer all the questions, some, or simply one. These questions and your answers challenge you to determine how you can manage your responsibilities. Understanding our "response-abilities," better prepares us to succeed in accomplishing what is expected of us. This activity aims to determine your strengths, capabilities, and ability to respond.

## Questions

1. What skills have helped you thrive?
2. What activities make you feel empowered?
3. What comes to you naturally?
4. How do you spend your free time?
5. What do others think you're good at?
6. What are you passionate about?
7. Do you overwhelm yourself with tasks?
8. Do you have enough time in your day to accomplish everything you set out?
9. Do you need to limit the things you undertake?
10. Do you take control of your life?
11. Do you learn from those around you?
12. Do you keep an open mind?
13. What is one thing you would change about your ability to respond to challenges?
14. How will you work to change it?

## Resources

- [8 Steps To Help You Answer The Question "What Am I Good At?" - Zippia](#)
- [Responsibility - Response-ability - ability to respond and react the way you want](#)
- [Ways of knowing for 'response-ability'](#)



## Changing the Way We Speak +

Understanding language.

### What?

Language is one of the many ways we have learned to communicate as people. However, how we use language can influence how we make others feel, and how we feel. This activity/practice aims to change how we speak to ourselves. This practice can be done when speaking about ourselves to others, and when we self-talk. When we change the narrative, we can begin to notice its positive effects on our lives.

1. When speaking about work, we often state *"I have to go to work tomorrow"* \*sigh\* We are challenging you to change that narrative. Instead, say *"I get to go to work tomorrow."* Using a positive language can help affirm you. When we acknowledge that others may not have a job and that we are lucky to have one, we begin to see the privilege we have in working.
2. When creating a list of things that need to get done, we often title it a *to-do* list. This practice does not help show initiative and urgency. We encourage you to instead write a *will-do* list. How we use language can subconsciously encourage us to get things done. When we say we have a *will-do* list, we are encouraged to get things done. This being said, we do not recommend adding everything to this list and overworking yourself, we do however recommend you create yourself small, accomplishable, *will-do* lists and complete them daily.
3. This practice can be adapted in various ways. Once we learn how to use language within ourselves positively, we can include it in every aspect of our lives. Instead of saying *"I procrastinated all day,"* say that you *"prepared yourself for tomorrow."* Instead of saying you *"did nothing all day,"* say that you *"took time for yourself to breathe and recharge."*
4. Studies show that it takes nine positives to combat one negative. This statistic does not only include the negative comments that we make about ourselves in our heads but also speaks to the negative way we speak of ourselves to others. Changing the way we speak about and to ourselves can be challenging, however, it is immensely beneficial to our mental health. Language impacts us in various ways, why not let it **positively** impact us!?



## The Power of Affirmations



Affirmations are positive statements we can say to ourselves to reframe a negative mindset. It is not a practice of ignoring our negative feelings or experiences, but rather a practice of replacing negative self-talk with positive self-talk. The way we speak and think about ourselves impacts our outlook on life significantly. Your thoughts become your reality. What you think about and focus on is what you attract in life. This is why positive affirmations can be so powerful.

### Examples of positive affirmations:

- I am worthy
- I deserve happiness and healing
- I love and care about myself
- I nourish and fuel my body with healthy food
- I am enough
- I love being me
- I believe in myself

### Resources

- [Self-Talk: Why It Matters](#)
- [How to Change the Way You Talk to Yourself](#)
- [How to Change How You Talk to \(and See\) Yourself](#)
- [Motivation & Goals What is Positive Self-Talk? \(Incl. Examples\)](#)
- [Positive Self-Talk: Benefits and Techniques](#)
- [Mayo Mindfulness: Overcoming negative self-talk – Mayo Clinic News Network](#)
- [Power Of Words - How Words Affect Our Lives & Behavior](#)
- [Effect of Daily Affirmations \(Positive thoughts\) on Subconscious Mind, Health and Happiness - Wholesome Ayurveda](#)
- [Positive Affirmations \(apuzletmind.com\)](#)

believe in yourself

# Creativity Activities

(Music, Drawing, Journaling)

## Activity

Challenge your creative self. This can be done in various mediums such as visual art, written art, and auditory art.

1. Gather some art supplies (*paint/pencils/crayons/canvas/paper*) and create an artistic piece.
2. Grab a pen and paper or journal and write about your day, your feelings, or create a story. Journaling can be beneficial as it can let out pent-up thoughts and act as a release.
3. Auditory art can include listening to music, playing music, and singing. This can be both traditional and modern music. Create a self-care playlist, dance to your favorite songs, or go for a drive and listen to the radio.

## Lessons

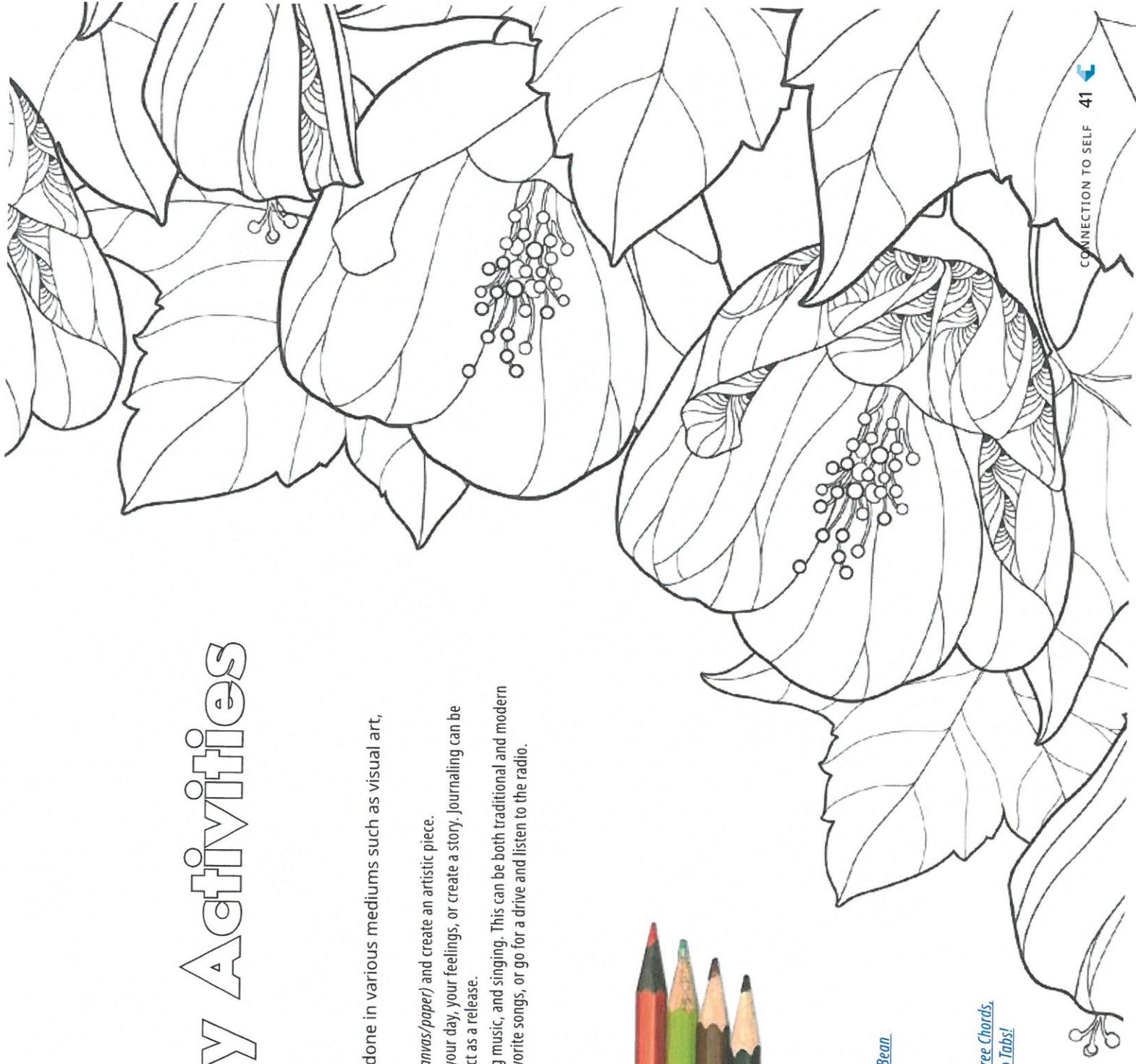
1. Releasing pent-up emotions.
2. Allowing yourself to be free.
3. Having fun alone.
4. Learning to take care of yourself mentally.



## Resources

- [17 Journaling Tips For Beginners \(And How To Start\)](#)
- [75 Journaling Prompts for Your Best Life — The Bliss Bean](#)
- [How To Create A Self-Care Playlist](#)
- [100 Silly Drawing Prompts to Engage Your Students](#)
- [ArtPrompts | A Prompt Generator for Artists](#)
- [Ultimate Guitar Tabs - 1,100,000 songs catalog with free Chords, Guitar Tabs, Bass Tabs, Ukulele Chords and Guitar Pro Tabs!](#)

Written by Connor Lafortune



# Fidgeting and Its Importance



## Backstory

Anxiety is very prevalent in Indigenous communities due to various factors. It is manifested physically in a plethora of ways:

- Movement
- Shaking
- Tapping
- Deconcentration
- Panic
- Silence
- Shyness
- Avoiding eye contact
- Not knowing what to do with your hands

Fidgets allow the body to use up its energy and calm down. Anxiety often involves the looping of thoughts— if an activity is done continuously instead, the mind does not have to continue its cycle. Fidgets help to reduce that anxiety— keeping the body occupied so the mind can rest. For many, fight or flight occurs even when one is not in danger. To be stagnant might make some feel vulnerable; like the canoe, if we keep floating along we are consistently going somewhere. When one does not have control of their environment, situation, or in this case, a presentation, having something they can control can be euphoric. For many, movement means safety due to the nature of having control.

## Finding Your Roots

Movement and sounds can be grounding— like placing our feet on the earth and taking a breath, movement can allow our bodies to find comfort in a space. Fidgeting often causes sound, although this can be bothersome, a light tapping sound, the sound of keyboard keys, or the clicking of a pen can allow for comfort, much like the sound of the wind, the waves, or the rain.

## Anxious Minds, Anxious Bodies

The restless mind makes the body move— when one cannot find structure in their thoughts, one often searches for a physical manifestation of that structure. A structure can simply be a drawing, a doodle, or writing on a piece of paper. When anxious thoughts arise, it can be difficult to focus on anything else, therefore, having something to manifest that anxiety physically allows your mind to rest.

## Concentration by Deconcentrating — Action vs Thought

For some individuals, having to focus on only one thing can cause a lot of stress. These individuals often require a second activity to make their experiences more enjoyable. The concept of concentration by deconcentrating is something that can be used when reading, writing, or learning something new on an instrument. By doing two or three things at once, you allow your brain to not hyper-focus one thing but rather to naturally act.

## Drawing Distracts You From Unwanted Thoughts

Art can be relaxing; it is a way to express yourself and be creative. It does not have boundaries— said simply, you can colour outside the lines without consequence or worry of reprimand.

## Things that can be used to fidget:

- Fidget spinner
- Fidget blocks
- Colouring books
- Pens/markers/crayons/pencils and paper
- Slinkies
- Beadwork kits
- Hand sewing project
- Mr. Tangle
- Rings/necklaces/jewelry
- Pen caps
- Bobby pins
- Elastics
- Tape
- Magnets
- Playdough

## Resources

- [Anxiety Disorders and Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: The Current State of Knowledge and Directions for Future Research](#)
- [Drawing for Anxiety: Benefits, Easy Exercises, & More.](#)
- [12 Effects of Anxiety on the Body](#)
- [Aboriginal Mental Health: The statistical reality | Here to Help](#)

## Creating a Self-Care Kit



### Why?

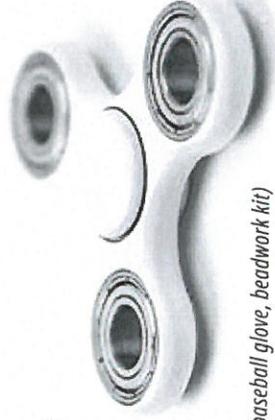
Creating a self-care kit can be both beneficial and practical. Your kit is customizable, it aims to help comfort you in times of need. This kit is meant to help you feel more relaxed and give you a break from stress. While creating your kit, you can add various things to keep your morals high when you are in need. For example, you might want to add positive notes to yourself, affirmations, words of advice, or your favourite quotes.

### How to Create Your Kit

We recommend you gather up items that make you most comfortable, this can range from activities, food, clothing, etc, and store them in one place. Create a self-care basket, bag, or bin that can include all your favourite things. This kit is meant to be accessible and fun. This kit can be used every day, periodically, or only when you need to relax. Self-care is an important activity that can be done simply for yourself.

### Examples of things to put in your kit:

- Bath products
- Your favourite snacks
- A list/playlist of your favourite songs
- Movies
- A journal
- A sketching pad
- Stress balls
- Fidget toys
- Your favourite activity (*video games, baseball glove, beadwork kit*)
- Your favourite blanket
- Comfy clothes (*PJs, a hoodie, jogging pants, cozy socks*)
- A book
- Words of affirmation
- Face masks
- Candles
- Your traditional medicines
- Tea/coffee
- Teddy bear
- Pictures
- Essential oils/diffuser/incense



# Morals and Values Activity



## Activity

1. Provide a bunch of small stones and smooth rocks for the youth to pick from or let the youth go outside and pick one for themselves. Ensure that the rocks can be written on and that they are approximately 2 inches in diameter.
2. Provide the youth with a list of morals and values, encouraging them to come up with some on their own as well. *(A list will be attached at the end of the activity.)*
3. Tell the students to pick five values or morals that they believe in.
4. Once they have five, tell them they need to leave one behind. This typically works better if you create a story, for example, you are headed on a trip and your suitcase can only fit four values, which one are you taking with you?
5. Afterward, tell them they need to leave two more behind, for example, you can only have a carry-on this time, two more must be left behind.
6. Now you need to make them choose one out of the two they have left, for example, you can only carry a backpack on your journey, you can only fit one value.
7. Once the youth have picked their one value, explain that just because they left the others behind doesn't mean they aren't part of their values, but they are not the most important one at this time.
8. After the youth has reflected on their value, have them write it on their stone on one side, and the date on the other.

## Examples of values:



## Purpose of the Activity

The youth can deduce what is important to them at this moment. They can bring the stone home and every time they look at it, they can see a value that they find important. Placing the date is also important as it reminds them how people can change and what one believes is the most important thing right now, might not be the most important thing later on. It can also help remind them in what direction they are headed and remind them of all the activities you might have done that day.

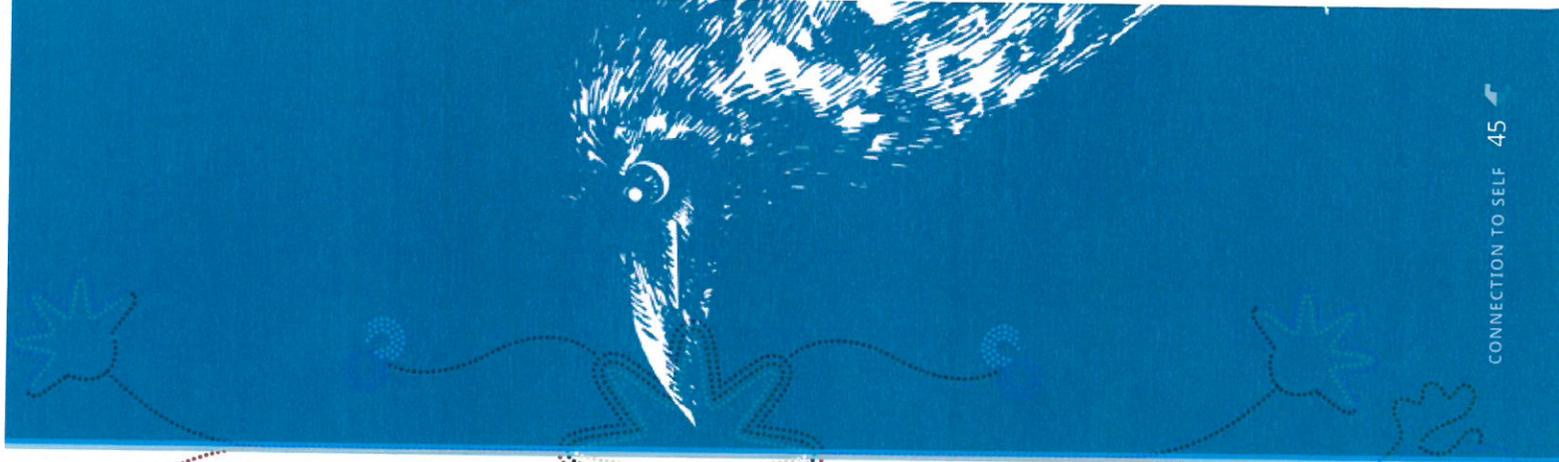
## Self-Reflection Activity

### Activity

1. Grab a piece of paper and something to write with (*crayon, pencil, marker*).
2. Close your eyes and think about this statement "*how are you feeling today?*".
3. Draw the image that came to mind with a lot or a little detail.

### Self-Reflection on Activity *(this can be shared as well)*

- How did the visualization of your thoughts/emotions make you feel?
- Were you able to see a clear picture?
- Was physically seeing your thoughts/emotions helpful?
- Would you ever use this practice to express yourself if you could not find the words to do so?



## Exploring Our Identities

The goal of this reflection activity is for us to explore our ideas behind our identities. Taking the time to honestly answer these questions can help us better understand ourselves so we can feel grounded as we move through the many phases of life. It's important to note that our answers may change over time as we continue to strengthen our identity and learn more about who we are at our core. When we truly begin to feel comfortable with ourselves, our confidence grows, and we can flourish spiritually, emotionally, mentally, and physically.

### **Who Am I?**

This first question helps us explore the many intersections that make up each of our unique stories. As we start to think about who we are as individuals, we can uncover more of our history. This can include our family history as well as our clan and tribal history. Reflecting on our connections to family crests and houses can help deepen our understanding of our place within these cultural contexts, helping us find our sense of Belonging. Other areas of life to explore with this question include sexual orientation, gender, and linguistic identities.

### **Where Do I Come From?**

This second question helps us explore our nation and tribal connections. As we reflect on what communities we come from, we can start to find Meaning for life through our respective cultural worldviews. Another way to approach this reflection could be: who am I accountable to?

### **Why Am I Here?**

This third question aims to help us narrow down our self-identified Purpose. What work fuels and energizes you? What or who inspires you to do the work that you do? Who is this work for? In what moments do you find you feel the happiest? Who or what is around when you feel this way? Answering these questions openly and honestly can help us understand the passions that drive us to do the work that we do.

### **Where Am I Going?**

This fourth question helps us begin to visualize the future we desire for ourselves. When faced with difficult life decisions, it's important to take a step back and ask ourselves "*does this decision support the life I envision for myself? Does this decision make me happy?*" When we can picture and feel excited about our future, we can then have Hope for what is to come.

### **Resources**

- [The Four Essential Questions — Regional Feather Carriers](#)

Written by Megan Metz





# Meditation

## Activity

1. Dim the lights in the room.
2. Empty the lungs of air.
3. Breathe in quietly through the nose for 4 seconds.
4. Hold the breath for a count of 7 seconds.
5. Exhale forcefully through the mouth.
6. Repeat the cycle up to 4 times.
7. While breathing focus on your breath and chest, ensure you are filling up your entire diaphragm which involves engaging your stomach muscles.

## Lesson

1. The diaphragm is key to improving the way we breathe; it encourages our body to make more use of oxygen, which slows our heart rate, lowers blood pressure, and overall improves our mental wellbeing.
2. Being able to connect with yourself quietly is a crucial step to healing as these moments also offer a chance to take stock of the day with a clear mind, thinking of both the good and the areas in which we need to improve.

## Resources

- *Headspace: Meditation for Beginners*
- *Diaphragmatic Breathing*



# CREATE A SONG PLAY-LIST

THAT...

- Makes you feel good
- Brings a smile to your face
- Makes you want to dance
- OR
- Helps you Relax
- Calms you down

