

Start Well

Five days of ready to use activities to connect, calm and begin your day

This resource is designed to help you and your students start the day, whether virtual or in-person, in a good way! Included are 5 days of ready to use learning activities designed to promote connection and calm and give you a chance as an educator to catch your breath. Each activity is designed to take approximately 15 minutes in total and can be used at the start of your day or following a transition in your day.

As you review these activities, consider your students - their varied strengths, needs, identities and experiences. Is there anything you would want to add or adapt from a culture, identity, or faith perspective? Any students that you might wish to check-in with in particular? These learning activities provide starting places for you, but you know your students best and can use your professional judgement in applying these ideas.

We hope this resource will provide both you and your students, an opportunity to explore strategies to use when feeling stressed or overwhelmed. Each of us is unique and strategies that work for some might not work for others, and that is okay. Included with the activities are some simple extension activities for use by parents and caregivers.

Be gentle with yourself. You've got this!





Day 1: Checking In

It can sometimes be challenging to connect with students, especially if they are learning remotely. The images provided in this check in activity give students an opportunity to visually express how they are feeling. There are moments throughout the day that may be difficult for some students, (starting the day, transitioning from recess, etc.) and they experience a range of feelings in response, and that's okay. By following the check in with a breathing activity you will be providing students with a concrete strategy that they may find helpful.

A: Check in

Share with students one of the check-in tools provided in the table below – teddy bears, emojis, or mood meter. Have them identify which image or word that they relate with most on that day.

*Suggested
for younger
students
(Kindergarten,
early Primary).*

*Suitable for
all ages.*

*Suggested
for Junior and
Intermediate.*

B: Strategy

Follow the check-in activity with one of these breathing strategies. Just press play and follow along. (Note these are sections of a larger video. The clips are cued up to start at the correct place. You will need to stop them once the breathing activity is finished.)

*Deep Belly Breathing –
Hot Chocolate
(Approximately 2 mins:
7:07 – 9:12).*

*Suggested for
Kindergarten, and
Primary.*

*Deep Belly Breathing
(Approximately 2 mins:
5:36 – 7:51).*

*Suggested for Junior
and Intermediate.*

C: Continue the learning

Share the following resources with parents/caregivers.

*Read aloud video –
"My Heart"
(4 mins, 9 seconds).*

*Activity: Deep
Belly Breathing
(Card #1).*





Day 2: Sharing Stories

The check in activity provides students with the opportunity to share with one another. This re-imagined version of show and tell is an interesting and fun spark for discussion that levels the playing field for learners. Everyone has a small object or an old object in their learning space, and there is a story that surrounds every object! By following the check in with a muscle relaxation activity you will be providing students with another strategy that may help them feel grounded and more ready to learn.

A: Check in – Find an object

Ask students to look for the oldest thing OR the smallest thing they can find in the space they are in right now. Give them one minute, then have them come back to their screen or desk with their item. If you are learning in-person you could have students look in their desk, cubby or backpack. Invite students to share the item they found. You can use the following questions, or some of your own that suit the age of your students, to guide the sharing:

- Tell us the story of your object. How did the object come to be in your space?
- Are there any feelings associated with the object?
- Do you think the object is valuable?

B: Strategy

Follow the check-in activity with this muscle relaxation strategy called Tense and Relax. Just press play and follow along. (Note some of these videos are sections from a larger video. The clips are cued up to start at the correct place. You will need to stop them once the activity is finished.)

*Muscle Relaxation –
Tense and Relax
(Approximately 4 mins:
8:27 – 12:33).*

*Suggested for
Kindergarten, and
Primary.*

*Muscle Relaxation:
Tense and Relax
(Approximately 6 mins:
7:48 – 13:55).*

*Suggested for Junior
and Intermediate.*

*Alternate Version:
Muscle Relaxation:
Tense and Relax.
(Approximately
4 minutes, 04 seconds).*

*Suggested for Junior
and Intermediate.*

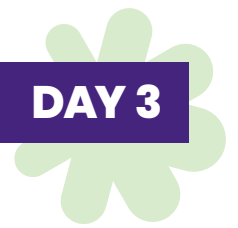
C: Continue the learning

Share the following resources with parents/caregivers.

*Read aloud video –
“What’s My Superpower?”
(10 mins 57 seconds).*

*Activity:
Show and Share
(Card #9).*





Day 3: Connect the Dots

This activity will shine a light on the strengths and interests of students. It also allows students to hear and learn about the views of their peers, as well as see possible connections that may bring them positive feelings. By following the check-in with a four-finger affirmation you can build on positive feelings and cultivate feelings of gratitude and confidence.

A: Check in – I in Image

Share with students one of the two charts with images below. We've provided a few formats to make it easier for in-person or for your virtual platform. Have students look through the images and choose one that they can relate to, or one that they are interested in. Students are then invited to share their choice and explain why they chose that image. This activity was originally designed for Junior, Intermediate and Secondary students – there are two versions below. If you teach Kindergarten or Primary, we would recommend downloading the linked slide deck and choosing just a few images to share with students.

*Suggested
for younger
students
(Kindergarten,
early Primary).*

*Suggested
for Junior and
Intermediate.*

B: Strategy

Following the check-in activity, continue with the affirmation strategy shared below. Just press play and follow along. (Note this is a section from a larger video. The clip is cued up to start at the correct place. You will need to stop it once the activity is finished.)

*"Four Finger Affirmation"
(Approximately 3 mins:
4:53 – 7:50).*

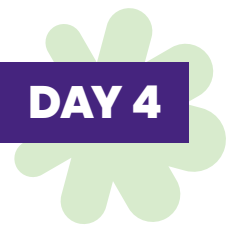
C: Continue the learning

Share the following resources with parents/caregivers.

*Read aloud video –
"We're All Wonders"
(5 mins 4 seconds).*

*Activity:
Kindness Jar
(Card #7).*





Day 4: Learning Together

This activity builds on the connections made in Day 3 and gives the opportunity for students to get to know each other and themselves better. Learning and practising strategies such as visualization can allow students to move past big emotions and make space for fostering a sense of calm.

A: Check in – Would you rather?

Share the 'Would you rather?' statements with students. You'll need to determine ahead of time how students will share their response to these questions. Options for virtual learning could include: turn cameras on and raise their hand for the option they would choose, answer in the chat, or use a respond button in the digital platform (e.g. thumbs up). Options for in-person could be similar - thumbs up or hands up, written responses on paper or white boards, or moving to a section of the room that corresponds with each answer. Students could also 'act out' their preferred choice – e.g., swimming or flying.

*"Would You Rather?"
available in chart
with text, or slides
with images.*

***Suggested for
younger students.***

*"Conversation
Starters" are PDF
with cards (see
Cards 43-54),
or click [here](#) to
download slides.*

***Suggested for
older students.***

B: Strategy

Follow up the check-in activity with a visualization strategy. Just press play and follow along. (Some videos are sections from a larger video. The clips are cued up to start at the correct place. You will need to stop them once the activity is finished.)

*Forest
Visualization
(Approx 3 mins:
0:40 – 2:43).*

*Visualization –
My Favourite
Place
(Approx 5 mins:
13:31 – 18:14).*

*Visualization –
My Favourite
Place
(Approx 4 mins:
13:51 – 17:46).*

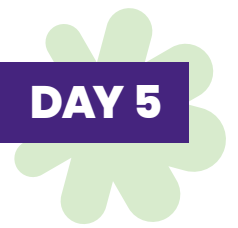
C: Continue the learning

Share the following resources with parents/caregivers.

*Read aloud video –
"Sweetest Kulu"
(5 mins 58 seconds).*

*Activity:
Organizing Pause
(Card #11).*





Day 5: All the Feels!

Activities that allow students the opportunity to check in with their own thoughts and feelings can bolster their sense of well-being despite uncertainties that exist. These fun and interactive feeling flashcards provide a variety of visuals that may help students enhance their emotional vocabulary. Following the check-in, share the muscle relaxation strategy below to provide students with another tool for their stress management toolbox.

A: Check in – Name that emotion

Ask students what feeling they associate with the emojis shown on the flashcards. There are 18 flashcards, so depending on the age of your students you can use them all or use a smaller selection. When naming the emotions on the cards, remind students that not everyone will associate the same feeling with each image, and that's ok! Also, some emotions are expressed in similar ways. For example – joy, excitement, happiness.

Feelings Flashcards – available as a PDF or slide deck link.

Optional extension – When you're done naming the emotions students can check-in and share which emoji best represents how they are feeling today.

B: Strategy

Follow up the check-in activity with a muscle relaxation strategy. Just press play and follow along. (Note these are sections of a larger video. The clips are cued up to start at the correct place. You will need to stop them once the activity is finished.)

*Muscle Relaxation –
Chair Stretches
(Approx 2 mins:
6:33 – 8:42).*

*Suggested for
younger students.*

*Muscle Relaxation –
Owl Stretch
(Approx 2 mins:
5:53 – 7:48).*

*Suggested for
older students.*

C: Continue the learning

Share the following resources with parents/caregivers.

*Read Aloud video –
"Visiting Feelings"
(5 mins 14 seconds).*

*Activity:
"Emotion Charades"
(Card #3).*

If you are concerned about a student:

In these uncertain times, it may be more challenging to notice when changes in a student's behaviour or emotions are occurring. As an educator supporting learning, you have regular contact with students and may notice when they are struggling with a mental health problem. Taking a proactive approach to connect with students individually can help you to know your students and recognize when they may need more support. For further information check out the [ONE CALL Desk Reference for Educators](#) or contact your boards [Mental Health Leader](#).

