



**stay grounded,
stay strong**

**THE B'YES EMPOWERMENT
TOOLKIT**

This initiative has been made possible through a financial contribution from the Public Health Agency of Canada. The views expressed herein do not necessarily reflect those of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of:

Black youth who shared their voices, insights, and lived experiences

The ACPNet-BC executive team, working group, and advisory members

Margaret Mubanda, President, Daughters of Hope

Tricia-Kay Williams, mental health therapist and advocate

University of Toronto MPH students: Ayan Mohamed, Dhara Chauhan, and Fatima Faruq

Community partners across BC who support mental wellness for African, Caribbean, and Black communities



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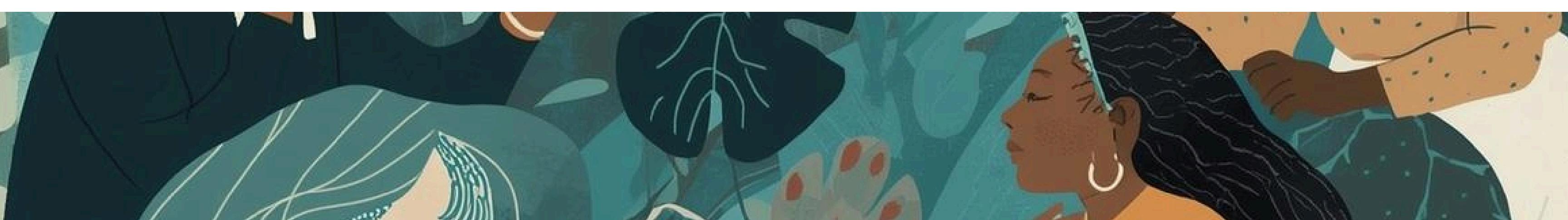
Introduction

Hi, welcome to the Black Youth Empowerment for Social Inclusion and Mental Well-being (B'YES) resource. This project was built for you to raise awareness about mental health, break down barriers like social exclusion, and strengthen Black youth skills through workshops and community events.

We also want to acknowledge that conversations about mental health can be difficult because of stigma that still exists in many Black communities. This toolkit aims to challenge that stigma by creating space for open dialogue, promoting understanding, and reminding youth that seeking support is a powerful step toward healing and strength.

This toolkit was co-created with Black youth, youth leaders, parents of youth, and registered counselors through advisory and working group sessions. Together, we shaped it to reflect real experiences, practical tools, and community care.

Think of it as your guide to resources, strategies, and inspiration that can help you stay grounded, connected, and strong.



How to Use this Toolkit

The B'YES Mental Health Toolkit was created by and for Black youth to support your mental well-being. Inside, you'll find tools, reflections, and resources you can use at your own pace, in your own way.

Whether you're feeling overwhelmed, curious about mental health, or just looking for ways to care for yourself, this toolkit is here for you.

Who it's for

- Black youth (ages 15- 24) living in BC
- Peer mentors, educators, or caregivers supporting Black youth
- Community members who want to promote Black mental wellness

How to use it

1. Choose what you need
2. You don't have to read it all at once. Start with the section that feels most helpful today, maybe a breathing exercise, a reflection prompt, or just a few affirmations.
3. Make it your own
4. This toolkit is yours. Download it from [ACPNet website](#), write in it, draw in it, print pages, or keep it digital. Use it on your own or with someone you trust.
5. Come back when you need to
6. Mental health is a journey, not a one-time activity. Keep this toolkit nearby for tough days, quiet moments, or when you want to reconnect with yourself.

Share it forward!

If a page, quote, or activity helps you, pass it on. You are not alone, and your healing can spark healing in someone else.



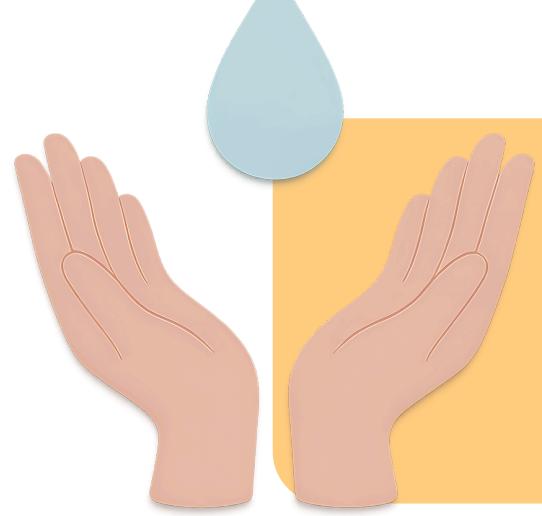
MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES - GROUNDING AND COPING



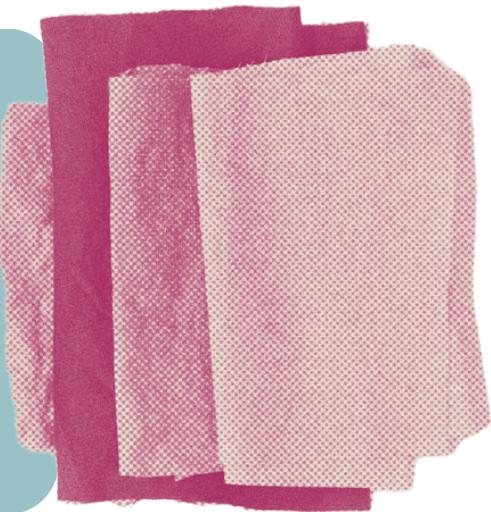
What Is Grounding?

Grounding is a mental health strategy that helps you refocus your attention on the present moment by engaging your body, senses, or environment. It's often used to interrupt overwhelming thoughts, stress, or emotional distress. (Raypole, 2024)

Physical Grounding Activities



Hands in water: Feel the temperature and flow of cold or warm water on your skin. Focus on the sensations to shift your attention from distress to the here and now (Raypole, 2022).



Touch nearby objects: Pick up an object - a bracelet, pen, or fabric - and describe its colour, shape, texture, and weight. This helps centre your awareness in your surroundings (Raypole, 2022).



Hold ice: Place an ice cube in your hand and notice how the temperature changes. The cold sensation helps bring you out of emotional overwhelm (Raypole, 2022).



Use your hands : Rub your palms together, snap your fingers, or hold a grounding object like a smooth stone, shea butter tin, or a piece of kente cloth.

MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES - GROUNDING AND COPING

Breathing & Movement

Box Breathing

Inhale for 4 seconds → Hold for 4 → Exhale for 4 → Hold for 4. Repeat for 3–5 rounds. Great for calming the nervous system.



Movement Break

Dance to your favourite Afrobeat, soca, or hip-hop track for 2–3 minutes. Feel your body move, release tension, and reconnect with joy.

Take a walk or stretch

Focus on your steps, your breath, or your surroundings as you move. Movement helps ground your body and calm your mind (Raypole, 2022).



Mental Grounding: 5-4-3-2-1 Senses Check

Name:

- 5 things you can see
- 4 things you can feel
- 3 things you can hear
- 2 things you can smell
- 1 thing you can taste

This is a powerful, portable grounding tool that engages all your senses.



MENTAL HEALTH PRACTICES - GROUNDING AND COPING

Name a Memory

Visualize a moment of Black joy – a family celebration, a cultural event, a laugh with friends, or an achievement. Hold onto how it made you feel.

Play a Memory Game

Look at an image, then look away and list every detail you remember. This activates focus and presence (Raypole, 2022).



Speak your truth: Cultural affirmations

Say aloud or to yourself

“I am safe. I am rooted. I carry the strength of my ancestors.”

Other affirmations to try:

My voice matters, even when it shakes.
Joy is resistance.
I am not alone — I am connected to a powerful community.
Rest is radical. I deserve peace.
I carry the dreams of those before me.

Create or colour

Doodle your emotions, colour a mandala, or use paint to express what words can't. This is a great non-verbal release for tension and emotion.

TRY THESE FREE APPS AND DIGITAL RESOURCES TO PRACTISE GROUNDING ON YOUR OWN:

MINDSHIFT CBT:
TOOLS FOR
MANAGING ANXIETY

BREATHR: GUIDED
MINDFULNESS AND
BREATHING EXERCISES

ROOTD: PANIC
AND ANXIETY
RELIEF

THE MINDFULNESS APP
MEDITATION AND
SLEEP TO IMPROVE
HEALTH

THE VILLAGE! ON THE
APP STORE - TRAUMA-
INFORMED GUIDED
MEDITATIONS, TALKS
AND MUSIC TO
SUPPORT HEALING
JOURNEY.

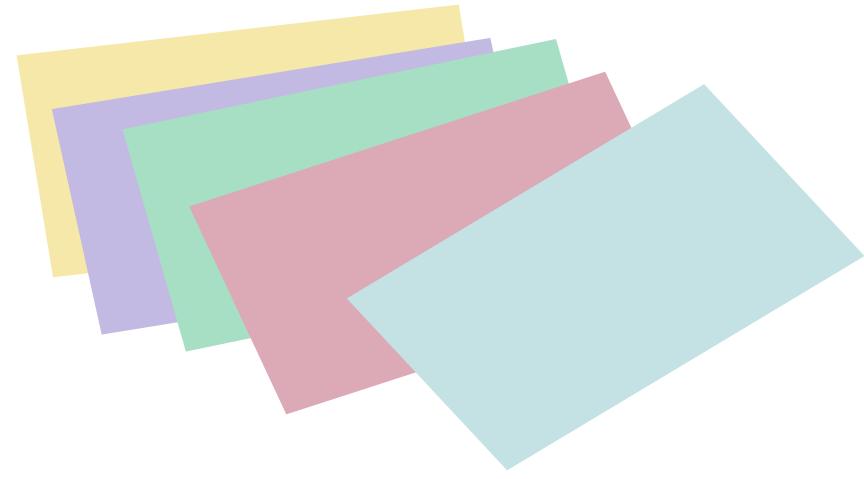
EXHALE - APPS ON
GOOGLE PLAY - AN
APP FOR BLACK
WOMEN OFFER
BREATHING AND
OTHER MENTAL WELL
BEING RESOURCES.

MY POSSIBLE SELF:
THE MENTAL HEALTH
APP - MENTAL HEALTH
TOOLKIT WITH
GROUNDING
ACTIVITIES, COPING
STRATEGIES, AND
MOOD TRACKING

YOUTUBE - SEARCH
“BLACK MENTAL
WELLNESS GUIDED
MEDITATION” FOR
MORE VIDEO



AFFIRMATION CARD DECKS FOR BLACK YOUTH



1 Blackfullness Affirmation Cards

50 affirmation cards inspired by the elements (air, water, earth, fire), designed to center intent and groundedness.

- Available at Blackfullness shop- \$9.99 USD (blackfullness.com)
- [View Deck & Order](#) (site link via citation)

2 Magical Black Girl Affirmation Cards by The Conscious Queen

36 beautifully designed cards focusing on self-awareness, relationships, self-love, and empowerment — tailored for young Black girls and women.

- Priced at \$21 USD ([The Conscious Queen](#)) [See & Buy](#)

3 Digital Affirmation Cards for Black Boys by Brianna Laren

A downloadable set of 40 uplifting and confidence-building digital cards. Ideal for daily positive reinforcement for Black boys.

- \$25 USD, digital product ([The Conscious Queen](#), [Brianna Laren](#))
- [Download Here](#)

4 Afrocentric Affirmation Cards by Africa On My Back

A month-long deck (31 cards) featuring African proverbs and quotes from Black authors like Maya Angelou — promoting connection, focus, and perseverance.

- Available online ([Brianna Laren](#), [Africa On My Back](#)). [Explore & Purchase](#)

5 African American Princesses

Affirmation Cards by Culturs

52 affirmations with royalty-inspired art-ideal for weekly uplift, positivity, and connection with identity.

- \$23.99 USD ([Africa On My Back](#), [shop.cultursmag.com](#))
- [Check It Out](#)



6 ABC Affirmation Flash Cards – Black Girl Magic by Liberated Young

A learning-friendly deck with 26 affirmations — perfect for early childhood, literacy, and confidence-building.

- Available online ([shop.cultursmag.com](#), [liberatedyoung.com](#)). [Learn More & Order](#)

GROUNDING TOOLS FOR BLACK YOUTH

While many grounding techniques are universally helpful, culturally affirming methods can strengthen identity and resilience. Here are two grounded, reflective resource hubs:



AAKOMA PROJECT

Founded by Dr. Alfiee Breland-Noble, this nonprofit provides toolkits, workshops, and culturally specific mental health resources for Black youth.

- [Visit AAKOMA Project](#) (searchable site offering free guides)

VERYWELL MIND – BLACK THERAPIST SELF-CARE TIPS

Includes evidence-based, culturally resonant grounding tools such as journaling, ancestry honoring, breathwork, and gratitude.

- [Read Tips & Techniques](#) (liberatedyoung.com)

USING THESE RESOURCES TOGETHER

1. Pick a grounding practice (like breathwork, gratitude journaling, or sensory color walks).
2. Draw a daily affirmation card from one of the decks above.
3. Reflect on its meaning, write it in a journal or discuss with a mentor/peer.
4. Revisit weekly, noting how it impacted mood, confidence, or self-awareness.



EMOTIONAL RELEASE STRATEGIES

Building Supportive Relationships

Talk to a trusted adult (parent, teacher, youth leader, or counsellor) about your thoughts and emotions (Salami et al., 2022).

Connect with friends and peers who understand your lived experience, as it creates belonging and shared strength (Jacob et al., 2022).

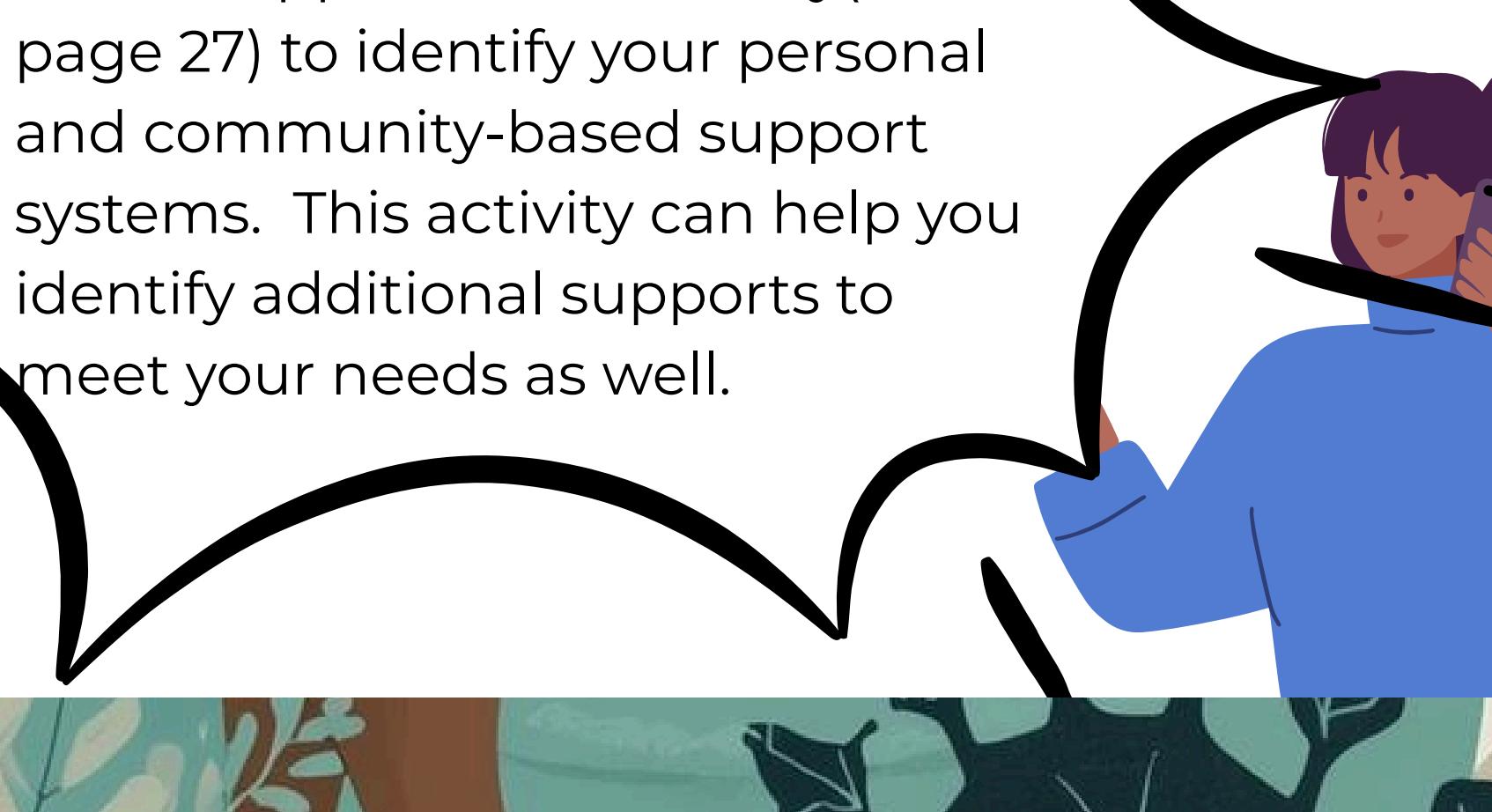
Engage with community organizations (check the toolkit for a list of community organizations) or peer-led groups that offer safe, affirming spaces for Black youth (Nia Centre for the Arts, 2021)

Join youth circles or support groups where you can share, listen, and heal together (The Jed Foundation, n.d.)

Check in on others too, since supporting a friend can also strengthen your own support network.

"I'd rather talk to my friends or siblings. They get me more than any adult or counsellor."

Social support systems are unique and personal. Complete the *My Social Support Circle* activity (on page 27) to identify your personal and community-based support systems. This activity can help you identify additional supports to meet your needs as well.



EMOTIONAL RELEASE STRATEGIES

Creative and Physical Expression

Draw, paint, or create digital art to express emotions that may be hard to put into words (Black Boy Joy Foundation, 2016).



Write in a journal (freeform or using prompts) or craft poetry to explore your inner thoughts and feelings (Nia Centre for the Arts, 2021).

Listen to or make music (beats, rap, singing) that speaks to your emotions and builds joy (Black Boy Joy Foundation, 2016).

"When I am stressed, I listen to Afrobeats, I draw, or just go for a walk. It helps clear my mind."



Dance, move, or exercise (e.g., Afrobeat, martial arts, walking, or sports) to release stress and feel grounded (Salami et al., 2022).

Mindfulness and Relaxation

Practice deep breathing (e.g., inhale 4 counts, hold 4, exhale 4) to help calm your nervous system (The Jed Foundation, n.d.).



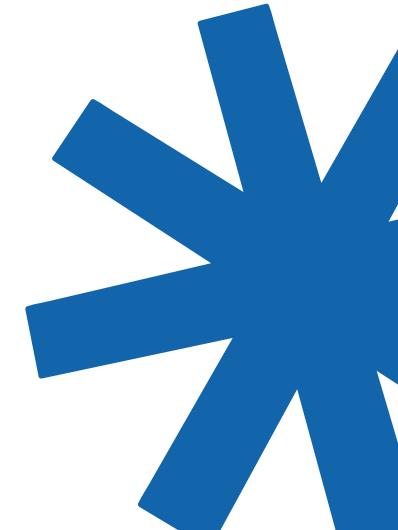
Try mindfulness or meditation apps to focus (see toolkit for meditation apps), reflect, and stay present (Jacob et al., 2022).



Relaxation techniques like stretching, grounding exercises, or body scans can reduce anxiety (Salami et al., 2022).

Digital boundaries (e.g., social media breaks) can protect your mental space (Nia Centre for the Arts, 2021).

Spending time with nature is also a good activity.



EMOTIONAL RELEASE STRATEGIES

Cultivating Joy and Resistance

Embrace joy as resistance, as thriving in your full identity is powerful and healing (Jacob et al., 2022).

Celebrate Black culture by exploring music, stories, and art that affirm your heritage (Black Boy Joy Foundation, 2016).

Use self-affirmations (e.g., "I am enough," "I am powerful") to build confidence and resilience (Nia Centre for the Arts, 2021).

Recognize your strengths and wins, no matter how small, because they matter (Salami et al., 2022).

Surround yourself with role models and people who inspire you to do better.

Addressing Racism and Trauma

Have open conversations about race and racism with people you trust, and remember it is okay to speak your truth (Jacob et al., 2022).

Name your emotions when dealing with discrimination, and know that anger, fear, and sadness are valid (The Jed Foundation, n.d.).

Seek a culturally responsive therapist or mental health worker who understands Black youth experiences (Salami et al., 2022).

Explore collective healing practices such as storytelling or drumming circles to process trauma together (Black Boy Joy Foundation, 2016).

Reclaiming Your Story

"Racism is a big part of why we struggle. I've had teachers ignore me in class or let others talk over me because I'm Black."

Use spoken word, short videos, or comics to **share your story and reclaim your voice** (Nia Centre for the Arts, 2021).

Your experience matters, and expressing it can build healing for you and others who listen (Jacob et al., 2022).



Self-Care Practices for Black Youth

Self-care isn't selfish; it's an act of resistance and healing, especially for Black youth who may face unique challenges. These practices can support your body, mind and community connections.

Start with one or two things that feel doable today and build from there.

Your wellness journey is your own.



Physical Wellbeing



Y(Indigenous, Sport, Physical Activity and Recreational Centre, n.d.)

- **Movement for Mood:** Move your body in ways you enjoy, such as walking, dancing, biking, stretching, or playing sports. Just 30 minutes a day can boost your mood and energy.
- **Eat to Nourish:** Enjoy colourful meals with fruits, veggies, whole grains, and omega-3-rich foods (like flaxseed, avocado, or fish) to support brain health.
- **Protect Your Sleep:** Try to get 7–9 hours of rest. A regular bedtime and screen-free wind-down routine helps your body and mind recharge.
- **Stay hydrated:** Drinking enough water keeps your body energized and focused.

Mental Emotional Wellbeing



(Insight Timer, 2019)

- **Mindfulness and Stillness:** Practice breathing exercises, guided meditations, or yoga to manage stress and stay grounded. Apps like Insight Timer or Liberate (made for BIPOC users) can help.
- **Feel It, Don't Bury It:** Write in a journal, create music or art, talk to a trusted friend, or seek therapy (See the resource map for the list of Black therapists) to release emotions in healthy ways.
- **Connect to Culture:** Celebrate your roots through music, food, language, art, or community events. Your culture is a source of healing, strength, and pride.
- **Know Your Limits:** Say “no” without guilt. Protect your energy, especially when you feel overwhelmed or emotionally drained.
- **Affirm yourself:** Use positive affirmations daily to remind yourself of your own worth.

Social and Community Support



Canadian Mental Health Association, 2018; British Columbia, 2024)

- **You Are Not Alone:** Stay connected with family, friends, mentors, or peers who uplift you. Safe relationships help you feel seen, supported, and strong.
- **Ask for Help:** Reach out to a school counsellor, community support worker, or culturally aware therapist. It's okay to need support.
- **Filter What You Take In:** If news or social media drains you, take a break. Curate your feed to follow pages that inspire and reflect your values.

Self-Care Practices for Black Youth

Additional Tips for Everyday Wellness

(Neff, 2024)



Plan for Wellness

(Butler, 2019; Gass & Ansara, 2015)



- **Be Gentle with Yourself:** Practice self-compassion. Speak to yourself the way you'd speak to a friend- with kindness and care. Aim for consistency, not perfection.
- **Find Your Joy:** Make time for activities that bring peace or laughter, such as reading, drawing, music, gaming, or just being in nature.
- **Focus on Gratitude:** Keep a gratitude jar or list. Focusing on what's good, even small things, can shift your mindset.
- **Take short breaks** from technology to relax your mind.

Create a self-care plan:

- Know your triggers
- Write out your coping tools (and recognize the negative ones)
- List go-to people and resources
- Set realistic goals for yourself

MY SELF-CARE PLAN

1. Know Your Triggers

- Stressful work deadlines
- Lack of sleep
- Negative self-talk

2. Write Out Your Coping Tools

- ✓ Positive coping: deep breathing
- ✗ Negative coping to avoid: overworking, isolation, excessive screen time

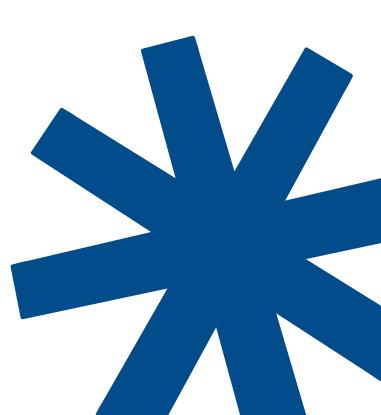
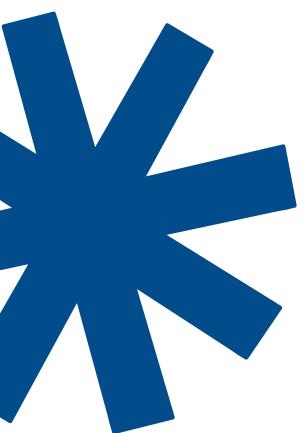
3. List Go-To People & Resources

- Trusted friend or family member
- Therapist or counselor
- Support groups or online communities

4. Set Realistic Goals for Yourself

- ✓ Sleep 7-8 hours nightly
- ✓ Take a 10-minute walk daily
- ✓ Limit social media to 8 minutes

Play the Self-care Bingo (on page 26) to see how many of these you already practice!



Black Community-Based Organizations in British Columbia

We need Black therapists, people who actually get where we're coming from. But they're so hard to find, and when we do, they're always full or far away.



We hear you.

That's why we created this list of Black Community-Based Organizations in British Columbia.

[Click here to see the full list](#)

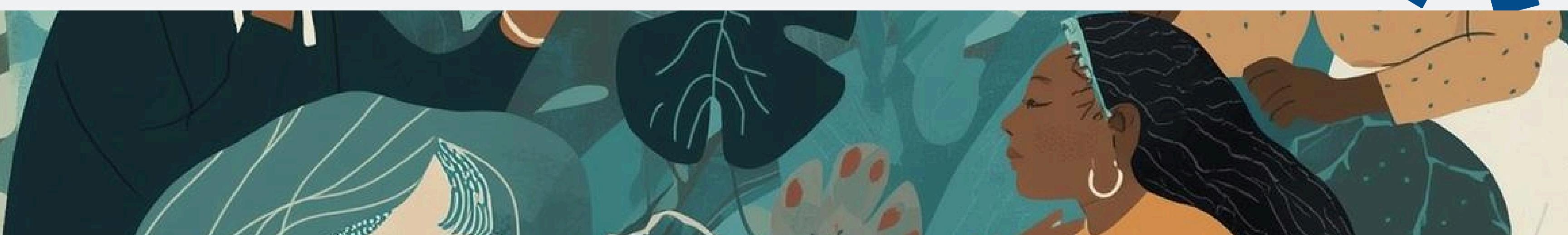
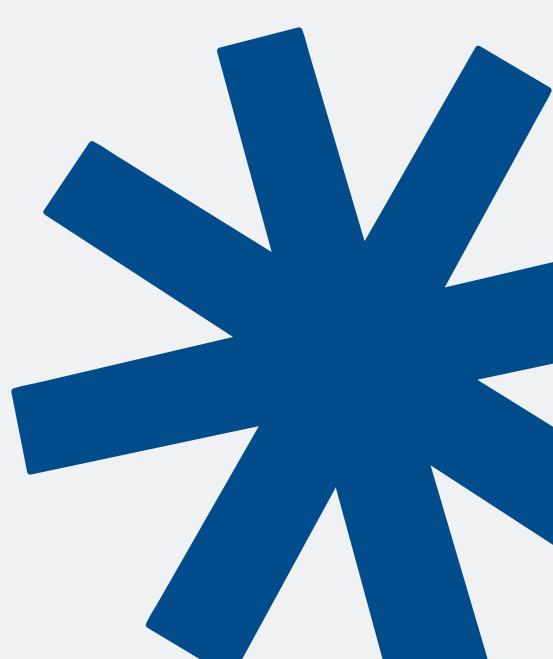
OR

Scan this QR Code to see the full list



OR

Visit the B'YES homepage to see a resource map with directions to the resources nearest to you:
<https://afropositive.org/b-yes-program/>



Crisis and Emergency Supports (BC + National)

Immediate Crisis Lines Available:

Black Youth Helpline (Canada-wide)

Contact: Call- 416-285-9944 Toll free- 1-833-294-8650

Email: info@blackyouth.ca

Kids Help Phone (Canada)

Contact: 1-800-668-6868 or text CONNECT to 686868

Talk Suicide Canada

Contact: 1-833-456-4566 toll-free, anytime – or text 45645 between from 4 pm to midnight EST

Foundry BC Mental Health Support (ages 12–24)

Contact: 1-800-784-2433 | 1-800-SUICIDE (1-800-784-2433) or SMS/Text: 45645 anytime

Here2Talk (BC post-secondary students)

Contact: 1-877-857-3397 or direct 604 642-5212

310-Mental Health Support (BC):

Contact: Dial 310-6789 (no area code)

YOU ARE NOT ALONE - MESSAGES AND AFFIRMATIONS

Social media messages

1

"You are not alone. Your feelings matter, and help is here when you need it.
#BlackYouthWellness"



2

"Taking care of your mind is just as important as your body. Rest is resistance.
#BlackMentalHealthMatters"



3

"Healing isn't linear. Take your time, take your space. You're doing better than you think."



4

"Talk it out. Journal it out. Dance it out. There's no one way to heal—just your way."



5

"Joy is revolutionary. Protect it. Nurture it. Share it."



6

"Struggling? You don't have to go through it alone. Reach out. Text, call, or DM someone you trust."



7

"What's one thing you did today to protect your joy?" / "Rest is not laziness. Rest is preparation for greatness."



YOU ARE NOT ALONE - DAILY AFFIRMATIONS

"I am rooted in strength and possibility."

"My story matters. My voice is powerful."

"It's okay to ask for help."



"I honour my boundaries."



"There is power in my Blackness."

"I trust myself to handle today with courage."

"I am healing, and that is enough."

"I am worthy of rest, joy, and abundance."

"My dreams are valid, and I deserve to see them unfold."

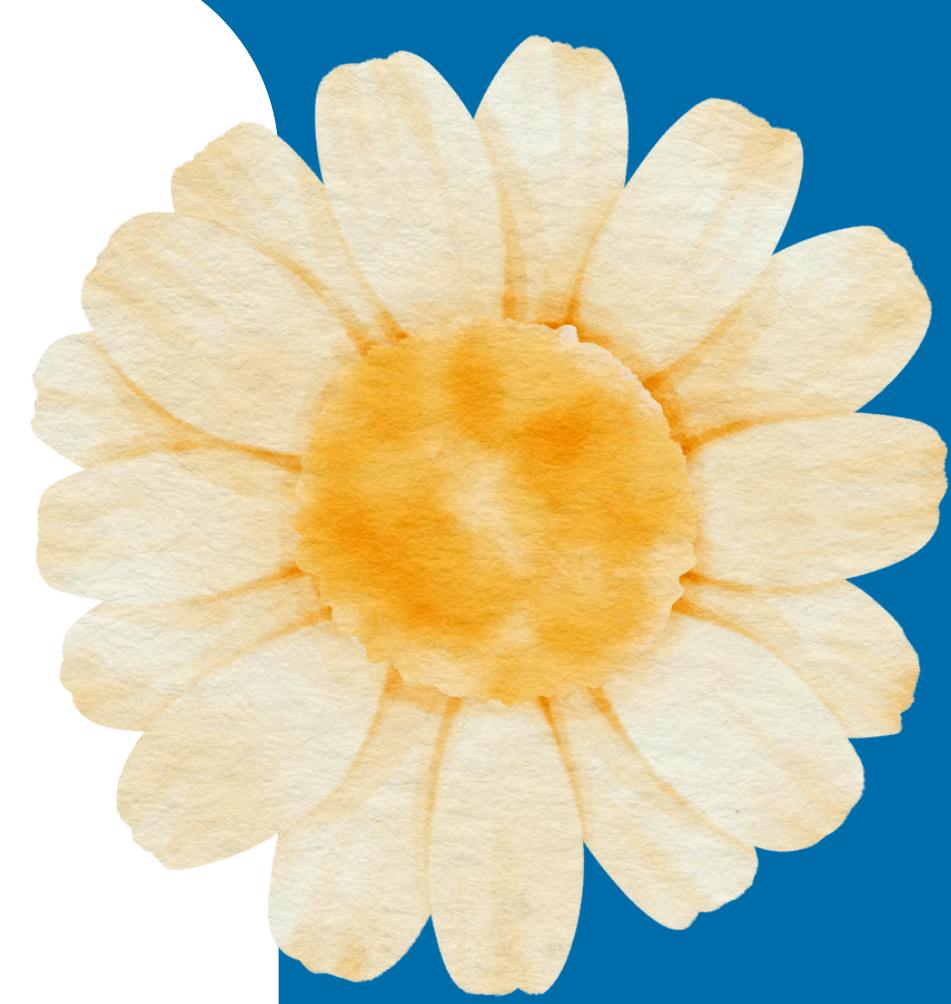
"I release what no longer serves me and welcome growth."

"I carry the wisdom of those who came before me."

"I am whole, evolving, and deeply enough as I am."

DAILY AFFIRMATIONS

- “I give myself permission to rest and grow.”
- “My boundaries are valid.”
- “I am part of a legacy of strength.”
- “I am not alone”
- “I am confident in my skills and my capacity for love”
- “I let go of what I cannot control.”
- “I know who I am”
- “I choose to love myself unconditionally.”
- “I am enough exactly as I am.”
- “Every day, I heal a little more.”
- “I give myself permission to forgive myself and others.”
- “I am proud of who I am becoming.”
- “I choose peace over chaos.”
- “I inhale calm and exhale stress.”
- “I honor my body’s need for rest and restoration.”
- “I am grounded, safe, and present at this moment.”



REFLECTION PROMPTS

Take a moment to pause and check in with yourself. Use these prompts to reflect on how you're feeling, what you need, and what supports your wellbeing. There are no right or wrong answers—just honesty and care.

1. What brings me joy and why?
2. When do I feel most safe and at peace?
3. Who is in my support circle?
4. What does wellness look like for me?
5. What messages about mental health have I learned—and what do I want to change?
6. What do I fear? (Where does this anxiety come from?)
7. Why do I feel like this currently?
8. How are these emotions physically presenting themselves?
9. How does my body feel today?
10. Where in my body do I feel tension, and what might be causing it?
11. How do I know when I'm emotionally drained, and what helps me recharge?
12. What challenges have shaped me into who I am today?
13. Where do I feel a true sense of belonging?
14. Who or what inspires me to keep going?
15. What's one thing I can do today that my future self will thank me for?
16. How do I define strength for myself?



SELF-CARE BINGO

Goal: Make self-care feel fun, intentional, and achievable, especially for youth who may not yet see their everyday actions as valid forms of care.

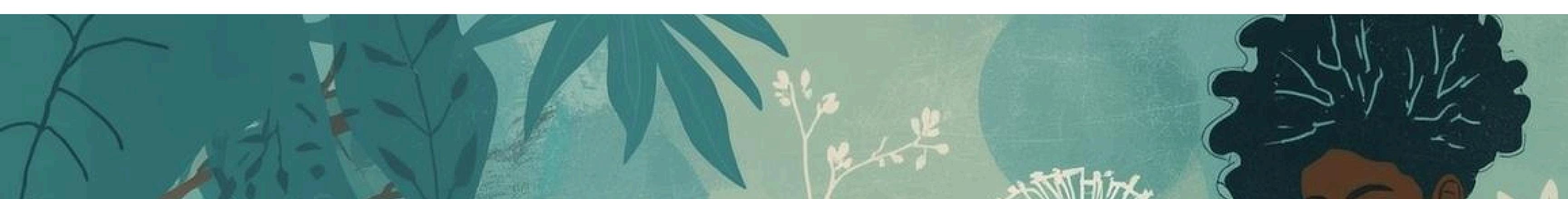
Why it matters:

- Encourages consistency and self-awareness
- Normalizes rest, creativity, and boundaries
- Builds a sense of accomplishment by checking off completed items
- Can be used alone or in peer groups as a bonding activity

How to play:

Check off a square each time you complete an activity. Go for a line, an "X," or even a full card if you want a bigger challenge!

Please find the Bingo Sheet on the **next page**.



Name _____

Date _____



SELF-CARE BINGO

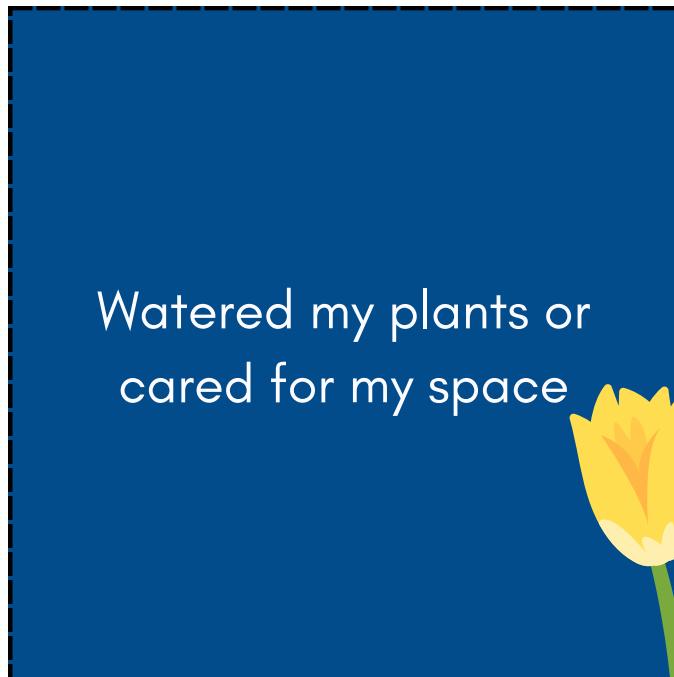
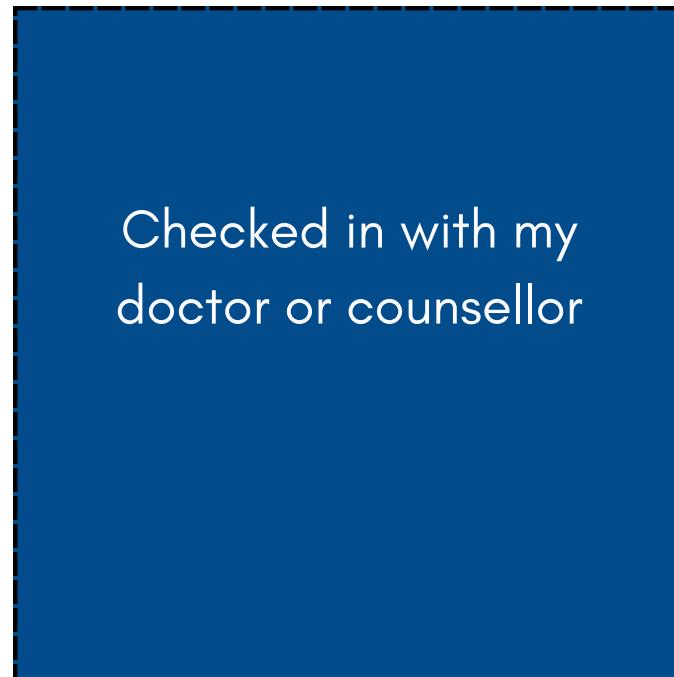
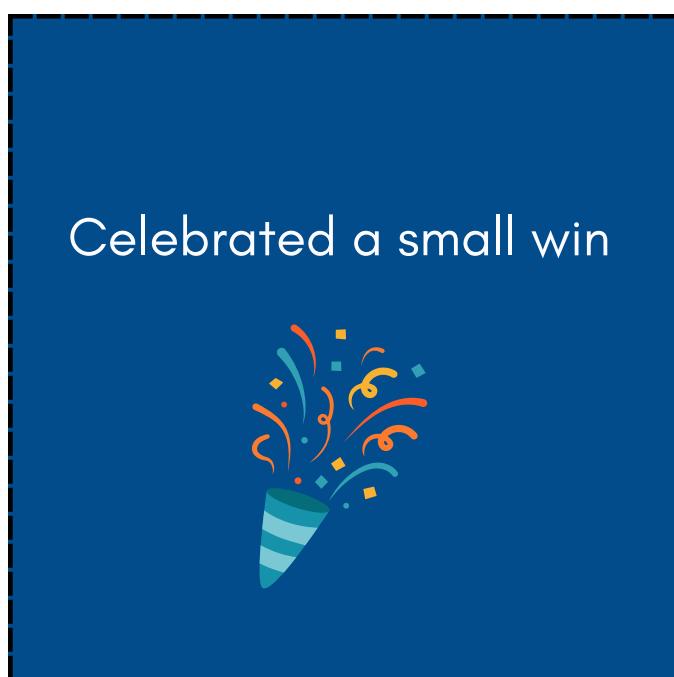
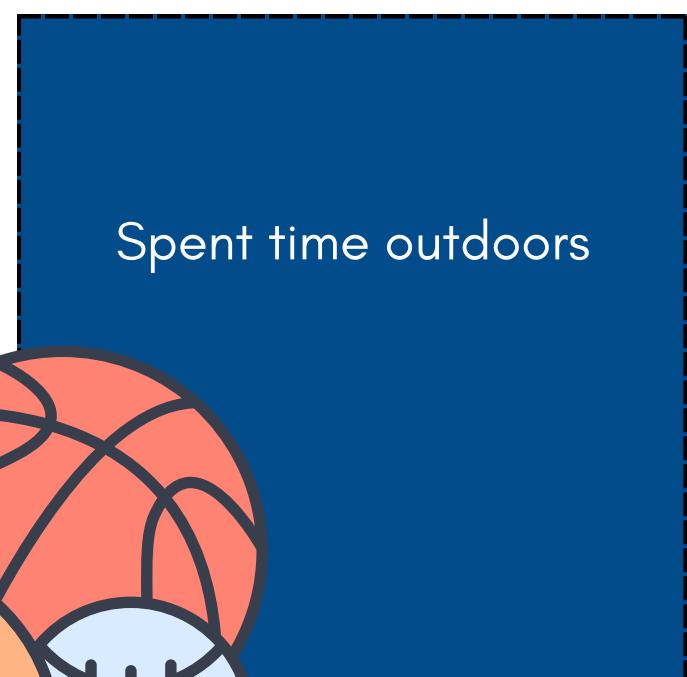
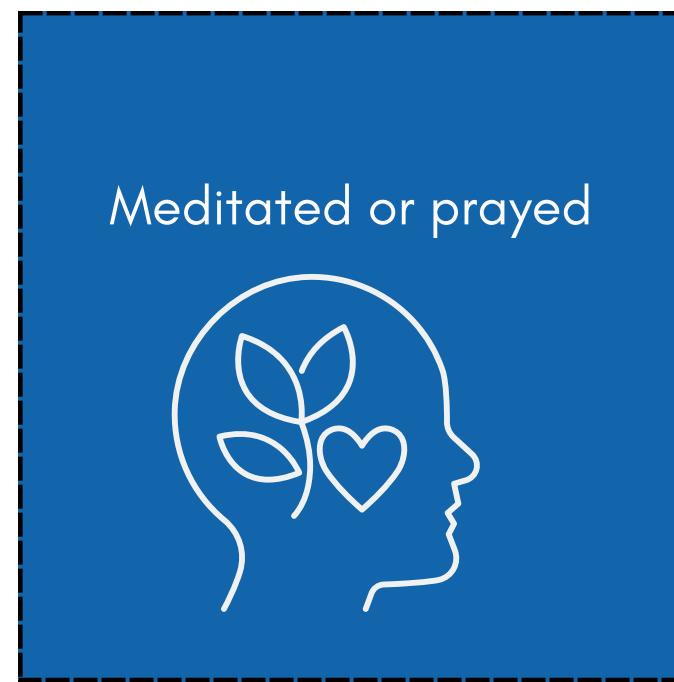
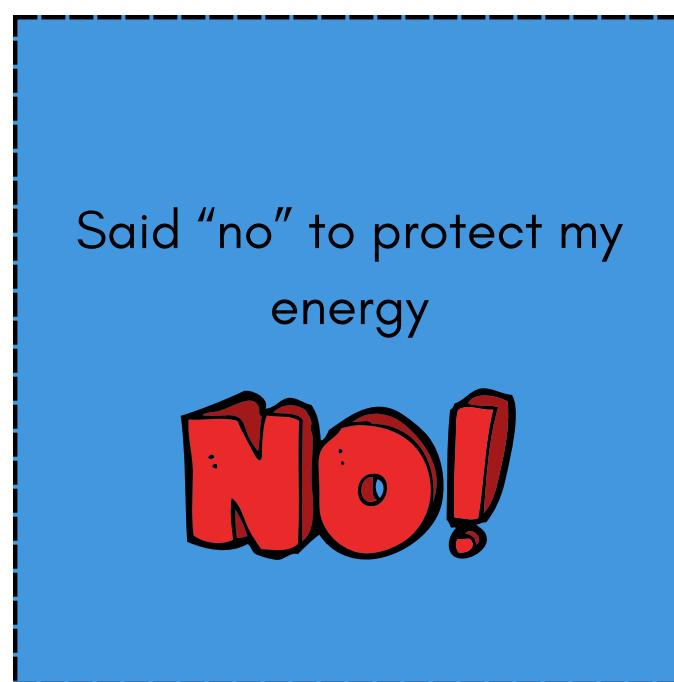
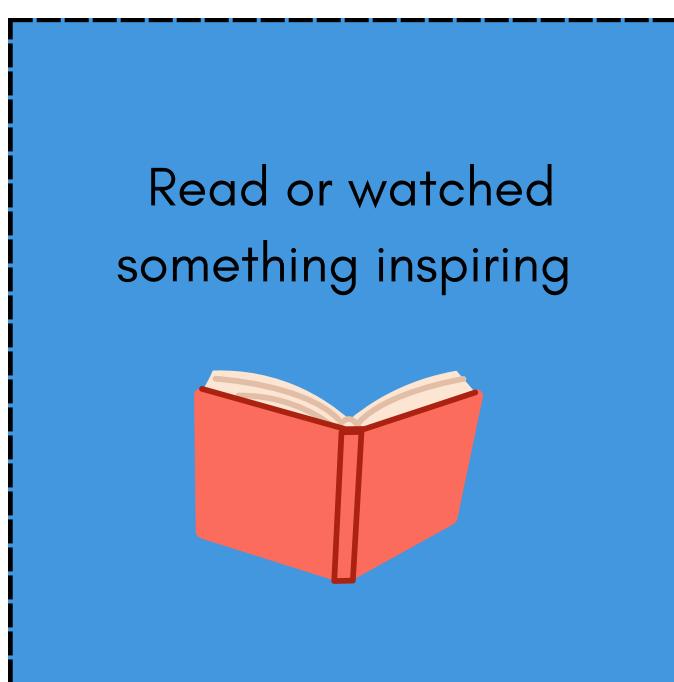
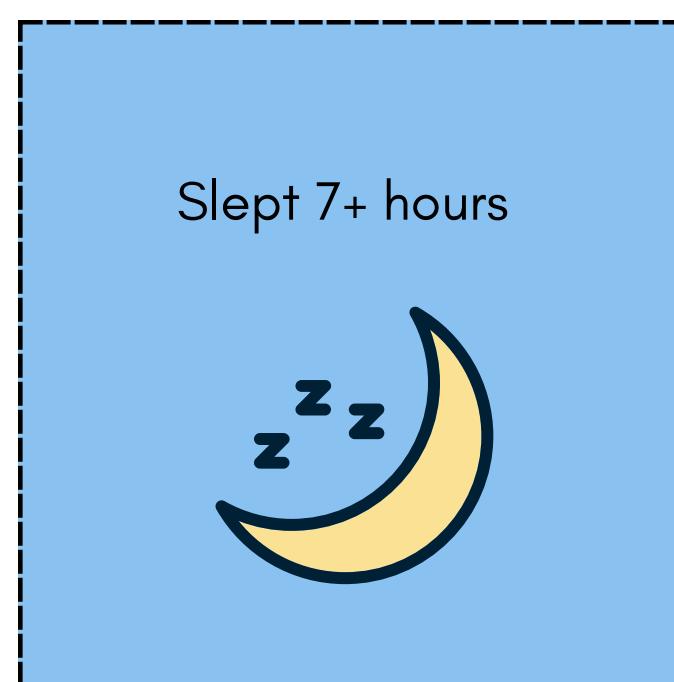
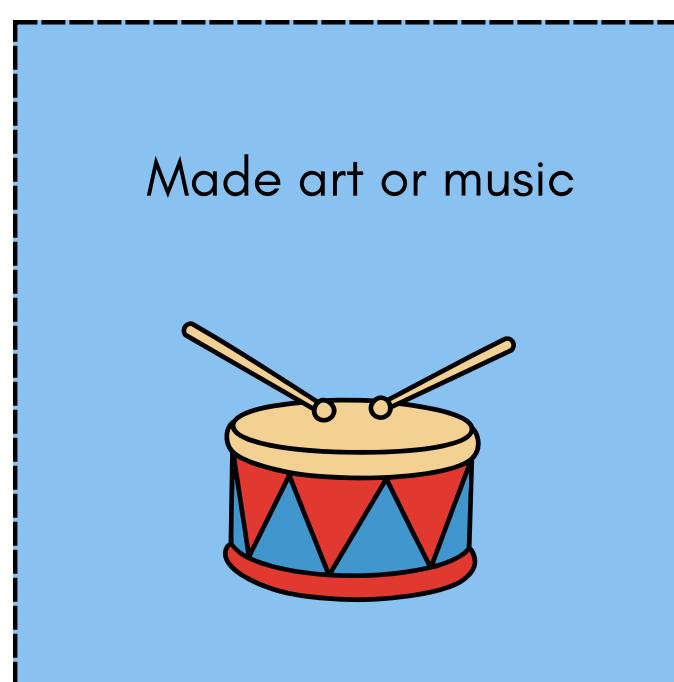
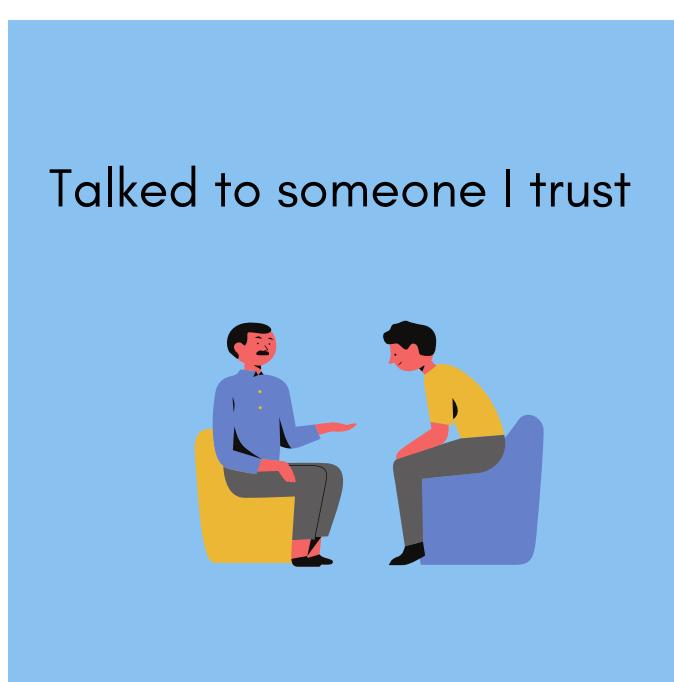
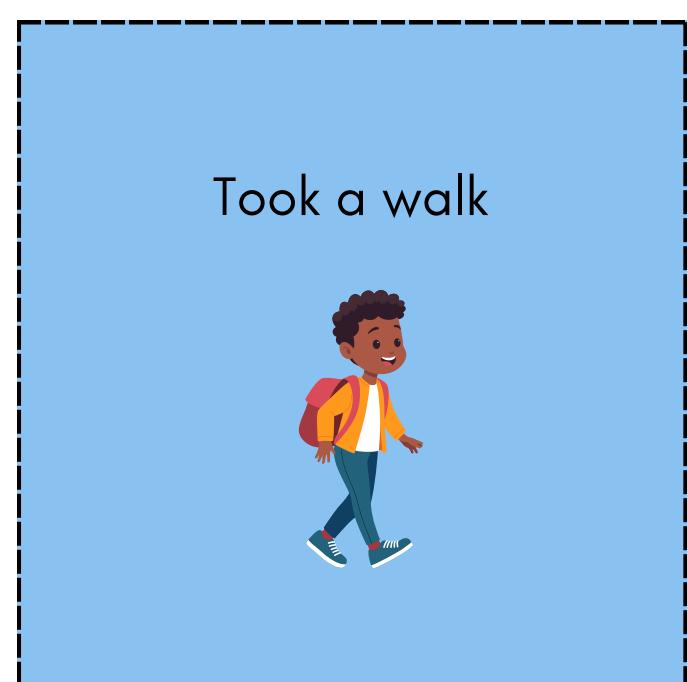


Everyday actions are valid forms of self-care.

How to Play:

How to play:

Check off a square each time you complete an activity. Go for a line, an "X," or even a full card if you want a bigger challenge!



MY SUPPORT CIRCLE

Goal: To help youth visualize their personal and community-based support systems, which can increase feelings of safety, connection, and trust.

Why it matters:

- Promotes help-seeking behaviour
- Encourages youth to reflect on who or what makes them feel supported (e.g., a friend, elder, park, playlist)
- Useful for counselling sessions, group work, or journaling
- Empowers youth to identify gaps and consider adding new supports

Instructions:

Draw a circle and place yourself the centre. Around it, write names of people, places, or activities that support your mental health.

COPING STRATEGIES LIST

Goal: To help youth develop and personalize a go-to toolbox of healthy coping mechanisms for managing stress, sadness, anxiety, or burnout.

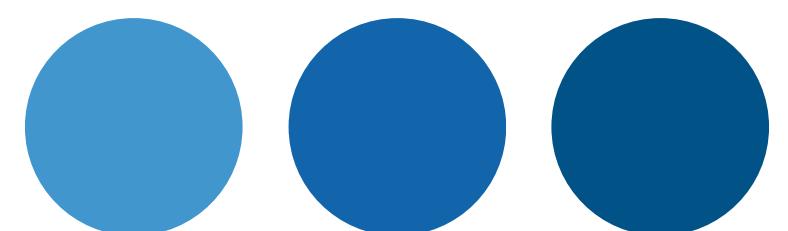
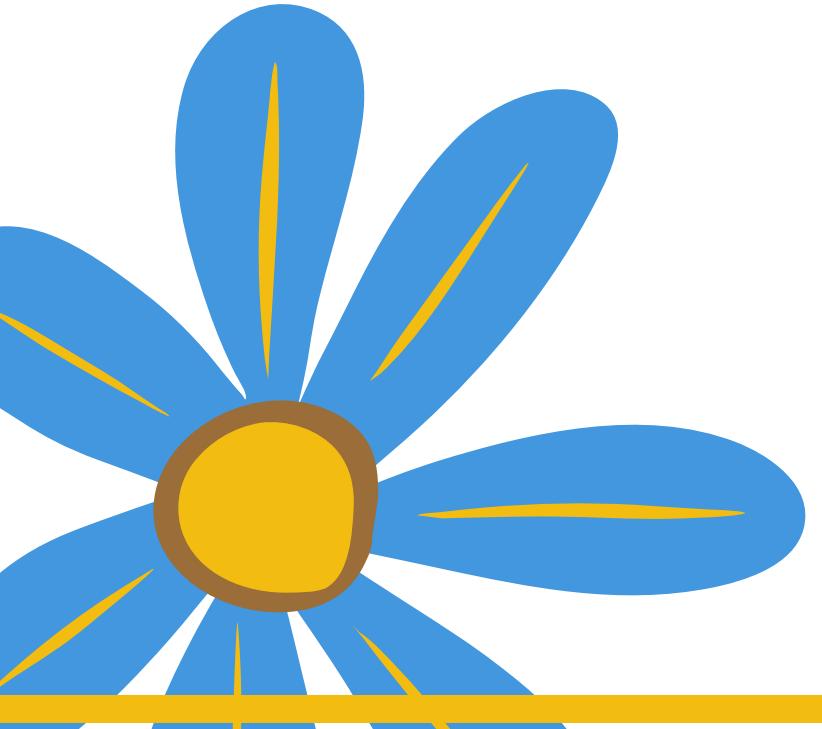
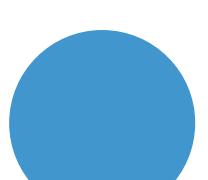
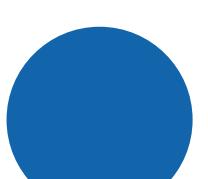
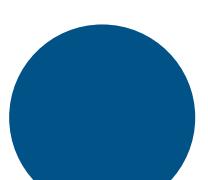
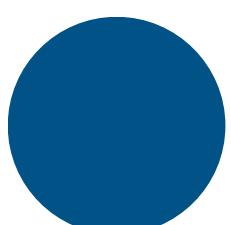
Why it matters:

- Validates culturally resonant strategies (like music, dance, or journaling)
- Encourages non-harmful ways of dealing with big emotions
- Can be revisited and updated regularly as needs change
- Supports self-regulation and resilience-building

Some examples of coping strategies

- Breathing exercise
- Listening to music
- Journaling
- Dancing/stretching
- Calling a friend
- Taking a screen break

COPING STRATEGIES LIST



Glossary of Key Terms

Coping Strategies: Healthy ways you manage difficult emotions or situations.

Cultural Safety: Creating an environment that respects your cultural identity and history.

Grounding: Techniques that help bring your mind back to the present moment during stress or anxiety.

Intersectionality: Intersectionality means understanding that people's experiences of discrimination and oppression are shaped by the overlap of factors like race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability.

Mental Health: Your emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

Resilience: Your ability to bounce back from challenges and keep going.

Trauma-Informed: A way of supporting people that recognizes and responds to past trauma.

Wellness: The active process of caring for your physical, mental, and social health to feel balanced and whole.

