

RESET, REFLECT & RECONNECT

A Guide to Mental Health
in the Classroom



Welcome

The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health-School Based Community Access Platform is excited that you have chosen to use this guide that promotes social-emotional discussions to further enhance the mental health and wellbeing of your students as they embark on the new school year!

We were all impacted by the global pandemic, in particular our students, as they were tasked with the challenge of having to quickly adapt to many changes in school, and in their community.

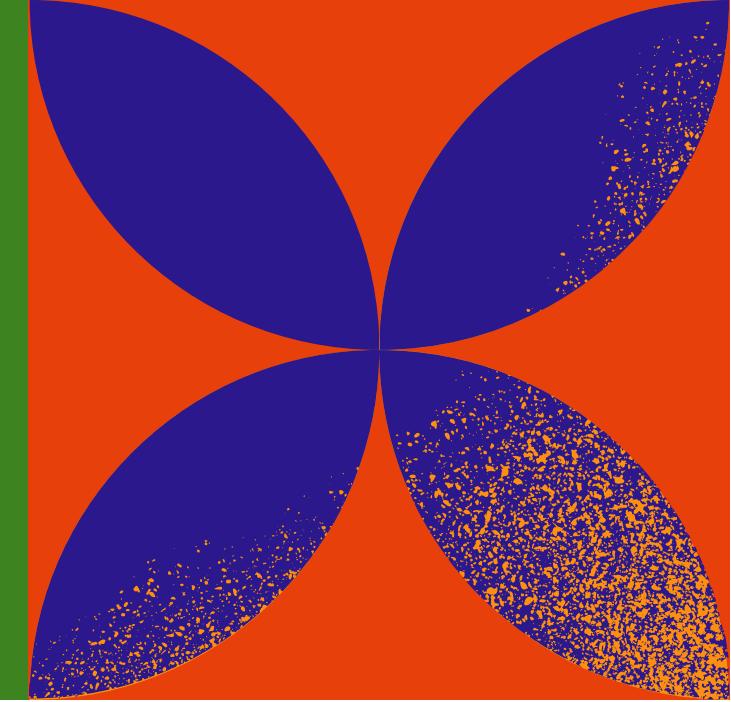
The goal of this guide is to provide teachers with several activities that equip students with coping mechanisms to support their resiliency.



Mental Health Matters!



How to Use This Guide



This guide is divided into three sections. Each section has several activities that can be completed together during a class session, or divided into a few class sessions. Each activity will take approximately 5-10 or 15-20 minutes.

- **Reset:** The purpose of this section is to start students off with a "fresh start" and encourage them to "reset" through identifying things that make them feel good and helping them feel supported.
- **Reflect:** The purpose of this section is to acknowledge the experience of the past year/year and a half, and to help students build resiliency by tapping into their strengths, and increasing their use of positive affirmations.
- **Reconnect:** The purpose of this section is to encourage students to connect with themselves and the world around them by utilizing mindfulness exercises and seeking additional support when needed.

Recommendations Before Starting



- Music can be utilized as a regulating or calming agent for anxiety or for dysregulation. Consider playing calming music for your class during activities to help your students find balance and to self-regulate. Headspace offers various, free music playlists on their [YouTube channel](#) that can be used.
- Each activity will include a slide that includes directions and suggestions with an accompanying slide to be shared with students. Please note, slides to be shared will contain a star in the top right hand corner of the slide.
- Some activities will include accompanying worksheets, it is recommended to download or print these worksheets prior to the activity to share with students.



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Reset

Section I

Reset With Music



-  Duration: 5-10 minutes
-  Frequency: Weekly

Activity: Introducing music as a coping skill and self-regulation tool. Choose a song to play during the beginning of class ([click here](#) for a Headspace compilation). As the teacher discusses this activity with the class, the teacher can create a running list of appropriate songs chosen by the class to play periodically.

Suggested Script: Music can be a great coping skill and a great way to help improve your mood. What song or songs do you like to listen to that helps with your mood? Please take a few minutes to write a few songs down and I will collect your suggestions and try my best to play them here and there in class.



What song(s) do
you like to listen
to that help(s)
your mood?



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Coping Skills

★ Duration: 10-15 minutes

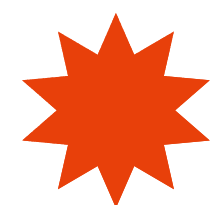
★ Frequency: Weekly



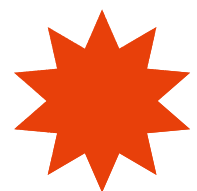
Activity: Teach students about coping skills and their benefits. Please see supplemental worksheet to provide to students. The teacher is also encouraged to pick a coping skill of their choice (deep breathing, mindful coloring/drawing, journaling) to have students practice in the classroom during this activity.

Suggested Script: Today we are going to practice and talk about coping skills. Coping skills are ways that we deal with our different feelings and experiences. There are ways to cope that can be unhelpful but today we are going to focus on helpful coping skills. Helpful coping skills are things that we do that make us feel better and make choices that benefit our wellbeing. Some examples are: listening to music, practicing yoga, drawing or painting, meditation and breathing. They are things that we do to feel better. So let's take a few minutes to think about all of the different coping skills that you like to use in your daily life or that you'd like to try out. (Pause.) The reason we are doing this is because there may come a time while we are here in school when we need to tap into those coping skills. It may be easier for some than others, so let's see how we can create a supportive environment in the classroom.

Please think of your own coping skills that you can use this school year...



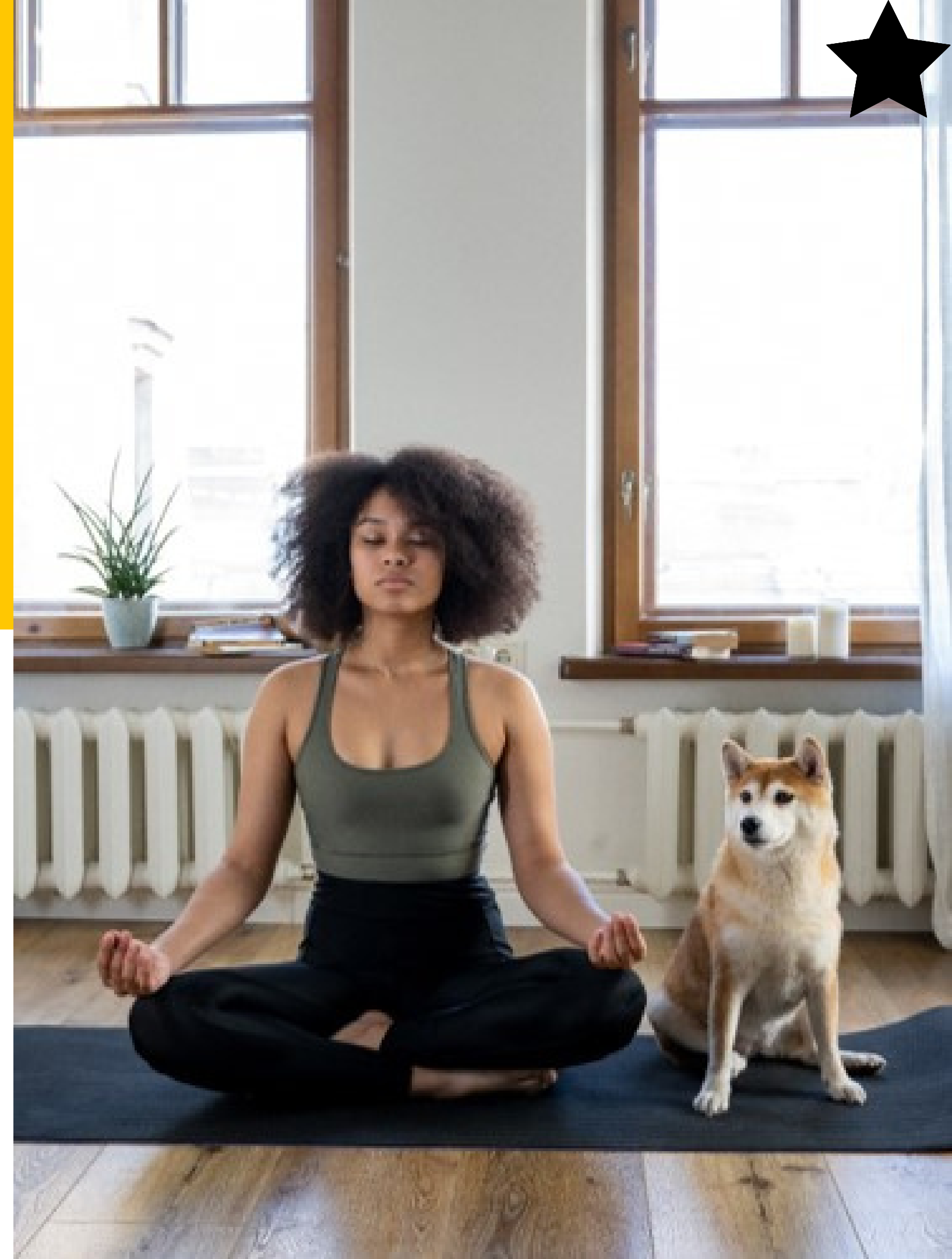
Which ones can you use at school?



Which ones can you use at home?



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Reset Word



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★ Duration: 10-15 minutes

★ Frequency: Once

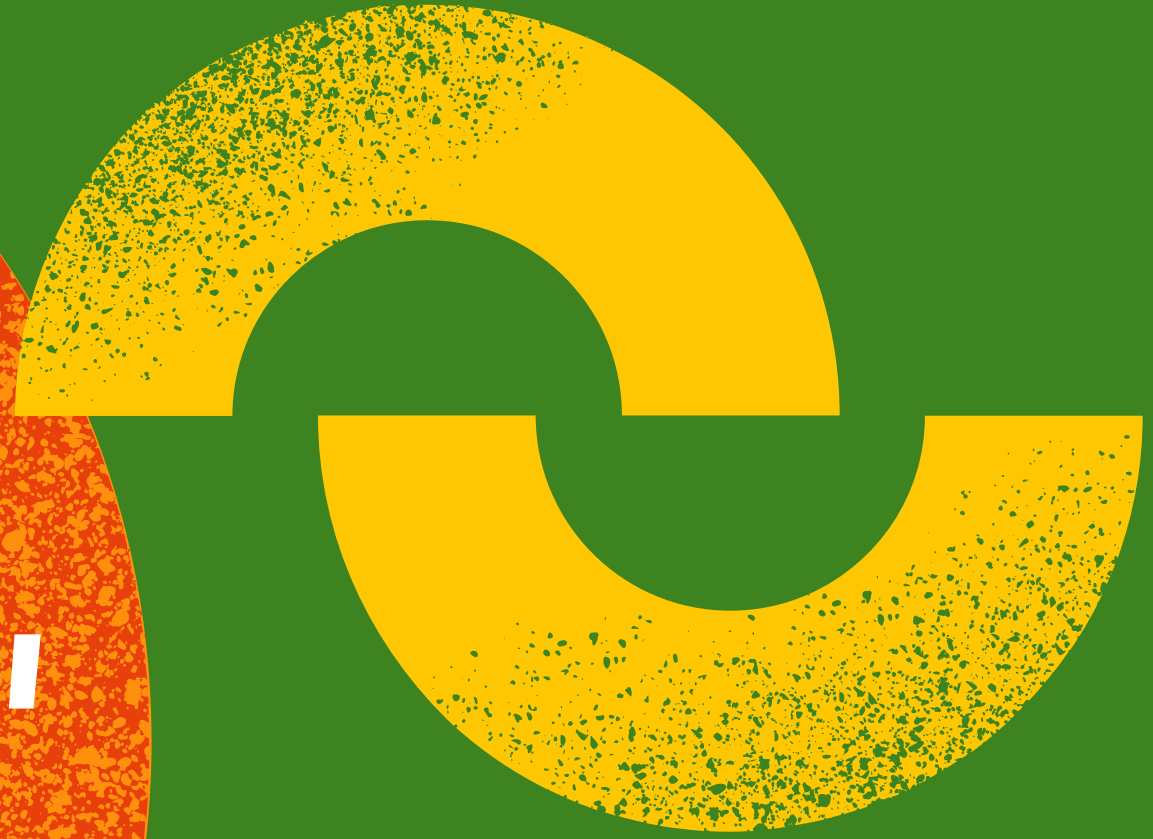
Activity: Deciding on a "reset word" as a class to promote an open and safe environment for students. The teacher will engage students to mutually agree upon a "Reset word" and establish parameters so students know when it is appropriate to use. This is an activity that can really yield engagement from the students.

Suggested Script: Today we are going to work as a class to come up with a "reset word." What is a "reset word?" A reset word is a safe word that a person uses when they need time to check-out so that they can "reset." Sometimes we may need a moment to reset because we are feeling overwhelmed, anxious, or just need a little bit of time to ourselves. Let's talk about a safe word that we can use as a class so that we are all on the same page.

Recommendations: Establish a time frame for how long a student gets to "reset," establish where student will reset (i.e. classroom or outside of class), discuss how students will communicate the reset word when needed, and lastly establish parameters for the amount of times the reset word can be used per day or class.



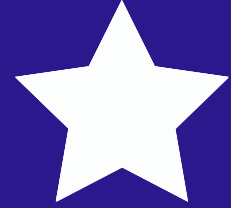
"Reset Word"



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How do we
want to use
the reset word
in our class?

RESET



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Reflect

Section II

Temperature Check

- ★ Duration: 5 minutes
- ★ Frequency: Weekly

As this school year begins, it is important to recognize the impact of this past year. This can be a simple activity such as taking a "Temperature Check" or Mood Check-in at the start of the school-year and even the start of every week thereafter.

Activity: At the beginning of class, ask your students to do a mood check.

Suggested Script: I would like to take a few minutes to allow you to please check-in with yourselves about how you are feeling right now. It is okay to have a lot of different feelings and it is understandable if you are feeling nervous, excited or overwhelmed. (Presenter may want to share how they are feeling.)

Information to Share: When you are aware of how you are feeling, you can support yourself better throughout the day and be mindful of your emotions and what you may need.

*It is recommended that students only share their mood with the class on a voluntary basis.



Mood Check - In

When I am aware of how I am feeling I can support myself better throughout the day and be mindful of my emotions and what I may need.



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- ★ Duration: 15-20 minutes
- ★ Frequency: Periodically throughout the school year.

*This activity is two parts and can also be completed as a journal entry.

Activity: First ask students to reflect on something positive that was learned over the past few months, or during the summer. Students would then write down what comes up for them on a piece of paper or item of your choice. Students are then asked to keep what they wrote down in a safe place. Next, ask students to reflect on something during the summer/over the past few months that they would like to 'let go' of (i.e. stress, low self-esteem). Have a bag/basket/trash bag on hand to encourage students to 'let go' of their responses. Allow a few minutes at the beginning of the activity to just reflect on these questions before having students write out their responses.

Suggested Script: What is one thing that you learned during the summer, or over the past few months that you want to keep/hold on to? (Pause.) I encourage you all to keep this piece of paper somewhere safe, and maybe in the future you can pull it out as a reminder of its importance.

What is one thing that came up for you over the past year that you want to let go of? I have a bag/box/basket and I would like you all to put your piece of paper in here. I will not read any of the pieces of paper, you don't need to include your name, just focus on letting go.

Reflection

Please think
quietly to
yourself...



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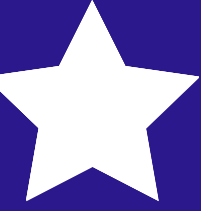
What is one thing that came up for you over the past year that you want to let go of?



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What is one thing
that you learned
from the past year
that you want to
keep/hold onto?



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Identifying Strengths

- Duration: 15-20 minutes
- Frequency: Once

Activity: Assisting students to identify their own strengths. Pass out sticky notes or a small piece of paper to each student. Ask students to reflect on and identify their individual strengths. Collect responses and display for students. Discuss some responses to elicit conversation. May want to display throughout the year.

Suggested script: Today we are going to talk about some of your strengths. Sometimes, when we are having a hard time, it's hard to remember things that we are good at or what we may call strengths. So today I want to take a few minutes to help you identify some of your strengths. On this slide you will find an example of some strengths, please take a second to write down some of your own strengths. As the year goes on, let these be the strengths you look back on when you need a reminder.

Identifying Your Strengths

Motivated

Calm

Energetic

Team Player

Hopeful

Athletic

Creative

Considerate

**Good
Listener**



Affirmations

- ★ Duration: 15-20 minutes
- ★ Frequency: Once

Activity: To increase student's recognition and use of positive affirmations. Have students write down their own affirmations and allow those who are willing to share.

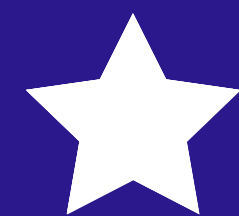
Suggested Script: Today we are going to be talking about affirmations. So what is an affirmation? An affirmation is a positive statement that can help motivate us, increase our self-esteem, and challenge unhelpful thoughts that we may have. Here are a few examples (show example slide). Now I'd like you all to write down your own affirmations. Keep these with you throughout the school year for times you may need a little more motivation, or challenge yourself to read, and repeat throughout the day, one affirmation per day.

Recommendation: It is recommended that students share their affirmations only if they feel comfortable. Be sure to explain to students at the beginning of the activity that they will not be expected to share their affirmations.



Affirmations

- I am capable
- I will make a difference
- I take care of myself
- I am courageous
- I am always growing
- I am appreciative of this moment



Please write your own Affirmations that you can use for this school year.



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Reconnect

Section II



Mindfulness

Duration: 5 minutes
Frequency: Weekly

Activity: Introducing Mindfulness. This activity can be done at the beginning of every class to help students reconnect with the current moment and ready themselves for class. The meditation app Headspace is free for educators and contains exercises specifically for students. Each exercise can be completed in as little as 3 minutes. To access, please [click here](#).

Suggested Script: Over the course of the school year I would like to start introducing you all to mindfulness. Mindfulness asks for you to be fully present, to be aware of where you are and what you are doing and how your body and mind/thoughts are responding. By bringing awareness to what we are experiencing through our senses, thoughts and emotions, we can better address what we are feeling. There's a lot you may be dealing with right now, so it may be hard to stay present in the moment, but with practice it can get easier. We are going to be practicing these short exercises in class. They will only take a few minutes and you may feel like it is difficult at first to focus, but that's okay, you will see it will start to get easier the more we practice.



Headspace

Please sit
comfortably and
close your eyes if you
choose to.



To be applied in all
activities and exams

Reconnect
With Support

Activity: To remind students that there is support available if needed. The next slide provides local resources and supports for students should they decide they would like mental health support. Teacher may also want to go through supports available in schools, i.e. counselors, school psychologists or school social workers.

Suggested Script: This last year has been a struggle for most of us. It is okay to not feel okay as we transition into a new normal. If you feel like you need more support than what these activities have given, please talk to a trusted adult or stay a few minutes after class so we can talk about the best way to get you some support. On the next slide, there is a resource and some information that you might find helpful. The Department of Mental Health can provide a list of local mental health agencies for you and you caregivers to contact. If you feel you need the support, please reach out. There are a lot of resources out there to help.



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If you or someone you know
needs more mental health
support please contact your
school counselor, or call the
number listed.



**LACDMH Helpline:
(800) 854-7771**



dmh.lacounty.gov

Available 24/7



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If additional support is needed please refer to your school mental health protocol. You may also contact the Department of Mental Health and provide this information to the student's caregiver.



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