

ACTIVITY –  
OUR MENTAL HEALTH AND  
WELL-BEING

FOR IN-PERSON AND ONLINE CIRCLES,  
FOR ALL GENDERS

 **ONE CIRCLE**  
FOUNDATION

We are all connected.

To All One Circle Facilitators,

With these difficult times, One Circle Foundation wants to acknowledge you for the great work that you continue to do with youth.

In an effort to make that a little easier for you, we are adding Adapted Activities from our curricula in order for you to have the ability to hold Girls Circle and The Council for Boys and Young Men sessions online with the youth in your programs. As you know, the creative and experiential activities presented in the Activity Guides require individuals to be in a live, in-person circle. We began adapting these activities so the youth could participate from the safety of their homes. These adaptations are made available to you on the One Circle Foundation website “Virtual Solutions” section, for your easy access.

Each adapted activity will note which Activity Guide they were adapted from as well as which session. We include an outline of the six steps of the Girls Circle Model and the seven steps of The Council for Boys and Young Men Model for you to use as a guide.

PLEASE NOTE: These adaptations do NOT include the full session; only the **ACTIVITY** step is described. However, you will see in the adaptation that there is an overview of the topic and brief discussion to incorporate into your circles. The objectives of the activity align with the original intent of the session.

**Girls Circle:**

Opening Ritual  
Theme Introduction  
Check-In  
**Activity → ADAPTED**  
Sharing of Activity  
Closing Ritual

**The Council for Boys and Young Men:**

Opening Ritual  
Theme Introduction  
Warm-Up  
Check-in  
**Activity → ADAPTED**  
Reflection  
Closing Ritual

We welcome your suggestions and feedback. We also want to hear of any adapted or original activities you are doing online with the youth that you serve. Please email [info@onecirclefoundation.org](mailto:info@onecirclefoundation.org) to share the online adaptation work that you’re doing, and we invite you to share with one another in our Facebook Facilitator Support Group. Visit @onecirclefoundation on Facebook to join the conversation.

We at One Circle Foundation are committed to supporting all of you as we find our new normal. Be safe and continue to reach out for support from One Circle Foundation.

## **Virtually Adapted Activity 2 – Our Mental Health and Well-Being**

Teens are experiencing higher rates of anxiety, worry, depression or mood problems, sadness and isolation since the covid-19 pandemic arrived. For those teens who already experienced a mental health condition, the situation has become even harder. The pandemic cut off or curtailed school, work, social and extra-curricular activities. With the overlapping stressors of racial injustices, politics, and environmental challenges, it's a hard time to be a teenager.

This session invites youth through a group brainstorm to call out common or recent stressors. They'll identify what is and is not in their control. Then, they are invited to individually write a letter to their future self, describing their own particular challenges and struggles. Next, they will write a letter from their future self responding to them.

These steps – sharing common concerns, considering what is in their control, expressing themselves in letters, and imagining a future self – can offer youth a new and more hopeful way of thinking and feeling in their daily lives.

### **Activity:**

- Group Brainstorm: Calling Out the Struggles and Stressors
- Letter to Future Self; Future Self Letter to You

### **Materials:**

- Music player and energetic playlist
- Flip chart and marker or Zoom Whiteboard feature for online delivery
- 3 sheets of paper per participant
- 1 pen or pencil per participant
- Crayons or colorful markers for each participant (virtual circle participants may provide their own)
- One copy of Letter to Future Self handout per participant
- One copy of Letter from Future Self handout per participant

### **Objectives:**

- Acknowledge stressors and hardships that youth have witnessed or experienced since the time of the covid-19 pandemic and recent racial injustices, climate change effects, political divisions, gender-based harm, and more.
- Explore difficult emotions, thoughts and questions, especially due to uncertainty, anxiety, grief, depression, and isolation that impact mental health and well-being.
- Discover personal and community resources for positive mental health and well-being during difficult times.

**Prior to the Activity:** Let the youth know they will need 2 pieces of blank paper, a pen or pencil, and either some crayons or colorful markers.

**Facilitator Preparation:**

- 1 Read through the entire session for familiarity.
- 2 Gather materials, make copies of handouts, one per person for ***In-Person*** circles; or gather and mail or email the list of materials in advance of the ***Online*** circle.
- 3 Prepare a flip chart or the online Whiteboard\* as follows:

BAD STUFF	EMOTIONS, THOUGHTS or QUESTIONS
NOT IN MY CONTROL <hr style="width: 50%; margin: 10px auto;"/> IN MY CONTROL	SPARKS of LIGHT

4. Take a picture of the following resources to text to participants just before the Closing Ritual.

**CrisisTextline.org** (24 hrs): Text 741741

**TrevorProject.org** for LGBTQ Support: Text START to 678-678

**SuicidePreventionLifeline.org:** 800-273-8255

A Favorite Local Resource \_\_\_\_\_

*\*Facilitators Note: Click the green “Share Screen” icon on your Zoom Control Panel at the bottom of the Zoom window. A new window will pop up with various screen sharing options. Select the “Whiteboard Option.” Then click the “Share” button at the bottom right corner of that pop-up window.*

## **Procedure to Lead Activity**

### **OPENING RITUAL**

For our opening ritual let's mark the beginning of the circle by each of us sharing one thing we gained during the covid pandemic and one thing we lost. Or, if your circle already has developed an opening ritual, use that established ritual.

### **THEME INTRODUCTION**

Introduce the theme of the week, Mental Health and Well-being.

Say,

- Let's face it: *we've all been through a lot.*
- Recently, there have been many changes to everyday life for everyone.
- A lot of things have changed: home, school, after school activities, neighborhoods and businesses. A lot of these have changed who we could see, what we could do and where we could go. Some people have grieved for loved ones or lost or postponed dreams.
- For everyone, the covid-19 crisis, racial injustices, climate change, political disagreements, gender-based harassment, and other circumstances have created a lot of uncertainty, stress and hardship.
- Today, we will acknowledge emotions around living through this extraordinary time; and, we will creatively express ourselves about some of the burdens we shoulder, as well as some sparks of light that help us to endure and grow through hard times.

### **WARM-UP**

Choose and facilitate a favorite warm-up activity. Recommended: [Bust a Move](#)

For Online circles delivery, see the last page of this session for instructions. For In-Person circles:

- 1 Create an energetic playlist with as many songs as participants in the circle.
- 2 Tell the circle participants that each person will be randomly called upon to bust out with a dance move and that everyone else will mirror their move.
- 3 Tell them you'll start it out and everyone will mirror you, then you'll call on others.
- 4 Allow about 20 seconds for the whole circle to be mirror dancing to the person's move.

- 5 Play a new song and call on a new participant.
- 6 Repeat until each person has had a chance to “bust a move.”

### CHECK-IN

Go around the circle or in the established online order and invite each person to check in about their high/low of the week, and/or anything else they want to share about what’s on their minds, in their hearts, or anything else going on in general.

### ACTIVITY 1: Group Brainstorm: Calling out the Hardships and Stressors

Use the prepared flip chart or online Whiteboard to capture participants’ responses to the questions below in the corresponding box. The brainstorming exercise overall will take about 10 minutes.

Say,

- Let’s briefly list some of the things that have been going on around us and inside of us.
- Think back over the recent times of stressful things you’ve heard, witnessed, or experienced in the world, nation, community, school or family. These might be big or small things. There’s no right or wrong response.
- Remember our agreements and this is a “no judging, safe space”.
- Please call out some **“Bad stuff that’s happened.”** Or, you can type them into the chat just to me, or type directly onto the online Whiteboard, (If participants call out or use chat, the facilitator writes the responses into the box.)

*Examples: parent/guardian lost job; people died; sibling harms themselves racist/homophobic attacks; started smoking a lot of weed.*

- Now, call out Emotions, Thoughts and Questions that young people have had during these times. Especially the painful, stressful, or hard ones.

*Examples: confused, lonely, stressed out, bored; “I’m ugly”; “What if I can’t get motivated again with school?”; “What if my family has to move again?”*

- Next, call out or write in the things that go in the **Not in My Control** section in the top half of the box. [Pause.] Then, in the lower section, call out or write in, what is **In My Control**.

*Examples of Not in My Control: the pandemic, others’ acts of violence, parents/guardians’ breakup.  
Examples of In My Control: my choice of words, my beliefs, and how I spend my time.*

- Finally, think about **Sparks of Light** that show up outside or inside of you, and call out or write these into the box.

*Examples: friends, songs, books, deep breaths, games, good meals, smiles, places in nature, or feelings of awe or wonder.*

**ACTIVITY 2: Letter to Future Self; Future Self Letter to You**

*Note to Facilitator: This entire activity will take about twenty to twenty-five minutes.*

- 1 Pass out the Handout: Letter to My Future Self. Keep the flip chart or Whiteboard lists visible for this activity.
- 2 Say,
  - Take a piece of paper and pen and use the handout: Letter to My Future Self.
  - Using ideas from the lists we've just created to get started, write a letter\* to your Future Self.
  - Imagine you are writing to yourself that lives five years in the future.
  - You can use the handout directly, or as a guide with a blank sheet of paper.
  - You'll have about 5-10 minutes to write.

\*Alternatively, for those who prefer not to write, please draw symbols or images to express yourself to your Future Self.

*Note to Facilitator: Share the tips below.*

**TIPS:**

Free yourself to write anything you want, no edits.

No need to share anything you don't want to share.

Be real.

Go there.

- 3 Begin. Let participants know when they have about two minutes to complete the letter.
- 4 Bring everyone's attention back to the circle. Ask,
  - What feelings did you experience during this activity?
  - Who would like to volunteer to read a line or two from your letter to your future self? (Take as many volunteers as time permits. If some would rather chat a line into the chat box, that's okay too.)
  - What did you notice about our circle and the things expressed to your future selves? Were there common concerns?
  - Other observations?

- 5 Now, pass out or share the handout: Future Self Letter To You
- 6 Say,
  - Now, write a letter from your Future Self responding back to you.
  - Use your imagination. Allow the wisdom of your Future Self, five years into your future, to speak to your present self.
  - You can use the handout: Future Self Letter To You, directly, or as a guide, with your own sheet of paper.
  - Tips: Be free; No edits; Don't have to share. Be real. Go there.
  - You'll have about 5 minutes for this activity.
- 7 Give participants notice when they have about one minute to complete the letter.

### SHARING OF ACTIVITY

- 1 Invite everyone back to the circle .
- 2 Invite volunteers to read the letters from their future self, or if time is tight, to share one or two lines. (People can pass if they wish.)
- 3 Ask,
  - What is it like to imagine your future self?
  - How can our future self be a resource for us?
- 4 Text to participants a picture of the crisis mental health resources.
- 5 Go around the circle, and invite each participant to respond to the application question:
  - **What is one thing you can do this week to promote your mental health and well-being?**

**CLOSING RITUAL** Thank everyone for their participation and let them know you look forward to seeing them at the next circle. Complete the session with your chosen closing ritual.



## Handout: LETTER TO MY FUTURE SELF

Dear FUTURE SELF,

I'm \_\_\_\_\_ years old. A lot has been happening lately.

First, **the bad stuff** (any that have bothered you, and your own):

---

---

Some things **I've been feeling inside**:

---

---

And **some thoughts or questions I have**:

---

---

It's true that a lot of things **ARE NOT in my control**, including:

---

---

And, some things **ARE in my control**, such as:

---

---

These are some **SPARKS OF LIGHT** outside and inside of me, too:

---

---

What have you discovered that might help me at this time? How did you make it to where you are now?  
Please write back.

Sincerely,

Me

## Handout: FUTURE SELF LETTER TO YOU

Dear My \_\_\_\_ year old Self,

You made it through those years. I'm living proof!

Here are some people, places, and things that helped to get you through the pain and struggle of those years:

---

---

You discovered that:

---

---

Back then, you really cared about \_\_\_\_\_  
and you still care about that here in the future.

And, you had this spark going for you:

---

---

The hardest thing was dealing with:

---

---

But you learned it's okay to \_\_\_\_\_ and how to \_\_\_\_\_.

THE REALLY IMPORTANT thing I wish I knew back when I was where you are at, but now I realize, about you (me), others, and life is:

---

---

Take care, I'll see you in five years!

Your FUTURE SELF

*P.S. If you want to, you can draw a picture of me (your Future Self) here, too!*

## **WARM UP – BUST A MOVE**

*Facilitator Technology Note for Online circles:*

- 1 *Use gallery view to see all the participants displayed at once Have your Bust A Move music ready to share via your preferred music player. You can add your own personal favorites or choices from hip-hop, rock, country; from music selections that are upbeat and recognizable!*
- 2 *Click the “Screen Share” icon at the bottom of your Zoom window. A smaller window will pop up with three tabs at the top “Basic” “Advanced” and “Files”.*
- 3 *Under the “Advanced” tab select the “Music or Computer Sound Only” option.*
- 4 *Then, click the “Share” button at the bottom right of your screen. A small bar will appear at the top of your Zoom window stating “Your sharing computer sound.”*
- 5 *Depending on your operating system, you may need to also adjust the audio output volume.*
- 6 *When you are done with the activity, press “Stop Share”.*

### INSTRUCTIONS:

Tell participants that you will begin to play music in a moment.

Say:

- 1 We will all Bust A Move together following one leader at a time.
- 2 I will start us off and you all are to mirror the move that I make.
- 3 Then I will call in the next leader to Bust A Move and we all mirror them.
- 4 I will be randomly selecting each of you until everyone has led, so be ready.
- 5 When it is YOUR turn to lead, please move however you feel most comfortable. It can be as small as wagging a finger or as big as you want.
- 6 I will play the music. Can everyone hear it clearly?  
*(Check that everyone can hear it clearly before you begin moving on. Facilitator can choose to either pause the song every 30 seconds to switch a leader or lower the volume briefly as you call the next leader’s name.)*
- 7 Encourage a freestyle session towards the end where everyone can move however they feel most comfortable.
- 8 Stop the music and bring the activity to an end.
- 9 Celebrate with a round of applause and thank them for participating in the warm up activity.
- 10 End the screen sharing by clicking “Stop Share” at the top of your Zoom window.