Healing Toolkit At-a-Glance

created by youth for youth

Introduction

In January, 2022, Growing Up Boulder and Mayamotion Healing convened a group of 21 area high school students to form a Youth Leadership Healing Committee (YLHC). The YLHC created and facilitated a "Healing Day of Remembrance" event in April 2022 in response to the March 2021 King Soopers tragedy. At the event, students led "healing stations" to promote healing and resilience; these stations then became an exhibit at the Museum of Boulder's Google Garage in June and July 2022, so that more people could benefit from them. The community response to the youth and their healing stations has been overwhelmingly positive. The YLHC believes that youth of all ages need continued opportunities to heal, and they designed this healing toolkit for student leaders, classroom teachers, counselors and mental health advocates alike.

Toolkit attributes

- **Flexible:** The toolkit includes 11 healing stations, but you decide how many (and which) stations your students will engage in. *We do ask that every teacher who uses this toolkit visit station 11 to give us student feedback.*
- **Accommodates for all learners:** The activities are suitable to use with humans of all ages. Adjust your toolkit introductory remarks (and your follow-up discussions) according to the age of your students.
- **Creative:** Art promotes healing because it forces us to forge a connection between our mind and our body. Unlike exercise, which works our body, or meditation, which clears our mind, art-making accesses both mind and body to promote healing.
- **Purposeful:** In addition to the stations themselves promoting community connection and healing, the information shared in the feedback station will inform future work in our community.

Note to teachers: Your students may be interested to know that the stations in this toolkit were **developed BY youth** (9th-12th graders) **FOR youth** (all ages). If you're using a physical toolkit, use this at-a-glance document as *an inventory* to return a complete toolkit so that we may quickly resupply and share it with the next teacher and students.

Finally, we kindly request that each leader using this toolkit complete our **brief survey.** As a thank you, while supplies last, local Boulder area leaders will receive a gift card for an 8-inch Bundt cake from Nothing Bundt Cakes.

Thank you,

The Youth Healing Leadership Committee, Growing Up Boulder, & Mayamotion Healing

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Station 1: Poetry Wall

What is it? Poetry can be a wonderful way to express how we are feeling. A Poetry Wall can consist of a variety of images, words and phrases that people of all ages create.

Objective: Engaging their senses and emotions, students will create poetry using a variety of images and found poetry (variation).

Instructions: At this station, you'll want to have a table pushed up against a bulletin board. Students will spend time looking closely at a variety of cut out magazine photographs (ie. an outdoor setting or animal) displayed on the table. They'll notice which one/s they are drawn to and how the images make them feel. Then, students will write a word, phrase, or short poem to express themselves. Finally, they will add their creations to the poetry wall.

"Found" Poetry Variation: After students select an image, students create poetry using words that have been cut out of magazines, newspapers, and other print material.

Supplies:

- ☐ Magazine cut out photographs (nature, animals, etc.)
- ☐ Loose leaf paper or student notebook
- ☐ Variety of pens and markers
- ☐ Variety of sticky notes (for writing on)
- ☐ Clear tape to tape magazine cut out to poetry

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Station 2: Half-Hearts

What is it? An art activity focusing on the concept of community and the benefits of sticking together in times of challenge.

Objective: Students will identify people in their community that they love or appreciate; through classroom discussion, students will build their understanding of the importance of community.

Instructions: At the Healing Half-Hearts station, students draw and then label what they love or appreciate about a friend, their family, school, community, or the world. Individual half-hearts are then paired together with a second half-heart to make a "whole", complete heart, symbolizing strength that comes when a community comes together.

Variation: Students draw their *wishes* for a friend, their family, school, community, or the world.

Supplies:

- ☐ Half-heart templates
- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Markers or colored pencils
- ☐ Scissors
- ☐ Black skinny markers for labeling

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Station 3: Community or Classroom Altar

What is it? Found across cultures, altars can be a beautiful way to remember and honor the lives and blessings of loved ones who we've lost. The altar location can be set up in a classroom or in a shared community space. Due to the powerful nature of this practice, we encourage facilitators to pause to reflect on the appropriateness of an altar in your space and be intentional in the process.

Objective: Students will identify, draw and write a memory about a loved one. This is a wonderful opportunity to share multicultural perspectives around healing such as learning about Dia de Muertos, and other traditions relevant to students and families.

Instructions: Once the Altar Station has been set up in the classroom or community space, students will add to the altar by filling out a name card to honor one or more special people in their life. Using both sides of the name card, students will then draw something that reminds them of their loved one. Finally, students will think of a memory they hold dear and then write about it in a journal, tablet, or computer. Students can share their stories with one another and then look for common themes and similarities within the group. We ask that you be mindful of how this supports your youth (items used, images, context, etc.) and stay attuned to their individual and collective needs as you will know them best.

Supplies:

- ☐ Paper name cards (any size)
- ☐ Skinny markers or pens
- ☐ Tablecloth
- ☐ Paper flowers
- ☐ Battery-operated candles
- ☐ Loose leaf paper, student journal, tablet or computer

Interested in the altar but not sure where to start?: This is a wonderful opportunity to connect to multicultural and Indigenous members of our community! Consider inviting guest speakers to share more about the tradition and meaning of altars, Dia de Muertos and other healing practices. Remember, we want to show appreciation rather than appropriation, and collaborating within a community is a great start! Reach out to Mayamotion Healing with questions.

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Station 4: Envelope Exchange

What is it? The Envelope Exchange station reminds us that the written word can be a powerful way to take care of ourselves, stay resilient or heal, especially when the words are kind and offer hope and encouragement to the reader.

Objective: Students will explore the power of the written word by creating a message for the Envelope Exchange that will inspire, bring joy or peace to the reader.

Instructions: At this station, students pick a written message from the envelope board to keep and then write an inspiring or kind message to leave for a classmate. Teachers: discuss the term “to inspire” and solicit examples from students.

Supplies:

- ☐ Envelope Exchange Board (placed securely on a counter or table)
- ☐ Markers and pens
- ☐ Colored paper squares for messages

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Station 5: Watercolor Crayon Resist

What is it? This art activity encourages students to think about one or more ways they take care of themselves.

Objective: Through reflection and discussion, students will identify at least one activity they engage in for their own emotional and physical wellness.

Instructions: At the Watercolor Resist station, students will think about one or more things that they do to take care of or heal themselves (refer to the list of prompts below or wellness posters on slide 18 & 35). Once students have an idea, students follow a 2 step process: they draw it using crayons, and then they paint with watercolors over their drawing. The wax in the crayon "resists" the watercolor and their drawing comes alive!

Note: Students can either LABEL their drawing with crayon while completing the art project or with a pen after it dries.

Supplies:

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Watercolor sets
- ☐ Crayons
- ☐ Markers or pens for labeling
- ☐ **Prompts helped students get started, such as:**
  - ☐ Take a moment to close your eyes and imagine: where do you do this activity?
  - ☐ Who are you with?
  - ☐ Are you alone or with friends or family?
  - ☐ Are you outdoors or indoors?

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Station 6: Sensory and Care (Aromatherapy Scents or Soft Materials, Quiet Reflection & Journaling)

What is it? At this station, students will care for themselves by 1) learning about and using a variety of aromatherapy scents while 2) creating some time for quiet reflection and journaling. Scents like lavender, rose, cedarwood, and lemon are popular aromatherapies. Soft music is a nice addition to this station.

Objective: Students will experiment with a variety of aromatherapy scents to discover what brings them a sense of peace and calm, and then engage in quiet reflection time/and or journaling.

Instructions: Make a scent container for each scent with cotton balls, old film containers or small tupperware containers. Add a few drops of each scent. Students find a cozy spot in the room (think pillows and couches), experiment with the scents that are offered, and engage in quiet reflection time and/or journaling. We suggest that students smell the different scents from 4-6 inches away.

Variation: A potential variation of this exercise is to offer students bolts of soft cloth from which they can cut a small square to keep and touch when feeling activated.

Note: Teachers, please be aware of any aroma sensitivities that your students may have and adjust accordingly. We recommend using small quantities of a variety of scents (see instructions above).

Supplies:

- ☐ Scents
- ☐ Small containers
- ☐ Cozy corner
- ☐ Journal and pen or pencil
- ☐ Soft cloth for variation above

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Station 7: Community Healing Puzzle

What is it? This community puzzle emphasizes the importance of "healing" and that we're "all in this together."

Objective: Students will identify what healing means to them and then will contribute to a community or classroom puzzle.

Instructions: After first putting their name on the back of a puzzle piece, students then draw or write something on the front of the puzzle that represents healing to them OR, alternatively, something that brings them joy.

Variation: If you don't have a 3D printer, create a puzzle using tag board or poster board, cutting out the number of pieces needed for each of your students.

Supplies:

- ☐ Use **this file** with a 3D printer or use tag or poster board if you don't have access to a 3D printer.
- ☐ Permanent or "paint" markers
- ☐ Tag board or poster board

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Station 8: Somatic Experience

What is it? "Somatic experiencing" is a body-centered approach that expands on thoughts and feelings associated with a traumatic experience to include the natural bodily (somatic) responses. Through breathing, visualizations and body scans, youth connect to their body and nervous system, and, over time, gain skills and strategies that they can apply any time they might feel activated by a situation. Increased self-regulation and self-awareness are often lasting outcomes.

Objective: Engaging in a guided body scan, students will develop self-awareness regarding their emotional body and self-regulation skills.

Instructions:

1. Notice how you are feeling in your body now. This can be done by bringing your awareness first to your breath.
2. Scan the sensations you notice in your body, from head to toe. Where do you feel tension or relaxation? Be curious as to why this is so.
3. When you notice tension, try taking a few big belly breaths. Keep returning to your breath and repeating the body scan.
4. Once you feel grounded in your breath and more aware of your body, begin to activate your senses, one at a time:
    - What do you SEE
    - What do you HEAR
    - What do you SMELL
    - What do you TASTE
    - What do you FEEL
5. Return to your body and notice what has shifted.

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Station 9: Nature as a Pathway to Healing

What is it? Spend time in nature to promote healing.

Objective: Indigenous peoples' relationship with their traditional lands is a core part of their identity. Spirituality and connecting with nature as a form of healing is deeply rooted in their culture and history. Research also indicates that time in nature helps children, youth, and families cope with adversity and achieve resilience, recovery, and regulation. This includes interventions like nature therapy, forest bathing, and outdoor meditation, or simply playing outside, gardening, or taking a walk.

Instructions: Go outside! Take a deep breath. Then take another one. Look up, down, and all around you. Notice something new. Listen for birdsongs. Search for smells you recognize. See what all your senses can tell you about the natural world, and find your place within it.

Find your own ways to connect with nature

- Spend time alone outside.
- Spend time in nature with family and friends.
- Go to outdoor concerts and other events.
- Participate in guided discovery programs.
- Go out on your own discovery mission.
- Take an outdoor yoga or meditation class.
- Sign up for a forest bathing program.
- Make art with natural materials that are dead, down, and detached.
- Learn about nature through educational exhibits and signs.
- Find out how you can help care for nature, and take action!
- Find other ways to connect with nature, and share the good news.

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Station 10: Create Your Own Wellness Poster (Summative Activity)

What is it? At this station, students create a mini poster of all the activities that help them heal, stay healthy and resilient.

Objective: Students will be able to generate a list of activities that they find most healing to them and then create a poster for their personal use.

Instructions: Students take a piece of paper and fold it in half until they have the number of squares they need. They draw icons or pictures of their healing activities and then label them. Finally, students identify a place at home or at school to keep their wellness poster so they may refer back to it.

Variation: Students take action, by sharing their posters with their families. Together, they participate in daily or weekly family wellness activities.

Supplies:

- ☐ Paper
- ☐ Pens, colored pencils, pencils, crayons

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Station 11: Feedback

What is it? **This brief survey.** As a thank you, you will receive a gift certificate for an 8-inch Bundt cake from Nothing Bundt Cakes (while supplies last). Be sure to provide your address where it asks in the survey so we can send the gift certificate to you.

Objective: Each student leader, teacher, counselor or mental health advocate using this healing toolkit will complete the survey, and by doing so will contribute to future healing opportunities in the Boulder community.

Instructions: After youth engage with healing activities, adult and student leaders use the link above to answer questions. **Information from youth will inform future healing work in our community.**