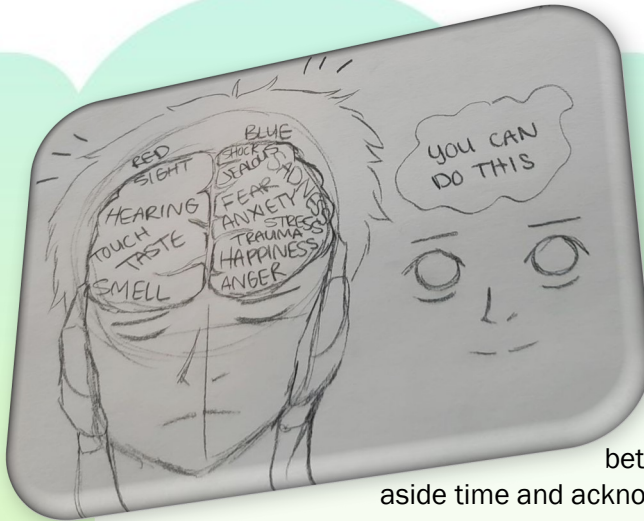


Self Affirmation



Not One More:
A Mission to Eliminate
Youth Suicide

Overview

Learning to love ourselves is a necessity when it comes to bettering mental health. Self-affirmation requires us to set aside time and acknowledge what attributes we appreciate about ourselves.

Things like our talents, strengths, and taking part in things we love doing can all be examples of self-affirmation. Too often we are quick to criticize ourselves for not meeting someone's standards. This negative way of thinking blocks out any positive reinforcement and has a negative effect on mental health.

But what if we took that time to tell ourselves about our talents, abilities, and amazing parts of our personality? What effects would that have on our mental health, self-image, and overall attitude? This pamphlet will guide you through self-affirming activities that you can use, and help others use, in the near future!

Objectives

- Improve students' morale and self-confidence by identifying and reinforcing strong attributes that they possess
- Build students' crisis response plan
- Teach students the importance of verifying their emotions through positive self-affirmation

Venue:

- Classroom Activities

Estimated Cost:

- Nominal: Postcards, notes, jars

Activities:

- Postcard to Myself
- Happiness Jars
- Trait Tracing

"Love yourself first, and everything else falls in line. You really have to love yourself to get anything done in this world."

- Lucille Ball



Postcard to Myself



What Is It?

During the activity, Postcard to Myself, students write letters to themselves that they will see in the future. These letters are used to remind students about their passions, positive traits, and/or uplifting memories during times when their mental health may be suffering. These letters remind students to love themselves. During a Mental Health Moment, teachers block off a period of time for students to write their letters on a sheet of paper, collect the letters, and put them into an envelope to receive them later. The letters can be based off a prompt provided by a teacher, or students can write about anything they'd like.

Why It Is Effective!

This activity gives students time to go more in-depth with self-affirming reflections. Rather than being working in a big group on something, or writing many messages, students can be focused solely on themselves. It also allows students to be descriptive in their writing and voice whatever they like about themselves. Postcard to Myself gives students the opportunity to reflect by themselves and acknowledge their good qualities. Because the postcards are written and received on different dates, students are reminded of all the positive things they see in themselves more than once.

Take Action

Acquire paper and envelopes for making the postcards (you can also get stamps, if you'd like). Decide upon a prompt your students will write about. Store and send out postcards after they're created.

Prompts!

What do you like about yourself?

If the world could know one great thing about you, what would it be?

What does your perfect day look like?

What do you like to do outside of school?

What kind of person do you want to be?

Free write!

Extra Steps/Alternate Activities

After the postcards are made, it is necessary that they be kept in a secure place where they can be redistributed later. For example, if your school has a mailing room where the postcards can be stored then sent out about a month later (or even years later – whatever your choose.), this would be an ideal location to put them.

If the teacher intends to mail the postcards to the students' houses, it is encouraged that the students write their home addresses on the envelopes.

Alternate ideas to Postcard to Myself include:

Pairing up members of your class and having them write to one another. (This would require more review of the letters to make sure they're not harmful, but would help build community)

Faculty and Staff writing to students



Happiness Jars

What Is It?

Happiness Jars are an activity that result in a lasting, easily accessible resource that can be added to a student's crisis response plan. During a Mental Health Moment, teachers provide mason jars, and strips of paper to their students. On these strips of paper, students write encouraging messages and things that make them happy until their jar is full.

Why it's Effective!

Happiness Jars: Everyone wants a word of support, compassion, or love during a hard time. But often, those words don't come right when we need them. Happiness Jars easily provide accessible, immediate messages of encouragement. Having the Happiness Jars easily accessible can also help build a student's crisis response plan. In the midst of a hard time, messages (or gifts) from their happiness jar can distract and guard a student from whatever negative thoughts they may be having. During these times, messages also help lift a student's mood through reinforcement of positive thinking.

Take Action

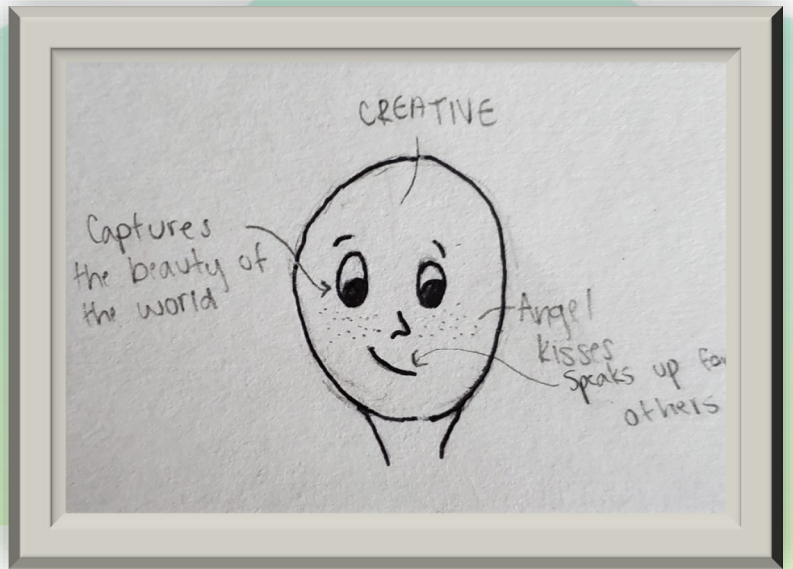
This exercise works well at any time.
Just get some jars and strips of paper!

Extra Steps/Alternate Activities

If the teacher chooses to do so, they may buy trinkets, stickers, candies, squishies or anything else that may foster more creativity amongst their students. Providing more options to be used in students' Happiness Jars is encouraged, but not necessary. Furthermore, if you can't acquire mason jars, you can use boxes or cups or anything that will securely hold the small strips of paper.



Trait Tracing



What Is It?

In this activity, students will draw a representation of themselves and note their positive traits in corresponding areas on the template. For example, if someone likes to draw, they can write “Artistic” on their template’s hand and draw a small picture. The representation could be a stick figure, bubble head figure, or it could come from a template.

Why It Is Effective!

Trait Tracing allows for artistic expression of one’s attributes. Not only is visual art a great opportunity for someone to express emotions, but Trait Tracing also allows for students that learn best through visuals to understand their positive qualities better. Finally, if possible, you can hang the diagrams on your classroom walls so that your class can constantly be reminded of all the amazing things about themselves.

Take Action

Create or Acquire templates of body outlines that are big enough for your class to draw and write on.

Make sure that each student has a template, and that extra templates are printed out... just in case.

Provide drawing and coloring supplies in case students want to decorate their template.

Decide upon a day to administer the activity.

Alternative Activities

If your school allows you to, and your class is willing to do so, templates may be hung on the walls of the classroom or in the hallway for other students to see and appreciate. This would also serve as a constant reminder to your class of their characteristics.

Note

There are versions of this activity that can be found in other sources, but some of these alternate activities instruct each student to have a friend trace their body onto a sheet of paper. I do not recommend this approach to the activity because I believe the emphasis should be on the non-physical traits that a person has.



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- Lynda C.—Illustrator
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IMPORTANT

- THIS IS NOT A REPLACEMENT FOR THERAPY OR PROFESSIONAL HELP. THESE ACTIVITIES ARE LISTED TO PROVIDE EASY-TO-ACCESS RESOURCES THAT CAN BE USED TO LESSON FEELINGS OF ANXIETY. TRAUMA SHOULD NOT BE PROCESSED IN A CLASSROOM SETTING. PLEASE SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP IF YOU ARE SUSPECTED OF HAVING ANXIETY, DEPRESSION, PTSD, OR OTHER MENTAL ILLNESSES.
- To get a list of overall guidelines to follow when doing the activities in the pamphlets please reference the “Safety” page in the Implementation Packet.





Resources

Templates for Trait Tracing:

<https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&url=https%3A%2F%2Fin.pinterest.com%2Fpin%2F88735055141123962%2F&psig=AOvWawOVlseYahEdE8RUVHYVHCf9&ust=1615944915405000&source=images&cd=vfe&ved=0CAIQjRxqFwoTCLDLkYvWs-8CFQAAAAAdAAAAABAD>

https://www.google.com/imgres?imgurl=https%3A%2F%2Ft4.ftcdn.net%2Fjpg%2F03%2F96%2F10%2F33%2F360_F_396103311_wwOBwsOP0VO1PNETCfNTPY40HghqDFd.jpg&imgrefurl=https%3A%2F%2Fstock.adobe.com%2Fgr_en%2Fsearch%2Fimages%3Fk%3Dchild%2Bbody%2Boutline&tbnid=jYEEgEvqtS92xM&vet=12ahUKEwis1cWG1rPvAhUbUMOKHe7kCj8QMygPegUIARDLAQ..i&docid=Cp4IK2cwE4p3DM&w=360&h=360&q=body%20outline%20drawing%20for%20children&ved=2ahUKEwis1cWG1rPvAhUbUMOKHe7kCj8QMygPegUIARDLAQ

References for Trait Tracing: *104 Activities that Build Self-esteem, Teamwork, Communication, Anger Management, Self-discovery, and Coping Skills* by Alanna Jones

Importance of Low-Cost Interventions (Postcard to Myself inspiration):

<https://project2025.afsp.org/>

Learn More About How Affirmations Work:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/mental-health/do-affirmations-work#making-them-effective>

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- Lucille Ball