

REBUILDING AFTER COVID

Activities Organized by Implementation Time





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REBUILDING COMMUNITY

What's in a Name?

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 10 minutes

This simple and surprisingly fun activity fosters a sense of belonging in the classroom, something identified as essential to students' feelings of comfort and restoring readiness to learn. Sharing information about our names opens doors to discussion about our families and history while creating bonds with peers, educators, and others at school.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- Have students form groups of two or three.
- Ask students to think about the story behind any part of their name - first name, middle name, last name, or nickname.
- In partner pairs or small groups, invite students to share these stories with each other.

Questions for Discussion:

After ten minutes or so, invite the class to circle up and share what they learned about others or their own story behind their name. Some questions to build and maintain the conversation could be:

- Is anyone willing to share about a story connected to their name?
- Would anyone change their name if they could? What would you change your name to?
- Have you ever had a nickname that you really like? Who calls you that and how did that come to be?

Talking about the origins of names provides an opportunity to recognize and honor the cultural diversity of your class.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Ubuntu Common Bond

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 10 minutes

Before we use Ubuntu Cards, it's important to understand the origin of the word, its meaning and its relationship to the cards we are about to use. The word Ubuntu is an Nguni Bantu term and philosophy. (Nguni is a subset of the larger family of Bantu languages and peoples in the southern portion of Africa.) The term means "humanity" and is frequently translated to "I am because we are." Ubuntu highlights our interconnectedness as a community, and that is what we intend to do when using these cards, create a sense of community and connection within our group.

This activity helps build relationships with a focus on discovering commonalities rather than differences between students. What we have in common with others is a key ingredient to building empathy and compassion for others and a sense of belonging for all. Creating bonds with peers, educators, and others at school can reestablish feelings of connection, promoting happier and more engaged learners.

Materials Needed: [A deck of Ubuntu cards](#) — High 5's Ubuntu Cards are a multi-functional deck of 54 cards, each with a single-image side and a multi-image side depicting 8 different objects with only 1 object in common with every other card in the deck.

How to Play:

- Have everyone start with an Ubuntu card that they will hold onto for the duration of the activity.
- When students partner up, they should begin by exchanging names if they don't know one another. Then, using the multiple image side of the card, the first challenge is to identify the matching image between both players' cards. Students show each other their cards, and try to find the image that the cards have in common (each card has multiple images, and every card will always have a match between any other card in the deck)
- After the matching object on the cards has been discovered, invite partners to find something in common with their partner like a shared interest in a video game or a favorite food.
- Once a partner pair has finished, have them find a new partner and repeat. Encourage students to find a new partner for each round.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Ubuntu Common Bond

Questions for Discussion:

Invite students to circle up and share:

- What are some examples of things you share in common with your partner?
- As students share, invite others to raise their hand if they also share that commonality.

Optional: Ask if anyone was unable to find a match between two cards (this is actually impossible because every Ubuntu card has one match with each card in the deck). This will bring up another important theme to highlight: sometimes it can be difficult to find a common bond, but don't give up!



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Rhyme or Reason

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 10-15 minutes

This fast-paced activity challenges students to think quickly to either rhyme or reason with a given word. This is a stimulating game that can help students re-engage and reacclimate to being back in the classroom while creating a sense of joy and pleasure. The joy we experience during play is essential to rebuilding classroom and school communities and to counteract social isolation.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- Invite students to find a partner.
- Explain that one partner will start by saying any word that comes to mind. Then, the other partner will respond with one word that either rhymes with the word that was just said, or reasons with it. For example, if one partner said "car," the other partner could choose a word that rhymes with it, like "far," or a word that reasons with it, like "automobile."
- The game continues going back and forth, with partners getting to rhyme or reason with the word their partner just said.
- Have students play for a few minutes before finding a new partner to play with.
- If time allows, consider playing a few rounds as a full class. The guidelines are the same but have everyone sit in a circle and take turns going around the circle to rhyme or reason with the word that was previously said.

Questions for Discussion:

Invite students to circle up and share:

- What was the experience like during the activity?
- Did you tend to rhyme, reason, or both?
- What observations about other students' tendencies did you notice?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Emotional Greetings

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 10 minutes

Emotional Greetings is a warm-up activity that challenges students to greet their partner with the emotion on a pre-selected card. We need to rely on a range of ways to share our emotions and understand how others are feeling. Research indicates that we overestimate our accuracy at reading others' emotions, with or without masks. This playful activity invites everyone to practice identifying emotions through the tone of voice used.

Materials Needed: [Emotions Cards](#)

How to Play:

- Provide each student with an Emotions Card. They should keep the word on their card private for now. Choose a greeting for everyone to use. For example, it could be a simple "Hello" or something longer like, "Hey there. How's it going?"
- Students will be given the opportunity to mingle with each other to find a partner.
- Students should use the chosen greeting to interact with their partner and are challenged to say it with a tone and facial expression that matches the emotion on their card.
- After each student has greeted their partner, their partner then gets three guesses as to what emotion they have on their card.
- Students then find another partner to keep playing until time is up.

Questions for Discussion:

- You can request that students reveal their Emotion Card for everyone in the class to see.
- What emotions were easier to guess? Why?
- What emotions were harder to guess? Why?
- How did you communicate your emotion through the greeting?
- What did you look for to guess someone's emotion?
- What might we do if we are confused by the tone someone uses when communicating?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Mood Meter Check-In

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 10 minutes

The Mood Meter is designed by the [Yale Center of Emotional Intelligence](#). [Marc Brackett, Ph.D.](#), is the lead developer behind this tool and research associated with their evidence-based approach to social and emotional learning. You can check out the [Mood Meter App](#), as well.

Introducing the Mood Meter prior to this activity is a must. We encourage you to run the **Sorting Emotions** activity to segue into introducing the Mood Meter, or you can share the tool visually and simply explain how it works. Make sure students understand that the horizontal axis represents the pleasantness associated with experiencing an emotion, while the vertical axis speaks to the energy level. Allow students some time to practice by naming some emotions and asking them to identify where they would place them on the graph.

You can circle back to the Mood Meter tool again and again, using this activity to help check in on how students are feeling at a specific moment. Research highlights the importance of emotional awareness for self and others within a functional classroom, and emotional awareness is one of the building blocks of emotional self-regulation.

Materials Needed: [Visual of the Mood Meter](#), or draw it on a pad or board.

To download the Visual file: click the link, go to the three vertical dots on the upper right, scroll down, and click Download. The file will download on your computer.

How to Play:

- Share the visual graphic of the Mood Meter in a way where all can see it.
- Refresh students on how the tool works and ensure everyone is clear in their understanding of the tool.
- Give students a moment to check in with themselves silently about how they are feeling in the moment.
- Invite students to name where they fall on the Mood Meter, either visually or by verbalizing or writing where they land.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Mood Meter Check-In

Questions for Discussion:

- Once everyone has had a turn to name where they would land on the Mood Meter, give students who want to a chance to elaborate on why they placed themselves where they did and what words they might use to describe how they are feeling right now.
- To prompt further discussion, you could ask:
 - In looking at the Mood Meter with everyone's marks on it, what do you notice about where we are as a whole group?
 - How do you think our answers as a group would look differently at other times of the day/week/year?
 - Ask students to raise their hands if . . .
 - They are happy with where they are at and want to stay in this zone/feeling.
 - They would like to shift how they are feeling currently (if there are some students who raise their hand for this, potentially ask if they have a strategy in mind around how to make that shift).
- This could lead to people sharing strategies they have tried that work (or haven't worked) for them.



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Psychic Hop

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 10 minutes

This simple activity provides opportunity for connection, movement, and laughter. Research has shown the loss of connection that a school environment provides has resulted in the loss of opportunities for spontaneous play and the loss of skill development that play provides, such as autonomy and problem solving.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- Invite students to demonstrate what it would look like for them if someone asked them to hop. Then establish as a class what is meant by “hop,” and demonstrate that action so everyone is on the same page. Is it a hop on one leg, or a small jump with both feet? Anything will work, so long as students come to agreement on the definition.
- Explain to students that they are secretly going to pick a number and not tell anyone. Then, they are going to find a partner to play with. Allow students to partner with a handful of different people before moving onto the second round.
- **Round 1: Psychic Hop**
In this round, partners decide for themselves if they are going to be a one, two, three, four or five. They do not tell their partner what number they chose. Then, facing each other, partners say “ready, set, go” and then proceed to hop the number of times that matches their secretly chosen number. If Lisa chose the number two, she would hop two times, and if her partner Ryan chose the number four, he would hop four times. For the first two hops, they would be in unison, and then Ryan would hop two more times.
- **Round 2: ESP**
In this round, partner pairs stay with each other for three separate hop attempts. Their goal is to match their number of hops in three attempts or less. The first attempt is done exactly like in Round One. In the second attempt, using the above example, Lisa might hop four times and Ryan might hop two times as they both try to match their partner. They then have one attempt left to try and hop the same number of times without telling their partner which number of hops they chose.



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Psychic Hop

- This activity could be played for a few minutes or with a more structured approach, such as playing until everyone has had a chance to play with at least four of five people. The game itself does not lead to a natural end; rather, it can wrap up when the class is ready to move on.

Questions for Discussion

- Reflecting back to the themes of autonomy and skill development, conversations can be centered around how students engaged in these ways:
 - How did you decide how many hops you were going to do?
 - What influenced your decision?
 - What was it like when you and your partner matched?



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

High 5 Mingle

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15-20 minutes

High 5 Mingle builds peer support through a variety of creative handshake-inspired, yet socially distanced, greetings. Although fun, this activity also provides an opportunity for students to practice supporting others while developing important skills of responsibility, self-regulation, and ownership that nurture a school climate of diversity and empathy.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- With the class standing in a large circle, explain that students will have the opportunity to learn and create some novel handshakes – but without making physical contact.
- Encourage students to partner with as many people as possible to learn, share, and create the handshakes.
- For the first handshake, demonstrate a simple variation. Examples can be found [here](#).
- In between each handshake, invite students to showcase their new skills.
- After you demo a few handshakes, invite students to create their own unique greetings with their partners.
- After a couple minutes, invite pairs to showcase their greetings in the middle of the circle.
- The most important consideration is asking students to think about how they are showing support on the outside. What are the expectations for how students should behave?

Questions for Discussion:

Invite students to showcase the greetings in front of the group, focusing on the social risk they are taking to be in the spotlight. More importantly, have students reflect on what it looks and sounds like for the rest of the group to show support – creating a community where people feel comfortable taking risks and putting themselves in the spotlight.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Tiny Teach

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

This activity empowers students to reflect, plan, and teach something to their partner. As simple as it seems, when students teach their peers, it goes a long way in helping them to regain control in their lives and feel that they are a valued and welcome member of a learning community.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- Invite students to partner up.
- Explain that they are responsible for teaching something to their partners. It can be a unique skill, talent, fact, or other piece of information. For example, perhaps they know a tip for making delicious cookies or how to make a simple paper airplane, or a way to remember multiples of nine.
- Give students a minute or two to reflect and plan on their own.
- Have partner pairs decide who will teach first and who will learn first. Then, give 2-5 minutes for the teaching member of the pair to share their skill, then switch roles with their partner to become the learner.
- If time allows, invite students to find a new partner, and give them the choice to share their skill with that partner or to share the skill they just learned from their previous partner.

Questions for Discussion:

Invite students to circle up. Ask students to raise their hand if they learned something new during this activity. Allow time for students to share and/or demonstrate their new skills and who they learned them from.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Change 3

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

This activity challenges students to identify small changes in the appearance of a partner. Although this activity is fun, it also serves as a warm-up to more important discussions about self and social awareness. These skills build the foundation for developing greater self-management and responsible decision-making skills.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- Invite students to partner up and stand facing their partner.
- Explain that, in a minute, they are going to change three things about their appearance and then their partner will try to guess what was changed.
- To start, partner pairs will take a minute to make simple observations about each other.
- The challenge begins as partners turn away from each other before changing three things about their appearance. For example, someone might roll up their sleeve, change their watch from their right wrist to their left wrist, or untie a shoe.
- When partners are ready, they'll turn to face each other and attempt to guess the changes made.
- If either partner gets stuck, the other person may reveal what they changed.

Questions for Discussion:

- Ask students to describe the experience and what they noticed or perhaps did not notice.
- What was challenging about the experience? Did you struggle or notice others struggle with the challenge?
- Apart from this experience, have you ever not noticed something that's changed? Maybe in the classroom?
- Is it important to notice changes in others? Why or why not?
- How can we increase our awareness of ourselves and others?



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Switch Seats

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

Switch Seats is a useful tool to help students actively engage in sharing their experiences during the pandemic and acknowledging the spectrum of realities experienced since March 2020. We help build empathy when we realize that while we are not in the same boat, we are all in the same storm and although we've all been dealing with loss of some kind, our respective experiences may not have been the same.

Materials Needed: A chair, poly spot, or something similar for each student

How to Play:

- Have everyone start by standing on poly spots or sitting in a circle of chairs.
- Explain that you are going to say "Switch seats if..." or "Find a new spot if..." or "Raise your hand if..." followed by a prompt.
- If that prompt is true for students, they should either switch seats, find a spot, or raise their hand based on your directions. If the statement is not true for them, they should stay where they are.
- Once everyone is set in a spot, the next prompt can be shared. In between prompts, you can ask questions and invite students to share more about what made them switch their spot.
- This activity is all-encompassing and can be used for both silly and serious conversations and anything in between - use relevant prompts depending on your goals for the activity.

Questions for Discussion:

- This tool invites every student to participate by moving if the prompt is true for them but doesn't force students to share if they don't want to.
- As you call out different prompts, feel free to pause to ask follow-up questions and invite students to share verbally if they want to.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Challenge Circles

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

This activity invites students to reflect on their emotions and recognize when they feel in their own comfort zone, challenge zone, or even “panic” zone in relation to different scenarios. This allows students to practice both self-awareness and social awareness skills and consider how they might step outside their comfort zone. When students realize they can handle uncomfortable emotions, it helps build resilience.

Materials Needed: A large length of rope (30’), a shorter length of rope (10’) or paper and pens (depending on which guidelines you use)

How to Play:

- Invite students to share what it looks like and feels like to be in your comfort zone, your challenge zone, and your panic zone.
- After students have a chance to share, create a visual with the two lengths of rope placed on the floor like a target.
- Explain that the center represents when we’re most comfortable (give an example). From the inner circle to the second circle is our “challenge zone.” Typically, when we are outside of our comfort zone is when learning and growth occur. Outside the challenge zone is the “panic zone.” This is when we push ourselves or others too far. In experiential education, we like to encourage students to step within the challenge zone.
- Offer example scenarios and ask students to position themselves in the zone that most represents their comfort. Invite students to share observations.
 - Some examples: Swimming in the ocean.
 - Giving a presentation in front of the class / grade / school / all the teachers.
 - Ordering your own meal at a restaurant.
 - Going a day without personal technology.
 - Cooking a meal on your own for a special guest.
- Depending on your goals with this activity, students might stand, draw, or write to show their answer. The foundational idea is the same, but it might look very different.
- If you want students to reflect by themselves and focus on self-awareness:
 - Give each student a pencil and a piece of paper.
 - Have students draw the challenge circle diagram on their paper.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Challenge Circles

- As you share each scenario with the class, invite students to mark on their paper where that scenario would put them.
- After students have marked all the scenarios, you can invite them to hold their papers up so students can see each other's responses without knowing which marking corresponds to which scenario.
- If you want to offer students anonymity and create a visual of where the class is at as a whole:
 - Write each scenario on a separate sheet of paper with the challenge circle diagram on it.
 - Provide a pencil or marker for each student.
 - Invite students to travel around the room to the different pieces of paper and mark where they would be for that scenario.

Questions for Discussion:

- The discussion after Challenge Circles will differ slightly based on which guidelines you followed. Consider having a smaller discussion between scenarios and a longer conversation at the end.
- Some questions might include:
 - What did you notice during this activity?
 - What themes emerged during this activity?
 - Why is it important to be aware of our own challenge circles?
 - Why is it important to be aware of others?
 - How do we support ourselves and others to step outside our comfort zones?



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Us/Not Us

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

Research supports the importance of empowering the voice of youth to help them establish a sense of control. One simple but effective way to involve students in the rebuilding process is through the creation of classroom norms called Us/Not Us. This student-generated list outlining agreed-upon classroom norms can address student needs and successfully re-engage youth in learning.

Materials Needed: A large sheet of poster or flipchart paper, markers

How to Play:

- Introduce the idea that some classroom behaviors support learning while others may impede the ability for learning to happen.
- Invite students to identify examples of thinking and acting that contribute to success in the classroom. For example, students may identify behaviors like clear communication or patience as those that support learning.
- Additionally, ask students to identify behaviors that will impede learning.
- After a warm-up discussion, divide a large sheet of paper in half by drawing a line down the center of the page creating two columns. Label one column "Us" and the other "Not Us."
- Brainstorm, discuss and record agreed-upon positive behaviors in the "Us" column.
- Next, brainstorm, discuss and record agreed-upon negative behaviors in the "Not Us" column.
- Review the two columns and make any refinements before moving on.
- Ask students to commit to working hard on following the agreed-upon norms outlined in this exercise.
- Display the list in the classroom as a reminder of the agreed-upon classroom norms.

Questions for Discussion:

Use the Us/Not Us list as a reflection tool throughout the year.

- How are we doing as a class in terms of living out our norms?
- Which norms are we following well? Which norms could we do better at following?
- Do we need to change or amend our list?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Masked Emotions

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

Masked Emotions helps students realize how much we rely on viewing the lower half of someone's face when understanding their emotions. Research has shown that when we cover our mouths, positive emotions are less recognizable and negative emotions are amplified. This can affect not only communication within the classroom community, but the bond between the teacher and students that promotes learning.

Materials Needed:

- Each player needs a mask
- *Optional:* [Emotions Cards](#)

How to Play:

- Have students partner up and determine who is going first.
- The first person attempts to get their partner to guess an emotion they are silently acting out based on their facial expression and body language.
- Provide some Emotions Cards for inspiration of what to act out if needed.
- Once the partner guesses correctly, they can switch roles.
- Continue until students have had enough experience to engage in a conversation about the challenges experienced in this exercise.

Questions for Discussion:

- Why is it challenging to read someone else's emotions with a mask on?
- What information did you use to guess how people are feeling?
- When we can't see someone's whole face, how might we better communicate? What do we want that to look like for us as a class?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Ubuntu Cards Championship

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

Before we use Ubuntu Cards, it's important to understand the origin of the word, its meaning and its relationship to the cards we are about to use. The word Ubuntu is an Nguni Bantu term and philosophy. (Nguni is a subset of the larger family of Bantu languages and peoples in the southern portion of Africa.) The term means "humanity" and is frequently translated to "I am because we are." Ubuntu highlights our interconnectedness as a community, and that is what we intend to do when using these cards, create a sense of community and connection within our group.

The Ubuntu Cards Championship is a playfully competitive event that encourages students to experience the emotions related to winning, losing, and mutual support. During this activity, students will practice the crucial skill of managing their emotions when they lose and will need to shift their focus to encouraging their peers. We know through research that emotional self-regulation techniques need to be retrained and practiced during rebuilding from difficult experiences. The class can build their skills and positive energy during this memorable experience as they rally to support one another and determine who is the champion!

Materials Needed:

- [Ubuntu Card Deck](#)
High 5's Ubuntu Cards are a multi-functional deck of 54 cards, each with a single-image side and a multi-image side depicting 8 different objects with only 1 object in common with every other card in the deck.

How to Play:

- Have everyone start with one Ubuntu Card from the deck. The multi-image side should be hidden out of sight from the opponent to start.
- Have students partner up and race to identify the matching image on the multiple side image of their cards. The partner who correctly identifies the object first wins and goes on to find another partner.
- The partner who loses joins the winner's team, becoming an enthusiastic fan and cheers them on.
- If a player who loses already has fans, the winner gains both the losing player and all of their fans.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Ubuntu Cards Championship

- Eventually, there will be only two players left with the rest of the class cheering them on in the final championship round.
- The winner of the final round becomes the champion!

Questions for Discussion:

- What emotions did you experience when/if you lost?
- Were you able to move on and support others? If so, how?
- What did it feel like to be supported by your classmates?
- How could we take the supportive energy we showed in this activity and bring it into other parts of our routine together as a class?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Name That Situation

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 20 minutes

This playful activity invites students to consider when they have felt, or could imagine experiencing, two randomly paired emotions. Through research and experience, we see how important it is to be able to share honestly about our complex emotional experiences and to validate that it's possible to experience more than one feeling at a time. This game normalizes this reality with an inviting approach that lets everyone be creative, silly, reflective, and vulnerable.

Materials Needed:

- [Name that Situation Digital Game Board](#) if you're doing this activity virtually.
To download the Digital Game Board: click the link, go to the three vertical dots on the upper right, scroll down, and click Download. The file will download on your computer as a PowerPoint file. If you don't have access to PowerPoint, please contact us and we'll send you a different file.
- [Emotions Cards](#) if you're doing this activity in person.

How to Play:

- Project the Name that Situation digital game board so that everyone can see it or lay the Emotions Cards out face down on a table or floor.
- Explain that a volunteer will choose two numbers [or cards] and then, by clicking on those numbers [or turning over those cards], they will reveal two random emotions. The goal is for the players to think about a specific situation where they have felt or might feel both emotions simultaneously.
 - Give an example before you start. For example, if your two words were *nervous* and *excited*, you might share that you have experienced both these emotions simultaneously when you were at a theme park right before going on a new roller coaster.
- Next, a student can volunteer to take a turn. Click on the two numbers they picked to reveal their random emotions [or turn those cards over].
- Then ask them to share a scenario when they have, or might, experience these two emotions at the same time.
- Keep playing as time allows, letting students take turns choosing numbers and emotions.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Name That Situation

- You can make the game more complex by picking three emotions.

Questions for Discussion:

- In between each turn, consider pausing for a brief conversation before moving onto the next person's turn. Some questions might include:
 - Can anyone else imagine experiencing those emotions in that situation?
 - What other emotions might you experience in that situation?
 - Are there other situations where you might experience those two emotions?
- At the end, invite students to reflect on their experience with the activity. Some questions might include:
 - Can you think of a time when you are experiencing three (or more) emotions all at once? What does that look like for you?
 - Why do people experience different emotions in different situations?
 - Why is it important to consider how you might experience different emotions than someone else in the same situation?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Sorting Emotions

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 20 minutes

Sorting Emotions allows students to deepen their emotional vocabulary. Research shows that resilience, self-regulation, and self-awareness are increased when students have the vocabulary to identify and explicitly name their emotions. This activity is helpful to introduce or revisit with the Mood Meter tool, as well as to spark conversation about how we individually see and experience different emotions.

Materials Needed:

- [Emotions Cards](#)
- (2) 10-foot ropes

How to Play:

- Present all the Emotions Cards in a way that students can sort and move them around while being mindful of social distancing.
- To start, challenge the students to sort all the Emotions Cards along a continuum of pleasant to unpleasant emotions, and provide a horizontal visual line for students to work along using one of the ropes.
- Give time for this to be a collaborative effort and encourage students to discuss their reasoning.
 - Students are encouraged to share if they are unclear what an emotion word means.
 - Remind students that everyone may experience emotions a little differently, therefore there is not one right answer.
- Next, use the other rope to overlay an additional line or axis perpendicular to the first one, making a cross. Invite students to further organize the words along the spectrum of high energy and low energy emotions.
- The Emotions Cards will then be sorted into four categories — essentially the students have created their own Mood Meter.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Sorting Emotions

Questions for Discussion:

- Are there any emotion words that you still aren't sure of their meaning?
 - (Responding to an unknown word raised by a student) Who knows what ____ means? (If no one does) How can we figure it out?
- Why do you think we use "pleasant" and "unpleasant?" Why might it be a problem if we thought of these as "good" and "bad" emotions?
- What emotions did you experience during this activity?
- What emotions did you observe in others during this activity?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Secret Emotion

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 20 minutes

Secret Emotion is an activity that expands students' emotional vocabulary and experiences in a way that is approachable and inviting. Research shows it is crucial to normalize talking about emotions, especially when rebuilding after a traumatic period. The better we can communicate our emotions, the easier it is to get help and provide support to others. This light activity allows for students to practice this without risking feeling overly vulnerable.

Materials Needed:

- [Digital Emotions Game Board](#) if playing online, or [Emotions Cards](#)
To download the Digital Game Board: click the link, go to the three vertical dots on the upper right, scroll down, and click Download. The file will download on your computer as a PowerPoint file. If you don't have access to PowerPoint, please contact us and we'll send you a different file.

How to Play:

- Display a range of 20 - 30 emotions for everyone to see. You can use either:
 - The digital game board, which has up to 57 emotions listed (you can click on the emotions to temporarily remove them before starting the round).
 - The printed Emotions Cards as a physical manipulative for this game.
- Ask for a volunteer who will be the secret emotion keeper, with the responsibility for answering yes or no questions during the round.
- Explain the goal is to eliminate all the emotions except for the chosen one by asking questions.
- Once the volunteer has silently chosen an emotion from the options presented, someone can ask a question to begin.
 - Questions must be yes or no questions and cannot ask directly about the spelling or color of the emotion.
- The group decides which emotions to eliminate based on the answer to each question. Each questioner gets the ultimate say of which cards stay or go.
- Continue to ask the volunteer yes or no questions until one card remains. Check to see if you got it correct!
- You can play additional rounds with some new emotions thrown in as time and focus allows.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Secret Emotion

Questions for Discussion:

- Most of the processing will happen during this activity; frequently there is lots of discussion generated. However, if the group faces some unpleasant emotional experiences during the activity, it would be beneficial to use that for learning by asking:
 - Did you learn anything new about one of these emotions during this game? If so, what did you learn?
 - What makes it challenging to know the difference between different emotions?
 - Why do you think we have so many words for emotions?
 - What emotions did you experience at different points during this activity?
 - How did those emotions show up in the ways you were acting?
 - What strategies did you try to manage your emotions?
 - What may be a strategy you could try in the future that would be fitting for this situation?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Push Catch

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 20 minutes

Push Catch is a high-energy warm-up activity that allows students to practice recognizing how they and others are feeling. Research and our experience show that rebuilding from traumatic experiences requires that we strengthen our skills to identify and manage our emotions, especially in situations where we feel anxious. This activity “puts the pressure on” and solicits a range of responses, giving many opportunities for emotional awareness, as well as management of some more challenging emotions.

Materials Needed: Soft ball to toss, such as a beach ball

How to Play:

- Gather everyone in a circle.
- Explain that this activity will provide an opportunity for students to practice identifying emotions, as well as managing their own feelings when they may be on edge. Ask students to be prepared to share at the end of the activity what it feels like to be in the spotlight and then ask how it feels to make a mistake while in the spotlight.
- Transition to explaining and demonstrating the activity. Explain that you’ll instruct someone to either “Push” or “Catch” immediately before you toss them the ball.
- The goal is for the student to quickly perform the opposite of what is instructed. If you say “Push,” they should catch the ball. If you say “Catch,” they should just bop the ball back towards you in a pushing motion.
- If a student makes a mistake, they are out. Make it obvious they are out but still be in a place where they can observe their peers, such as sitting down if everyone playing is standing.
 - Students can take themselves out of the game at any point during the activity if they no longer wish to play. This is key to give a sense of choice and control, and a way to help them manage their own emotions if the pressure is too intense.
- The last person standing is declared the winner!



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Push Catch

Questions for Discussion

- At the end of the game, or between rounds and/or during rounds, consider pausing to have students reflect on the emotions that are coming up for them. Some questions might include:
 - How did you feel during different points of the game?
 - By show of hands, who else felt that way?
 - How can those emotions show up in the way we act and react?
 - What are some strategies you could use to manage these emotions that would be appropriate in this current situation?



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Alphabet Stretch

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

Alphabet Stretch is a calming, low-impact physical activity that allows students to connect through non-verbal shared leadership. Research has shown that centering relationships in authentic ways is a feature of social-emotional learning that warrants special attention, particularly during times of communal stress. This simple activity provides that opportunity, while also providing opportunities for restorative physical activity.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- Explain to students that they are going to have the opportunity to spell out the alphabet through stretching and mirroring their partner.
- Consider setting the story by saying, "Imagine that you are a painter, and you have a giant canvas in front of you. Your hands are your paint brushes, and you are going to paint the letters of the alphabet, so that each letter takes up as much of the canvas as possible."
- Give a demonstration by "drawing" a specific letter, reaching as high as you can and going down low to your toes.
- Explain to students that if their partner is the person "drawing," that their role is to follow their partner's movements as precisely as they can – as though their partner is looking in a mirror.
- Invite students to partner up and try it out. After one partner has "drawn" two or three letters, have them switch roles, and continue going back and forth until they get to the end of the alphabet.
- After warming up with the alphabet, challenge students to have their "drawing" partner spell out a word, while the mirroring partner tries to guess the word.

Questions for Discussion

Invite students to circle up and share what it was like to be both the partner drawing and the partner mirroring.



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Rock Paper Scissors (RPS) - Split!

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

RPS Split is a quick energizer that can be done once to refocus students or played for longer periods as part of another lesson. Research has shown that promoting a sense of belonging leads to happier and more engaged learners and this game creates those bonds through a blend of cooperation, competition, and the opportunity to be actively supported by a peer group. It's an activity that can help reacclimate students to being in physical proximity with others.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- Check in with the group and make sure all know the rules to RPS: rock beats scissors, scissors beat paper, paper beats rock.
- Explain that students will start with a partner standing heel to toe (with their feet brought into a straight line), facing their partner, toes touching.
 - Social Distancing Adaptation: Place a pool noodle lengthwise on the ground between the two participants. Both players will have their toes touching the pool noodle to maintain distance.
- Each time students play a single round of RPS a winner will eventually be determined.
- That winner takes their front foot and places it directly behind their back foot, heel to toe once again.
- The loser must then slide their current front foot forward until it meets the toes of that game's winner (or the newly repositioned pool noodle). You will see them begin to do a "split."
- It is important to be aware that it is the FRONT foot that always moves in each case and never the back foot.
- There are 3 outcomes that may rule a player out of the game:
 - If at any point they fall over.
 - If they cannot make the distance created and must forfeit.
 - If a hand or any other body part comes into contact with the ground.
- If a student is out, then they must cheer the winner on to face another 'team'...to ultimately become the RPS Split Champion!



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Rock Paper Scissors (RPS) - Split!

Questions for Discussion

This activity doesn't have a set discussion component, but you can check in with the participants to have them express how they felt about getting closer to another classmate, or what other feelings the game elicited.



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Paper Run

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

Paper Run helps students take a developmentally appropriate approach to goal setting and personal challenge, while enjoying encouragement from peers. This energetic, fun activity can be useful in restoring a sense of joy and play.

Materials Needed: One piece of paper per participant

How to Play:

- Ask students: How long do you think a piece of paper would stick to the front of your body if you couldn't use tape or anything else to attach the paper? Would the paper stay on longer if you were moving?
- Hand out one piece of paper per participant.
- Take a minute or two for everyone to experiment with different ways of balancing the paper, on the head, on the arms etc. Finally, invite everyone to place the paper on their abdomen.
- Next challenge participants to remove their hands and see if the paper can stay in place. Share the rule that the paper may not be held in place with anything — no hands, no assist from clothing, tape, etc.
- As will quickly be discovered, the paper will likely only stay in place if participants are moving. The faster the movement, the more likely the paper will stay in place!
- Allow everyone some time to experiment with different paces of movement.
- Once everyone has had a chance to practice and experience some physical activity, the activity can end there, or a group challenge round may be attempted.

Group Challenge Round

- Divide the class into groups of 3-4 people.
- Ask each group to set a goal for how many seconds cumulatively they can keep the paper on their abdomen. For example, if Ryan has 15 seconds, Jim has 20 and Beth has 30, that group's time is one minute and five seconds.
- Allow each group some practice time to see how realistic their goal might be and allow for any adjustments to be made.
- Once each group has had a chance to try to reach their goal, record the total of actual seconds, and make a note of that as a time to try to beat the next time.

Questions for Discussion: No discussion necessary!



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Poppers

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 20 minutes

Poppers are simple toys – slices of a pool noodle – and in this activity sequence, students will have opportunities for movement, creativity, and sharing of skills. Research has shown that providing students with opportunities for input and control in their environment leads to higher sense of self-efficacy and self-confidence, particularly after difficult events. This fun sequence of relatively free play has infinite possibilities and allows students to think of their own variations of the game.

Materials Needed: One or more poppers per participant (you can purchase poppers from [the High 5 Store](#) or make your own)

How to Play:

- This is a loose, free play-like sequence that allows students to share insights, challenge each other, and experience the joy of novelty. Below is one example of an instructional sequence.
- Distribute one popper per student and allow for some free play time. Explain that there will be a variety of challenges that students can engage with using the poppers.
- Gripping the Popper
 - Hold the popper between the thumb, pointer finger and middle finger with the rounded side of the popper facing the space to which you would like it to travel.
 - Extend your arm away from your body, keeping it slightly bent.
 - Aim the round part toward the space or target.
 - Squeeze the popper with both thumb and fingers equally.
 - Release the popper toward the space, target, or partner.
- Once participants have a good sense of basic popping, introduce new challenges such as:
 - Pop with your non-dominant hand.
 - Pop a popper into the air and catch it.
 - Pop two poppers into the air and catch them both.
 - Pop a popper, do a 360-degree spin, then catch it.
- Once participants appear to be ready to move on, introduce some partner or small group challenges such as:
 - A simultaneous popper exchange.
 - A long distance pop.
 - Popping through the legs or over the head.



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Poppers

- Facilitator Tips: Given the loose structure of the activity, it works well if you, the facilitator, immerse yourself in the play as well. Doing so adds value and models a playful approach. Get the play started, but don't overdo it. Allow participants to explore, discover, and play!

Questions for Discussion

With an opportunity for relatively free play and organic idea sharing, a group reflection or discussion is not indicated. Themes around idea sharing, drawing inspiration from each other may come up in future activities, and a reference back to popper play may support those conversations.



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Clap Jump Spin Run

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

Clap Jump Spin Run is a simple group activity that has equal emphasis on movement and social skills, such as self-regulation and responsibility. Research has shown that students need opportunities to have ownership over their learning and interactions with each other, and this activity allows for that practice in a joyful context.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- First, have students gather in a circle and explain the game sequence of gestures:
 - Clap: Clap hands together once
 - Jump: A low one- or two-foot jump, just slightly away from the group
 - Spin: A full 360-degree rotation
 - Run: Leave one's current spot, and find a new place in the circle
- After a moment of practice with the gestures, explain that throughout the game, the gestures will always be performed and passed around in that order. One person will start the sequence with a Clap, the next person will Jump, the next person will Spin, and the next person will Run to a new spot in the circle and start the sequence over with a Clap. The direction of the sequence will change depending on the round of play.
- **Round 1:**
 - Ask for a volunteer to start the sequence with a Clap, facing the person to their right, who will continue the sequence with a Jump. The sequence continues to pass to the right and the next person will Spin and then the next person will Run across the circle to a new spot. When they arrive at their new spot, they turn to their right and Clap, effectively starting the sequence over. Engage with this round for a minute or two.
- **Round 2:**
 - This round is the same as Round 1, except that the runner who arrives at a new spot can decide which direction they would like to pass the sequence — either to the right or to the left. Engage with this variation for a minute or two.
- **Round 3:**
 - This is where communication gets tricky! Round 3 starts in the same way; however, the sequence gets passed to the left and to the right at the same time, effectively doubling



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Clap Jump Spin Run

the number of people playing. When a runner arrives at their new spot in the circle, they clap, sending the sequence in both directions.

Questions for Discussion

- Reflection for this activity is, in many ways, built into the game itself. It may not be necessary to have a discussion afterward.
- A common theme that emerges is how difficult it is to hear lots of instructions at once, especially when it's literally impossible to do all the tasks at once!



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Moonball

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 15 minutes

Moonball is a simple and fun problem solving activity that can be played over and over again. Research has shown that when students have a specific problem solving process to follow, they can develop predictive skills that will help them make responsible decisions. Moonball allows a class to apply a simple planning and problem solving process in a light and engaging way. This activity can be followed up by teaching the ABCDE's of Problem Solving or to reinforce the use of this tool if it has already been introduced.

ABCDE's of Problem Solving

This is a tool that can help with problem solving when working with others. Each letter stands for a different part of the problem solving process.

- **A:** Ask questions for clarification
- **B:** Brainstorm ideas of how to solve the problem
- **C:** Choose an idea
- **D:** Do it by trying out the idea
- **E:** Evaluate by asking how that went and where can we improve?

Materials Needed: Beach ball

How to Play:

- Invite students to think about the importance of setting goals when you're faced with a problem to solve. Some questions might include:
 - Is it important to set goals when solving a problem? How come?
 - How do you choose a goal that is realistic, but not too easy?
 - Why is perseverance an important skill when problem solving?
- Invite students to spread out around the space. Explain that the goal is to keep the beach ball from hitting the ground for as long as possible by hitting it up in the air.
- **The rules:**
 - No one can hit the ball two times in a row.
 - Everyone should hit the beach ball at least once.
 - Every hit counts for one point.
- Count the number of successful hits. If the ball hits the ground, start again.



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Moonball

- After a few rounds, invite your students to set a goal of how many points they think they can get or challenge them to get as many points as there are students in your class.
- Continue playing until they reach their goal or as time allows.

Questions for Discussion

- The discussion for this activity can happen both throughout the activity and again at the end:
 - During the activity, allow time for students to set a goal of how many points they think they can get and to reflect on the strategies they are using.
 - At the end of the activity, have students reflect on the goal they set.
- Some questions might include:
 - How did you decide what your goal number of points was going to be?
 - What helped you reach your goal or prevented you from reaching your goal?
 - How did you use the ABCDE's of problem solving in this activity?
 - How did you come up with a strategy to use? Did you change your strategy at any point? How come?
 - If you were to do this activity again, what would you do the same and what would you do differently?



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Swat Tag

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 20 minutes

Swat Tag is a lively activity that offers a steady progression of individual and group challenges. This game offers spontaneous opportunities for conflict practice and resolution, an important component of rebuilding school climate after the long period of social distancing and remote learning.

Materials Needed: 1 pool noodle (required) and 1 poly spot per participant (optional)

SAFETY NOTE: *As there is a lot of action in this game, there is an opportunity for heads to collide particularly when reaching for the noodle in the center of the circle. You may want to reduce any running to a fast-walking speed or less.*

How to Play:

- Start with a conversation about tag in general with prompting questions such as:
 - How many of you enjoy being “It” in a game of tag, or being the center of attention? Why or why not?
 - What makes it feel more or less risky to be in those spotlight positions?
 - Discuss topics such as these and then explain how Swat Tag works.
- Have the group form a large circle. If desired, have each individual mark their space with a spot marker. Place a spot marker in the center of the circle.
- One person starts in the center of the circle, on a spot, holding a pool noodle. This person is now “It” and will be trying to make someone else take their place.
- To play, the “It” can lurk around the inside of the circle and tag anyone standing in the circle, below the knees.
- Immediately after the tag, the “It” heads back to the spot marker in the middle of the circle and places the noodle on the spot, which must rest on and touch some portion of the spot. Meanwhile, the tagged player (Tagee) follows the “It” to the center.
- Once the noodle is laid on the spot, the Tagee can then pick up the noodle and try to tag the “It” back, before the “It” claims the open spot in the circle.
 - If the “It” gets tagged before making it back to a spot, the “It” needs to return to their role in the center with the noodle.
 - If the “It” manages to get back to the spot in the circle without getting tagged, the Tagee becomes the new “It” with the noodle.



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Swat Tag

- If the noodle is not carefully placed on the center spot marker, a Taguee is not required to pick it up until it has been laid in the proper position by the "It". Precision matters! This rule has the added benefit of slowing down the game a bit, which can help prevent collisions.

Questions for Discussion

This activity doesn't have a set discussion component; it's ideal as a physical energizing break or warm-up to get students ready to focus on other activities.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Robots

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 25-35 minutes

This activity invites students to reflect on what it means to trust someone and to be trustworthy, while providing the opportunity to practice earning trust and being trustworthy. Trust is the very foundation on which relationships are built and maintained and will become a critical part of rebuilding connections and community. When students know they can trust someone, it promotes resilience and an awareness that they can cope with difficult events.

Materials Needed: None

How to Play:

- In this activity, students will impersonate robots and their operators. Have students partner up and decide who will begin as the Robot and who will begin as the Operator. Challenge the Operators to keep their Robots moving without any collisions, or beeps, for as long as possible.
- Robots walk around with their “bumpers” up at all times (hands out in front, palms facing out). Once activated, using the “Start” command from their Operators, Robots walk slowly in a straight path until they are instructed to change direction. If the Operator says “Left” the Robot should make a 90-degree left turn and if the Operator says “Right” the Robot should make a 90-degree right turn. Robots know that they are programmed to stop just before colliding with an obstacle. In addition to stopping, the Robot beeps — “Beep!” — signaling the need for a direction change from the Operator. The Operator also has a “Stop” command, signifying to the Robot to stop.
- In the first round, Robots should keep their eyes open, allowing them to see what is in front of them. After a minute or two, allow the partnered pairs to switch roles.
- In the next round, to increase the amount of trust needed, invite the Robots to keep their eyes closed as the Operators are guiding them around. Bumpers are especially important because the Robots cannot see and therefore lose their ability to stop before walking into something or someone else.
- In the final round, the Operator picks a destination ahead of time for their Robot. The Robot should have their eyes closed. The Operator has the goal of leading their Robot to that destination in the room. **Note** that closing your eyes creates extra vulnerability; your group may not be ready for this step until they’ve done the activity with eyes open a few times.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Robots

Questions for Discussion:

- Did you notice anyone being particularly trustworthy in these challenges? Open this up for shout-outs to their peers. You can also use a thumb gauge (thumbs up; thumbs down; thumb sideways) to measure the feeling of trust.
- What did it look like to be trustworthy in this activity?
- What does it look like to be trustworthy in school?
- How does trust play out in school?
- Do you think you, personally, always act in a way that is trustworthy?
- What would change if we all were trustworthy all the time while in class?



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Mass Pass

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Connections and Community
Total implementation time, with discussion: 25-35 minutes

This activity allows students to practice problem solving skills. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL), teaching children how to make constructive choices is an important step in restoring their confidence and autonomy.

Materials Needed:

- Two large buckets or hoops
- A large boundary rope, approximately 50 feet long
- 25 to 30 tossable objects (such as fleece balls, stuffed animals, deck rings, etc.)
- A stopwatch

How to Play:

- Create a large rectangle with the boundary rope and place the buckets or hoops at opposite corners from each other. Place all the objects in one container. Ask the group to gather around the outside of the rectangle to hear the specific instructions.
- The goal is to pass as many objects as possible from Bucket A to Bucket B within the given time frame – 60-90 seconds works well – while following these rules:
 - All sides of the rectangle must be occupied by at least one participant.
 - During the round, participants must stay in their spot around the rectangle.
 - The interior of the rectangle is off-limits. If an object is dropped inside the rectangle, it may not be picked up again during that round.
 - Objects must be touched by all participants before they are placed in bucket B.
 - Objects may not be passed directly to anyone's right or left, including around corners.
 - If you wish, you can give the team a few minutes to plan their pattern in advance.
- Timing of the round begins once an object in Bucket A is touched by any participant.
- Once the time is up, all actions stop, and the items in Bucket B are counted. The number of items equals the score for the first round.
- Before going into the second round, the group should be given a few minutes to discuss how they may improve their score.
- Three or four rounds is a good number of attempts for most groups.



REBUILDING COMMUNITY

Mass Pass

Questions for Discussion:

When this activity is presented as a challenging initiative, invite students to share what they saw as strong moments in their problem solving and collaborative process as well as where they could have improved. Students can highlight strengths or skills they saw emerge in their peers, as well as goals that come to mind for themselves to be a supportive team member in the future.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Heads Up

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 30 minutes

The activity invites students to describe various emotions in a fun guessing game. The experience sets the stage for learning about emotional expression and vocabulary. We know through research and experience that it is important to develop skills in recognizing, understanding, and accurately identifying your own and others' emotions. Validating the emotions that we and others feel is an important step in rebuilding after difficult experiences.

Materials Needed:

- [Emotions Cards](#)

How to Play:

- Divide the class into two equal groups. Position each group spread out along a line, sitting and facing the other group with about an eight-foot gap.
- Clarify that even though we are in two groups, the whole class is working together toward our goal of guessing as many words correctly as possible in each one-minute round.
- During each round, one group describes the emotions, and the other group tries to guess them. Stand behind the first round's guessing group and hold the Emotions Cards up one at a time so only the describing group can see the words.
- The describing group can speak or act (without saying the word, spelling out the word, saying what it rhymes with, saying it in another language, etc.) to get the other group to guess the word.
- When a student correctly guesses the word, reveal the next word.
- Students may pass on a word that is too challenging or unknown.
- Consider making the rounds harder as the activity progresses by challenging students to be silent and just act out the words instead of using verbal descriptions.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Heads Up

Questions for Discussion:

- Spread the Emotions Cards out for all to see for reference during the discussion.
- Are there any emotion words you were unfamiliar with? How might we define some of these words?
 - It's important to talk about what different emotions mean so students have a more precise emotional vocabulary. Some commonly mixed up or misused words are jealous vs. envious, frustrated vs. hopeless, excited vs. elated, overwhelmed vs. anxious, etc. The more precisely we can identify our emotions, the easier it is to understand them.
- This discussion can transform into an additional activity as you encourage students to think about the words that came up in the activity and what they mean. Some possible questions might include:
 - Has anyone ever felt _____? (choose emotions that are harder to understand or discuss)
 - What are some words that are similar? How are they different?
 - Are there any emotions you try to hide? Why?
 - Why do you think we have so many words for emotions anyway? Do we need all of them?
 - Why do we need to be able to read, label, and understand emotions?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Helium Hoop

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 30 minutes

This activity is designed to challenge students to manage their emotions during a seemingly simple, but in practice, quite difficult task. Students' self-regulation skills and emotional resilience will be put to the test, which are critical skills to be practiced and rebuilt at this time. The aim is for the conflict and frustration that emerge in this activity to be used for the follow up reflection and tied to appropriate strategies for managing emotions.

We call this activity Helium Hoop because, despite the group's attempt to lower the hoop, it usually rises because everyone will be putting pressure on it from the bottom — almost as if it's filled with helium!

Materials Needed:

- One hula hoop for every group of four to six students (the more students around a hoop, the more difficult the activity will be).
- One foam pool noodle per student.

How to Play:

- Have students spread out in groups of four to six with a hula hoop.
- While in a circle, ask students to aim both pointer fingers toward the center of their circle and then place the hula hoop on their circle of fingers.
 - *Social Distancing Variation:* Have students each use a pool noodle to extend their reach and hold up the hula hoop.
- Explain the goal is to lower the hoop to the ground.
- Have the students start with the hoop at roughly shoulder height and begin to lower it from there:
 - Their fingers (or pool noodle) must always maintain contact with the hoop and must be positioned below the hoop.
 - No additional contact should be made with the hoop.
 - The hoop must also always stay level.
- Groups must restart the process if someone loses contact with the hoop or if the hoop tilts off level.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Helium Hoop

Questions for Discussion

The discussion for this activity will vary based on how students did with the challenge, which might vary dramatically from one group to the next. If challenging emotions arise (which is really the point of this activity), give time if needed for students to calm down a bit before jumping into the class discussion.

Some possible questions include:

- What role did your emotions play in this activity?
- What emotions did you observe others experience?
- What did you or others do when experiencing [name the emotion you are observing, such as frustration, overwhelmed, spent, etc.]?
- What would it look like if we approached this activity when everyone was calm and able to manage their emotions?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Perfect Square

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: 45-60 minutes

Perfect Square asks students to create the outline of a perfect square using a length of rope. It sounds simple but it is actually quite difficult and typically elicits a range of emotions. Students regularly become frustrated or apathetic during this activity, giving us the chance to discuss strategies and self-management tools in real time. Research highlights the need to rebuild our ability to regulate our emotions in order to stay focused, calm, and think collaboratively, even during moments of stress.

Materials Needed:

A 65-foot length of rope or webbing with the ends tied together to form a large, closed loop.

How to Play:

- Ask students to stand in a large circle while holding the large rope along the perimeter.
- Explain that the goal of the activity is for the group to make the outline of a perfect square. Students should continue holding onto the rope until everyone agrees it is perfect and the rope is placed on the ground.
- A few important notes:
 - Once the instructions are clear, step back and give your students space to go through this (probably messy) process. If you observe heightened emotions, know that the activity is working, and it will set you up to have a good discussion afterwards.
 - Interrupt the students' process if emotions and behaviors escalate to the point of being no longer appropriate. Give students some time to calm down and reflect, and then open up for conversation.
 - There is no one right way to make the square, and there may be a lot of negotiation to come to agreement on a strategy.
 - The goal of this experience is to engage in some honest conversation and so if the goal is not completed to everyone's satisfaction, that's normal.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Perfect Square

Questions for Discussion

- What emotions did you experience during this challenge? Do you think others could have observed that you felt that way through your actions?
- What strategies did you use to manage your emotions?
 - What strategies were helpful in this situation?
 - What strategies were not so helpful?
- What would have been different if everyone remained calm throughout the challenge?
- How does communicating your emotions affect your ability to work together?
- How do you communicate your emotions in the classroom appropriately?



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Maestro

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Physicality
Total implementation time, with discussion: 30 minutes

Maestro helps students engage in physical activity while also enjoying a sense of self-direction and self-regulation. Research has shown that students need opportunities to regain ownership over their own learning after a long period of remote schooling and social distancing. This activity allows students to design important elements of this process for themselves and each other.

Materials Needed:

- Flipchart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard
- Markers or chalk

How to Play:

Round 1:

- On a large piece of flipchart paper, whiteboard, or chalkboard, replicate these four lines of text:
X X X O O O
O O X X O O
O X O X O X
O O X O X X
- Explain the X is the symbol for Hop (or jump, or other motion) and that O is the symbol for Squat (or lunge, or other motion)
- The role of the Maestro is to point to the letters, line by line, from left to right, as the rest of the class attempts to follow along. The Maestro should start with a slow, steady pace.
- Once the group seems oriented to the activity, add a twist to the activity by placing a small dot inside every other O. Explain that O with the dot inside is an indication that the group should Squat (or Lunge, etc.) and also make a specific sound (a cat's meow is a favorite). The specific sound is up to the Maestro!
- Engage with the challenge again, with the Maestro pointing to the letters line by line, from left to right. As the activity progresses, the Maestro may vary the speed to modify the level of challenge!



REBUILDING PHYSICALITY

Maestro

Round 2:

- The next level of the challenge allows for a sharing of the Maestro role. Divide the class into small groups of 3-5 participants and invite them to create their own “piece of music.”
Some guidelines to consider:
 - Each small group is asked to focus on a certain muscle group or movement type.
 - Each small group should use a similar structure as in the original round, with four lines of six letters.
 - After each small group has had a chance to create their own challenge, they will take turns explaining what their symbols mean, and sharing their challenge with the rest of the class.

Questions for Discussion

- What traits of the routine did you enjoy the most?
- Where else in your life at school and beyond do you have routines that you are hoping to settle back into?
- Where are you finding it challenging to be physically back in the classroom with everyone?



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Observation: An Additional Layer to Add to any Activity

HELPS WITH: Rebuilding Emotional Wellbeing
Total implementation time, with discussion: Dependent on activity used with observation

The additional role of “Observer” can be added to any activity where there will be a range of emotions experienced. With this additional component, students can practice and build their skills in interpreting others’ emotions. Through research and experience, we know it is crucial to have the ability to read others’ emotions using the nuanced ways they show up in our facial expressions, tone of voice, and body language. This is especially important when students and colleagues may be struggling with a range of feelings after traumatic events.

It’s ideal to add the role of Observer when you revisit a favorite activity that solicits a range of emotions, adding this additional element to an activity with which you and the students are already familiar.

Materials Needed: Paper and pen/pencil for every student

How to Play:

- Share that there will be two roles for this activity. There will be those playing and those observing, with possible opportunity to switch roles if the game and time allows.
- Students begin by pairing up, and each partner decides who is going to be the Observer and who is going to participate in the activity. If needed, an Observer can be watching and recording for two participants.
- First focus your directions on how the observation part of the activity works.
 - The designated Observer will watch their partner(s) play the activity and record on paper at least three different emotions they think their partner(s) experience during the activity.
 - The partner(s) who play should also pay attention to the emotions they experience during the activity so they can also write down at least three emotions they experienced after the activity is over.
- Once everyone is clear about the Observer role, transition to introducing the activity to those playing the game.
- At the end of the activity ask the people who played to also quickly record three emotions they experienced.



REBUILDING EMOTIONAL WELLBEING

Observation: An Additional Layer to Add to any Activity

Questions for Discussion:

- Have the Observers share with their partner what emotions they saw. Their partner can share which ones were accurate and they can discuss how there may have been any misreading of the emotions.
- Discussion for the larger group after partner conversations might include:
 - What emotions did you observe in your partner and why? Were your observations correct?
 - What emotions might you present differently than others?
 - Why is it important to recognize others' emotions?