

Stretch-and-Snack Break (10 minutes)

Materials:

- Nutritious snack items such as fresh fruit, trail mix, granola bars, and water
- Paper plates or cups
- Disposable utensils

Purpose: During a stretch-and-snack break, participants explore how movement and nutrition can affect the way they feel.

Encourage everyone to choose their own stretch and do it for one or two minutes. They can do this standing or sitting, whatever feels good to them. If they're unable to think of one, show them a couple of your favorites.

SAY:

- *How did stretching make your body feel?* (Give time to answer.)
- *How does movement affect how you feel mentally?* (Give time to answer.)
- *Did you know that what you eat can also affect how you feel? Let's get a snack and talk about that some more.*

Have the group select whatever snacks they'd like. While they eat, talk with them about how nutrition impacts mental health.

SAY:

- *We're taking a snack break to give our brains some energy.*
- *Foods have nutrients that can help you stay alert and strong, and make you feel better.*
- *Do you notice a difference in how you feel when you're hungry compared to when you've had a nutritious meal or snack?* (Give time to answer.)
- *What foods and drinks do you think keep your body and mind strong?* (Give time to answer.)
- *Hope you're all feeling recharged! Let's move on to the next activity, where we'll get into self-care and what it means to be resilient.*

Activity 3: Building Resilience (15 minutes)

Materials:

- Paper (enough for everyone)
- Pencils or pens
- Large construction paper (enough for everyone)
- Small sticky notes
- Markers
- **Getting the Right Start** meeting aid

Purpose: Participants explore different types of self-care, identify stressful and positive things in their lives, talk about why it's important to get help, and learn about taking care of themselves.

SAY:

- *Did you know that one out of every six people ages 6 to 17 experiences a mental health condition each year? What do you think of that statistic?* (Give time to respond.)

- *When someone is struggling, what should they do?* (Give time to respond; if needed, offer "get help" as an answer.)
- *Let's find out more about what it takes to get help if you or someone you know is struggling with something.*

Pass out the **Getting the Right Start** meeting aid. Use this next discussion to help familiarize participants with the points made in the handout and lead into a discussion about self-care and coping.

SAY:

- *Why do you think it's important to tell someone about a mental health challenge?*
- *What points on this handout do you find most helpful? Or surprising?*
- *Why do you think it's important not to wait to get help?*
- *What do you do when you're having a tough day? How do you move forward when you're struggling with something, like a difficult assignment at school?*

- *It's okay to feel sad, hurt, or angry when you're dealing with a tough situation. Feeling our feelings—rather than avoiding or trying to hide them—is a great way to process them and take care of ourselves.*
- *One way to deal with tough situations is to practice self-care. How do you define that? What do you do for self-care? (Give time to respond.)*
- *Your definitions are all great because self-care can mean a lot of things.*
- *Taking a bath or writing in a journal are often our go-to examples. But self-care can also mean:*
 - *utilizing your support system*
 - *giving yourself slack when you make a mistake or fail at something*
 - *saying no when something doesn't feel good to you*
 - *putting your phone down and taking a break from connecting with others for a period of time*
 - *advocating for yourself*
 - *raising your voice to be heard*
- *Have you tried doing any of these? What was the situation and how did it work out? (Give time to respond.)*
- *How do you think self-care is related to coping? (Give time to respond. If you need to define coping, it's "the things people do to help deal with stressful situations.")*
- *What do you do to cope with tough situations? It may be the same as what you do for self-care, or it may be something different. (Give time to respond.)*
- *One example of a coping mechanism is to recognize the things that stress you out and decide where or even if they fit into your life. That's what you're going to do now. Ready?*

Give everyone a piece of paper and have them make two columns. In one column, they should list the things that stress them out, such as a difficult relationship or an event they're not looking forward to. In the other column, they should list the good stuff in their lives, such as a friendship or an activity they love doing.

When they're done with their lists, give everyone a piece of construction paper and some sticky notes.

SAY:

- *Draw a bubble in the middle of your paper.*
- *The inside of the bubble represents everything that feels comfortable, enjoyable, and/or manageable for you. The outside of the bubble represents everything that feels uncomfortable, stressful, and/or difficult for you to manage.*

- *Write the items from your list on separate sticky notes—one item per note.*
- *When you're done, choose where to place each sticky note, either inside or outside your bubble.*

When everyone's finished, give them the chance to share and talk about their bubbles if they want. Whether they share or not, everyone can discuss these questions:

- *What are some ways you can open up a conversation about a struggle you're having? (If needed, offer these ideas: Plan what you want to say; find a private place to talk; explain your challenge as clearly as you can; come up with some next steps.)*
- *Why do you think it's important to have these conversations? (Answers could be: "So that it doesn't turn into a bigger issue down the line"; "The earlier you speak up about something, the better chance you have to manage the problem.")*
- *What are the benefits of being open or sharing with someone when we're struggling? (Answers could be: "Having support makes it easier to deal with an issue"; "You build a network of support—sharing with others could make them more open to sharing with you when they need help.")*
- *Are you more likely to help someone else who is in trouble than to help yourself? If so, why?*
- *Why did you make the placements you did?*
- *What do your placements say about what the items mean to you or how you plan to deal with them in your life?*

SAY:

- *Keep your bubble as a reminder of what you do and don't have room for in your life.*
- *Being aware of what things feel stressful and what you can handle is one move toward taking care of yourself as you navigate challenges. Remember you may not always be able to avoid something that is causing stress.*
- *What does resilience mean to you? (Give time to answer; if needed, share this definition: "Resilience is adapting to or learning how to deal with life situations, such as the ones you just identified. It's a person's ability to bounce back after a setback, to learn from failure, and to be willing to try again.")*