

# Student Mental Health Toolkit for High School Classrooms



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# Introduction

This year’s High School toolkit is designed to empower students with practical self-care strategies, build emotional resilience, and foster open conversations about mental health inside and outside the classroom. It’s a simple yet impactful way for educators like you to intentionally support student well-being.

Inside, you’ll find **ready-to-use activities** that seamlessly integrate into your lesson plans—helping students develop emotional awareness during three key moments:

**1**  
**Right now**  
Start the conversation and introduce self-care strategies today.

**2**  
**Mental Health Awareness Month**  
Engage students in meaningful discussions and activities throughout May.

**3**  
**All year long**  
Help students build lasting self-care habits and emotional resilience they can use every day.

Together, let’s create a space where students feel supported, understood, and empowered to take charge of their mental well-being and be themselves.

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# How to Manage Stress and Teacher Burnout

Navigating your mental health as a teacher is crucial, given the emotional, mental, and physical demands of the profession. Here are some practical tips to help you maintain balance and well-being.

1

## Set Boundaries

- Avoid taking work home every day—set a specific time to stop working.
- Learn to say no to extra responsibilities that overload your schedule.
- Protect your weekends and personal time for rest and self-care.

2

## Prioritize Self-Care

- Get enough sleep, eat well, and engage in activities that recharge you.
- Exercise regularly, even if it's just a short walk between classes.
- Practice mindfulness, meditation, or deep breathing exercises to manage stress.

3

## Build a Support System

- Connect with other teachers who understand the unique challenges of the job.
- Don't hesitate to seek support from a mentor, supervisor, or school counselor.
- Join online or local teacher communities for shared experiences and encouragement.

4

## Manage Classroom Stress

- Establish a structured, predictable environment to reduce chaos and stress.
- Use positive reinforcement and classroom management strategies to prevent burnout.
- Take short breaks when possible, even if it's just a deep breath between lessons.

5

## Celebrate Small Wins

- Acknowledge the impact you're making, even in small ways.
- Keep notes or reminders of positive student interactions to boost morale.
- Reflect on the reason you became a teacher and hold onto that passion.

6

## Use Available Resources

- Take advantage of mental health days if your school offers them.
- Seek out professional development on teacher wellness and stress management.
- Consider therapy or crisis hotlines to process emotions and develop coping strategies. If you ever need support, Crisis Text Line is here for you, 24/7. Simply text **SCHOOL** to **741741**.







# Classroom Activities for Mental Well-Being

These easy and interactive worksheets help foster a supportive and open classroom space where students can explore their emotions, strengthen resilience, and gain practical tools to navigate life’s challenges with confidence.

## How to Use

- 1

**Explain the purpose**  
Writing and visualizing can help students express their emotions and communication skills, develop and strengthen coping strategies, and participate in self-reflection.
- 2

**Encourage students**  
to think about the emotions or ideas they want to convey through the exercises. Emphasize that there are no right or wrong answers, fostering a supportive and non-judgmental atmosphere.
- 3

**Provide inspiration**  
to spark creativity and imagination. E.g.: Artwork that depicts various emotions, gratitude journals, stories that center on navigating challenges.
- 4

**Set up the workspace**  
ensuring each student has access to the materials needed and organize the classroom to allow for individual or group work.
- 5

**Provide guidance and feedback**  
by offering assistance and positive reinforcement to students as they work.
- 6

**Prompt students to discuss**  
their work, sharing the thoughts and feelings behind their reflections.
- 7

**Celebrate and showcase opportunities**  
for your students to display their work. Welcome the diversity of creativity and encourage students to appreciate each other’s work.



**Think of a peaceful and quiet place.  
Notice how this place smells, its  
temperature, lighting, any noises,  
its size. Write how it makes you feel.**

**Write down something that has been  
weighing on your mind. Imagine  
placing it in a balloon and watching it  
float away. How do you feel now?**



**Where do you see yourself next year? Map out your future self.**

**Write down any negative thoughts you've had recently. Now, rewrite them as positive or neutral statements.**



# Brain & Body Breaks

Taking small breaks throughout the day can help us recharge, refocus, and reduce stress. This activity encourages students to engage in simple movements, mindfulness exercises, and offer accessible ways to refresh the mind and body—helping students return to learning with renewed energy and focus.

## How to Use

- 1

**Introduce the concept**  
by explaining to students that taking short mental and physical breaks can improve focus, reduce stress, and support overall well-being. Emphasize that the breaks are flexible—students can choose what works best for them.
- 2

**Decide how long the break will be**  
according to what works best for your classroom schedule. Let students know they can participate in one or multiple activities during this time.
- 3

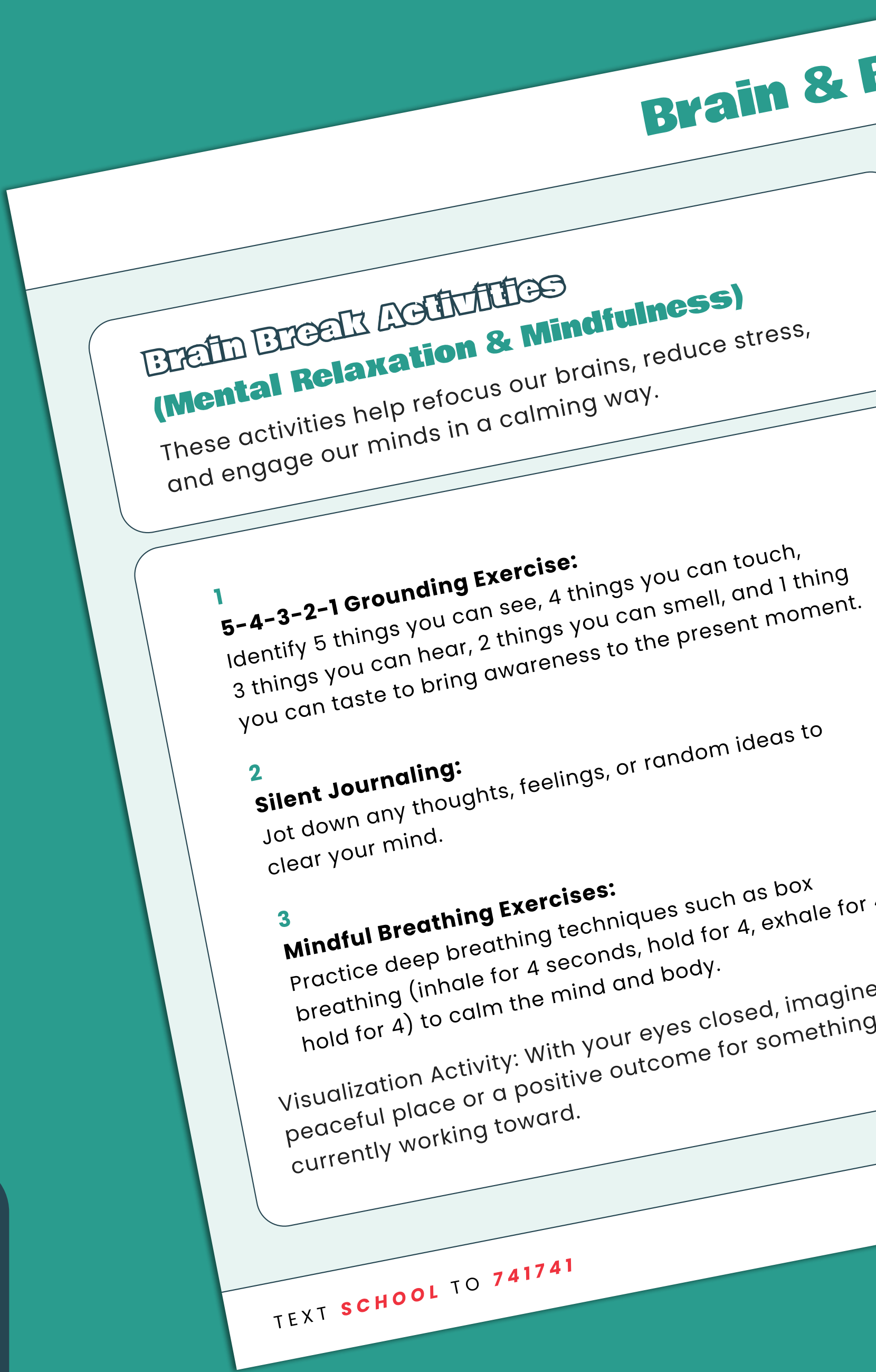
**Provide students with a list of options**  
either displayed on the board, printed, or verbally shared.

- 4

**Guide the activity**  
by walking students through a group exercise from the “Brain & Body Breaks” options. If students choose their own, ensure they have enough space and quiet time to participate.
- 5

**Incorporate regularly**  
as part of your classroom routine throughout the school year to help students develop healthy habits for managing stress and staying engaged.

**Optional:**  
After the break, ask students how they feel and if they noticed a difference in their mood or focus.





# Brain & Body Breaks

## Brain Break Activities

### (Mental Relaxation & Mindfulness)

These activities help refocus our brains, reduce stress, and engage our minds in a calming way.

1

#### 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise:

Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste to bring awareness to the present moment.

2

#### Silent Journaling:

Jot down any thoughts, feelings, or random ideas to clear your mind.

3

#### Mindful Breathing Exercises:

Practice deep breathing techniques such as box breathing (inhale for 4 seconds, hold for 4, exhale for 4, hold for 4) to calm the mind and body.

4

#### Visualization Activity:

With your eyes closed, imagine a peaceful place or a positive outcome for something you're currently working toward.

## Body Break Activities

### (Physical Movement & Relaxation)

These activities help refocus our brains, reduce stress, and engage our minds in a calming way.

1

#### Chair or Standing Stretches:

Engage in simple and safe stretches that can be done from your desk, such as neck rolls, shoulder shrugs, or seated forward bends. Only select exercises that feel comfortable.

2

#### Heads Down for 5 Minutes:

Put your head down and close your eyes for a few minutes to rest and reset.

3

#### Step Outside for Fresh Air:

If possible and allowed, step outside briefly to get some air and reset your focus. Pick a tree to sit by or notice three things you've never noticed before.

4

#### Quick Movement Challenge:

Stand up and do 10 jumping jacks, shake out your arms and legs, or walk in place to re-energize your body.



# Digital Reset Challenge

Screen time can shape our mood, focus, and overall well-being. This challenge is all about creating healthier digital habits and promoting positivity online—whether that means unfollowing negative accounts, setting screen time limits, or taking a break from social media. Small changes can make a big impact on your students’ mental health. Ready to reset and recharge? Let’s go!

## How to Use:

1

### Hold a week-long challenge

where students track their screen time, unfollow accounts that negatively affect them, and share positive, uplifting content.

2

### Introduce the 5-Day Digital Reset Challenge

to your students. You can lead this challenge as a class, assign it individually, or use it as a journaling activity. Your classroom, your choice.

3

### Read the daily activity

to your students and highlight its main focus. You may decide to complete the reflection part of the exercise after each day or complete all reflections together at the end of the challenge.

4

### Host a classroom discussion

after the challenge has ended or ask your students to write a short reflection on how it felt to reset.

## Tip:

Print and display the Digital Reset Challenge page on the board or use it as individual hand- outs.



# Digital Reset Challenge



Day	Focus	Activity	Reflection Question
Day 1	Awareness	Track your total screen time today.	What apps or activities take up most of my time, and how do they affect my mood?
Day 2	Feed Reset	Unfollow or mute accounts that make you feel stressed, sad, or less than.	How did it feel to clear out things that don't serve me?
Day 3	Spread Positivity	Share something uplifting or kind online (like a compliment or good news).	What's one positive thing social media CAN do?
Day 4	Offline Joy	Take a 1-hour screen break and reset by doing something fun without a screen.	What did I notice about my mood after taking a digital break?
Day 5	Move or Pause	Move: Get up, stretch and move your body for 5 minutes. Pause: Put your head down for 5 minutes on your desk, breathe and relax.	How do I feel, physically and mentally, after taking breaks like these?





# Mental Health Plan

There may be a time when you or your students will need support in managing tough emotions. Having the right tools and a plan in place ahead of time can make all the difference in navigating those moments with confidence.

## How to Use:

**1 Explain the purpose**  
and importance of having a mental health plan as a tool for helping themselves stay safe and seek appropriate support during times of distress.

**2 Encourage your students**  
to take a picture of their plan so they can revisit it when needed and keep a physical copy of it in their backpack, lockers, or at home.

### Pro tip:

Play our [Peaceful Pause Playlist](#) in the background while the students work on some of the activities. Remind them that it's okay to seek help and that learning about how to develop a Mental Health Plan is an important part of growing up.



# Make a Mental Health Plan



Your mental health is important. At one point or another, you and your friends may need some tools to cope with difficult emotions. The best way to prepare yourself is to have a plan before you need it.

**When I feel stressed, here are three things I can do to feel more calm:**

**Three people I can reach out to if I’m struggling:**

**Three things I do for self care that often make me feel better:**

**Resources I can turn to if I need support:**





# Coping Techniques Breakdown

These straightforward and practical strategies equip you with the tools to help your students build resilience, manage their emotions, and navigate life's challenges. With these tips, you can foster a supportive and positive classroom environment where every student feels understood, empowered, and ready to succeed.

## How to Use:

1

### Explain the purpose

of this resource, emphasizing the importance of understanding and developing coping skills for dealing with emotions and challenges.

2

### Start a brief discussion

about different emotions and situations that may require the students to use coping techniques.

3

### Provide relatable examples

on when and how to use these techniques, such as "ways to help us feel better when we're upset or facing something difficult."

4

### Highlight

that there are no right or wrong answers, and that the goal is to explore and discover what works best for each individual.

## Address support and resources

by reassuring the students that they can talk to a teacher or a trusted adult if they have any concerns or need additional support. They can also reach out to Crisis Text Line by texting **SCHOOL** to **741741** for free, 24/7, and confidential emotional support or through our [webchat service](#).

# Coping Techniques Breakdown



## Take time to rest

Allowing yourself to rest physically and mentally will help you reset and clear your mind.



## Seek mental health support

Need additional support? Consider reaching out to Crisis Text Line by texting **SCHOOL** to **741741** or contacting mental health professionals in your area.

## Create art



Practice a hobby or try something new. These activities can help with feelings of stress and burnout and allow you to be present in the moment.

## Listen to music

Pick an upbeat tune to feel energize or go for that slower beat for a soothing and relaxing effect on your mind and body.

## Connect with loved ones

Quality time with your core circle is key. Find a moment to meet with them, talk, text or joke together. Having a support system is a game changer.

## Tune into TV, video or podcasts

Your favorite show can be a healthy temporary coping skill to lower anxiety. Some shows offer new perspectives and learning opportunities.

## Let's get physical

Choose an activity that best suits you. Exercise can help boost your mood, decrease anxiety and depression and improve sleep quality.



## Play with pets

It helps diminish feelings of loneliness and depression. If you don't have pets, visit a nearby shelter and show those little critters some love.

## Take it slow with meditation

Doing this can provide a sense of calm, balance and relaxation. Find a quiet place to connect with yourself and your senses.



## Get lost in a good book

It'll help relax and distract your mind, and can significantly help decrease your stress.





# Peaceful Pause Playlist

Our [Peaceful Pause Playlist](#) is curated to create a sense of calm, ease stress, and restore balance. Music has a powerful impact on mental well-being, influencing emotions, thoughts, and even physical responses. For many of our texters, pressing play on the right song is one of the most effective ways to shift from a stressful moment to a state of relaxation.

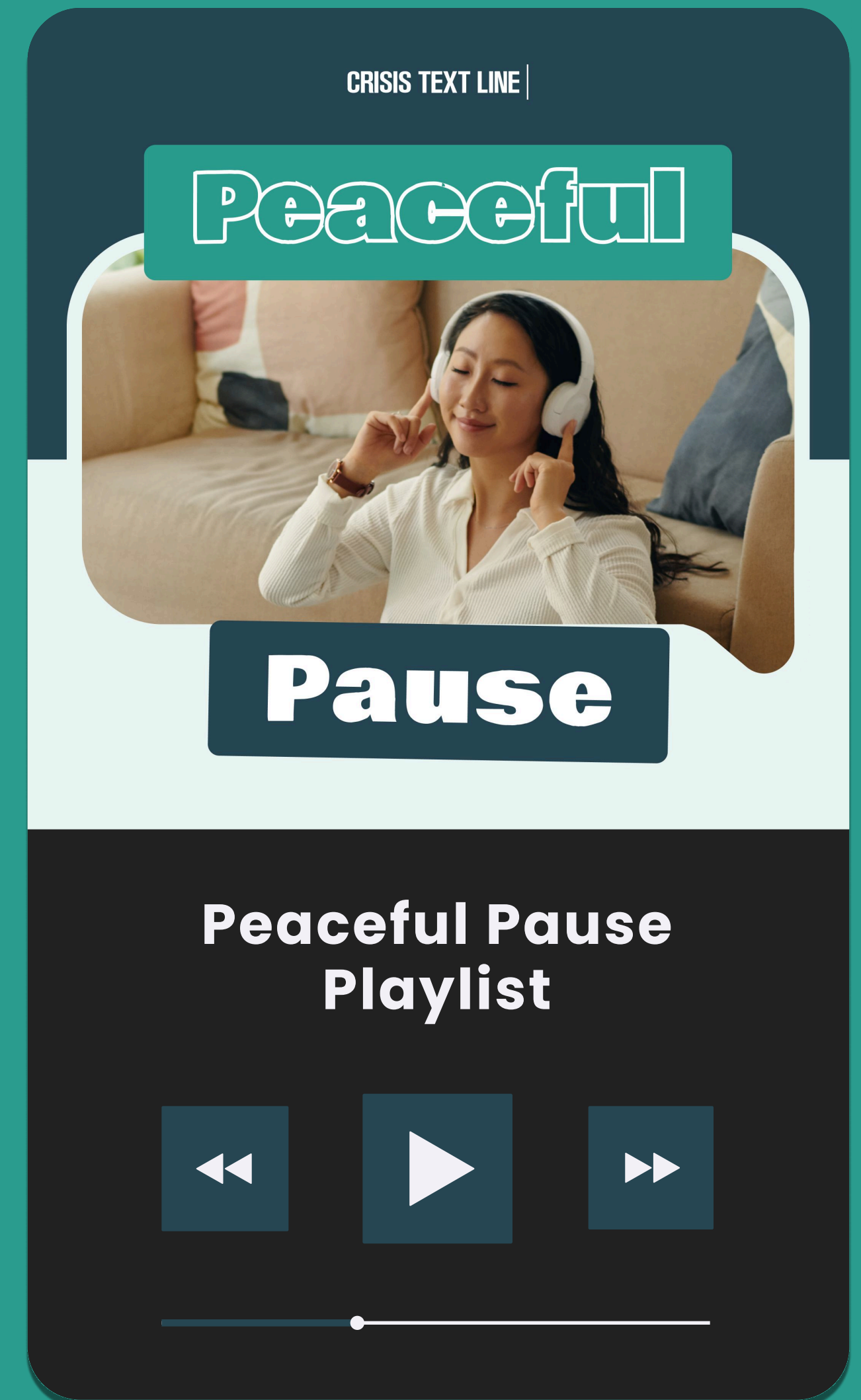
## Play it in the classroom:

Using music in the classroom can enhance the learning environment and engage students in a variety of ways:

- Play the songs softly in the background during independent work time or group activities.
- Use the playlist as a prompt for interactive listening activities, such as identifying musical elements like tempo, rhythm, melody, and dynamics. Students can also analyze the song lyrics to see what resonates with them.

## Pro tip:

When using music in the classroom, it's important to consider students' preferences, cultural backgrounds, and sensitivities. Be mindful of volume levels and ensure that music enhances the learning experience without becoming a distraction.



[CRISISTEXTLINE.ORG/PEACEFULPAUSE](https://CRISISTEXTLINE.ORG/PEACEFULPAUSE)

# How to Talk to Parents and Caregivers About Mental Health

Talking about mental health with parents or caregivers can be tough for students. Many fear being misunderstood, judged, or adding to their parents' stress. Some struggle to find the right words, while others worry about not being taken seriously. By understanding these challenges, you can help create a supportive space where students feel more confident discussing their well-being—both at home and in school.

## How to Use:

**1**  
**Introduce the “How to Talk to Parents or Caregivers About Mental Health”**

worksheet. Explain its purpose as a tip sheet to help students feel more comfortable sharing their feelings about mental health with the trusted adults in their lives.

**2**  
**Encourage self-reflection**

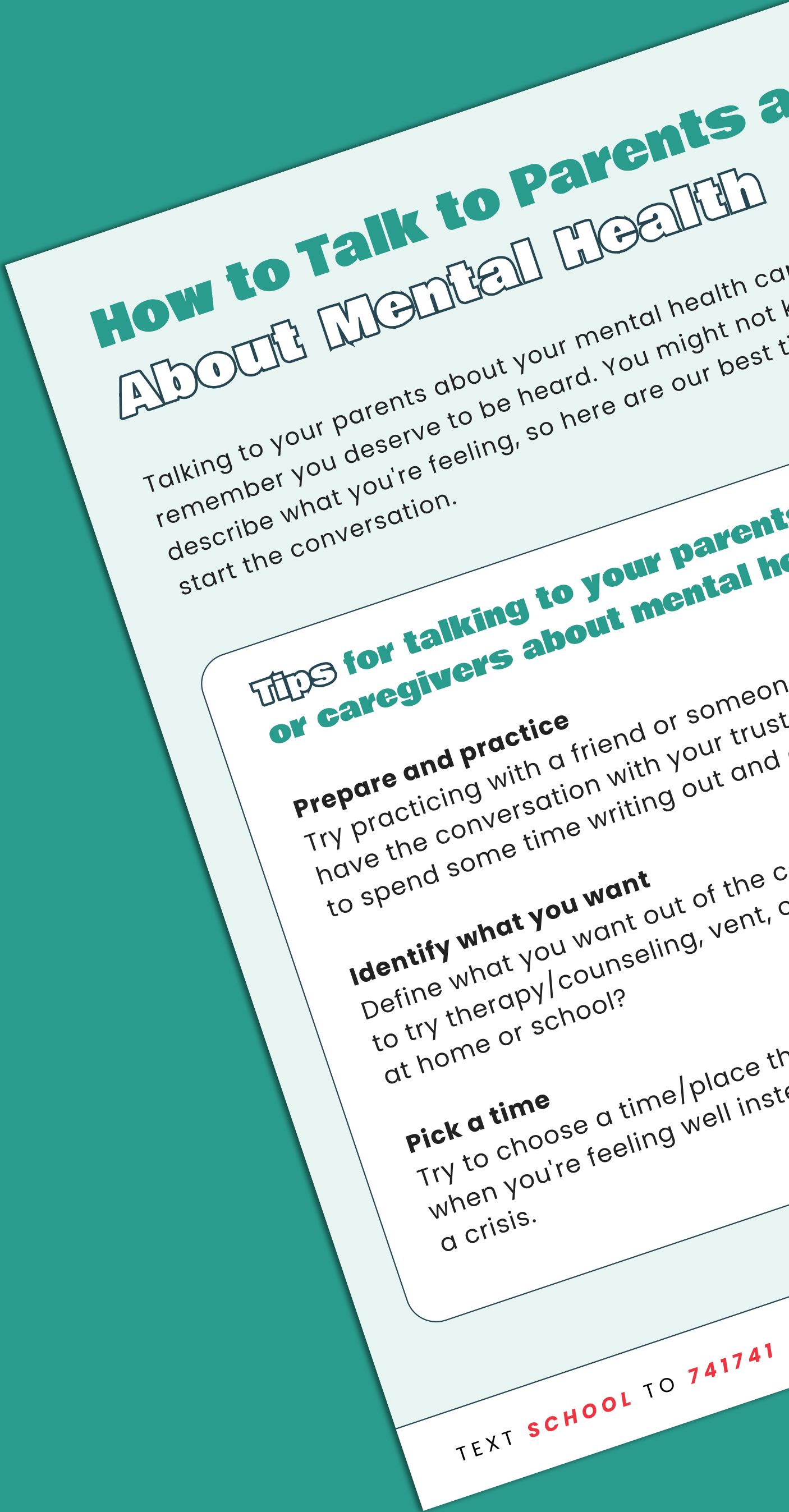
by prompting students to review this worksheet coping privately, encouraging them to reflect on which strategies resonate with them personally.

**3**  
**Normalize emotions**

and reassure your students that it’s perfectly fine for them to feel their feelings and that it’s also okay to be open and talk about them with their parents or other adults they trust.

**4**  
**Offer follow-up support**

by letting your students know that you’re there for them and be prepared to offer guidance to those students who may require additional assistance on how to start a conversation about mental health with their parents or caregivers.





# How to Talk to Parents and Caregivers About Mental Health



Talking to your parents about your mental health can be tough, but it's important to remember you deserve to be heard. You might not know where to start or how to describe what you're feeling, so here are our best tips and some phrases you can use to start the conversation.

## Tips for talking to your parents or caregivers about mental health

### Prepare and practice

Try practicing with a friend or someone you trust before you have the conversation with your trusted adult. It may also help to spend some time writing out and organizing your thoughts.

### Identify what you want

Define what you want out of the conversation. Do you want to try therapy/counseling, vent, or ask for specific support at home or school?

### Pick a time

Try to choose a time/place that works for a conversation when you're feeling well instead of waiting until you're in a crisis.

## Phrases to use when talking to your parents or caregivers about mental health

Hey, \_\_\_\_\_ I'd really like to talk to you about some things I'm going through right now, and I'd appreciate your support. Can we set some time to talk? I've been feeling (*stressed, sad, anxious*) about (*situation*) and want to share because I need support with \_\_\_\_\_.

**Remember, you don't have to struggle alone, and you can always reach out for support by texting *SCHOOL* to 741741. We're here for everyone, so make sure your parents have this number, too!**