

THE HUMAN SPIRIT IS PERFECT, BUT THE SYSTEMS AROUND IT ARE NOT MENTAL HEALTHES A HUMAN RIGHT F Y IS **DNAL SA** E 5 EV L PEOPLE HAVE UPS AND DOWNS. IT'S OKAY NOT TO BE OKAY 444 VING M TH S ABOUT TRYING, AND TRYING, AND TRYING AGAIN An reclaim our power by declaring rest is revelatory R&R, NESS MEANS WE HAVE THE SPACE FOR ECTIONS BETWEEN MOVEMEN ' | ' IS ABSOLUTELY EVERYONE STRUGGLES WITH **/E**())) / | /E TO FE| ME FO EN FOR P AND ⁻ SF IVERSE CULTURES AND ORIGINS OURSELVES AND OTHERS IN A DYNAMIC COMPL MEANS WE DON'T EXPECT OU WAYS BE PERFORMING, AND CAN TAKE **V**A D(S) OUR $(\mathbf{0})$ BEING WELL MEANS TRYING TO FIND PEACE WIT OURSELVES, **THE WORL** RESHAPING Λ. THAT DOESN'T A SK WORLD

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ABOUT THIS SERIES

Among young people in the United States, rates of anxiety and depression, exacerbated by the pandemic, have reached the highest levels on record. Other generations have characterized this one as not being "tough enough" to handle the demands of an increasingly chaotic world. But this generation, more than any other before it, is tough enough to be honest about the mental health crisis—and to do something about it.

Together with its partners, including students, frontline educators, Unfinished, Unity, the JED Foundation, the California Endowment, and Founder and CEO of ReThink Trisha Prabhu, Amplifier has created a new narrative on mental health, one that is inclusive of the spectral, messy journey we often have to take to be well during turbulent times. Designed by 8 different artists, this set of 14 artworks covers topics including stress, self harm, and healthy communication.

Each artwork is paired with a unique augmented reality artwork that brings that concept about wellbeing to life.

Consider these cards to be conversation starters, prompts meant to help classrooms engage in open and effective dialogue on mental health.

As we progress in addressing mental health and wellbeing in our classrooms, Amplifier looks forward to continued, collaborative work with our educators and stakeholders to learn about their needs, desires, and dreams for a better educational experience—one that is rooted in culturally responsive, imaginative learning.



MANIFESTO

There is no one way to navigate mental health and reach a state of "wellness." Interventions range from the widely accessible—breathwork, diet, community building, and public service—to (frequently expensive) therapy and psychotropic medications. We recognize that systematically, every person, at some level, struggles to access comprehensive mental health care that is efficient and personal. We further recognize that marginalized groups, in a culture that remains patriarchal and white, are disproportionately affected.

With this in mind, we choose to not move within the norms of productivity and hustle culture if they do not sustain our wellbeing. We are giving ourselves permission to heal while also supporting our communities as they find their own—often homemade—ways to thrive. We believe that mental health intervention also requires climate change intervention on a global scale, because if our Earth is not well, we are not well. Finally, we are committed to being countercultural, because true wellness on our own accord is freedom.

Letter for Classrooms: How To Use This Tool Kit HELLO TEACHERS AND STUDENTS!

We are excited to bring you this interactive tool kit on mental health. Using a phone or other mobile device, you can bring these artworks to life with augmented reality by downloading the app below and pointing your camera at each artwork. Each card also has prompts and questions teaching about how to manage conflict, stress, boundaries, and more. Keep in mind that although these conversations may be awkward and uncomfortable, they are necessary to grow a kinder and safer community!

Download the Amplifier AR app here to get started.

TEACHERS, we have designed this toolkit to be flexible. You can teach it to your students, or you can also have them self-guide via computer or print out - the choice is up to you! You can have all-classroom discussions about the prompts and AR content, or you have students work in small groups and discuss amongst themselves.

We would like to underline that this card deck is not a crisis handbook.

It is a classroom tool to engage students in conversation on wellbeing as it relates to mental health. As mandatory reporters, you are obligated to follow your administration's rules regarding mental health crisis management.

To aid in the creation of brave spaces, we advise informing your students of confidentiality rules and your role as a mandatory reporter.as the facilitator of these conversations and exercises, please keep an open dialogue between you, your colleagues, and school leaders to ensure proper interventions are in place as issues arise.

STUDENTS, your teacher will be there to facilitate these conversations, so it is important to lean on them for support and guidance. This includes any instance when you learn that a peer is hurting themself or others, or planning to do so. We know it can be tough to speak about these topics, but we also know you are capable of building the skills to stand up for your community's well being.

We are so excited to see what you learn through this experience!

Thank you so much for embarking on this journey with us. As your classroom moves towards wellness, we at Amplifier stand with you in rewriting the narrative on how we talk about and navigate mental health. We hope this series inspires you to participate in innovative mental health interventions in the classroom and beyond.

In solidarity, **The Amplifier Team**

RESOURCE LINKS

EDUCATOR RESOURCES FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR COLLEAGUES

SOCIAL MEDIA LITERACY

INTERNET SAFETY

EATING DISORDERS

UNDERSTANDING SUICIDE

SUPPORTING YOUNG PEOPLE THROUGH STRESS INDIVIDUAL, IF YOU LOVE WITH A BOY, IN LOVE WITH A BO FACT THAT MANY AMERICA

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HOW TO NAVIGATE RACIAL STRESS

How do we rest while navigating racial stress? It's a hard balance, but it isn't impossible. Acclaimed author, poet, and activist James Baldwin often worried about this tension between social awareness and finding rest. He said, "To be a Negro in this country and to be relatively conscious is to be in a rage almost all the time." While participating in social issues can be fulfilling, James Baldwin understood the toll it can take on a person experiencing the oppression they are fighting against.

This series offers various tips on how to navigate stress for all students, and it challenges you to consider the ways our culture, society, and family influence how we respond to stress. As we think about racial stress in particular, it's important to remember these affirmations:

- Your experience is valid and real. Racial stress can be exhausting, debilitating, and lonely
- Your journey does not have to end at the feelings that you're feeling, whether it's shame or fear. Moreover, if you have feelings of guilt, that does not have to be the end of your journey but the start of a new opportunity for learning and growth
- Be gentle and lean into your feelings as they are a part of your own identity development. Reach out and utilize your community network for support
- You have rights as a student that protect you when your safety is in jeopardy due to racial hate and discrimination

CHALLENGE:

As you go through this card deck, continue to ground yourself with these affirmations. We recognize that racial stress can manifest in different ways, but it does not need to fester in silence.

ARTWORK BY: **ABCNT** *@ABCNT* AUDIO BY: **GONAJASUFI** *@GONJASUFI* Get a pen and paper and pick one of the bullet points above and reflect about your response to that statement. Does it make you feel affirmed? Safe? Afraid? Unsure? Why? Journal for 5-10 minutes and share your thoughts with a trusted peer.



HOW TO FIND REST IN A STRESSFUL WORLD

Anxiety can look different for everyone, but one thing remains the same: navigating anxiety takes patience and practice. It also takes understanding the difference between stress and anxiety.

STRESS is a physical or mental tension in response to a trigger, for example, feeling nervous before a big test.

ANXIETY is a feeling of intense worry or uneasiness that we experience when we're facing something stressful, often a situation with an uncertain outcome. Think of anxiety as prolonged, debilitating stress.

In a concerning situation, feeling a certain amount of anxiety is normal, and can even be helpful – for example, it can help us stay motivated to meet deadlines, or even keep us safe in a scary situation. But anxiety that's too intense, or goes on for a long time, can stop being helpful to us and start interfering with our lives. If you're feeling anxious, it's important to understand:

- What's causing it?
- How is it different from regular stress?
- Different kinds of anxiety you might be experiencing (e.g. social anxiety).

CHALLENGE:

Think about a time you experienced stress that turned into anxiety. Use the three bullet points above to learn more about the feelings you are experiencing.

Take some time to research different kinds of anxiety by visiting the JED Foundation here:

ARTWORK BY: YASH PRADHAN @YASHPRADHAN

AUDIO BY: SPEK (WAS HERE) @SPEKWASHERE







HOW TO CALM YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM: UNDERSTANDING THE MIND-BODY CONNECTION

Did you know breathing exercises can help relax our mind and bodies — making it easier for us to cope with stress and anxiety? It's actually scientifically proven that breathing not only helps calm us down, but also makes it easier to access and use what we have learned, such as information we have studied for an exam.

We also know that continued shallow breathing can actually do the opposite, keeping our bodies in a cycle of stress and affecting everything from our mental to physical health.

Using the AR tool paired with the artwork on the front of this card, try out the breathing technique on your own for four rounds. Then, talk with a partner about what this experience was like for you.

CHALLENGE:

We invite you to try this breathing exercise for 3 days this week. Did it make a difference in your daily routine?

While this breathing technique is helpful, we understand that they aren't always enough. If you're struggling with your stress or anxiety levels, consider talking to a therapist about how you can create a routine of coping strategies that work for you. Visit AFSP to find out how to find a mental health professional.

ARTWORK BY: ALDOUS MASSIE @ALDOUSMASSIE AUDIO BY: MAEJOR @MAEJOR







HOW TO CALM YOUR NERVOUS SYSTEM: UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

Technology has changed our world and our lives since its creation in the 80's. While our favorite apps such as TikTok, Instagram, Discord, and YouTube connect us to a broader world than the one that we know, an overconsumption of technology can cause anxiety, back pain, and impact your quality of sleep!

Interested in learning how technology is impacting your life? Trisha Prabhu, founder and CEO of ReThink, suggests taking a week and monitoring how you and your tech interact on a daily basis. Make note of how much screen time you have and your subconscious behaviors.

Do you always check your phone when it rings or vibrates? Try turning off your notifications for certain apps. When you're waiting in a lobby do you always go on your phone? Try reading a magazine or meditate. These small changes can make a big difference in your behaviors.

CHALLENGE:

We invite you to try this breathing exercise for 7 days this week. Did it make a difference in your daily routine?

Want more advice on how to manage your screen time? Vist Ask Trish for more information!

ARTWORK BY: CULT OF DANG @CULT_OF_DANG AUDIO BY: MAEJOR @MAEJOR







HOW TO IDENTIFY YOUR COMMUNITY NETWORK

Seize the Awkward focuses on embracing awkward conversations about mental health. This doesn't mean you have to dive straight into talking about mental health struggles or have an intense heart to heart. Seize the Awkward instead suggests meeting your friend where they are or extending an invitation to hang out. You can even talk about struggles you are going through to give your friend an avenue to open up. Whether it's over a bite to eat or taking a walk, a simple "what's up" is a great place to begin.

Need some ideas of how to start the conversation? Try one of these:

- Ask a friend to play a pick-up game of your favorite sport.
- Casually ask how your peer is while playing an online game together.
- Have a shared hobby? Use that activity as an opportunity to check in.

CHALLENGE:

Check-in with a peer today by using one of these conversation starters. How did it go? How can you use these conversation starters in your own life?

ARTWORK BY: **NINA YAGUAL** *@BEAUTIFULHOODCRUMB* AUDIO BY: **CAT MAHATTA** *@CATMAHATTA*





expressing the emotions inside of you out into the world

offers someone else the chance to understand the world inside of you

HOW TO HAVE POSITIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication skills can help prevent conflicts, keep them from escalating, and resolve conflicts in a healthy way.

Here are some ways to create good communication during a conflict:

- Choosing the right time to bring up a conflict
- Being honest in a respectful way
- Not hiding your feelings
- Validating your partner's feelings and perspective
- Staying on topic in conversation
- Taking constructive criticism
- Finding compromise

CHALLENGE:

Consider the following scenario: your friend tells you that a joke you made hurt their feelings. They appreciate your friendship and want to make sure you understand that the joke is not okay. They would like to talk about ways to make sure it doesn't happen again. How is this an example of good communication?

ARTWORK BY: **PEA THE FEARY** *@PEATHEFEARY* AUDIO BY: **ELIAS ZAMUDIO** *@ITSEASYELL*



HOW TO AVOID NEGATIVE COMMUNICATION

When we are fighting with a peer, it can sometimes be easy to get defensive or to use unhealthy coping mechanisms to temporarily feel better.

Here are some common unhealthy communication patterns to recognize:

- Bottling up your emotions
- Brushing your or your peer's emotions aside
- Using jokes to cover up feelings
- Being passive aggressive
- Becoming overly defensive
- Bringing up unrelated conflict during an argument about a specific topic
- Talking over or ignoring your peer's points
- Giving your peer the silent treatment after an argument, or to avoid an argument

CHALLENGE:

With a peer, discuss moments where you have had a positive and negative communication experience with someone recently. What insights do you have from those experiences?

To help your peers during the conversation, go to Seize the Awkward for some tips!

ARTWORK BY: CREATIVE WANNA BE @CREATIVEWANNABE_ AUDIO BY: TRISHA PRABHU @TRISHPRABHU





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DON'T GIVE UP ON YOURSELF

SHARE YOUR FEELINGS

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HOW TO CREATE HEALTHY BOUNDARIES

An important part of maintaining a healthy relationship is knowing yourself well enough to know how to take time for yourself separate from your relationships. This includes understanding how to set healthy limits and boundaries to protect as well as respect your time, energy, emotions, and resources.

Creating and maintaining healthy relationships for yourself and others features the following:

- Learn to be okay with the fact that all relationships move at various speeds.
- You respect each other's needs, family and friends, privacy, boundaries, and alone time.
- You and the other person treat each other with kindness.
- Equality AND equity. Equality expects the exact same effort out of every person while equity acknowledges that everyone doesn't have the same level of ability and resources.

CHALLENGE:

Here is more information on equity in communication. How is creating healthy boundaries a form of equity? Make a list of examples with a peer!

Clearly communicating what you each need both inside and outside of the relationship makes relationships stronger and more satisfying. To learn more about healthy communication and boundaries, visit the JED Foundation here.

ARTWORK BY: CREATIVE WANNA BE @CREATIVEWANNABE_ AUDIO BY: JOEL SHEARER @JOELSHEARER







HOW TO COMMUNICATE IN HEALTHY WAYS

Communicating is not just about talking. It's also about listening and understanding your partner's perspective as deeply as you can. Remember, effective communication doesn't always have to be verbal! Here are ways to communicate during conflict:

- Understand your own feelings first
- Set a goal
- Learn about your communication styles

It's also important to think about how you talk to yourself in these situations. While you understand your feelings and learn about how you communicate, consider the way you go about talking to yourself. Are you kind? Judgmental? How does that affect how you communicate with others? Oftentimes, how we communicate with others starts with how we communicate with ourselves!

CHALLENGE:

With a partner, think about the following scenario: You come from school and a sibling tells you that you are not doing enough around the house to keep it clean. Using the bullet points above, how would you handle this situation?

To learn even more tips about how to communicate in healthy ways, visit the JED Foundation here.

ARTWORK BY: FLOSTITANARUM @FLOSTITANARUM AUDIO BY: HAYES BRADLEY @B HAYES





WANTING THINGS TO BE PERFECT IS HUMAN

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PEA THE FEABY + AMPLIFIER.ORG

HOW TO NAVIGATE PERFECTIONISM AND SHAME

Perfectionism refers to a person's desire to be perfect, flawless, or even excellent at a skill of behavior. It can lead someone to setting unrealistic goals that harm them in the long run.

Shame is a feeling a person has when they believe they are flawed and, therefore, unworthy of love or belonging.

In order to move forward through the conflicts in our lives we must address our feelings of perfectionism and shame. We can do this by:

- Decentering ourselves for a moment
- Engaging an outside perspective
- Being in the present moment by practicing gratitude

CHALLENGE:

With a partner, discuss what you wish you were perfect at. It can be something like flipping a pancake or playing a sport! How have you felt shame from not being perfect at that skill? Practice decentering yourself, gaining an outside perspective, or practicing gratitude for something you're grateful for being good at or having in your life.

ARTWORK BY: **PEA THE FEARY** *@PEATHEFEARY* AUDIO BY: **ELIAS ZAMUDIO** *@ITSEASYELL*

TIAN WIDJAYA + AMPLIFIER.org

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HOW TO ACKNOWLEDGE FORMS OF HARM

Harm is a broad experience and may look different for everyone. There are many forms of self-harm, direct and indirect.

Self-harm is direct when someone purposefully injures their body, such as:

- Cutting
- Suicide

But self-harm can also be indirect, meaning people end up hurting their body, even though that might not be the primary intent. **These include:**

- Eating disorders
- Drug abuse
- Risky behaviors

Here are some examples of what to do instead of committing acts of self-harm:

- Take a hot or cold shower
- Blast music and dance!
- Pop bubble wrap
- Phone a friend and talk to them

What other forms of self-harm do you know about? What types of self-harm exist outside of what we see in our society? How can we create brave spaces to address issues of self-harm in a safe way in your classroom?

If you or someone you know is exhibiting signs of self-harm, talk with your teacher and/or text "START" to 741-741 or call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). Visit the JED Foundation to learn more about coping with non-suicidal self-injury here.

ARTWORK BY: TIAN WIDIAVA @TIANWIDJAYA AUDIO BY: ELIAS ZAMUDIO @ITSEASYELL







HOW TO IDENTIFY STRESS

Stress is a feeling of unpleasant tension and can be experienced physically, emotionally, or as a diffuse sense of alertness or irritability. Some tension is a natural and even healthy part of the situation — like getting ready to run a race, take a test, or have an emotionally charged conversation. In other situations, feeling tense can signal stress that needs more mindful attention and professional support.

Research indicates that when we feel overwhelming stress related to school, it not only demotivates us to do the work, it reduces our overall academic achievement and can lead to increased dropout rates.

Not to mention how stress manifests itself in our bodies, including depression, poor sleep, substance abuse, and anxiety. But, there's hope and moreover, help.

CHALLENGE:

With a peer, brainstorm how stress has manifested itself in your life. For example, how has stress affected your relationships? Here are some topics to consider: school, family, health, and self-care.

To learn more, visit the JED Foundation here.

ARTWORK BY: CREATIVE WANNA BE @CREATIVEWANNABE_ AUDIO BY: JOEL SHEARER @JOELSHEARER







TAKE TIME TO CONNECT WITH OTHERS



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HOW TO MANAGE STRESS

Figuring out how to manage your stress starts with being able to recognize it.

Find the source of stress:

- Is it a particular class or type of work?
- Is it an issue of time management and prioritization?
- Do you have too much on your plate?
- Is it due to family expectations or financial obligations?

Pinpoint how that stress is affecting you:

- Is the stress preventing you from sleeping?
- Is it making you take longer to do the work or paralyzing you from even starting?
- Is it causing you to feel anxious, unwell, or depressed?

CHALLENGE:

What are the ways in which you find stress relief? Share your current practices with a peer and discuss ways you can incorporate new methods to manage stress in your life.

Because stress seems like it should be typical, too often we dismiss it and get down on ourselves for feeling like there's something wrong with us and we should be handling it better. It's important to remember that we're not alone. Visit the JED Foundation to learn more about stress management.

ARTWORK BY: CREATIVE WANNA BE @CREATIVEWANNABE_ AUDIO BY: JOEL SHEARER @JOELSHEARER







HOW TO MANAGE FEELINGS OF DESPAIR

Feelings of despair can be described as lack of hope that life can feel better than it does.

Sometimes despair can be manifested as irritability, isolating yourself from your friends and loved ones, or feeling hopeless about the future. And when we feel this way, it can be challenging to find help, because social media tells us that we must remain positive no matter what, 24/7. It's important to remember in these moments that we can talk about despair even when the world is telling us that we shouldn't while we move toward healing.

It's important to keep in mind that feelings of despair are normal experiences and are a part of being human. We want every student to thrive and feel secure and hopeful about their futures, even when it may be difficult. Here are some ways to manage feelings of despair:

- Accepting that what you've gone through can't be undone, but the difficult feelings—such as deep sadness, shame, or grief—that come with it will lessen over time.
- Understanding that, no matter how unfair or devastating this loss or change was, the future holds many more kind, soft, and happy moments than you can see right now—and it is better to be here for that future than not.
- Finding and focusing on the positives in life does not mean you have to forget or invalidate the struggles you've experienced.

CHALLENGE:

Have you noticed a friend experiencing some signs of despair? It's important to remember that you do not have to support them alone. Find a trusted adult who can help you find the best approach to helping your friend.

ARTWORK BY: GINA KIEL @GINAKIEL_ AUDIO BY: GASLAMP KILLER @GASLAMPKILLER





THANK YOU FOR READING!

Questions, comments, or feedback for our team? Please write to us at **info@amplifier.org** and let us know!










expressing the emotions inside of you out into the world

offers someone else the chance to understand the world inside of you





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