

Activity Guide for Leaders



As a 4-H leader, it is important that you expand your knowledge of mental health and available services to support any 4-H member who may turn to you for help. We encourage you to review the 4-H Canada Mental Health Resources and to do your own research so that you can feel more comfortable talking about it with your members.

Try using the following tips and activities with your club to open up the dialogue around mental health and to have ongoing check-ins.



This Activity Guide is divided into three sections:

1. Mental Health and 4-H Meetings

- Why incorporate mental health into your meetings
- How to incorporate mental health into your meetings
- Tips for talking about mental health

2. Activities for Breaking the Ice on Mental Health

- Creating an open space to talk about mental health
- Lift Me Up – Hot Air Balloon
- Destigmatizing mental health
- Walk through Kids Help Phone's website

3. Check-in Activities - Ongoing

- Bud, Rose, Thorn
- Feelings Thermometer
- Build Your Own Check-in

1. Mental Health and 4-H Meetings

Why incorporate mental health into your meetings

It is important to hold regular discussions around mental health at your 4-H meetings in order to:

- de-stigmatize the topic of mental health;
- create a comfortable and safe space where talking about mental health is okay;
- encourage 4-H members to open up about their struggles.

How to incorporate mental health into your meetings

- Work through activities outlined in this guide to introduce the subject of mental health.
- Have regular check-ins with your 4-H members. Once it becomes part of the regular schedule, members may become more comfortable opening up. Check-out the check-in activities in section three.
- Invite mental health experts to speak at your 4-H meetings.

Tips for talking about mental health

- When you are talking about mental health as a club, build in enough time to have an open and honest discussion with 4-H members.
- Read the room and be prepared for members to come to you after the discussion.
- Try not to leave the discussion until the end of the meeting; build it in as part of your meeting agenda so that if any emotions about the subject come up, there is time for them to be addressed before everyone rushes home.
- Check your perceptions, judgements and biases towards mental health before you start talking about it with your members. Reading the tips sheets in 4-H Canada's Mental Health Resources is a great place to start.

2. Activities for Breaking the Ice on Mental Health

ACTIVITY

Creating a safe and open space to talk

Purpose: To create an open and safe space that allows for sharing about mental health when the time is right, by establishing an agreed-upon code of behaviour. This is an important first step in making members feel that their 4-H club is a safe space for sharing about their emotions and mental health, and eventually a part of their support system.

Age: 9 and up

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Paper and writing materials, box for suggestions and comments

Instructions:

- Explain to your 4-H members that it is important to set an agreed-upon code of behaviour for safe and open communications so that everyone feels comfortable sharing. After an initial discussion, have the members complete the Group Guidelines on the next page.

Discussion points:

- Ask your members what an open or safe space means to them. Does it look different if you are brainstorming ideas for a club event, or having a more sensitive discussion on something like mental health? Have someone make note of the guideline ideas.
- Talk about the purpose of group guidelines and explain that they are in place so that the people in the room can hold each other accountable for the openness and safety of the space. What happens if someone isn't following the guidelines?
- *Reminder: Group guidelines apply regardless of age or role – adults are expected to adhere to them just the same as young people.*
- What if someone doesn't feel comfortable sharing in front of others? Discuss other options to allow all members to be included in discussions. Perhaps you can add a suggestion box for anonymous ideas?



- Your ground rules might include:
 - > **Respect:** It is important that everyone respects each other's feelings.
 - > **Confidentiality:** When it comes to personal stories or feelings, it cannot leave the room afterward. Discussions of a personal nature must be protected by those who have had the privilege to hear it.
 - > **No judgment:** No one can make comments about a person's story or feelings.
 - > **Anonymity:** Any questions or comments put in the box are to remain anonymous even if you recognize who wrote it (make sure only leaders read the questions or comments).
- Use this discussion as an opportunity to link back to the **Building your Support System** tip sheet. By working with your club to create a safe and open space for sharing, members may begin to recognize that 4-H club members and leaders can be part of their support system when they are facing challenges.
- You can also use this discussion to link back to the **Understanding Bullying** tip sheet. It is important to address that bullying does not have a place in your 4-H club and what you can do if you witness it.



Template: Group Guidelines

Our group guidelines:

[illegible]

Why these group guidelines are important:

[illegible]

What happens when we do not follow these group guidelines:

By signing this document, we collectively agree with these guidelines and pledge to follow them.

Our signatures:

Our signatures:

ACTIVITY

Lift Me Up - Hot Air Balloon

It is important for everyone to be able to identify what makes them feel unhappy, overwhelmed, or stressed, but also what lifts them up and makes them feel positive, confident and happy.

Purpose: To encourage 4-H'ers to identify what brings them up (what makes them happy or stress-free) and what brings them down (issues they may be having or unhappy emotions they may be feeling).

Age: 6 and up

Time: 20-30 minutes

Materials: Hot air balloon print-out provided, pencil crayons (or other colour materials), sharpener, other crafting supplies (optional)

Instructions:

- To start, have a conversation with your 4-H'ers on general issues or emotions that can make them feel down, and why. For example:
 - > stress from school
 - > anxiety
 - > sadness
- As a club, brainstorm ideas 4-H'ers could use to combat those feelings/issues. For example:
 - > exercising
 - > reading
 - > spending time with animals
- You will find a printable hot air balloon at the end of this activity. Print it out and hand it out to your 4-H'ers.
- Have your 4-H'ers write on the sandbags of the balloon any emotions or issues that weigh you down. On the inside of the balloon, have your 4-H'ers write things that lift them up and make them feel good. Encourage your members to decorate their balloon.
- If your 4-H'ers feel comfortable doing so, allow time at the end of the activity for them to share their balloons.

Discussion Points:

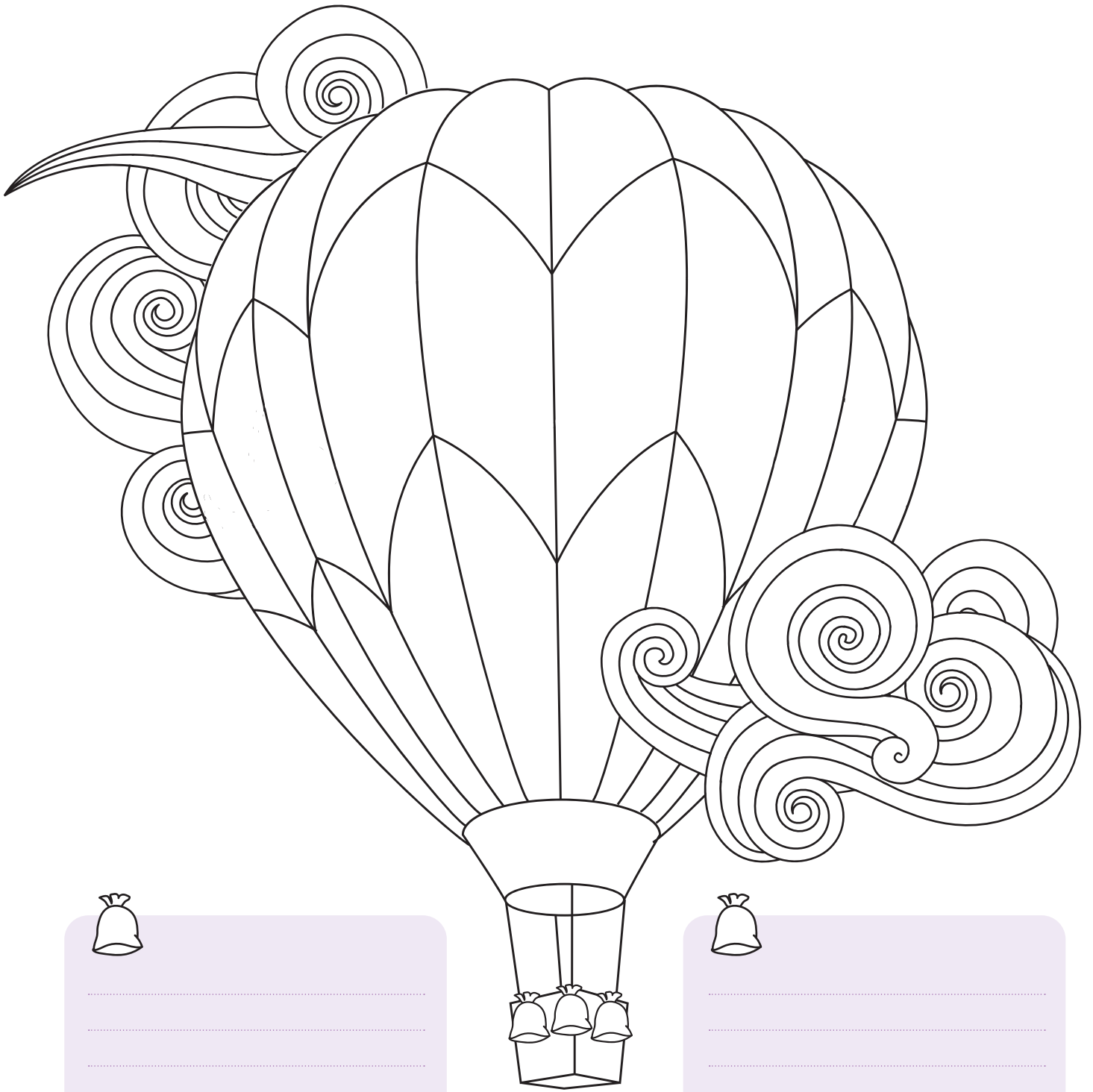
With youth members 10 years old and up, you may want to begin introducing them to more in-depth concepts around mental health. Refer back to the **Introduction to Mental Health** and the tip sheets for members and leaders.

Mental health can be visualized as a continuum where some days are better than others. This balloon activity shows what might make you feel down, but also what you can do to lift yourself up.

When someone experiences a challenge to their mental health, we use the term mental ill-health. Mental ill-health might include sadness, worry, and stress over a few days, but when it lasts for an extended period of time it is important to seek help. A professional can help to determine if the symptoms of mental ill-health are part of a mental disorder, and can make a diagnosis.

Remember: Everyone will experience mental health and mental ill-health at some point in their life, although not everyone will have a mental disorder.

This is also a great time to introduce the **Taking Care of Yourself** tip sheet. Many of the ideas your members list on their balloons would be examples of self-care and how they can boost their self-esteem.



ACTIVITIES

De-stigmatizing mental health

Mental health is a topic that is still widely stigmatized today. The only way to de-stigmatize it is to normalize it through everyday conversations.

Purpose: To start the conversation around stigma and ways to reduce it.

Age: 13 and up

Time: 30-35 minutes

Materials: Writing utensils and paper

Instructions: The following activities are meant for you and your members to start the conversation on stigma and mental health.

ACTIVITY 1 What is stigma?

Have a conversation with your members to define what stigma means and the effect it can have on people.

Discussion points:

- Stigma refers to “a cluster of negative attitudes and beliefs that motivate the general public to fear, reject, avoid and discriminate against people with mental illness. Stigma is not just a matter of using the wrong word or action. Stigma is about disrespect. It is the use of negative labels to identify a person living with mental illness.” (as quoted in Kutcher, Wei, & IWK Health Center)
- Major concepts on stigma
 - > Stigma is the result of discriminatory behaviour and treatment towards people with mental illness.
 - > The fear of stigma often prevents people from seeking help and treatment for mental illness.
 - > Stigma is continued through mistaken beliefs about mental illness and can be seen in the media, public policy and people’s attitudes.
 - > Stigma can be reduced by ensuring accurate information about mental health and its treatment is provided.

If you are looking for more information, check out these resources:

- The Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH)
 - > Addressing Stigma: camh.ca/en/driving-change/addressing-stigma
 - > Mental Health and Addiction 101 Series: Stigma: camhx.ca/education/online_courses_webinars/mha101/stigma/Stigma_.htm
- Canadian Mental Health Association – Stigma and Discrimination: ontario.cmha.ca/documents/stigma-and-discrimination

This section on De-stigmatizing Mental Health has been extracted from Kutcher, Stan, Dr., Yifeng Wei, Dr., and IWK Health Center. “Mental Health & High School Curriculum Guide: Understanding Mental Health and Mental Illness Version 3.” December 2017.

teenmentalhealth.org/curriculum/

ACTIVITY 2 What do you know about mental health – Survey

Instructions:

- This survey is to find out how much you and your 4-H members know about mental health. It is okay if you or your members do not know a lot, as this activity is meant to start expanding your knowledge.
- Print or photocopy this page and distribute the survey to your members.
- Give your members approximately 5 minutes to complete.
- Discuss the survey with the answers provided.

What do you know about mental health?

Check the most appropriate answer:	Agree	Disagree	Not sure
1. People should work out their own mental health problems.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. Once you have a mental illness, you will have it for life.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. Females are more likely to have a mental illness than males	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Medication is the best treatment for mental illness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. People with a mental illness are generally violent and dangerous.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. Adults are more likely than teenagers to have a mental illness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. You can tell by looking at someone whether they have a mental illness.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. People with mental illness are generally shy and quiet.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Mental illness can happen to anybody.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. You would be willing to have a person with mental illness at your club.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. You would be happy to have a person with mental illness become a close friend.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>



Answers to the survey

1. People should work out their own mental health problems

Not true. When people have a physical health concern, they generally take some action and often go to the doctor. Mental illness is associated with disturbances with brain functioning and usually requires professional assistance. Because of the stigma surrounding mental illness, many people have been reluctant to seek help.

2. Once you have a mental illness, you will have it for life

While it's true that most mental illnesses are lifelong, they are often episodic. This means that the symptoms are not always present. Just like people who live with chronic physical illnesses like arthritis and asthma, people with mental illnesses can, when their illness is managed, live positive and productive lives.

3. Females are more likely to have a mental illness than males

Men and women are both equally affected by mental illnesses in general, but there may be higher rates among women of specific illnesses such as eating disorders. Men have higher rates for some disorders such as alcoholism and ADHD. Some illnesses are relatively equally shared by both men and women (e.g. Bipolar Disorder). Women are more likely to seek help for mental and emotional difficulties and to share their concerns with friends compared to men. Females are more willing to let friends know if they are receiving counselling.

4. Medication is the best treatment for mental illness

Medication can be a very effective part of treating a mental illness, but it is not always the best nor only type of treatment. For many people with a mental illness it is a necessary part of their care. A wide range of appropriate interventions, including medication, counselling, social, vocational and housing-related supports, as well as self-help and generic resources for all community members (such as: groups, clubs, and religious institutions) may also be important in helping people recover and stay well. It is helpful to think of medications as often necessary but not sufficient treatments for many mental disorders. The best approach is to have a combination of strategies that have been scientifically proven effective.

5. People with a mental illness are generally violent and dangerous.

People with mental illness are generally not more violent than the rest of the population. Mental illness plays no part in the majority of violent crimes committed in our society. The assumption that any and every mental illness carries with it an almost certain potential for violence is not correct. However, a small number of people who have a mental illness where they may have lost their ability to distinguish what is real and what is not real may commit an unusual, violent act. This can be unusual and is therefore sensationalized in the media, leading to the mistaken belief that all people who have a mental illness are violent.

6. You would be willing to have person with a mental illness at your club.

See answer to question 11 below.

7. You would be happy to have a person with mental illness become a close friend.

Questions 10 and 11 both address the issue of "social distance" - that is, the willingness to engage in relationships of varying intimacy with a person. Social distance is an indicator of public attitudes toward people with mental illness. Social distance is a complex concept influenced by a number of factors, including age, gender, socioeconomic and cultural factors, but also by the respondent's general attitude toward mental illness. Contact, or social inclusion of people with mental illness with the rest of the population, is one factor that may lead to a decrease in stigma. This can happen when people find out that a co-worker, neighbour or friend is struggling with mental illness, and despite it, is living on their own, working and being a part of the community.

Discussion points:

After completing the mental health survey and reviewing the answers, use the following questions to continue the discussion:

1. What are some of the negative things you have heard about people with mental illness? (Possible answers may include: violence, bizarre behaviour)
2. What are some of the positive things you have heard about mental illness? (Possible responses may include: link to creativity). While this may be seen as positive, remind students that generalizing can also be a form of stereotyping.
3. Why do you think people with mental illness are stigmatized? (possible answers include: they are seen as being different, people don't really know the facts about mental illness, etc.)
4. What kinds of factors have contributed to changing public attitudes around some of these conditions or issues? (Possible answers include: education, public policy, open dialogue, scientific research, legislation changing social norms, better knowledge, etc.)
5. How do you think stigma affects the lives of people with mental illness? (Possible answers include: people decide not to get help and treatment even though they would benefit from it, it makes them unhappy, they may not be able to get a job or find housing, it may cause them to lose their friends, it puts stress on the whole family, etc.)



ACTIVITY 3 Reducing stigma

Brainstorm with your 4-H'ers ways to reduce mental health stigma and activities they can do to implement those ways.

Discussion points:

Here are some ways to reduce stigma:

- Watch your language
 - > Most of us including mental health professionals and people living with a mental illness, use terms and expressions related to mental illness that may perpetuate stigma.
- Ask questions
 - > If you don't know something, instead assuming or perpetuating stereotypes, the best thing you can do is ask questions. If you are willing to learn, people will teach you.
- Learn more about mental illnesses
 - > If you are well-informed about mental illness, you will be better able to evaluate and resist the inaccurate negative stereotypes that you come across.
- Listen to experiences
 - > These individuals can describe what they find stigmatizing, how stigma affects their lives and how they would like to be viewed and treated.
- Speak up about stigma
 - > When someone you know misuses a psychiatric term (such as Schizophrenia), let them know and educate them about the correct meaning. When someone says something negative about a person with mental illness, tells a joke that ridicules mental illness, or makes disrespectful comments about mental illness, let them know that it is hurtful and that you find such comments offensive and unacceptable.

ACTIVITY

Walk through Kid's Help Phone Website

You may have a 4-H'er silently struggling without you knowing. One way that you can help them is to show them the Kids Help Phone website and resources that are available.

Purpose: To take out the unknown factors of accessing the Kids Help Phone website and Resources Around Me.

Time: 20-60 minutes

Materials: Computer(s), Internet, projector (optional)

Instructions:

- Show your 4-H'ers how to access the Kids Help Phone website and Resources Around Me on a computer. If you only have one computer, you can project it onto the wall with a projector or have everyone gather around the computer.
- Navigation of the Kids Help Phone website
 - > Go to kidshelpphone.ca.
 - > On the main page, you will see a search bar, the various ways to contact Kids Help Phone, and what is trending.
 - > While you have the main page on the screen, have a discussion with your members on the ways they could contact Kids Help Phone.
 - > Next, have someone suggest a topic and write it into the search bar.
 - > You can then go through the suggested articles and games on that topic.
- Exploration of Resources Around Me
 - > Go to: apps.kidshelpphone.ca/resourcesaroundme or go to kidshelpphone.ca and scroll down to the ways to contact Kids Help Phone and click on Resources Around Me.
 - > A box will pop up: "Would you like to search for resources based on your current location?" You can select either yes or no.
 - > Enter a location. It could be your hometown or a nearby town or city.
 - > Depending on what you are searching for, you can choose a topic to narrow down the search or you can search all.
 - > On the left, you have all the services that are in that area and they will be organized by topic. If you scroll in or out on the map, it will either refine your search or expand it.
 - > When you click on a resource from the side bar it will show all the information related to that service and its location.
- If you have multiple computers:
 - > Have your 4-H'ers break into groups and let them explore the Kids Help Phone website and Resources Around Me.
 - > Give the groups a minimum of 20 minutes to explore the two websites together.
 - > Have each group fill out the Kids Help Phone website Scavenger Hunt.
 - > If they feel comfortable to do so, have each group present what they found and why it is interesting to them.

Tip to Leaders: Listen for issues that are worrying your 4-H members and look up on the Kids Help Phone website for resources that you could highlight to the group or share individually.



Discussion points

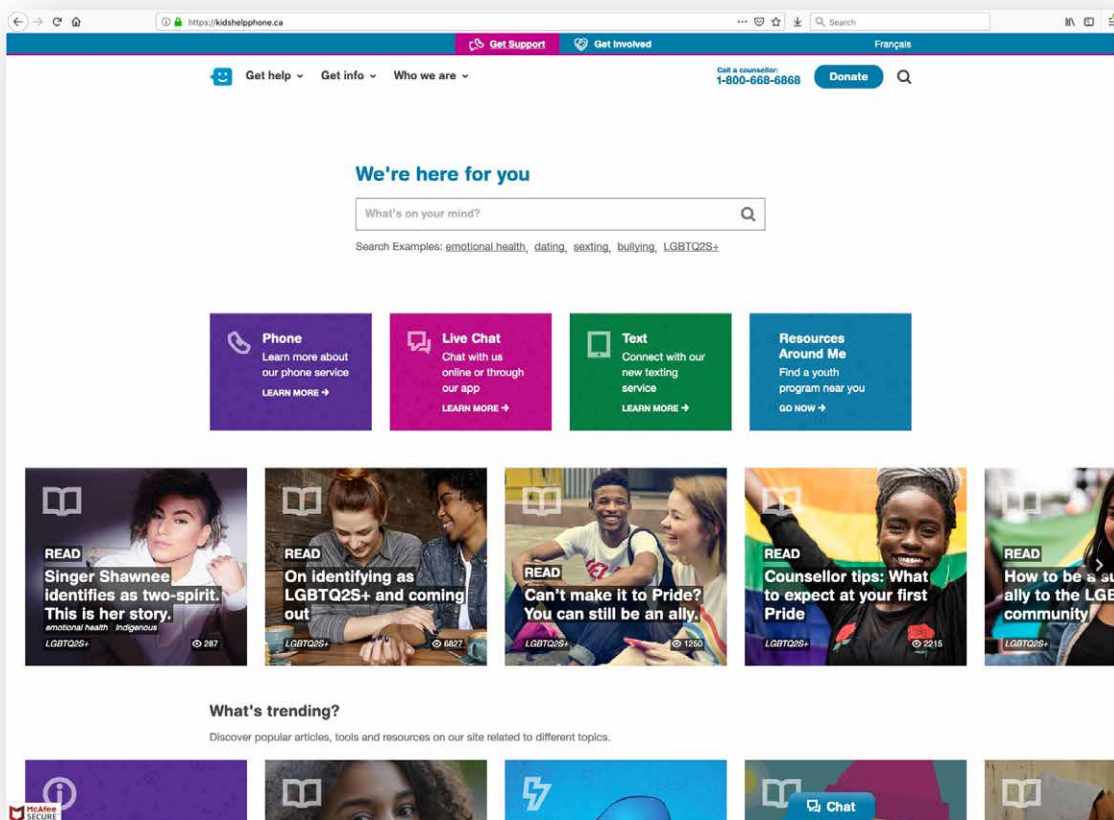
You can introduce any of the tip sheets during this activity. If you are unsure what tip sheet to introduce with this activity, **Supporting a Friend in Distress** would be a good one, if you have not already addressed it.

Supporting a friend in distress can take a toll on your own emotions. It is important to make sure you think of yourself during this time as well. Reach out to a trusted ally if you or your friend needs help.

If you want to know about the topics we have discussed, check out the Kids Help Phone website to explore further.

Kids Help Phone is a great place to learn more information on other mental health topics such as suicide, eating disorders, anxiety and depression.

This is also a great time to introduce the **Accessing Resources** tip sheet. All the information to contact Kids Help Phone is on this tip sheet and the provincial resources on the back can also be found at Resources Around Me.



Kids Help Phone 

Template: Kids Help Phone website Scavenger Hunt

1. List the top three interesting things you found:

1.

2.

3.

2. Check out the Tools and Games section. Pick two games that you found helpful or would share with a friend.

1.

2.

3. What is Kids Help Phone?

4. Go to Resources Around Me and describe one resource available in your area:

5. What is trending on KidsHelpPhone.ca?

6. Where would you go if you wanted to talk to a counsellor?

6. Is there more than one way to connect with a counsellor (Circle yes or no)?

Yes

No

3. Check-in Activities - Ongoing

Check-ins are a great way to see how your members are doing both mentally and emotionally, and can be done in small or large groups. The more often you do check-ins, the more routine it will become, and the more your members may feel comfortable in opening up.

As a 4-H leader, check-ins are a great way for you to:

- gauge the feelings and emotions of the club members after a meeting, discussion or event;
- get insight into what the club may need going forward;
- learn more about your members and what they do outside of 4-H;
- encourage personal and group reflection.

Check-ins can also be extremely beneficial to your members by:

- allowing time for personal reflection;
- helping them to get to know one another (especially those who are new to the club);
- allowing time for everyone to share their feelings.

ACTIVITY 1 Bud, Rose, Thorn

Instructions:

Ask your 4-H members what their bud, rose and thorn are from the week, the month or from the 4-H meeting. This check-in activity can be done in small or large groups.

Tip: Challenge your 4-H members to have different answers from each other.

Legend:



Bud:

Something you are looking forward to



Rose:

Something you liked or enjoyed



Thorn:

Something that you disliked or bothered you

Discussion points

Mental health is on a continuum and you will have good and bad days. If you can only identify thorns for weeks, then it is time to reach out to a trusted ally for support.

ACTIVITY 2

Feelings Thermometer

Instructions:

1. Print the thermometer activity and distribute it to your members.
2. Have your members indicate the emotion they are feeling and colour the thermometer for a visual representation.
3. Have your members fill out the three corresponding questions.
4. If your members chose it, have them share what they are feeling and why.

Discussion Points

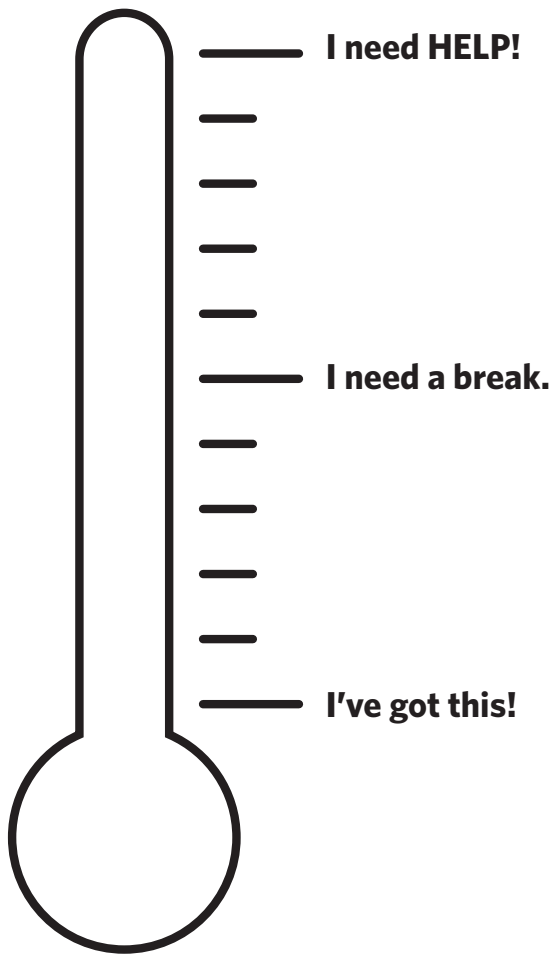
If you haven't yet introduced the **Building your Support System** or **Taking Care of Yourself** tip sheets, now would be a great time, so you can get your members to start thinking. If you already have introduced them, refer back to them when doing this check-in. Ask your members:

If you do not know what or who might help you get through this feeling, refer to your Building your Support System and Taking Care of Yourself tip sheets.

Think back to a time where you might have felt this feeling before. What did you do to get you through it?

Feelings Thermometer

How I am feeling: _____



1. Why do I feel this way:

2. What can I do to change this feeling:

3. What or who might help:

Examples of Feelings

HAPPY
FRUSTRATED
STRESSED
RELAXED
SHY
SAD

PROUD
CONFUSED
ANNOYED
PEACEFUL
WORRIED

ACTIVITY 3

Build Your Own Check-in

There are lots of resources online to help you build a check-in question to best suit your club.

Keep in mind:

- **Size of your club:** Does your club have six or 30 members?
- **Time:** How much time can you dedicate to the check-in activity?
- **Type of question(s):** Are you looking for short, one-sentence answers or detailed, compelling stories from your 4-H members?
- **Tone:** What are you checking in about? Are you looking to hear how your members are doing emotionally or simply how their week went?

Here are some examples:

- Tell the club about a time when...
- How do you feel about...
- What do you think of...
- What do you need...

How would you...

Notes