



# TAKING CARE OF THE WHOLE PERSON

**Activity Purpose:** Recognize that health and wellbeing comes when we balance all aspects of our life, including the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual elements.

**Youth will:**

- Explain the importance of balance in one's life
- Describe what stress is and how it can negatively impact you
- Identify strategies to deal with stress in a healthy manner
- Define sadness, depression, and grief

Activity Outline	Core Content Components	Instructional Method	Timing
<b>1 Welcome &amp; Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome</li> <li>• Answer Questions (QB)</li> <li>• Words of Wisdom (WOW)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mini-Lecture</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> <li>• WOW</li> </ul>	5 minutes
<b>2 Stress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Divide Students for Chart Activity</li> <li>• Large Group Discussion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small Group Activity</li> <li>• Large Group Discussion</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<b>3 Sadness, Grief, Depression, and Suicide</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe and discuss Today's Lesson</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Group Discussion</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<b>4 Who's Got Your Back?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Reflections on Support Systems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Work</li> <li>• Large Group Discussion</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<b>5 You Rock!</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peer Affirmations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Large Group Activity</li> </ul>	10 minutes
<b>6 Closing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Question Box</li> <li>• Preview Next Session</li> <li>• WoW</li> <li>• Resources Available</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> <li>• Mini-Lecture</li> <li>• Cultural Teaching</li> </ul>	5 minutes

### **Materials:**

- Chart paper, markers, masking tape
- Pens, markers, stickers
- Optional: Ball of yarn

### **Handouts:**

- Student Handout 16: Who's Got Your Back?

### **Preparation:**

- Display Words of Wisdom
- Prepare chart paper with questions for Activity 2 (with one question per sheet):
  - What is stress?
  - What causes stress?
  - What happens if you don't deal with stress?
- If you invited a counselor to attend this session, speak with him or her in advance to brief them on today's session.

# 1. Welcome & Introductions



5 minutes, Large  
Group Activity

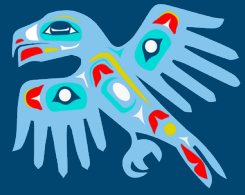
- Have students sit in a large circle.
- Review Session 15: HIV/AIDS
- Answer any questions in the Question Box.
- Preview today's session.
  - To be healthy in our minds and body, we must strive to maintain a balanced life, including the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual elements of our life.
  - Today we are going to talk about our mental health and wellbeing.
  - Sometimes in our busy lives it's easy to get caught up in the physical and not pay enough attention to the mental, emotional, and spiritual pieces of ourselves.
  - We are going to talk about some heavy topics, like stress, depression, and suicide – but we are also going to talk about positive ways to deal with these imbalances, like coping skills, support systems, and resiliency.
  - For some of you, this session might be very intense and personal. Many of you may have had some of these experiences or know friends or family members who have.
  - Remember that you are in a safe place among people who care about you. Share as much as you feel comfortable sharing, so we can learn from each other's experiences, but do not feel pressure to share more than you want. Let one of the facilitators know if you need a break or need someone to talk to after the session ends. (If a counselor has been invited to participate in today's session, introduce them to the group at this time.)
  - Think back to the Medicine Wheel we worked with in the Culture and Tradition session. Remember that it represents wholeness, health, and harmony with one's self, family, community, nation, and universe.
- Ask a student to read today's WOW.



*All individuals have the power to  
transform and change themselves.*

- Anonymous

## 2. Stress



10 minutes, Small  
Group Activity

- Either as a class or in small groups, find and share memes, gifs, or cartoons depicting: Stress. After they've had a chance to look at them and (hopefully) laugh, continue on with the Lesson.
- **Say:** These cartoons are funny, but stress is a serious issue. Today we're going to talk about stress, depression, grief, and suicide.
- Divide students into three groups and give each group a sheet of chart paper with one of the questions below.
  - What is stress?
  - What causes stress?
  - What happens if you don't deal with stress?
- Tell each group to take 5 minutes to write as many responses as possible on their chart paper.
- **Share:** Reconvene the large group and ask each group to share their responses starting with the group that had the question, "What is stress?"

### Facilitator Note

You can also Google search "Uncle Iroh Avatar" quotes or "Baby Yoda" images. There are a lot of Avatar and Yoda memes circulating that teens and young adults can relate to.

### What is stress? *Some responses may include:*

- Stress is how your body feels when you have too many things to do
- It's when you can't get your mind to slow down
- It's a response to scary and overwhelming things
- Not feeling equipped to deal with the challenges you face

## What causes stress?

*Some responses may include:*

- School demands and frustrations
- Negative thoughts and feelings
- Changes in their bodies
- Problems with friends or family
- Unsafe living environment/ neighborhood
- Separation or divorce of parents
- Domestic violence
- Chronic illness in the family
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Incarceration
- Death of a loved one
- Moving to a new community
- Changing schools
- Taking on too many activities or having too high expectations
- Family financial problems

## What happens if you don't deal with stress?

*Some responses may include:*

- You get out of balance, sad, depressed, feel physically sick
- Stress can lead to anxiety, withdrawal, aggression, and poor coping skills such as drug or alcohol use
- Stress can cause a faster heart and breathing rate, increased blood to muscles of arms and legs, cold or clammy hands and feet, upset stomach, or a sense of dread

- After each group shares their responses, ask the other students if they agree and if they can think of other responses to add to the list.
- Ask the large group:

## What are some negative ways people deal with stress?

*Some responses may include:*

- Smoking cigarettes or vaping
- Drugs or alcohol
- Cutting
- Over-exercising
- Over-eating
- Restrictive eating
- Bullying

## What are some positive - or healthy - ways people deal with stress?

*Some responses may include:*

- Exercise
- Healthy eating
- Music
- Meditation
- Relaxation techniques
- Sleep
- Prayer
- Positive thinking
- Mindfulness activities
- Talking to friends
- Talking to a counselor
- Make time for yourself

## Facilitator Resource 16.0

### Stress Cartoons, Memes, or Gifs

My face when someone tells me stress balls are for squeezing, not for throwing at people who stress me out



When u think you've hit your  
stress limit and things get  
more stressful the next day



### 3. Sadness, Grief, Depression & Suicide

10 minutes, Large Group Discussion

- Explain that sadness is a part of life - everyone feels sad every now and then. Someone may feel sadness after they go through a sad event or they are hurt or disappointed by something or somebody.
- Some people can also feel sad with no particular trigger – without knowing why they are sad.
- And some people can pull off a façade and still function normally, but still feel depressed.
- Describe the difference between sadness and depression:

Grief and Sadness	Depression
Temporary	Last more than two weeks, sometimes months or years
Normal	Serious health problem
Feelings are not usually severe enough to interfere with your daily activities.	Feelings prevent you from functioning normally and enjoying the things you normally enjoy.



# What is Sadness and Grief? <sup>1 2 3</sup>

- **Share:** All people who suffer loss experience grief one way or another.
- **Ask: What is grief?** Some responses might include:
  - The emotional, physical, intellectual, behavioral and spiritual process of adjusting to loss.
  - Grief can result from:
    - Family breakdown
    - Divorce
    - Incarceration
    - Moving to a new home or community
    - Adoption
    - Abuse
    - Loss of health
    - Serious illness of a family member or close friend
    - Death of a family member or close friend
    - Suicide of a family member or close friend
    - A typical reaction to death, divorce, job loss, a move away from friends and family, or loss of good health due to illness.
    - COVID - losing time with friends and family, losing out on ceremonies and experiences
- **Share:** The sense of loss may never go away completely, but over time the intensity will diminish.
  - It's a natural and normal response to losing someone you love.
  - The grieving process takes time, and healing usually happens gradually. The intensity of grief may be related to how sudden or predictable the loss was and how you felt about the person who died.
  - Sometimes, if you've experienced conflict with someone who has passed, your grief may be complicated by a sense of relief too.
- **Ask: What are some positive ways you've used to handle grief?** Some responses might include:
  - Remember that you will heal over time.
  - Participate in ceremonies.
  - Be with others.
  - Find someone to talk to when you're ready.
  - Exercise.
  - Eat right.
  - Join a support group.
  - Don't keep your emotions trapped inside you.
  - Create a memorial or tribute.
- **Share:** Going forward and healing from grief doesn't mean forgetting about the person or experience you lost. Getting back to enjoying your life doesn't mean you no longer miss that person or thing. And how long it takes until you start to feel better isn't a measure of how much you loved the person or experience. With time, the loving support of family and friends, and your own positive actions, you can find ways to cope with even the deepest loss.

<sup>1</sup><http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/publications/allpubs/ken-01-0104/default.asp>

<sup>2</sup><http://www.teenloss.com>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.youthradio.org/news/helping-teens-deal-with-grief>



## Some Signs of Depression:

- **Share:** Sadness may last for days or weeks, but sadness and depression aren't the same thing. People experiencing depression may express feelings of:
  - Sadness or "emptiness"
  - Hopelessness, pessimism, or guilt
  - Helplessness or worthlessness
- They may seem:
  - Unable to make decisions
  - Unable to concentrate and remember things
  - To have lost interest in ordinary activities, like sports or band or texting with you
- They may complain of:
  - Loss of energy
  - Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep, or getting up
  - Appetite problems; losing or gaining weight
  - Headaches, stomach aches, or backaches
  - Chronic aches and pains in joints and muscles
- You may notice changes in their behavior:
  - They may want to be alone most of the time
  - They may be drinking heavily or taking drugs
- They may talk about:
  - Death
  - Suicide - or may have attempted suicide<sup>4</sup>
- Remind students that this discussion may raise some intense emotions or reactions from the students. Make sure they know that you are in a safe place; you are there to support them.

### Facilitator's Note

Be prepared to stay afterwards and address individual reactions. Make a special point of checking in on those students who seemed upset by the discussion. Also, if in a boarding school setting, give the dorm managers a heads up to check in on those students and make sure they're doing okay.

<sup>4</sup>NIMH - [http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic\\_text/health/friend-depressed/friend-depress.htm](http://www.pueblo.gsa.gov/cic_text/health/friend-depressed/friend-depress.htm)

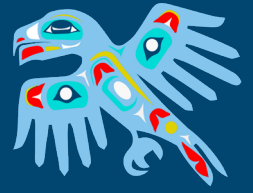
# Suicide

- **Share:** Many people at some time in their lives think about suicide. Most decide to live because they come to realize that the crisis is temporary and that death is permanent. On the other hand, people having a crisis sometimes perceive their dilemma as inescapable and feel a loss of control.
- It's important to know that if you have had these feelings or if you love someone who has had these feelings, you are not alone. Even in the deepest darkest place, it is possible for things to get better, which is why we're talking about this today.
- They may feel like they can't:
  - Stop the pain
  - Think clearly
  - Make decisions
  - See any way out
  - Sleep, eat or work
  - Get out of depression
  - Make the sadness go away
  - See a future without pain
  - See themselves as worthwhile
  - Seem to get control<sup>5</sup>
- **Ask students:** What are some conditions that put Native youth and communities at greater risk?

Answers might include:

- History of trauma
  - Experiencing physical or sexual abuse
  - History of neglect
  - Family loss, separation, and disruption
  - Extreme poverty
  - Foster care with multiple home placements
  - Involvement in the juvenile justice system
  - Poor parent-child communication
  - Hopelessness
  - Previous suicide attempt
  - Suicide of a close friend or relative
  - Local clusters of suicide that have contagious influence
  - Exposure to suicides by others, either directly or through the media
  - Alcohol or substance abuse
  - Stigma associated with help-seeking
- In our next activity we'll think about ways to support the mental health and wellbeing of yourself, your friends and your community.

<sup>5</sup><http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/GetHelp/WhatIfSomeoneIKnowNeedsHelp.aspx>



## 4. Who's Got Your Back?

10 minutes, Individual Activity

- Pass out the Handout: Who's Got Your Back?
- Ask them to take a few minutes to complete the boxes ("If you were feeling super stressed out, what are three healthy things you could do to make yourself feel better?" and "If you needed to talk to someone about your feelings, who are some supportive people you could go to?")
- Ask for a few volunteers to share what they wrote.

## Student Handout 16.0:

### Who's Got Your Back?

Mental health is how we think about things and our conscious thoughts. On a deeper level, it includes our beliefs and our values. When we are balanced, we are able to make good decisions that support our goals. When we are not balanced, it can impair our forward trajectory in life.

Mental resilience is the collection of inner resources we build that help us thoughtfully respond (rather than automatically reacting) to a difficult person, situation, or circumstance.

Building mental resilience takes practice. For many of us, our traditional ways of thinking and living naturally build mental resilience. For example, taking time to pray, participate in ceremony, and actively listen to stories all build resilience - working our mental health muscle.

Read more at We R Native: <https://www.wernative.org/articles/managing-our-mental-health>

**If you were feeling super stressed out, what are three healthy things you could do to help calm yourself down or feel less stressed? What has worked for you in the past?**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**If you needed to talk to someone, who helps take your mind off things or cheers you up? Who are some supportive people you could you turn to?**

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#### Resources:

- Crisis Text Line | Text NATIVE to 741741 | [crisistextline.org](https://crisistextline.org)
- Offers free crisis counseling 24/7
- We R Native: [www.wernative.org/my-mind/building-mental-resilience/cultivating-good-mental-health](https://www.wernative.org/my-mind/building-mental-resilience/cultivating-good-mental-health)
- Youth ambassador videos from NowMattersNow: <https://nowmattersnow.org/skill/young-ambassador>
- BRAVE is a text messaging series that follows the story of three friends – Alex, Chris and Benny – as they experience and overcome common life challenges, like intimate partner violence, alcohol misuse, and suicidality. The series shares wellness strategies and encouragement to get support from family and friends when things get tough. Simply text **"BRAVE"** to **94449** to sign up.
- The best part about being Native, is that we've got each other's backs. Sometimes all it takes is a thoughtful text to brighten your day and shift your perspective. Simply text **"CARING"** to **65664** to receive two texts per week with funny videos, songs, and messages designed to improve your mood and remind you how awesome you are!

## 5. “You Rock!” Activity

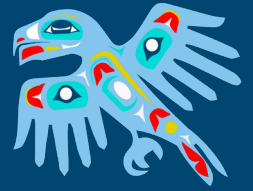


10 minutes, Large  
Group Activity

- **Circle the Class up and Say:** We’ve talked about a lot of intense stuff today and I want us to end on a positive note.
- Like we have done before, I would like to take a couple minutes and have each of us go around and give a shout-out to someone who did something awesome today or something challenging today.
- I will start. I want to give a shout-out to (insert) for (insert). You Rock! Thank you for being you.
- If there is time, go around the circle again.

### Facilitator’s Note

You can also have students toss a ball of yarn around as they pass the affirmation from person to person. The exercise will leave students holding a “spider web” – a visual representation of the connections we have with one another in our tight-knit communities – and the importance of looking out for each other to keep the web tight.



## 6. Closing

5 minutes, Large  
Group Activity

- Answer any questions in the QB.
- Direct students' attention to the Words of Wisdom. Ask for a volunteer to read the WOW and share how they relate to today's session and activities.



*All individuals have the power to  
transform and change themselves.*

- Anonymous

- Preview the Next Session: Drugs and Alcohol
- Remind students there are additional resources on their handout, or that you are available to talk anytime.

**Native  
STAND**

*Students Together Against Negative Decisions*

## RESOURCES

- A **Customizable Resource List** for your Students – from Healthy Native Youth:  
<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Weve-Got-Your-Back-Local-Resources.pdf>
- Crisis Text Line | **Text NATIVE to 741741** | [crisistextline.org](http://crisistextline.org) | For free crisis counseling 24/7
- **Center for Young Women's Health: Depression: A Guide for Teens**  
<http://www.youngwomenshealth.org/depression.html>  
A youth-friendly site from the Children's Hospital of Boston.
- **Half of Us**  
<http://www.halfofus.com>  
An initiative to raise awareness about the prevalence of mental health issues and connect young adults to appropriate resources to get help. A project of mtvU and The Jed Foundation.
- **Suicide Warning Signs**  
<http://family.samhsa.gov/get/suicidewarn>  
Recognizing the warning signs for suicide in young people. A project of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.
- **Teen Central**  
<http://www.teencentral.net>  
Developed by KidsPeace, a private charity dedicated to serving the behavioral and mental health needs of children, preadolescents and teens.
- **TeensHealth: Mental Health**  
[http://kidshealth.org/teen/your\\_mind](http://kidshealth.org/teen/your_mind)  
Website created for teens looking for honest, accurate information and advice about health, relationships, and growing up. A project of Nemours, a leading pediatric health system.
- **Trevor Lifeline**  
1-800-850-8078—available 24/7  
<http://www.thetrevorproject.org>  
The only nationwide, around-the-clock crisis and suicide prevention helpline for LGBTQ youth.