

The Well-Being Toolkit

Building Hope, Resilience, Agency,
and Belonging in Schools



FOUNDATION FOR
APPALACHIAN OHIO

Dear Friends,

You are receiving this toolkit through the generous partnership of many:

- Battelle for Kids, a national nonprofit with deep expertise in the science of hope;
- Our inaugural cohort of Growing Home Fellows, who have helped identify ways to increase hope in Appalachian Ohio's K-12 classrooms and beyond;
- FAO's visionary founders, who challenged us all to believe in the power of opportunities; and
- The Friends of FAO, who fuel our success through annual giving.

For 25 years, FAO has been encouraging and supporting philanthropy to remove barriers and create opportunities in Appalachian Ohio. Our community of donors and doers work together to ensure that everyone in our region has opportunities to flourish because we know our people have the same potential as people anywhere.

But the challenges and barriers of poverty in Appalachian Ohio are very real. Many are experiencing trauma. And children often don't see pathways to a brighter future because generational hardships have led them to believe this is just how life works. Since our earliest days, we've encouraged pride and high expectations in our region, particularly among our children. Recently, we've begun a new effort to help people understand their role in making sure the future is brighter than the past through the science of hope.

Hope is essential to a flourishing Appalachian Ohio. Where hope is rising, well-being is rising. Success is rising. Even health is rising. The best part? Hope is a pattern of thinking

we can learn and influence. We can all foster access to opportunity and encourage the patterns of thinking that create hope. This toolkit is designed to show you how, with a particular emphasis on lessons for the classroom.

This toolkit is a direct result of FAO's partnership with our Growing Home Fellows – a cadre of 100+ young leaders in the K-12 sector who are meeting needs and advancing opportunities in their communities as part of a five-year leadership development program. They shared their feedback about the science of hope, and Battelle for Kids helped us develop a framework for any educator who wants to weave more hope into their lives and the lives of those around them. We couldn't be more grateful.

This toolkit a living, breathing guide, so please share your feedback as you test these strategies and develop ideas of your own. If you would like more information about this tool or are interested in joining our community of partners working to advance hope, email us at info@ffao.org.

With hope,



Cara Dingus Brook

President and CEO | [Foundation for Appalachian Ohio](https://www.foundationforappalachianohio.org)

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Cultivating Hope and Resilience

A Toolkit for Growth, Reflection, and Emotional Engagement

Hope and resilience are not just essential to our well-being; they are empowering forces that enable us to embrace change, navigate uncertainty, and persevere through adversity. Grounded in more than three decades of research across psychology, education, and neuroscience, we now understand that **hope and resilience are not traits we either have or don't have; they are dynamic, learnable skills** that can be developed, strengthened, and sustained over time.

Hope, as defined by Dr. C.R. Snyder, a leading psychologist and founder of Hope Theory, is built on three key components: having meaningful goals, identifying pathways to reach those goals, and cultivating the motivation (agency) to pursue them. Resilience complements hope by supporting the ability to adapt in the face of challenges, recover from setbacks, and continue moving forward with intention and self-belief.

When we intentionally cultivate both hope and resilience, we unlock a powerful combination that supports:

- **Sustained motivation and purpose**
- **Flexible coping in the face of obstacles**
- **Greater emotional regulation and self-awareness**
- **Improved engagement, connection, and well-being**

This toolkit is built around the **core four conditions** that support the development of a hopeful and resilient mindset:

1. **Goal setting and future orientation**
2. **Self-awareness in action**
3. **Agency in motion**
4. **Connection and belonging**



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Each section includes reflection tools, strategies, and prompts that can be used personally or shared with others, whether you work directly with students, support teams, or are simply doing your own growth work. These resources are designed to be both practical and personal – flexible enough for many contexts but rooted in evidence-based frameworks that support meaningful, lasting change.

The following tools are designed to move beyond internal reflection and into **applied action, language, and culture-building**. Whether you're exploring personal beliefs, auditing policies, or shifting your classroom language, these strategies help turn hopeful mindsets into meaningful practices that shape individual and collective growth. This toolkit is here to remind you: **Hope is teachable, resilience is buildable, and growth is always possible.**



The strategies in this toolkit are organized around the **core four conditions** shown in the graphic: the foundational areas that research has shown most reliably support a hopeful and resilient mindset.

These are not quick fixes or one-size-fits-all answers. Instead, they offer entry points to reflection, growth, and sustainable change, whether you're working on your own development, leading a team, or guiding an organization.

Each of the core four represents a distinct but interconnected area of focus. Together, they create the internal and external conditions that allow hope to take root and grow:

1. Clarity of Purpose

Hope begins with a sense of direction. This condition focuses on identifying what matters most: your goals, values, and personal or organizational mission. When people have clarity, they are better able to prioritize, stay grounded in their “why,” and navigate challenges with a deeper sense of meaning.

2. Pathways Thinking

It's not enough to have a goal; you need ways to get there. This condition emphasizes flexible thinking, creativity, and the ability to identify and pursue multiple routes forward. It builds the skills to problem-solve, pivot, and keep going even when the first path doesn't work out.

3. Supportive Relationships

No one sustains hope alone. This condition highlights the importance of connection, trust, and belonging. When people feel seen and supported, their capacity for hope increases. This section focuses on cultivating networks of care, collaboration, and emotional safety.

4. Agency and Belief

Hope requires a belief that your actions matter. This condition strengthens internal resources like confidence, motivation, and self-efficacy. When people feel empowered and believe in their ability to make a difference, they are more likely to take initiative and persist.

Throughout this toolkit, each strategy or reflection aligns with one or more of the core four. You can use the entire toolkit sequentially or begin with the section that feels most relevant to your current context or need.

Goal Setting and Future Orientation

Creating a Vision That Moves You

Hope begins with a clear and meaningful sense of direction. When we can imagine a future worth striving toward – and believe we have the power to move toward it – we begin to tap into something transformative. This section focuses on cultivating that belief through intentional goal setting, visioning, and future-oriented reflection.

Drawing from evidence-based practices, these tools support the development of what psychologist C.R. Snyder called the core components of hope: goals, pathways, and agency. They invite us to reflect on what matters most, visualize success, and break big dreams into small, purposeful steps.

Whether you're navigating personal change, leading a team, supporting students, or guiding organizational growth, these strategies offer both structure and inspiration. The tools in this section are designed to be flexible and adaptable, equally useful in classrooms, community initiatives, or staff planning settings.

You'll explore tools like Hope Mapping, Focused Mental Imagery, Just One Framework, Purpose Puzzle, SMARTer Goals, Whoop it Up!, and Letter to Your Future Self, each designed to help clarify intentions, identify internal and external resources, and build a stronger connection between today's actions and tomorrow's possibilities.

As you move through this section, take time to reflect on:

- What energizes you?
- What challenges you?
- What future do you want to help shape – for yourself, your team, or your community?

Beyond the Classroom

These tools aren't just for students. Try using them in:

- Staff retreats or onboarding
- Mentorship or leadership coaching
- Community engagement sessions
- Department or team goal setting
- Team planning and group leadership circles

Hope Mapping

How to use:

This tool is designed to help you turn a meaningful goal into an actionable plan. This worksheet is based on the science of hope, which includes three core elements:

1. **Goals** – what you want to accomplish and why
2. **Pathways** – specific steps you'll take
3. **Agency** – what obstacles might get in your way and how will you find a way forward

Use this worksheet to:

- Identify a personal, meaningful goal
- Develop 2–3 concrete strategies to pursue it
- Anticipate and plan for potential challenges

After completing the steps, take time to reflect on what you've learned. This can help increase motivation, strengthen self-awareness, and improve your follow-through.

Step 1: Goals What would I like to achieve or accomplish? Why is this important to me?	Step 2: Pathways How will I accomplish this goal? What is my plan? What are at least 3 specific actions I will take?	Step 3: Agency What obstacles might I encounter along these pathways? How will I find a way forward when they occur?
	1.	
	2.	
	3.	

Reflection

Use these questions to explore what this process taught you about yourself, your motivation, and your goal. Take your time. Reflection helps hope grow stronger.

1. What can I do to maintain my motivation?
2. How has this Hope Map helped me clarify what I want to accomplish?
3. What have I learned about myself in this process?

Imagine It. Believe It. Achieve It.

Focused Mental Imagery

This activity helps participants connect to a wish, dream, or goal through guided imagery. It uses mental rehearsal and sensory engagement to build confidence, motivation, and clarity.

Instructions

Let's get started with our imagination activity. Today, we're going to think about a wish, dream, or goal. And we're going to use our imagination to think about how it will feel to accomplish that goal. Some of you may see pictures in your head with colors and images. Some of you may feel words as you imagine or have feelings or emotions that come up.

Before we get started, you have choices about how to use your imagination.

- You may wish to close your eyes and use your imagination.
- Or you may choose to keep your eyes open and use a pencil and a piece of paper to draw images, write words, or express feelings you think about today.

However you choose to do this activity is perfectly okay.

As you are imagining your wish, goal, or dream, you might find yourself starting to think about other things. If your mind starts to wander, that's perfectly normal. When you notice, gently bring your attention back to the imagination activity.

Let's begin.

Optional Relaxation Preparation

Let's start by taking a couple of slow deep breaths at your own pace. As you breathe in, you may feel the chest rise and the belly expand. You may notice the shoulders lifting and then relaxing as you release your breath. On your next exhale, I invite you to release that breath through the mouth and feel the shoulders fall away from the ears, relaxing the head, neck, and jaw. Feel free to repeat that a couple of times at your own pace.

As you continue breathing, you may wish to wiggle your fingers and toes a little bit. Maybe roll your shoulders around or shrug them up and down, moving around in whatever way feels comfortable for you. Maybe you choose to roll your head in a circle or look back and forth over each of the shoulders. Maybe shake out the arms and legs or tense all the muscles and then release.

Option 1: Setting up a School Goal

Take this moment to settle down into your seat as we help calm the body, so we can focus our thoughts and pay attention to all our senses (pause for 3 seconds). Once you feel settled, think about a goal you have for school.

What is a goal you would like to accomplish this month? You may want to finish all your homework and turn it in on time. You may wish to do well on the science test you have this week. You may wish to make a new friend at school. You may want to have the best game of tag at recess ever. Whatever your wish, dream, or goal is, think about that now.

The teacher can offer suggestions if gearing this toward an event – a goal related to our upcoming test, a wish you have about your performance next week, etc.

Option 2: Setting up a Personal Goal

Take this moment to settle down into your seat as we help calm the body so we can focus our thoughts and pay attention to all our senses (pause for 3 seconds). Once you feel settled, think about a goal you have in your personal life.

What is a goal you would like to accomplish this month? You may want to create healthier habits by getting more sleep each night. You may wish to read a certain number of books. Maybe you are considering taking up a new hobby or buying a new car. Whatever your wish, dream, or goal is, think about that now.

Practicing Visualization

Picture yourself when you have achieved the goal you desire. Vividly see yourself achieving this goal.

- How do you feel when you accomplish your goal? What are your emotions? What about your facial expressions? (pause for 5 seconds)
- Are you someone who sees images? When you look around, what do you see? Notice all the details. The people you are with, the objects around you, the colors (pause for 5 seconds).
- Or maybe you imagine with words. Name the people you are with and the objects around you (pause for 5 seconds).
- What sounds do you hear? (pause for 5 seconds)
- Can you smell anything around you? (pause for 5 seconds)

Take note of how it feels to achieve your goal. Thank yourself and congratulate yourself for the hard work. Maybe allow a smile to cross your face. Give yourself a pat on the back or any gesture that may feel appropriate.

I invite you to sit with the feeling of accomplishment for a moment. And when you are ready, slowly open your eyes.

Just One Framework

Setting and pursuing goals can feel out of reach when life feels overwhelming. The “Just One” approach helps you focus on a single, manageable action to build momentum and move toward a brighter future.

JUST ONE Action Toward a Goal

What is JUST ONE small step you can take today to move closer to your long-term or short-term goal? Write down your goal, research one resource, or tackle one simple related task.

JUST ONE Visualization of Success

What is JUST ONE image you can create in your mind of what achieving your goal will look or feel like? Picture yourself crossing the finish line, receiving recognition, or feeling accomplished.

JUST ONE Habit to Build

What is JUST ONE routine or habit you can start today that aligns with your future aspirations? Spend 5 minutes planning your day, jot down 3 priorities, or review your progress nightly.

JUST ONE Question to Reflect On

What is JUST ONE powerful question you can ask yourself to stay aligned with your future? Think about it or write it down, whatever feels best for you.

Reflection

- How might the Just One strategy have helped you at a time when you had less hope or were experiencing challenges in your life?
- In what ways could the Just One strategy create hopeful and resilient mindsets for yourself and your students?

Purpose Puzzle

Students reflect on their sense of purpose by identifying what matters most to them, their strengths, and how these elements connect to their personal and academic lives.

Materials Needed

- Puzzle template handout or blank sheets of paper (pre-draw large puzzle pieces, e.g., 4–6 pieces per page)
- Markers, crayons, or pens
- Reflection prompts (on a slide, handout, or read aloud)



Facilitator Tip: You may wish to complete your own Purpose Puzzle beforehand and share a piece of it with students to model vulnerability and spark discussion.

Introduction and Framing

- **Set the Stage:**
 - Explain: Today, we're going to explore what makes our lives meaningful and what fuels our sense of purpose. By reflecting on our values, strengths, and dreams, we can discover more about what motivates us and how we can make a difference in the world.
 - Emphasize that sharing is completely voluntary and that this is a judgment-free space where everyone is encouraged to support one another.
 - Highlight that small groups or pairs can help create a safe, comfortable environment for sharing.
- **Prompt for Engagement:**
 - Take a moment to think about times in your life when you felt proud of yourself, truly excited about something, or deeply connected to a person, cause, or experience. What were you doing? Who were you with? What made those moments stand out?
- **Guidelines for Sharing:**
 - Encourage active listening, reminding students that listening is just as important as sharing.
 - Provide sentence starters to ease responses, such as:
 - I appreciated when you said...
 - That resonated with me because...
 - You made me think about...

Creating the Purpose Puzzle

1. Hand Out Puzzle Templates

- Distribute the puzzle templates with 4 – 6 blank pieces. Alternatively, students can draw puzzle pieces themselves.

2. Guided Reflection

- Provide the following prompts and ask students to fill in each puzzle piece with their thoughts:
 - **Piece 1:** What activities bring me joy or happiness?
 - **Piece 2:** What are my natural talents and strengths? What do others say I'm good at?
 - **Piece 3:** What causes or issues do I feel passionate about? What truly matters to me? What do I care about?
 - **Piece 4:** Who or what inspires me? Why?
 - **Piece 5:** If I could make a difference in the world, what would it be? How would I like to help others?
 - **Piece 6:** What do I love learning about or doing for hours without getting bored?

3. Add Creativity

- Encourage students to decorate their puzzles with colors, designs, or images that represent their answers. This not only makes the activity more engaging but also allows students to express parts of themselves that may not come out through words alone.

Reflection and Sharing

1. Small Group Sharing

- Ask students to share 1 – 2 pieces of their puzzle with a partner or small group.
- Prompt for discussion:
 - What's one piece of your puzzle that really excites you or that you'd like to explore further?
 - Which piece felt the most challenging to fill out? Why?
 - How do your values, strengths, or dreams connect to your purpose?

2. Whole-Class Reflection (Optional)

- Invite a few volunteers to share a piece of their puzzle with the class.
- Prompt for discussion:
 - Did you notice any common themes or ideas in your group's puzzle pieces?
 - Was there something someone shared that inspired you or gave you a new perspective?

Wrap-Up

- **Takeaway Message**

- “Your purpose is like a puzzle – made up of all the things you love, care about, and excel at. It’s not something you have to figure out all at once. As you continue to grow, learn, and experience life, new pieces will naturally be added. Today’s reflection is just the beginning of a journey to understanding what makes you unique and what fuels your motivation.”

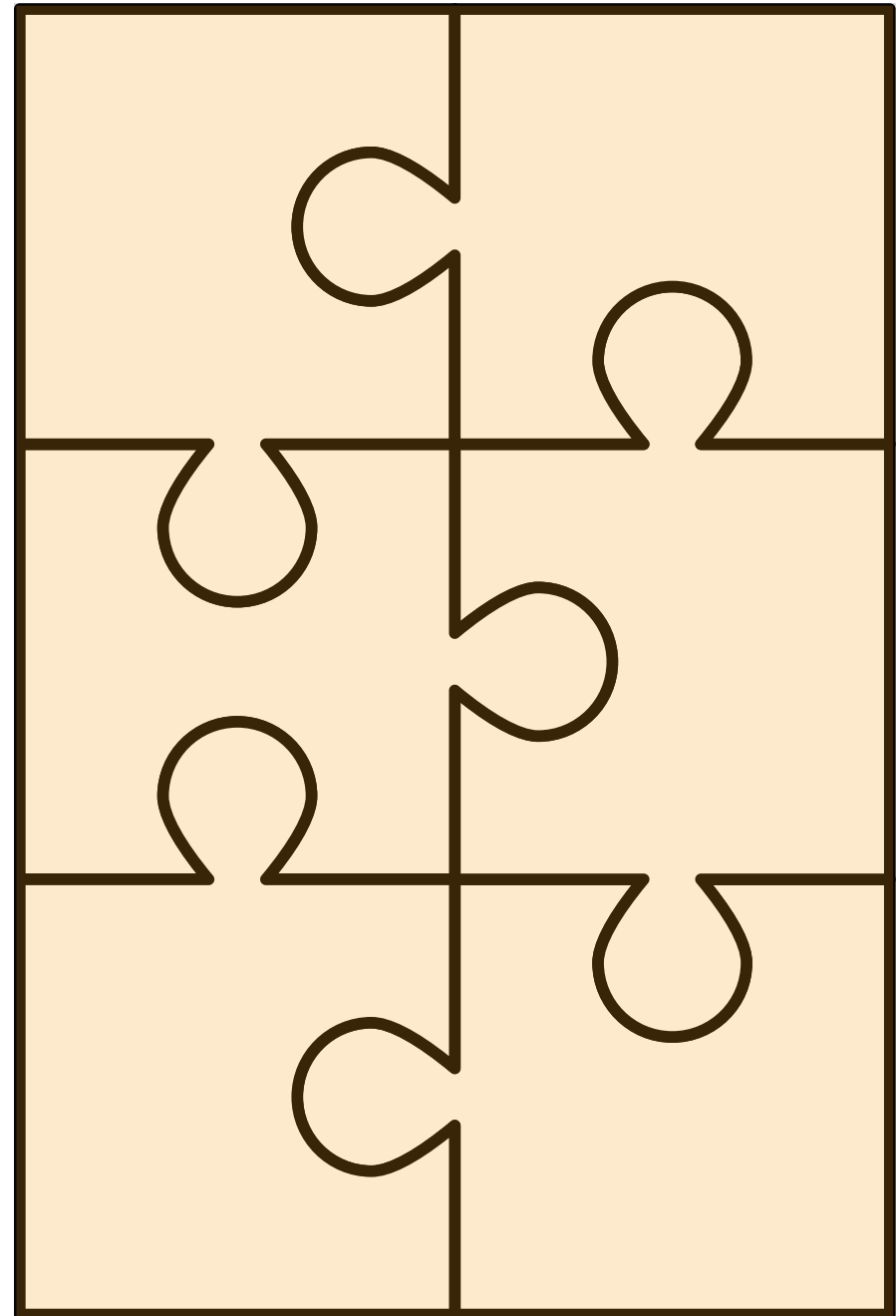
- **Action Step**

- Encourage students to keep their puzzle in a place they’ll see often – on a wall, in a notebook, or as a photo on their phone. Let it serve as a daily reminder of their strengths, passions, and purpose and inspire them to take small steps toward their dreams.

Why It Works

1. **Accessible:** Combines reflection with a tangible takeaway, engaging students creatively and personally.
2. **Holistic:** Helps students see the bigger picture by connecting their strengths, values, and dreams.
3. **Action-Oriented:** Ends with a practical step that aligns their reflections with actionable purpose, reinforcing a sense of control and possibility.

Purpose Puzzle Template



SmartER Goals!

Moving From Wish to Action

This is designed to help individuals set clear, meaningful, and hopeful goals using the SmartER framework. By following these steps, it increases the focus on achievable and inspiring outcomes while staying adaptable and reflective. This framework helps you dream boldly and plan wisely.

Specific	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you want to achieve? • Ensure the goal is about reaching for something positive, not avoiding something negative. 	
Measurable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will you know when you have achieved your goal? • What does success look like? • Who will be your accountability buddy? 	
Achievable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Choose a goal that feels challenging yet realistic considering your current circumstances. • Will this goal challenge you or help you grow? • Do you have the skills, time, and resources to pursue this goal? 	
Relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why does this goal matter to you? • How does it move you toward your future aspirations? • How does it align with your values, passions, and beliefs? 	
Time-bound	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When would you like to achieve this goal? • Can you adjust your goal or break it into smaller steps? 	
Exciting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What excites you about this goal? • What are the benefits or rewards that will keep you motivated? • How will you feel when you achieve this goal? 	
Reviewable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you practice being flexible if your circumstances change? • How will you check in with yourself and adapt your goal if needed? • In what ways can you celebrate your progress? 	

Reflection

- What is one small step I am willing to take toward my goal today?
- What is something I learned by using the SmartER method?
- How does this differ from how I have set goals in the past?

WOOP IT UP!

Turn Your Wish Into Action

The WOOP framework helps turn wishes into actionable goals by anticipating internal obstacles and planning effective responses.

Wish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What's a meaningful goal, wish, or dream you're eager to achieve? • What's something you want to achieve that inspires you and is challenging yet within reach? 	My Wish:
Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spend some time thinking about the outcome. • What positive result will come from achieving this? • What could change, and how will it feel? • Close your eyes and picture it vividly. 	My Outcome:
Obstacle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could get in the way? • Think of something internal, such as a fear, habit, behavior, or mindset. • Pause and visualize your obstacle clearly. 	My Obstacle:
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can you overcome this obstacle? • What is your plan for when it arises? • Create a When-Then plan to describe the action you will take to stay on track. 	My Plan: When Then

Reflection

- How did the WOOP method help clarify my thoughts about what I want to accomplish?
- What have I learned about myself in this process?
- How might I apply this method to other areas of my life?

Letter to Your Future Self

Write as your present self to your future self. Imagine the kind of person you want to be and the life you want to create. Participants imagine their lives in the future and write a letter to themselves about what they can do in the present to work toward their hoped-for future self.

Step 1: Visualize Your Future

Take a moment to think about where you want to be in the future and what you want to have accomplished. For short-term goals, think about 1-6 months from now. For longer-term goals, think about 1, 5, or 10 years from now. Choose a timeframe for your letter:



1 month



6 months



1 year



5 years



10 years

Reflect on these prompts:

- What do you hope to have achieved by then? (career, relationships, personal growth)
- What values, habits, or traits do you want to cultivate?
- What challenges might you face, and how do you want to overcome them?
- What kind of impact do you want to have on others and your community?

Step 2: Take Note of Your Present

Reflect on where you are today and how it connects to the future life you've imagined.

- **Strengths:** What strengths or skills does your present self already have that will help you achieve this future?
- **Habits:** What habits or routines are supporting you in reaching this future life?
- **Barriers:** What might be some habits, fears, or distractions that are holding you back?
- **Support System:** Who in your life today is encouraging you or helping you move closer to your dreams?

Step 3: Write Your Letter

Use the template on the next page to write a letter TO your future self. Use a hopeful, goal-oriented, and aspirational tone. This letter is about setting clear intentions and making a commitment to your future self.

Step 4: Reflection

- After writing your letter, take a moment to reflect:
- What are the key themes or goals you have written about?
- How can you start working toward them today?
- Who might you share this with or turn to for support in achieving this future?
- Save your letter to revisit in the future, or use a service like FutureMe.org (<https://www.futureme.org>) to email it to yourself on a specific date.

Example Letter to Your Future Self

Dear Future _____,

I hope this letter finds you happy, healthy, and living a life you're proud of. Today, I want to share my hopes and dreams for us and remind you of what matters most.

Right now, I am working on:

- Describe your current goals, challenges, and what you're striving for.

I hope that by now you:

- List specific goals, accomplishments, wishes, or dreams you hope to have achieved.
- Share what you hope to have experienced by then.

Remember to:

- Provide encouragement and reminders about the values, habits, or behaviors you want to maintain (stay true to yourself, keep working hard, help others along the way, etc.).

Provide a statement of positive support and encouragement.

- Example: I know life will have its ups and downs, but I believe in our ability to grow and thrive. Keep striving and never forget where we started.

With hope and determination,

(Your Name Today)

(Date You Wrote Your Letter)

Template for Letter to Your Future Self

Dear Future _____,

I hope this letter finds you happy, healthy, and living a life you're proud of. Today, I want to share my hopes and dreams for us and remind you of what matters most.

Right now, I am working on:

I hope that by now you:

Remember to:

Provide a statement of positive support and encouragement.

With hope and determination,

(Your Name Today)

(Date You Wrote Your Letter)

Self-Awareness in Action

Reflection, Reflective Thinking, and Emotional Regulation

These tools are designed to help you become more aware of what's happening in the moment: in your thoughts, your body, your reactions, and your patterns. Whether you're using these strategies for personal insight, staff well-being, or leadership development, the practices in this section center on **reflective thinking**: noticing your habits of mind, recognizing unhelpful thought patterns, managing overwhelm, and pausing to respond with curiosity instead of judgment.

This section moves from big-picture goal setting into everyday mental habits that support motivation, focus, connection, and emotional well-being. Think of it as your inner toolkit, with strategies that help you reset, reflect, and stay grounded while navigating challenges, transitions, or emotionally charged moments.

As you revisit or share these tools, remember that the goal isn't perfection; it's presence, intention, and growth. For leaders and department heads, modeling self-awareness and reflective thinking can foster psychological safety and help create more open, supportive, and hopeful work environments.

Adapt It for Adults

These self-awareness tools can be adapted for:

- Staff wellness check-ins or morning meeting starters
- Community leadership training (managing burnout and decision fatigue)
- Reflective journaling prompts during supervision or coaching
- Emotional debriefs after major transitions or conflicts

Mindful Minute

A Gentle Stroll

“You can’t stop the waves, but you can learn to surf.” – **Jon Kabat-Zinn**

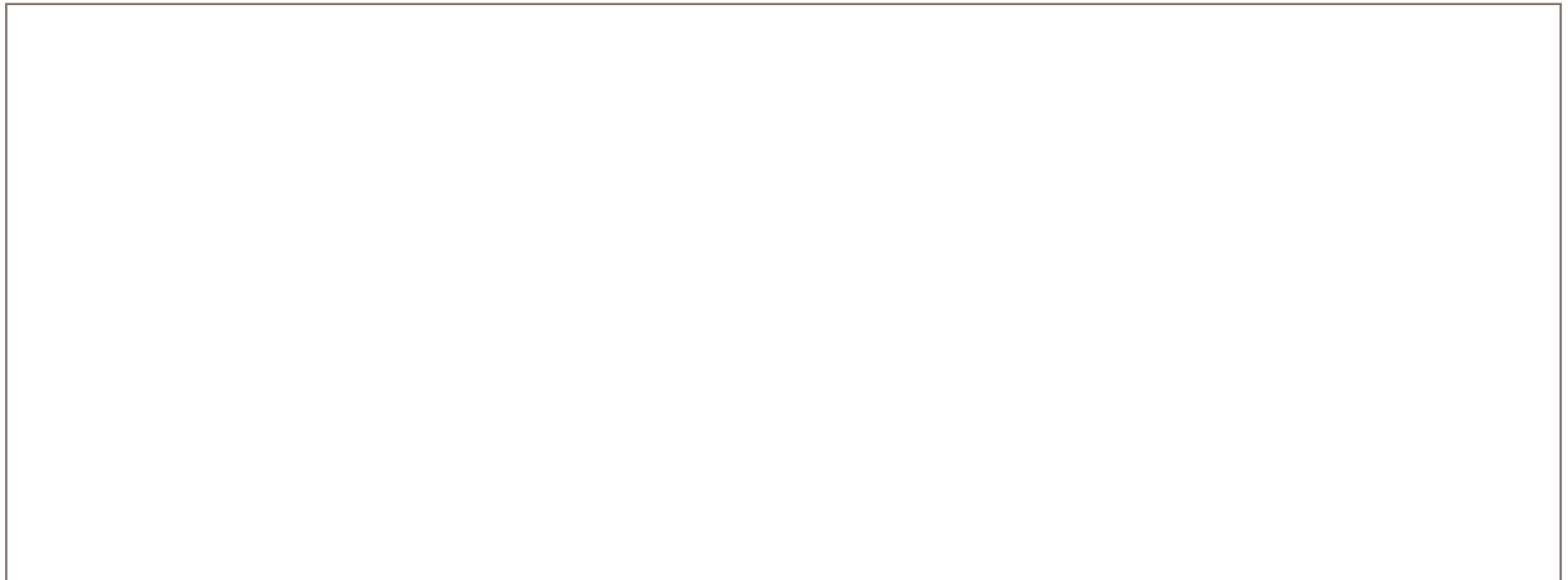
Founder of Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Our minds are constantly active, just like the ocean. Thoughts come and go – some are gentle ripples; others feel like crashing waves. Being aware of our thoughts helps us build self-awareness, manage emotions, and develop focus.

Your Mindful Minute

Set a timer for one minute. Without judgment, simply notice your thoughts and write them down as they come. Let them flow freely, big or small, serious or silly.

What thoughts come to mind? Write as many as you can!

A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for writing down thoughts during the mindful minute exercise.

Reflection Questions

Select **2 prompts** below to reflect back on from your Mindful Minute.

Prompt	Your Reflection
Were your thoughts mostly about the past, present, or future?	
What patterns did you notice in your thoughts?	
How did it feel to slow down and observe your thinking?	
Did any thoughts surprise you, and why or why not?	
If your thoughts were waves, what kind of ocean would you have today (calm, choppy, stormy) and why?	

This exercise introduces us to **metacognition – the ability to think about our thinking**. By observing our thoughts without judgment, we develop self-awareness, emotional regulation, and a stronger ability to focus.

Ideas for Using This Strategy:

- At the start of the day to set a positive tone, focus attention, and mentally prepare for learning.
- During transitions between subjects or activities to reset and refocus, helping students shift gears smoothly.
- After recess to calm thoughts and settle back into learning.
- Before a test, quiz, or public speaking to check in on and calm racing thoughts or worries.
- Before or during group work as a check-in to help groups work better together and be more aware of how they are interacting based on their thoughts.

Start. Monitor. Plan.

Metacognition and Self-Awareness Reflection

This tool helps individuals practice metacognition by reflecting on their thoughts, emotions, and strategies before, during, and after a learning experience. By encouraging intentional thinking and self-awareness, this activity supports focus, emotional regulation, and goal-setting. It can be used across content areas or professional settings to help learners deepen engagement and build habits of reflective thinking.

Step One: Start with Intention

Before we begin, take a moment to reflect:

1. What do you hope to learn or take away from today's lesson?

2. What personal strengths might help you engage with this topic?

Step Two: Monitor Your Metacognition

Throughout the lesson, pause to reflect on the following areas:

Prompt	Your Reflection
What am I thinking right now?	
What emotions am I noticing?	
What physical sensations am I aware of?	
What strategies am I using to stay engaged and focused?	
Am I understanding the content or do I need clarifications?	

Step Three: Plan for Progress

Today's Lesson:

Reflecting on today's lesson, write down one goal you want to set for yourself.

Tricky Thoughts

Spot it. Challenge It.

How to Spot and Challenge Unhelpful Thinking

We all have tricky thoughts – those automatic ideas that pop into our minds and make us feel stressed, stuck, or frustrated. These thoughts can trick us into seeing things in a way that isn't completely true or helpful. The good news? Once we spot the tricky thoughts, we can change them!

“Don’t believe everything you think.” - Robert Fulghum

Author of All I Really Need to Know I Learned in Kindergarten

Step One: Spot it!

First, notice the tricky thought that’s making you feel stuck. Below are some common cognitive distortions and how they may sound.

Tricky Thought	Explanation	How it May Sound
Black-and-White Thinking	Seeing things as all good or all bad. No in-between.	“If my friend doesn’t text me back right away, they must not want to be friends anymore.”
Catastrophizing	Expecting the worst possible outcome.	“If I miss this assignment, I will fail the class”
Mind Reading	Assuming you know what others are thinking.	“No one is sitting with me at lunch. Everyone thinks I am weird.”
Labeling Yourself	Defining yourself based on one event.	“We lost the game. I am a terrible baseball player.”
Fortune Telling	Predicting a negative outcome before it happens.	“I just know I am going to fail.”
Filtering Out the Good	Only noticing the negatives and ignoring the positives.	“I made one mistake, so the whole thing is ruined.”

Step Two: Challenge it!

When you feel upset, look at this chart and identify what tricky thought you notice. Ask yourself:

- Is this thought completely true, or just how I feel right now?
- What's another way to look at this situation?
- If a friend had this thought, what would I say to help them?
- What could be a more balanced thought?"

Tricky Thought	Explanation	How it May Sound
Black-and-White Thinking	"If my friend doesn't text me back right away, they must not want to be friends anymore."	"Have I ever had times when someone didn't text back quickly, but they were still my friend?" "What other possibilities are there besides they don't want to be friends?"
Catastrophizing	"If I miss this assignment, I will fail the class."	"What's the evidence for this thought? What's the worst-case scenario, and how likely is it to happen?" "Has this happened before, and I still managed to do well in class?"
Mind Reading	"No one is sitting with me at lunch. Everyone thinks I am weird."	"What have others said or done that gives me evidence they think negatively about me?" "Could there be other reasons for their behavior? What are they?"
Labeling Yourself	"We lost the game. I am a terrible baseball player."	"Is this one event enough to define who I am? What other qualities do I have that make me who I am?" "What can I learn from this experience to improve next time?"
Fortune Telling	"I just know I am going to fail."	"How do I know this is going to happen? What evidence do I have that supports this prediction?" "Have I been wrong in the past when predicting negative outcomes?"
Filtering Out the Good	"I made one mistake, so the whole thing is ruined."	"What went well in this situation? Can I see any positives, even if I made a mistake?" "How can I learn from this mistake, rather than letting it overshadow everything else?"

Be a Goldfish

This Thought Doesn't Have to Stay – Let it Swim Away

This worksheet is designed to help us recognize unhelpful thoughts and practice letting them go instead of getting stuck on them. Use this during morning meetings as a reflective activity after challenging moments, or even throughout the day to build self-awareness.

Part 1: Introducing Goldfish Thinking

Discussion Questions:

1. Have you ever heard that goldfish have short memories? What do you think that means?
2. Have you ever had a thought that kept repeating in your mind and made you feel stuck?
3. What happens when we focus too much on thoughts that aren't helpful?

Teacher Script:

"Even though goldfish may not actually forget everything quickly, we can learn from them! Some thoughts don't deserve our attention. Instead of holding onto them, we can let them swim away."

Part 2: Goldfish Thought Sorting

Give each student a copy of the thoughts to the right. Ask them to read the thoughts and decide if they should be kept (helpful) or let go (unhelpful).

Set Up Ideas: Provide students with slips of paper they can sort into "keep" or "let go" buckets. Or provide students with the table below and ask them to decide whether to "keep" or "let go" of each thought.

Thought	Keep or Let Go
"I made a mistake, but I can try again."	
"I will never be good at this."	
"That was hard, but I learned something."	
"Everyone probably thinks I'm bad at this."	
"I'll ask for help if I need it."	
"I failed, so I must be a failure."	
"This might take time, but I'll get better."	
"Nobody wants to be my friend."	

Part 3: Class Fishbowl Activity

1. Place a real or drawn fishbowl in the classroom.
2. Give students sticky notes to write down unhelpful thoughts they want to let go of throughout the day.
3. Adaptation: Offer on a virtual whiteboard or shared live document.
4. At the end of the day or throughout the day, have students (and the adults) drop the sticky notes in the "fishbowl" and say, "These thoughts don't need to stay. I am letting them swim away!"

Box It Up

Learn how to manage overwhelming thoughts by “boxing” them up and storing them for later, so you can focus on the present moment.

Step 1: Identify the Thought

Write down or say aloud the thought that's on your mind. It might be something that's stressing you out, distracting you, frustrating you, or making it hard to focus.

Step 2: Create a Box

Choose a way to represent a box that works best for you.

- Physically draw a box on paper.
- Imagine a box in front of you by creating a picture in your mind.
- Use an object nearby to represent your box, like a small container, box, or notebook.
- Hold out your hands and imagine feeling the weight of an invisible box.

Now describe the box. What color is it? Is it heavy or light? What size is the box – big, small, medium? What material is it made of – wood, plastic, paper, metal? You get to decide.

Step 3: Place the Thought in the Box

Gently place your thought inside the box, just as you place an item in a storage box for safekeeping.

- Picture yourself placing the thought inside the box.
- Write down your thought inside the box you drew.
- Write the thought on a sticky note and place it inside your box or container.
- Say aloud or in your mind, “I am placing this thought inside the box for now.”

Step 4: Close the Lid

- Close the lid in whatever way feels right to you, knowing the thought is safely stored away until you're ready to return to it.
- Picture yourself closing the lid and feeling the weight of the box.
- Physically fold the paper to close the box you have drawn.
- Physically close your real box, notebook, or container to reinforce the act of setting the thought aside.

Remind yourself that the thought is safe inside the box, and that you can return to it when the time is right.

Step 5: Place the Box on a Shelf

Set the thought aside in a safe place, knowing you can come back to it whenever you're ready. For now, it's out of your way.

- Imagine yourself placing the box on a shelf in your mind, somewhere secure and out of sight for now.
- Physically move the paper to a drawer, folder, or another spot where it won't be in view.
- Place the physical box or container in a different location, such as a shelf or closet, to symbolize setting the thought aside.

Step 6: Give Yourself Permission to Let it Be

Take a deep breath and remind yourself:

- "It is okay to set this thought aside."
- "It will be there when I'm ready to come back to it."
- "Right now, I am choosing to focus on the present."

Reminder

Whenever you feel overwhelmed, you can use this technique to create space in your mind and manage your thoughts more easily.

Reflection

How did it feel to use this strategy? What might this help you with next time?

Reflection Roadmap: Learning About Your Learning

Why Reflection Matters

Research shows that students who actively reflect on their learning process perform better on assessments, retain information longer, and develop stronger problem-solving skills. Metacognitive strategies – such as self-monitoring, identifying strengths and weaknesses, and adjusting study habits – are key to effective learning, engagement, and test performance.

This reflection helps you analyze your test preparation, mindset, and performance so you can apply what you've learned to improve in the future.

Part 1: Preparation Reflection

1. How did my expectations about this test compare to my actual experience?

2. When did I start preparing for the test?

- I reviewed consistently throughout the course.
- I started preparing about two weeks before the test.
- I started preparing about one week before the test.
- I started preparing the night before the test.
- I didn't prepare for the test.

3. What study methods did I use? (Check all that apply)

- Reviewed class notes
- Created my own study guide or notes
- Completed practice problems or questions
- Used flashcards
- Studied with a partner or group
- Used online resources
- Other: _____

Part 2: Test Experience – Thought Awareness

1. What types of questions were the most challenging for me? Why?
 - Multiple-choice
 - Short-answer
 - Essays or open-ended questions
 - Problem-solving or calculations
 - Other: _____
2. During the test, did I notice any tricking thoughts affecting my confidence or focus?
 - Black-and-White Thinking – “If I don’t ace this, I’ve failed.”
 - Catastrophizing – “If I get this wrong, my grade will drop a lot.”
 - Mind Reading – “Everyone else knows this except me.”
 - Filtering Out the Good – “I’m only noticing what I don’t know.”
 - Labeling Myself – “I always struggle with tests like this.”
 - Other negative thoughts? _____
3. How did I manage my time during the test?
 - I paced myself well and had time to review.
 - I rushed through some parts and ran out of time.
 - I spent too long on certain questions and didn't finish everything.

Part 3: After the Test – Metacognitive Reflection

- What did I do well on this test?
- What challenges did I encounter?
- If I could take this test again, what would I do differently?
- Which of my study habits were most effective? Which should I adjust?
- What resources (notes, tutoring, group study, office hours, etc.) could have helped me more?

Agency in Motion

Confidence, Courage, and the Power to Act

Now that you've explored your inner landscape – your thoughts, emotions, and patterns – this next section focuses on how you move forward with intention, even when things feel difficult. “I can figure this out” is the heart of agency.

Agency is more than just having goals; it's the belief that you have the power to influence your path, make decisions, adapt, and take meaningful action. When paired with self-efficacy – the belief that “I can do this” – agency becomes a powerful driver of growth, resilience, and hope.

The activities in this section invite you to reflect on times you've overcome challenges, draw strength from real-life role models, and use metaphors and creativity to visualize your own growth. These tools can be used in many settings: with students, teams, or community members; in leadership development or personal reflection; or as part of coaching, mentorship, or healing.

Whether you're using these tools to support others or applying them in your own leadership and life, they offer space to build confidence, celebrate effort, and connect past challenges to future progress.

This is where mindset meets movement, reflection becomes action, and where you begin to see how capable you already are.

Use This in Leadership + Community Development

These tools can support:

- Staff or leadership retreats to name and celebrate growth
- Coaching and supervision: agency-based goal setting
- Community forums: storytelling about overcoming adversity
- Team-building through shared reflection on “hard things we've done”

Metaphors of Growth

A Reflection for Building Agency and Self-Awareness

This activity invites students to reflect on their personal growth using a metaphor. By choosing and working with a metaphor, students can visualize their growth process, recognize progress, and identify the next steps to build agency and self-efficacy.

Facilitator Notes

Introduce this activity by explaining that growth happens gradually, like in the natural world. Using metaphors helps students connect their learning and challenges to meaningful images. This exercise is not about perfection but about reflecting on where they are now and where they want to go.

Reassure students that there is no “right” metaphor – they can pick whatever image best reflects their personal growth. The power of this activity is in connecting effort, agency, and hope to the real process of learning and developing.

Student Instructions

Choose a Metaphor for Your Growth: Choose an image representing your personal growth. (It could be something like a phoenix rising, a butterfly, a river carving stone, a plant growing, or any image that feels meaningful to you.)

Where Are You Now? Describe your current stage. (Are you still underground like a seed? Are you in the middle of a transformation like a cocoon?)

What's the Next Step: What is the next step in your growth? What actions, efforts, or choices will help you move forward?

Reflect and Share: Write, draw, or talk about your metaphor and its meaning.

Reflect and Adjust: Return to your metaphor as you continue to grow. Update your reflection as you progress, adapt, or encounter new challenges.

If They Can, I Can Too

A Self-Efficacy and Agency Exploration Project

This activity helps students recognize and learn about agency and self-efficacy by exploring real-life examples of people who have demonstrated these qualities. It also builds vicarious experiences, helping students see what agency looks like in action.

Step One: Introduce the Activity

Explain to students that they will be researching or interviewing someone who inspires them and has shown agency and self-efficacy in overcoming challenges. Encourage students to choose someone meaningful to them (examples: community member, family member, historical figure, celebrity, peer).

Step Two: Define Key Concepts

Review the meaning of self-efficacy and agency with students:

- Self-efficacy = believing “I can do this.”
- Agency = turning that belief into action (making choices, adapting, and persisting).

Step Three: Research and Investigate

Students collect stories about their chosen person by researching, interviewing, or collecting stories.

Encourage students to answer these questions:

- What challenges did they face?
- How did they show agency? (Did they make choices, adapt, or persist?)
- What helped them believe, “I can do this”?
- What actions helped them make progress?

Step Four: Create the Spotlight

Students create a short spotlight, a poster, a video, a journal entry, a visual board, or a poem to share how this person's story models agency.

Step Five: Share and Display

Have students present or display their spotlights in the classroom or virtually.

Emphasize that these stories will help classmates see how real people develop agency, and recognizing that they can, too.

Building Agency Through Reflection

This activity helps participants reflect on times when they have done hard things, navigated challenges, or persisted despite setbacks. Sharing these moments helps us recognize the sources of our resilience and builds the belief we can overcome difficulties. By reflecting together, we foster agency, self-efficacy, and hope.

Facilitator Guidance

This activity can be used by both adults and students. It helps normalize struggle and highlights the role of perseverance and support in overcoming challenges. Encourage participants to choose examples they are comfortable sharing and to listen with empathy.

Students can reflect in pairs, small groups, or through written journals. Encourage students to think about school-related challenges as well as personal ones. Use the reflection to highlight how students already have experience doing hard things, even if they don't always realize it.

Activity Instructions

- 1. Connect:** Break into pairs or small groups.
- 2. Reflect on a Hard Thing:** Each person takes turns sharing a story about a time they did something hard – overcame a challenge, stuck with something difficult, or adapted in a tough situation.
- 3. Listen and Support:** The listener practices being fully present, offering encouragement, and recognizing the speaker's effort and growth.
- 4. Discuss Strengths:** After both partners share, discuss what inner strengths or resources helped you get through those moments.
- 5. Group Share:** If comfortable, return to the group and share key insights, common themes, or surprises.

Optional Sentence Starters

- A time I did something hard was when...
- I wasn't sure I could do it, but I...
- One challenge I pushed through was...
- Looking back, what helped me was...
- I realized I was stronger than I thought when...

Connection and Belonging

Creating Emotionally Engaged Spaces

Agency grows stronger in the presence of connections. As we build belief in ourselves, it becomes equally important to feel seen, valued, and safe in our environments. This section focuses on the role of belonging and emotional engagement and the human need to feel connected, supported, and part of something meaningful.

Whether you're a student, a team member, a leader, or someone supporting others in their growth or healing, **fostering belonging is foundational**. These tools offer practical ways to notice emotional signals, strengthen protective factors, and intentionally create meaningful moments of connection throughout the day.

In classrooms, organizations, or community spaces, small actions, a check-in, a kind word, a choice, or a moment of empathy can profoundly shape how people show up, engage, and feel safe enough to grow. Belonging is not a bonus; it's a basic condition for resilience, hope, and purpose.

As you explore this section, consider how you're already contributing to a culture of belonging – whether with students, staff, families, or neighbors – and where you might deepen that impact for yourself and those around you.

How to Use This with Teams and Community

Use these strategies to support:

- Stronger team culture across departments
- Community partner relationships or volunteer networks
- New staff onboarding or transitional leadership moments
- Retention and morale through small, meaningful daily practices

Protective Factors That Promote Belonging and Emotional Engagement

This tool helps educators reflect on and strengthen the protective factors that support student belonging and emotional engagement.

Quick Reference List

The following protective factors lower the likelihood of negative outcomes and support student well-being and school connection:

- Supportive relationships with trusted adults
- Healthy coping strategies
- Strong social connections
- Problem-solving and decision-making skills
- Emotional self-awareness
- A sense of purpose and belonging
- Safe and stable environments
- Access to supportive after-school programs
- Feeling connected to adults outside of the family
- Consistent routines and emotional safety

Personal Reflection Prompt

Which of these protective factors are currently strong in your virtual classroom or school environment? Which feel underdeveloped?

Circle 2 strengths and 1 area to grow.

Planning for Practice

Protective Factor	Current Example	Ideas to Strengthen It
e.g., Supportive Relationships	Weekly 1:1 check-in with advisees	Start doing 3-minute "relationship rounds" in breakout rooms

Emotional Signal Decoder

This worksheet helps decode behaviors through an emotional engagement lens. It supports teachers, counselors, or school staff in shifting from reaction to interpretation. It can also be used with students to build awareness of their own or others' behaviors and emotional needs. This is not about excusing behavior; it's about understanding it.

This can help build buy-in with staff who are new to relational approaches.

How to Use:

- Write down a student behavior you've observed (e.g., silence, disruption, over-compliance).
- Hypothesize a possible emotional driver (e.g., fear, disconnection, anxiety).
- Brainstorm a regulating, compassionate response rooted in relationship.
- **Optional:** Use in team meetings or professional development for case reflection.

Behavior Observed	Emotional Driver	Regulating Response

Need Support? Here are some options to consider.

Behavior Observed	Emotional Driver	Regulating Response
Clowning / constant joking	Anxiety or fear of being judged	Pull aside for private check-in, provide safe attention
Zoning out / disengaged	Overwhelm, dissociation, or fatigue	Offer a sensory break, reduce cognitive load, co-regulate
Perfectionism	Fear of failure, need for control	Normalize mistakes, celebrate effort, share your own imperfections
Defiance / talking back	Feeling powerless or unheard	Reflect their perspective, offer voice/ choice when possible
Over-compliance	Fawning response or people-pleasing	Reassure safety, affirm autonomy, check for internal stress
Refusal to participate	Shame, disconnection, or anxiety	Create low-stakes entry points, validate their presence

Belonging Touchpoints Tracker

Use this tool to reflect on how you intentionally build belonging throughout the day. This worksheet is designed for educators, school staff, or student leaders who want to create emotionally supportive spaces. It can also be adapted for students to identify where they feel most connected and what supports that feeling.

How to Use

- Review throughout the day and consider moments where connection can be strengthened.
- Write down specific language, actions, or rituals you already use or would like to try.
- **Optional:** Invite students to reflect on the same points and share their insights.

Time of Day	What Can I Say/Do to Promote Belonging?
Arrival	
Instruction	
Transitions	
After School/Extracurricular or Lunch	
Unstructured Time	
End of Day	

Reflection

Which moment in the day feels most natural to build connection? Which is most overlooked?

Hope in the Workplace

Leadership Tools for Strengthening Morale and Engagement

Workplace culture has a powerful impact on our sense of hope, purpose, and well-being. In rural organizations – where teams are often small, roles are overlapping, and resources are stretched – leaders play a critical role in cultivating environments where people feel supported, energized, and connected.

Hope in the workplace isn't about toxic positivity or pushing through exhaustion. It's about creating a culture where people believe their work matters, where obstacles feel surmountable, and where agency, recognition, and connection are intentionally fostered.

This section provides leaders, department heads, and team facilitators with practical tools to boost morale, deepen connection, and strengthen emotional engagement. These strategies are easy to implement, scalable across teams, and grounded in the same principles of hope explored in earlier sections – goals, pathways, agency, and belonging.

As you explore these tools, consider which ones align with your team's current needs. Even small shifts can spark meaningful change.

Hope Huddles

Purpose: Foster trust, connection, and shared momentum in 10 minutes or less

How-to: Open weekly team meetings with a simple question:

- What's one thing you're hopeful about this week?
- What's one small win worth celebrating?
- What's something you're working toward?

Why it works: Encourages emotional presence and team connection without requiring vulnerability that feels too risky.

Recognition Rituals

Purpose: Reinforce effort, growth, and meaningful contribution

How-to: Create a routine for spotlighting team members – not just for outcomes, but for creativity, compassion, and perseverance.

Examples:

- Bright Spot Board in a breakroom or virtual doc
- Rotating “Hope Token” passed weekly from peer to peer
- Monthly reflection on unsung contributions

Why it works: Recognition is one of the strongest drivers of morale. Done well, it deepens psychological safety and belonging.

Voice Loops

Purpose: Elevate feedback and demonstrate that it's heard

How-to: Invite regular staff input through short forms, open prompts, or quick huddles. Crucially, follow up. Share what was learned and what action (if any) will be taken.

Example prompts:

- “One thing that's working well...”
- “One thing I'd like support with...”

Why it works: Voice + follow-through = trust. Staff are more engaged when they feel heard and valued.

Final Reflection for Leaders

- Which of these tools feels most aligned with your current team culture?
- What might it look like to implement it on a trial basis this month?
- What message do you send when you model hope-based practices?

Hope for School Leaders

This appendix is designed specifically for school leaders, principals, assistant principals, and district-level administrators who want to create a hope-centered culture in their schools. These practices support both staff morale and student well-being and are especially powerful in small or rural school settings where connection and trust are critical.

Strategy	Description	Implementation Ideas
Hope Walks	Informal, visible check-ins with staff and students	10 minutes a day; start conversations with “What’s something going well this week?”
Vision Huddles	Revisit shared goals with staff regularly	Use Hope Mapping as a standing agenda item in leadership team meetings
Modeling Reflection	Share your own learning, mistakes, and reframes	Use “Tricky Thoughts” or “Just One” language in staff updates or emails
Recognition Routines	Publicly acknowledge growth, not just outcomes	End the week with 2–3 shout-outs for effort, creativity, or perseverance
Protected Planning Time	Show you value staff bandwidth and boundaries	Schedule a “no meetings” half-day monthly; invite staff to use that time for their own goals or planning

Language That Shapes Culture

Instead of...	Try saying
"We don't have time for this."	"What's one small piece we can do right now?"
"I don't know what else to try."	"Let's map out a few new pathways together."
"I've told them this already."	"What support or shift might help this land differently?"

As leaders, one of the most powerful things we can do is listen with intention. This simple Hope Pulse Check is designed to help you understand how your team is feeling – emotionally, relationally, and professionally. It's not a formal evaluation; it's a tool for building trust, identifying needs, and keeping hope alive in your school community.

Use it regularly and, most importantly, follow up with transparency and care. When people feel heard and supported, they're more likely to stay connected, resilient, and hopeful, even during difficult seasons.

Hope Pulse Check

1. Right now, how hopeful do you feel about our school's direction?

- Very Hopeful
- Somewhat Hopeful
- Neutral
- A Little Discouraged
- Very Discouraged

2. Do you feel like your voice is heard and considered in school decisions?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

3. What's one thing that is helping your sense of hope, motivation, or connection right now?

Optional open-ended response

4. What's one thing that is challenging your hope, motivation, or well-being right now?

Optional open-ended response

5. What's one small shift that would make your work feel more supported or meaningful?

Optional open-ended response

Closing Reflections

Carrying Hope Forward

The journey through this toolkit has offered space to reflect, imagine, reframe, and reconnect with your goals, patterns, inner strength, and sense of purpose. Whether you explored these tools for personal insight, professional growth, team development, or community impact, each section has been an invitation to deepen self-awareness and build the conditions for sustainable hope and resilience.

You've practiced setting meaningful goals, noticing your thoughts, challenging limiting beliefs, and identifying the relationships and structures that foster belonging. You've named what matters to you and started building a bridge between intention and action, within yourself and in the environments you help shape.

As you close this chapter, remember that growth is not a one-time event. Hope and resilience are lifelong practices. These tools are here for you, whether you're navigating change, supporting others, leading a team, or simply needing a moment to reset.

Keep this workbook nearby. Share it with your colleagues, your family, your community. Adapt the tools to fit your context, because the work of hope looks different in every space, but it matters everywhere.

And above all, remind yourself often:

You are capable of change, worthy of connection, and wired for hope.

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About FAO

The Foundation for Appalachian Ohio (FAO) is a 501(c)(3) regional community foundation serving all 32 counties of Appalachian Ohio. In partnership with 14 geographic affiliate foundations and the regionwide African American Community Fund, FAO helps turn charitable giving into meaningful and lasting investment in the individuals, institutions and ideas that create opportunities and meet needs in our communities. Our goal? To unleash the collective potential within Appalachian Ohio by encouraging and supporting philanthropy to advance flourishing people and flourishing communities throughout our region.

FAO maximizes its impact by investing in local solutions, supporting transformative leaders and advancing approaches that are collaborative, holistic, evidence-based and sustainable. Our Pillars of Prosperity serve as a roadmap for all we do. Each pillar – Arts and Culture, Community and Economic Development, Education, Environmental Stewardship and Health and Human Services – advances opportunities and meets needs. Our investments are improving health, creating educational opportunities, advancing economic development and environmental stewardship, and providing access to arts and cultural experiences.

In 2024 alone, FAO and its affiliate foundation partners awarded more than \$6 million in grants, scholarships and fellowships throughout Appalachian Ohio's 32 counties. Over the last 25 years, that figure is nearly \$50 million. To learn more, visit www.AppalachianOhio.org.

About the Growing Home Fellowship

The Foundation for Appalachian Ohio launched its Growing Home Fellowship pilot in 2023 to give young community builders a stake in the future of our region. Through this public-private partnership, FAO has invested in more than 100 emerging leaders across 29 of Appalachian Ohio's 32 counties – both financially and through a targeted program that teaches them how to identify community needs, develop solutions and assemble a network of partners to address local challenges.

Growing Home Fellows work with K-12 students in Appalachian Ohio as classroom educators, student support service providers, and behavioral and educational programming partners. But through the fellowship, they're expanding their leadership from the classroom into their communities. All fellows have committed to live, work and volunteer in the 32-county region throughout the five-year leadership development program.

The Growing Home Fellowship is grounded in hands-on experience that allows fellows to adapt leadership theory to real-world challenges they encounter through required service projects in the communities where they live and work. Less than three years into the pilot program, fellows are serving more than 80 nonprofit and civic organizations, actively contributing to the vitality of their communities. Visit www.AppalachianOhio.org/GrowingHome for more information.



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