

# Lesson Thirteen – Building Your Support System and Customizing Your Toolbox

“ For there is always light if only we’re brave enough to see it. If only we’re brave enough to be it.  
– Amanda Gorman ”

## CREATIVE ACTIVITY – Choose Your Own Artistic Medium

### Lesson Intention:

As students approach the end of the unit, they now have the opportunity to pause and reflect on what they’ve learned about emotions, and the methods they can draw upon when life feels challenging. **It can be challenging to remember how to support ourselves in the midst of our most difficult moments, and this lesson is an opportunity to compile the methods students have learned throughout the curriculum.** Students are also asked at this time to think about the approaches to well-being that, in the past, have worked for them. The hope is that students can add what already works for them in their lives to this toolbox that now has some new tools as well. This lesson reviews the techniques taught in this curriculum as well as sharing a few additional methods for increasing well-being that are supported by extensive research. However, it also honors the wisdom young people have about their own individual experiences with navigating life. This lesson also can act as an informal assessment tool, to see what resonated with the students. This curriculum, as a whole, is not simply about learning content, but about students grasping concepts and finding methods that will ring true for them. This lesson, in particular, will help students gather the tools they find most helpful so that they can hopefully return to them later when needed.

### Learning Goals:

- Develop a list of “supports” that students can draw from when they are experiencing difficult emotions or when they want to increase their feeling of well-being.
- Value and honor the healthy methods students have already used to navigate life.

## Materials for Lesson:

- [Featured Video \(1\) - Dr. Neha Chaudhary](#)
- [Additional Videos \(4\)](#)
- Lesson Plan (this document)
- [Lesson PowerPoint](#)
- [Student Examples of Creative Projects](#)

## In Preparation for Lesson:

Prior to teaching this lesson, **watch the expert's video** and make the example creative activity that you plan to share with your students.

Give the class a handout with the instructions for the creative activity and a place for students to draw. The teacher offers students 10 minutes to work on their drawing.

## Featured Video:

Dr. Neha Chaudhary offers several practices for managing and “reeling in” very intense emotions when they are overwhelming: breathing, listening to music, moving the body, writing, drawing, and finding a healthy distraction.

## Additional Videos:

1. Peiman Raf and Mason Spector describe tools that support them with their mental health. Peiman describes the way journaling helped him after a skiing accident, and Mason shares the way therapy supported him after his parents' divorce.
2. Emily describes the mental health tools that helped her with body image issues and anxiety during the pandemic.
3. Nathalie shares the way writing and basketball supported her when her moms were going through a divorce, and during the pandemic.
4. Ethan Levy describes the way Dork Dancing has supported him with his mental health and has helped him navigate his journey with Bipolar Disorder.

## Lesson Plan:

Display the 'welcome slide' from the Lesson 13 PowerPoint as you begin.

*\*Slide 1*

As discussed in the teacher training, remember to make the suggested language below authentic to yourself and meaningful for your students.

## Launching the Lesson:

\* Slide 2

Explain that the curriculum is coming to a close and you are hopeful that students have a strong sense of the core message of the unit- that there is nothing wrong with them if they feel sad or anxious or angry. Everyone goes through challenging experiences, but there are also tools they can draw on to help. Explain that today's lesson will offer students the chance to organize the tools they learned in this curriculum in a way that will be easy to remember later. Invite students to share other methods of support that they themselves already may find useful.

### Example of What You Could Say:

"We are coming to the end of this curriculum, and this is a chance for us to pause and reflect on some of the ideas you may want to incorporate into your daily life – methods for feeling good and also for expressing your feelings when life gets really hard. I hope the main message of these lessons has been clear: everyone goes through times when they feel anxious or sad or angry or any other difficult feelings we have talked about during this time. Like Kevin reminded us, "Everyone is going through something we can't see." And it is totally normal to feel all of these feelings; it's part of what it means to be human. So, this means at some point in all of our lives we will, for sure, feel these tough feelings again, and it will help to have tools in place that can help us when life feels hard. Let's watch a mental health expert give a few examples of additional tools that you can use when times get tough."

### Notes on What You Plan to Say:

## Play Expert Video:

The expert describes tools we can use to help us cope when things get difficult.

## Introducing the Guest Artist Video:

Explain that students will watch a short video from the founders of MadHappy, and learn a few more mental health tools that they can add to their own toolbox. Encourage students to listen for ideas that they can use in their own life when life feels challenging.

**Example of What You Could Say:**

“The expert video offered you some additional ideas for how you can react when you experience really difficult emotions or when something really hard happens in your life. We are going to watch another short video from the founders of a company called MadHappy that is working to make conversations about mental health easier. They share a few of the tools that they use in their own lives to support their mental health.”

**Notes on What You Plan to Say:**

**Play Guest Artist Video:**

Peiman Raf and Mason Spector describe tools that support them with their mental health. Peiman describes the way journaling helped him after a skiing accident, and Mason explains the way therapy supported him after his parents’ divorce.

**Introducing the Creative Activity:**

Explain to students that they will choose one of the creative mediums that they have explored in this curriculum (poetry, drawing, protest art, music playlist) and use that medium to create a list of the most important tools/lessons they have learned from the curriculum. Encourage students to create this piece of art so that they will have something they can refer to later when they are having a difficult time.

**Example of What You Could Say:**

“As we continue thinking about our methods of support, even though we have learned a lot within this curriculum, I want to pause and ask if there are other things outside of this curriculum that you feel should be included in this discussion because you know they already help you personally. Let’s compile a list, as a class, that is not just from our recent discussions or from these artists and experts, but from your own experiences.

(Write the students’ ideas as they share them. If there is a lull in the conversation, add a few ideas of your own – exercise, eating well, calling a friend, reading a book, cooking, drawing, spending time outside, playing an instrument – the list of healthy emotional supports can be very long and individualized.)

Now, it's your turn to think about how you would organize and illustrate the methods you've learned and what you want to remember from all of these discussions and activities. Choose a way of helping yourself remember all of these strategies by using one of your favorite artistic mediums from this curriculum: it could be a graffiti mural with different methods from this list written into the images. It could be a retro cassette mix tape with different tools where the titles of songs should be. Or you could make a collage or draw a wave with the words that resonate the most with you from these lessons along the crest of the wave. Or freedraw anything that comes to mind. But it is really important that this is not just revisiting your favorite art project from this curriculum. I want to challenge you to make this creative project a review of the most important lessons you've learned during this time. So, the words that you incorporate in this art are going to be critical. This is something I hope you can look back on in a dark moment and remember tools that worked."

**Notes on What You Plan to Say:**

**Creative Activity:**

*\*Slide 3*

Students choose their favorite form of artistic expression that they discovered during the curriculum that will act as a graphic organizer to help them remember the emotional tools they have learned. They will use their preferred artistic medium as a 'backdrop' for the tools that they want to remember and refer to in the future.

**Lesson Closure:**

Invite students to share the creative project they decided to make in order to compile their list of tools.

**Example of What You Could Say:**

“Does anyone want to share the way they organized the tools they plan to use and the medium they chose to express it with? I would like to share with you what I created....”

**Notes on What You Plan to Say:**

**Supplemental Information:**

If you or your students would like to learn more about the ideas in this lesson, additional resources and third party links are included below.

1. This lesson points students to several methods that will support feelings of well-being. The film *Happy* goes into greater detail about many of these ideas, especially the important link between social connections and happiness.