



Peer  
Education  
Project



Mental Health  
Foundation



# Ice breaker activities pack



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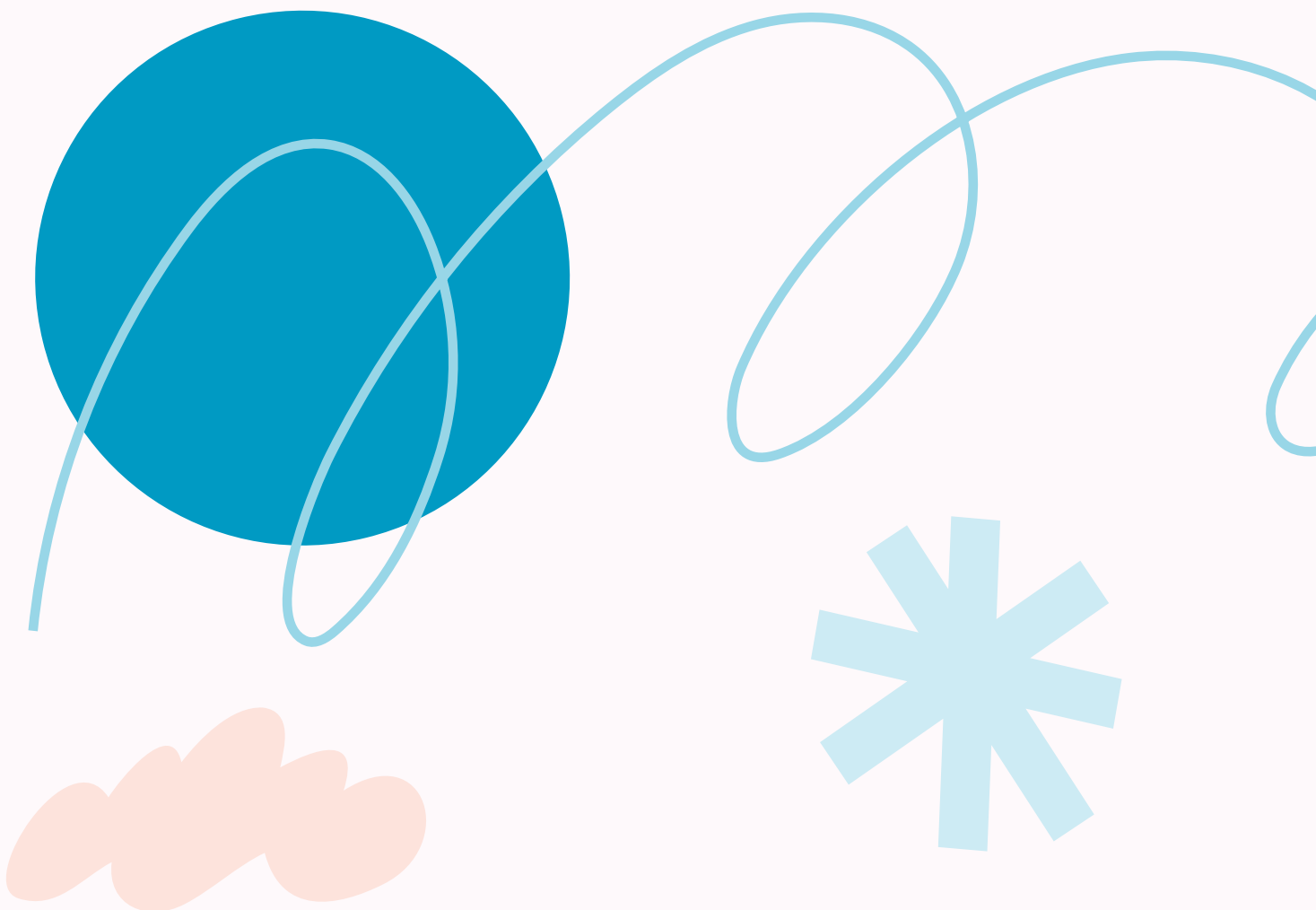
## How to use these exercises

Before each lesson, select the ice breaker activity to use.

Each lesson plan has a recommended ice breaker activity.

You can choose to write or search for alternative ice breaker activities.

Keep in mind the lesson plan allocates only 5 minutes to the ice breaker activities. The activities should be something simple to follow and related to the content of the lesson.



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# Overview

## How to do it:

The instructions for each activity are split into these steps:



Actions required such as presenting slides or handing resources out.

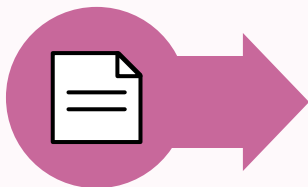


Key messages and activity instructions to be said.



Questions to be asked to extend the discussion or gauge understanding.

## Notes and troubleshooting:



There is additional information to support lesson delivery such as activity adaptations, considerations for classroom management, and key preparations for the lesson.

## It's not a script:

Prior to delivery, preparation time should be allocated to make key notes and plan how each activity will run.



# Ice breaker activities

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# Arranging items on a spectrum

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: What is mental health and the mental health spectrum?



Say:

"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about how things can be placed and move on a spectrum or scale."



Do:

Make one end of the room 'TALLEST' and the other end 'SHORTEST'. Ask the Peer Learners to arrange themselves in height order as quickly as they can, without speaking.

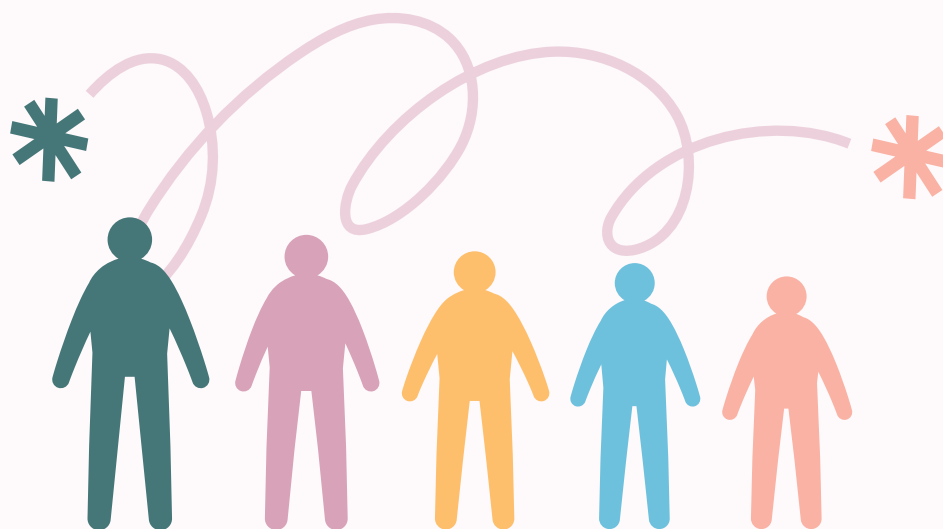
*Time to complete: 1 minute 30 seconds.*



Ask:

When they are lined up in order, ask:

- "How did you find completing the task?"
- "Did you need anything to make the task easier?"
- "What could happen to the line up if we asked other classes to line up with us, or we repeated this activity in six months?"



# Understanding myths and facts

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: Why do mental health problems happen?



**"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about how it's not always easy to recognise what someone else might be experiencing, particularly around mental health."**



Each of the Peer Educators should think of three statements about themselves – two truths and one lie. Try to make some of the lies obviously untrue (e.g. I have been to the moon) and others more subtle.

Label three corners of the room with: Statement 1; Statement 2; Statement 3. Explain to the Peer Learners that once you have read out your statements, they should stand in the corner that matches the statement they think is untrue. E.g. If they think Statement 3 is untrue, they should stand in the corner labelled Statement 3.

Take it in turns to read out your three statements and encourage Peer Learners to move around the room accordingly.



- **"Which of the lies were the hardest to figure out, and why?"**
- **Which statements were you most surprised to find out that they were true, and why?"**

*Continued...*



## Understanding myths and facts (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Variations:** If you have time, invite the Peer Learners to play a round of this in small groups, coming up with their own two truths and a lie.



# Human bingo

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lessons: The 5 Ways to Wellbeing and The 8 Tips for Good Mental Health.



**"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about things we are already doing that are helpful for our mental health and wellbeing."**



Ask the Peer Learners to all stand up and form a circle, if possible. For each statement, read aloud and ask Peer Learners to step forward if they relate to the wellbeing statement. Invite a couple of Peer Learners to share what they did for each statement.



**"In the last week:**

- **You've done something helpful for a friend.**
- **You've done something relaxing.**
- **You've been physically active."**



You can come up with some more statements of your own or even ask Peer Learners to suggest some during the activity.

Alternatively, if there is not enough space to form a circle, ask the Peer Learners to stand up from their seat if they have done the action.

*Continued...*







### Notes and troubleshooting

**Classroom management:** Don't worry if it gets noisy during this activity but do make sure that everyone is sitting quietly before you start the next section.

**Variations:** Print copies of the resource ahead of the lesson and hand out to Peer Learners for this activity. Ask the Peer Learners to get up and talk to those around them about the statements/images.

If someone has done one of the activities listed, they can write their name next to that statement. They must have a different name for each statement and can't include themselves. First one to finish shouts 'Bingo'!



# Looking after our mental health and wellbeing

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: Creating a mental health and wellbeing toolkit.



"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about things we are already doing that are helpful for our mental health and wellbeing."



Place either the 5 Ways to Wellbeing or the 8 Tips for Good Mental Health labels around the classroom.

## The 5 Ways to Wellbeing

CONNECT



BE  
ACTIVE



TAKE  
NOTICE



KEEP  
LEARNING



5

GIVE



## 8 Tips for Good Mental Health



MORE AND  
BETTER SLEEP



UNDERSTAND AND  
MANAGE FEELINGS



SPEND TIME IN  
GREEN SPACES



LOOK FORWARD  
TO SOMETHING

8



HAVE A  
HEALTHY DIET



BE PHYSICALLY  
ACTIVE



HELP  
OTHERS



BUILD AND MAINTAIN  
HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



Ask the Peer Learners to stand by the label that represents something positive they have done this week. Invite pupils from each label to share what they have done.

*Continued...*

## Looking after our mental health and wellbeing (continued)



Ask:

Ask the class:

- “How easy was it to think of something you did since the last lesson?”
- “Are some labels more ‘populated’ than others? Why might that be?”



Say:

“Building activities for our mental health and wellbeing into everyday life can help us to feel supported, connected, and able to cope with daily stressors. Many of us will already be doing such activities, but sometimes it can be helpful to try something new.”



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Classroom management:** Don't worry if it gets noisy during this activity but do make sure that everyone is sitting quietly before you start the next section.

Some Peer Learners might find it hard to think of something they have done.

It may be useful to circulate around the room, helping those pupils think of something they might already be doing for their mental health and wellbeing.

**Alternative:** This activity can be done seated. Read out each tip and ask pupils to raise their hand if they have done something positive this week related to the tip. Invite Peer Learners to share what they have done.

# Finding our connection with others

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: **Building our network of support.**



**"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us reflecting on the connections we have with those around us."**



Ask pupils to arrange themselves in a circle.

Choose something you like or enjoy doing (e.g. going swimming, eating pizza). Ask the Peer Learners to put their hand up if they like it too. Pass the ball of wool to one Peer Learner who puts their hand up, keeping hold of the other end of the wool.

Ask the Peer Learner currently holding the ball of wool to name something they like or enjoy doing and pass the ball of wool to someone else who likes that, keeping hold of a piece of wool.

Continue these steps. The ball of wool is gradually passed across and around the room, forming a web. Once everyone is connected in the web, find something that the first and last person have in common to join up the web.



- **"Were you surprised by how many people liked the same things as you?"**
- **"Did it get hard to think of things as the activity went on?"**

*Continued...*





### Notes and troubleshooting

**Classroom management:** Don't worry if it gets noisy during this activity but do make sure that everyone is sitting quietly before you start the next section.

**Variations:** This can be done sitting down. If sitting down, you might need to be more active in passing the wool from person-to-person and ensure that Peer Learners hold it above their heads.

**After the lesson:** You could re-use the wool to make a display board showing the web of connections to other pupils. On the web you could display information of where to seek support or have the Peer Learners write down some of the things they had in common with one another that made them feel connected.

Alternatively, each pupil could get to keep a bit of the wool and have it as a bracelet or keychain to remind them of the connections they have to others.

# CONNECTIONS



# What makes us, us?

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: **Body image.**



**"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about the different things that make us who we are – such as the things we are interested in, enjoy doing, or that we appreciate about ourselves."**



Ask pupils to stand up, with one of the Peer Educators holding the talking tool. The Peer Educator should say their name and one thing they enjoy doing, are interested in or like, or appreciate about themselves e.g. I like going swimming, I like chocolate ice cream, or I have neat handwriting. Then they should pass the talking tool on to one of the Peer Learners.

Peer Learners each take their turn holding the talking tool and saying their name and one thing about themselves. The talking tool should then be passed on to the next person, until everyone has had a turn.



**"We all have different things that we like and make us who we are. It is important for us to remember those unique things and reflect on what we enjoy."**



## **Notes and troubleshooting**

**Prepare:** Before the lesson, you will need an object to use as a talking tool. The talking tool can be a ball, a balloon, or any object you can find in the classroom.



# Self-care activities

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: Healthy relationships with ourselves.



Say:

"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about how we can connect with ourselves and look after our mental health."

"As a class, you can ask 10 questions to work out what self-care activity I am thinking of. I can only answer yes or no to your questions. You can talk to those around you before asking a question. Raise your hand if you would like to ask a question."



Do:

Choose pupils to ask their question. Pupils can guess at any point. If all 10 questions have been asked, and no-one has guessed correctly, share your activity with the class and why you like to do it.

Invite pupils to try the activity with the person sitting next to them, with one person asking the questions and the other answering the questions.



Say:

"Being able to look after our mental health is an important part of the relationship that we have with ourselves."



# Communicating with others

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: Healthy relationships with our peers.



"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about the way we communicate with others, and how it is important to find what works for us and what works best for our peers."

"In your pairs or groups, you will take it in turns to share with your partner or group an activity you enjoy doing to look after your mental health and wellbeing. For example, baking cupcakes, dancing or walking in the park."

"You can do this as:

- **A charade:** Act out the activity without using any sounds.
- **An articulate:** Describe the word on the piece of paper, without saying the word written.
- **A drawing:** Draw the activity without using any letters or numbers.



You can pick whichever type of communication you prefer to share your activity. Your peers will then have to try and guess what activity you are communicating. You will have 30 seconds."



# Web of connections

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: Kindness matters.



**"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about how even the smallest acts of kindness can have a knock-on effect and inspire others to be kind. We will look at stories of kindness and see how those people then shared that kindness with others."**



Allocate the Peer Learners into five groups and hand out one individual kindness story to each group. Invite the Peer Learners to read their story in their small groups.

Read out the first story (Lucy).



**"Put your hand up if you think your group has the story that follows on from Lucy's?"**

Hint: the stories span across a day.



Invite the group linking to Lucy's story to read out their story and ask the remaining groups to put their hand up if they have the linking story. Continue until all the stories have been read and the links between them identified.

Here is the order of stories: Lucy, Sam, Isiah, Joseph, Anita then Jenny.

If you have glue or tape, you can ask Peer Learners to create a paper chain once they have read their story out. This will demonstrate the knock-on, chain effect of kindness and show how 'kindness circles' are formed.

*Continued...*



## Web of connections (continued)



“We have seen how one small act of kindness can end up inspiring more acts of kindness and reaching more people than we intended. Kindness can be shown and felt by people of all ages, not just to those of a similar age to us. An important part of kindness is that we take the time to understand what the other person truly needs, not just what we want to show or give them and that we express gratitude for their kindness.”



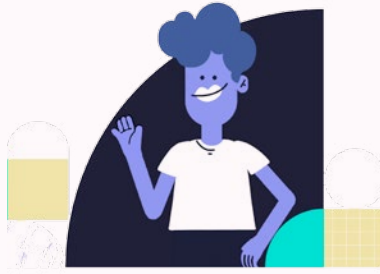
### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** Print the Web of Kindness resource sheet on the next pages. Cut the stories out ready for the activity.



# Web of kindness resource - page 1

## Lucy



Hi, I'm Lucy and last night I made my mum a cup of tea before bed. This morning, I woke up late for school. My mum had kindly prepared my packed lunch for me and said she would drop me off at school on her way to work. At lunchtime, I noticed one of my friends had forgotten their lunch, so I offered to share my lunch with them.

## Sam

My name is Sam. My friend was very kind to me today and shared their packed lunch. It gave me lots of energy for my football match in the afternoon. A new pupil started with the team today – I've been the new person before, and it can be scary! So, I asked the new pupil to be partner for the drill sessions. The new pupil is really good at football!

## Isiah

Hey, I'm Isiah. I joined the school's football team today. I was really worried about joining because I'm quite shy and not always very confident with making friends. But the team were so friendly, and I chatted lots with my partner for the football drills. I went home and told my dad about the team whilst we cooked dinner together.



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# Web of kindness resource - page 2

## Joseph

Hi, my name is Joseph. I love to cook dinner with my son and hear about his day. This evening I cooked Isiah's favourite food from a recipe my friend gave to me as she knows we love to eat anything spicy.

## Anita

My name is Anita. I've been attending a local cookery class at the community centre. They recently had a recipe for a spicy chicken casserole that I knew my neighbours would want to try! The classes are run by a local café owner. She always gives me lots of encouragement with my cooking, so now I am starting to feel confident enough to share my ideas.

## Jenny

Hi, my name is Jenny. I love owning my little café and passing on my cooking skills to others. I hope one day my daughter will take the business over – she is very good at making a cup of tea!



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# Our unique experiences

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: Loneliness.



**"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about how we connect with, and experience situations differently."**



Present an image on the board or hand out copies of the image to the pupils.



**"What three words come to mind when looking at the image?"**



Encourage pupils to think about what they see, how the image makes them feel and what the image inspires in them.

*Time to complete: 1 minute.*



Invite Peer Learners to share their three words with the class.



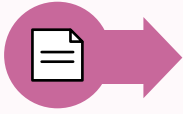
**"From looking at this image, we have come up with lots of words and phrases. Some of these are similar and some are different. It is important to remember that even when we share a similar experience, each person's thoughts and feelings may be different and unique."**

This lesson focuses on understanding the common experience of loneliness, and how this may look different for everyone. Finding connections with ourselves, others and the world around us, is one way to support ourselves and others when feeling lonely."

*Continued...*



## Finding our connections with others (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** Select an abstract image for this activity – an image that could have multiple interpretations.

Either place the image on a PowerPoint slide or print out copies for Peer Learners to look at during the activity.



# Connecting with nature

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: **Connecting with nature.**



**"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about how important it is to give ourselves the time and space to connect with nature in a meaningful way, and to recognise that we will all connect differently."**



Ask Peer Learners to work in pairs. Hand out a natural object such as a leaf, a stone, or a feather, to each pair.

Ask the Peer Learners to spend one minute looking at and feeling the natural object, giving it their full attention without speaking.

*Time to complete: 1-minute.*



Then, ask pupils to share their observations of their object in their pairs.

*Time to share: 1-minute.*



**"How did you find the activity?"**



**"Sometimes we don't take the time to notice and value the nature around us. Even if we do, what we observe and how we connect with nature will be different from others, and this is ok – it is important to find what works for you!"**

*Continued...*



## Finding our connections with others (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** Before the lesson, you will need to gather the natural objects to use in this activity.

**Variations:** If you are unable to use physical natural objects, select images of natural objects and add them to the PowerPoint. Allocate an image to each pair of Peer Learners.



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# Our internal body clock

This is the recommended ice breaker for the lesson: Sleep.



"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about sleep and our internal body clock, known as our 'circadian rhythm'.

Have you ever noticed that how alert you feel dips and rises throughout the day?"

"We all have an internal body clock that restarts every 24 hours. It helps us to keep on track of carrying out important tasks in our bodies like eating, sleeping, and controlling our temperature.

However, everyone's internal body clock is unique to them. We're going to explore this further in the next exercise."



Ask the Peer Learners to stand up. Assign three areas of the room as 'Morning', 'Afternoon,' and 'Evening'.



Ask the following three questions and instruct the Peer Learners to move to one of the areas in response:

1. "When in the day do you feel most alert?"
2. "When in the day do you feel most energetic?"
3. "When in the day do you feel most sleepy?"



"So we have seen from this exercise that our body clock, and how we feel throughout the day, is a bit different for everyone. As we work through this lesson on sleep, remember that having good sleep health is about building the confidence to find what works for you as an individual."

*Continued...*



## Our internal body clock (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Classroom management:** You may need to explain the difference between 'alert' and 'energetic'. Being alert means feeling awake and able to pay attention to a task(s). Being energetic means feeling active and ready to 'get up and go'.

Make sure everyone is sitting quietly before you start the next section.

**Variations:** If you have plenty of space, you could imagine the room is a 24-hour clock with 12am (midnight), 6am, 12pm (noon), and 6pm in the middle of each wall – pupils can then move around to somewhere between these times.

If you don't have space to get Peer Learners moving around, you could ask them to stay seated and raise one hand for 'morning', two hands for 'afternoon', and stand up for 'evening'.



# What we are grateful for



**"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us reflecting on the things we are grateful for."**



Ask pupils to work in pairs. Hand out a resource sheet and a die to each pair.

Ask pupils to take it in turns to roll the die, and then answer the relevant question on the resource sheet.

*Time to complete: 3 minutes.*



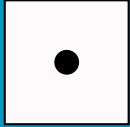
**"Sometimes, we may not always show gratitude to ourselves and others. However, it is important to find moments to express gratitude towards ourselves and others, to feel connected and valued."**



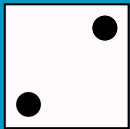
## **Notes and troubleshooting**

**Prepare:** Print out copies of the resource sheet and collect dice.

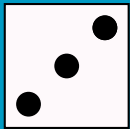
# What am I grateful for



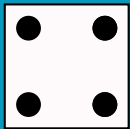
Name one thing that you appreciate about yourself.



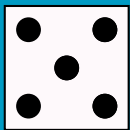
Name a person in your life you are grateful for.



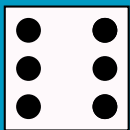
Name a song that you feel connected to.



Name a hobby you like to do.



Name one way you can show kindness to yourself or others.



Name a place you like to visit.



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