

Feelings and “What Got You Through” Brainstorms

Goals:

- To relate to one another and understand mental illness.
- To reduce stigma by connecting to “common feelings.”
- To brainstorm examples of what go you through or coping.
- To show the difference between coping that heals and coping that numbs, e.g. self-medicating.
- To provide youth with local resources.

Have Ready:

- Flipchart papers with “Feelings during a hard time?” and “What got you through?” (x 2) written at the top.
- Markers

Instructions for “Feelings”:

- As a large group brainstorm, explain that we are going to think of some of the feelings that might come up during a difficult or hard time e.g. when there’s a loss, a break up, or when preparing for a difficult task such as an exam or a big game. Ask youth, “**What are some of the feelings that could come up when someone is having that hard time?** Flipchart their responses.

Sample Flipchart:

Feelings During A Hard Time

- Scared
- Alone/ Isolated
- Powerless
- Guilt
- Hurt/Pain
- Confused
- Angry
- Depressed

Debriefing “Feelings”:

- Ask youth, **“Who here has felt most of these feelings?”** These feelings are common feelings meaning that most of us have experienced these feelings at one time or another in our lives, so we can relate to others who are dealing with these emotions.
- Ask youth, **“Are any of these feelings bad, or wrong?”** (No)
- For some of us, these feelings are triggered by specific events (a loved one dying or getting sick, losing a game, failing a test, breaking up with a partner, etc.). However, sometimes the reason for the pain is not visible to those around us, which can often be the case with mental illness. This can lead to misunderstandings or even minimizing of what someone is going through.
- Although it may be confusing to understand the source of the feelings, it is important to acknowledge that all feelings are real and valid. So even if we have not been through what someone else has been through, we know what it’s like to need support and understanding from others.
- Ask youth, **“What are some simple ways to make someone feel supported?”** Listen without judging, call to check-up on them, do fun things together, etc.
- Sometimes even though we are going through a hard time we may still feel strong or have hope knowing that we will get through it because we’ve gotten through the other hard times before. When we recover from a tough time we call it “resiliency” and people can be amazingly resilient.
- Note: If youth bring up thoughts of suicide, it is important to respond appropriately. Acknowledge that sometimes when people have been feeling sad, depressed, or hopeless for a long time, they may start to think about suicide. Reinforce suicide prevention messages: if someone is thinking about suicide it’s important to talk to an adult they trust and not keep it a secret. For more information, please refer to the Suicide Prevention section of the Mental Health chapter in the Teen Talk Service Provider Manual.

Instructions for “What got you through?”:

- Divide youth into 2 groups and give each group a “What got you through?” flipchart.
- Explain to the groups that we know hard times are going to happen in our lives, so it makes sense to try to figure out healthy ways to get through those hard times or to cope with them. These can take some time and work to develop, but can really help us.
- Ask the group, “**When thinking about a hard time, what helped you get through?**” Have them write their ideas on the flipcharts.

Sample Flipchart:

What got you through?

- **Talk to someone you trust:** a friend, family member, Elder, teacher, counsellor, etc.
- Hang out with friends/others/family
- Cry, laugh and get hugs
- Do something creative, draw, paint, or play music
- Talk to people / have conversations
- Write down your feelings in a letter, journal, blog, or diary
- Go see a medical doctor, Elder, spiritual leader, for care etc.
- Watch movies
- Play sports, dance, sing
- Go for a bike ride
- Read poetry or create your own
- Build or fix something
- Masturbate
- Spend time alone/get to know yourself
- Meditate or pray
- Attend ceremonies
- Use positive self talk
- Practice mindfulness/deep breathing
- Take part in cultural practices

Debriefing “What got you through?”:

- Have the groups read out their lists if they feel comfortable, or if not you read the lists to the whole group. Validate that there are lots of ways people get through tough times.
- If youth have substances use on their lists, we have to acknowledge that substance use or self-medicating is a choice some people make. It may be helpful in the short term to avoid challenging feelings and can also potentially lead to problems in the long run like addiction. It’s important to know that substances and self-medicating can numb all feelings, both “negative” (i.e. shame, guilt) and “positive” (i.e. joy, hope). We also highlight other activities and resources on the list.
- Note: If youth bring up self harm encourage youth not to judge and add in healthier ways of coping. Finding new ways to get through difficult times can help people reduce risks and may be more useful in the long run. For more information on self-harm please see the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention chapter of the Teen Talk Service Provider Manual.
- Some ways of coping allow us to reflect and/or release our feelings (e.g. talking, journaling, making music, art, etc.), and others help us to distract, numb, or avoid feelings (e.g. shopping, watching television, playing sports, etc.). Ideally, we do both reflective and engaging activities, as well as distancing or distracting activities when dealing with difficult or stressful times.
- Beyond reflecting and distracting activities, it is helpful to have a variety of coping skills. It can be good to think about activities that you can do by yourself, that you can do with other people, activities that do not cost money and some that do cost money, activities that take some time and some that are quick, things that take effort and things that are easy. That way, we have a mix of things to pull from.¹
- Ask youth, **“Who needs coping skills and people to support them?”** (Everyone)

Providing Resources:

- Talking about feeling and coping can be a heavy topic and may bring personal issues for some youth. Provide youth with local resources where they can go if they want to talk to someone. Examples are guidance counselor, teacher, mental health worker, Elder, Traditional

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healer or crisis lines (Klinik Crisis Line: 1.800.322.3019, Kids Help Phone: 1.800.668.6868, Manitoba Suicide Prevention and Support Line: 1.877.435.7170, First Nations and Inuit Hope for Wellness Help Line: 1.855.242.3310, Sexual Assault Crisis Line: 1.888.292.7565, Manitoba Farm, Rural & Northern Support Line: 1.866.367.3276).

- When in Winnipeg youth can access Klinik Drop-In Counseling (Mon/Wed 12-7pm, Tue/Fri/Sat 12-4pm): 204.784.4067, Youth Mobile Crisis Unit: 204.949.4777, Child and Adolescent Mental Health Program Centralized Intake: 204.958.9600 through referral by a teacher, counselor, or yourself without a doctor's note, no fee for service.
- It can be scary talking to friends, counsellors, or crisis lines about issues that are going on in our lives but it can be helpful. Crisis line workers are counsellors who are trained to offer support and help. They understand that calling and sharing is a hard thing to do. They will wait with the person and they won't hang up if the person is silent or crying.
- These services are free, mostly youth-friendly and try to be non-judgmental. If youth try one of these places or come across a person they don't find helpful encourage them to keep trying. Sometimes we have to try a few different resources before we find one we are comfortable with.
- FYI: Though Youth Mobile Crisis (a service available in certain areas of the province) offers confidential phone calls, they will not visit a youth in person without their guardian's consent or if the youth is intoxicated. If the youth is high risk or is in the midst of it then YMC will call the police to intervene.
- FYI: The Manitoba Adolescent Treatment Center (MATC) has mental health clinicians that provide mental health services via Telehealth to children and youth who are experiencing emotional difficulties in 11 Manitoba First Nation communities. They accept referrals from service providers and community professionals such as guidance counselors directly. Youth under 16 require parental consent but there is no limit to the number of sessions provided. Call 1.855.413.7855 for referral forms and information.