

ACTIVITY 7: CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

AIM: Young people are able to identify the mental health support systems available to them in their own community, in the UK, and around the world, and feel safe and empowered to access mental health support if they are concerned about their own or a friend's mental health.

Preparation:

- Review the circles of support activity to have an idea of community and UK resources
- Draw a diagram of seven concentric circles on a white board or flip chart

Facilitator materials and resources

- Activity 7 Presentation
- Flip chart or white board and markers (for in-person group facilitation)
- Poster board to record the group agreement and action plan

Participant materials

- Piece of paper
- Colouring pens or pencils

FACILITATOR INTRODUCTION

Through OutRight, we've discussed how important it is to take care of our mental health and to speak out to ensure that the duty-bearers of young people's rights are acting in their best interests.

Explain to the young people that part of having the best information to stay safe and healthy is to know where we can get help if we need it. Sometimes this might be professional help if we are in the amber or red parts of the health continuum, but other times this might just be needing a safe person to talk to.

In this activity we are going to think about and map out the safe people we can access in our own lives, in our community, and in our country when we want to talk to someone about our mental wellbeing, and we'll also create an action plan for how young people can commit to better support one another!

Stop with the taboos!

"Time for us to normalise mental health... The least we can do to break the stigma and normalise these issues, is by talking about them, reaching out to more and more people. Let's do it!"

Manvi Tiwarii, 18, India

[Read more](#) from Manvi on UNICEF's Voices of Youth platform.



Part 1: Circles of support

1. Explain to the group that in this activity we are going to map out the different resources available for young people who might need someone to talk to or need support for their mental health.

2. Use the Activity 7 Presentation and/or the seven concentric circles diagram drawn on a whiteboard or flipchart, to introduce the circles of support. Ask young people, individually or in groups, to create their own diagram with seven circles. In the middle circle ask the young people to draw a picture of a themselves or another young person. The picture demonstrates that this is a support network for themselves or for a child or young person close to them that they might want to help.

Options: Young people can work through the diagram on a whiteboard in plenary or as small groups, or on individual worksheets dependent on the young people's ages and if the activity is being conducted remotely or in an in-person, interactive setting.

3. Use the steps below to talk the group through filling in each ring of the diagram from the closest people they could reach out to for help, through to community members, local organisations, national organisations, and international organisations like UNICEF, which is working to protect the rights of all children, including the right to health.

- In the middle circle draw a picture of yourself, or another child or children who might need support to stay healthy.
- In the next circle, draw or write: The people you live with who you could feel safe talking to about how you are feeling. Examples: parents, siblings, grandparents, carers.
- In the next circle, draw or write: Your closest friends, other extended family members, or carers who feel safe talking to about how you are feeling. Examples: Grandparents, aunts or uncles, cousins, close family friends, other carers.
- In the next circle, draw or write: The people in your school who you feel safe talking to. Examples: other pupils, teachers, office staff, librarian, school nurse.

- In the next circle, draw or write: Local organisations or other people in your neighbourhood or community you see outside of school and feel safe talking to. Examples: GP, emergency services, youth workers, youth club friends, people at a sports club, neighbours, religious leaders.
- In the next circle, draw or write: UK organisations or other support systems that would have tools or resources if you or a friend needed help. Examples: ChildLine, Young Minds. For more ideas, see the list of organisations that can help in the [background reading](#).
- In the last circle, draw or write: Organisations or resources outside the UK that work to protect all children around the world and/or work to protect all children's rights to good mental health. Examples: UNICEF, Oxfam, Save the Children, some of the international youth advocates from Activity 5.

Note: Use this activity to encourage young people to identify who they can talk to and think about why those people make them feel safe. Be prepared to adapt this activity so it meets the needs and situations of the children you're working with.

This might be more difficult and take more time for some children than others, for example some children may not feel safe talking to family members due to individual home situations.

In a case where an activity prompts a child to disclose that something has happened to make them feel very worried, anxious or unsafe, be sure to follow the safeguarding protocols of your school or organisation.



4. Complete the circles of support activity by facilitating a discussion using the following questions. For in-person facilitation complete the discussion interactively in small groups or in pairs where young people feel comfortable sharing their circles and safe to talk about the activity.

- How does it make you feel looking at your support network on paper?
- Which relationships are particularly important to you? How do you feel supported by that person/people?
- What are the qualities or characteristics of the people or groups on your circles that make you feel supported?
- How might you know when you need to reach out to someone for support for your mental wellbeing?
- What additional support might you want to advocate for in your school or community that you and other young people don't have access to now?
- How do you think that having a support system connects to your rights; specifically Articles 12, 13, 24 and 29?

Part 2: Group commitment and action plan

1. Explain that through all of the OutRight activities this year, we've learned that it's important for young people to be able to identify how they are feeling and to feel safe and empowered to share their opinions and use their voice to talk to others about their mental health without feeling any shame or embarrassment. In this final wrap-up activity we are going to make a plan for how we as a group/class will be committed to each other to create a safe space in our group to talk about mental health challenges.

2. Using the Activity 7 Presentation, ask the group to think through the following questions. If facilitating in-person ask one young person from the group to be the scribe for each question, writing the answers on a whiteboard or flip chart for all to see.

- What does it mean to have a classroom or young people's group that feels 'safe'?
- Why is it important that we create a classroom or group where everyone feels safe and ready to learn?
- How do you want the other young people in this group to treat you this year so you can feel safe?
- What are some ways we can check in with each other as a group to make sure everyone is in a good place on the mental health continuum, and getting help to move back towards green if they are in amber or red?

3. From the list of ideas, ask the young people to narrow down and vote on the ones they would like to put into practice in their group. For in-person facilitation use a participatory voting method like writing a list of the options on a flip chart and asking young people to vote for their top three using three sticky dots each. Once one or two actionable ideas are identified, ask young people to determine the details for implementing their action plan.

Some sample ideas might include:

- A daily group/class emoji check-in.
- A buddy system where everyone is paired with a safe friend for a mental health check in.
- Creating a worry box that only the teacher/group facilitator is allowed to read.
- Practicing regular mindfulness activities each time the group meets.

Optional activity: Using the list of words and phrases that the young people identify of how they want to be treated and will treat others, create a bulletin board or a poster to hang in the activity room. Ask each young person to sign their name on the poster as their own commitment to creating a safe space for others.

Part 3: Cool down with mindfulness – 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

1. Explain to young people that building an ongoing practice of mindfulness is important, and that we can practice the same exercises over and over again every day as a way to train our brains.

2. Repeat the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 exercise from Activity 6 as cool down at the end of this final activity as an example. If you like, use this video to facilitate the exercise: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 mindfulness video

3. As time permits, continue to practice this activity regularly even as OutRight is completed.

