



Warmup Activities

- Go around the group to share one thing: *What was the best part of the week/day for you?*
- Go around the group to share one thing: *What was the most challenging part of the week/day for you?*
- Go around the group to share one thing: *One word that describes what you're bringing to the space today (or represents how you're showing up today).* This can also be repeated at the end, where everyone shares a different word.
- Go around the group and all share the following: *Name, pronoun, and a number on the scale of 1 to 10, where 1 represents "feeling low" and 10 represents "feeling fabulous".* No need to explain the number - just a level playing field sort of way to share a number that represents how one is feeling upon arrival (also good to do at the very end of a rehearsal, too, so staff can observe if or how numbers have changed).
- One at a time in the group, share: *Think for a moment about how you're feeling right now. Come up with a sound, an image, a picture of what that feeling looks, sounds, feels like, etc. Share just that.*

Sound & Motion

This activity is done in a standing circle with enough room so students can move freely.

Starting with the leader of the activity (this can easily be student led) each person shares their name paired with a physical action. After each person shares, the entire circle repeats that person's name and action, encouraging folks to match that person's energy & volume. The goal is not to mimic, but to match. Remind students that there are no wrong answers. You can do a couple of rounds using names if you'd like.

Then, ask students to reflect on their current physical and mental state, choosing a word and an action that best reflects where they are at today. Again, there are no wrong answers. Encourage students to share only what they are comfortable with and get a verbal agreement from the group that we will handle everyone with love and care. This can lead into a discussion about empathy ("what does it feel like to take on someone else's mental state?" "what does it feel like to see your mental state reflected back to you?", etc.) From there, you can take the activity in many different directions. Partner pair & share, creating emotional tableaux, etc.

Clams are GREAT!

Another standing circle activity, this game focuses on affirmations. One by one, each student will step to the middle of the circle and share three statements. Each statement begins with the words "Clams are great because..." The first round should focus on nonsense statements like, "Clams are great because the sky is purple plaid!" Each statement should be bold, declarative and make absolutely no sense. Immediately after each statement from the student in the middle, everyone in the circle shouts "YES!" This should be fun, silly and light-hearted. The focus should only be on saying YES to whatever is being shared in the center

After a round or two of nonsense sentences, ask students to step into the center of the circle and share one to three things that are holding them back from being fully present in the room. Again, encourage students to share only what they are comfortable with and get a verbal agreement from everyone in the circle that we will hold the information with love and care. Students should be given the option to pass if they are not comfortable sharing. Again, after each statement, the students in the circle shout, "YES!"

This can be the end of the activity, or you can continue to ask questions like, "What does it feel like to have your feelings affirmed?" "Was there anything that was shared that you connect with?" etc.

Sensory Countdown

This is often used when someone is having an anxiety attack but also really good just to ground/center anyone at any time, to help your kids regain focus and get back on track, or even to unite everyone in a relaxing activity before starting rehearsal. This can be a written activity, or just a personal meditative thinking activity. Count through the following, focusing on responses relating to the present moment:

--5 things you can see (such as your hands, theater lights, the floor)

--4 things you can physically feel (such as your feet on the ground, the waistband of your pants, hair in your eyes)

--3 things you can hear (such as bodies shifting, people breathing, footsteps outside the room, airplane overhead)

--2 things you can smell (such as stale theater air, someone's perfume)

--1 thing you can taste (such as remnants of the snack or drink you just had before rehearsal)

This one can also be modified for simplicity/timing and just include a 3-2-1 countdown (instead of 5-4-3-2-1) - in which case I'd recommend leaving off taste and maybe smell?

Web of Reflection

Standing or sitting in a circle, hang onto the end of the string of a ball of yarn, share something* and then toss the ball to someone else in the group. The *something shared could be something you are feeling, a word that represents what you're bringing to the space that day, what you appreciate about the person you're throwing the yarn to, something you'll take away from this experience, etc. - the options are kind of endless. The receiving person then does the same until everyone in the group has become part of the web. The resulting web can represent the connectedness of the group - the dedication, the team, the "we're all in this together" no matter how hard things are idea. Then use a pair of scissors to cut the connecting strings, symbolizing that we also remain individuals, but still must keep working together to connected. If desired, when you cut the string, have each person continue holding on to a cut piece that they can keep or tie around their wrist as a memory of this reflective activity.

Resources for Youth

- The Bridge for Youth: <https://bridgeforyouth.org/programs/outreach-and-support/>
- MoveFwd: <https://movefwdmn.org/>
- MN Teen Mental Health: <https://www.mnteenmentalhealth.org/>
 - The <https://www.mnteenmentalhealth.org/resources> page has links to further exercises/activities to help teens with stress, emotional instability, breathing/grounding themselves, etc. PLUS helpful mental health apps, and tons of other resources, plus other links in the side margin for specific resources for BIPOC & LGBTQ youth as well.
- NAMI: <https://namimn.org/support/youth/>
- Walk-In Counseling Center: <https://walkin.org/> as a free mental health resource
- (National) LGBTQ teen specific - crisis counselors trained to respond via phone, chat, and text: <https://www.thetrevorproject.org/crisis-services/>

Questions, concerns, or more ideas? Email spotlighteducation@hennepintheatretrust.org.