



# Skills Sheet for Caregivers: High School

High school is a time of transition. Teenagers become more independent, and turn towards their friends and peers for guidance and support. They also start to explore larger questions like what they want to do in the future. It's an exciting time that also comes with complicated, wonderful, confusing and big emotions.

Sometimes these emotions may be uncomfortable but feeling them is healthy and important because emotions provide teens with information about themselves and their environment and help them to connect to other people. Learning how to notice, label, and express their feelings helps teens to feel more in control.

Below is a summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Label and name feelings to increase emotional vocabulary AND reinforce that you can feel more than one emotion at a time.
- Notice body sensations that are attached to different emotions and provide clues for what we are feeling. Sometimes it's easier to notice physical symptoms first.
- Rate the feeling of emotions on a scale of 1 to 10 to capture that we feel emotions in different amounts or intensities.

## Practice skills

- Make time to check in with your teen and explicitly ask how they are feeling.
- Start by listening and validating your teen's emotions. This might sound like:
  - “It seems like you're feeling sad today. Is there anything you want to talk about.”
  - “You had a really frustrating experience. That sounds really hard.”
  - “I hear that you're excited, but maybe also feeling nervous about the future.”
- Once your teen has identified how they are feeling, ask them how much of that emotion they are feeling. They can give you more information about how intense their emotions are.
- Encourage your teen to observe where in their body they are experiencing that emotion. This will help them to turn down the intensity of their emotions and make them feel more in control.

- Model expressing and validating your own feelings! Discuss and label how you feel, how your body reacts to that feeling, and how much you feel it. It is a great way to normalize all feelings and send the message that feelings are important.
- If you are not used to discussing emotions directly with your teen, it might be awkward at first. But the more you do it, the easier it will become and the more connected you will feel.

### Start with this →

- Emotional validation is a foundational skill that caregivers can try at home that will help their high schoolers to increase emotional awareness.
- Listening, reflecting, and connecting helps to increase your teen’s awareness of their emotional experience and helps them to know that it’s okay to feel all emotions.
- Be mindful of the do’s and don’ts below when it comes to validation as you encourage your teen to tell you how they’re feeling.

#### DO

##### Listen

Give your full attention.

##### Reflect

Say back what the emotion was that they shared. For example: “I hear that it was super frustrating.”

##### Connect

Tell them you understand. For example: “I can understand why you would feel that way.”

#### DON'T

##### Minimize Feelings

Avoid telling your child they shouldn’t feel a certain way. For example: “Don’t worry about it! It will be fine!”

##### Shame

Avoid using language that can lead to embarrassment for feeling a certain way. For example: “Why do you feel sad about that? You know better.”

##### Fix right away

Avoid jumping in with solutions. For example: “I’ll handle the issue with that other child. Don’t worry.”

On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your teen as an activity to help reinforce and practice the different skills for understanding feelings.



## UNDERSTANDING FEELINGS

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

# Emotion Monitoring

Being able to monitor and track your mood is an effective skill for helping to increase your emotional awareness. It can also help provide information about the things you may need and help you communicate that need. For this week, pick three emotions you will monitor. Track the intensity, physical sensation, and what was happening at the time you felt each emotion.

Emotion:	Emotion:	Emotion:
_____	_____	_____
Rate intensity:	Rate intensity:	Rate intensity:
Physical sensations:	Physical sensations:	Physical sensations:
What was going on:	What was going on:	What was going on:

### Follow-Up

When you rate your feelings, you're gathering data about your experiences over the past week. If there are emotions that you're hoping to feel more or less, the skills reviewed in the additional videos and worksheets of this curriculum will help. You can use worksheets like this one each week to track your progress and figure out how the skills might be affecting your feelings.



# Skills Sheet for Caregivers: High School

High schoolers manage a lot. Many days they juggle schoolwork, extracurricular activities, jobs and relationships with friends and family. They also grapple with larger issues like forming their identity, gaining independence, and preparing for the future.

In this video, teens learn that the stress, anxiety and frustration that often come with these experiences produce uncomfortable physical sensations due to our flight, fight, or freeze response. Effective relaxation skills, like paced belly breathing, help to calm the body and turn down the intensity of these unpleasant feelings.

Below is a summary of **PACED BELLY BREATHING**, one of the key relaxation skills in the video.

- Belly breathing is breathing slowly and deeply at a steady pace. By slowing their inhaleds and extending their exhaleds, your child can use their breath to harness control of their emotions.
- Belly breathing balances out the carbon dioxide and oxygen in kids' bodies, cutting off their fight, flight, or freeze response. It returns their mind and body to a calmer state.

## Practice skills

- When you notice that your teen is feeling anxious, frustrated, or worried, encourage them to stop what they are doing and take a few minutes to practice taking paced belly breaths.
- Belly breathing for relaxation is different than breathing teens do without thinking about it. If your teen says "I've tried that," encourage them to give it another try. Providing some information about why belly breathing helps may increase their willingness to try.
- Encourage your teen to practice belly breathing when they are calm. They will be more prepared to use the skill in the moment they need it if they have practiced it beforehand.
- Belly breathing for relaxation is different than breathing teens do without thinking about it. If your teen says, "I've tried that," encourage them to give it another try. Providing some information about why belly breathing helps may increase their willingness to try.

**Start with this →**

- Breathe together! Take five minutes right after dinner or before bed to take some relaxing breaths together.
- You can post the visual below somewhere in the house, like the kitchen or bathroom. That way it can be used as a cue to practice some paced belly breaths throughout the day.
- You can also suggest your teen utilize apps like Calm or Headspace that help guide paced belly breathing and recommend scheduling moments in the day to practice.

**On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your teen or post in the home to reinforce and practice paced belly breathing.**



## RELAXATION SKILLS

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

# Paced Belly Breathing

Breathing deeply into your belly helps to tell your body that you are safe and calm. Follow the instructions below and practice paced belly breathing when you are feeling calm and when you are feeling stressed or anxious.



- 1 Sit comfortably in your chair or on the floor either cross-legged or on your shins.



- 2 Place one hand on your belly and one hand on your chest.



- 3 Breathe in slowly through your nose for 4 seconds and feel your belly expand.



- 4 Slowly breathe out for 5 seconds through your mouth, letting the air gently leave your body.



- 5 Repeat 3-5 times, or for as long as you want.

Keep a log to plan when you will use relaxation skills. Plan self-care activities, too.

Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

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# Skills Sheet for Caregivers: High School

Teens have a lot on their minds. Thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are all connected, and it's common for everyone to fall into unhelpful thinking patterns where their thoughts make them feel overwhelmed, anxious, sad or frustrated.

The good news is that teens can learn to manage their thoughts. By recognizing how their thoughts make them feel, asking themselves how helpful or realistic their thoughts are, and reframing unhelpful or unrealistic thoughts into ones that are more helpful or realistic, teens can decrease uncomfortable emotions and better manage difficult situations.

Below is a summary of the **KEY SKILLS** from the video.

- Thoughts are not always facts and are temporary.
- Thoughts can be either helpful or unhelpful.
- You can practice changing unhelpful thoughts to thoughts that are more realistic or helpful.

## Practice skills

- Help your teen to practice identifying unhelpful and helpful thoughts and describing how their thoughts make them feel.
- If you recognize that your teen is expressing an unhelpful thought, encourage them to replace that thought with a more helpful or realistic thought.
- Model for your teen by sharing your own personal examples of moments when you engaged in unhelpful thinking and how that made you feel.
- Use positive feedback when you recognize that your teen has paused to consider their thinking.

### Start with this

- Ask your teen the following questions to get them to be more aware of their thinking:
  - “ What thought are you having? Or: What were you thinking in that situation?  
How is this thought making you feel?  
Do you think this thought is helpful or unhelpful?
- Share some ways they can question their thoughts:
  - “ What are the facts about the situation?  
What is the evidence that this thought is true or false?  
What is the worst that could happen? If it does happen, what can you do to handle it?  
Is this thought kind to you? If not, how can you be fair to yourself?
- Remember that recognizing and changing unhelpful thoughts takes practice.

**On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your teen to help practice understanding and changing thoughts.**



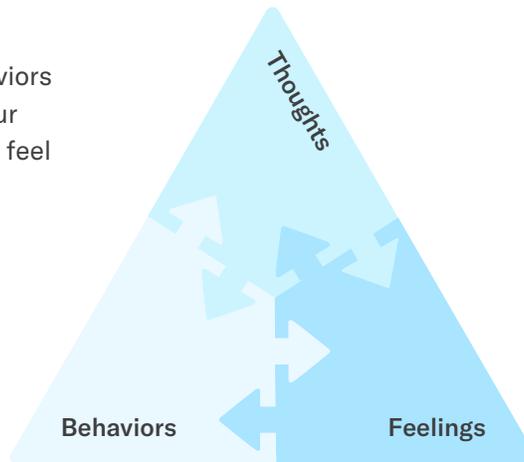
## UNDERSTANDING THOUGHTS

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

# Challenging Unhelpful Thoughts

Remember thoughts are not facts, and sometimes thoughts are unhelpful to us. One way of practicing understanding your thoughts is by keeping track of them when you notice uncomfortable feelings. Below is a thought log. Practice identifying what was happening at the time, what your thought was, how you felt, and what you did. If you notice that the thought was unhelpful, try to change it to a more realistic or helpful thought, and then see if that would change your feelings and behaviors.

Our thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are all connected. By changing our thoughts, we can change how we feel and how we behave.



Event	Unhelpful Thought	Feeling	Alternative/Helpful Thought

Here are some things you can ask yourself when trying to change your thoughts:

- What is the likelihood that this will happen?
- Is this realistic?
- What is the evidence that this is true?
- Is there another way I can think about this?

### Follow-Up

When you notice how your thoughts are connected to how you feel, you're gathering data about yourself. If you notice that certain ways of thinking are not all that helpful or lead to uncomfortable feelings, remember that you have the power to slow down and consider when there might be other ways of thinking about the situation. The skills reviewed in the additional videos and worksheets of this curriculum can also help!



# Skills Sheet for Caregivers: High School

It is not uncommon for teens to experience their emotions very intensely. As highlighted in the video, when emotions become intense, there is often an urge to do something connected with that feeling. Sometimes the urge might be to do something that ultimately makes them continue feeling overwhelmed or makes their problems bigger.

It's important for teens to know that intense emotions and the urges that come with them are common and they do not last forever. Teens can ride out intense feelings and urges by utilizing their five senses and different activities to ground them in the present and help them tolerate how they feel. Waiting for the intensity to pass also allows for greater control in choosing what they do next.

**Below is a summary of the KEY POINTS from the video.**

- Everyone feels big and intense emotions sometimes.
- Everyone has urges to act that are caused by big, intense, and uncomfortable emotions. The key is riding out the urge and waiting for big feelings to lessen.
- Teens can ride the wave by utilizing their five senses (sight, sound, taste, touch, smell) and by engaging in healthy distracting activities and being active (e.g., taking a walk, talking with friends, reading, journaling).

## Practice Skills

- Validate emotions! Show that you're listening to what your teen has to say and that you empathize with how they feel. This helps them feel understood and connected to you.
- Check in with your teen to see how they are feeling, and ask if significant events are happening or may happen in the future that could trigger intense emotions. Being aware can help them to plan for these moments and utilize effective calming strategies.
- Discuss with your teen how they can tolerate and get through intense emotions. This can include ways in which they can use their five senses in addition to being active and engaging in healthy distracting activities.
- Creating healthy habits that help teens to get enough sleep, eat healthily, and stay active can contribute to effectively regulating emotions.



### Start with this →

- Practice those validation skills! As a caregiver, when you feel the pull to help your teen solve a problem to make their intense emotions go away, start with validation instead to help them tolerate those emotions and know they can get through them.
- Model at home healthy ways of tolerating and riding out intense emotions. Encourage your teen to use effective calming strategies that work for them, in addition to healthy activities such as going for walks, reaching out to friends, and being active.

**On the next page there is an activity that you can share with your teen to help them plan ahead and create a self-soothe kit that they can use to tolerate intense emotions.**



## MANAGING INTENSE EMOTIONS

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

# Self-Soothe Kit

You can use your five senses to self-soothe and help tolerate intense emotions. Use the guide below to create your own self-soothe kit.

You can carry this self-soothe kit with you so you always have what you need to tolerate intense feelings.

5 Senses	One thing that makes me calm and relaxed is:	Stumped on what to pick? Here are some suggestions:
See		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Calming colors</li> <li>• A relaxing scene</li> <li>• Small picture of my favorite person, family member, athlete; or place to visit</li> </ul>
Hear		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Listen to rainstorm or ocean sounds</li> <li>• Recordings of funny jokes or comedians</li> <li>• Happy or soothing music</li> </ul>
Smell		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good-smelling hand lotion</li> <li>• Small perfume bottle</li> <li>• A scented candle</li> </ul>
Taste		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pieces of your favorite candy or other treat like gum or a mint</li> </ul>
Touch		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Satin ribbon or soft fabric</li> <li>• A small pompom or pouf</li> <li>• A small feather</li> <li>• A stress ball</li> <li>• Slime</li> </ul>

# Skills Sheet for Caregivers: Middle School

Mindfulness is the practice of paying attention on purpose to the present moment, without judging or trying to change your experience. The practice of mindfulness can help teens to increase their self-awareness, self-control, and attention. It can also reduce their emotional suffering and increase compassion for themselves and others. Practicing mindfulness allows teens to see reality more accurately and without judgement. Regular practice will help to foster an increased sense of well-being for your child.

## Summary of **KEY POINTS** in the video.

- Mindfulness is an ongoing practice, just like daily physical exercise.
- There are three mindfulness skills to focus on with your teen:
  - Observe: Notice, without words, what is going on in the environment or in their body
  - Describe: Name what they notice using descriptive and non-judgmental language
  - Participate: Throw themselves fully into an activity or experience

## Practice skills

- Model for your teen and schedule daily mindfulness activities for yourself. Invite your teen to participate with you when possible. Activities can include:
  - Take a mindful walk together. Encourage your teen to use all five of their senses to observe their environment, and then describe what they experience using non-judgmental language.
  - Practice paced belly breathing together. Every time the mind starts to wander to a thought, consider it an opportunity to practice mindfulness and bring your attention back to the breath.
  - Practice mindful eating at family meals. Rather than eating without thinking about it, encourage your teen to slow down, notice the colors, smells, taste, and textures of their food.
  - Put on some music and dance like no one is watching (or like you don't care if they are).
- Engage in mindful parenting. When you notice feeling stress when you are interacting with your teen, slow down and be. Be mindful of thoughts, urges, and sensations that arise. Take a deep breath and bring awareness to your breathing body. Observe how the breath naturally brings balance to your body. Proceed as you have shifted to having a more mindful response.

- Keep a gratitude journal, and encourage your teen to do the same. The mindfulness practice of bringing your attention to gratitude helps to increase compassion for yourself and others.
- It can be helpful to utilize mindfulness-based apps, including Headspace, Calm, Shine, and others, to provide different guided activities. You can encourage your teen to utilize these tools for their ongoing practice.

### Start with this →

- When it comes to mindfulness practice, everything that is taught has to be lived. Encouraging your teen to be mindful starts with you creating your own mindfulness practice.
- Start by creating and holding space for your mindfulness practice, and protect five minutes each day to engage in a mindfulness exercise. Talk about your intention with your teen, and share with them your mindfulness practice.

**On the next page there is an activity that you can share or even place somewhere in your house as a reminder to engage in mindfulness practice.**



## MINDFULNESS

Practicing these skills helps you to increase awareness of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors to improve your mental health and wellness.

# Mindfulness Skills & Activities

The more you practice mindfulness the more it will help our mental muscles to have better focus, attention, and awareness. You can choose from many activities below to practice the skills of mindfulness.



### Observe Skill



### Describe Skill



### Participate Fully Skill

Counting  
Breaths

Paced belly  
breathing

Listening to  
music and paying  
attention to one  
instrument

Going for a walk  
and naming what  
you see

Mindfully  
eating your  
favorite food

Playing an  
instrument

Journaling

Dancing

### Using recommended apps to guide you:

- Calm
- Headspace
- Shine
- Mindfulness for Children
- Thrive for Alexa: Amazon
- Take a Chill
- OMG I Can Meditate