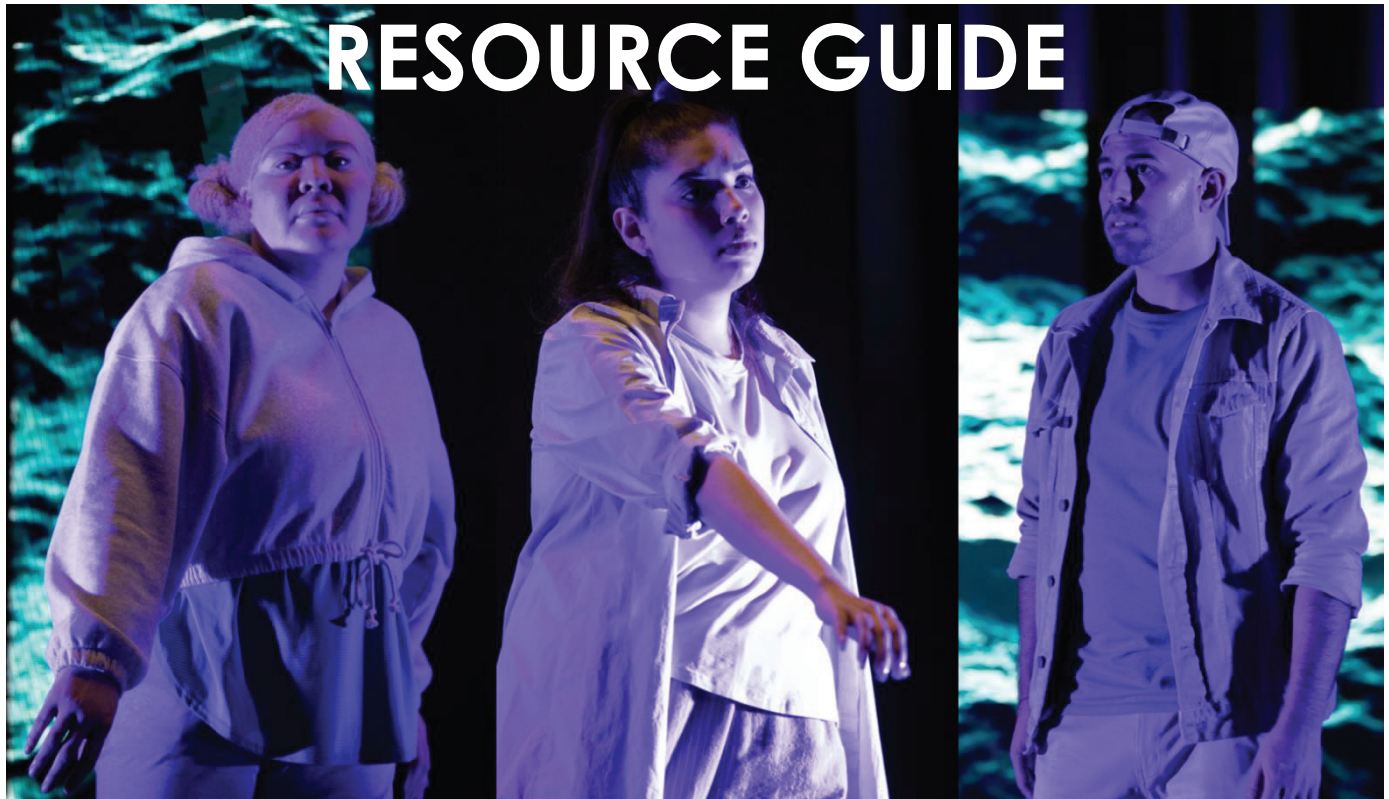




An Adrienne Arsht Center Production

MI am



RESOURCE GUIDE



**Arsht
Impact**
Community + Education



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About

Imagined, produced and presented by the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts of Miami-Dade County, *I am Me* will begin its tour of Miami-Dade County public high schools on January 31, 2022. Focused on teen mental health and wellness, the new initiative includes a world premiere play created especially for teens that will travel to local high schools and a series of artistic self-expression workshops for teens. The first arts-driven mental health initiative of its kind, *I am Me* is the culmination of the Arsht Center's 16-year partnership with Miami-Dade County Public Schools (MDCPS) and is provided by the Arsht Center at no cost to every 9th grade student and teacher in Miami-Dade County public schools.

Overview

I am Me begins as a traveling play designed to be performed at every high school in Miami-Dade County. In the mixed-media theatrical work, six young people share what it's like for them to be teenagers in 21st century Miami. Delivering lyrical monologues against a backdrop of oceanic images and vibrant music, the characters express their fears, frustrations and triumphs as they navigate the rough terrain of adolescence in a city whose future is as uncertain as their own. Anxious about climate change, parental expectations, societal pressures and their burgeoning identities, these young people find hope and comfort in one another, in art and ultimately within themselves. Created by a group of established and emerging Miami artists commissioned by the Arsht Center, *I am Me* features an all-local cast and is directed by award-winning Miami artist Teo Castellanos.



Guide Usage

- The *I am Me* resource guide is designed with the goal of supporting mental and emotional wellbeing through arts and mindfulness-based activities and prompts. You will find exercises that you can do on your own, with friends/family or in your classroom. The guide is also designed with flexibility in mind, you can engage with the prompts and activities as you want/need them and can come back to them at any time. It is here for you. You can work through the guide in order or can work through in the order that feels most helpful in the moment. You do not need any arts experience or skills to use this guide.
- The resource guide is organized by five themes that are found in the play *I am Me*. In each of the five theme sections, Identity, Connection, Emotions, Safety and Legacy; you will find activities related to those themes. Some of the activities include links to visit and videos to watch.
- A group of Creative Arts Therapists and Teaching Artists in Miami Dade County worked together to create the activities and prompts included in the guide. The guide was edited by a Board-Certified Registered Art Therapist and Licensed Mental Health Counselor and is a result of a partnership with the Adrienne Arsht Center and The Moss Center.

Note: Engaging with this resource guide and/or working through these activities is not a substitute for mental health treatment, medical advice and/or therapy. These activities are designed with the goal of providing coping resources and encouraging self-expression. If you need more support beyond this guide, please review the support options at the end of the guide and speak with your doctor.

Director's Note

As the artistic director of I am Me, I began my work with the project with a strong desire to highlight and cultivate local Miami talent in the inception, creation, and implementation of the production. I brought together writers and spoken word artists together from the Miami community to participate in a collaborative process of telling their story, and our story, as Miamians. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, we started with six BIPOC spoken word artists, with the intent that they would write and perform the work when it was premiered. With the onset of COVID-19, we continued the creative and planning process virtually, but the opportunity to perform was delayed. Working with a set of young artists, many had to move on for other educational and career opportunities. However, this gave us the opportunity to involve more voices, taking the original cohort's written words, and casting young actors to deliver them. Some editing did have to be done to accommodate the actors chosen for the production.

At the heart of our efforts, was the desire to tell the authentic Miami story as a young person. Many of our families fled other countries searching for more opportunity and freedom. As first-generation Miamians, we have experienced the turmoil of immigration, financial insecurity, cultural assimilation and rejection, while also dealing with problems other American teenagers tackle including peer pressure, gender identity, depression, and parental expectations. As a teenager, I myself did not feel heard, and I wanted to convey a message to our audiences that we hear them and respect them. With all the mounting pressures today's teens face, we wanted to convey the message that it is okay to feel things that society does not want you to feel. I want our teen audience members to leave the production knowing they are enough, we respect them, and they should feel proud and empowered by their personal stories of resilience and survival.

To bring the different personal stories together of the actors into an integrated production, I used the central themes, as well as the symbolism of water and the use of sound effects. The beauty and destructiveness of water is known to all Miamians, and has personally affected many immigrants through their migration stories or as a reason for fleeing their previous homes. Each story was created through personal experiences of the writers, as well as interviews, and research into communities and cultural groups.

The work went through several edits to fit the actors cast, as well as to be able to present the work during the school day to every 9th grader in Miami-Dade County. Taking the production into every community in Miami-Dade, despite having to work with the different types of performance spaces and technical support available at each high school, is important to me because I know many of these ninth graders do not have opportunities to experience cultural events. The artistic team and I want them to know that this is their story, their Miami, and we celebrate their stories and their contributions to the unique character and spirit of Miami.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Teo', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

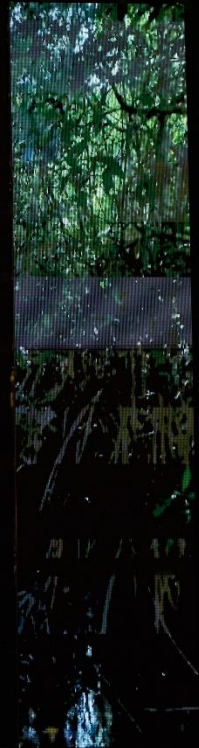
Teo Castellanos



Cast and Creative Team

The play *I am Me* was imagined, created and executed by a team of local arts educators, theater professionals and performers who understand Miami's unique community. The play is directed by Teo Castellanos, an award-winning Miami-based actor, director and writer and recipient of the Fringe First Award at the prestigious Edinburgh Fringe Festival. The creative team also features Seth "Brimstone" Schere (Sound Designer); Keena Blair Brown (Costume Designer); Shamar Watt (Choreographer) and playwrights Teo Castellanos, Maylin Enamorado, Rudi Goblen, Alejandra Nuñez, Christell Victoria Roach, Giovannai Garced-Rosa and Samantha Turner. The cast consists of Miamians Inez Barlatier, Thiana Berrick, Diana Buitrago, Rayner Gabriel, Dayron Leon and Kristie Millie Valdes.

THEMES



Identity

Who am I?

“You are not fixed. You can adapt. You can flow in any dimension. You can carry the weight of a mountain. You can rise. Form a new world.” - *I AM ME*

In *I am Me*, each character explores identity through their memories, family values, social interactions, mental health and nationality. Similarly, we discover who we are through our connections, family values, and how we are feeling. In the following, you will have an opportunity to explore identity through mindfulness and theater arts activities. Please have a writing utensil of choice and notebook to engage in the following:

Reflect

Place your notebook in front of you. Take a relaxing deep breath and release any tension. If you feel comfortable, please close your eyes. Settle into your seat. Your notebook is there to support your story. Let's engage with who you are. You are someone who is unique and has so much to offer. Take that uniqueness that has experienced both wonderful things and hard things. Allow your journey to be heard. What story do you wish to share with others? Take a deep breath. Release any tension. Gently open your eyes.

Writing

Now that you have settled into place, it's time to engage in a creative process that can allow for an aspect of yourself that you wish to be heard and seen in the form of a monologue. In theater, a monologue is a speech presented by a single character, most often to express their thoughts aloud. There were several monologues presented throughout *I am Me* from characters sharing their thoughts, interests, stories with the audience. In the following exercise, approach your monologue as your opportunity to share that story you want others to know about you. The title of your monologue is *Who am I?*

Here are some prompts to get you started.

- I'm (your name, nationality, any fact about yourself).
- Continue adding details about yourself.
- Write about what makes you happy, afraid, proud, embarrassed... etc.
- What are some unknown facts about yourself that you want to share?

- Is there something that needs to be said?

Share

Now that you have written your monologue, decide who you would like to share your story with out loud. Sharing your monologue would provide a creative and unique opportunity to give to life your story. This would get a conversation focused on sharing your interests, history and new details about what makes you and your trusted person similar and unique.

Visual Art

Intersectionality Assemblage: An Abstract Self-portrait

Video Tutorial - [Click here to watch](#)

Video length: 6 minutes 42 seconds

Follow along with this video to create an assemblage self-portrait that explores identity and intersectionality. We each have unique lived experiences that shape us. Exploring the intersections of our social identities, like, race, class, and gender, can help us better understand social injustices related to discrimination, oppression, power and privilege. This activity provides an opportunity to explore what makes us who we are, how these identities interconnect, and how our intersectionality impacts our daily experiences.

After completing the activity, respond to these reflection questions in a journal/notebook, paper or digital device:

1. What two objects are most significant to you, and why? What intersectionality do they each represent?
2. When you think of power and privilege, what words or images come to mind? How does power and privilege show up in your daily life?
3. Looking at your art, what is one aspect of your identity that you are most proud of, and why?

Writing

Think about how the characters in the play introduce themselves in relation to where they are from, what culture they belong to or what they have survived. One character says, "We lost everything --but ourselves." Juan says, "I became afraid of the water too." The verbs

“lost” and “became” help to ground the characters in their experiences and express their individual and cultural identities.

Listen to “[Apparently](#)” by J Cole, notice how he uses the song as a canvas to express his identity.

“This is my canvas

I'ma paint it how I want it

This is my canvas

I'ma paint it, paint it, paint it, how I want it

There is no right or wrong

Only a song

I like to write alone

Be in my zone”

Fill in the blanks of the first verse of the rap to express your identity.

I keep _____

I got _____

I don't know _____

I want _____

I keep _____

I ask _____

I've been _____

I don't know why _____

Reflect

Option A: Using a few lines from the fill in the blank, share a personal reflection on an experience that shares how you relate (or do not relate) to your family's cultural identity.

Option B: Share the fill in the blank with a friend or family member. Fill it out at the same time and when finished, share your answers and discuss the similarities and differences.

Movement

In cultures all around the world, movement and dance play a major role in community connection, community support and healing. In these circles, movement and dance serve as a “language” for connection, and inclusion, where all participants feel seen, supported and understood.

Dance, like all forms of cultural expression, reflects the society in which it exists, as well as a space where mind, body and spirit can co-exist.

Through dance, we are able to face and express what might be sometimes “difficult” to put into words. This movement activity can be done in a classroom or group setting and can be led by a teacher or group leader. Conduct the activity in a space for all participants to sit in a circle format

1. Sit in a circle format with all participants equally seen. Take 3 deep breaths as a group to settle in.
2. Invite all participants to reflect on their family's history and culture. Ask them: What traditions, practices or beliefs do I identify with?
3. Give each participant a chance to share their answers, and invite them to think of a short movement gesture that might best represent what they identified in the previous question. Invite the rest of the group to “mirror” (echo back) the movements shared.
4. Ask each participant: what movement gestures shared within the group, were you able to connect with/ identify with. Why?
5. Reflect and discuss how family and culture can affect a person's identity, contributing to how they see themselves and the groups/ people with which they identify.

Video

TikTok video for a friend <https://vimeo.com/671797346>

Make a TikTok that could be helpful for a friend:
What could you make that would empower/ support a friend?

Make a two-part TikTok

Find a sound that you think delivers a positive or helpful message for someone out there.

Or

Make your own sound or voice-over that can provide a friend with some helpful advice or something that you have learned or experienced.

After completing the activity, respond to the question below in a notebook/journal, paper or digital device.

- How does doing something kind for someone else teach you about yourself?

Writing

Where you're from comes down to not only where you live, but also how you live. And how we live life is impacted by our history, family, and culture. Where you're from helps to create who you are and who you are is impacted by your family history just as much as it is impacted by what you see in your home, neighborhood, and/or what you have done or heard over and over again.

Read the sample poem below:

"I Am From" -YCJ

I am from black cast iron skillets and hot combs
From sweet potato pies and collard greens
grits, cornbread and corn flakes
I'm from Massachusetts by way of Mississippi
And from old sayings, slow shakes of the head and sucked teeth
I'm southern by way of my mother and midwestern by way of my father
I'm from listening to New Edition on the radio and Bill Withers
On the record player
I'm from three generations of sharecroppers and an engineer
From white socks, white undershirts and white gloves on Sunday mornings
I'm also from roller rinks, four squares, double Dutch, and monopoly games that went
on and on.
from walking to school with a metal Wonder Woman metal lunch box and riding my
bike after school to the Boys & Girls Club
I'm from the end of the line of six
From siblings who talked too loud and blocked the TV way too much
From uncles who drove Cadillacs and aunts who wore colorful hats
from storytellers, migrants, and educators
I'm from joke telling,
Bible holding
Book reading
Big laughing
Beautifully made
people.

Reflect:

Option A: After reading the poem, identify the clues that hint to the time the narrator was a child. Think about the many different ways you can show someone where you're from. Using the foods, tastes, smells, colors, music and sayings of your culture, write your own autobiographical poem titled, "Where I'm From."

Option B: Interview an elder in your family and/or neighborhood. Ask questions about their parents and their childhoods, their favorite foods, or songs. Then, create a biographical poem about this family member and/or neighbor using the same style as the sample poem.

Music

"I am a blueprint...divine design, detailed draft... pattern providing guidance... an ever-changing outline".

Reflect

Think, discuss, and/or write on any of the following topics:

- What do you think of when asked about your identity?
- Do you use music to express your emotions, pride, or fears?
- What does being an "ever changing outline" mean to you?
- Do you feel your music interests sometimes change?

Create

Create a playlist that reflects your identity. You may use the following prompts to guide you:

- Favorite song in this moment
- A song connected to a happy memory
- A song that makes you feel confident
- A song that expresses sadness
- A song that brings you comfort
- A song that you know every lyric to
- A song you loved in childhood
- A song that helps you relax
- A song that gives you a sense of cultural pride
- A song that makes you want to dance

Share

Share this playlist with a friend or family member. Try this activity as a group and see what songs you may have in common with those around you.

Movement

Materials: A space to move in, Music is optional, *I Am Me Poem*

1. Read the "I AM A BLUEPRINT" excerpt poem from *I AM ME* play:
Actor One/ Two/ Three/ Four

I am
a blueprint.
[beat]
As in found-nation;
divine design, detailed draft
and diagram.
[beat]
A fraction
of a program of action,
pattern providing guidance,
and flyness
towards my plan,
I am.
[beat]
The blueprint I am.
[beat]
I am
an ever-changing outline
i am me.
—as are you.
painting your past, forging futures,
—you are the suture,
so sew it up, you.
[beat]
Blueprint,
you are the roadmap,
recipe and all that;
sketch serving as a model,
throttle for the voices to be audile
so don't fall back.
[beat]
Let's build,
break bread and molds;
more and more don't fold.
You are the bold, the sole,
fourfold—all told.
[beat]
Hold and coddle the cold
then roll in gold until the old has faded.
[beat]

For you to keep going—knowing.
to keep zoning—growing and stay elated.

[beat]

I am. You am.
My fam. So say it.

[beat]

"I am
a blueprint.

- "I AM ME" Play by Rudi Goblen

2. As a group, create a short and simple movement that represents the chorus that repeats: "I am a blueprint"
3. Divide in 5 smaller groups and work on creating a short and simple movement that best represents each of the verses.
4. Then, bring it all together and connect each of the movements and record a video if you want. (Music is optional)

Writing

The Inner Critic is the critical voice in your head of negative self-talk about not being good enough. The Inner Critic might resemble the voice of our parents, friends, media, as mentioned in *I am Me*, protecting us from rejection. The Inner Critic often comes up when we engage in creativity, leading us to judge our efforts harshly, feeling like we are not good enough, or assuming failure. Your Inner Muse is the source of creativity and confident self-expression. Getting in touch with your Inner Muse means listening to your intuition, trusting the process, allowing for mistakes, and creating freely without self-judgment. Practicing an attitude of mindfulness (nonjudgmental awareness of the present moment) and self-compassion when you approach creative activities can help you silence the Inner Critic and allow your Inner Muse to come through.

In the following exercise, we are going to invite our dreams into the space.

Mindfulness Moment

Let's begin by taking a relaxing deep breath and release any tension. If you feel comfortable, please close your eyes. Settle into your seat. Your notebook is there to support your story. Let's engage with who you are. You are someone who is unique and has so much to offer. Take that uniqueness that has experienced both wonderful things and hard things. Allow your journey to be heard. What dream do you wish to share with others? Take a deep breath. Release any tension. Gently open your eyes.

Letter to Our Inner Muse

Write down a dream you wish you could share with others. Take notice if negative self-talk has entered your head and write down those thoughts. This is the voice of your Inner Critic.

Now with the above in mind, imagine you have been given an opportunity to write a letter to your Inner Muse who is compassionate and non-judgmental. Include in the letter your dream you wish to share with others. However, it is time to be honest with your Inner Muse that the Inner Critic is simply getting in the way. Include how you can allow your Inner Muse to be heard.

Share your writing with someone else and reflect on how it felt to share your dream out loud. Once you have worked with a partner, you might feel courageous and bold to share with the entire group! Be bold and allow your dream to be heard.

Movement

Miami is a major city in the United States that is in constant flux. There are always new buildings going up and older historic places being torn down. This coupled with the reality of climate change makes for an interesting challenge when trying to establish a sense of place.

What is a sense of place? A sense of self, is the image that you see in your mind when you contemplate who you are. It can be determined by various factors such as, where you grew up, who you hang out with, what music you like, etc. It also can be something deeper, something that perhaps you can't explain in words, but can feel. It is how you can differentiate yourself from other people. Similarly, a sense of place is how you view yourself in relation to where you live.

How do you relate to the place that you live in? How do you identify Miami as Miami?

This is where the value of expression comes in. Expressing yourself can help you to see outside of your own mind, and in this case, how it is that you view yourself and the world around you!

By going to a favorite place, such as a historical landmark, an environmental or cultural site, we will explore how we connect with a place to find a greater understanding of ourselves in relation to where we live. What are the ways that you express yourself and allow you to experience a sense of home/place?

Examples of some places you could visit:

[Perez Art Museum Sculpture Garden](#)

[Cuban Memorial Boulevard](#)

[Crandon Park Abandoned Zoo](#)

- Take a walk around the location you have chosen. Don't take any pictures or notes and try to not use your phone. Without any agenda, simply walk about.
- Reverse the path that you just walked. This time, take time in certain spots. Perhaps take a photo of something that interests you. Maybe it's a blade of grass, or a tree, or an image that you see.
- Take a few notes in your journal/digital device while you are on this reverse walk.
- Once you have gotten back to where you started- pick a spot in particular that stood out to you and return to that place. If you are doing this in partners or a group/ decide on which spot together.
- Ask yourself (or each other) how you can make your own landmark? What are some ways you can make this place special to you, your history, and future?
 - Example- If you are in a park- make a plan to have a themed picnic with some friends or family. Perhaps a nature themed picnic where everyone has to wear something that references either native plants or animals.
- What would be something that you would like to see happen for the community in this place? If it is a historic building for example, would you like an event that explains the history and offers live music? Or let's say you chose a particular spot on the beach; would you like to see a beach clean-up and lunch? What are some possible ways the space can be activated and enjoyed?

Now, let's bring it to the present moment.

See Video Example Here: <https://vimeo.com/788053749>

- If you are by yourself or in a group, take a moment either standing or sitting to inhale through the nose and exhale through the mouth 10 times slowly, paying close attention to the air as it comes in and out.
- Now that you have re-centered, allow your mind to wander. If you are in a group separate, or if you are alone return to your original exploration of the place you are at.
- This time, as you walk, pause randomly and do a full look around. Look up at the sky, look all the way around you.
- Do some gentle and inconspicuous stretches. Like raising your hands over your head and then interlocking your hands and pulling them behind your back.
- Touch your toes.
- Swing your arms from side to side.
- Do any other gentle stretches that you may know, perhaps that you learned in P.E.
- Imagine in your mind that as you do this you are leaving behind a trace of yourself in this space, while at the same time making an embodied memory through your simple stretches.

To end the exercise: write a brief description of your journey. You can add some drawings or doodles of any details that you might like. If you are in a group, share your experience with each other.

Consider doing this in different locations, making a scrapbook of your experiences in Miami. In the end you will have made your very own book about how you experience where you live!

Writing

In *I am Me*, each character speaks to the audience how they are trying to be seen and heard while highlighting challenges of mental health and safety issues. However, the characters break the fourth wall, or interact directly with the audience, to encourage everyone to view their lives as a blueprint to a story beyond right now.

For the following exercise, you will have the uplifting opportunity to celebrate with your peers your unique talents, stories, and all the wonderful things that you embody.

Mindfulness Moment

Let's begin by taking a relaxing deep breath and release any tension. If you feel comfortable, please close your eyes. Settle into your seat. Your notebook is there to support your story. Let's engage with who you are. You have many things to offer. Take a deep breath. Release any tension. Gently open your eyes.

Blue Print Party

Part 1

After the Mindfulness Moment, create a list of your positive traits on paper or digital device. For example: I am a dancer that has fun with others. If you find this challenging as negative thoughts, come up, try to replace those negative thoughts with a more neutral statement. For example, replace "I am not good enough," with "I am trying my best and that is enough." Here are some other examples:

- I have many talents.
- I don't have to be perfect to be worthy.
- Making mistakes helps me grow.
- I am learning how to work through problems.
- It is okay to be afraid, but I am learning to not let fear stop me.
- I am smart.
- I am capable.
- I am a fierce queen.
- I make others laugh and feel great.
- I have managed to feel calmer.

Part 2

Next, share your affirmations with the group. The group will cheer you on. You can include music and dance to create the Blueprint Party to celebrate how unique everyone is!

Movement

How do we dress to play the part? How does what we wear influence how we act? Or in this case how we move. For this exercise, you will make a few choices related to how you perceive yourself. Then you will randomize these choices and create a video log for your own personal study. Of course, you can share this if you like, but you can also keep it just for you! After we have completed the simple tasks there will be a few useful questions for you to answer.

- Pick 3 outfits (fits) that you feel express an aspect of who you are. This could be done by focusing on color, style, or even texture of the fabric.
 - Decide on 3 different locations where you would feel comfortable to dance. Could literally be three different spots in your room/home. Or if you feel comfortable could be somewhere outside.
 - Now write three different aspects of yourself you like. It could be your humor, or your voice, your handwriting or your skill at video games. Anything about you or that you do that makes you feel special!
 - Now mix these three things up at random. For example:
 - Outfit one with bedroom location and your humor
 - Outfit two in park by school and your taste in music
 - Outfit 3 in your bathroom mirror combined with your skateboarding skills.
 - Now make a video of each scenario on your phone or other recording device you prefer. Based on the aspect of yourself that you chose for each particular scenario, make a silent dance that expresses that particular trait. You can just move freely or mime or dance to a song in your head! But whatever it is, just do it in the moment without any practice. Often the first attempt is the most authentic and that's what we want for this exercise.
 - Once you are done, review the videos and answer the following questions about one:
 - How would you describe the character being presented in each video?
 - How does seeing yourself move make you feel? Does it make you feel creative?
 - Do you identify with the video you made? If not, explore why that is.
 - Finally, how do you think creating a visual/movement video representing different aspects of yourself can help you further develop as a person?
-

Connection

What am I connected to?

Connection forms an integral part of our “day to day” life – in the way we connect to others, to ideas, to our feelings, to our bodies, to our families, to our community, to society, to nature and the animals in it, or the universe as a whole.

The most important connection you can nurture is the connection between “you and you”; the connection between your mind, your body and your spirit (feelings & intuition).

In *I Am Me*, iamme character says: “I am you”, “all of you”. “I is you”, “Is us”, “Is me” – implying that we are all connected, despite our differences or experiences.

“We are but mirrors of one another” – “What we can see in others, is because we can also recognize it within ourselves” – What we strive to connect to, already lies within.

Meditation

The following activity can be done individually or in a class or group setting.

How do I nurture my Mind-Body-Spirit Connection?

Materials recommended: A quiet space to meditate in, (headphones are recommended), phone or digital device that can access YouTube, a journal/notebook, and something to write with

5-minute meditation:

1. Sit comfortably or lay down in a quiet space
2. Listen to this guided 5-minute meditation:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=inpok4MKVLM>

In a journal or notebook or digital device, respond to the following:

1. What are the things, experiences or relationships that make me feel connected? (Ex. engaged, loved, supported, happy)
2. How can I nurture my mind, my body and my feelings? (Consider actions that help your mind and body feel happy and good)
3. Make a list of your Positive Mind Aspects (Ex. I am honest, intelligent, curious, creative, etc.)
4. Make a list of your Positive Body Qualities

(Ex. I have strong legs, good eyesight, strong sense of smell, etc.)

5. Make a list of actions that allow you to connect to happy loving feelings and thoughts.

(Ex. "Listening to music, petting my dog, spending time with friends, nature, etc.)

Writing

"I Am Me" demonstrates how hard it can be for teens to communicate their thoughts and feelings with their parents. Different experiences and perspectives can make it tough to feel connected or heard.

Writing a letter can be a way to communicate and connect with others, and the recipient of the letter is often more engaged if the letter reads like a story and contains images, thoughts, and feelings. The [epistolary](#) form allows a creative piece of writing to take the shape of a letter. It also uses literary devices like [imagery](#), [metaphor](#), and [alliteration](#), to share a story.

A letter includes 5 basic parts:

- Date
- Greeting/salutation: "Dear _____,"
- Body (at least three paragraphs)
- Closing: "Sincerely"/"Yours truly"/ "With love"
- Signature: your name

The body of the letter is where you share your story. Here is a sample structure to follow:

Part 1: Begin with setting. Where are you as you write? Include the time and place of where you are writing. Include a detail of what you were doing before you sat down to write.

Part 2: Include a memory (or create a memory you wish you had) of a time you felt the most connected or heard. Describe how it made you feel. In this part, work to include dialogue and sensory details.

Part 3: Include a wish or desire for the future. What do you want to change? What does it look, feel, or smell like? And what is one idea on how to get there?

Option A: Using the epistolary form, write to a parent or family member you want to have a better connection with. Sharing your letter is optional.

Option B: Using the epistolary form, write a story from a different perspective than your own. Be sure to include dialogue and sensory details. Then share with a partner, friend, or family member.

Music

Music can provide us a sense of connection with the world around us. Music can remind or relate to one's culture, spirituality, and sense. Music connects with our being through our memories and emotions. Together we can explore a sense of connection.

Think, discuss, and/or write on any of the following topics:

- What does connection mean to me?
- Where and when do I feel most connected with the world around me?
- Where and when do I feel most connected with myself?

Listen to the following song and follow along with the lyrics:

- **Song: "Hey Brother" by Avicii** - [Avicii - Hey Brother \(Lyric\)](#)
- What is the message in the lyrics?
- Are there any relationships that you can connect with the lyrics?

Hey brother, there's an endless road to
rediscover
Hey sister, know that water's sweet but
blood is thicker
Oh, if the sky comes falling down
For you
There's nothing in this world I wouldn't do

Hey brother, do you still believe in one
another?
Hey sister, do you still believe in love? I
wonder
Oh, if the sky comes falling down
For you
There's nothing in this world I wouldn't do

What if I'm far from home?
Oh brother, I will hear you call
What if I lose it all?

Oh sister, I will help you out
Oh, if the sky comes falling down
For you
There's nothing in this world I wouldn't do

Hey brother, there's an endless road to
rediscover
Hey sister, do you still believe in love? I
wonder
Oh, if the sky comes falling down
For you
There's nothing in this world I wouldn't do
What if I'm far from home?
Oh brother, I will hear you call
What if I lose it all?
Oh sister, I will help you out
Oh, if the sky comes falling down
For you
There's nothing in this world I wouldn't do

Rewrite the lyrics with your personal experiences and ideas:

Hey, _____, there's _____
Hey, _____, know _____
Oh, if _____
There's _____

Hey, _____, there's _____

Hey, _____, know _____
Oh, if _____
There's _____

Need some help?
Hey (person), there's (advice/words of support)
Hey (person), know (advice/words of support)
Oh, if (challenging situation)
There's (support or resource)

Writing

Many characters in the play have a direct connection to a body of water. Water brought some from an island to the shore of a new country. Water was connected to fear and sadness, but for others, water held the memory of strength and survival. Do you share any of these connections to water?

Complete the sentence:

When I think of water, I think about...

Do you ever think about how much of you is made of water? Sixty percent of our bodies are made up of water. Our hearts are made of 73% of water. But, despite how much water is in our bodies or around us, if we don't drink enough water, we can become dehydrated and ill. In order to take care of our bodies and minds, we need water, especially clean drinking water. [According to CDC](#) in 2019, 884 million people in the world did not have access to clean drinking water, that is about one out of four people globally.

Research three facts about a body of water that is closest to where you live or where you were born and write them down.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

To learn more about Florida's water quality and those trying to protect it, check out [Miami Waterkeeper](#) and [Love the Everglades movement](#). To join a water clean-up effort near you, visit <https://www.volunteercleanup.org/find>

Reflect

Option A: Beginning with the first line, "When I think of water, ..." write an informative paragraph about the body of water you researched and include your personal connection to it,

Option B: Share your researched facts and reflection with a family member or friend who you think may have a similar experience to you or to the characters presented in the play. Ask questions and listen for similarities and differences.

Movement

During the play, "I AM ME", the actors break out into a celebratory "soul train" style dance, where they take turns celebrating one another, dancing and embracing their individuality.

Community is based in love, acceptance, inclusion and connection. Movement allows us to feel free to be ourselves, and when shared with others, movement becomes a powerful tool for transformation and joy.

"Soul Train", a 1970's musical dance show, became a famous platform for displaying a variety of cultures, dancing and moving together.

In this activity, you are invited to participate in a variety of connective movement practices that celebrate who we are and honor others through the practice of circle dance.

Reflect

Who am I? What do I feel connected to?

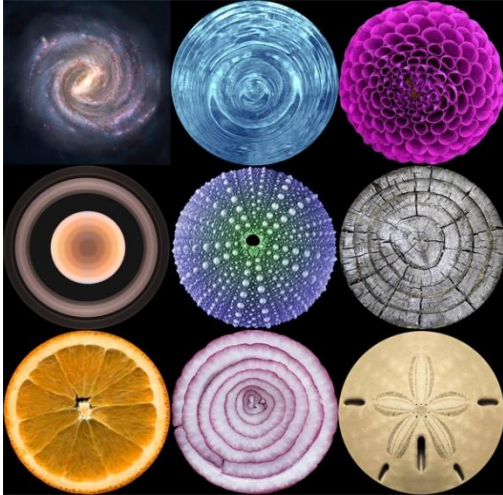
Materials: A space to move in

1. Creating a safe space to move in:

- A. Participants create a circle, where all are welcome and seen – with plenty of room to move freely in all directions.
 - B. Ask the question:
Who am I? – Participants share with words, followed by a gesture/movement/shape
 - C. Participants mirror movement back to each participant
-

Visual Art

A mandala is a geometric figure that's shape is always a circle which is one of the oldest symbols for unity, wholeness and infinity. The Mandala shape exists in nature and can be seen in flowers, fruit, spider webs, snail and some sea shells. In various spiritual/cultural traditions, mandalas may be used to help with focusing attention and establishing a sacred space for grounding and connection.



Materials needed:

1. A large sheet of paper or surface of your choosing to work on
2. Natural leaves, grass, branches or twigs and different colored flowers (please ensure that you have permission to take/use any of these items when gathering your materials)
3. White liquid glue (only if you want to glue things down)

Instructions:

Begin at the center of the paper and place one flower or object to be the initiation of the project. Now, start adding items of your choosing by circling them around the first object in the center and keep repeating until you reach the outer part of the paper/surface. You can create any pattern that you would like. There are no "wrong" ways to create your nature mandala.

Examples:



Writing

One of the themes that is explored in the play is connection. Each of the characters connect with their family, friends, homeland, neighborhood, and nature. The connections we have are what nurture the people we are and who we are to become.

With cell phones and social media, there is an idea that we are connected more than ever. Both of these inventions have given us the ability to engage with others, but how often do we consider the degree of those connections?

Exercise:

Step 1: Grab your cell phone or your favorite camera.

Step 2: Take pictures of the things and people you feel connected to. The pictures can be of friends, family, pets, nature, things in your neighborhood, or whatever feels right for you.

Step 3: Write a caption about the picture and its connection to you. Explore why it's important and how it contributes to who you are. The caption can be serious, funny, poetic or straight-forward.

Step 4: Share. Share your photos on your own social media. You can share them one at a time or create a collage or reel. Share however you choose. When you share, use the hashtag #IAMConnected. #ArshtCenter

If you don't want to share on social media, you can share them with your classmates, friends, whoever you choose.



Example:

Caption: *I am one with the palm trees. They remind me of home. Sometimes we seem to sway to the same rhythm. The rhythms I hear every day in my house and from the cars driving through my neighborhood. #IAMConnected #ArshtCenter*

Emotions

How do I feel?

We all have emotions. We can think of them as how we respond to what is happening around us. Emotions are the result of our thoughts, feelings and actions. We tend to experience emotions in bodily sensations (ex. sweaty palms). When we become aware of our different emotions, we are able to cope with them more effectively.

Writing

Think about the ways the characters in the play describe their emotions. One character says "Everything feels uncertain." Some characters express hopelessness while others express fear and anxiety. Which character's emotions do you identify with and why?

There are different ways people respond to difficult emotions. Identify which description best fits how you respond to when you are feeling hurt or sad. **Circle one or more that apply to you.**

When I am hurt, I am...

A Runner: I disconnect from the emotion and focus on something else. I don't want to deal with it.

A Thinker: I think and rethink about the situation over and over again and try to figure out what went wrong.

A Feeler: I feel like I'm going to feel sad forever. It takes me a long time to feel happy again.

A Rock: I harden to protect myself. I feel like I get stronger when I don't show my emotions.

A Volcano: I get angry and explode. I yell, scream, slam doors and sometimes feel violent.

A Breather: I take a deep breath and exhale. I take three more deep breaths and count to ten. I know the feeling will eventually weaken if I stay calm.

The following 9 steps may be helpful to process your emotions if you are feeling anxious, sad, frustrated, or angry.

1. See it

2. Say it
3. Sense it
4. Stay with it
5. Relax into it
6. Breathe
7. Reconnect with the reality
8. Reframe the experience more objectively
9. Become present again

For more information on these steps visit:

<https://www.artofwellbeing.com/2016/06/21/processyouremotions/>

Visual Art

How to Make an Accordion Sketchbook for Visual Journaling

Video Tutorial - [Click here to watch](#)

Video length: 12 minutes 19 seconds

In this video, you will learn how to make a unique sketchbook that can be used for visual journaling. Visual journaling is a practice much like writing in a journal. Yet, instead of writing about your thoughts and feelings, you draw or make art about them. The pages of your sketchbook, your visual journal, become a place to document your experiences visually and creatively. You can let the pages hold your emotions.

Visual journaling can be a helpful activity that makes space for daily self-reflection and creative exercise.

After completing this activity, respond to these questions in a notebook/journal, paper or digital device:

1. What thoughts or feelings would you like this sketchbook hold for you?
2. Why would it be helpful for this sketchbook to hold the thoughts or feelings you listed?
3. For your first drawing, draw a picture of a time that you felt happy or at peace using any materials of your choice.

Theater

I am Me presents various aspects of personal experiences and observations of family dealing with mental health issues, such as anxiety, depression, trauma and schizophrenia. Through such storytelling we are provided an opportunity to help us

identify with the characters which gives a sense of validation and connection. In the following activities, you will explore through mindfulness and creative arts activities to check in with yourself and those you trust to be heard, supported and validated in your experiences. Please have a writing utensil of choice and notebook to engage in the following.

Reflect

Take a moment to just pause and come into the moment. Take a deep breath and release any tension. Notice any feelings and thoughts that may come up, such as, "I feel sad." Or "Today was hard". "I feel great". Write down any thoughts and feelings that may surface. A deep breath in and exhale any tension.

Play a Part

Theater exercise to be done in pairs. This exercise is to be done in two (2) rounds. Choose who will be **Role A** and **Role B** in your pair.

- **Role A** shares how they are feeling in the present moment as a short true story in 3 sentences. I feel _____. Because _____. I need _____.
- **Role B** acts out through movement and verbalizing key phrases
- After **Role A**'s story is acted out, **Role B** asks, "Did I capture your story?"
- **Role A** shares how it felt to have their story acted out for them.
- **Role B** shares their experience acting out Role A's story.

Repeat the above sequence with Role B telling their short true story for Role A to act out.

Writing

Creative expression exercise to do individually.

Write a letter to yourself expressing self-compassion. Self-compassion is defined as giving yourself the same support and encouraging words you would give to someone you care about. Write your letter as though you are directing it to a friend. This letter is for you to offer yourself self-compassion. There is no right or wrong way to write this letter as you are offering yourself some support. If you find this to be challenging or have trouble getting started, it is okay to come back to this and keep trying to find the words to be kind to yourself.

Here is a writing prompt to get you started:

Dear (your name), I have noticed you have been feeling (write the heavy emotion that you are experiencing at the moment). You have been feeling this way for _____. I know it is not easy feeling that way.

The above exercises can offer an opportunity to explore and express your emotions in a safe way. The more ways we can express our feelings in a safe way we allow ourselves to connect with others in order to receive love, support and guidance. Sharing our feelings helps build healthy communication and trust in our relationships.

Visual Art

Some emotions may be experienced on their own like pure happiness. Sometimes several feelings can co-exist like excitement and fear. However, they show up, feelings can be hard to talk about while a color speaks a thousand words!

Choose a color. Write a list of thoughts, feelings, and responses that come to your mind when you look at/think about the color. This is a free-writing exercise. Continue with the list for a few minutes. You can write on a paper/notebook/journal or digital device.

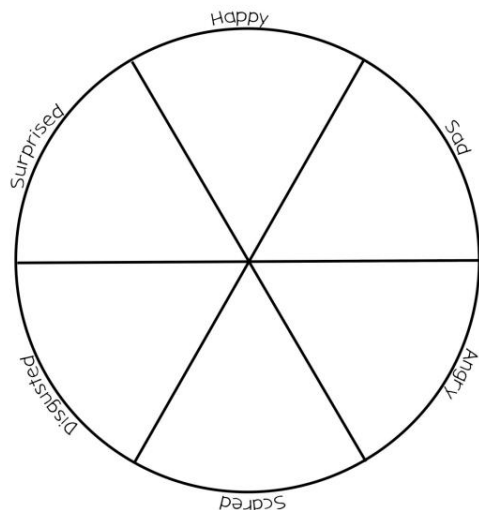
Materials needed:

Pencil
Paper (size of your choice)
Crayons/Markers/Color pencils

Instructions:

Draw a big circle on the paper and divide it into 4-6 slices. Identify 4-6 emotions you would like to focus on. Each slice of your circle will represent a different emotion. Color in each emotion slice with the color you matched it to.

(optional) If you did this in a group, you can present your wheel of emotions to group members. Each person can state "I feel purple", "I feel yellow", and describe the emotion-as-color connection. Consider the transitional space between emotions (i.e., how do you go from feeling blue to feeling purple?)



Movement

In this exercise, you are encouraged to get outside and let your mind connect to your body through walking. Walking is an excellent way to process something that is maybe hard to figure out or can help just getting out of your head! So, let's get started. Find a safe place you can walk around.

Watch the following video: <https://vimeo.com/671785838>

Note: if you have any mobility issues, feel free to make this work for you, whether that be rolling along using a wheelchair, standing outside or however you choose to move.

After your walk, respond to the following reflection questions in your notebook/journal, paper or a digital device.

- 1.How did it feel to notice the way that you walk?
- 2.Why do you think walking can be a tool for processing emotions or ideas?
- 3.What was the pattern that you noticed and how did you choose to incorporate it into your walk?



Safety

Where am I safe?

I am Me addresses the concept of safety through each character's experiences with their surroundings and interactions with various people and systems.

It is important that we all feel safe in our environment, community spaces, homes and bodies.

Writing

Let's explore how you experience safety. Respond to the following in a journal, notebook, paper or digital device.

Where am I safe?

1. Make a list of the places in the world where you feel most safe. This could also be an imaginary place.
(Ex. band room, coffee shop near my house, beach, grandma's couch)
2. If safety had a sound, what would it sound like?
(Be specific. Examples: silence, Adele's voice, my cat's purr)
3. If safety had a smell, what would it smell like?
(Ex. no shoe smell, freshly baked cookies, acrylic paint)
4. Is there anyone in your life that you feel safe with? Who are those people?
5. Sometimes music can make people feel safe. Do you have any songs that you feel this way about? If so, what songs would be on your safety playlist?

Now that you have explored what contributes to your experience of safety. Use your ideas to write a poem that expresses how you experience and understand safety. This poem can have whatever structure feels right for you.

Example:

In my grandma's house, there is an old green chair
It reclines, sometimes, this old green chair at my grandma's house
This green chair feels like home
like a lullaby at night,
a forehead kiss when I'm sick.
This old green chair at my grandma's house knows my secrets

and keeps them tucked in the cushions, never whispering a word.
I am at home in this chair.
My grandma's voice gets louder on the recline.
I am never alone in this chair.
This old green chair in my grandma's house is a safe harbor.

Visual Art

An ally is an empowering figure that protects and supports us and acts as an internal resource that we draw upon or conjure when needed. Sometimes they show up as real people (family, friends, encouraging teachers...). Other times allies can be fictional and inspired by a movie or a book character (super hero, mermaid...) or spiritual figures (guardian angel, ancestor...) or nature-based (animals, trees, flowers...).

Reflect

Begin by answering the following questions in quiet, meditative space. You can write in a notebook/journal/paper or digital device.

Who is your ally? What are they called? How would you describe them on a sensory level (sight/scent/texture/sound)? How does your body feel around them? Is there any particular area they might support (shoulder, neck, feet...)? If they were speaking to you, what message would they want you to know?

Visualize

Materials: Colored paper (size is your choice), glue sticks, magazine cut-outs

Instructions: Create a collage representing your ally. You can include yourself and how you relate to the ally.

Share (optional)

If you created this in a group, you can present your ally to group members. When sharing about allies, consider how each ally is unique to their person.

Music

"I learned that if your truth is not safe, you don't have to offer it... I've become a collector of secrets... Reminding myself we are, and will always be, the beholders of our own beauty."

"Fall in love with where you live. You are your home – no one else's..."

Reflect

Think, discuss, and/or write on any of the following topics:

- What does the word safety mean to you?
- What do you hear, feel, see, smell when you think of a safe space?
- Is your safe space a place where you can go in your mind or a physical location?

Create

How can you represent your sense of safety through music?

Use one of the following platforms, [Soundtrap](#) or [BandLab](#), to create a song or soundscape that communicates what you feel or hear when you think of the topic of safety. (Note - you will need access to a digital device to use the linked platforms and internet access)

Take time to explore the different sounds and add some lyrics of empowerment if it feels right. You can use the following prompts:

- I am strong when I...
- I am in control when I...
- I feel comfort when I...
- I feel loved when I...
- I feel safe when I...

Share

Share this song project with a friend, family member, or mentor. Explore ideas of safety with the community around you and discuss what it means to create a safe place to grow.

Theater

I am Me explores safety as experienced through the characters' interactions with others and their living accommodations. Safety for all of us is ensuring that our basic needs are being met and we feel protected from harm. In the following activities, you will explore through mindfulness and creativity what safety means to you and ensure your safety is being met. Please have a writing utensil of choice and notebook to engage in the following.

Reflect

Take a deep breath and release any tension. Close your eyes if you feel comfortable. Respond to these questions in your notebook:

Do I feel safe?

What do I need to feel safe?

Where do I feel safe?

Who makes me feel safest?

Play a Part

Divide into pairs. Each pair will use the above to develop into a role-play to explore safety through identification, communication, connection, respect and support. The goal is to explore if there is an opportunity to improve one's safety through peer support, problem solving and communication.

Here is an example to help develop your role-play on safety.

Role A: I feel ____ at home and ____ at school.

Role B: Would you like to talk with me about it?

Role A: Yes, by.... **OR** No, I would prefer to ____ right now and then talk when I am ready.

Once the pair has developed their role-play, it is now time to practice.

Discuss with your partner how it was to receive support and problem-solve each other's sense of safety. When we are able to communicate to ensure our needs are being met, we are able to thrive and achieve our goals to live safely and completely.

Share

Discuss with your partner how it was to receive support and problem-solve each other's sense of safety. When we are able to communicate to ensure our needs are being met, we are able to thrive and achieve our goals to live safely and completely.

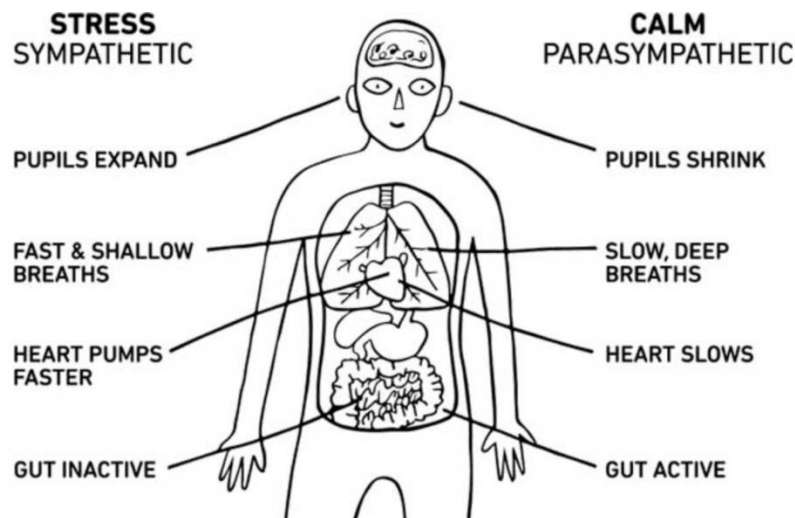
Meditation

When we perceive danger (either real or unreal), our bodies/minds activate the "fight, flight or freeze" response.

Fight or flight vs Rest and Repair

The sympathetic (SNS) and parasympathetic (PSNS) nervous systems are channels of neurons that work hand in hand to control your physical and emotional state. Both are

part of the Autonomic Nervous System, which manages your involuntary bodily functions so you don't have to worry about them.



It is helpful to know some techniques you can use when you would like to bring a sense of calm to your body and mind. Visit the following links to learn some breathing techniques/practices that can help you to feel more calm/relaxed.

Humming bee breath meditation (6 min 26 sec) <https://youtu.be/Uy7aP3ymj4w>

Alternate nostril breathing/meditation (8 min 13 sec) <https://youtu.be/s3VeI7CXglc>

Another helpful technique is called Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT)/Tapping. EFT is based on the Chinese theory of energetic meridians which are energetic pathways that run through our bodies (similar to how blood runs through our veins). When we are sick, those meridians are blocked. To heal, needles are placed in specific acupuncture points on the body to unblock the energy to restore health.

Tapping also uses energetic meridians, except tapping with your fingers is done on the specific energy points instead of using needles. Tapping is simple, easy, and effective.

Here is a short video to introduce you to EFT/Tapping:

EFT - Tapping meditation (2 min 42 sec) https://youtu.be/9xe_75soDFI

Movement

Here are some mindfulness & movement practices that you can engage with to experience a sense of safety and/or to help you through difficult emotions.

4 B's of Self-Settling:

B – Break energy by squeezing hands together

B – Breathe deeply and slowly with your arms

B – Brain Taps with Affirmations

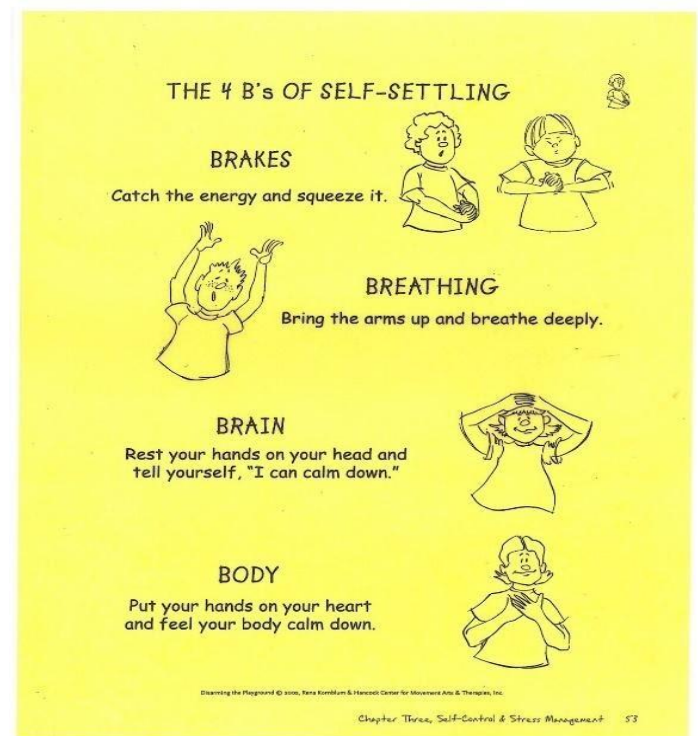
B – Body Tactile movement (cross hugging yourself)

Click on the following link to learn how to use

The 4 B'S of Self-Control

<https://youtu.be/d8KdAoB5Q0A>

Video 9 min 58 sec



Visual Art

A container is a vessel or holding space where we can store difficult things. Containers are safe spaces that help us manage big feelings before we return to the here-and-now.

Reflect

Begin by imagining your unique container. This can be from a memory or inspired by a story or movie. In a meditative space, reflect on the following questions: What does your container look like in terms of shape, color, and size? What texture is made out of? How does it feel in relationship to your body? How does it open and close? What does that sound like it? Where would you store it (bottom of the ocean, in a dark cave, grandma's attic...)?

Visualize

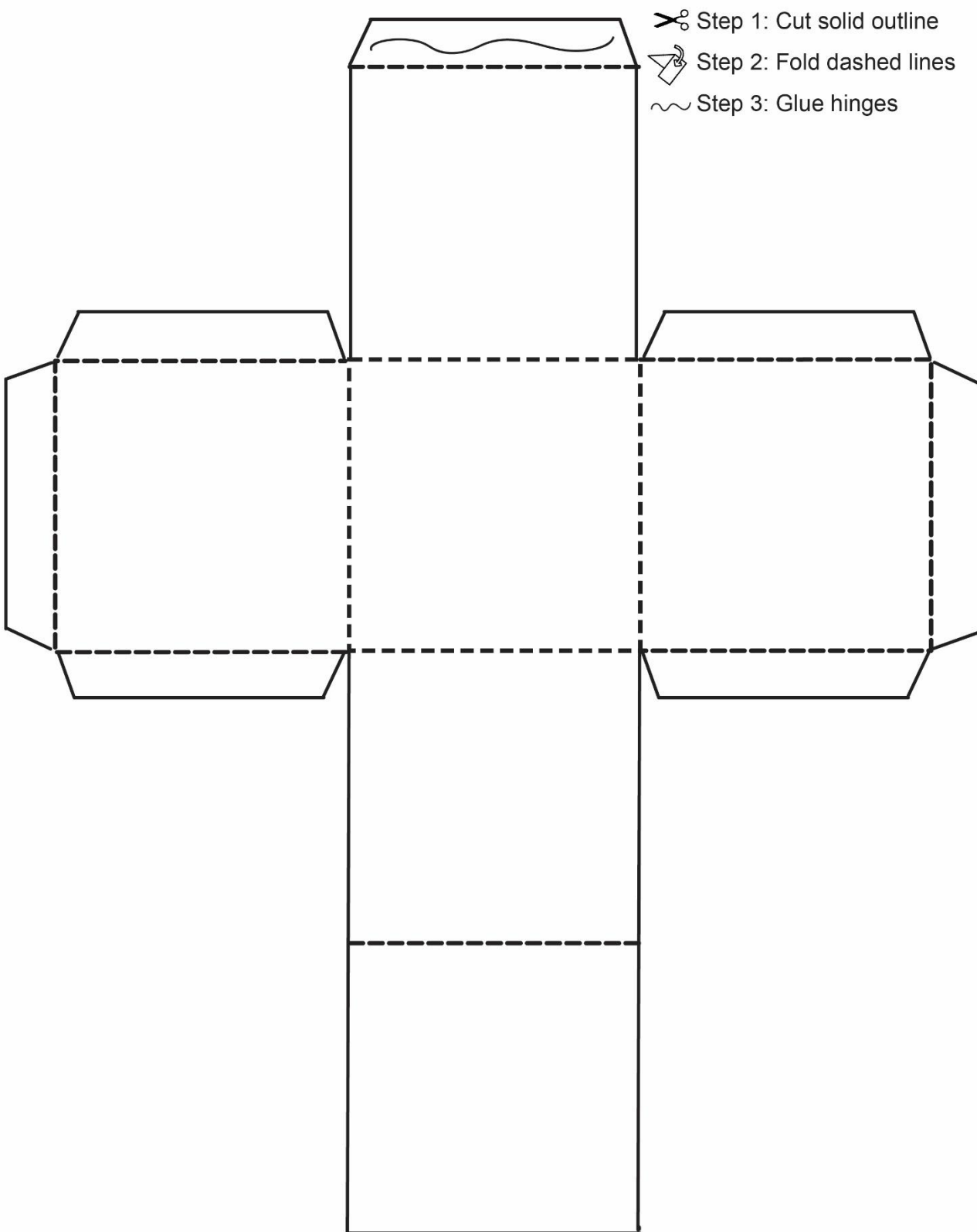
Materials: Colored paper (size is your choice), scissors, tape or glue sticks, markers

Instructions: Bring your container to life! Use the template below to cut and fold the paper into a box shape. Design the box to symbolize your container. Click on the following link to follow along with [creating your box](#).

Share (optional)

If you created this in a group, you can show your box to group members. When sharing about containers, consider how each challenge can have an appropriate container

big and solid enough to hold it.



Legacy

What did I receive and what do I want to give?

Legacy: something passed from one generation to the next and often refers to gifts of money or property. The play discusses legacy in terms of culture, customs and traditions that have been passed down to the characters. Legacy can also refer to physical items: money, property, and sentimental objects.

Writing

Respond to the following prompts in a notebook/journal/paper or digital device.

1. Think about an elder, someone you look up to or an important person in your life.
(Examples: parent, older sibling, grandparent, mentor)
2. Describe that person in 5 words.
3. What lessons have you learned from that person?
4. If you could have one of this person's characteristics, what would it be?
5. What would you want to leave and/or give to others?
6. Why are those things important to you?

An epistolary poem is a poem in the form of a letter. As in a letter, this poem is directed to a person, but it can also be to an item or personality to trait.

Option A: write a poem to the person you chose. Express your gratitude to them for the legacy they have/will leave to you.

Option B: write a poem to yourself, but in the voice of the person you chose. Imagine what they would say they want to leave you as a legacy.

Option C: (For student's family members) write a poem to your child or grandchild. Express to them the things (physical, emotional, etc.) that you want to leave to them as a legacy.

Example Poem:

Dear Pops Brown,

It is Sunday afternoon and the last hymn is being sung.
The deacon has a soft voice, nothing like yours.
His voice doesn't have the gravel and pain yours had.
He can't imbue these church songs with the scars of segregation.
His songs sound like he does not know hard work.
You worked hard until your hands could no longer open.
You showed me that there is no substitute for a good day's sweat,
a long night's labor.

Your patience is legendary.
Your tenacity a masterclass.
You let me *help* you build a house
and taught me that there is nothing without a strong foundation.
This deacon could not have built a house.
His hands are not as calloused enough.
He cannot the stories you left behind.
Stories that tell both the horror's of history
and the possibility of the future.
I know that I can because you did.
And that will never leave.

Visual Art

Our Squares: A Collage Quilt

Video Tutorial - [Click here to watch](#)

This art activity explores 'legacy' through art-making and story-sharing. You and your family (or group) will create art and design a quilt-like collage. Each square of the collage will represent a piece of someone's story or experience.

The final art piece could be framed and hung or displayed in some way to continue the sharing of these stories and experiences into the future.

After completing this activity, consider these reflection questions:

1. What story did you create about, and why?
 2. What does legacy mean to you?
 3. What stories or experiences do you want to share with the next generation, and why?
-

Music

"Remember the ocean's voice rings with generations. Remember we are strong enough to sing anyway." -I AM ME

Reflect

Refer to the quote above. A legacy can be defined as what you leave behind to others. This can be related to culture, such as food or traditions, or can be items like money, property, or something of personal value. Challenge yourself to keep the spirit of legacy in your mind while answering the following prompts.

Respond to the following in a journal, notebook, paper or digital device:

As you experienced the play, what were the parts that resonated with you or you related to?

How did you notice legacy being expressed in the play?

What is something you learned or something personal that you wish to share with the world around you?

What is **one phrase** that summarizes how you feel?

"Values reflect what is important to the way you live and work" - Anonymous

Respond to the following in a journal, notebook, paper or digital device:

Step 1: Identify 4 values that are important to you:

Examples include: courage, honesty, kindness, [see more examples here](#)

Step 2: Choose from these options how you would like to present your work.

Poetry with music

Rewrite a popular song

Write your own song

Step 3: Create some lyrics or lines of poetry to express why you chose your values and what role they play in your life. You can use a [karaoke track](#), find an [instrumental beat](#), or use a [blues backing track](#) as musical backup. Try to include the "**one phrase**" from your reflection portion in your writing.

Share

Try this activity with another person or a small group. See if you can create something together!

Visual Art

Family Landscape

Key words: Individuality, Collective, Ancestors, Relationships

Each family is different, with its own shared strengths and group identity. Some families are like a traditional tree with old roots and new flowers. My neighbor's family might be like a school of fish, everybody swimming as one. Some may be more like a hive of bees, with different members that somehow work together. Who do you consider to be your family? What is your family like?

Reflect

Begin by completing these lists. You can write in a notebook/journal/paper or digital device. Feel free to edit and “mine” repeatedly. There is no wrong answer; lists can be long, random, funny, with little details, memories, or imaginative...

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| • My family sounds like... | • With my family, I am... |
| • My family sounds like a rushing river | • With my family, I am grounded |
| • My family sounds like thunder | • With my family, I am fiery |
| • My family sounds like... | • With my family, I am... |
| • My family sounds like... | • With my family, I am... |

Materials:

Colored paper (size is your choice), markers, pencils, or crayons

Instructions:

Create an image representing your family members as elements in nature. Choose symbols such as mountains, clouds, rivers, flowers, lakes, trees.... This nature inspired family portrait is unique to you and however you define “family”. You can include yourself, chosen family, loved ones who passed away, and pets!

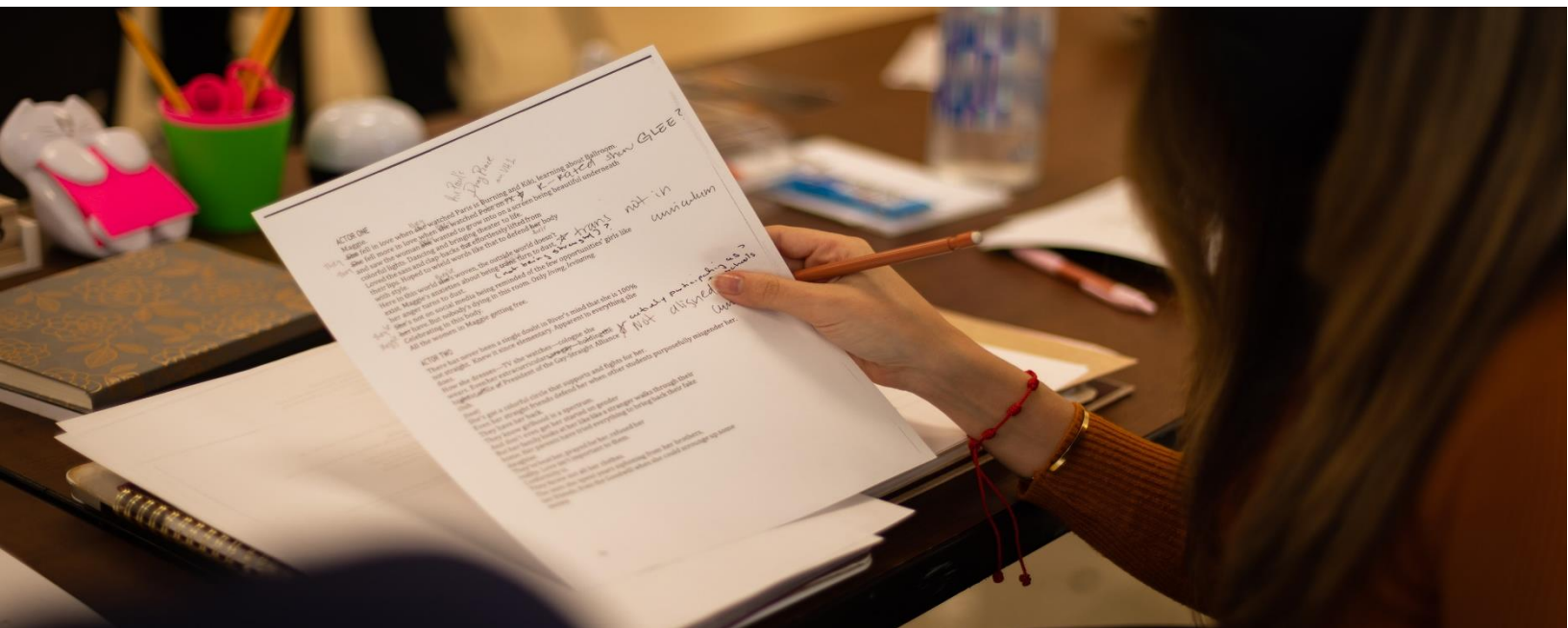
Share

(optional) If you created this in a group, you can present your image to group members. When sharing about the image, try to keep it metaphorical and find meaning in the landscape. Consider the strengths of each natural element and how care helps sustain them.

Did you know? Below you will find some information about some of the most common mental health issues impacting teenagers today.

- **Anxiety** - Anxiety is a natural human reaction that involves mind and body. It is actually a basic survival function and acts as a warning system that gets activated when we perceive danger or threat. Everyone experiences feelings of anxiety from time to time. Anxiety can be described as a sense of nervousness, worry, fear, or dread of what's about to happen or what could happen. When these worries or feelings of nervousness become constant or excessive, these may be signs of an anxiety disorder. Anxiety disorders are one of the most common mental health conditions. (kidshealth.org) For more info: <https://kidshealth.org/en/teens/anxiety.html#catmental-health>
- **Depression** - Depression is more than a low mood or feeling sad. It is characterized by intense feelings of sadness, hopelessness, anger or frustration that last for at least 2 weeks. Depression can make you feel like it is hard to enjoy life or even get through the day. Some signs and symptoms of depression, especially, if they last for more than 2 weeks, are: Irritability or annoyed mood; feelings of worthlessness; trouble concentrating, making decisions; changes in sleep; changes in appetite; loss of interest and/or pleasure in usual activities; frequent thoughts of death, dying or suicide. For more info: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/teen-depression> and <https://medlineplus.gov/teendepression.html>
- **Trauma/PTSD** - Trauma is an emotional response to a terrible event(s) like an accident, abuse, sexual assault and/or natural disaster. Immediately after the event(s), shock and denial are typical. Longer term reactions include unpredictable emotions, flashbacks, strained relationships and even physical symptoms like headaches or nausea. Fortunately, even when people experience a traumatic event, they don't always develop traumatic stress. Many factors contribute to symptoms, including whether the person has experienced trauma in the past, and protective factors at the family and community levels can reduce the adverse impact of trauma. For more info: <https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma>
- **Eating Disorders** -eating disorders are serious but treatable mental and physical illnesses that can affect people of all genders, ages, races, religions, ethnicities, sexual orientations, body shapes, and weights. Eating disorders are illnesses that affect a person's relationship with food and body image. People with eating disorders have excessive thoughts of food, their body weight or shape, and how to control their intake of food. 9% of the U.S. population, or 28.8 million Americans, will have an eating disorder in their lifetime. For More info: <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org/what-are-eating-disorders>
- **Suicide Prevention** - Suicide is when someone hurts themselves with the goal of ending their life, and they die as a result. A suicide attempt is when someone

hurts themselves with the goal of ending their life, but they do not die. Suicide is the second-leading cause of death for young people ages 15 to 24, surpassed only by accidents, according to the U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Knowing the warning signs for suicide and how to get help can help save lives. Some warning signs to look out for are: Talking about wanting to die or wanting to kill themselves; Talking about feeling empty or hopeless or having no reason to live; giving away possessions; researching ways to kill themselves; saying goodbyes to family and friends; engaging in risks that could lead to death, such as driving extremely fast. The 5 Action Steps for helping someone in Emotional Pain are linked here <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/5-action-steps-for-helping-someone-in-emotional-pain> National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
For more info: <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/suicide-prevention>
<https://www.oakgov.com/health/information/Pages/Youth-Suicide-Toolkit.aspx>



SUPPORT



Support Options

MDCPS

Mental health services and safety, support provided by the district
<https://mentalhealthservices.dadeschools.net>

Hotlines

Who to call/text in a crisis or for support?

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255)
- Self-Harm Hotline: 1-800-DONT CUT (1-800-366-8288)
- National Hopeline Network: 1-800-SUICIDE (800-784-2433)
- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233
- Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741
- Lifeline Crisis Chat (Online live messaging):
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/chat/>
- American Association of Poison Control Centers: 1-800-222-1222
- Trevor Project - LGBTQ crisis intervention and suicide prevention
 - 24/7 availability Text START to 678678
 - Trevor Life Line 1-866-488-7386
- Banyan Health Mobile Response Team 24 crisis hotline (305) 774-3616
<https://banyanhealth.org/service/mobile-response-team/>

Where to find support:

Organizations/ways to access providers/treatment in South FL

- National Alliance on Mental Illness - NAMI Miami
<https://namimiami.org>
- SAMHSA National Helpline <https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline>
1-800-662-HELP (4357) 24/7 availability in English and Spanish
- Florida International University Center for Children and Families
<https://ccf.fiu.edu/families/index.html> (305) 348-0407
- Community Health South Florida <https://chisouthfl.org/services/behavioral-health-care/> (305) 252-4820
- National Eating Disorders Association <https://www.nationaleatingdisorders.org>

Low-cost & virtual therapy/support:

- Open Path Collective (virtual and in person therapy options)
<https://openpathcollective.org/>

- Talkspace (online therapy)
<https://www.talkspace.com/>
- Sesh Therapy (virtual support group options)
<https://seshtherapy.com/>
- Within Health (virtual eating disorder treatment)
<https://withinhealth.com>

Apps

for relaxation/meditation, self-help/self-healing

Insight Timer

<https://insighttimer.com/>

Calm

<https://www.calm.com/>

Headspace

[Meditation and Sleep Made Simple - Headspace](#)

Colorfy

[Colorfy: Coloring Book Games - Apps on Google Play](#)

Social media

Mental health IG/ Tik Tok accounts

Let's Talk Mental Health

https://instagram.com/letstalk.mentalhealth?utm_medium=copy_link

Self Care is For Everyone

<https://www.instagram.com/selfcareisforeveryone/?hl=en>

Mental Health America

<https://www.instagram.com/mentalhealthamerica/?hl=en>

Tik Tok - @micheline.maalouf

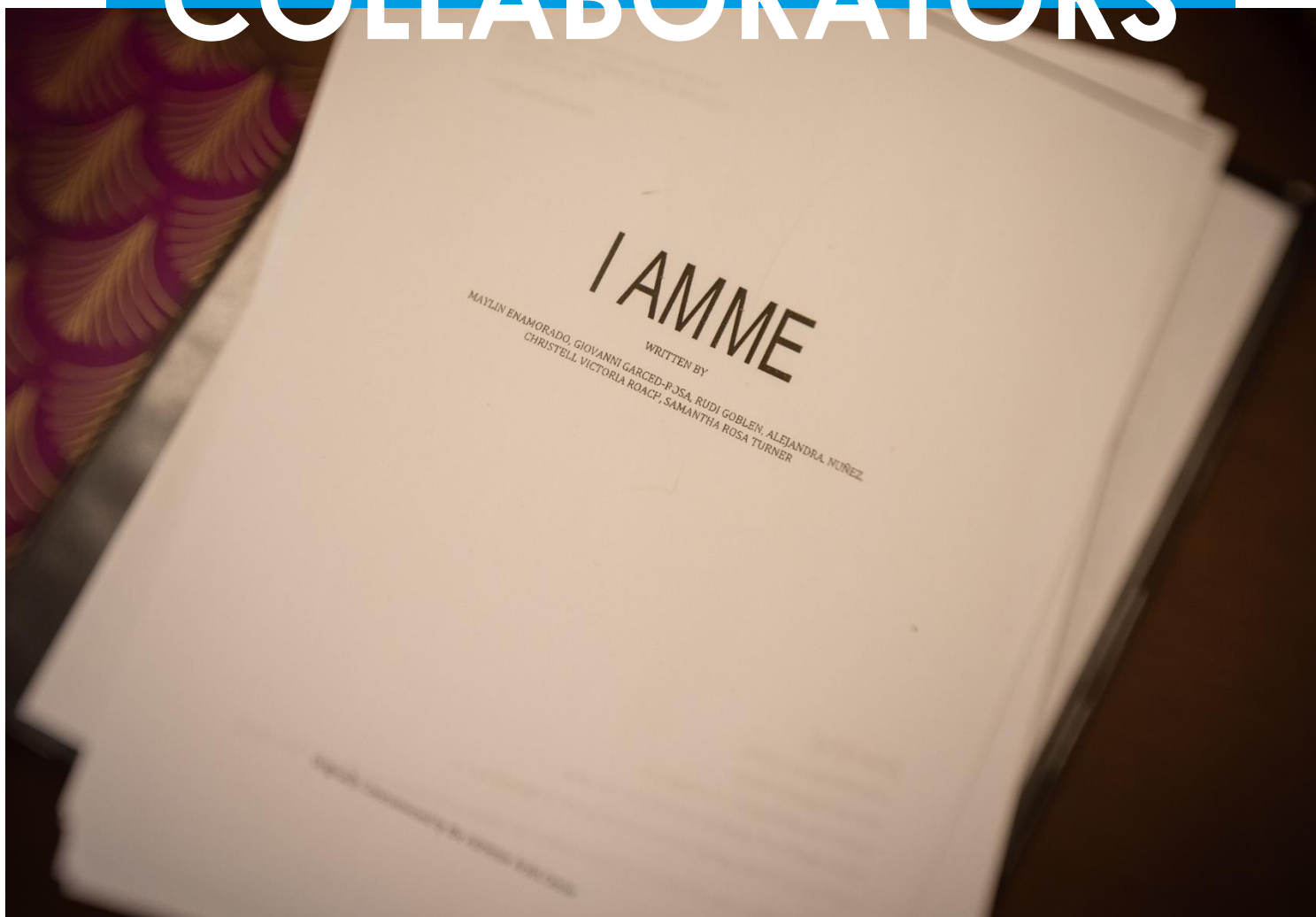
To learn about Creative Arts Therapies and/or find a Creative Arts Therapist:

American Art Therapy Association <https://arttherapy.org>

American Music Therapy Association <https://www.musictherapy.org>

American Dance Therapy Association <https://www.adta.org>

COLLABORATORS





Jenna Balfe is an artist/musician (Donzii) and activist from Miami, FL. Balfe graduated from the University of Massachusetts in Sustainability Studies and Dance in 2011. In 2017 Balfe received a Master of Science from Pratt University in Dance Movement Therapy. She currently is holding her "Bodymovement" classes, which have been ongoing since 2012.

Deanna Barton is a Board Certified Art Therapist, educator, and artist creating and holding spaces for people of color to connect to innate creativity, heal and bloom. Deanna is a member of the American Art Therapy Association's (AATA) Multicultural Committee and has been featured in several AATA publications, including the 2021 DEI Gallery and Art Therapy Today. Deanna is a professor at Edinboro University's Art Therapy Program, and a member of the Accreditation Council for Art Therapy Education. She received a MA in Art Therapy from the George Washington University and a BA in Psychology from Spelman College.



Deanna is the founder of ALLUMA: Art & Healing, a private practice and virtual art and wellness space that supports the healing and well-being of women of color living with anxiety, depression, perfectionism, and the experiences of racial stress and trauma.



Yolande Clark-Jackson is a creative writer, children's book author, speaker, and educator. She holds an MFA in creative nonfiction from Converse College. Her nonfiction writing can be found in *The HuffPost* personal, *Sisters Newsletter* from AARP, *Midnight and Indigo*, the *Chicken Soup for Soul: I'm Speaking Now* anthology, and others.

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/YClarkjackson>
Website: yolandec Clarkjackson.com

Natalie Cole, MA, MT-BC, NMT is a Florida native music therapist. Natalie earned her Bachelor of Music in Music Therapy from the University of Miami and earned her Master of Arts in Music Therapy from Berklee College of Music. She currently works full-time with veterans and mental health. In addition, Natalie works with Guitars Over Guns, Miami Jam Sessions and the Latin American Music Therapy Network. She has presented on topics of culturally appropriate music therapy treatment, approaching mindfulness interventions with veterans, and using songwriting as a means of Trauma-Informed Care both locally and nationally. Natalie strives to build new music therapy and mental health programs that are accessible for underserved communities and empowering of the people.



Darius V. Daughtry is a poet, playwright, director, and educator. He is the Founder and Artistic Director of Art Prevails Project, a performing and literary arts organization cultivating community and creating equitable access to the arts through performance, arts education, and community engagement.

Darius understands how exposure to and participation in the arts can impact individuals and help shift cultural landscapes to transform communities.

He is the author of a poetry collection, *And the Walls Came Tumbling*, an introspective poetic memoir and cultural critique full of vulnerable, introspective poems that explore the intersections of race, class and gender through a brutally unforgiving lens.

Born in Mexico City and Berklee College of Music alumni, **Paloma Dueñas** has been practicing many years in the field of Music therapy, specializing in Autism and sensory integration disorders. As a multidisciplinary artist, Paloma performs live with her Brazilian Jazz & Soul music project: Brasoul and she is a visual artist constantly producing and selling her art work participating in local events and exhibitions. Paloma is also an active teaching artist for museums and organizations where she focuses on sensory art, inclusion and conscious educational programs. In 2017, Paloma created Ohm Sessions which focused on teaching how music and sound can assist the healing process and understanding of how frequency and vibration is medicine. She currently travels back and forth between Miami and Mexico doing Ohm Sessions work.



Lakeisha Frith is a violinist and graduated from Florida Atlantic University with a bachelor's degree in Arts and Humanities. Ms. Frith began working with the Greater Miami Youth Symphony in 2005 as the String Orchestra Assistant and as an instructor in the GMYS Preparatory Program. From 2016 to 2025, Ms. Frith served as the Manager of Education at the Adrienne Arsht Center for the Performing Arts, where she worked in conjunction with resident companies, arts partners, and Miami-Dade County Public Schools to enhance the arts education experience of all students and teachers throughout Miami-Dade County. Ms. Frith is a proud member of Women of Color in the Arts. She also maintains a private violin studio and enjoys teaching and performing.

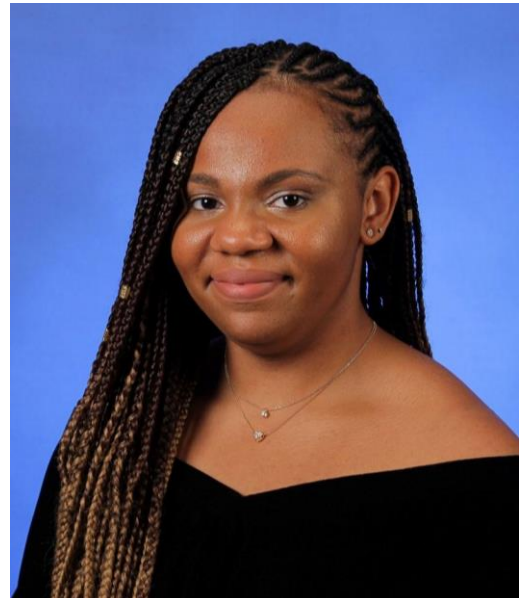
Annie Hoffman, ATR-BC, LMHC (Editor) is a Board-Certified Registered Art Therapist and Licensed Mental Health Counselor. She is the Education and Outreach Manager at The Moss Center with the Miami-Dade County Department of Cultural Affairs. She has over 13 years' experience in the arts and health care fields working with youth, adults and families. She has spent the majority of her career advocating for and educating about the healing and community building aspects of being involved with the arts. She is passionate about creating accessible arts opportunities for all.





Elia Khalaf, MA, LMHC, ATR is a Registered Art Therapist and Licensed Mental Health Counselor in the state of Florida. He is currently a doctoral student in Counseling Education and Supervision at Oregon State University and received his MA from NYU in Art Therapy and Counseling. Currently he leads the Creative Arts Therapy program at University of Miami Sylvester Comprehensive Cancer Center.

Emma Moise is a college student and dancer, born and raised in Miami, Florida. Since the age of two years old, she has been learning many different forms of dance, including ballet, jazz, modern, hip hop, tap, west African, Haitian folklore, flamenco, acro, and contemporary. In 2016, she was a camper in Ailey Camp Miami at the Arsht Center. She recently interned at the Adrienne Arsht Center in the Education and Community Engagement Department under both the Director of Community Engagement, Jenni Person, and the Director of Education, Lakeisha Frith. During the internship, she was able to work on events such as Ailey Camp Miami, Camp Broadway, "Kitty Hawk", "Jazz Roots", and "The Head and the Load".





Michelle Moreno is a heart-centered registered drama therapist. She has been working with individuals to discover their unique voice for over 10 years throughout South Florida. She utilizes a variety of creative arts, drama therapy, and psychotherapy techniques to create a holistic experience to honor and support the individual to meet their unique needs.

Currently, Michelle collaborates with fellow drama therapists and artists to produce original content for the virtual space that takes the witness on a magical autobiographical therapeutic journey.

Jennifer Puig is a dance, yoga and creative movement facilitator, artist, choreographer and dance teacher certified as a Wolf trap Education Teaching Artist and Dance Movement Therapist. Jennifer boasts an inexhaustible curiosity for how dance and movement manifest in cultures around the world and the way in which body movement plays an intricate part of our everyday lives, providing a tool for meaning, expression, communication and transformation. Jennifer knows that the Arts have the power to connect, transform and assist others in learning, as well as assisting in the integration of social, emotional and self-regulation skills, that provide all individuals with a sense of Well-Being.

