



Girl Guides  
of Canada  
Guides  
du Canada

# Mighty Minds

## Sparks Program



THE PSYCHOLOGY  
FOUNDATION  
OF CANADA  
LA FONDATION  
DE PSYCHOLOGIE  
DU CANADA

*Girl Guides of Canada would like to thank Kids Help Phone and The Psychology Foundation of Canada for their support and assistance in the development of Mighty Minds. Their expertise in the areas of child and youth mental health has been fundamental in ensuring Mighty Minds is a strong mental health program based on research and best practices for girls and young women across Canada.*



# Sparks Challenge

The Mighty Minds Challenge is designed to help girls develop positive mental health skills they can use in their daily lives, while addressing the stigma that surrounds mental health and illness in our communities. Mighty Minds offers many different activities girls in units can choose to do. Some require planning and organizing and some can be done with just the information provided here. As you work with girls to plan your Mighty Minds meeting(s), review the activities and decide which ones are suitable and of interest. Then you can mix and match activities to create your unit meeting. Don't forget to begin with the provided Starter Activity and end with the provided Closing Activity for a full experience.



Don't forget to share what you are doing in the Mighty Minds Challenge by telling us about your participation in the program and sharing photos with us on social media using **#MightyMindsGGC** and **#MentalHealth** and the following tags:



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Look for the **OUTDOOR** icon throughout this Challenge. This icon identifies activities that can easily be done outdoors with little or no modifications.

Complete the Starter Activity and the Closing Activity as well as **at least one activity from each of the three themes**. After completing the Mighty Minds Challenge, Guiders can choose to present girls with the Mighty Minds crest, available from [thegirlguidestore.ca](http://thegirlguidestore.ca).

**NOTE:** Throughout this Challenge document, you will notice text in **BLUE**. This text is provided as a sample dialogue that Guiders may choose to use to explain various concepts, ideas or terms to girls. Guiders should feel free to adapt these sections, based on what works for them. Guiders should also feel free to use these sections as mini scripts in their unit meeting, depending on their individual knowledge and comfort levels on the topic.



≡ **BEGIN** the Challenge with this Starter Activity ≡

## Starter Activity – Building Blocks of Health

Materials: (will vary depending on approach chosen)

- Options for making bricks:
  - Draw bricks onto pieces of coloured or white paper; Guiders should have them cut out (if necessary) in advance.
  - Make 3D bricks in advance out of folded/origami paper using the following video instructions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nggz44ADzMs>. Note: to create a brick with enough space for girls to write/draw on, make (28 cm) 11' squares from (43x28 cm) 11x17 sheets of paper.
  - Bricks could also be made from GGC cookie cases covered with white or coloured blank paper (Guiders should prepare these in advance)
- Coloured markers, pencil crayons, crayons
- Tape for posting on wall (if needed)

There are two ways your unit can create the building blocks:

1. Create individual bricks for girls to write/draw on, and then post them on the wall to create a paper wall.
- OR**
2. Have girls write/draw onto 3D bricks, then stack the bricks into a wall.

As girls arrive at the meeting, direct them to the building blocks area. Invite girls to spend a few minutes writing and/or drawing onto bricks/sheets of paper ideas, objects and/or concepts they think are part of health and staying healthy. If girls are struggling, have them think about their own health and the different things that help them be healthy. Girls can also think about how being healthy makes them feel. Guiders should explain that there is no right or wrong answer.

When all the girls have arrived and Guiders are ready to begin, conclude the starter activity by using the bricks to build a wall, or tape sheets of paper to the room's wall in a 'wall' formation. Give girls a quiet minute or two to look at the ideas on the bricks/sheets of paper. Explain that tonight you will be talking about mental health, which is part of everyone's health. Guiders can share that:

### Mental health is part of your overall health. It's about:

- how you feel, think, and behave
- how you cope with the ups and downs of everyday life
- how you feel about yourself and your life
- how you see yourself and your future
- how stress affects you
- how you deal with negative things that happen in your life
- your self-esteem or confidence<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Mental Health: The Basics," Children's Mental Health Ontario, accessed October 2016, [http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/children\\_youth/introduction.php](http://www.kidsmentalhealth.ca/children_youth/introduction.php).



Explain that being able to understand how mental health is part of their overall health is an important skill. Let girls know that you will be coming back to these bricks at the end of the meeting.

**NOTE:** When using the term ‘mental health’ with Spark-age girls, it may help to use it interchangeably with ‘feelings’ or ‘emotions’ which girls may be able to better understand. Guiders should still help girls make the link between feelings and emotions and mental health so that they begin to draw these early connections.





≡ **CONTINUE** the Challenge by selecting one activity from each of the themes. ≡

## THEME 1 – General Mental Health

Mental health is a natural part of overall health and something that everyone has and experiences. Mental health has strong connections to feelings and emotions and is best thought of as a continuum from optimal mental health to poor mental health. Each person will experience a range of feelings and emotions, and be at countless places along that continuum at various times in their lives. Experiencing this range is normal and healthy. Good mental health involves the building of skills to spend as much time as possible on the positive side of this continuum and lessen the impact of negative emotions.

### Objective:

- Girls will learn about mental health and illness.

### Outcomes:

At the completion of this theme, girls will demonstrate:

- an understanding of what mental health is and its role in their daily lives
- knowledge of the distinction between mental health and illness and the relation between the two
- the ability to identify people and organizations where additional help is available
- insight into supporting the positive mental health of themselves and others

## Theme Activities:

### Mental Health in Action



In this activity girls will explore the mental health component of their overall health.

### Materials:

- Situation cards (page 27) – one per group of three to four girls



Begin by having girls sit in a circle. Have girls take turns sharing an idea they have about health that they want to share with others. This could include ideas such as: having a strong heartbeat, eating nutritious food, being active, washing hands often, etc. Depending on the size of the unit, this can be done in two groups, each working with a Guider. When all girls have had a turn, Guiders can ask girls what ideas might not have been



presented. Guiders should refer girls back to the definition of mental health from the starter activity and ask girls if they included ideas about mental health. Have girls share a few ideas about how mental health is part of overall health (e.g., having an upset stomach when they are sad, feeling their pulse race when excited or nervous, etc.)

Next, break girls into small groups of three to four. Ideally each group should be paired with a Guider. Depending on the number of girls and/or Guiders, groups may need to be slightly larger. Provide each group with a situation card (page 27). With Guider support, have girls think of healthy ways to handle the situation shown on the card (including: what they might think, feel and do, not just a ‘solution’) to ensure that everyone’s mental health (feelings and/or emotions) are considered. Girls will choose their best/favourite example and develop it into a short skit. Groups can be paired together to share skits or each group can share their skit with the whole unit.

When skits have been presented, have a brief concluding talk about the importance of good mental health and how good mental health helps support being healthy overall. Guiders can use any of the following questions to assist:

- How might you feel if you found yourself in one of these situations? How might your body react to these feelings and emotions?
- Why is it important to think about your feelings and the feelings of others before we act?
- What can you do to pay more attention to your mental health (feelings/emotions) every day?

## Controlling the Negative

(Modified based on “Tug of War” from *Flex Your Head*; Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada)

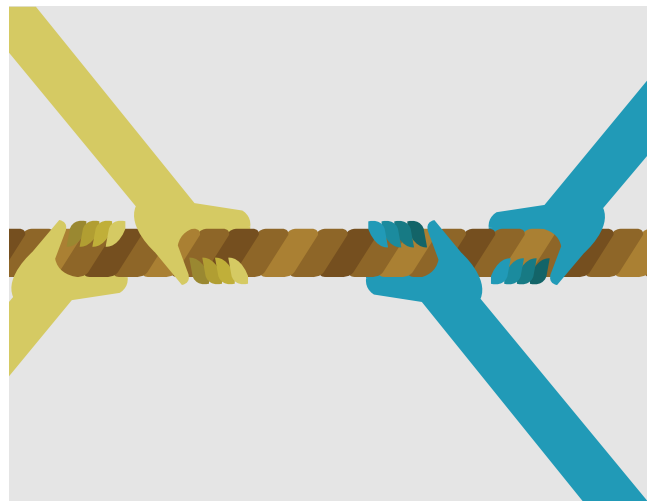
In this activity girls will play a tug of war to demonstrate the pull some feelings and emotions can have on them.

### Materials:

- Long, strong length of rope
- Length of tape (to be used on the floor)

Begin the activity by brainstorming with girls about feelings and emotions. Ask girls to give an example of a feeling or emotion they have had as well as one way that their body experiences that emotion. For example:

- Happy – smile a lot which makes cheeks hurt
- Angry – face turns red and feels hot
- Excited – feels like there are butterflies in their stomach
- Worried – get a headache and don’t want to eat





Ask girls if they know what a tug of war is. If they don't, share with them that **a tug of war is when two teams pull at opposite ends of a rope until one team pulls the other team over a centre line.** Explain that some feelings and emotions pull really hard at us trying to keep us feeling them longer than we may want to, kind of like a tug of war. Explain that fighting against our thoughts, feelings and emotions takes a lot of effort. Share with girls that they are going to play a tug of war game to demonstrate how this works.

Lay out the rope across the room and place the tape on the floor at the centre point. Break girls into two teams. Explain that one team is going to represent the feelings we like to feel and the other team is going to represent the feelings we don't like as much. Have girls take up places along both ends of the rope and hold on. Tell girls that when you say 'go,' they should start pulling, and that the object of the game is for the 'feelings we like' team not to get pulled across the line. (Note: depending on their unit, Guiders may want to provide additional safety reminders at this time.)

Once girls start pulling, Guiders can add some distractions. This might include singing and doing silly dances around the girls, playing musical instruments or noise makers; anything to try and cause girls to pull less hard.

The game ends if the 'feelings we like' team gets pulled across the line, or at any point of the Guider's choice. Have girls gather to share their experiences. Guiders can lead this by using questions such as:

- How did it make you feel to be told you were on the 'feelings we like' or 'feelings we don't like' team? Why do you think you felt this way?
- How much concentration did it take to focus on the tug of war? Show of hands – a little, medium or a lot?
- What happened to your concentration on the tug of war when there were distractions? (Guiders can explain that these distractions represent all the other things happening in our lives when we have big feelings or emotions we want to move past which can make that job harder.)
- What did you notice happened when your team pulled harder? (Response should be that the other team pulled harder, too)
- What do you think would have happened if the 'feelings we like' team had just dropped the rope and stopped playing?



Guiders can end the discussion by having girls think about whether they might ever be able to just stop fighting the feelings they don't like, and instead just feel them. Explain that **sometimes everyone experiences feelings they don't really like. This is normal and okay. Accepting and dealing with these feelings is part of moving away from them and back to the feelings we do like.** Remind girls that if they are worried that they can't seem to move past a feeling/emotion, or are concerned about what they are feeling, they should talk with an adult they trust.



## Practice the Positive - Sparks



This activity allows girls to try various techniques for helping maintain positive mental health.

### Materials:

- Materials will vary depending on the strategies chosen for the stations
- Activity instructions – (pages 29 – 31)

### Activity options

1. Take 5 Breathing – page 29
2. Making Stress Balls – page 29
3. Yoga – page 30
4. Colouring Mandalas – page 31
5. Mindfulness – page 31

Guiders should have several stations set up ahead of time based on the activities they have chosen. (See activity options above.) Guiders can determine the amount of time girls will spend at each station based on their individual unit. It may be worthwhile to let girls know ahead of time that if they do not complete particular activities, they can take them home and finish them later.

Guiders can begin the activity by talking briefly with girls about things they do to cheer themselves up when they feel down, to calm themselves down when they are angry or upset and that make them feel happy. Guiders can share with girls that learning how to handle big or overwhelming feelings and emotions is part of good mental health and that having some strategies to improve their mood or manage big feelings will help make these situations easier.

Explain to the girls that they are going to have a chance to try out a few different strategies that can help with all this. Break girls into groups, having one Guider with each group. Have each group move to their first station to complete the activity. Girls rotate to the next station as directed by Guiders and the process continues until girls have completed all of the stations (or as many as possible in the time available).



**NOTE:** Guiders can decide how much time groups will spend at each station. Five minutes should be enough at each station except for making stress balls, which will require approximately 10 minutes. Guiders can choose which activities to include based on the overall time available, and could have groups visit all stations, or one or two of the girls' choice.





Before the activity concludes, bring all the girls back together for a short discussion. Remind girls that if they are worried that they can't seem to move past a feeling/emotion, or are concerned about what they are feeling, they should talk with an adult they trust. Questions to incorporate in the discussion may include:

- Which activity did you like best? Why?
- How did you feel after trying some of the activities?
- Have you ever tried any of these activities before? Which ones?
- How do you think you can use these activities in your daily life?
- How might these activities help you handle your feelings?

## Here to Help – Sparks



(Modified based on “*Stay Away Paparazzi*” from *Flex Your Head*; Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada)

In this activity, girls play a version of tag demonstrating the role support plays in helping to maintain positive mental health.

### Materials:

- None

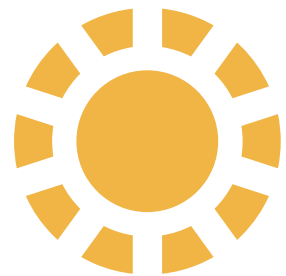
Spend a few minutes with girls at the beginning of the activity thinking about different times when they might need help or support from someone else. For example, when they can't reach something, when they are confused about something or are feeling sad. Girls can also provide examples of how others help/support them and how they help/support others. Conclude the conversation by explaining that they will be playing a version of tag that will require help/support from others.

Explain to girls that in this game they are going to be in three groups: superheroes, villains and force fields (another option could be fish, seals and kelp). The villains will chase and try to catch the superheroes, and it's the job of the force fields to protect the superheroes from the villains. Force fields are active when two girls join hands face-to-face with a superhero between them. When the superhero leaves the protection of the force field she can be caught again. If a superhero is caught by a villain, she becomes a villain for the rest of the game. Tell girls they will need to be watchful of who needs help because the villains move fast!

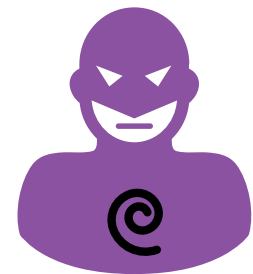
Divide girls into three groups (markers of some type such as athletic pinnies or arm bands can be used to remind girls who is in which group). Play the game as long as desired. Groups can be swapped at any point so that all girls have the opportunity to play each role.



Superhero



Force Field



Villain



At the end of the game, bring the girls back together to discuss the experience. The following are examples of questions Guiders may choose to include:

- How did you feel when you were a force field and responsible for protecting the superheroes?
- How did you feel when you were a villain? A superhero?
- Where are some places you feel safe?
- Who are people you feel safe with? (Who are the ‘force fields’ in your life?)
- Do you like being taken care of or helped? Do you like helping or taking care of others?
- What are some things you can do when someone you know needs help?

Close the discussion by reminding girls that **everyone needs help sometimes and we help others because we care about them. We may not even realize we’re helping someone when we say a friendly ‘hello’ to them or let them go first in a game. Sometimes these small actions are a big deal to someone else. Helping and caring for someone can make them feel safe, cared for, happy, appreciated and valued. And feeling all of these good feelings helps with our mental health and the mental health of others.**

Remind girls that if they are worried that they can’t seem to move past a feeling/emotion, or are concerned about what they are feeling, they should talk with an adult they trust. Challenge girls to watch for chances to care for and help others, especially those who might really need to feel some of these positive feelings.





## THEME 2 – Resiliency

Resiliency skills are powerful tools in helping girls bounce back from the challenges in daily life. The ability to bounce back from failure, disappointment, adversity, trauma and every day ups and downs and to move forward in a positive way supports positive mental health and reduces the risk of mental health challenges and/or behavioural problems.<sup>2</sup>

### Objective:

- Girls will learn resiliency skills and how they support good mental health.

### Outcomes:

At the completion of this theme, girls will demonstrate:

- improved understanding of their feelings, emotions and ability to self-calm
- techniques in problem solving, handling failure and adaptive skills
- increased skills in flexible and positive thinking
- realization of how recognition of personal strengths, achievements and self-concept support mental health

## THEME ACTIVITIES:

### Symphony of Emotions



(Modified based on “Emotional Symphony” from *Flex Your Head*; Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada)

This activity will allow girls to explore the various ways their bodies provide cues to the feelings and emotions they are experiencing.

### Materials:

- Chart paper
- Markers



Begin the activity by brainstorming a list of feelings and emotions that girls are familiar with. Guiders can record these on chart paper. Girls should try and think of diverse feelings and emotions including those they like and those they don't. There should be at least the same number of emotions listed as there are girls in the unit.

Reveal to girls that they are going to use the feelings and emotions they just listed for this activity. They will be exploring how their bodies show or experience these feelings and emotions. Remind girls that there is more

<sup>2</sup> “Promoting Resilience and Wellbeing,” Response Ability, accessed October 2016, [http://www.responseability.org/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0004/4783/Promoting-Resilience-and-Wellbeing.pdf](http://www.responseability.org/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/4783/Promoting-Resilience-and-Wellbeing.pdf).



than one way for someone's body to show a certain feeling, so the way their body shows a certain feeling or emotion may be different from someone else, and that's okay. Explain that it's important to know how our own bodies show different feelings and emotions so that we can find good strategies to help us manage them and/or to support the feelings or emotions someone else is having.

Have all girls form a line and face in the same direction. Select one girl to be the 'conductor.' This girl will stand facing the line of girls. Give each girl in the line a feeling or emotion from the list they created. Tell girls they need to decide how to show their feeling or emotion using their bodies and voices, but not words. It should be fast and only last a second or two. Give girls a few moments to think about this. Guiders can help provide examples if girls are struggling. For example: Happy – smiling and clapping, Sad – frown, whimpering and slouching, Excited – jumping up and down making a high pitched sound.

**NOTE:** Guiders may want to demonstrate how conducting works for the first round before girls take turns in this role.

When everyone is ready, the conductor stands in front of the line and points to each girl one at a time. When a girl is pointed to, she 'acts out' her feeling or emotion. The conductor can start by moving through the line of girls across from her so each girl has a turn. Once each girl has acted out their feeling or emotion once, the conductor can use her creativity to direct in any way she chooses. This might include creating a pattern, randomly selecting girls in the line, conducting faster or slower, etc. Guiders can choose to switch the conductor and the feelings girls have fairly often to allow girls to have a variety of experiences. The activity ends at any time of the Guider's choosing.

Bring girls together at the end of the activity to talk about their experiences. The following are some examples of questions Guiders may choose to include:

- Was there a feeling and/or emotion that you liked acting out most? Why did you like it best?
- Was there a feeling and/or emotion that you didn't like acting out? What didn't you like about it?
- How did you choose what to do when acting out the feelings or emotions?
- What did it feel like when you were acting out the feelings and/or emotions?



Guiders can wrap up the talk by reminding girls that everyone shows their feelings and emotions in different ways. Even though the activity allowed girls to exaggerate the feelings and emotions, the idea is that our bodies will tell us what we are feeling through different messages, like smiling when we're happy or our shoulders getting tight when we're frustrated. Explain that girls should always try hard to pay attention to the messages their bodies are giving them so that they can choose appropriate, healthy and positive strategies to



handle how they are feeling. Remind girls that if they are worried that they can't seem to move past a feeling and/or emotion, or are concerned about what they are feeling, they should talk with an adult they trust.

## Practicing Problems

(Modified based on "What If?" and *Problem Solving Model* from *Kids Have Stress Too! Preschool Program*; *The Psychology Foundation of Canada*)

This activity will provide girls with the chance to practice simple and effective problem solving steps with scenarios they may encounter in their daily lives.

### Materials:

- '5 Steps' poster (see page 37 for sample)
- Blank paper – one sheet per girl
- 5 Steps Icons – one set per girl (see page 36)
- Various colours of washable paint
- Paint brushes
- Glue
- Markers

**NOTE:** This activity may be a bit messy.

To start the activity, ask girls to talk about how they tackle and solve problems. This can include having girls share examples. Guiders can share with girls that sometimes they need to use creative and flexible thinking (looking at the situation in a new way) when handling or solving problems. (For example, if the swings are all taken at the park, girls could get upset, wait for a turn, or play on other equipment until they see a swing is free.) It can also help to break the situation or problem down into steps. Share with girls that you're going to show them five steps they can use when problem solving.

Guiders can put up the 5 Steps poster (see page 37) and talk through the steps with girls. The following is an example of how this dialogue might sound.

Let's imagine that it's early in the morning. Everyone at home is still sleeping, but you're awake and hungry. You decide to get yourself a bowl of cereal. You carefully take out a bowl, pour the cereal and milk, and put everything back. When you pick up the bowl from the counter to move to the table, it slips and smashes all over the floor. There is cereal, milk, and broken glass everywhere. What should you do? Let's use the 5 Steps to help us figure this out.

### 5 STEPS



**STEP 1: What is the problem?**



**STEP 2: How big is it and how do I feel?**



**STEP 3: What can I do?**



**STEP 4: What might happen?**



**STEP 5: Did it work? Try something else?**



**STEP 1:** ‘What’s the problem?’ - There is a huge mess all over the floor. Figuring out the problem was pretty easy this time.

**STEP 2:** ‘How big is it (the problem)? How do I feel?’ - Well the mess is taking up most of the kitchen floor so it’s big, but no one is hurt or in danger at this moment so it’s not an emergency. I feel a bit surprised that I dropped the bowl and worried that I might have woken everyone up and that my parents will be angry I made a mess.

**STEP 3:** ‘What can I do?’ - I could clean up by myself. I could also go wake someone up, tell them what happened and ask for help.

**STEP 4:** ‘What might happen?’ - If I clean up myself, I might not do it right and I could also cut myself because there is sharp glass. If I wake someone up, they might be upset about the mess.

**STEP 5:** Did it work? Try something else?’ - I’m going to wake Mom up and explain what happened. I’m going to ask her to show me how to clean it up properly so I learn, and ask her to pick up the sharp glass so I don’t get hurt. She might be upset about the mess, but I think she’ll be glad I didn’t risk getting hurt cleaning it up alone, and that I asked for help when I needed it.

While talking through the example, Guiders should get girls to associate each step with a finger on their hand, moving from the thumb to pinky. Break girls into small groups so that there is one Guider with each group. Have girls practice using the 5 Steps as a group by applying them to a situation or problem they might face, such as:

- Breaking a toy while fighting over it with a sibling.
- Spilling lunch all over their clothes at school.
- Someone buds in front of them in the line for the water fountain a school.
- Playing with friends at the park and someone falls and is hurt.
- Forgetting to bring their lunch to school.

When girls have finished practicing applying the 5 Steps, provide each girl with a blank paper and they can create their own 5 Steps poster using their handprint and the icons.

## POSTER INSTRUCTIONS

**STEP 1:** Set up materials ahead of time.

**STEP 2:** Provide each girl with a blank sheet of paper and have them title their poster “5 Steps Problem Solving.” (Provide a template for girls to copy from if needed.)

**STEP 4:** Working with a partner if needed, have girls paint one of their hands. Girls will press their handprint onto the center of their paper. (Have girls wash their hands before proceeding with the next step.)





**STEP 5:** Have girls carefully glue one of the 5 Steps Icon pictures (page 36) at the end of each of the fingers and thumb on their sheet, beginning with the thumb and ending with the pinky.

**STEP 6:** Girls can then label each strategy one through five (beginning at the thumb) with marker using the poster from earlier as a template.

## It's Not A....It's A....

In this activity, girls will build their flexible thinking skills to use common objects in a completely new way.

### Materials:

- Materials will vary; however, each girl will need one main object such as:
  - Box, jar, can, or other small container
  - Funnel
  - Plastic utensil
  - Paper or plastic cup
  - Paper towel or toilet paper roll
  - Pieces of wood or sticks
  - Milk jug
  - Garland
  - Straws, pipe cleaners, or plastic scoops
  - Random kitchen utensils – spoon, spatula, tongs
  - Game pieces – dice, checkers, markers
- Various craft materials
- Scissors
- Glue, tape

Before beginning, Guiders should have all of the ‘main’ items laid out so that girls can select the item they wish to work with. All other supplies can be set out in a separate work area.

To begin, Guiders will ask girls what they think the phrase ‘flexible thinking’ means. After girls have shared some thoughts, Guiders can share that **flexible thinking is about looking at things in a different way – changing your thoughts and mind to ‘see’ something differently.** Explain that this activity is going to help them practice their flexible thinking, which will help them handle difficult situations.

Tell girls that they will be able to choose one main item. Using that item and other supplies, they need to create something completely new that serves a new purpose. It’s up to each girl to decide the purpose her creation will serve. It might solve a problem, make life easier, do something silly or fun or be useful in the future; it’s completely up to each girl to decide. It may be helpful to let girls know before they begin how much time they will have, and then remind them periodically of how much time is remaining.



After girls have completed their items, they can work in small groups to explain their creation and its new purpose. (This can also be done as a large group.) Once girls have presented their creations, talk about the experience as a unit. The following are some examples of questions Guiders may choose to include:

- What types of things did you think about when you first looked at your main item?
- What did you find challenging about this activity? How did that make you feel?
- What was easy for you? How did this make you feel?



Brainstorm with girls situations in their lives when they might be able to use flexible thinking. Let girls know that this type of thinking can help them solve problems, and avoid getting angry or frustrated when things don't turn out the way they would like. Challenge girls to try and remember to use this type of thinking the next time they face one of the situations that were discussed in the brainstorm.

## Positive Self-Talk Puppets

(Modified based on "Talking Nicely to Myself – My Two Voices" from *Kids Have Stress Too! Preschool Program*; The Psychology Foundation of Canada)

Girls explore positive and negative self-talk and build strategies aimed at easing any challenges in growing positive self-talk.

### Materials:

- Socks – one per girl
- Various craft supplies such as: googly eyes, pom poms, pipe cleaners, fabric scraps, felt, ribbon, etc.
- Glue suitable for fabric
- Markers

**NOTE:** It may be helpful to know that there are three ways children experience negative self-talk:

- Personal – "It's all **my** fault."
- Pervasive – "I ruin **everything**." "Nothing ever goes right."
- Permanent – "No matter **what** I do, bad things **always** happen to me." "I'll **never** get it."

There are also three simple positive self-talk strategies that work for young children:

- Affirmations – "I am...smart, fun, kind, etc."
- Positive Self-Statements – "I can...share, jump high, sing."
- Self-Praise – "I did it! I'm so proud of me!"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> "Talking Nicely to Myself," The Psychology Foundation of Canada, *Kids Have Stress Too! Preschool Program*, 2016





Guiders can ask girls, **if someone who knows you well and loves you were here right now, what might they say about you?** Have girls provide examples and then ask, **could you say these same things about yourself?** When girls have responded, ask them if they know what self-talk is. If girls are having trouble understanding the concept, Guiders can explain that **self-talk is the conversations or thoughts we have with ourselves in our heads.** Guiders may want to act out an example. Have girls provide examples of both positive and negative self-talk someone might use. Ask girls if it's easier to hear nice and positive things about themselves from others or to hear it from themselves?

Guiders can explain to girls that sometimes it might be easier to listen to our own negative self-talk, such as we wish we could change something about ourselves. Remind girls that we all do things well, and trying to remind ourselves of these things, encouraging ourselves and trying to be positive can help us have positive mental health (feelings/emotions). Assure girls that sometimes it is easier to hear positive things from someone else, but it's important to try and work on listening to their own positive self-talk as well.

Explain to girls that they are going to be making puppets to help make this transition from listening to the positive things someone else says, to listening to their own positive self-talk. Girls can make their puppets look however they want. Once they've made their puppets, invite the girls to practice having their puppets say positive things to them, and then slowly work on moving from using the puppet to their own self-talk. Girls can also practice using them with a partner and think of positive things their puppets can say to them.





## THEME 3 – Stigma

Mental health stigma is widespread and harmful. Stigma is seen in the labelling of anyone perceived to be ‘different’ from the majority. Those who struggle with mental health and/or illness often comment that dealing with the stigma associated with mental health is worse than the mental health/illness they face, causing many people to never seek help or treatment. Open communication and education about mental health are powerful steps towards breaking the stigma that exists in society.

### Objective :

- Girls will learn about the negative impact of stigma on mental health while becoming empowered to build awareness and acceptance.

### Outcomes:

At the completion of this theme, girls will demonstrate:

- an understanding of what stigma is and its impact on mental health
- an awareness of the impact of biases and language choice and use
- the confidence to take a stand against stigma through building awareness
- the confidence and courage to break the silence on mental health through open conversation

## THEME ACTIVITIES:

### What If Everyone...



In this activity, girls will gain insight into the impact of mental health stigma and the importance of respecting the feelings of others.

### Materials:

- Will vary depending on experiential strategies chosen (see below)

**NOTE:** Some of the experiential strategy suggestions are messy. Guiders will want to prepare for this appropriately and may choose to complete these outdoors.

Before the meeting, Guiders will need to decide on the experiential strategies they want to use. In each case, the action will be done by one person first and then everyone together. Some examples are provided; however, Guiders can choose others based on their unit’s situation.



Example experiential strategies could include:

- Spilling a glass of water
- Clapping hands
- Popping a balloon
- Breaking an egg
- Jumping up and down
- Cleaning up a mess
- Throwing a ball
- Throwing wet sponges at a wall

Guiders can begin the activity by asking girls if they have ever heard the word stigma before and to share what they think it means and where/how they've heard it. Depending on what girls know already, Guiders can explain that **sometimes we have not nice thoughts about something, someone or a group of people just for being “different.” These not nice thoughts, and the way we act because of them, are called stigma.** Ask girls:

- Why might someone think/call someone else ‘different’?
- What feelings might the person have who thinks/calls someone else ‘different’?
- What feelings might the person who is being called ‘different’ have?



Guiders can explain that **sometimes we think that it doesn't matter what we say or do because we are only one person. But we don't always stop to think about how our actions and words sway others to act in the same way and then what happens when a big group of people all start saying or doing this same thing.** Let girls know that this activity is going to help them experience how this works.

Using the experiential strategies chosen before the meeting, Guiders will lead girls through each one using the format below. Guiders may want to choose more than one strategy in order to allow for a variety of experiences. Each can follow this sample format:

**STEP 1:** Provide each girl with any item needed for the experience.

**STEP 2:** Ask girls what they think will happen when the action is completed by one person and how big the impact of that action will be. For example, “I have a glass of water. What will happen if I pour it out right here? How big of a mess is it going to make?”

**STEP 3:** The Guider completes the action and allows for girls to respond to what they experience.

**STEP 4:** Ask girls what they think will happen if the same action is completed by all of them at the same time and the impact of that action. For example, “Now what will happen if everyone together pours out their glasses of water? How big of a mess will that make?”



**STEP 5:** The Guider instructs all girls to complete the action and allows time for girls to respond to what they experience.

Repeat the format for as many experiences as desired before concluding the activity as below.

Ask girls to think about how it might feel to hear one person say something hurtful. Have girls share thoughts and feelings they might have if they are comfortable doing so. Have girls now think back to how much bigger an action became when it was done by everyone at the same time. Ask girls to think about how their thoughts and feelings might change if they heard a big group of people all saying something hurtful to them together. Girls can share these thoughts if they are comfortable doing so.

Guiders can explain that **the hurt of stigma might feel like a lot of people saying not nice things or doing not nice things to you. It might make someone feel sad, embarrassed, or not part of the group. If someone who needs help feels like their feelings don't matter, they may not ask for the help they need because they don't want to be "different." This isn't okay. We need to remember that it's okay to be honest about how we feel, to tell others how we feel and to ask for help if what we are feeling is too big. Everyone's feelings deserve respect, even when they are different from our own. We can show this respect by allowing others to positively express what they feel around us.**

Have girls listen and think about how they feel when they hear all Guiders say, **"You don't have to hide what you feel"** to the group. (Guiders can repeat this phrase a few times for emphasis.) Girls who feel comfortable doing so can share their thoughts about how this phrase made them feel. Finally, have all girls repeat the phrase in unison three times and think about how the whole group saying it together makes them feel. Girls who are comfortable doing so can share any thoughts and feelings they had hearing the whole group support their feelings.

Guiders can conclude the activity by sharing that **it may not always be easy to understand how and why someone is feeling a certain way. We can all help to stop mental health stigma by using simple words and actions to show others that we respect how they feel and that we will support them with their feelings in any way we can.**

## Different But the Same

Girls will explore a few of the things everyone needs in order to maintain good mental health. They will also identify how we are all alike in many ways, despite our differences.

### Materials:

- Small jar – one per girl
- Pre-printed "Different But The Same" labels (see page 38) – one per girl
- 'Same Shapes' –one set per girl printed on card stock (see templates page 39)
- Double-sided craft tape
- Various colours of paint



- Marbles
- Markers
- Plastic spoons

**NOTE:** This activity might be a bit messy.

Before the meeting begins, Guiders may want to set up the area where girls will be making their Different But the Same jars with all of the needed items ready to go.

Have girls begin the activity by talking about how words and phrases can hurt. Girls can provide examples of things they may have said or heard others say that can be hurtful. Ask girls how these words make them feel and/or to think about how they may make others feel. Have girls think about and share words or phrases they might have heard people say that relate to feelings/emotions and mental health that might make people feel bad. If girls are having a difficult time with this, Guiders can provide some examples such as:

- Weirdo
- Crazy
- Crybaby
- Stupid
- “You’re making me crazy.”
- “Crying is for babies.”
- “You’re such a dummy.”
- “Smarten up.”
- “Oh get over it.”

To end the discussion remind girls that no matter what kind of hard time someone is having with their feelings, there are certain things that everyone needs. Ask girls what some examples of these things might be.

Conclude by explaining that they are going to make a craft to remind them how everyone needs certain things like love, respect and kindness. (Guiders can show girls the ‘Same Shapes’ at this time that they will be using in completing their jars.)

Have girls gather in the craft area to complete their ‘Different But The Same’ jars.

**STEP 1:** Provide each girl with a jar and set of ‘Same Shapes.’ These shapes should be created on card stock to avoid paint from bleeding through the paper.

**STEP 2:** With assistance if needed, have girls apply double-sided crafting tape to one side of their ‘Same Shapes’ and paste them on the inside of their jar.

**STEP 3:** Have girls place several drops of paint into their jar along with several marbles. Replace the lid and tighten. **NOTE:** The quantity of paint needed will vary depending on the size of the jar used. Be careful not to use too much as excess will be difficult to remove without ruining the pattern on the sides. More can always be added if needed.





**STEP 4:** Girls will roll and swirl their jars to help the marbles spread the paint around the inside of the jar. Be sure to swirl jars carefully, and not shake. Shaking the jar can cause it to break. Carefully remove the marbles. Plastic spoons may be helpful in removing the marbles.

**STEP 5:** Provide each girl with a “Different But The Same” label for their jar. Girls can decorate their label and then place them on the outside of the jar.

**STEP 6:** Allow paint in the jar to dry with the lid off. Once dry the lid can be replaced and the jar placed in a location where it can remind girls of the things everyone needs and they can provide to everyone regardless of their differences.

Girls can use their jar to hold pencils, markers or other items in their home where they will see the jar often.

## Guest Speaker- Sparks

Guest speakers are an opportunity for girls to hear from experts and those with lived experiences with mental health and illness. This is also an excellent opportunity to incorporate an open discussion about mental health to encourage positive dialogue.

### Materials:

- None

Invite a guest speaker from a mental health field (e.g. psychologist, social worker, representative from a mental health organization, etc.) or someone with a lived mental health experience to visit your unit meeting. Have your guest speaker talk with girls about stigma related to mental health and mental illness. They can talk with girls about things that can be done to stop the spread of stigma and to help people talk openly about mental health. When contacting your guest speaker, be sure to share information about your unit (age of girls, what the girls are like and how they can best engage girls) and some of the activities you are going to be completing with girls during your Mighty Minds meeting. This can help your speaker better prepare to deliver the best possible presentation for your unit.

Guiders may want to incorporate some time to allow girls to talk openly about mental health. This could include asking questions, sharing thoughts, concerns or worries, as well as breaking stigma and myths. Guiders shouldn't worry about being able to answer every question when asked. Knowing where to direct girls for more information, or helping them find the information they need is appropriate in this case.

For Guiders who may not be sure what resources are available in their local area or how to find a suitable guest speaker, check out the Mental Health Resources Document available on the Mighty Minds page of [girlguides.ca](http://girlguides.ca).





## Here For You Hug

(Craft modified based on *Kindness Craft* from the LoveNLoot Blog. <http://lovenloot.blogspot.ca/2013/01/kindness-craft.html>)

Girls will create supportive hugs that they can give or leave for someone they want to help.

**NOTE:** When discussing giving hugs, Guiders may want to remind girls that they should only be hugging someone when they know they have that person’s permission.

### Materials:

- Coloured paper
- Templates (at least one of each) – “I’m Here For You” and “Feel Good Hug” – for girls to copy and use to write messages on handprints
- Yarn/string
- Beads, various sizes, colours and shapes
- Foam hearts with punched holes in the centre
- Pencils
- Scissors
- Tape

Before the meeting begins, Guiders may want to set up the area where the girls will be making their hugs with all of the needed items ready to go.

Have girls begin the activity by talking about how words and phrases can hurt. Girls can provide examples of things they may have said or heard others say. Ask girls how these things make them or others who hear them feel. Have girls think about and share words or phrases they might have heard people say that relate to feelings/emotions and mental health that also might make people feel bad. If girls are having a difficult time with this, Guiders can provide some examples such as:

- |           |                             |                          |
|-----------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| ● Weirdo  | ● Stupid                    | ● “You’re such a dummy.” |
| ● Crazy   | ● “You’re making me crazy.” | ● “Smarten up.”          |
| ● Crybaby | ● “Crying is for babies.”   | ● “Oh get over it.”      |

Guiders can explain to girls that all of these words and phrases create stigma. Ask girls if they have heard any of these words before. Guiders can share that **stigma is a set of negative and unfair beliefs that society or a group of people have about something, someone or another group of people for being ‘different.’**

Brainstorm with girls some of the things they might be able to do for someone who might feel sad or embarrassed because of things others are saying about how they are feeling. (Hopefully girls will include give a hug in their brainstorming.) Guiders can share with girls that letting someone who is hurting know that you support them can be very helpful in letting them know they aren’t alone. Let girls know that they are going to be creating hugs that they can give to someone they think might be struggling with their feelings and



emotions or could just use some support. They can also leave them in a place for someone to find who might need a supportive hug.

Have girls move to the craft area for the remaining portion of the activity.

**STEP 1:** Working with a partner, have girls trace both of their hands onto coloured paper and cut them out. Girls can write the following messages (one on each) of the hands: “I’m Here For You” and “Feel Good Hug.” Depending on the abilities of girls, Guiders can provide templates for girls to copy the messages from.

**STEP 2:** Working with their same partner, have girls cut a length of yarn/string the length of their wingspan.

**STEP 3:** Knot one end of the yarn/string. (Guiders may need to assist with this.) Girls can lace various beads and foam hearts onto their string before knotting the other end.

**STEP 4:** Tape one end of the yarn/string onto the back of each of the handprints.







≡ **CONCLUDE** the Challenge with the following Closing Activity. ≡

## Closing Activity – Building Stronger Health

### Materials:

- Tape (any type)
- Small blank squares of paper (approximately 7-10cm square)
- Markers, pencil crayons, crayons

Have girls return to the building blocks of health wall they created at the beginning of the meeting. Provide girls with a few moments to look at the bricks again. Ask girls where the weak points are in the wall and how the wall can be made stronger (the bricks aren't attached in any way; they can be made stronger by gluing/taping them together).

Have girls think about everything they have talked about in this meeting when looking at their building blocks of health and consider what might be missing. Have girls comment on this as well as what ideas and strategies they have learned that can help strengthen the blocks, and their overall health.

Provide girls with squares of paper and have them draw or write some of these ideas on the squares. Explain that these new ideas are going to be used like patches to attach bricks together with tape. When girls have completed their pictures, use some tape to add them to the building block wall like patches.

Example ideas might include:

- Talk about feelings
- Say nice things
- Deep breathing
- Move your body
- Problem solving
- Flexible thinking

Remind girls that they should try and keep in mind after this meeting all of these different parts of health and keep trying to support their positive mental health (feelings/emotions) as well as the mental health of others.





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## Situation Cards



**“Clean up!” “I don’t want to!”**



**Feeling left out.**



**Fighting over a toy.**



**I need help now!**



## Situation Cards



**Ouch! That hurt.**



**It's too noisy and busy.**





## Practice the Positive – Possible Activities

### Take 5 Breathing

1. Open one hand with your fingers outstretched and palm facing you. Your pointer finger on your other hand is like a pencil and will trace your open hand during the breathing activity. Remember to keep your breathing slow and steady, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth.
2. Place your pointer finger at the bottom of your thumb. As you slide your finger to the top of your thumb, breathe in.
3. When your pointer finger gets to the top of your thumb, pause and hold that breath for a moment.
4. Breathe out through your mouth as you slowly slide your pointer finger down the other side of your thumb.
5. Continue the same process for all fingers on the hand.
6. When finished, think for a moment. How are you feeling? If you're still not calm or are feeling stressed/ anxious, begin again and take another five.

### Making Stress Balls

**NOTE :** This activity may be a bit messy.

#### Materials: (per stress ball)

- Two round balloons of any colour (or one sock per girl can be used in place of balloons)
- Filling material: flour, cornstarch, rice or sand
- Funnel (rolled paper funnels also work)
- Spoon
- Pencil, skewer or long toothpick
- Scissors
- Markers

#### Instructions

1. Allow girls to choose two balloons. Have girls set one of the balloons aside. This balloon should be the colour they want visible at the end of the activity.
2. Have girls blow up the balloon that they will not see and let the air out several times to stretch the balloon.
3. Stretch the balloon onto the funnel ensuring that the balloon is attached tightly to the bottom.
4. Spoon the filling material into the funnel to start filling the balloon. Be careful to ensure that the balloon doesn't slip off and spill the flour. For younger girls, it may be helpful to have them work in pairs for this step with one girl holding the balloon and the funnel while the other scoops the filling material.



5. If the funnel becomes clogged, carefully use the pencil/skewer to push the filling material into the balloon without puncturing the balloon.
6. Fill with filling material until it reaches the neck of the balloon. Carefully remove from the funnel and tie a knot in the balloon to prevent it from spilling. Younger girls may need help tying the knot.
7. With their second balloon that will be visible, have girls cut most of the neck off this balloon. For younger girls, Guiders may want to do this part in advance.
8. Stretch the second balloon over the first to help contain filling material should a hole appear.
9. Girls can decorate their stress balls with markers!

Remind girls that they can use their stress balls anytime they feel stressed or anxious to help them relax, refocus and release some tension.

## Yoga

### Materials:

- Yoga poses (see page 33)
- Yoga mats if available, but not necessary
- Calming music (preferably without lyrics) and equipment to play it if desired

Have girls remove their shoes and socks and spread out throughout the room. If using yoga mats, have girls unroll them. Before beginning the yoga poses, take a few minutes to practice deep breathing. Have girls focus on breathing deeply so that their abdomen expands, not their chests, making their abdomens expand completely on inhale and fall completely on exhale. All of this should be done without strain, in a slow smooth easy way. Next have girls try the same type of deep breathing extending their abdomens first and then continue to inhale and also fill their chest. When exhaling, girls should focus on emptying their chest first and then their abdomen. Remind girls that this is the type of breathing they should try and use throughout the yoga session.

With calming music playing (if desired), have girls follow you through various yoga poses (see page 33). Depending on the age and engagement level of girls, Guiders can use as many or as few yoga poses as they choose for the session. Girls should try and remain silent, focusing on their breathing and completing each pose to the best of their ability. Younger girls may not complete each pose with accuracy; however, Guiders not leading can circulate and assist girls as needed. Each pose should be held between 10-30 seconds (depending on the age and abilities of girls). Poses should not be held to the point that they cause pain. Girls should continue their deep abdomen and chest breathing while holding the poses.

Guiders may want to begin with easy pose or seated meditation and finish with corpse pose. These three poses can be held for 1-2 minutes or longer to allow girls time to gather their thoughts for the activity ahead and to regain their thoughts once it is completed.



## Colouring Mandalas

### Materials

- Assorted printed mandalas (see reference websites below or GGC mandala page 35)
- Blank paper
- Crayons, pencil crayons and markers
- Pencils

Guiders can provide a variety of printed mandalas for girls to colour. Various websites where free printable mandalas are available can be found below. Guiders can also provide girls with blank paper and allow girls to draw and create their own mandala design.

<http://mandala-4free.de/en/en-Mandalas-flowers.htm>

[http://www.coloringcastle.com/mandala\\_coloring\\_pages.html](http://www.coloringcastle.com/mandala_coloring_pages.html)

<http://printmandala.com/>

[http://www.coloring-book.info/coloring/coloring\\_page.php?id=209](http://www.coloring-book.info/coloring/coloring_page.php?id=209)

### Mindfulness

(Modified based on: <http://www.youthdeved.ie/sites/youthdeved.ie/files/Mindfulness%20Exercises.pdf>)

#### Materials:

- None

Ask girls to get into a comfortable sitting position on a chair or on the floor. If they are comfortable doing so, have them close their eyes. (If girls are uncomfortable with closing their eyes, explain that they can continue with their eyes open, but may find that they are better able to focus with their eyes closed). Read the following italicised instructions to girls.

*Picture your sense of hearing like a radio that can be tuned into different stations. Right now I want you to tune your radio into the sounds that are farthest away for a moment. (Pause and allow girls to listen.)*

*Now I want you to change the station and listen to the sounds right around you. (Pause for a few moments allowing girls to listen.)*

*I want you to change your station again now and this time, listen to the sounds of your own body – your breathing, heartbeat and so on. Bring their attention to each part of your body. Starting with the tips of your toes, move your attention up slowly through your legs, hips, back, arms, shoulders, neck and head. (Pause for a few minutes to allow girls to move their attention through their bodies)*

*I want you to now change your station again and just listen to your own breathing. (Pause for a few moments.)*

*Now change your station again and listen to the sounds right around you. (Pause again for a few moments to allow girls to listen.)*



*One last time, I want you to change your station and listen to the sounds furthest away. (Pause for a few moments to allow girls to listen.)*

*When you feel ready to do so, open your eyes and take a deep breath.*

Have girls share how they feel now compared to how they felt at the start of the activity. Have them share comments on how easy or hard it was to concentrate. Girls can share what the easiest part and the hardest part of the activity were. Ask girls how often they just stop in their everyday lives, focus on and listen to the sounds around them. Conclude by discussing why it might be important to listen more.





## Yoga Poses



**Easy pose or seated meditation**



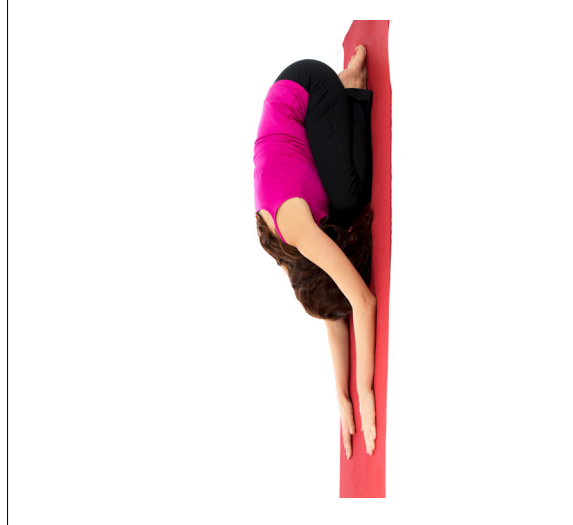
**Cat pose**



**Cow pose**



**Seated forward bend**



**Child's pose**



**Tree pose**



**Standing forward bend**



**Legs up the wall pose**



**Warrior III**



**Corpse pose**



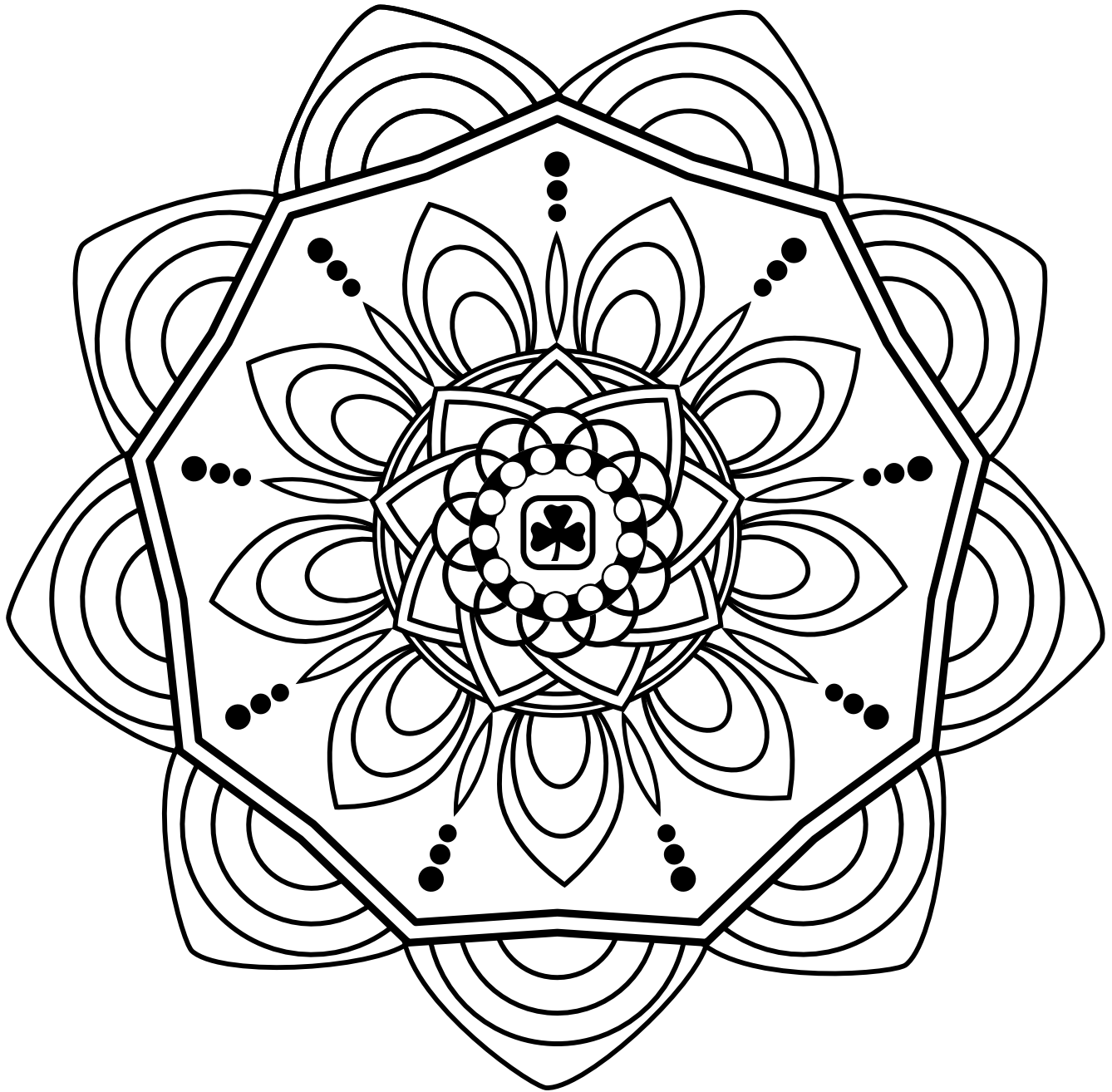
**Extended triangle pose**



**Downward dog**

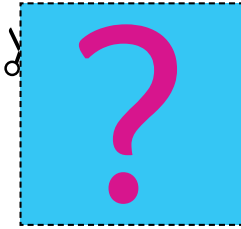


# GGC Mandala

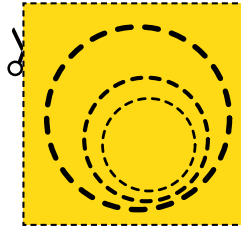




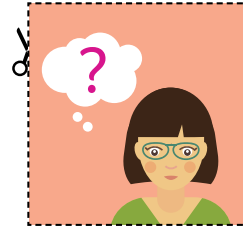
## '5 Steps' Problem Solving Icons



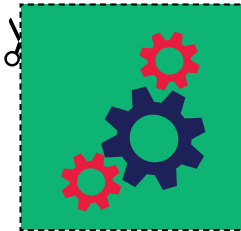
**Step 1:**  
**What is the  
problem?**



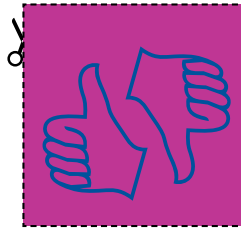
**Step 2:**  
**How big is it  
and how do  
I feel?**



**Step 3:**  
**What can I do?**



**Step 4:**  
**What might  
happen?**



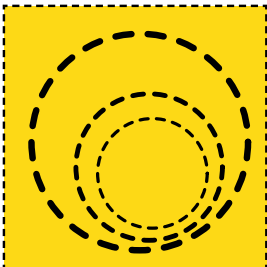
**Step 5:**  
**Did it work?  
Try something  
else?**



## '5 Steps' Poster



**STEP 1: What is the problem?**



**STEP 2: How big is it and how do I feel?**



**STEP 3: What can I do?**



**STEP 4: What might happen?**



**STEP 5: Did it work? Try something else?**



## Different But The Same Labels




## Same Shapes

