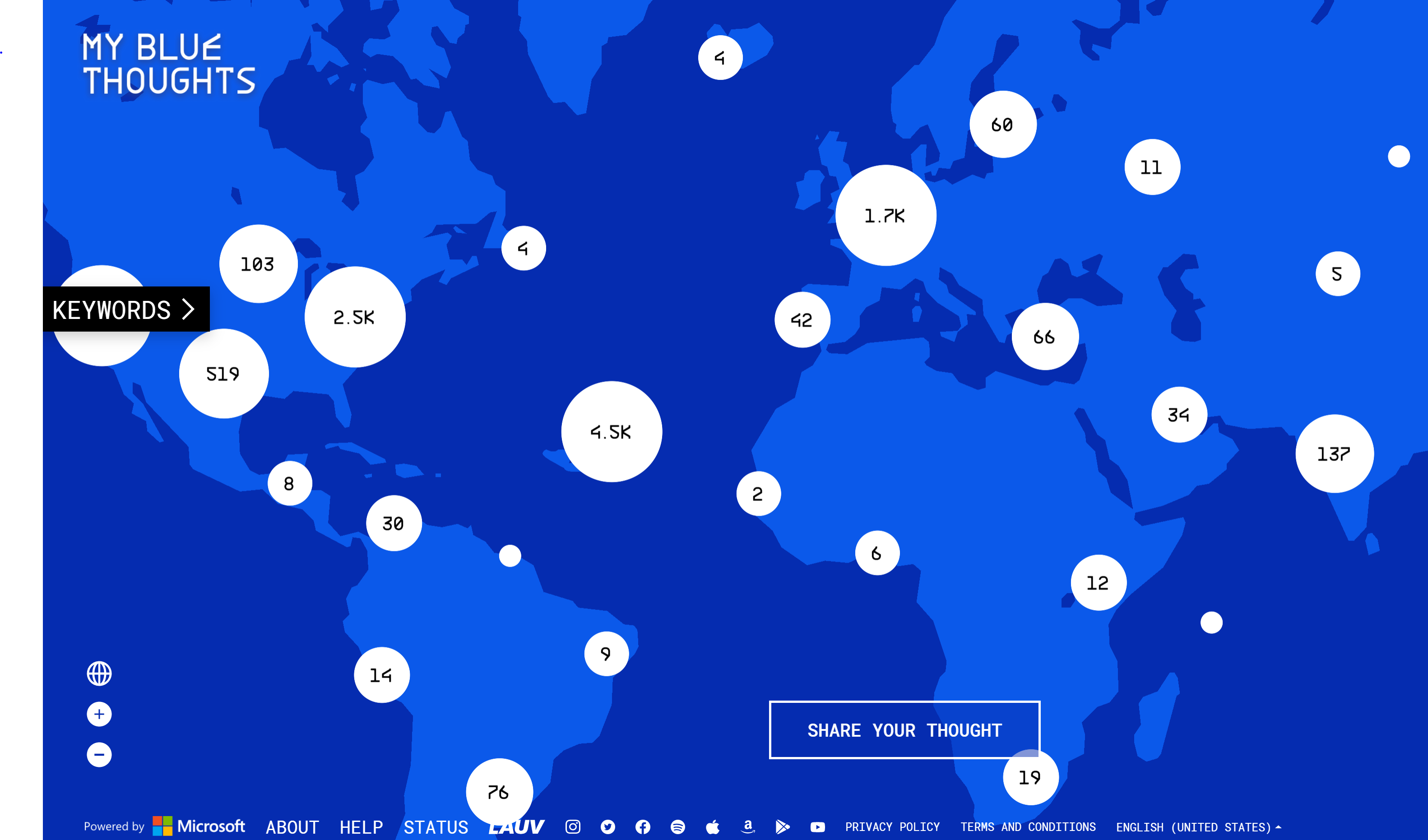
Breaking modern loneliness: a workshop on mental health

*Presented by Blue Boy Foundation, The Jed Foundation, and Microsoft*



Facilitator guide

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# Overview

## Length

1 hour (60 minutes)

75 minutes total if the optional 15-minute online activity for participants 16 years and older is included

## Background

Safeguarding the well-being of young people

The transition to adulthood can be a difficult time of life changes, milestones, and sometimes overwhelming challenges or things we feel are out of our control. During this time, many teenagers and young adults experience emotions such as sadness, anxiety, loneliness, and hopelessness. It is important not only to validate their experiences but also to raise their awareness of good emotional health, encourage authentic human connectivity, and help them develop the life skills to support themselves and others.

Lauv and *My blue thoughts*

Ari Leff “Lauv” writes and performs songs that express his thoughts on life’s challenges and emotional health. Knowing that others too deal with emotional issues, he began setting up a “My blue thoughts” box at his shows so his fans could anonymously share their feelings and experiences by writing them down and slipping them into the box. Then, through a partnership with Microsoft, the “My blue thoughts” box transformed into a website and computer terminals installed in Lauv’s performance venues. With the use of Microsoft AI speech-to-text and text-analytics technology, the [*My blue thoughts* website](https://mybluethoughts.world/en-us) lets users ages 16 and up share what is on their minds and search for other users’ thoughts from around the world by entering keywords.

*Breaking modern loneliness: a* *workshop on mental health*

Based conceptually on the website, the one-hour-long *Breaking modern loneliness* workshop teaches young people ages 13 and up the importance of good emotional health. Developed in partnership with The Jed Foundation (JED), which empowers teens and young adults “[with the skills and support to grow into healthy, thriving adults](https://www.jedfoundation.org/),” the workshop reaches across diverse cultural contexts to help participants devise an action plan for navigating life’s challenges. The plan is based on taking action in two areas: self-care and caring for others. Guided by the National Health Education Standards as put forth by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the *Breaking modern loneliness* workshop intends for participants to take away a sense of connectedness, awareness of skills for boosting and maintaining emotional well-being, and access to resources to help themselves and others who may be struggling.

## Target audience

The workshop is intended for participants 13 and older. The optional *My blue thoughts* website activity is for participants at least 16 years old, the minimum age required to access the website.

## Learning goals

During this workshop, participants will:

* Experience the support, validation, and connectedness of an open, safe forum for discussing the emotional and social challenges they face as young people transitioning to adulthood.
* Learn how to identify potential emotional issues and commit to an action plan for taking care of themselves, sharing their thoughts with people they trust, and taking time to help others.
* Become aware of resources to help them learn life skills and how to support their peers in times of need.

## Educational standards

The *Breaking modern loneliness* workshop adheres to the [National Health Education Standards](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm) and the [Characteristics of an Effective Health Education Curriculum](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/characteristics/index.htm) set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as part of their [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC)](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscc/index.htm) framework.

See the [**Appendix**](#_Appendix) for more detailed information, which may be of interest to participants’ parents, caregivers, and teachers.

# Preparation

## Advance preparation

To prepare for the workshop:

* View the quick-start video for facilitating the workshop.
* Review the suggested scripting, provided for your reference both in this facilitator guide and in the PowerPoint slide notes.
* Practice the presentation in Slide Show mode to experience the on-click animations.
* Familiarize yourself with [Lauv](https://www.microsoft.com/inculture/musicxtech/lauv-ai-my-blue-thoughts/), the [*My blue thoughts*](https://mybluethoughts.world/en-us) website, and [The Jed Foundation](https://www.jedfoundation.org/).
* Explore the resources provided to participants. (See the [Recommended resources](#_Recommended_resources) section below.)
* Put together the “My blue thoughts” activity box: a covered cardboard box (such as a shoebox or similar alternative) labeled “My blue thoughts.” Create a slit in the cover for inserting slips of paper.
* Determine the setup for the workshop: If at a physical location, will you have use of a computer? Will there be a projector and screen? Will there be a whiteboard, or will you use a digital whiteboard? Will there be a wall or any vertical surface for posting sticky notes? Or will the workshop be delivered virtually?

## Day-of preparation

Before the workshop begins:

* Print the facilitator guide: either key sections such as the preparation checklists and outline for easy reference, or the entire document to use the presentation guide instead of the PowerPoint presentation to conduct the workshop.
* If you plan to present the slides and use PowerPoint’s Presenter View to follow the scripting during the workshop, refer to this [Microsoft Office Support article](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Start-the-presentation-and-see-your-notes-in-Presenter-view-4de90e28-487e-435c-9401-eb49a3801257) on how to use Presenter View.
* Bookmark the [action-plan page](https://mbt-test.azurewebsites.net/en-us/breaking-loneliness) (password: listentolauv!) on the *My Blue Thoughts* website on your computer/laptop/tablet or smartphone. If you anticipate not having internet connectivity at the workshop location, then print the participant plans, which mirror the webpage, in advance.
* Assemble the materials listed below in the setup table.

## Setup

There are two ways to run the workshop depending on the tools you have available:

* The optimal setup: Present the PowerPoint presentation using a computer or other presentation device and display it to participants by projecting it on a screen or wall. This setup scenario is described in the table below.
* The low-tech option: If you don’t have a presentation device or projector and/or if you anticipate that the participants will not have personal internet-connected devices such as smartphones, you can conduct the workshop by following the facilitator guide. In this case, the only requirement would be to print the participant plans and put together the “My blue thoughts” activity box.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
|  | For the facilitator | For participants |
| Hardware | * Printer for facilitator guide and participant plans * Computer or other presentation device * Projector or screen display and connecting cables | None required, but if all participants have smartphones or other personal devices for connecting to the internet, then these will be used |
| Software | Microsoft PowerPoint or [PowerPoint for the web](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/View-a-presentation-without-PowerPoint-2f1077ab-9a4e-41ba-9f75-d55bd9b231a6) (free, sign-in required) | None required |
| Materials | * Facilitator guide * Quick-start video * PowerPoint presentation * Covered box   *Labeled “My blue thoughts” with a slit in the cover*   * Slips of paper   *E.g., 8.5”x11” sheets cut into 4 or 8 for participants to write down answers to put in the box*   * Pens or pencils   *For participants*   * Sticky notes   *For the brainstorm on what causes blue thoughts if a whiteboard or digital whiteboard is not used* | Printed participant plans if they do not all have personal internet-connected devices |

## Virtual delivery

Staffing

* Virtual workshops benefit from more than one facilitator: the principal facilitator, who runs the workshop and presents the content, plus one chat moderator for every 10 participants, for example.
* The support staff (chat moderators) can also help the participants troubleshoot any technical difficulties and provide additional support during activities.

Setup

* Choose a virtual meeting platform such as Teams for delivering the workshop virtually, and practice using it.
* Determine which tools (digital whiteboard, etc.) you will use, and practice using them with your support staff.

Facilitation tips

* Have your facilitation partner(s) manage the chat to help troubleshoot any technical issues with joining the meeting.
* Expect that getting participants into the meeting and setting up to participate will take up some time at the beginning of the workshop.
* If you encounter issues with background noise, echoes, or cross-talk, keep participants on mute unless it’s their turn to speak.
* Use chat for engagement throughout, especially with larger groups. Your co-facilitator(s) should manage and monitor chat to keep the conversation going.
* Whenever participants do a task independently, ask them to write in the chat to confirm when they’re done.
* Don’t let quiet students fall through the cracks: have support staff check in with each student by referencing the participants list against the chat.

## Required skills

To conduct this workshop successfully, you need to be able to:

* Navigate through and present a PowerPoint presentation with animations.
* Lead discussions including brainstorming and recording participants’ answers in a visible location. Note that use of a digital whiteboard might be required.
* Comfortably work with young people in the 13+ age group. Relevant experience as a youth-program facilitator, teacher, or camp counselor is expected.
* Identify issues that may require further assistance or intervention, such as participants making statements that suggest they might need help.
* Have resources at the ready to refer to any participants who may need more help, such as professional attention or mental health support. See below for examples. If possible, research resources available in your community or region.

## Recommended resources

Please refer to the accompanying quick-start video for a brief, high-level orientation to leading the workshop. For additional support, review the following resources:

* [*My blue thoughts*](https://mybluethoughts.world/en-us)
* [The Jed Foundation](https://www.jedfoundation.org/)
* [Relaxation skills for teens](https://www.newportacademy.com/resources/well-being/relaxation-skills-for-teens/)
* Resources provided to participants:
  + [Half of Us](http://www.halfofus.com/)
  + [Help a Friend in Need](https://www.jedfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/help-a-friend-in-need-jed-facebook-instagram-guide-NEW.pdf)
  + [Press Pause](http://presspause.halfofus.com/)
  + [Seize the Awkward](https://seizetheawkward.org/)
  + [Teen Line](https://teenlineonline.org/)

## Tips for leading an inclusive, accessible workshop

Setup considerations

* Use the PowerPoint [Subtitles feature](https://support.office.com/en-us/article/Present-with-real-time-automatic-captions-or-subtitles-in-PowerPoint-68d20e49-aec3-456a-939d-34a79e8ddd5f) in PowerPoint to caption your presentation in real time.
* To create an autism-friendly environment, limit visual and auditory sensory input in the environment.

Language to use and avoid

* Use people-first language: use the “people with/who + disability” equation. For example, person with a disability, who is blind, or who uses a wheelchair.
* Avoid insensitive describing words.Think of every bad word you can find and eliminate it: anything that uses disability to describe abnormality.
* Practice empowerment, promote strong role models, and don’t condescend to people with disabilities. For example, don’t portray people with disabilities as inspirational just because they have a disability.

Facilitation tips

* Always ask if you can help, then wait until your help is accepted before you do anything.
* Speak directly to the person you’re addressing rather than to a companion or interpreter.
* When speaking, make sure your mouth is in full view of participants in case they read lips.
* Don’t touch assistive devices (wheelchair, cane, etc.) or try to pet or interact with service animals.
* If you are corrected by someone or make a mistake, accept it, ask for suggestions to fix it, and move on.

# Outline

## Introduction, welcome video, and agenda (7 minutes)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slides | Topic | Time | Description |
| Slide 1 | Introduction | 3 min | Facilitator and participants introduce themselves and do a mini-icebreaker. |
| Slide 2 | Welcome video | 2 min | Play welcome video. |
| Slide 3 | Agenda | 1 min | Review the agenda for the workshop. |
| Slide 4 | Guidelines for participation | 1 min | Review the guidelines for establishing a safe space and sense of inclusion. |

## Life’s challenges and the feelings they cause (20 minutes)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slides | Topic | Time | Description |
| Slide 5 | Brainstorm | 7 min | What are some examples of life’s challenges? |
| Slide 6 | Activity intro | 1 min | What are some feelings these challenges cause? |
| Slide 7 | Blue thoughts box activity | 12 min | Participants submit and discuss answers on how teens can feel because of life’s challenges. |

## Extension activity for ages 16+ (optional)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slides | Topic | Time | Description |
| Slide 8 (hidden) | *My blue thoughts* | 15 min | Participants visit the website, interact with it, and compare results and impressions. |

## Participant plans for emotional well-being (25 minutes)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slides | Topic | Time | Description |
| Slide 9 | Activity intro | 2 min | Participants think of everyday actions for taking care of themselves and others. |
| Slide 10 | Activity | 13 min | Participants construct their plans. |
| Slide 11 | Sharing | 10 min | Participants are invited to talk about their plans. |

## Review resources (5 minutes)

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slides | Topic | Time | Description |
| Slide 12 | Resources | 5 min | Resources to help participants in their plans. |

## Wrap-up (3 minutes)

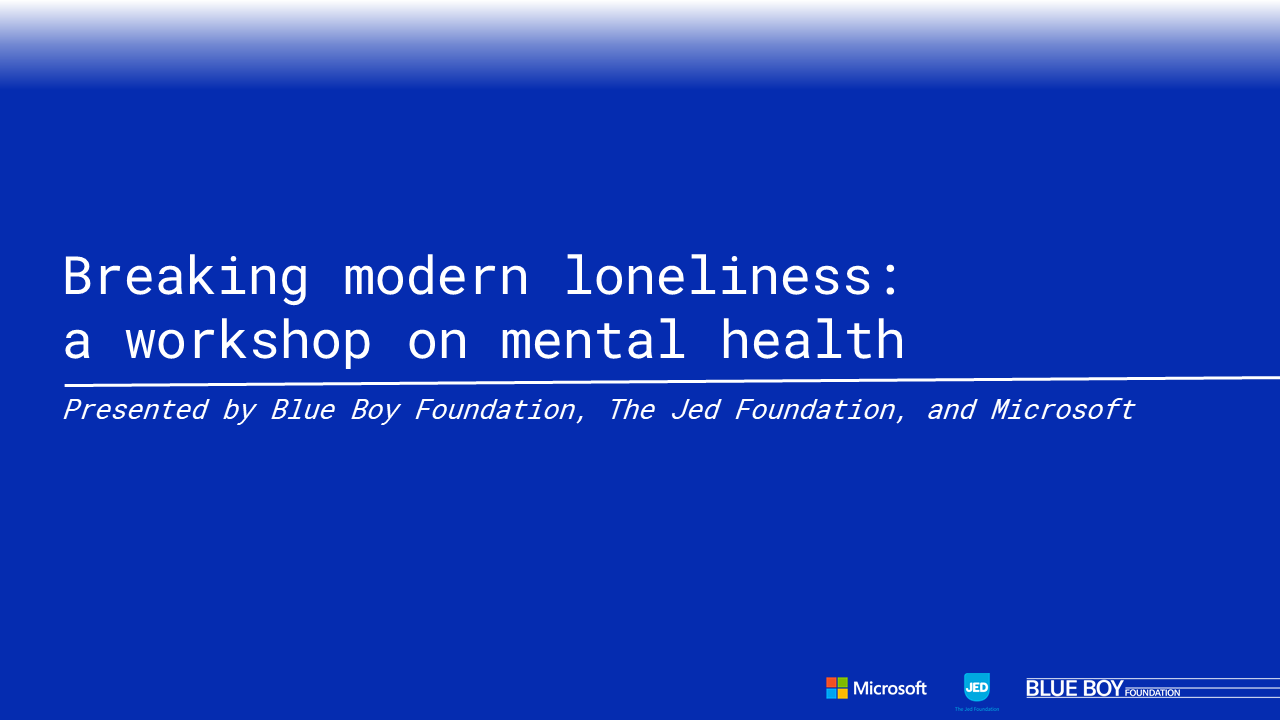
|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Slides | Topic | Time | Description |
| Slide 13 | Recap | 3 min | Brief review, then thank them for attending. |

Total: 1 hour (75 minutes with extension activity)

# Presentation guide

## Introduction, welcome video, and agenda (7 minutes)

* GOAL: Greet participants. Play a video message from Lauv welcoming them to the workshop. Create a safe space and sense of inclusion.
* SHOW**:** Slide 1: Introduction



Facilitator’s notes

3 min

say: Hi everyone, thanks for joining us for this important workshop! It’s great to have you here. My name is \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

mini-icebreaker:

* Invite participants to name their favorite kind of music or musical artist right now.
* **ASK:** Has anyone here heard of Lauv?
* Explain that Lauv is the stage name for Ari Leff, a singer-songwriter who set up the Blue Boy Foundation in 2019 to promote the importance of mental health. This workshop comes from a partnership between Lauv, The Jed Foundation, and Microsoft. The Jed Foundation supports the emotional health of teens and young adults and empowers them with the skills and knowledge to help themselves and each other.
* SHOW: Slide 2: Welcome video



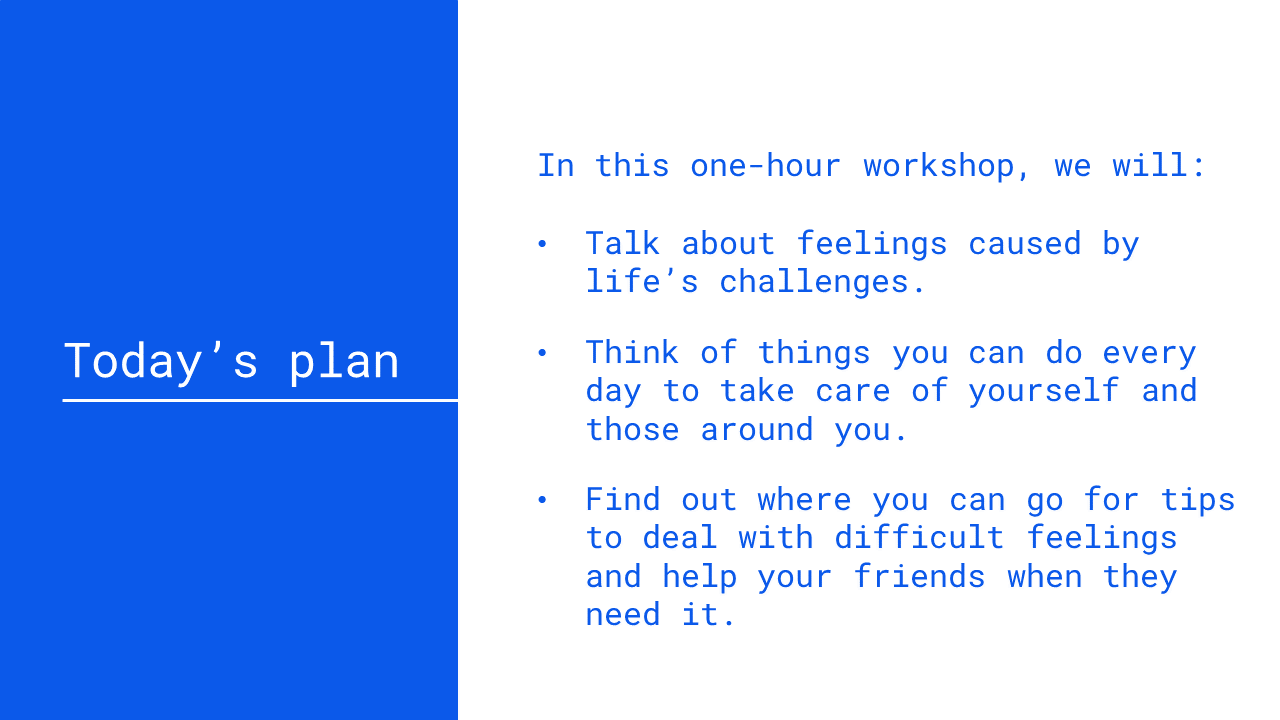
Facilitator’s notes

2 min

SAY: Knowing that others deal with emotional and mental health challenges as he does, Lauv sets up a “My blue thoughts” box at his shows so his fans can anonymously share their feelings by writing them down and slipping them into the box. Let’s watch a welcome message that Lauv recorded just for you and this workshop.

DO: Play the video.

* SHOW**:** Slide 3: Agenda

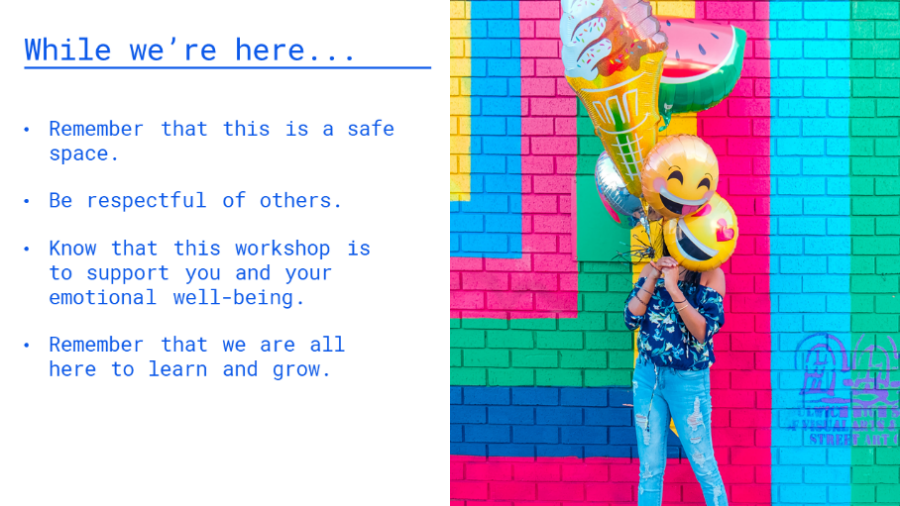


Facilitator’s notes

1 min

say: This workshop will last for one hour. Our plan today is to:

* Talk about feelings caused by life’s challenges.
* Think of things you can do every day to take care of yourself and those around you.
* Find out where you can go for tips to deal with difficult feelings and help your friends when they need it.
* SHOW**:** Slide 4: Guidelines for participation



Facilitator’s notes

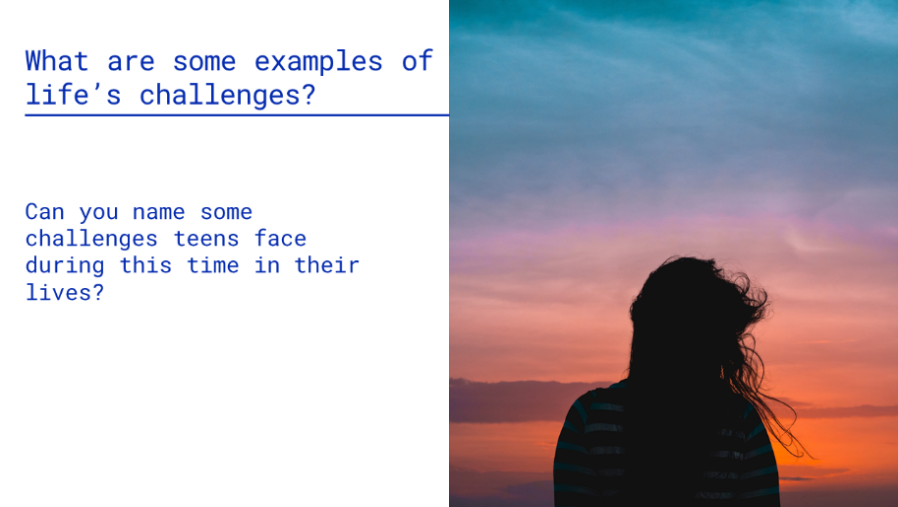
1 min

say: While we’re here, there are some things to keep in mind:

* Remember that this is a safe space for all of you to express yourselves and connect with one another through discussion and activities.
* Be respectful of others: listen when they speak, and keep in mind that it’s not always easy to share our feelings and experiences. Trust that everyone will show you the same respect when you share your thoughts.
* Know that this workshop is to support you and your emotional well-being.
* Remember that we are all here to learn and grow.

## Life’s challenges and the feelings they cause (20 minutes)

* Goal: Invite participants to consider the challenges teens face, and the feelings caused by these challenges.
* SHOW**:** Slide 5: Brainstorm: What are some examples of life’s challenges?



Facilitator’s notes

7 MIN

SAY: Let’s think about the many challenges teens face at this time in their lives. Can you name a few?

Do: Advance the slide animation to reveal the second question. Invite participants, if they are comfortable doing so, to name some challenges that young people face. Help them with the following examples if needed:

* Relationships
* School, family, and other responsibilities
* Next steps, such as getting into college or finding a job
* Issues and events happening in the world, such as . . .

**OPTIONAL:** Write participants’ answers on a whiteboard, sticky notes that you stick on a wall, or a digital whiteboard such as Microsoft Whiteboard.

* SHOW**:** Slide 6: What are some feelings these challenges cause?

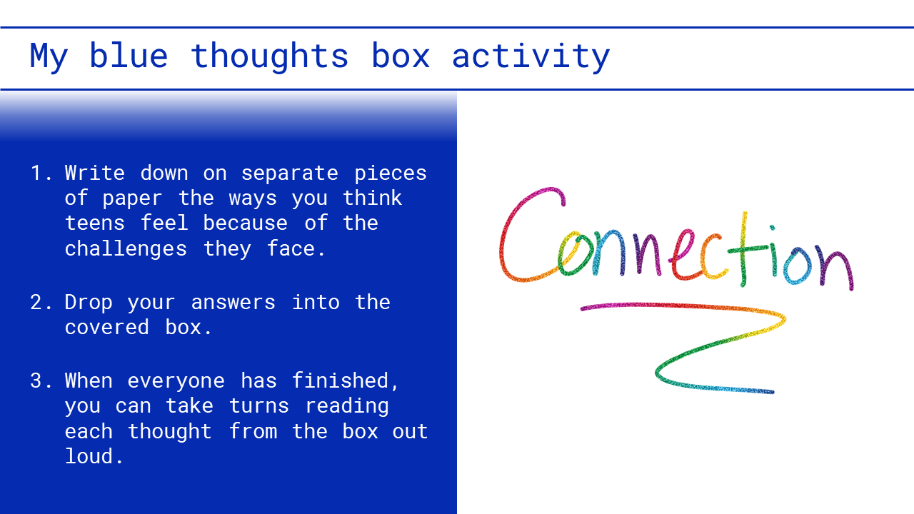


Facilitator’s notes

1 MIN

say: So, what are some feelings these life challenges can cause? (Advance the slide animation to reveal the next question.) What are some ways teens can feel because of the challenges they face? You’ll now have the chance to do the same activity that Lauv invites his fans to do at his shows.

* SHOW**:** Slide 7: “My blue thoughts” box activity



Facilitator’s notes

12 MIN

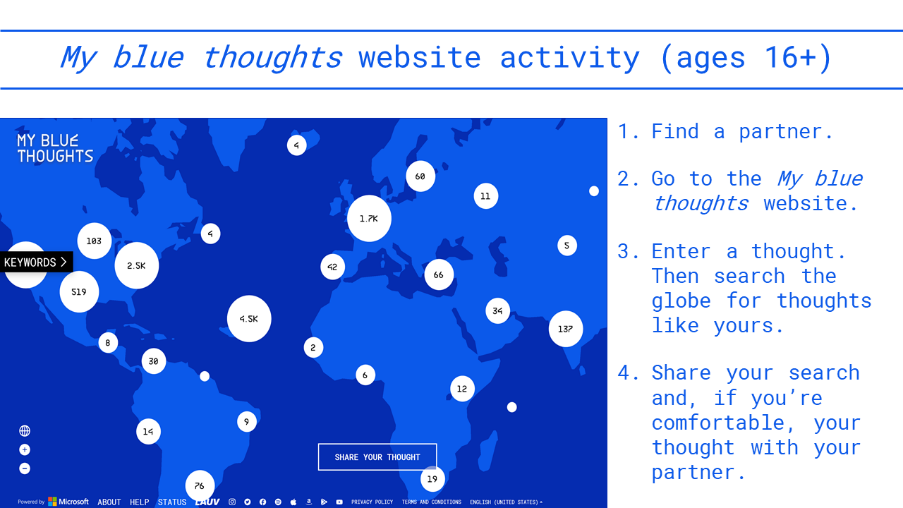
say: In this activity, imagine the kinds of thoughts that Lauv’s fans put into the “My blue thoughts” box at his shows. If you like, you can write down on separate pieces of paper different ways you think teens feel because of the challenges in their lives that we just talked about. Then drop your pieces of paper into the “My blue thoughts” box.

Do: Lead the activity. Note that participation is voluntary: participants should never feel uncomfortable taking part in any aspect of the workshop.

* Review the steps listed on the slide with participants and answer any questions.
* When everyone has finished submitting their answers, let participants volunteer one at a time to draw a random thought from the box to read aloud to the group.
* After each thought is read, ask participants as a group what their reactions are to it. Call attention to the themes represented in their answers, for example, loneliness, sadness, anxiety, boredom, confusion, or curiosity.
* Underscore that these thoughts and feelings are common and shared by other teens around the world.

## Extension activity for ages 16+: Think, pair & share (optional, adds 15 minutes)

* Goal: If desired and appropriate, invite participants 16 and older to interact with the *My blue thoughts* website as a resource they can continue to use to find connection and express their feelings. The age requirement is due to restrictions for accessing the website.
* **SHOW:** Slide 8 (hidden): *My blue thoughts* website activity



Facilitator’s notes

15 MIN

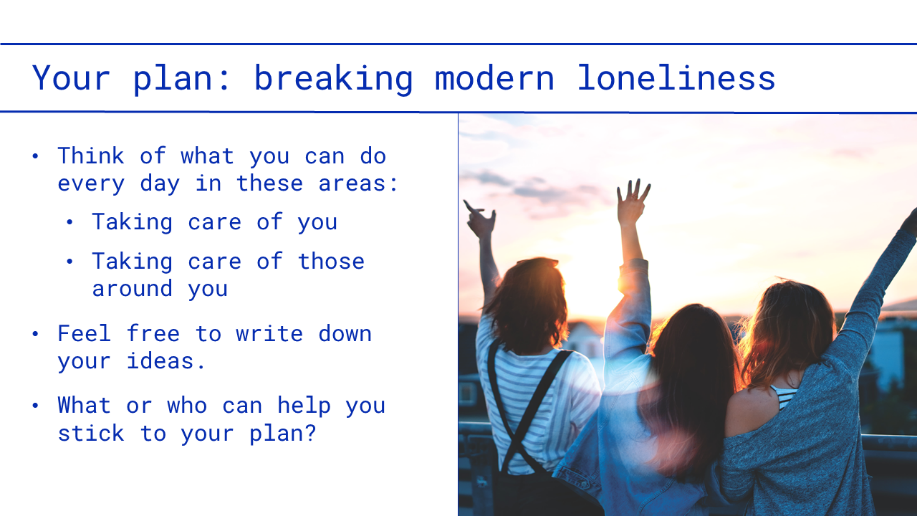
SAY: In partnership with Microsoft, the “My blue thoughts” box became a website that Lauv’s fans could access at computer terminals in his performance venues. In this activity, you’re going to interact with the *My blue thoughts* website, which is powered by Artificial Intelligence (AI) Microsoft technology to connect with others around the world by doing keyword searches. You’ll see how connected you are to so many others through the feelings you share.

DO:

* Review the instructions listed on the slide with participants:
* Pair up, and then access the *My blue thoughts* website – mybluethoughts.world – on your smartphones or other devices.
* Enter a thought on the website. Then look up other thoughts from around the world using the keyword that best relates to your thought.
* Share the results of your search and what you think about it with your partner. If you feel comfortable, share the thought you entered on the website with your partner.
* Answer any questions they have before and during the activity.
* NOTE: This activity is optional and only for participants 16 and older because of the age requirement for accessing the website.

## Participant plans for emotional well-being (25 minutes)

* Goal: Participants devise a plan consisting of everyday practices for bolstering their emotional well-being.
* SHOW: Slide 9: Activity: your plan



Facilitator’s notes

2 min

DO:

* Either assist participants in navigating to the [action-plan webpage](https://mbt-test.azurewebsites.net/en-us/breaking-loneliness) ([https://mbt-test.azurewebsites.net/en-us/breaking-loneliness /](https://mbt-test.azurewebsites.net/en-us/breaking-loneliness%20/) password: listentolauv!) attached to the *My blue thoughts* website on their internet-connected devices or smartphones, or distribute the printed participant plans if they do not have personal devices for connecting to the internet.
* Review the activity instructions on the slide.
* Note that it’s important to have support when starting to regularly do things that are good for our health. Ask them to think of ways or people who can help them stick to their plans. For example, they can have a friend check in with them to see how they’re doing with their plan. They can also set calendar reminders in their phones.
* Advance to the next slide to offer suggestions for what their plans can include.
* SHOW: Slide 10: Your plan can include . . .



Facilitator’s notes

13 min

SAY:

* **Taking care of yourself:** Taking care of your thoughts and feelings is as important as taking care of your physical health. For example, even brief periods of exercise can make a big difference. Or you can meditate, do something creative, or think about what brings you happiness and share that with your friends or family.
* **Taking care of those around you:** When we connect with others, we are addressing our own need for connecting with others. And when we help others, we help ourselves by doing good. Take the time to reach out and talk with a friend who seems to be struggling. Or volunteer at a soup kitchen or a local food bank once a month.

DO: Talk participants through the sections for constructing their plans, either on the webpage or on the printed paper copies, while allowing them time to write down their answers if they choose to do so.

* **SHOW**: Slide 11: Volunteer to share your plans

 10 MIN

Facilitator’s notes

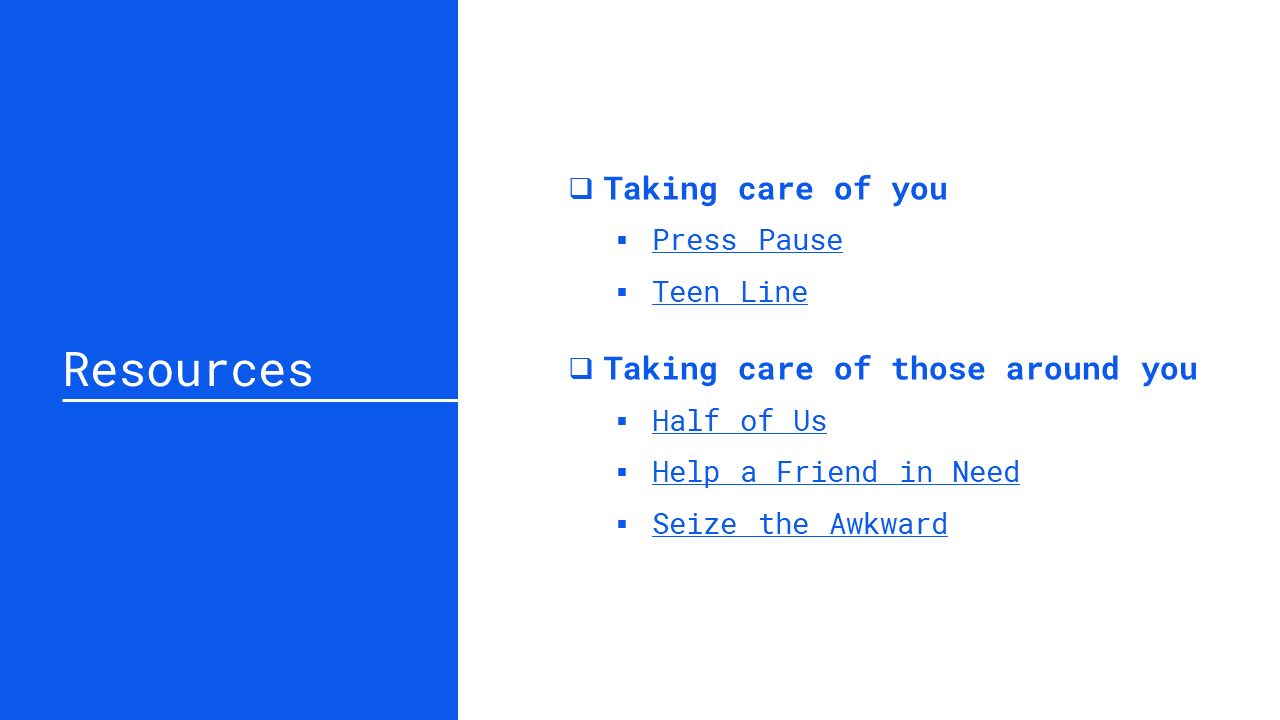
SAY: Would anyone like to volunteer to give some examples of things you can do to take care of yourself or those around you? Remember: sharing your ideas is a good way to help one another.

Do: Make sure the two focus areas — “taking care of you” and “taking care of those around you” — are covered.

ASK: As a follow up, ask for volunteers to share some ways they thought of to stick to their plans.

## Review of resources (5 minutes)

* Goal: Provide participants with easy-to-access resources for helping them stick to their plans and support their peers.
* **Show:** Slide 12: Resources



Facilitator’s notes

5 MIN

Do: Review and explain these helpful resources:

* + **Taking care of you**
    - [Press Pause](http://presspause.halfofus.com/): Provides ways to deal with stress and anxiety, such as breathing, moving, meditating, and phoning a friend.
  + [Teen Line](https://teenlineonline.org/): A good place to call, text, or email “if you have a problem or just want to talk with another teen who understands.”
  + **Taking care of those around you**
  + [Half of Us](http://www.halfofus.com/): Help a friend who is having a hard time and take action when you need to feel better.
  + [Help a Friend in Need](https://bit.ly/2V8xZJk): Identify distress signals from friends on Facebook and Instagram and take action to help them.
  + [Seize the Awkward](https://seizetheawkward.org/) (a partnership with The Jed Foundation, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, and the Ad Council): Tips for getting comfortable reaching out and discussing problems when you’re feeling down or see a friend struggling.

OPTIONAL: Click the linked resources on the slide to visit any websites you think would be most relevant to your group.

Ask: Do you know of any good websites or other resources that can help in these areas?

**DO:** Write down participants’ answers on the whiteboard, digital whiteboard, or sticky notes that you post on the wall so everyone can take note.

## Wrap-up (3 minutes)

* Goal: Review what participants accomplished in the workshop and what they found to be most beneficial.
* **Show:** Slide 13: Thank you for being here!



Facilitator’s notes

3 MIN

SAY: Thanks so much to all of you for participating in this workshop! Today we discussed life’s challenges and the feelings they can cause; you came up with plans for taking care of yourselves and those around you; and we learned about resources for helping you stick to your plans and help others when they need it. Overall, in this workshop, we’ve focused on how important your thoughts and feelings are for your general well-being.

ASK: Invite a volunteer or two say what they found to be the most beneficial about the workshop or what stood out the most to them among the things they learned.

DO: Thank them again for participating. Stay for a few minutes (or as long as you can) in case anyone wants to continue the conversation or ask questions.

# Appendix

The following information describes the pedagogical guidelines used to develop this workshop:

* [National Health Education Standards](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm)

The *Breaking modern loneliness* workshop adheres to the following standards set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as part of their [Whole School, Whole Community, Whole Child (WSCC)](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/wscc/index.htm) framework:

**A look at the health standards:** The NHES are written expectations for what students should know and be able to do to promote personal, family, and community health.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Standard** | **Standard description** |
| [Standard 1](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/1.htm) | Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health. |
| [Standard 2](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/2.htm) | Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors. |
| [Standard 3](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/3.htm) | Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health. |
| [Standard 4](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/4.htm) | Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks. |
| [Standard 5](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/5.htm) | Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health. |
| [Standard 6](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/6.htm) | Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health. |
| [Standard 7](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/7.htm) | Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks. |
| [Standard 8](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/8.htm) | Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health. |

* [Characteristics of an Effective Health Education Curriculum](https://www.cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/characteristics/index.htm)

The *Breaking modern loneliness* workshop adheres to the following curriculum characteristics as set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention:

* Teaching functional health information (essential knowledge)
* Shaping personal values and beliefs that support healthy behaviors
* Shaping group norms that value a healthy lifestyle
* Developing the essential health skills necessary to adopt, practice, and maintain health-enhancing behaviors