Mind Over Matters is an ongoing movement to raise awareness about mental health and promote wellness for students and staff in Baltimore County Public Schools. The activities included here coincide with the various themes broken down by months/quarters. There are a host of options for the school community, including those that can be offered virtually. While the themes are broken down by month/theme, feel free to use the activities when appropriate for your students/staff. Please refer to the All-Year Activity Options for additional activities that can be considered throughout the school year.

We encourage staff and students to post pictures of themselves engaging in the activities using #BCPSCares on social media. Please visit the Mind Over Matters Webpage for updates.

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**September – November “Kindness Matters”**

*Goal: To engage students and staff by exploring the importance of being kind to themselves and others.*

- **Welcome Video (Activity for Elementary and Secondary)**
  Support staff create a video introducing themselves that can be played during homeroom or morning announcements.

- **Classroom Visits (Activity for Elementary and Secondary)**
  Support staff could create a schedule and visit classrooms to introduce themselves and explain how students can reach out to them as needed.

- **A Collection of Icebreaker and Connection Activities (Activity for Elementary and Secondary)**
  Includes guidelines and considerations for facilitating connection activities. Additionally, activities are broken down into low-risk (students just meeting), moderate-risk (for students who have developed a rapport with one another), and high-risk (for groups that function well together) based on the needs of your students. This resource also highlights the importance of processing/debriefing after the activity and states that “the process is much more important than the product.”

- **Resilience & Self-Confidence (Activity for All - Elementary, Secondary, and Offices)**
  Students and staff can write on post-it notes or use some other medium to share things about which they are proud. They can list their best accomplishment, their heritage, what they are grateful for, and anything of the sort.

- **All About Me: (Activity for All)**
  This can be used by staff and students. These PowerPoint slides are a great way to introduce yourself to others and share some things about yourself. An example is provided.

- **Kindness Chain: (Activity for Elementary and Secondary)**
  Another great way to encourage kindness in the classroom is to start a ‘kindness chain’. Explain what kindness means, provide examples of ways your students can show kindness to their classmates, and challenge them to find ways to incorporate kindness into their daily routine. Each time you catch a student doing something kind, ask them to write it on a piece of construction paper with their name and add it to your ‘kindness chain’.

- **The Identity Iceberg: (Activity for Elementary and Secondary)**
  This activity involves exploring self-awareness, and like icebergs, most of the qualities and aspects of us and others are unseen. This can allow for students the opportunity to learn more about themselves as well as their classmates. It fosters the development of empathy. This discussion could also lead to exploring race and culture. The Maryland State Department of Education provides resources for talking and teaching about race, and BCPS provides readings and resources about race for students, staff, and families.

- **Creating Space Resource: (Activity for Elementary and Secondary)**
  This document was co-constructed by the Department of Equity and Cultural Proficiency, the Department of Professional Learning, and the Department of Academics with support from the Division of School Support and Achievement. BCPS defines Social Emotional Learning (SEL) as the process through which all young people and
adults acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to develop healthy identities, manage emotions and achieve personal and collective goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make responsible and caring decisions. SEL skills are foundational as we navigate courageous conversations around topics related to social inequality. The resources included in this document can be used to design spaces that allow students to talk openly about difficult topics. You can also use the strategies in this resource to prepare to facilitate difficult conversations in the classroom and school community.

- **Having Courageous Conversations in the Classroom** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*  
To have courageous conversations in the classroom, relationships and trust are key. When students feel connected to each other and their teacher, they will likely be more willing to engage in meaningful and courageous conversations. Some schools use circles (a *restorative practice*) to build and foster relationships and community in the classroom.

Many schools have equity teams that support staff in engaging in courageous conversations with their students. Please contact the [BCPS Department of Equity and Cultural Proficiency](#) if you have additional questions.

Resources:
- [Courageous Conversations in the Classroom Part I: A Partnering Tool to Achieve Equity in Schools](#).
- [Conversations should be courageous: why the compass](#).
- [Tough Conversations: A Tool for Parents, Part I](#).
- Cedarmere Elementary’s Equity Team developed compasses for elementary students and intermediate students to use when having courageous conversations:

![Primary Student Compass](image)

![Intermediate Compass](image)

**September 10, 2022 – World Suicide Prevention Day**

- **Meet and Greet** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*  
For students to meet the mental health professionals assigned to their school and for students to learn how to access those individuals. School counselors, school social workers, psychologists, and nurses are all support staff available to assist students as needed. This could look like different things in different schools. Some staff may
have a table at lunch where students can meet them, resources can be provided, etc. Others may choose to greet students as they are coming in the building. A table with resources could also be utilized.

- **Sharing and Promotion of Resources (Activity for Staff)**
  Offices could be sure to share information about the Employee Wellness Program and the Employee Assistance Program as well as having suicide prevention resources posted. Other resources can include:
  - **988** – A crisis hotline available 24/7 for those needing behavioral health services
    - The 988 Partner Toolkit has various resources including promotional items
  - **American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) Maryland Chapter** – Printed Prevention Resources/Pamphlets (some items are free and some have a cost.
    - Lifesaver Guide (also available in Spanish)
    - Lifesaver Guide LGBTQ
    - Talk Saves Lives (also available in Spanish)
    - Seize the Awkward (youth focused)
    - After a Suicide Attempt
    - Supporting someone after a Suicide Attempt
    - More printed materials for seniors, military families etc. can be reviewed here [https://stores.kotisdesign.com/afspexternal/resources](https://stores.kotisdesign.com/afspexternal/resources)

- **Hayden Hurst’s Second Change in Life – Breaking the Stigma Around Mental Health** – (Activity for Secondary)
  Video - “Falcons tight end Hayden Hurst always had dreamed of playing in the MLB or the NFL. After some time in the minor leagues his passion for baseball had diminished, which threw his life in flux. He wanted everything to be over. But he was given a second chance in life, culminating in his NFL dream being accomplished. Listen to Hayden’s powerful story of resilience, and together let’s break the stigma on mental health.”

  Possible Discussion Questions:
  - What signs did his family notice that he may be having some mental health concerns?
  - Who did Hayden finally open up to when he was struggling?
  - Why did Hayden turn to alcohol and drugs?
  - What helped Hayden?
  - What is the purpose of Hayden’s foundation?
  - What were some of the messages from Hayden and his family members to others who may be struggling with anxiety and depression?

- **Race Check Box (Activity for Secondary)**
  Check boxes are not only on to-do lists. Surveys may ask us demographic questions like our race, but how much of an effect does the “Race Check Box” have?

**October – Bullying Prevention Month**

**Goal:** To engage students, staff, and other stakeholders in setting and maintaining a positive tone in BCPS schools and offices throughout the year.

- **Sample of Bullying Prevention Learning Module for School Staff** – (Information for Staff)
  This learning module has been developed for school leaders to provide a template to increase the understanding and efficacy of school staff to better prevent and intervene in situations of bullying in their schools.

- **National Bullying Prevention Month – Student Activity Kit (Activity for Elementary and Secondary)**
Throughout October, use this four-week activity kit in K-12 classrooms or other youth settings. The kit features theme weeks, classroom projects, and student engagement to promote kindness, acceptance, and inclusion to prevent bullying.

- **Bullying versus Meanness** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*
  Have students examine the difference between what bullying is versus when someone is mean. Review definitions (This could vary based on the developmental/cognitive abilities of students). Review definitions. Consider role-playing and having students demonstrate the differences. [Rude vs. Mean vs. Bullying: Defining the Differences](#)

- **Bullying Prevention Materials** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*
  October is National Bullying Prevention Month. “Every October, schools and organizations across the country join STOMP Out Bullying™ in observing National Bullying Prevention Month. The goal: encourage schools, communities and organizations to work together to stop bullying and cyberbullying and put an end to hatred and racism by increasing awareness of the prevalence and impact of all forms of bullying on all children of all ages.” For more information and ideas for how schools can participate in weekly events, visit the [Stomp Out Bullying webpage](#).

The following links are resources for bullying prevention and intervention with students, staff, and parents:
- [Stop Bullying](#)
- [Stomp Out Bullying: Campaigns](#)
- [Bullying 101 - Elementary Schools](#)
- [Bullying 101 - Middle and High Schools](#)

- **Hashtag Kindness - #BCPSCares** *(Activity for older Elementary and Secondary)*
  At one point or another each of us has felt insecure, or stressed out, or alone. It is important to remind our friends and classmates that we are all in it together and we are there to listen and support each other. Leave a kind comment on someone’s page. A compliment or friendly message can lift someone’s spirit and improve their day.

- **Understanding Bullying** *(Activity for Secondary)*
  Using [Policy and Rule 5580, Bullying, Harassment or Intimidation](#), make sure that students have a clear understanding of the definition of bullying and the difference between bullying and conflict.

- **Wear a Color for Character – Week of October 17th - Oct 21st, 2022** *(Activity for All)*
  A color for students and staff to wear each day of the week has been suggested to represent character traits that all people should demonstrate. Share photos on social media using #BCPSCares.

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**October 29, 2022, Out of the Darkness Walk – Baltimore**

*Specific to Suicide Prevention but occurs in October.*

The Out of the Darkness Walk is held all over the country and is the largest fundraiser for the [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP)](#). They produce millions for suicide prevention programs, unite those who have been affected by suicide, and create communities that are smart about mental health. At this time, the walk is scheduled to be held in person, in Baltimore at the Inner Harbor. However, participants can participate virtually if they prefer. Join Team BCPS by visiting the [Out of the Darkness webpage](#).
• **Random Acts of Kindness** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*
Includes free Back to School Resources. Several virtual activities at this site to demonstrate kindness for children and adults including the ‘Do good from home challenge’, peaceful pen pals, device free dinners, write thank you letters, and gratitude meditations.

• **Kindness in the Workplace Challenge** *(Activity for Staff)*
A fun and engaging challenge to use in your workplace to encourage a kinder, more compassionate environment.

• **Cyberbullying Prevention** *(Activity for Secondary)*
Post positive words, statements, and pictures of their support for their school and others to social media. Be sure to tag your school. They should then tag five people from their school and challenge them to do the same.

   Cyberbullying awareness resources:
   - National Bullying Prevention Center
   - Stomp Out Bullying

• **Stand Up for Others/Upstander** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*
Talk about what an upstander versus a bystander looks like. Have students act out scenarios demonstrating upstander practices. An “upstander” is someone who recognizes when something is wrong and acts to make it right. When an upstander sees or hears about someone being bullied, they speak up.  
   What Youth Can Do to Help Peers Who Are Experiencing Bullying
   You’re an Upstander - Middle Schools

• **Family Materials about Bullying**
Resources for families about how students can be responsible and kind online.

• **I Can Help Calendar** *(Activity for Secondary)*
This calendar has daily suggestions that adults and students can do independently or with a peer to spread kindness every day. Examples: Send a teacher a thank you email, start a compliment thread, create a positive only group chat, etc.

• **Channel Kindness** *(Activity for Secondary)*
“Channel Kindness” is a digital platform created by Lady Gaga’s, Born This Way Foundation. It is a safe space for young people to tell their stories of kindness, resilience, and community. By highlighting the people and organizations that are doing good in their communities, Channel Kindness’ audience is inspired to create a kinder and braver world, one story at a time.” Learn how you can tell your story by visiting the Channel Kindness: Share Your Story webpage.

December – February “You Matter”
Goal: *Coping skills, healthy lifestyle, and engaging in healthy relationships play a vital role to overall wellness. Students and staff will enhance their abilities to cope by identifying their coping skills, exploring their healthy habits, and examining the quality of their relationships.*

• **Coping Skills Toolkit** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*
A collection of worksheets, resources, and tools for all ages.

- **My Coping Skills Worksheet** *(Activity for Secondary Students and Staff)*
  Worksheet that you can personalize by identifying triggers, coping skills, people to talk to, etc.

- **Take a Break – Activity** *(Activity for Elementary)*
  Please note, you will need dice or a dice app for your phone – Roll the dice as each number you could roll has a corresponding physical activity.

- **Healthy Habits Bingo** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*
  Includes an elementary and secondary option for bingo cards. You can have students use the cards to identify a healthy habit or habits they want to commit to and track. Additional healthy habits bingo cards are available online.

- **ChooseMyPlate** *(Activity for All)*
  Practice healthy eating habits using this app and website.

- **Motivation** *(Activity for All)*
  Share health facts, motivating quotes, challenge updates, and/or calendar reminders during the school-wide or classroom daily announcements. Have staff check-in with one another and their students’ goal progress. Use a bulletin board to display and update any school challenges related to the healthy behavior.

- **Relationships through Reading – Conscious Discipline** *(Activity for Elementary)*
  Teachers are encouraged to re-read any of the Shubert books they have in their classrooms. Teachers in grades 4 & 5 as well as special area teachers can borrow books from PreK-3rd grade classrooms. Each book has ideas on the last page to continue discussions about anything discussed in the story. Shubert Sees the Best is a great text to focus on positive intent and relationships. Revisit the lessons provided during the first 3 weeks of school in the Conscious Discipline folder of Schoology for PreK-3rd grade. 4th and 5th grade can borrow a book from another classroom, read through, and facilitate discussions on how they can see the best in others. Visit the [Conscious Discipline website](#) for a template and idea related to the story.

- **Social Emotional Learning (SEL) Information and Resources:** *(Activities for All)*
  Information about various social emotional learning resources including Restorative Practices, Conscious Discipline, mindfulness, and more. The monthly SEL calendars also provide examples of SEL and mindfulness activities that students and staff participate in.

- **Couplets – One Love Foundation** *(Activity for Secondary)*
  There are always signs in an unhealthy relationship. While everyone has behaviors we can work on, we also shouldn’t brush aside bad behavior as “cute” or “trivial.” The Couplets features a series of videos that highlight unhealthy relationships. Process with students. Visit the [One Love Foundation’s website](#) for more information on healthy relationships and more thought provoking free videos to engage students.

*(Staff)* The [One Love Foundation’s website](#) and the information are also applicable to adults/staff about healthy relationships as well as intimate partner violence. As mentioned in one of the videos titled, *The Most Important Gift of All* “we’re not taught how to love.”
March – June “Mental Health and Pride Matters”

Goal: Mental health impacts how we think, feel, and act. It also impacts the decisions we make, how we relate to others, and how we handle stress. June is national LGBT Pride Month. We will recognize the importance of having pride in who we are (as students, staff, families), appreciate our strengths, and the strengths in others. In these activities we will enhance our tools for social emotional learning, grief, promote mental wellness, healthy ways to cope with uncomfortable and unsettling feelings or events, and also engage in activities that promote our strengths, enhance our resilience, and show appreciation for our humanity.

- **Self-Care Activities (Activity for All)**
  Promote habits and routines that engage and encourage students, staff, and all members of our school communities to take care of their physical and emotional health throughout their lifetime. The Self Care Plan ideas range from five minutes to one-hour self-care activities that can be practiced at school and at home.

  The resources, [Self-Care for Teachers Calendar May 2022](#) and [June 2022](#) provide suggested strategies to help with teacher an adult self-care as well as ideas to keep school staff connected. Additional resources for school staff include [Elementary](#) and [Secondary](#) SEL calendars for April 2022, to foster staff and student connections towards engagement. SEL calendars are updated monthly. Visit the [SEL Resources](#) webpage for the current calendars.

- **Youth Mental Health First Aid (YMHFA) (Activity for Staff)**
  Youth Mental Health First Aid is a training available to BCPS staff, parents, and community members. This training is primarily designed for adults who regularly interact with young people. Participants will learn about mental health challenges for youth, review typical versus atypical adolescent development, and learn and practice a 5-step action plan for how to help young people in both crisis and non-crisis situations. Topics covered include anxiety, depression, substance use, disorders in which psychosis may occur, disruptive behavior disorders (including ADHD), and eating disorders.

  This course includes 2 hours of pre-session self-paced work and 4.5 hours of virtual face-to-face instruction. The course is free to attend, and eligible staff will receive a stipend for completion of the entire training. Trainings will be offered throughout the year. Please check the [BCPS News Hub](#) and the [BCPS Mental Health Services Webpage](#) for more information.

- **Free Printable Grief Worksheets (Activity for Elementary and Secondary)**
  Grief worksheets are helpful resources for children dealing with loss. Adults are better equipped to seek out help and support. But children have less life experience and emotional maturity to work through the incredible mix of emotions that arise when they lose a loved one. Grief worksheets can be used as tools to help kids gently work through the emotional turmoil they experience while grieving.
May 1-7, 2023: Children’s Mental Health Awareness Week:
The first week in May is when Children’s Mental Health Awareness week is celebrated. However, the Children’s Mental Health Matters Campaign brings together non-profits, schools, and other agencies with the following goals: raising public awareness of the importance of children’s mental health and substance use, helping reduce the stigma of mental health, and connecting families, educators and providers throughout Maryland with resources to help children and celebrates children’s mental health all month long.

4th Annual Virtual Mental Health Mile (May 27-29, 2023)
The Virtual Mental Health Mile event is scheduled for Memorial Day Weekend from May 27th through May 29th. Employees, students, family members, and community members can walk, run, bike, or use any other outdoor physical activity to cover at least 1 mile at any time that weekend. This mile can be completed by yourself, with people you live with, with colleagues/friends, whatever works best for you. Please share your pictures of your virtual mental health mile experience on social media using #BCPSCares. Please check the BCPS News Hub and the BCPS Mental Health Services Webpage for more information in March 2023.

Pride Matters

- **Activities for Students and Staff** *(Activity for Secondary)*
  Focus on Pride. If your school has a Gay Straight Alliance (GSA) or a Pride Club, coordinate activities with them.

- **Guest speaker Event** *(Activities for All)*
  BCPS student or staff (or other approved outside guest) to speak to students and staff to bring additional awareness to all.

- **Pride Matters Choice Board** – *(Activities for All)*
  Includes a variety of activities for students, families, and staff to participate in.

- **Hi, How Are You?** *(Activity for Secondary – High School)*
  “What are your pronouns?” is a way to promote inclusivity in the workplace and to also show respect to one’s identity. In this curriculum, it will break down pronoun uses and agender group greetings in order to address people more respectfully.

- **Resilience** *(Activity for Secondary – High School)*
  Did you know we have a great example of Resilience in BCPS? Team BCPS has put together a biography on Evelyn Chatmon’s story and in this curriculum, we hope it will inspire Resilience from youth alike.

- **Thurgood Marshall** *(Activity for Secondary – High School)*
  Thurgood Marshall was a Maryland native who fought for justice, liberty, and civil rights. In this curriculum, you will have the chance to analyze primary source documents to contextualize barriers he and colleagues alike had in order to practice law.
Juneteenth
Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the ending of slavery in the United States. From its Galveston, Texas origin in 1865, the observance of June 19th as the African American Emancipation Day has spread across the United States and beyond.

- [17 Ways to Celebrate Juneteenth with Kids](#)

Mind Over Matters - All Year Activity Options

- **BCPS Virtual Calming Room** (Activity/Resource for All)
The Virtual Calming Room is a space for students, families, and staff to find tools and strategies for managing emotions and feelings. Fun games, videos, activities, resources/supports and more are provided.

- **Multicultural & Diversity Calendar** (Activity/Resource for All)
“Throughout the year there are special days, weeks, and months that focus on celebrating diversity and the contributions of various groups to the fabric of the United States.” Students can learn about different groups via research or learning from their peers. Other options would be via classroom activities, discussions, writing assignments, etc.

- **DACA - Diversity and Inclusion** (Activity for High School Students)
In this activity, you will learn more about what DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) is, review legal documents and engage in discussion surrounding those materials, and engage in a MOM focused activity surrounding the implications of DACA.

- **Form a MOM Club** (Activity for Secondary)
Staff can create a Mind Over Matters (MOM) Club that is student lead. Student leaders of the group can facilitate discussions or activities that align with the MOM theme of that month. Various students can serve in leadership roles within the group (i.e. chair/co-chair, note-taker, time keeper, etc.). Here is a [template](#) the group can use to keep meeting notes/minutes.

- **SEL Champion (Monthly)** (Activities for All)
Staff/students can be nominated will be highlighted (on social media, and/or BCPS website) each month who are supporting social emotional learning that aligns with the MOM campaign. Complete [this form](#) to nominate someone.

- **SEL Resources** (Activities for All)
Includes several social emotional learning resources including SEL Calendars, information on Conscious Discipline, Restorative Practices, Mindfulness, the 3 signature practices, and more.

- **Start a School Instagram Account** (Activity for Secondary)
Some schools have started various social media accounts (specifically Instagram) to communicate with students about upcoming events and important information. This can be another way to promote various school-wide and county-wide initiatives, including Mind Over Matters. Staff ‘takeover days’ are days when staff post pictures to that account showing their day-to-day activities. It is a fun way to connect with students and show some of the personal side to educators and staff in the school.
- **Mental Wellness Wednesdays** *(Activity for Secondary)*
  Can be county-wide, school wide, or classroom activity. It can be held virtually or in-person. Student Leaders will focus on mental wellness in connection with the MOM theme. This can include a 20-minute guest speaker/or class lesson to discuss a component of mental wellness followed by a 20-minute student lead conversation. [Work2BeWell](#) offers some examples of what Wellness Wednesdays could look like.

- **Mental Health Days** *(Activity for Elementary and Secondary)*
  One or two days a quarter, provide students the opportunity to take some time to discuss mental health wellness in class and/or during advisory periods. Infusing Paws (Pause days) for academic reflection and mental wellness.

If you need immediate support, see below for a list of local and national resources:

**Local:**

- [988](#) – Call or text, available 24/7 for mental health and substance use crisis
- Baltimore County Crisis Response: 410-931-2214, free 24-hour crisis support for those in Baltimore County. Services include hotline support, linkage to resources, mobile crisis, urgent care, in-home intervention and more.
- Crisis Text Line: Text the word "HOME" to 741741 for free 24-hour support
- [BCPS Resource Toolkit](#) Contains a list of resources including

**National**

- US Trevor Project: 1-866-488-7386 - an organization that provides a 24-hour phone hotline, as well as limited-hour webchat and text options, for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning youth within the US; text TREVOR to 1-202-304-1200 (available M-F from 3:00 pm to 10:00 pm ET)
- US Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-8255 - 24/7 hotline that provides phone, webchat, and text options available to military veterans and their families. It provides options for deaf and hard of hearing individuals

**Headspace for Educators**: Headspace offers free access to K-12 (primary-secondary) teachers and supporting staff in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia.

“Whether you’re feeling inspired to connect more with your students or you’re looking for a new way to bring calm to your classroom, Headspace can help students build healthy habits that last a lifetime. Better focus, less stress, and happier thoughts are just a few minutes away.”
Headspace for Teens: Headspace is now free for all teens ages 13-18 years old in the US through our nonprofit partners.

Mental Health Resources (Therapy) –
- **Black Emotional And Mental Health (BEAM) Collective – Virtual Wellness Directory** – Find a virtual Black therapist, doula, yoga teacher, mediator, and much more here.
- **Latinx Therapy** – A national directory for mental health therapists and resources for the Latinx community.
- **Mental Health Resources For and By People of Color**
- **Psychology Today** – Allows you to search using various criteria (race/ethnicity of the provider, the type of treatment, by insurance, location, and more)

Trainings

Trainings for staff members and parents are offered throughout the school year. The below trainings are available. Please access the [BCPS website](https://www.bcps.org) for more information.

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<td>Council (BCJC) *2022-2023 Calendars in progress</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Various trainings for parents/caregivers</td>
<td>Parent University and SERC</td>
<td>Parents/Caregivers</td>
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Acknowledgements

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