

ACTIVITY 7: CIRCLES OF SUPPORT

AIM: Children are able to identify mental health support systems for children in their own community, in the UK, and around the world, and feel safe and empowered to access mental health resources if they are concerned about their own or a friend's mental health.

Preparation:

- Review the circles of support activity to have an idea of community and UK resources

Facilitator materials and resources

- Activity 7 Presentation
- Flip chart or white board and markers (for in-person group facilitation)
- Poster board to record class agreement

Participant materials

- Piece of paper
- Colouring pens or pencils

Tips for those working in Early Years settings:

- Ask children to draw pictures of the people they feel safe talking to, or use dolls or soft toys to represent those people, and talk about how they make them feel safe.

Facilitator Introduction

It is the responsibility of adults, carers, parents, and governments as duty bearers to make sure that the rights of children are protected. Through OutRight, we've discussed how important it is to take care of our mental health and to speak out to ensure that the duty-bearers of children's rights are acting in the best interests of children, especially when it comes to our mental health and wellbeing.

For more information on the role of duty-bearers, see the background reading in the [introductory pack](#).

Explain to the children that part of having the best information to stay safe and healthy is to know where we can get help if we need it. Sometimes this might be professional help if we are in the amber or red parts of the health continuum, but other times this might just be reaching out to talk to someone we know already.

When Paddington moved to London, he would talk to Mr Gruber over his elevenses or have a chat with Mrs Bird about how he was feeling. Sometimes he would also write to Aunt Lucy, back in

Darkest Peru, about his feelings. These were all people who he felt comfortable talking to about how he was feeling.

Tell the group: in this activity we are going to think about and map out the safe people we can access in our own lives, in our community, and in our country when we want to talk to someone about our mental wellbeing. We'll also create an action plan for how we as children can better support one another!



Stop with the taboos!

Manvi Tiwarii, 18, India

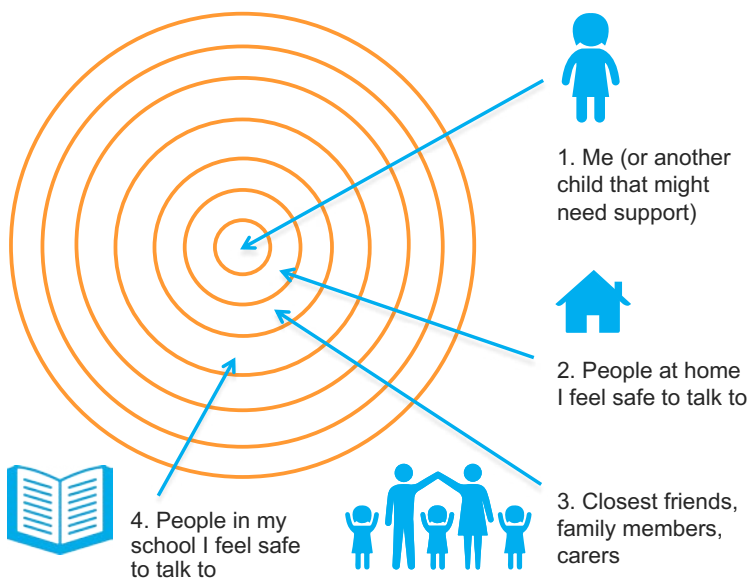
“Time for us to normalise mental health... The least we can do to break the stigma and normalise these issues, is by talking about them, reaching out to more and more people. Let’s do it!”

Read more from Manvi [here](#).

Part 1: Circles of support

1. Explain to the group that in this activity we are going to map out the different resources available for children who might need someone to talk to or need support for their mental health.
2. Using the Activity 7 Presentation, show the group the circles of support diagram. Using the narrative below, talk the group through filling in each ring of the diagram from the closest people they could reach out to for help, through to community members, local organisations, national organisations, and international organisations like UNICEF, which is working to protect the rights of all children, including the right to health.

- **In the middle circle draw** a picture of yourself, or another child or children who might need support to stay healthy.
- **In the next circle, draw or write:** The people you live with who you could feel safe talking to about how you are feeling. *Examples: parents, siblings, grandparents, carers.*
- **In the next circle, draw or write:** Your closest friends, other extended family members, or carers who feel safe talking to about how you are feeling. *Examples: Grandparents, aunts or uncles, cousins, close family friends, other carers.*
- **In the next circle, draw or write:** The people in your school who you feel safe talking to. *Examples: other pupils, teachers, office staff, librarian, school nurse.*



- **In the next circle, draw or write:** Local organisations or other people in your neighbourhood or community who you see outside of school and feel safe talking to. *Examples: GP, emergency services, youth workers, youth club friends, people at a sports club, neighbours, religious leaders.*
- **In the next circle, draw or write:** UK organisations or other support systems that would have tools or resources if you or a friend needed help. *Examples: ChildLine, Young Minds. For more ideas, see the list of organisations that can help in the background reading in the [introductory pack](#).*
- **In the last circle, draw or write:** Organisations or resources outside the UK that work to protect all children around the world and/or work to protect all children’s rights to good mental health. *Examples: UNICEF, Oxfam, Save the Children, some of the international youth advocates from Activity 5.*

ACTIVITY 7: PART 1 CONTINUED AND PART 2

Note: Use this activity to encourage children to identify who they can talk to and think about why those people make them feel safe. Be prepared to adapt this activity so it meets the needs and situations of the children you're working with. This might be more difficult and take more time for some children than others. For example, some children may not feel safe talking to family members due to individual home situations. In a case where an activity prompts a child to disclose that something has happened to make them feel very worried, anxious or unsafe, be sure to follow the safeguarding protocols of your school or organisation.



Options for in-person or virtual settings: Children can work through the diagram on a white board in plenary or as small groups, or on individual worksheets dependent on the children's ages and if the activity is being conducted remotely or in an in-person, interactive setting.

3. Complete the 'circles of support' activity by facilitating a discussion using the questions below. For in-person facilitation complete the discussion interactively in small groups or in pairs, where children feel comfortable sharing their circles and safe to talk about the activity.

- How does it make you feel looking at your support network on paper?
- Which relationships are particularly important to you? How do you feel supported by that person/people?
- What are the qualities or characteristics of the people or groups on your circles that make you feel supported?
- What additional support might you want to advocate for in your school or community that you and other children don't have access to now?
- How do you think that having a support system connects to your rights, specifically Articles 12, 13, 24 and 29?

Part 2: Group commitment and action plan

1. Explain that through all of the OutRight activities this year, we've learned that it's important for children to be able to identify how they are feeling and to feel safe and empowered to share their opinions and use their voice to talk to others about their mental health without feeling any shame or embarrassment. In this final wrap-up activity we are going to make a plan for how we as a group/class will be committed to each other to create a safe space in our group to talk about mental health challenges.

2. Using the Activity 7 Presentation, ask the group to discuss and list their answers to the following questions.

- What does it mean to have a group that feels 'safe'?
- Why is it important to create a classroom or space where everyone feels safe and ready to learn?
- How do you want the other children in this group to treat you this year so you can feel safe?
- What are some ways we can check in with each other as a group to make sure everyone is in a good place on the mental health continuum, and getting help to move back to green if they are in yellow or red?

ACTIVITY 7: PART 2 CONTINUED AND PART 3

3. From the list of ideas, ask the children to narrow down and vote on the ideas that they would like to put into practise in their group. Once one or two actionable ideas are identified, ask the children to think about how they can put their plan into action.

Some ideas might include:

- A daily group/class emoji check-in.
- A buddy system where everyone is paired with a safe friend for a mental health check in.
- Creating a class worry box that only the teacher is allowed to read.
- Adding regular mindfulness practise activities to class.



Optional activity: Using the words and phrases that the children listed on how they want to be treated and will treat others to make their classroom or children's group a safe space, create (or ask the children to create) a bulletin board or a poster to hang in the activity room. Ask each child to sign their name on the poster as their own commitment to creating a safe space for others.

Part 3: Cool down with mindfulness – 5, 4, 3, 2, 1

1. Explain to children that building an ongoing practise of mindfulness is important, and that we can practise the same exercises over and over again every day as a way to train our brains.
2. Repeat the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 exercise from Activity 6 as cool down at the closure of this final activity as an example.
3. As time permits, continue to practise this activity regularly even after you have finished Outright 2021/22.

