



## Strength-based activities (pick 9)

What we will learn: Gain a new self-care skill, Connect with the strengths in your life and create a support system within your community

**Instructions:** Choose nine activities from the categories below. This could be nine activities in the same category, or a combination. Please share your takeaways from these activities in the survey.

### Gardening

- **Strengths:** Teaches how to nurture/take care of something. Monitor the changes of the plant. Determine a routine for the plant.
- **Mental Health:** As the plant grows strong, a connection to the plant as its provider also grows.
- **Support System:** Once the plant is grown, share with an Elder or community member. Or the plants can be kept at a community garden for a collective experience.

### Pictionary/Charades

- **Strengths:** helps identify emotions/behaviors through acting out or guessing different prompts.
- **Mental Health:** The emotions/behaviors are easier to identify and allow the participants to feel less isolated when they have these feelings or behaviors.
- **Support System:** Involve your Family, Community members, or Elders to help understand complex emotions and behavior with challenging situations.

### Cooking lessons

- **Strengths:** Make or teach someone to make your favorite traditional foods. Food brings people together, during both the cooking and eating processes.
- **Mental Health:** Food brings energy, wellness, and health into our lives. Cooking provides a mind-body connection when preparing nutritious meals. Choose traditional plants or subsistence foods like fish, whale, and moose meat that have their own special nutrients. Learn about the traditional/local foods right outside your door.
- **Support System:** Elders can share traditional recipes and talk about subsistence practices. Community gardeners/hunters/farmers can share their local food. People can share their favorite foods and reflect on the history that food can bring.

### Sharing Circles

- **Strengths:** Teaches how to communicate, especially listening skills, with members of the community. Sheds light on the areas of support that might be lacking within the community.
- **Mental Health:** Encourages a culture of being open and honest about one's feelings within their community. Lessens feelings of loneliness and creates a support system.
- **Support System:** Elders can tell stories related to resilience and strength. Voices across generations can bring their perspectives. Note: Facilitated by peers or members of the community (NOT by an outsider).

### Sticky note/anonymous notes

- **Strengths:** Teaches how to give a compliment/positive message or encourage someone. Teaches people to lean on the uplifting voices within their communities.
- **Mental Health:** Provides a support system within their communities Shifts thinking to strength and positivity based.
- **Support System:** Everyone in the community can write positive notes and put them up in communal areas to promote a culture of support and positivity.

# Strength-based activities, continued

## Peer to Peer support groups

- Strengths: Peer leaders gain the skills to advocate for their peers and find resources for them. Peers learn how to identify risks and signs of suicidal behavior on their own. They also learn about specific triggers or situations that affect their peers the most.
- Mental Health: Reporting your own signs/risks for suicide to an adult can be hard and cause even more distress and anxiety. Confiding in a peer can feel easier and take pressure off having to talk to an adult.
- Support System: Support groups are open to anyone and everyone in the community with the goal of creating strategies for effective reporting and support systems.

## Journaling

- Strengths: Express one's feelings and thoughts on a regular basis. Teaches how to recognize how one is feeling and why/where those feelings stem from.
- Mental Health: Brings the uncomfortable feelings people may have to light and encourages people to face those feelings by self-identification. A journal is a safe place to express all thoughts without having to worry about having to directly express them to another person.
- Support System: Community members can encourage each other and normalize journaling as a part of everyday life.

## Arts and Crafts

- Strengths: Teaches how to express and nonverbally communicate one's feelings and thoughts through art. Can also teach a strategy for self-care or a traditional art skill.
- Mental Health: Art provides an outlet for mental distress. Traditional arts and crafts can also help people to feel closer to their culture.
- Support System: Community members or Elders can teach a lesson on how to do traditional art such as weaving, beading, pottery, drawing, sewing, and painting. Community events can be held to hold art classes. Arts and crafts can be gifted to Elders or other in the community.

## Arts and Crafts Examples:

- Beading Hearts for Tell Your Heart Story: Download the Beaded Heart Activity Instructions and Materials Handout. Share what you're doing to keep your heart happy and healthy.
- Self Portrait: Draw yourself, encapsulate your favorite things about yourself. Have everyone in the house or friends do the same and present them to each other.
- Design your own traditional clothes: Create your own outline for a traditional parka or other traditional clothing such as a qaspeq/kuspuk, mukluks or even traditional items such as a drum or dance fans. Personalize your clothing with colors, designs, glitter, texture, and whatever else. Download the Coloring Pages provided with an outline of a parka, mukluks and extra fun images.
- Make Your Own Book: We all face unique challenges that have been a part of creating our life story. We have lives that are filled with moments of joy, moments of pain, and everything in between. Tell a story of what provides you hope, help, and strength to continue your life story. You can illustrate each page and assemble it to look like a book.
- Memory Cards: Cut out the small squares of the Memory Game Handout. Play the memory game where you have to match the squares with the same image.
- Bird Mobile: Create a mobile of the birds that live in your area, provided as a guide is a downloadable Paper Raven Mobile Project handout. Use feathers and other natural materials.

## Self-care activities (pick 8)

What we will learn: Prioritize mental health in your daily routine, Learn different ways to take care of yourself, Encourage family and friends to do the same.

**Instructions:** Choose eight activities from the categories below. This could be eight activities in the same category, or a combination. Please share your takeaways from these activities in the survey.

### Morning Routine

- **Strengths:** Develop a morning routine that will mentally prepare you for each day. Breathing exercises, Stretching, Drinking water, Journaling, Words of affirmation, Breakfast, Hygiene.
- **Mental Health:** Begin with a fresh mindset to release stress and find a bright spot in the day.
- **Support System:** Share your routine with others and discuss how you like to start your day. Make breakfast with family or tell them you are thankful for them each morning.

### Go Through Old Photo Albums

- **Strengths:** Learn about family history. Ask about the people and places in the photos.
- **Mental Health:** Strengthen family ties by going through old photos and having family explain the stories behind the photos.
- **Support System:** Learn about the history of your community through photos and try to compare your sense of community now with what it is in the photos.

### Make a Playlist

- **Strengths:** Find music that makes you feel good.
- **Mental Health:** Listening to upbeat music makes you feel more energized and positive.
- **Support System:** Send a good mood playlist to friends/family and ask them to make you one too.

### Participate in physical activities

- **Strengths:** Get active and learn how to relieve stress/anxiety by keeping your body strong and healthy. Learn new skills, a traditional game, sport or dance.
- **Mental Health:** Physical activity/health is directly linked with mental health, so moving your body creates a clearer mind. Endorphins release when you are active which relieves stress.
- **Support System:** Share your favorite (nature) physical activities with your friends and family.

### Build your coping toolbox

- **Strengths:** Healthy coping skills help us deal with difficult situations and emotions. Create a list of the tools you have already in your toolbox, like breathing exercise, calling a friend, and going for a walk. Add one or two new skills to your toolbox.
- **Mental Health:** Healthy coping strategies help tolerate distress, soothe, or temporarily distract.
- **Support System:** Encourage others to build their coping toolbox.

### Build or grow your support system

- **Strengths:** Provides strength and protection when you may be experiencing hurt and pain. Create a list of people you can lean on and your support resources. Connect with others through shared hobbies or volunteering. Connect with new resources such as the ANTHC Behavioral Health Wellness Clinic.
- **Mental Health:** Social connection increase happiness. Leads to better health and a longer life.
- **Support System:** Encourage others to build or grow their support system.

# Self-care activities, continued

## Spend time with animals

- Strengths: Has a calming effect on our emotions. Spend 15 mindful minutes with an animal by sitting with them, and thank them for their company.
- Mental Health: Decreases stress hormones, depression, loneliness, and increases comfort.
- Support System: Encourage others to spend time with animals.

## Practice gratitude

- Strengths: Allows us to think about what we have that helps us. Each day of the week, write down one to three things you are thankful for.
- Mental Health: Decreases stress and anxiety, increases happiness, optimism, makes us more resilient, improves sleep, strengthens relationships, and makes us kinder.
- Support System: Encourage others to do the same.

## Get quality sleep

- Strengths: Improves our mood, ability to learn and make memories, organ health, immune system, and other body functions. Turn off technology, brush your teeth, listen to calming music, and stretch for 20 minutes before bed.
- Mental Health: With quality sleep the brain and body have an opportunity to be cleansed and repaired.
- Support System: Share with others how quality sleep improves your mood.

## Take care with nutritious foods

- Strengths: Keep your body, spirit, and mind healthy. Eat a variety of traditional foods: fish, caribou, moose, sea greens, and berries.
- Mental Health: Boosts energy, lowers risk of certain disease, fuels the brain, counteract the impacts of stress and affects mood-related body chemicals.
- Support System: Share with others in the community the benefits of eating well.

## Participate in traditional activities

- Strengths: Enhance cultural identity, self-concept, and increase self-esteem while creating connectedness to body, mind, spirit, and community. Participate in one or more of your favorite traditional activities.
- Mental Health: Create balance with our spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental wellness.
- Support System: Encourage others to participate in traditional activities as a way to connect with each other.

## Self-Care Poster (example: <https://www.wernative.org/my-mind/indigilove-campaign>)

- Strengths: Create a poster that shows how you overcame the major stressors in your life. The Poster should be unique to you and remind you of the positives in your life that outweigh the negatives.
- Mental Health: Use your favorite colors, and images that make you smile. Include words, or drawings about your stressors. Put this poster somewhere that only you can see, like in your room or bathroom where you can see those positive images every day.
- Support System: Encourage others to make their own posters.

## Language activities (learn 8)

What we will learn:

- Words used to describe feelings
- Encourage family and friends to do the same

**Instructions:** Use eight words in your Alaska Native or American Indian language, or another language, that helps to describe how you feel about engaging in strength-building and self-care activities. Download the Thought Record handout to track your thoughts.

Please share your takeaways from these activities in the survey.

- Strengths: Using our Alaska Native or American Indian language, or another language, connects us to the land, family, friends, community, and extends our knowledge to future generations.
- Mental Health: Language provides knowledge, insights, values, practices, and ways of life, as well as a sense of belonging. This is important to our health and wellness.
- Support System: Encourage others to use their Alaska Native or American Indian language, or another language to express their feelings.



**Remember to complete the Tell Your Heart Story Survey**  
([www.anthc.org/tyhs](http://www.anthc.org/tyhs)) and you will be entered to  
win a \$100 gift card!