

COUNSELING FIRST SESSION

A simple, repeatable session you can use with any student.



About This Resource

Your first counseling session is mostly the same across every student. Let's get the most out of that initial meeting by using a strong set of initial activities.

This resource will help you:

Introduce your role

Build rapport

Create a safe, predictable space

Understand the student's needs

Set goals



About Counseling Script

A simple script to help you explain what your role is and how counseling can help.

1. About Counseling Script

Part of your first session with a student will explain what counseling is and isn't and your role. This is an example script you can adapt to your specific approach.

Counselor: Hi [Student's Name], I'm glad to meet you today. I'm [Counselor's Name], your school counselor. Do you know what a school counselor does?

(Pause for the student's response)

Counselor: My job is a little bit like being a helper or a guide. Sometimes we have feelings or situations that can be tough to handle alone. It could be about friends, schoolwork, family, or feelings inside us. And that's where I come in. I'm here to help you talk about those things, understand them better, and come up with ideas on how to handle them. Like a guide helps people find their way, I help you navigate your feelings and problems. Does that make sense?

(Pause for the student's response)

Counselor: Great! Now, another important part of my job is making sure that our conversations here are safe and private. That means whatever you and I talk about stays between us, like a secret. However, there are some exceptions to this rule that I have to tell you about. If you were to say something to me that makes me worried about your safety or someone else's safety, I would need to tell someone else to make sure everyone is safe. That could be a teacher or your mom or dad. But, unless it's one of those situations, what we talk about stays in this room. From time to time, I may ask you if it's okay to share something with an adult who cares about you, like a strategy you are practicing or a problem that is happening that they can help with. How does that sound to you?

(Pause for the student's response)

Counselor: That's great. In our meetings, your job is, to be honest and open about how you feel. There are no right or wrong answers or feelings. It's just about being you and sharing what's on your mind. Remember, it's okay to feel what you're feeling and safe to talk about it here. Are you ready to start?

(Pause for the student's response)

Session Planning Templates

Straightforward
session planners and
summary forms.

NAME		SESSION PLAN
SESSION #	DATE & TIME	REFERRED BY
OBJECTIVE		
SKILLS		
MEASURES		
MATERIALS		
FEELINGS CHECK IN		
WARM UP		
ACTIVITIES		
COOLDOWN		
EXIT TICKET		

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Intake Materials

SCHOOL 

Describe a time you
f
s
s

ABOUT YOU

When you get old

FRIENDS 

Tell me about one of
your good friends. What
do you like about them?

GOALS 

Tell me ab
you've wor
hard to ac

HOME 

Share a favorite
memory you have with
someone in your in

prompt
cards

 **A BIT ABOUT ME**

1. My name is _____.
2. I am _____ years old.
3. I live in _____.
4. My favorite hobbies are _____.
5. One thing I really like is _____.
6. My favorite subject in school is _____.
7. When I'm not at school, I enjoy _____.
8. I feel happiest when _____.
9. Something that makes me unique is _____.
10. I have _____ siblings.
11. My best friend's name is _____.
12. I like spending time with my friends by _____.
13. In my family, I am closest to _____.
14. _____.
15. _____.
16. _____.
17. _____.
18. _____.
19. Something I'm _____.
20. I find it difficult _____.
21. My favorite book is _____.
22. I enjoy listening to _____.
23. The most important value for me is _____.
24. I feel motivated when _____.
25. One thing I would like the counselor to know about me is _____.

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sentence
stems

INITIAL MEETING 2

STUDENT NAME: _____

DOB _____ Grade _____

Date _____ Teacher _____

NOTABLE EVENTS

INITIAL MEETING 1

STUDENT NAME: _____

DOB _____ Grade _____

Date _____ Teacher _____

STUDENT MEETING

Home
School
Friends
Self
Goals

counselor
form

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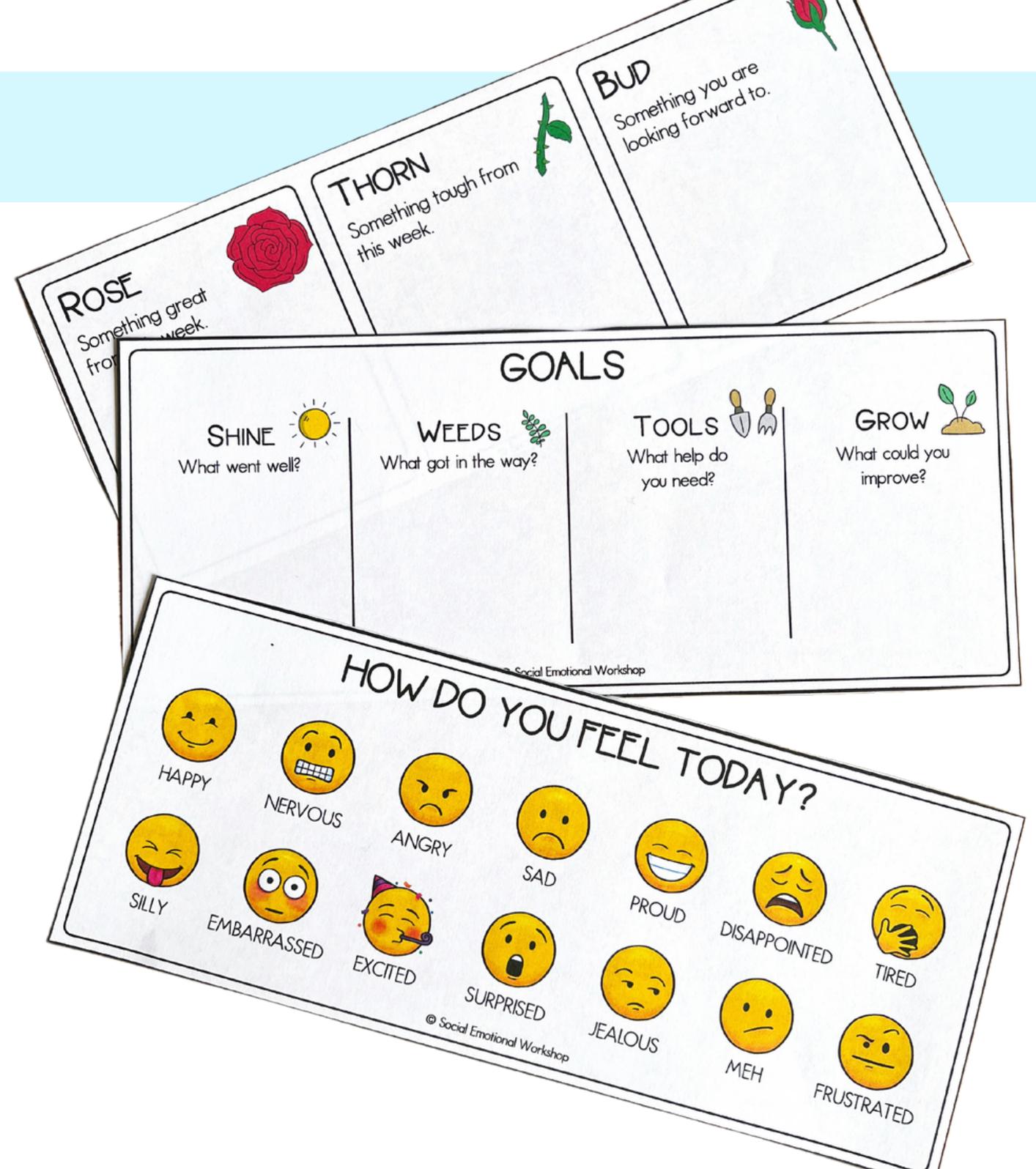
Check-Ins

3 variations

Feelings

Rose, Thorn, Bud

Goals



Goal Exploration Activity

Simple worksheets to help students brainstorm what they want to work on, define it, and break it down into a plan.

WHAT I COULD WORK ON
Brainstorm some possible ideas and then write down one you want to work on.

SKILLS learn to tell jokes, play an instrument, dribble a basketball, do c

SCHOOL get started immediately, get bett

HOME be nicer to my sister, finish my chr

RELATIONSHIPS listen better, rememnt

HABITS be more positive, brush my teeth

OTHER

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MY GOAL

I will

What exactly will you do?

How will you measure your goal?

What help will you need? What skills do you already

ng will it take you?

MY GOAL PLAN

Write down your goal at the bottom and write down where you are starting from at the top. Then create three checkpoints on the way to your goal. To get to each checkpoint, create a set of action steps.

Start

Checkpoint

Checkpoint

Checkpoint

Goal

Action Steps

Action Steps

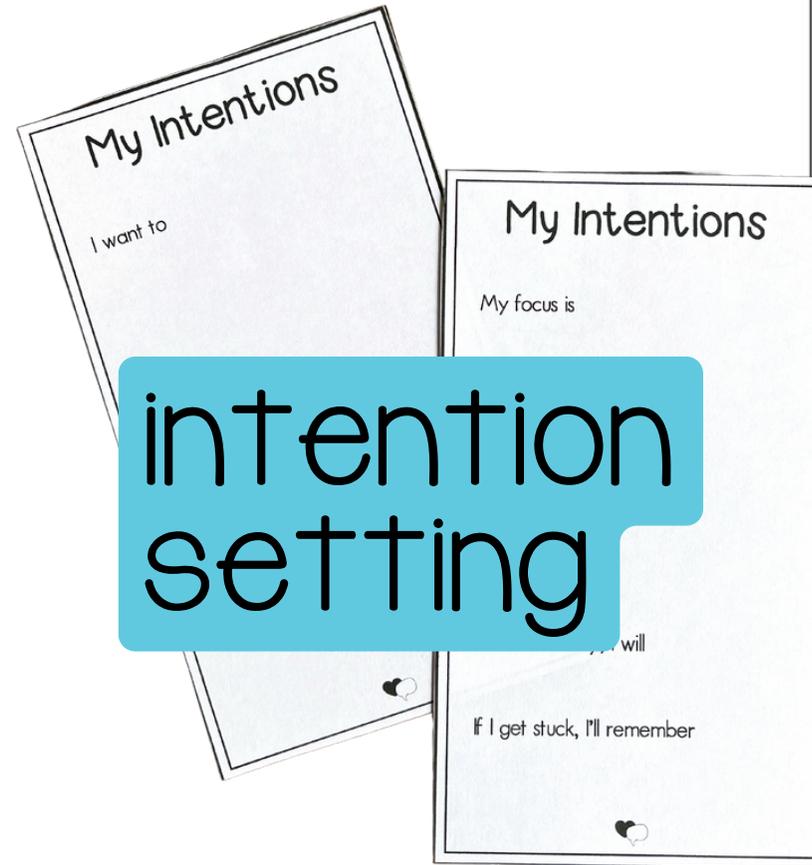
Action Steps

Action Steps

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Cool Down Exercises

quick activities to reset before returning to class and practice a strategy.



BOX BREATHING

STEP 1
Find a comfortable place to sit. You can sit on a chair or cross-legged on the floor.

STEP 2
Take a deep breath in through your nose slowly and fill your belly with air. Imagine you are smelling a beautiful flower. Count to four in your head while you breathe in.

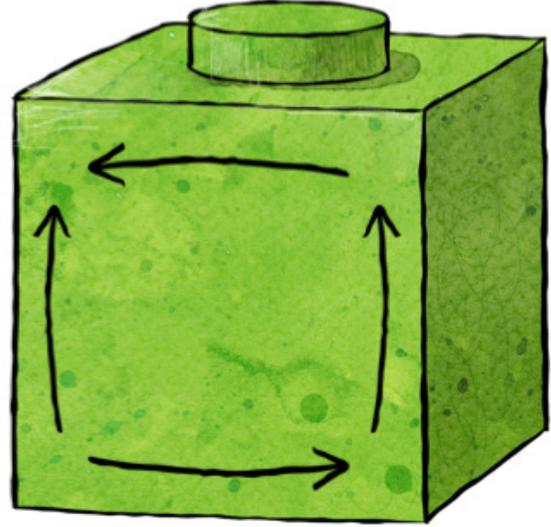
STEP 3
Hold your breath for a count of four. Imagine you are holding the smell of the flower inside you. Keep your body relaxed during this step.

STEP 4
Slowly breathe out through your mouth, like you're blowing out a candle. Make your breath last for four seconds.

After four seconds, take a deep breath in through your nose for four seconds. Repeat the box breathing exercise. You can imagine tracing a square or a box.

Keep practicing the box breathing for a few minutes. Each time you breathe in, hold, breathe out, and pause, try to relax your body more and feel your breath becoming calmer and slower.

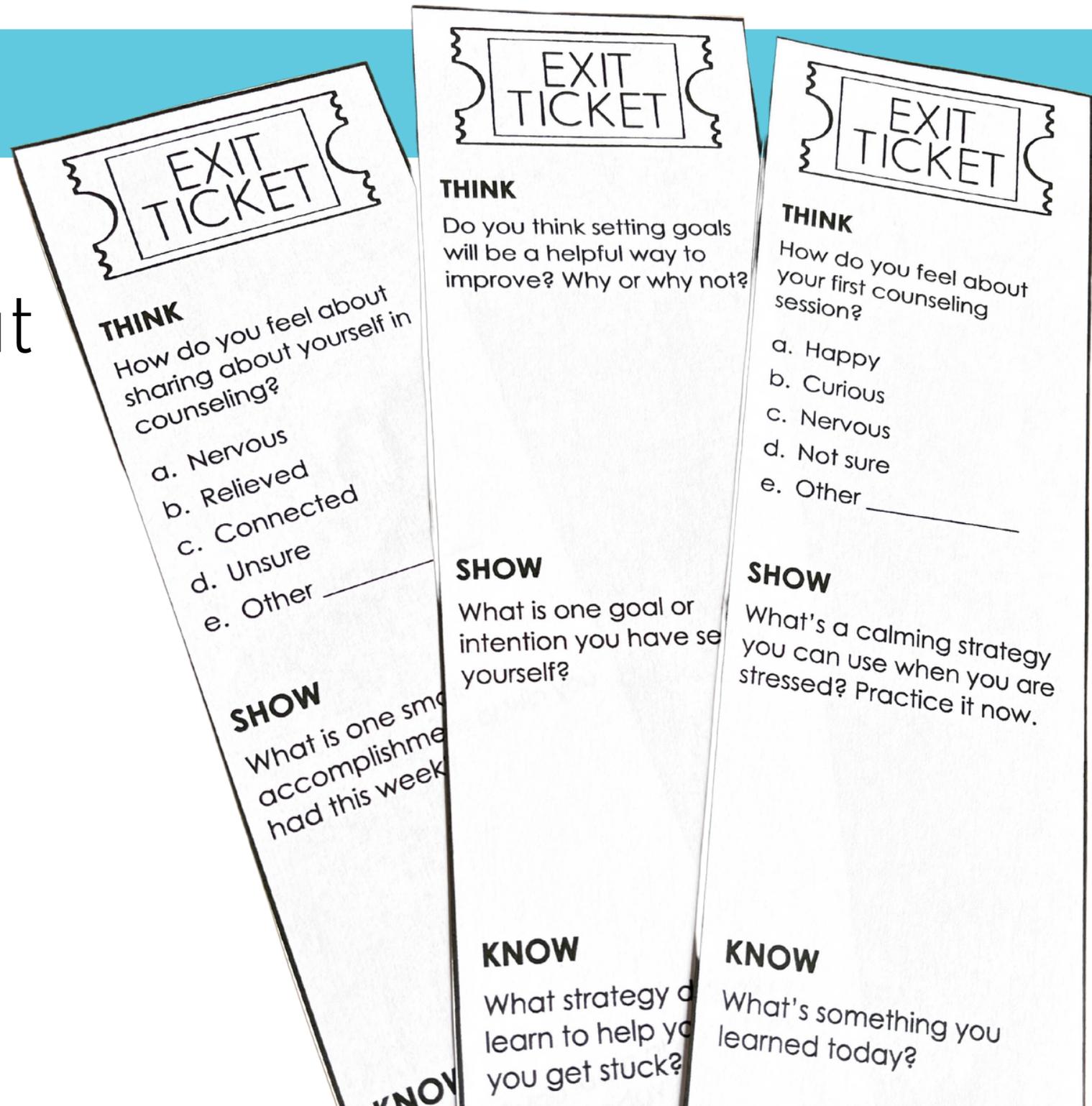
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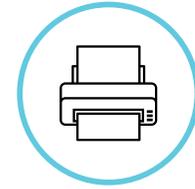
Exit Tickets

Simple exit tickets that prompt students to:

Think
Know
Show



DETAILS



Color and blackline



Best for 2nd-8th grade



Perfect for individual counseling

Check-In Tools for Counseling

Check-in tools can be a highly effective way to begin individual counseling sessions with elementary students. These tools help create a structured start to the session and encourage open dialogue between counselor and student. They can also help build a better understanding of the student's current emotional state, experience, and progress on individual goals.

For maximum effectiveness, explaining the purpose of these tools is essential. Be sure to let them know that the tools are there to help them share experiences, and track progress. Remember to encourage them to share no right or wrong answers and that the focus is on how they are feeling.

3 Check-Ins

- Feelings Check-In:** This tool features emoji faces to help students begin a session. This can initiate a discussion about why they are feeling a certain way and contribute to their emotional growth.
- Rose-Thorn-Bud Check-In:** The Rose-Thorn-Bud Check-In encourages students to talk about their week. "Rose" stands for something that went well, "Thorn" stands for a challenge, and "Bud" stands for something they are looking forward to or hoping for. This tool is great for promoting emotional growth.

ROSE

Something great from this week.



THORN

Something tough from this week.



BUD

Something looking forward to.

HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?

ROSE

Something great from this week.



THORN

Something tough from this week.



BUD

Something you are looking forward to.



PROUD

GOALS

SHINE

What went well?



WEEDS

What got in the way?



TOOLS

What help do you need?



GROW

What could you improve?



HOW DO YOU FEEL TODAY?



HAPPY



NERVOUS



ANGRY



SAD



PROUD



DISAPPOINTED



THINKING



SILLY



EMBARRASSED



SURPRISED



SHOCKED



DISAPPOINTED



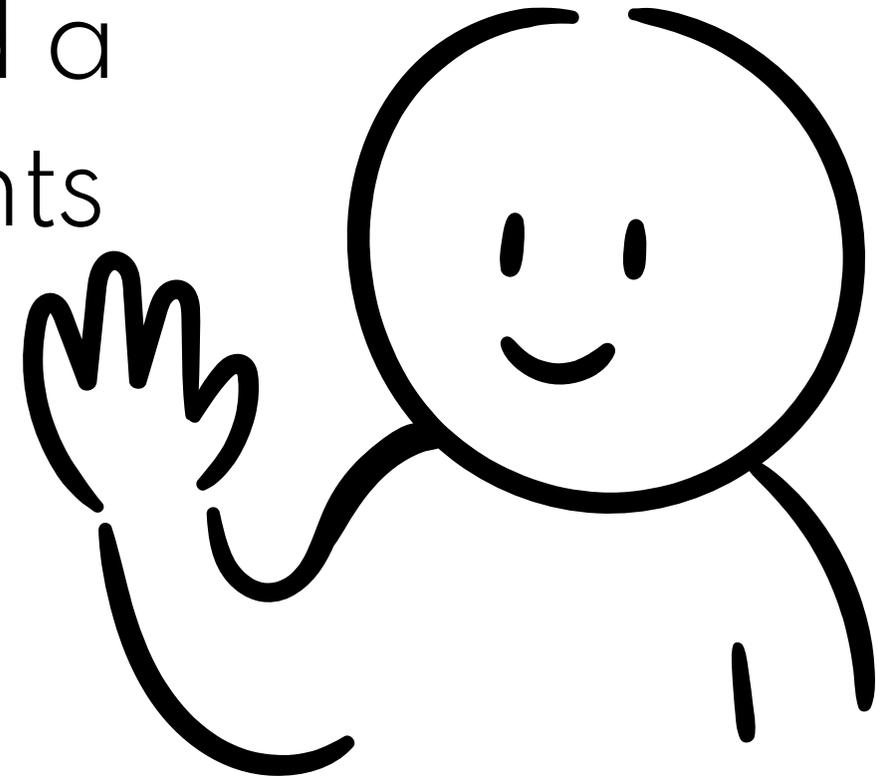
SAD



THINKING

Strong First Sessions

The first counseling session is perfect for establishing rapport, understanding the student's perspective, and creating a safe and predictable space. Build a strong first session and get students started on the right foot!



COUNSELING BUILDING BLOCKS

Flexible resources you can use to build individualized and effective counseling sessions.

[VIEW RESOURCES](#)



grab the
counseling
building blocks
bundle and save

Hi! I'm Laura

I create research-driven, uncomplicated tools and resources designed to build students' social and emotional skills in counseling or the classroom.

During ten years as a school psychologist, I wore all the hats - but the one I never took off was supporting my colleagues.

Whether you're a first-year counselor or a seasoned teacher, I want you to have the tools you need to support each student.

Visit [my blog](#) for more ideas and [subscribe](#) for exclusive resources!

contact: support@socialemotionalworkshop.com



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