

Thought Bubble

“Everyone is going through something,” is the title of an essay in which Kevin Love, an NBA player, wrote about his own struggles with mental health and launched a movement among high-profile athletes to destigmatize mental illness. It’s time to realize that taking care of mental health is an important and necessary part of life. Using this activity is a way to begin relating to each other and see all the things people in our lives and social circles are facing. This activity can help to bring awareness and share mental health resources with a group (club, school, class, etc.)

Social Emotional Learning Competency:

- Social Awareness
- Self-Awareness

Purpose:

- Provide an anonymous way to share what's happening in participants' lives.
- Help participants to understand that everyone is going through something in their life, no matter what outward appearances show.
- Reduce stigma around mental health.
- Provide a way for program leaders to gauge what's going on in participants' lives.

Materials

- Copies of word bubble
- Writing utensils (pen, pencil, or markers)
- Scissors
- Tape
- List of mental health resources

**Or adapt virtually on a platform like <https://www.mentimeter.com/>

Preparation

- Google “thought bubble” template and choose one to use. Print the number of copies you will need (at least one for each participant).
- Create a banner or poster with a message that goes along with your central message or idea that will hang over thought bubbles, for example: “Everyone is Going Through Something” or “We Are in This Together.”
- Compile a list of resources to share, such as local mental health resources and professionals, state and national sites (e.g., National Alliance on Mental Illness, Mentalhealth.gov; 988 suicide and crisis lifeline)
- Hang the central message banner on a wall or a large open space.

Activity

- Welcome participants and share your message. Explain that this activity will help them to see that everyone has something going on in their life, even if it is not apparent on the outside. It’s ok to have something going on, and you can ask for help if needed.
- Share the ground rule that participant should share only what they feel comfortable sharing. Assure participants of anonymity.
- Have participants reflect on a statement that aligns with your theme (e.g., “Think about something you are going through, something that makes you feel “different’ from others or not like your peers.”) Challenge them to recognize that everyone is going through something. No one person’s life is perfect and that we are all in this together.
- Distribute thought bubbles and writing utensils.

Success Indicators

- Participants will share things in a thought bubble.
- Gather a wide variety of shared thoughts from participants.

Recommended Group Size: At least 10 to allow for anonymity within a group up to very large group

Est. Time: 15-20 minutes to explain and do activity. May be longer to hang display if using it with a large number of participants.

Recommended age: Grade school and High School age.

Activity Continued

- Invite participants to go ahead and share what they want on their thought bubble. This may be something most people don't know (e.g., someone might write "I have anxiety." or "I worry about my mom's health)."
- Collect thought bubbles or allow participants to anonymously drop them in a box.
- Once you have collected all the thought bubbles, hang them around your central theme banner on the wall or other location where you have chosen.
- Allow participants time to observe and reflect on the thought bubbles.
- If time allows you may process and ask participants some questions.
- How did you feel sharing?
- Are you surprised at anything you see up there?
- Wrap up with something like "As you can see everyone is going through something." OR tie it into your central message. Tell participants when they are overwhelmed by what they are facing or if they notice their friends are overwhelmed, it's OK to seek help. Taking care of our mental health is critical to our well-being.
- Share resources for mental health that you have compiled.
- Additionally, if this is displayed in a community space like a school hallway or similar, leave the message up with thought bubbles and a copies of resources people can take. Let the lesson continue to reach a broader community.

References

<https://www.theplayerstribune.com/articles/kevin-love-everyone-is-going-through-something>

For Ohio Mental Health Resources by county visit:

<https://u.osu.edu/cphp/ohio-mental-health-resource-guides/>