

Mental Health Connectedness Activity: Unpacking Your Baggage



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PERMANENTE

Materials

- 2 suitcases (1 carry-on size and 1 medium or large checked bag)
- Index cards (enough for each participant to have 1)
- 3-5 packing cubes

Set-Up

1. Write out professional stress statements you may have heard teachers say about their resistance to addressing mental health needs. Here are a few suggestions: "I don't have time for this", "I'm not trained in this", "I have my own issues going on", etc.
2. Pack the cubes with the statements (1 per cube).
3. Load the carry-on bag with packing cubes.
4. Place both bags side-by-side at the front of the room.



Suggested Script

*Let's think about our stress in terms of baggage. Typically, when people travel there are 2 types of bags, the checked bag - which gets 'checked' into the bottom of the plane to be there when you arrive at your destination, and the carry-on bag - which goes with you onto the plane to be stowed in the overhead bin and accessible throughout the flight. Certain stressors can be found or belong in our checked bag--like a divorce or financial trouble and are not appropriate to come into the classroom with us. Other stressors like not feeling well-rested or job description related stress do come into school and the classroom with us. For example, we may not be feeling well-rested so we may be more quick to react negatively to student misbehavior. This is completely **NORMAL!** We have an amygdala just like everyone else!*

Let's take a few minutes to think about the heavy stuff - the stuff in our checked bag. Once you know what belongs in yours write it on your index card. If you'd like follow up support from me please be sure to include your name. If not, it can remain anonymous. After you finish writing on your card bring it to the front of the room fold it up and deposit it into the suitcase. (once all cards have been deposited zip up the bag and whisk it away to be 'checked beneath the plane'.) I will read all of your responses when I return to my office and will shred the cards for confidentiality reasons.

Now let's say our carry-on is flagged by security - TSA is being really diligent today - we will unpack each statement and work to use our re-framing skills and supporting one another with the NES (notice, engage, support) model. (adlib script here with the statements you wrote in the packing cubes and participant responses/discussion)

Next time you're stressed, think about whether it is in your carry-on or checked bag and how you might lean on me or your work family for help and support. Remember we want to keep what's in our checked bag out of the classroom and our work with students.

Last but not least, while your checked bag can stay checked when you're at school, it's important to find time to address the stressors you carry in that suitcase. Whether that be with a trusted family member, friend, or professional like a therapist. We don't want to ignore these big stressors forever, as they will become even larger if left packed away and spill over into ways we aren't proud of. We are in this together, and I'm here with you if you need to talk.



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