

Mental Health and Self-Care

Teacher's Guide



ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ACTIVITIES

INDEX

1. Introduction	3
2. Objectives: module orientation and pedagogical principles	3
3. Main activities	
• Activity 1. Introduction to mental health	4
• Activity 2. Identifying emotions	6
• Activity 3. The wellness tree	8
4. Complementary activities	
• Complementary activity 1. My emotional toolbox	10
• Complementary activity 2. My tree and I.....	12
• Complementary activity 3. Mapping the inner self	14
5. Printable materials and resources	
• Checklist of materials per session	16
◦ Activity 2. Identifying emotions	17
◦ Activity 3. The wellness tree	27
◦ Complementary activity 2. My tree and I	29
◦ Complementary activity 3. Mapping the inner self	32

INTRODUCTION

Mental health, like physical health, is a fundamental part of children's well-being. This guide is designed to help teachers address important issues of emotional well-being and self-care in a simple and accessible way, tailored to the needs of elementary school students.

The activities are designed to encourage reflection, dialogue and the acquisition of practical tools that students can use in their daily lives. It is essential that girls and boys feel safe to share their feelings and experiences in a trusting environment.

We recommend starting each session with a simple "emotional check-up", such as asking them to give a thumbs up if they feel good or a thumbs down if they are a little worried. This will allow the teacher to get a general idea of the mood of the class and adjust the focus of the session as needed.

Key words

- Mental health
- Well-being
- Self-care
- Emotions
- Feelings
- Emotional regulation
- Stress
- Anxiety
- Stress management
- Emotional support
- Support circle
- Asking for help
- Trusted people
- Healthy habits
- Self-awareness

Expected results module 3

By the end of this module, students will **better understand how their mental health works**, will be able to **recognize their emotions and needs**, and will have **specific self-care strategies** to manage stress and ask for support when needed.



The ideas we share in this workshop are simply **suggestions on how the material can be used**. Feel free to adapt it to your needs: you can divide the workshop into two parts, distribute it over several days, or complete it in a single session, whichever is most convenient for you. **You know your students and you know what is best for them.**

Likewise, materials can be used in both printed and digital formats, depending on what is most convenient for you.

A1

Activity 1: Introduction to Mental Health (15 minutes)

Main concepts of the activity:



01. What is mental health?

Explain that mental health is as important as physical health and that it helps us feel good, think clearly and relate better to others.

02. Basic and complex emotions

Introduce concepts about emotions that are more complex to understand or manage, such as rejection, guilt and anxiety.

03. Caring for mental health is normal

Help young people to understand that taking care of their mental health is something that we all need to do, in the same way that we take care of our physical health.

04. Talking about our feelings

Explain the importance of sharing what we are feeling, especially when facing difficult emotions or situations. Communicate that it is always right to ask for help if we don't know how to deal with what we are feeling.

1.1 Objectives:

1. **Understand what mental health is and the importance of taking care of it** just as we take care of our physical health, recognizing that emotions, both positive and negative, are part of our well-being.
2. **Encourage reflection on how to manage emotions in a healthy way** by identifying simple strategies such as talking to an adult, practicing self-care or engaging in activities they enjoy.

Materials

- ☐ Presentation with images.
- ☐ Whiteboard for writing down the answers.

1.2 Description of the activity:

1. First conversation:

- Teacher begins by asking "Do you know what mental health is?"
- Explain that just as we take care of our bodies when we are tired, we should take care of our minds when we feel sad, nervous or angry.

2. Visual presentation:

- Show a presentation with pictures reflecting different emotions (happy, sad, worried) and ask: "How do you feel when you are sad? and "What do you do to feel better?" Remind them that all feelings are normal.

3. Closing discussion:

- Finish by asking, "What do you do when you feel worried or sad?"
- Encourage them to share simple strategies, such as talking to an adult or doing something they enjoy.

Suggestions for the teacher:

- Keep the conversation intimate and relaxed.
- Encourage participation without pressuring those who are uncomfortable speaking up.
- Remember, all feelings are valid and it is important to ask for help.



A2

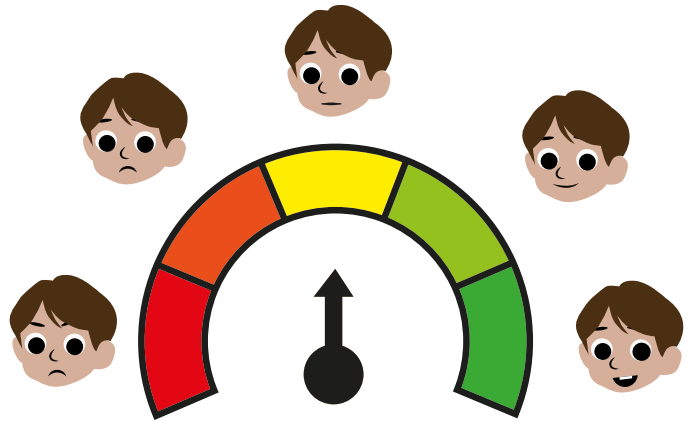
Activity 2: Identifying Emotions (15 minutes)

Main concepts of the activity:

- Identify the emotions girls and boys may feel or experience in situations they might experience or see in others.
- Identify the resources they can use to manage these emotions in a healthy way.
- Understand that all emotions are valid, that there are no negative or positive emotions, and that we can learn to manage them.

Materials:

- ☐ Visual list of emotions (printable material).
- ☐ Photographs of everyday situations (printable material).



2.1. Objectives:

1. To help students recognize and understand their emotions and learn how to manage them in a healthy way.

2.2. Description of the activity:

1. Introduction to emotions:

- Ask: "What emotions do you know?"
- Briefly explain the difference between simple emotions (happiness, sadness) and more complex emotions (frustration, fear). **Emphasize that all emotions are normal and have meaning.**

2. Practical exercise:

- **Display a list of emotions** (you can use the list we give you in the printable or write them on the board) and ask students to share when they have felt some of them.
- Ask questions such as "What do you do when you feel angry or sad?"

3. Image analysis:

- **Show the pictures** of the everyday situations we gave you in the printable.
- Ask "What do you think this person is feeling?" and "What would you do to feel better in this situation?" Encourage empathy by listening to the answers.

Suggestions for the teacher:

- **Encourage respectful participation** and remember that there are no wrong answers.
- If a child doesn't want to share, that's okay. Encourage them to listen and learn from others

A3

Activity 3: The Wellness Tree (30 minutes)

Conceptos principales de la actividad:

- Help children identify resources they can use to self-regulate when experiencing limiting emotions.
- Reinforce the importance of engaging in activities that promote mental and emotional well-being.

3.1. Objective:

1. Help students identify actions and resources to take care of their mental health and create a visual reminder of self-care in the classroom.

Materials:

- ☐ A large sheet of paper or a whiteboard for drawing the tree.
- ☐ Sheets of paper cut into the shape of leaves (or Post-it notes).
- ☐ Markers, coloured pencils.

3.2. Description of the activity:

1. Preparing the tree:

- On a large piece of paper or blackboard, **draw a large tree that represents wellness.**
- Explain: "This tree is like us, we need care to be healthy. Let's think of things we can do to take care of our mental health."

2. Creation of the leaves:

- Give students sheets of paper (or post-its) cut out from the printable material in the shape of a tree leaf.
- Ask them to write or draw on the leaf one thing they do to feel better when they are sad or worried (e.g. "talk to a friend", "listen to music", "play sports", etc.) and post the suggestions found on the printables.

3. Building the Tree of Wellbeing:

- Each student then adds his or her leaf to the tree.
- In the end, everyone will see the tree full of ideas and resources for taking care of their mental health.

4. Closing discussion:

- Ask "What actions can we all take to take care of ourselves?" and have them share their favorite strategies aloud.
- Explain that this tree is a reminder that we can all take care of ourselves and help each other when we are feeling down.



Suggestions for the teacher:

- Encourage students to be creative in what they write or draw on the leaves, remembering that there are no wrong answers.
- Leave the tree in a visible place in the classroom during the course as a constant reminder of wellness.

Final reflection

- At the end of each session, take a few minutes for students to reflect on what they have learned and how they can use these strategies in their daily lives.
- Questions such as "What did you learn about yourself today?" may be helpful for them to do a self-assessment.

AC1 Complementary Activity 1: Emotion Toolbox (20-30 total activity time)

We would like to suggest an additional activity so that you can develop it further and have this material as a permanent resource in the classroom.

4.1 Objective:

1. Help students identify and collect practical tools to help them manage their emotions and foster an environment of emotional well-being in the classroom.



Materials:

- ☐ A decorated or plain box for the 'Emotional Toolbox'.
- ☐ Small pieces of paper or blank cards.
- ☐ Markers, pens and coloured pencils for writing or drawing.

4.2. Description of the Activity:

1. Introduction to Emotional Tools:

- Explain that just as we need tools to perform physical tasks (such as a hammer or screwdriver), we also need tools to manage our emotions.
- Ask the group "What things help you feel better when you are sad or angry?", "What do you do to relax or calm down when you feel nervous?". Let them share their answers and reinforce that we all have different ways of managing ourselves emotionally.

2. Generating Ideas for the Emotional Toolbox

- Distribute small blank pieces of paper or cards to each student.
- Ask students to write or draw an action that will help them manage their emotions. Examples: "Talk to a friend", "Draw a picture", "Take a deep breath", "Listen to music", etc.
- Encourage them to think of activities they can do to feel better when they are sad, anxious or frustrated.

3. Sharing the Toolbox

- Set up a decorated (or plain) box in the classroom where each student will place his or her emotional tool card that he or she has written or drawn.
- Explain that this "emotional toolbox" will be available throughout the course and that the teacher can draw a card at times of need, either to reflect on emotional well-being or to support students in difficult situations.

4. Think and reflect

- As a group, reflect on how these tools can be useful in taking care of ourselves emotionally.
 - Ask *"How can these tools help us feel better during difficult times?"*
- Reinforce the idea that we can all use and share tools to take care of our emotional well-being.

Suggestions for the Teacher:

- Encourage students to think creatively and honestly about their emotional tools, and reinforce that there are no wrong answers.
- The box should be accessible throughout the course so that they can refer to it at any time.
- Remember to use the tools in the box in situations where students need a reminder about self-care.

AC2 Complementary activity 2. Me and my tree

(20-30 minutes total duration of the activity)

5.1. Objective:

1. To help children reflect on their identity and self-awareness in a simple and visual way.
2. Explore values, emotions and important aspects of their lives through the metaphor of the tree.
3. Emphasise the importance of emotional wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

Materials

- ☐ Pictures of different types of trees.
- ☐ White sheets of paper for drawing.
- ☐ Pencils, coloured pencils or felt-tip pens.
- ☐ A written reflection.

5.2. Description of the Activity:

1. Introduction

- In the Tree of Wellbeing activity, we learned that just like trees, we need to take care of ourselves to grow strong and healthy. Every tree is different and special, just like every person - let's find out what kind of tree you are!

2. Tree selection

- Look at the pictures of different types of trees and choose the one you like best or identify with most. There are no wrong answers, just choose the one you think best represents you.



3. Drawing and reflection on the chosen tree

- Draw the tree you have chosen on your leaf. Then take a good look at your drawing and answer:
 - If there is a part of the tree that represents how you feel right now, make it bigger or highlight it with a special colour.
 - Write or draw next to that part: Why do you think it represents you? What does it mean to you?

4. Written reflection

- Complete the following sentence

My tree represents me:

"When I feel sad or insecure, I remember that I have strengths and things that make me feel special. I connect with my family, my friends, and everything that makes me feel good. I remember that I am important and that I belong. Something bigger."

5. Conclusions

- You already have a "map" of your emotional state right now.
 - *Can you add words that describe what you felt?*
- If you like, add a time and date to your drawing to record how you were feeling at that moment.

Suggestions for teachers:

- **Explain to the children that there are no wrong answers** and that everyone is as unique as their tree.
- Encourage the children to share their drawing and reflection as a group if they feel comfortable.
- It reinforces the idea that we all need to recognise our strengths in order to grow and feel good.
- You can close the activity with a short discussion about the importance of taking care of ourselves and recognising what makes us feel happy and safe.

6.1. Objective:

1. Help children connect with their emotions through an automatic drawing exercise.
2. Encourage the exploration of feelings and their manifestation in the body.
3. Promote self-reflection on emotional and physical state.

Materials

- ☐ Blank sheets of paper or a notebook.
- ☐ Pencils, pens or coloured pencils.

6.2. Description of the Activity:**1. Preparation**

- Before starting, each child should check how she/he feels and if she/he is in the mood for the activity. Take a deep breath and relax.

2. Initial drawing

- On a blank sheet of paper, draw a simple outline of your body.

3. Sensory exploration

- Close your eyes and disconnect from your thoughts for a moment.
- Connect with how your body feels right now.
- Without thinking too much, let the pencil move freely within the outline of your drawing, marking the parts of the body where you feel a sensation or emotion.

4. Reflection

- Open your eyes and look at what you have drawn..
 - *Were you surprised by what you saw in the drawing?*
 - *It helps them to better understand how they are feeling at the moment?*
- Write a few words or phrases in the areas where you have marked sensations or emotions..

5. Conclusions

- You already have a "map" of your current emotional state.
 - *They can add words that describe what they felt?*
- If you like, add a time and date to your drawing to record how you felt at that moment.



Suggestions for teachers:

- Explain to the children that there are no wrong answers, each drawing is a unique representation of how each person feels.
- Encourage girls and boys to do the exercise without judgement or pressure.
- You can open a space for them to share their reflections if they wish, in a respectful atmosphere.

Material Checklist by Activity

Activity 1. Introduction to mental health

- ☐ Presentation with images.
- ☐ Whiteboard to write down the answers.

Activity 2. Identifying emotions

- ☐ Visual list of emotions.
- ☐ Photographs of everyday situations (printable material).

Activity 3. The wellness tree

- ☐ Large paper or whiteboard to draw the tree.
- ☐ Paper sheets cut into leaf shapes (or post-its).
- ☐ Markers, colored pencils.

Complementary activity 1. My emotional toolbox

- ☐ A decorated or simple box for the "Emotional Toolbox".
- ☐ Small blank papers or cards.
- ☐ Markers, pens, and colors to write or draw.

Complementary activity 2. My tree and I

- ☐ Images of different types of trees.
- ☐ Blank sheets for drawing.
- ☐ Pencils, colors, or markers.
- ☐ Written reflection phrase.

Complementary activity 3. Mapping the inner self

- ☐ Blank sheets or notebook.
- ☐ Pencils, pens, or colors.

What is happening in the picture?

What might the people in the photo be feeling?

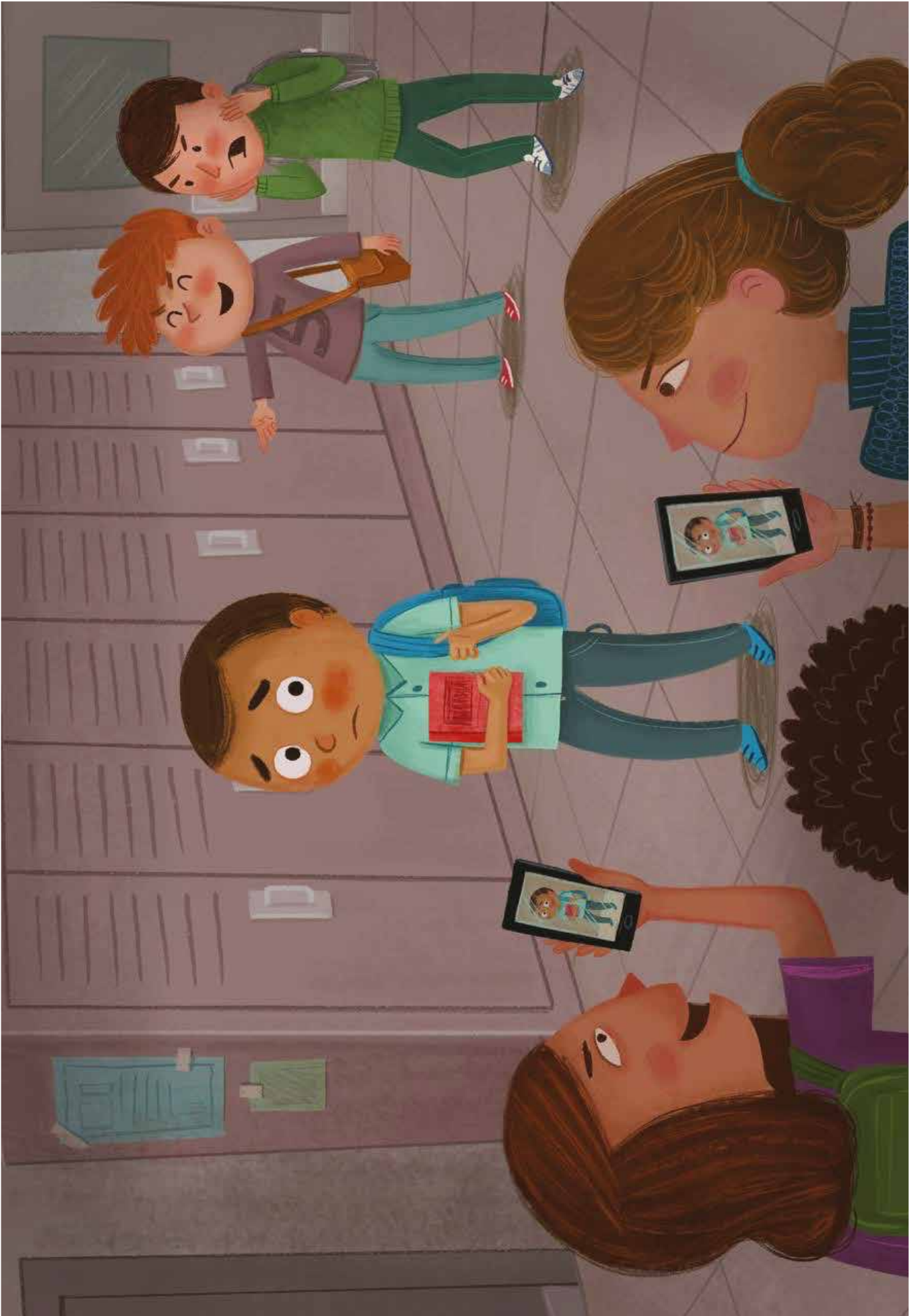
What emotion would you feel if you were in this situation?

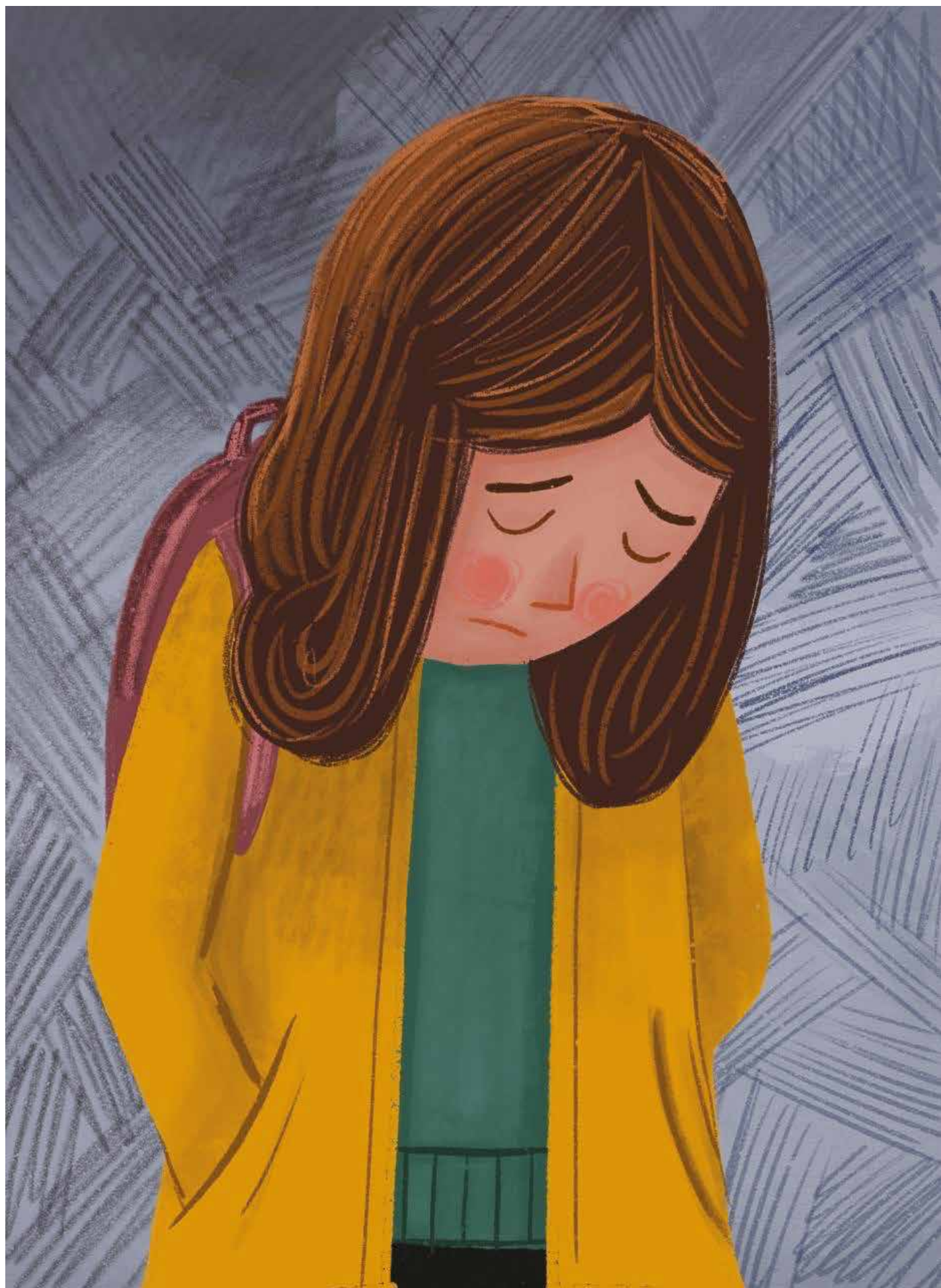
What would or could you do to
regulate your feelings?

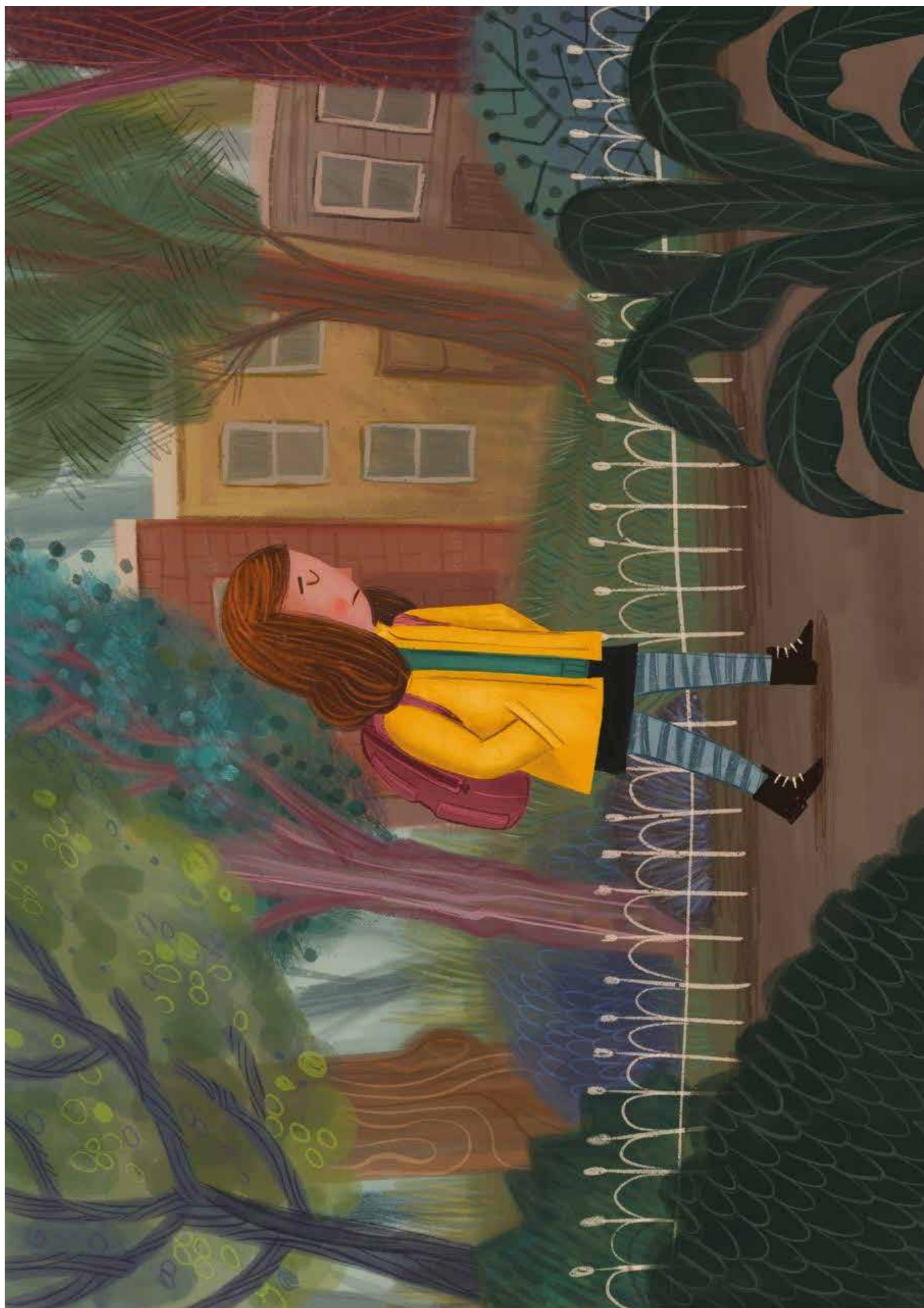


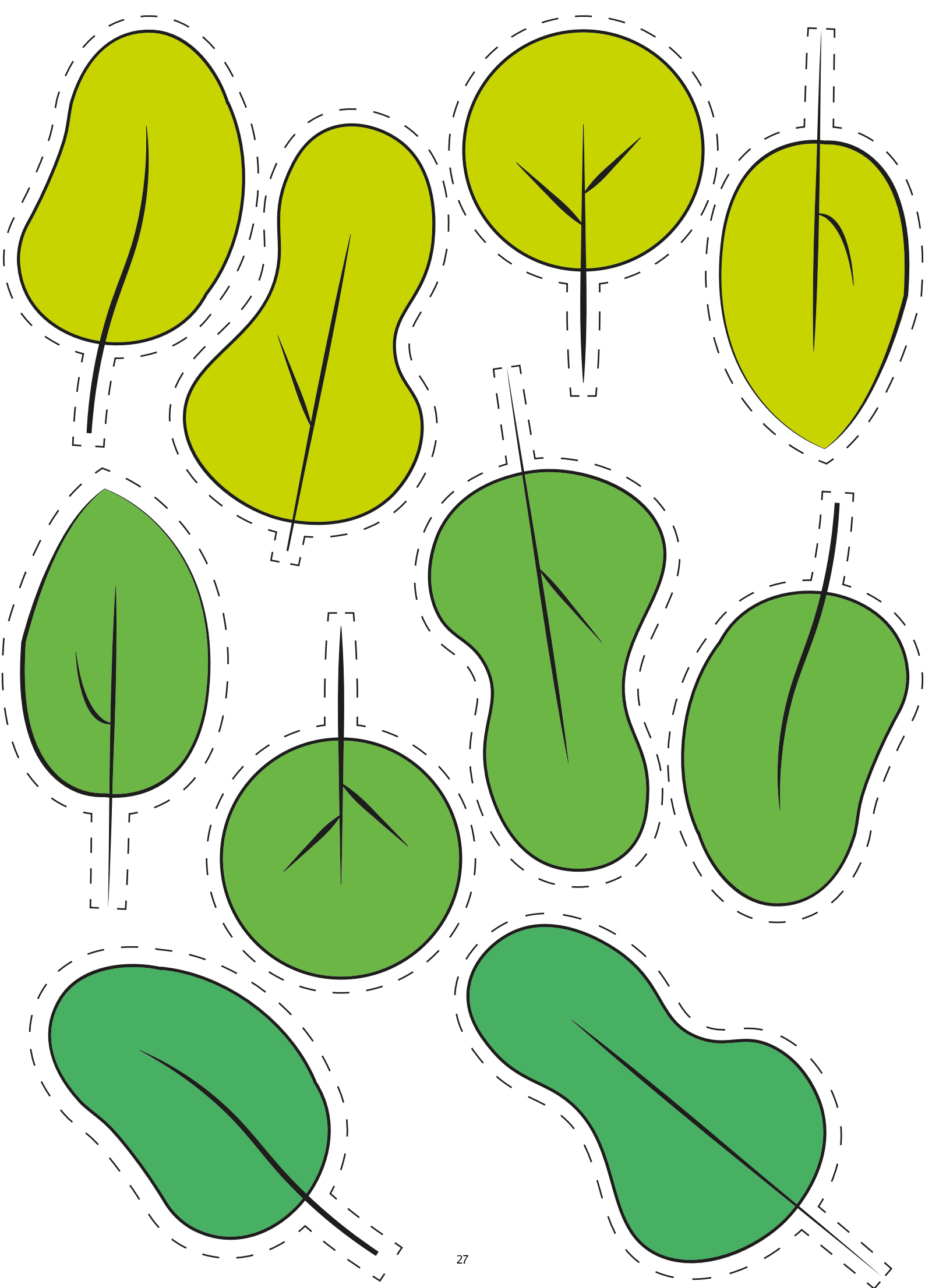


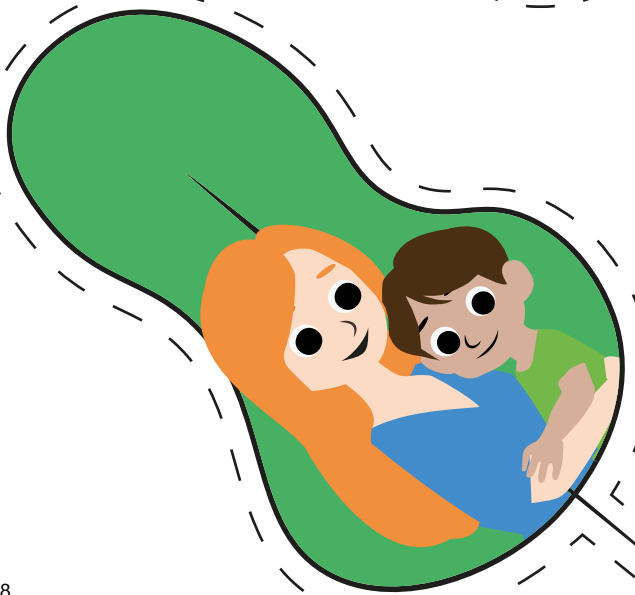














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