

Mental Health and Self-Care

Teacher's Guide



ACTIVITIES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Mental health, like physical health, is a fundamental part of adolescent well-being. This guide is designed to help teachers address important issues of emotional well-being and self-care in an accessible and effective way, tailored to ESO students.

The activities are designed to encourage reflection, dialogue, and the development of practical tools that adolescents can use in their daily lives. It is important that students 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 quickly assess the overall mood of the class and adjust the focus 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.



1.2. Objectives:

1. To promote mental health awareness among young people.
2. To develop practical self-care strategies that they can use in their daily lives.

Materiales

- ☐ Diapositivas con conceptos clave sobre salud mental.

1.3 Description of the activity:

1. Mental health introduction:

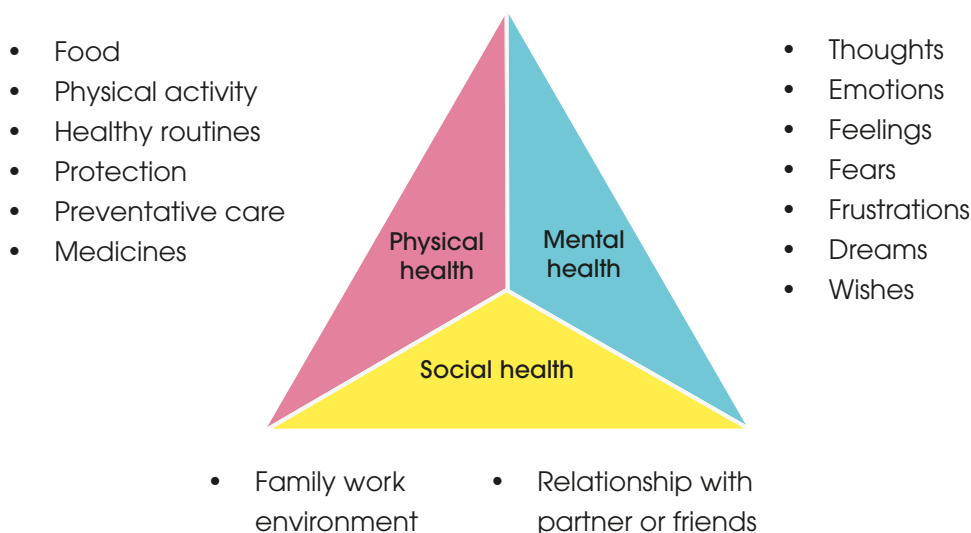
- Teacher starts by asking, "What does mental health mean to you?"
- Explain that just as we take care of our bodies when we are sick or tired, we should also take care of our minds when we feel stressed, sad or anxious.
- Make a direct comparison: "Taking care of our mental health is just as important as taking care of our physical health. Both allow us to enjoy life, feel good and relate better to others".

2 Visual presentation:

- **Show a simple slide** that defines mental health and how it affects our emotions, thoughts and relationships.
- Introduce more complex concepts that teens may be experiencing, such as stress from school, social anxiety, or pressure from social media.
- You might say something like, "It's normal to feel more pressure at this stage in your life. The important thing is to learn how to manage it so that it doesn't affect your mental health."

3. Closing discussion:

- Close with a small group discussion, starting with questions such as
 - *"What do you do when you feel overwhelmed by your studies or a situation?"*
- Encourage students to share tips and strategies they already use or would like to try.



Suggestions for the teacher:

- **Make the conversation more relatable:** use examples that relate to their everyday lives, such as social media use, exam pressure or conflicts between friends.
- **Encourage dialogue,** but don't force anyone to talk if they don't feel comfortable. Some young people may feel more comfortable listening before participating.
- **Emphasise the importance of self-care:** mention that asking for help is not a sign of weakness, but a way of taking responsibility for their wellbeing.

A2

Activity 2: The Wellness Tree (30 minutes)

2.1. Objective:

1. Help young people identify actions and resources to help them manage their mental health by creating a visual reminder in the classroom that promotes self-care.

Materials

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

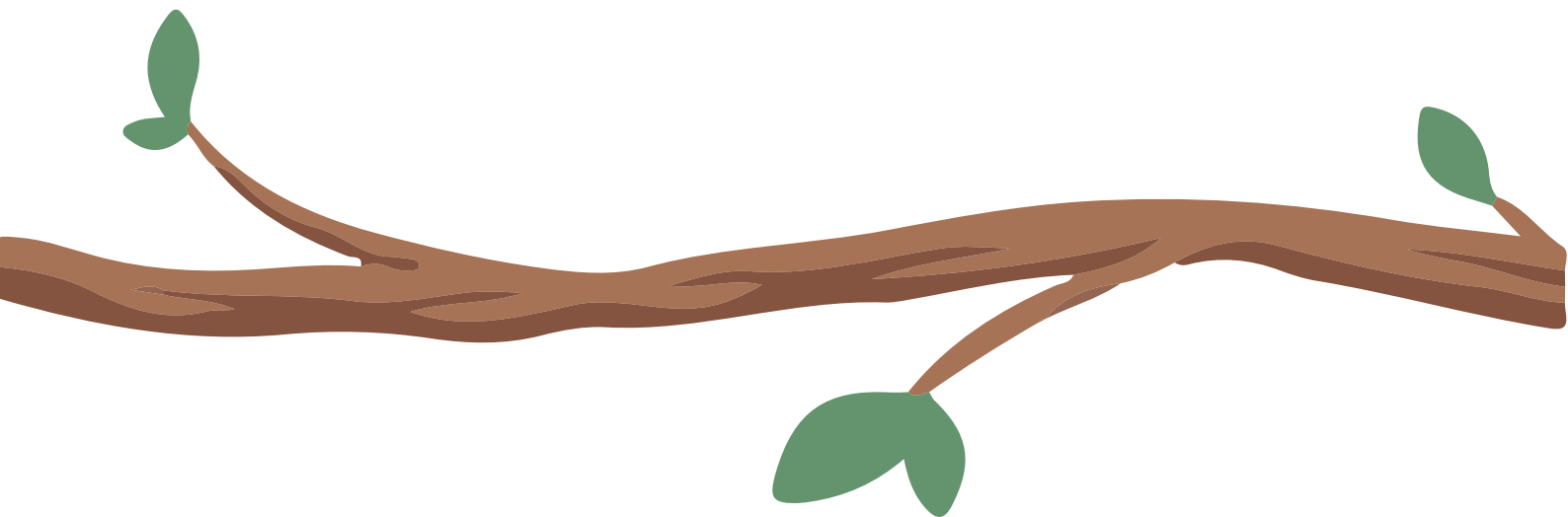
2.2. Description of the activity:

1. Preparing the tree:

- On a blackboard or large piece of paper, draw a large tree that represents spiritual well-being.
- Explain: *"This tree represents that we also need care to be well, just like a tree needs water and sunshine to grow. Let's think about actions we can take to feel better when we are stressed, sad or nervous".*

2. Creation of the leaves:

- **Distribute sheets of paper cut out in the shape of tree leaves (or post-its).**
- Ask students to write or draw something they do to make themselves feel better during difficult times, such as "listen to music", "go for a walk", "talk to a friend" or any other personal strategy.
- To help them, suggest some ideas from the printable material or give personal examples.



3. Building the Tree of Wellbeing

- Each student will add their leaf to the tree, creating a collective mural of ideas and resources that promote self-care.
- At the end of the activity, the tree will be filled with useful strategies to use when needed, creating a visual reminder of emotional wellbeing in the classroom.

4. Closing discussion:

- Do a little group reflection by asking, "What are some things we can all do to look after our wellbeing?"
- Encourage them to share their favourite strategies aloud.
- Explain that the tree is not just a drawing, but a reminder that we all have the ability to take care of ourselves and support each other when things get tough.

Suggestions for the teacher:

- Encourage students to be creative and honest in what they write or draw on the leaves, and **remind them that there are no wrong answers.**
- Keep the tree in a visible place in the classroom during the course as a constant reminder of strategies they can use to take care of their mental health.
- Use the tree during times of collective stress (such as before exams) to remind them of the tools they have identified.

2.4 Closing reflection

- At the end of the 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?"* or *"Which tools from the tree would you like to use more often?"* can help them do a self-assessment and reflect on their own self-care.

A2

Activity 3. My circle of support (20 minutes)

Main concepts of the activity:

- Help teens identify and appreciate the people who are part of their emotional support network.
- Promote reflection on the importance of relationships that provide security and well-being at key moments in their lives.

3.1 Objective:

1. To help young people identify the people in their lives who make up their emotional support network, and to reflect on the importance of these relationships to their well-being.

Materials

- ☐ A template with concentric circles for each student.
- ☐ Markers or pens.

3.2 Description of the activity:

1. Introduction to the “Circle of Support” concept:

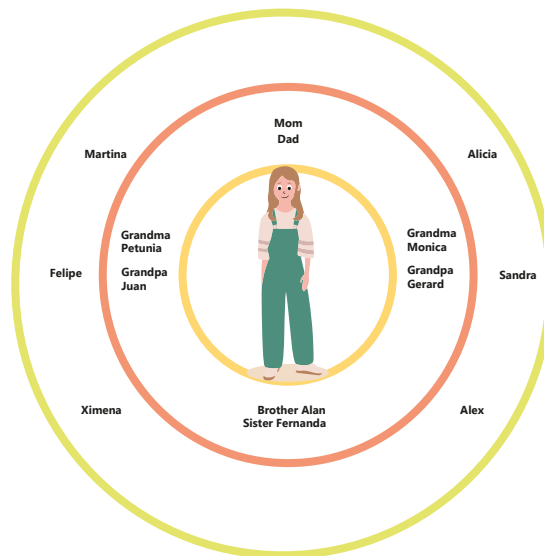
- Teacher begins by explaining, “We all have people we turn to when we need help or someone to talk to. This group is what we call our ‘circle of support.’”
- Ask, “Who do you think is part of your circle of support?”
- Have them give some examples, such as friends, family members, teachers, or coaches.

2. Create a circle of support:

- Give each student a **template of concentric circles**. The center represents the student, and the outer circles represent the people who support the student, from closest to farthest.
- Ask students to write inside the circles the names of the people they consider to be emotionally supportive (they can be friends, family, classmates, teachers, etc.).
 - Example: The innermost circle could be their mother or best friend; the outermost circles could be classmates or teachers with whom they feel comfortable but are not as close.

3. Thinking about support in specific situations:

- Ask questions such as, “*Who helps you when you feel stressed about your studies?*” or “*Who would you go to if you had a problem with a friend?*” Encourage them to identify different types of support (emotional, practical).
- Have them share their answers as a group or, if they prefer, individually.



Closing reflection

- She ends with a reflection on the importance of having a circle of support and how they, too, can be a part of supporting others.
- *"It's important to recognize who supports us, but also how we can be a good support for our friends and family."*

Suggestions for the Teacher:

- **Remember that there are no right or wrong answers:** each student may have a different circle of support, and all are valid.
- Some teens may feel uncomfortable sharing. Encourage them to write only the names that make them feel comfortable, and reinforce that their circle may change over time.
- **Facilitate group reflection:** Emphasize that we don't all have the same people in our circles, and it's okay to have differences.

4.1. Objective:

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

Materials

- ☐ A box or envelopes for personal kits.
- ☐ Cards or small pieces of paper.
- ☐ Markers, pens and coloured pencils
- ☐ Optional: Decorative materials to personalise the kit (stickers, ribbons, etc.).

4.2. Description of the Activity:

1. Introduction to Emotional Tools:

- Begin by explaining that just as we use tools for practical tasks (such as fixing a bicycle or assembling a piece of furniture), we also need tools to manage our emotions.
- Ask the group, *"What do you do when you are stressed about studying or after a fight with a friend?"*
- Allow them to share their answers, and reinforce that we all have different ways of coping emotionally and that it's okay to have our own ways.

2. Creating the "Emotional Self-Care Kit":

- Distribute small pieces of paper or cards to each student.
- Ask students to write or draw an action or strategy that helps them calm down and feel better during difficult times.
 - Examples: "Listen to relaxing music," "Exercise," "Disconnect from social media," "Talk to someone you trust."
- You can suggest that they think of activities they can do alone or together that are realistic and have worked for them in the past.

3. Building the Self-Care Kit:

- Instead of a simple box, suggest that they create an "emotional self-care kit."
 - Each student can add his or her tool card to a shared box that they decorate together. This kit can stay in the classroom as a group resource, or you can suggest that each student create their own personal kit to keep in their backpack with tools or cards they can refer to as needed.
- The idea is to have both the group and individual versions available to help them remember that they have ways to manage their emotions, even in difficult times.

4. Using the Kit in the Classroom:

- Explain that the **emotional self-care kit will be available throughout the course** and that the teacher or students can refer to it at times when the class is more stressed (e.g., before exams) or when someone needs it to remember and use these tools.
- From time to time, select a card from the kit as a self-care reminder and reflect as a group on its usefulness.

5. Closing reflection:

- At the end of the activity, reflect with the group on how these tools can be useful in caring for their emotional well-being.
 - Ask, "What will you do the next time you feel stressed or sad?"
- Emphasize the importance of **sharing tools** and emotional support in the classroom, but also of creating a personal space where they can access these strategies when they need them.



Suggestions for the Teacher:

- Encourage teens to **think honestly and thoughtfully** about their emotional tools, emphasizing that there are no wrong answers.
- **Encourage creativity** and customization of the kit, suggesting that they include tools that really help them calm down or center themselves.
- Make sure students feel free to refer to the kit as needed, and remember that it can be a valuable resource in stressful group situations.

AC2 Complementary activity 2: Which tree are you?

(20-30 minutes total duration of the activity)

5.1. Objective:

1. To encourage reflection on identity and self-knowledge through the analogy with a tree.
2. Explore values, emotions and important aspects of their lives through the metaphor of the tree.
3. Reinforce the importance of emotional well-being 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 also need care 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 sheet. Then look carefully at your drawing and answer the following questions
 - 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 this part:
Why do you think it represents you? What does it mean to you?

4. Written reflection

- Complete the following sentence:
 - *"When I feel sad or insecure, I remember that I have strengths and things that make me special. I connect with my family, friends and anything that makes me feel good. I remember that I am important and part of something bigger."*

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 reflections as a group if they feel comfortable doing so.
- This reinforces the idea that we all need to recognise our strengths in order to grow and feel good.
- You can end the activity with a short discussion about the importance of taking care of ourselves and recognising what makes us feel happy and secure.

AC3

Activity 3 extra: Listening to your Body

(20-30 minutes total duration of the activity)

6.1. Objective:

1. To help students identify their emotions by actively listening to their bodies.
2. Differentiate between physical thoughts and emotions to improve emotional self-awareness.
3. Learning to regulate emotions through breathing and conscious observation.

Materials

- ☐ Blank sheets of drawing paper.
- ☐ Pencils, pens or felt-tip pens.

6.2. Description of the Activity:

1. Introduction

- Our body is our main tool for discovering what we are feeling and what we need, but we often find it difficult to listen to it because our mind generates too much noise. This exercise will help us to focus our attention on our physical sensations and distinguish them from our thoughts.

2. Initial drawing

- Each student takes a sheet of paper and draws the silhouette of their body. Separately, they will draw the head as a separate element.

3. Guided visualisation

- The teacher will read the following script while the students close their eyes and follow the visualisation:

"Imagine you go into a cinema and sit down. You are comfortable, eating popcorn and drinking while the film starts.

Suddenly you realise that the film is about a situation that affects you. It could be a memory, an experience that makes you uncomfortable, or something that has been on your mind for a long time.

As you watch the film, you gently remove your head and place it on the seat next to you. seat next to you. You put it in a transparent glass box. Now the head is no longer yours, it just sits there while you are left alone with your body.

Pay attention to how your body feels right now:

- What feelings are you experiencing?
- Where in your body are you feeling them?
- Are you feeling hot, cold, tingly, tense, etc.?
- Does any part of your body light up or activate in any way?

Now begin to breathe deeply. With each inhale and exhale, notice if anything changes in these sensations.

When you feel ready, take your head out of the glass box and put it back in.

Watch the film again.

Do you feel any different now?

Has anything changed in the way you see her?

4. Written reflection

- In the silhouette of the body, write down what you felt in the body during the visualisation.
- In the head, write down the thoughts that came up as you watched the film.
- Think about the differences between what you feel and what you think.

5. Group reflection

If the students wish, they can share their experiences in groups.

Some questions to guide the reflection:

- *What differences did you notice between your thoughts and your feelings?*
- *physical sensations?*
- *How did your feelings change after you took a deep breath?*
- *How can you use this technique in everyday life to deal with difficult situations?*

Suggestions for teachers:

- It creates a relaxed and comfortable viewing environment.
- Encourage students to close their eyes and focus on their sensations.
- Emphasise that there are no wrong answers and that everyone experiences emotions differently.
- If a student does not feel comfortable sharing, respect their silence and validate their experience..

This activity will help students to develop a greater awareness of their emotions and to differentiate between what they think and what they really feel in their lives. their emotions and to differentiate between what they think and what they really feel in their lives.



Material Checklist by Activity

Activity 1. Introduction to mental health

- ☐ Slides with key concepts on mental health.

Activity 2. The wellness tree

- ☐ Large paper or whiteboard to draw the tree.
- ☐ Paper sheets cut into leaf shapes (or post-its).
- ☐ Printable material with suggested ideas.
- ☐ Markers, pens, and colored pencils.

Activity 3. My support circle

- ☐ Concentric circles template for each student.
- ☐ Markers or pens.

Complementary activity 1. My emotional self-care kit

- ☐ A box for the emotional self-care kit or envelopes for personal kits.
- ☐ Small cards or papers.
- ☐ Markers, pens, and colors to write or draw.
- ☐ Optional: Decorative materials to personalize the kit (stickers, ribbons, etc.).

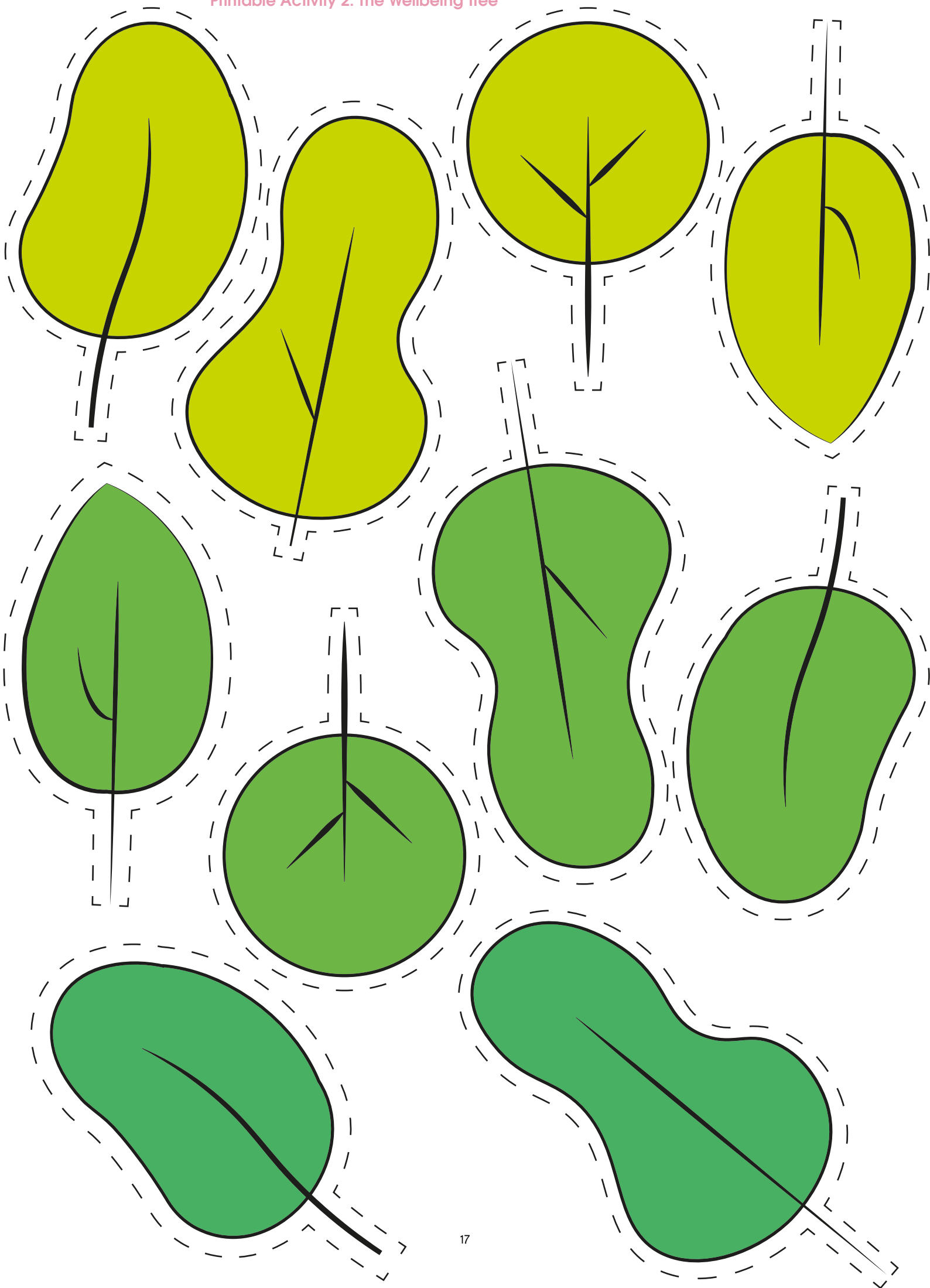
Complementary activity 2. Which tree are you?

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

Complementary activity 3. Listening to your body

- ☐ Blank sheets for drawing.
- ☐ Pencils, pens, or markers.

Printable Activity 2: The Wellbeing Tree



Reading

Drawing

Sleep well

Talking to Dad

Exercise

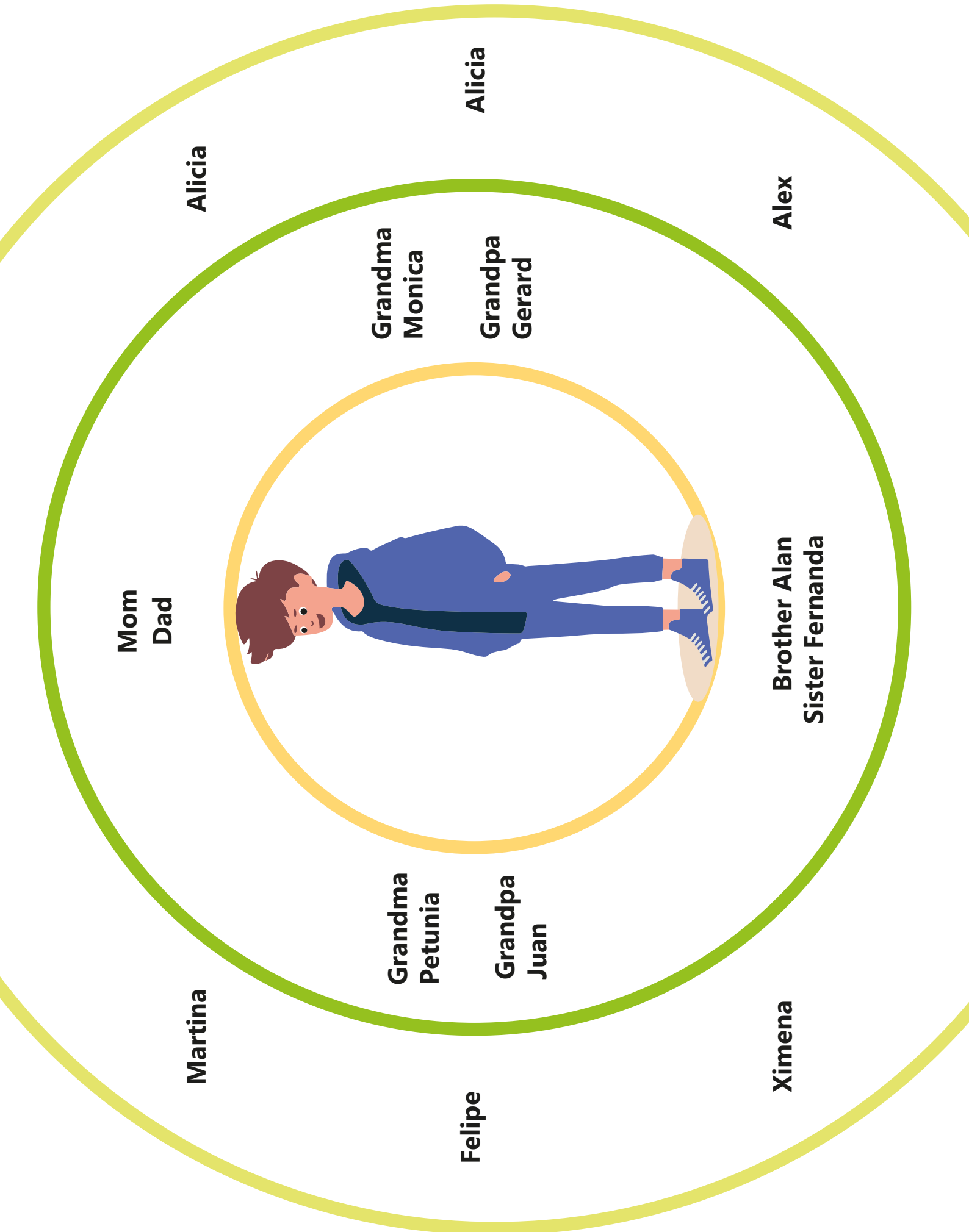
Talking to Mom

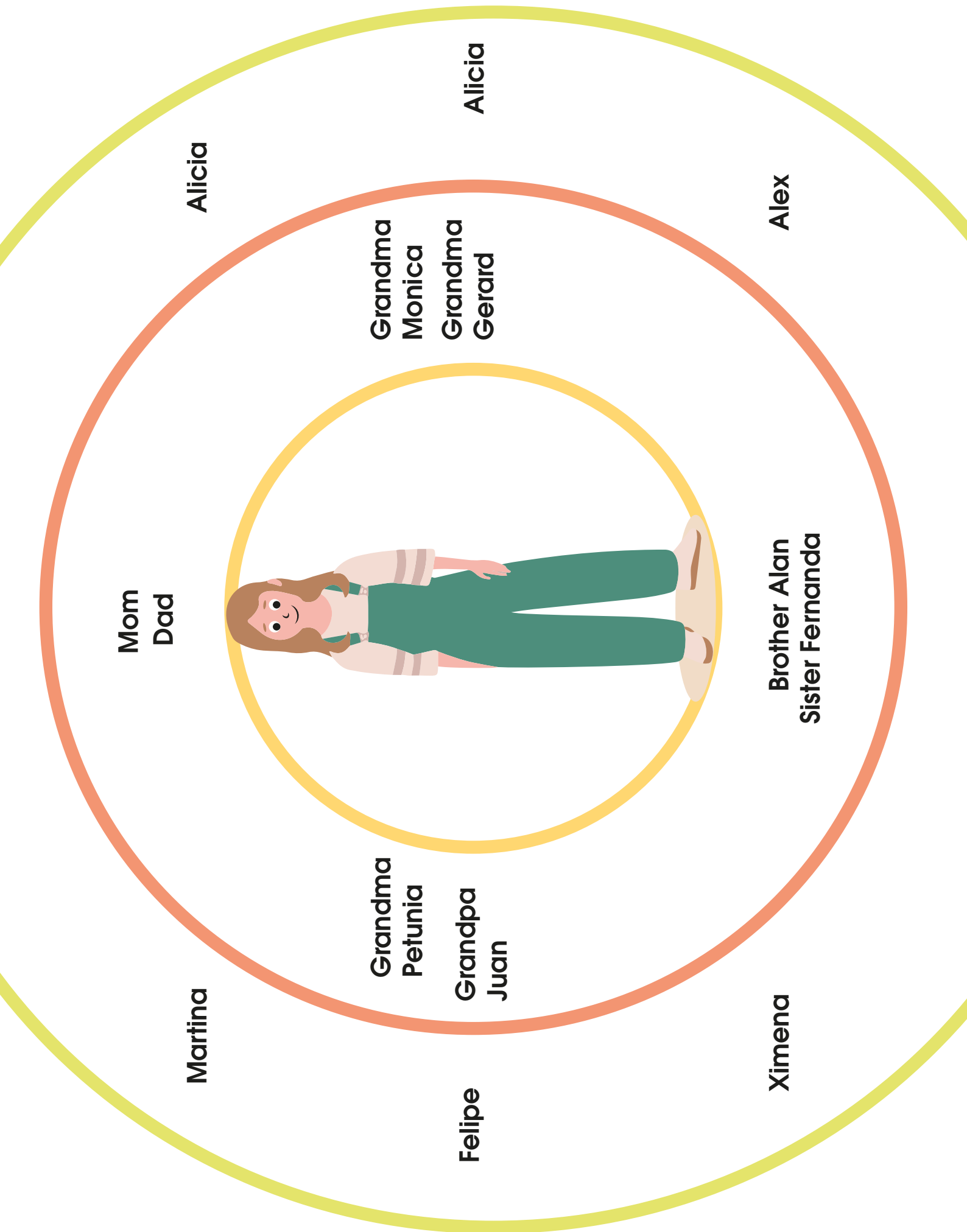
Eat healthy

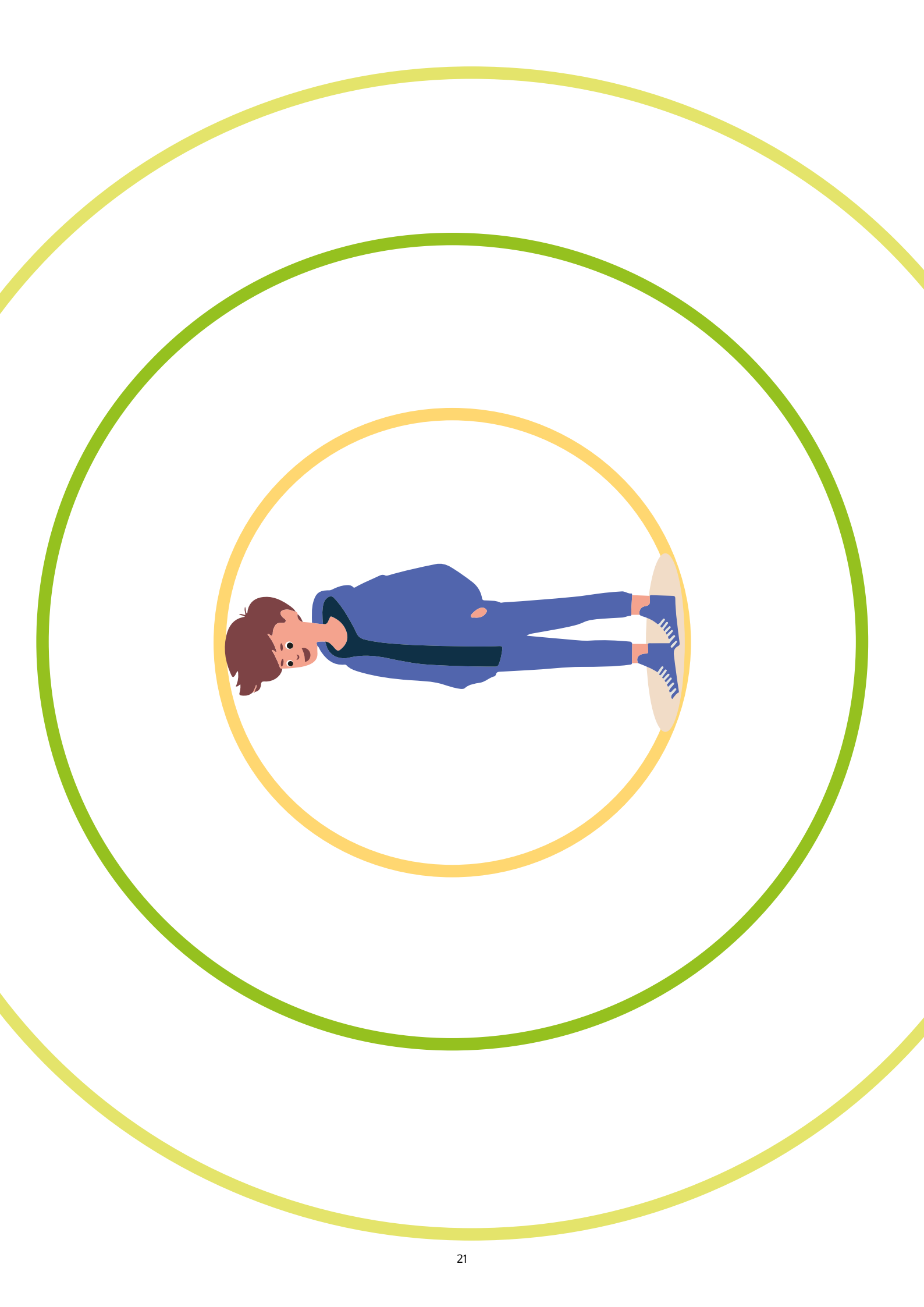
Writing

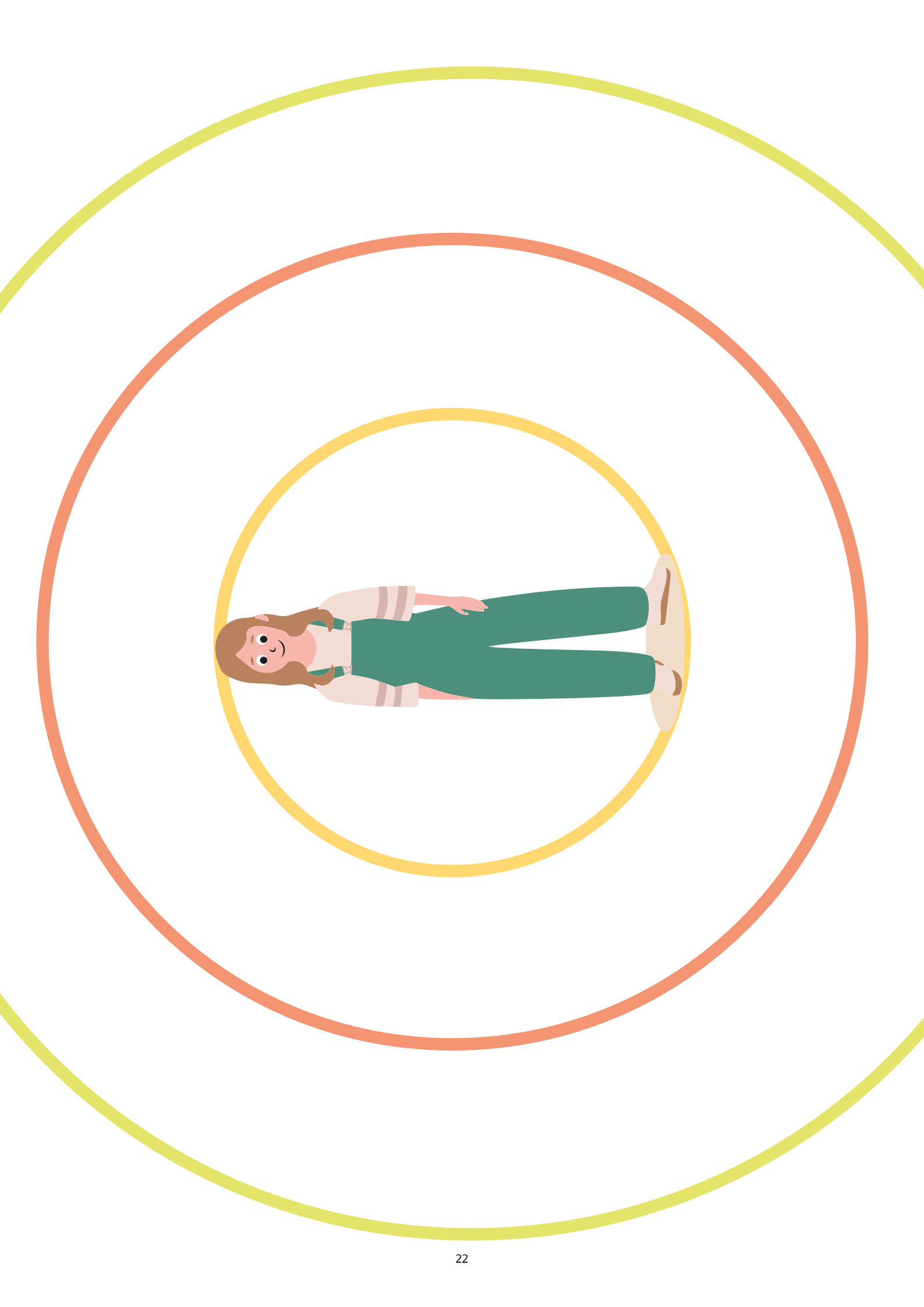
Talking with friends

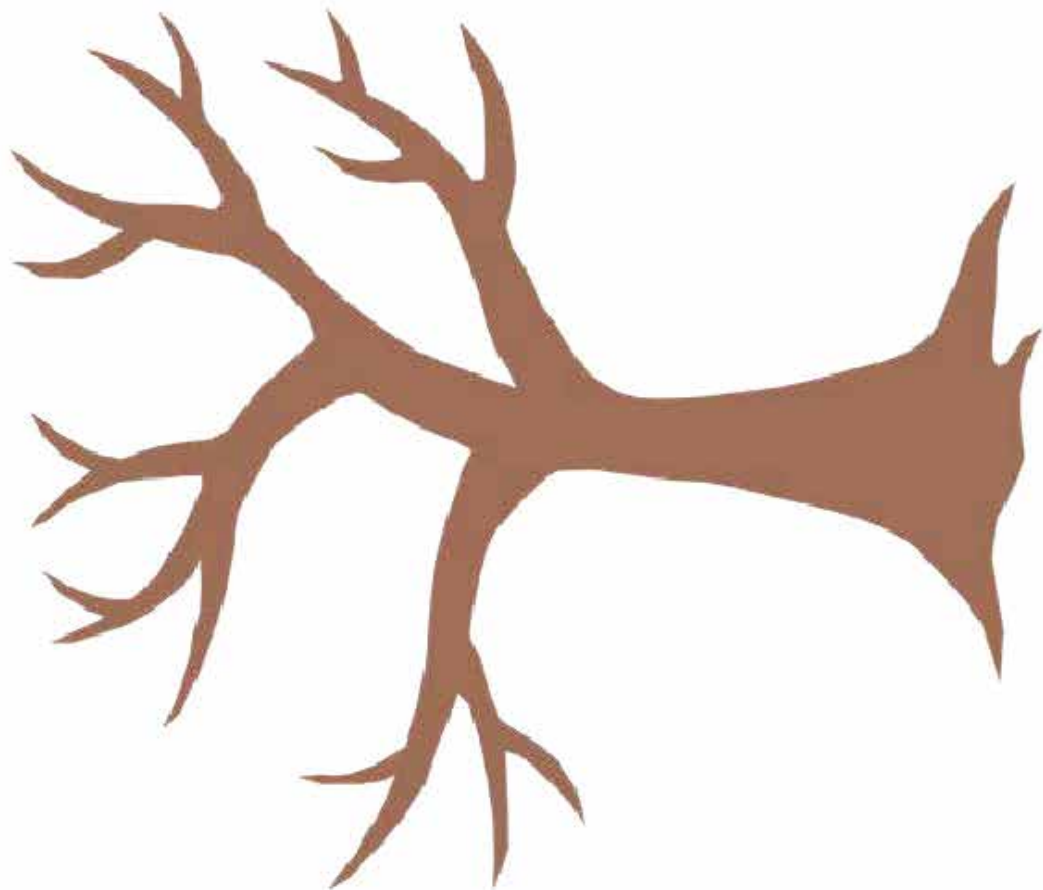
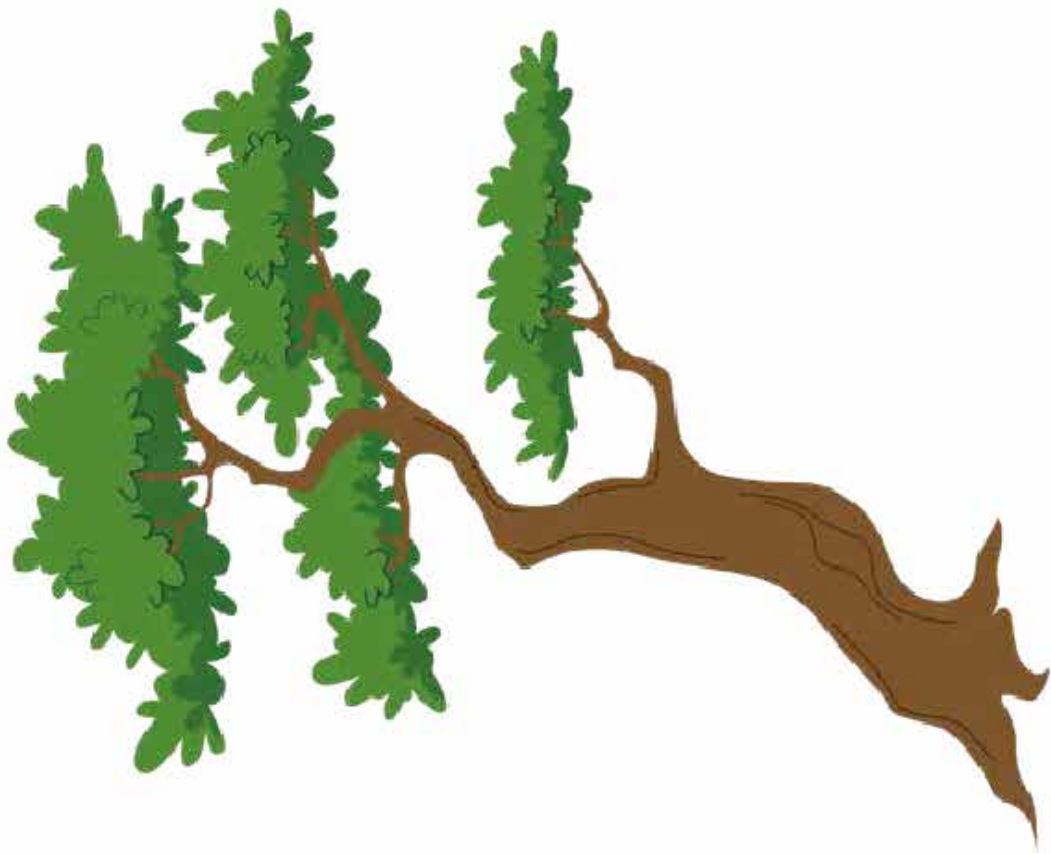
Listening to music

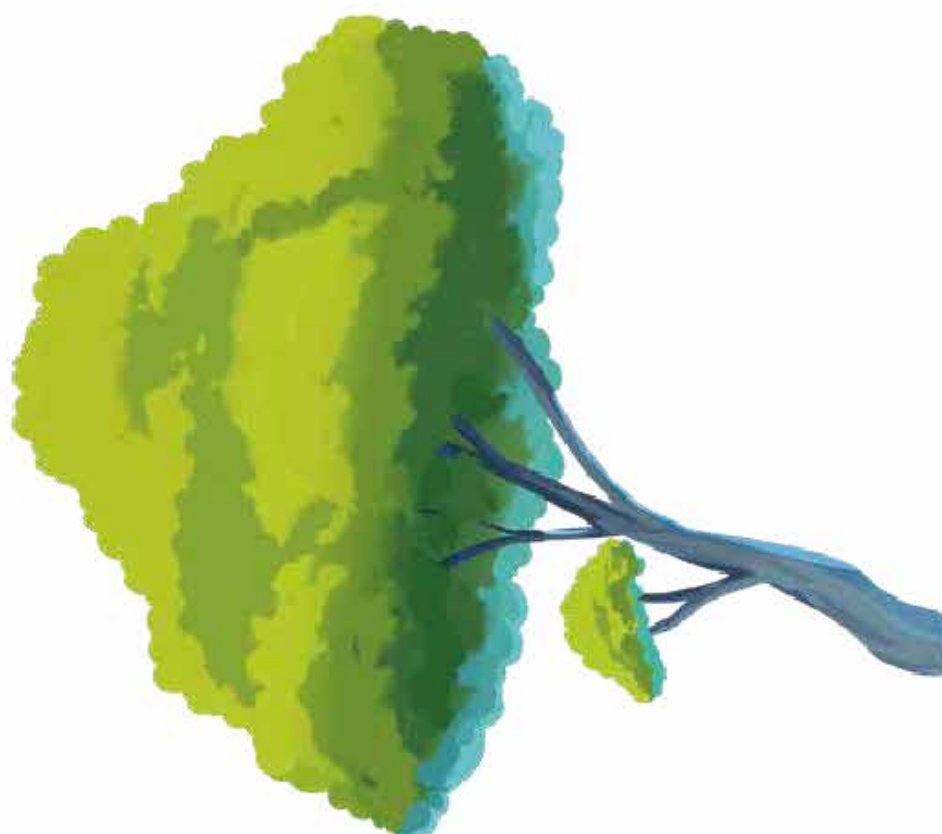
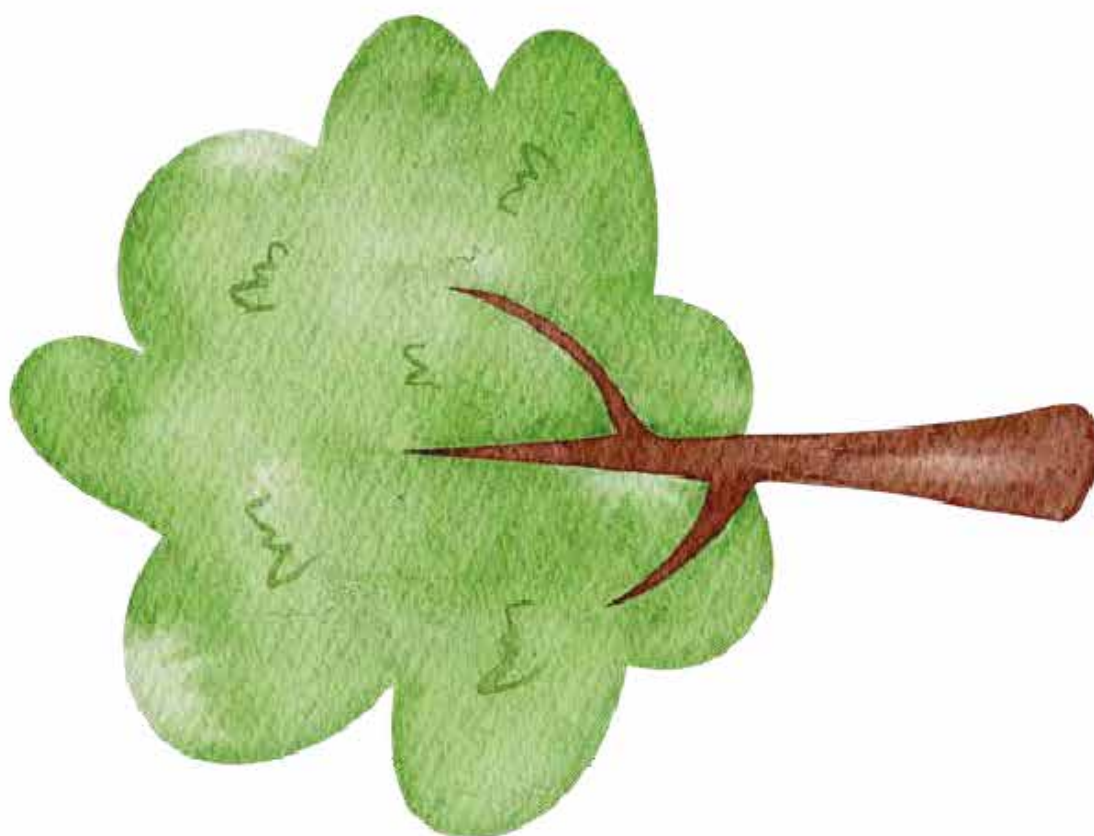




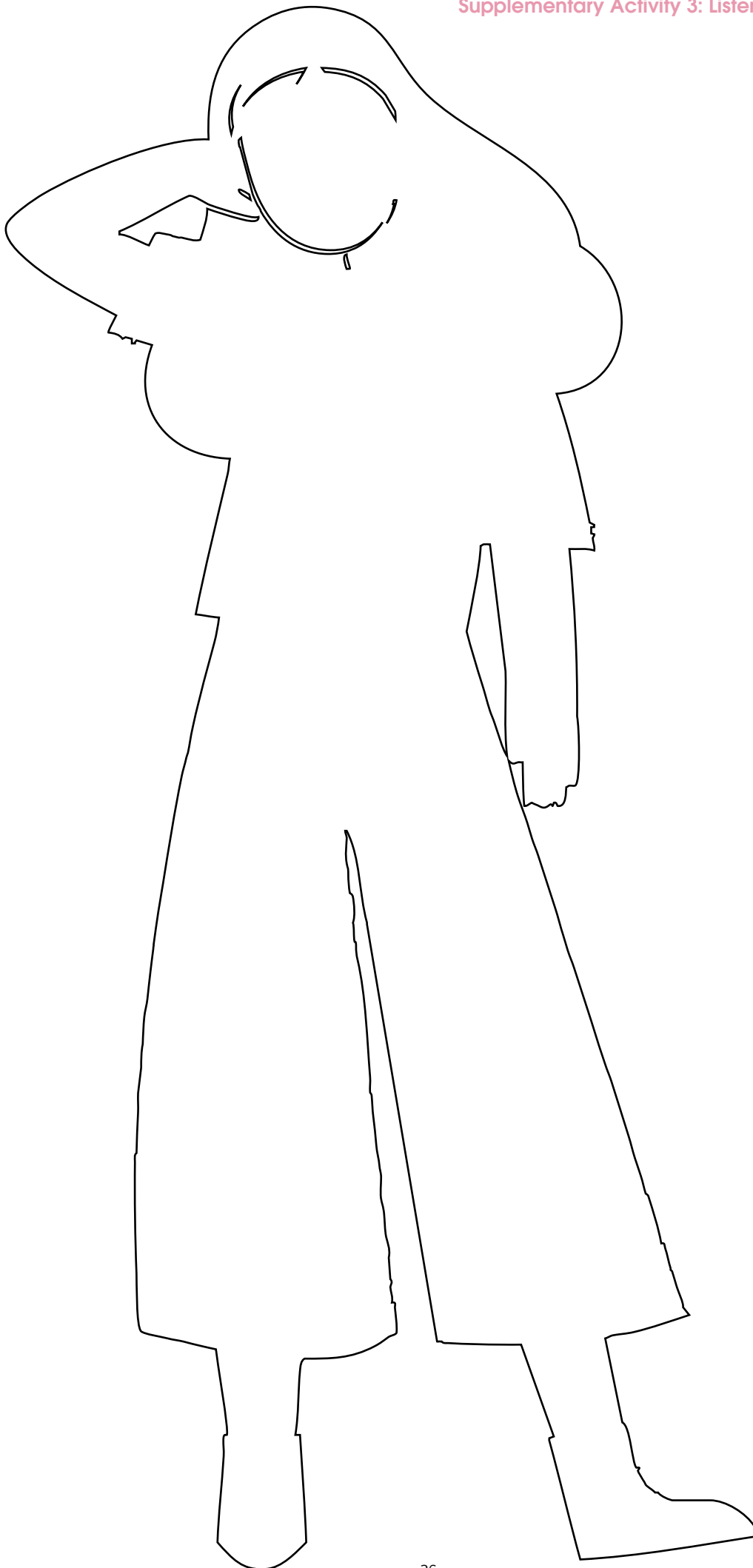


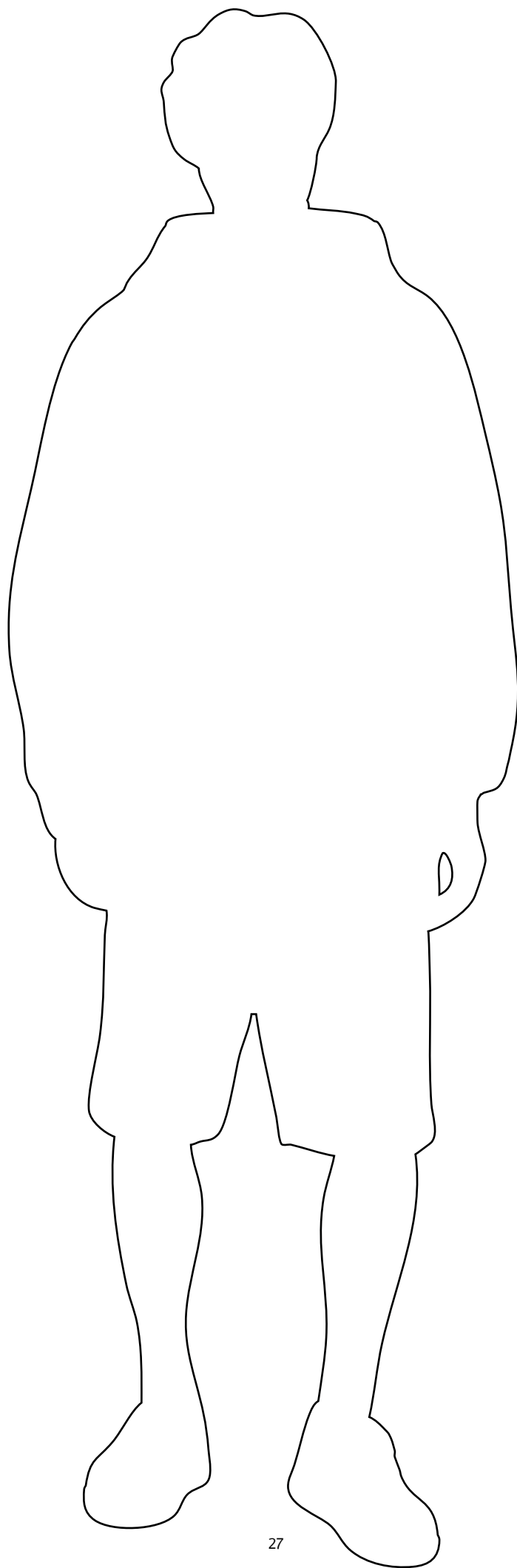














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