

AFTER SCHOOL matters®

Community Builder, Energizer, and Reflection

# ACTIVITIES

2<sup>ND</sup> EDITION



## COMMUNITY BUILDERS (Pages 4-13)

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Community builders give teens a chance to get to know one another and promote a culture of belonging in your program. Use community builders at the start of each program day. By week two, invite teens to choose and lead the day's community builder activity.

## ENERGIZERS (Pages 14-17)

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Energizers help your group re-focus, and can help bring the group together before or after an activity. Use energizers as a response to a lull in the group's energy, between activities, or after a break. By week two, invite teens to call for an energizer when one is needed, and to choose and lead the energizers.

## REFLECTION ACTIVITIES (Pages 18-24)

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Reflection activities allow young people to process the experience they're having, name the skills they're using, and connect with one another and you. Use reflection exercises after an activity as needed, and at the end of each program day. (Pages 10-12)



 **PERSONAL MINDSET**

 **VERBAL COMMUNICATION**

 **SOCIAL AWARENESS**

 **PLANNING FOR SUCCESS**

 **COLLABORATION**

 **PROBLEM SOLVING**

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Identifying a skill focus for your community builder, energizer, or reflection activity empowers young people to recognize, name, and strengthen these key skills. Identify the skill focus before the activity, and then ask young people how they used it after you finish the activity.



# COMMUNITY BUILDERS

## I'm In: Check In

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Personal Mindset

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Alva

Have teens write some example feeling words on the board or chart paper, like “happy, frustrated, excited.”

Explain the check in, and what it means to be “in.” When a teen is “in,” they commit to active participation, shared norms you have set, and being mentally present for the day.

At the start of each day, each participant says “I’m [name], and I’m [how you’re feeling today and why - teens can use a word on the board or another word] and I’m in!”

## Names and Gestures

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Personal Mindset

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Luis

Circle up. You will start in the center. Using big voice and gestures, say:

1. “I’m [your name].” The group repeats back “I’m [your name].”
2. “And I’m [how you feel or how you’re doing]” the group repeats back.
3. Then, walk up to a new person and trade places with them so that it’s their turn in the middle.

## Post-It Corners

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Social Awareness

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, David

1. Develop a list of questions you want teens to answer. Alternatively, have your teens write questions that they want to answer. Questions could include: “What is your favorite food?”; “How many siblings do you have?”; or, “What are you proud of?”
2. Post one large paper in each corner of the room. On each paper, write one possible answer to each question you will ask. For example, for “What is your favorite food?,” you might post “pizza,” “tacos,” “cheeseburger,” and “salad.”
3. Explain that each corner contains a possible answer to each question you will ask. Explain that teens should move to the answer they most identify with.
4. Ask the first question, and ask teens to move to the answer they most identify with (each paper containing different answers). If they do not identify with any of the four answers, they can remain in the center of the room. Start with light questions, like favorite food or music genre. As the game continues, ask more personal questions, like life goals.
5. As the exercise continues, take moments to have the teens reflect about what they have in common and what is different between them. After each question, you can ask the people in the middle what they would choose. You can also ask people in each corner to partner up and share a memory that relates to their answer. For example, teens who selected pizza as their favorite food can share favorite pizza places or a memory related to their favorite food.

## The Winds of Change

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Social Awareness

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Staff Member and Instructor, Jillian

1. Give everyone a sticky note.
2. Circle up.
3. Each person marks where they are standing with a sticky note.
4. You start in the center. Say “The winds of change are blowing for anyone who...” say something that is true about yourself, like has two siblings, or was born in another country, or has a dog.
5. Anyone in the circle for whom this is also true must find a new place in the circle, marked by a sticky note.
6. You may not trade with a neighbor (someone right next to you!)
7. If someone says something that is only true about them—no one else moves—everyone should clap and say, “You’re unique!”

## World Traveler

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Verbal Communication

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Staff Member and Instructor, Tammara

1. Start a sentence with “I would like to fly to...”
2. Each person finishes the sentence with the name of a city, country, or landmark. No place can be repeated by another participant.
3. The first place mentioned must begin with the first letter of the alphabet, and the next place following in consecutive order. For example, first student could say “I would like to fly to Australia”, and the second could say, “I would like to fly to Boston.” This continues until all students have had a turn. If there are more than 26 participants, the next person will go back to the beginning of the alphabet.
4. If time permits, the second round gets harder: the participants must identify a place they’d like to fly to that begins with the first letter of their first name. No place can be repeated by another participant.

## Sketch Prompt

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Personal Mindset

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Gerardo

As teens enter, have a drawing prompt on the board. Teens will take the first 15 minutes of program to sketch, then post their drawings gallery style and look at them, or you can have teens circle up to discuss them. Some sketch prompts to start you off:

- Sketch your dream house
- Sketch your mood today
- Draw one great moment from your day
- Draw something that makes you happy
- Draw something you are afraid of
- In October, you can have teens follow #inktober for daily drawing prompts. They can photograph their drawings and share them on social media with #inktober and #TeensMATTER.

If teens enjoy this activity, start to have them come up with daily sketch prompts! The teen who comes up with the prompt can then lead the share out about sketches. This is an easy way to incorporate daily youth leadership. If you are a visual arts instructor, you might extend this opening activity to give teens more time to sketch.

## Juke Box

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Social Awareness

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Tyianna

As teens enter program at the beginning of the week, have them write down a favorite song and place it in a container. Each day start the program playing a song from one of the teen's suggestions. Have teens write about how the song makes them feel and what the song brings to mind for them. Circle up and share out and ask the person who submitted the song to share why they love it. You might also switch up the writing prompt you use, such as, "How does this song relate to your day today?" or, "How are you feeling today?" You can also use the songs teens submit to create playlists inclusive of everyone! Please note: Preview the songs for appropriate language and themes ahead of time.

## The Weather

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Verbal Communication

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Juan

Have a piece of paper and markers available as teens enter. As each teen comes in, have them draw their "weather" for the day. For example, one teen might be feeling sunny and another may be in a thunderstorm. You may choose to have them write a little about why they are feeling that way on the back. Circle up, go around the circle, and have each teen share their weather. Remember, it's always good to offer teens the option to "pass" if they don't want to share. You can post everyone's "weather" on the wall so that all teens can be mindful of how their peers are feeling that day.

## Skittles

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Verbal Communication

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Willie

For this activity, you will need a bag of Skittles. Have each teen take one Skittle. Whatever color they take will dictate which question prompt and which small group they will be in for discussion. For example, all the green Skittle teens would group up and discuss the green question. Here are some ideas for question prompts:

- **Red:** What makes you a leader?
- **Orange:** What was one time you failed at something and how did you keep going after that?
- **Yellow:** Who supports you in your life?
- **Purple:** When was a moment you felt hopeful?

## Jenga

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Collaboration

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Staff Member, Emily

For this activity, you will need a standard wooden Jenga set. Bring the set in to your teens and have them write a getting to know you question on each block. For example, "What is something you're proud of?" or "Who would play you in a movie?" Try to have a variety of surface-level, deeper, and more meaningful prompts. You can then set up the Jenga tower and circle around it. Each teen will pull a question block and respond, until the tower falls!

## Inspiration Quotes

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Personal Mindset

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Staff Member, Randiss

Find six meaningful quotes online. Post these in six places around your program space. Have teens read each quote, then walk to the quote they most identify with. Have them share with others who chose that quote why they like it, then have each group share with the large group what their group discussed. This is a good way to form unique groups for other activities, as well! If only one teen goes to one quote, join them and be their discussion partner.

## Discussion Ball

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILLS:** Personal Mindset

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Patti

You will need a beach ball for this activity. Using a permanent marker, write questions around the ball. Include general questions, like “What’s your favorite restaurant?” and include some deeper questions, like “What does a healthy relationship look like?” In a circle with your teens, throw the ball. Wherever your right thumb lands, this is question you will answer. Toss the ball until everyone has had a chance to share.

## Talking Circle

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Community Builder

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Collaboration

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Spencer

1. Bring in a talking piece that means something to you personally.
2. Circle up.
3. Introduce what the talking piece means as part of your group norms.
4. Start with each person sharing their preferred name, pronouns, and one word describing how they feel today. You can say “Pass,” but everyone should have the talking piece and a chance to speak.
5. Then, introduce a funny question like “Who would play you in a movie?”
6. Last, have a teen offer a question. After the first time you do this, you can ask a teen volunteer to lead the talking circle. This activity can be used as a “Check-in” or icebreaker activity, and/or as a “Check-out” or reflection activity.

More on the indigenous origin and methods of this practice at [restorativejustice.org](http://restorativejustice.org)



## Energy Pass

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Energizer

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Collaboration

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Melissa

1. Circle up.
2. The first person starts a sound and motion, for example “Hah!” and a jump. The next person in the circle duplicates, sending the same sound and motion all the way around the circle. Then, the person to their left starts a different, new sound and motion and sends that around the circle.
3. The goal is to keep the energy up, and keep the sound/motion moving quickly. If it stops, or if the energy level dips down, you can send it back to the person who started it to begin the sound/motion again.
4. If it is close to the beginning of program, you can have teens use their names in this game so they can learn one another’s names.

**VARIATION:** Put on a catchy song with a good dance beat. The first person starts a dance move, and everyone duplicates. Then the next person, etc.

## Zip, Zap, Zop

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Energizer

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Collaboration

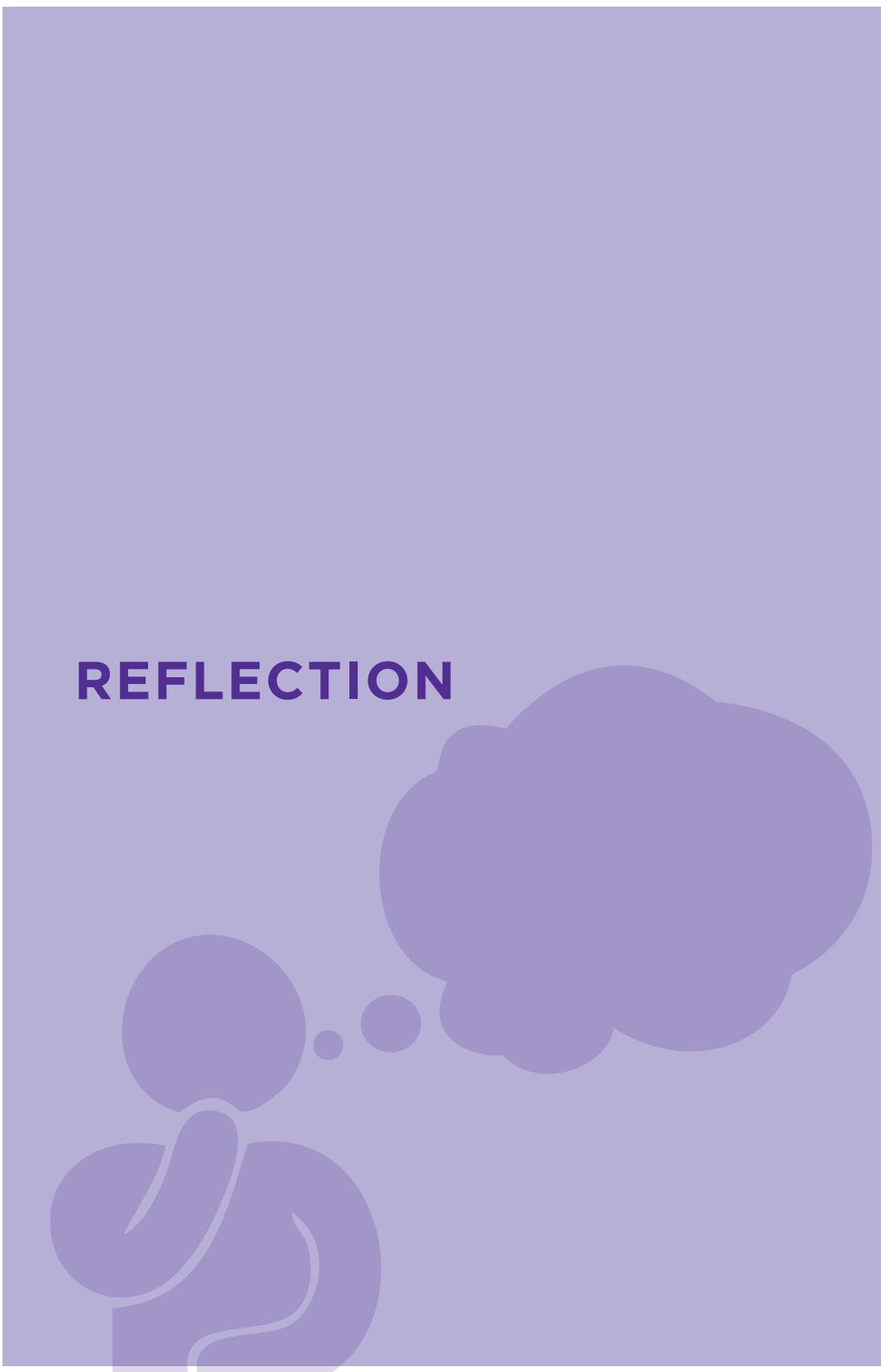
**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, David

1. Gather everyone into a circle (standing) and make sure everyone can see everyone else.
2. Say the title, and make sure everyone knows the 3 Z’s: “Zip, Zap, Zop.”
3. Make it clear how important it is to stay focused.
4. One person begins, using their hand and arm to point to whomever they wish to pass the energy to and loudly says “Zip.”
5. The person who receives the energy then has to send the energy to a different person across the circle by using their hand and arm to point and say “Zap.”
6. This is repeated, but each person must say a different “Z” in its order Zip, Zap, Zop.
7. As the energy and flow continues, the speed will increase and teens must remain focused to know the order of the Z’s.

**Variation:** If a teen says a word out of order, they sit in the middle and quietly say one of the three words. This distracts the remaining teens, adding a challenge! As more teens join the center of the circle, the challenge increases.



# REFLECTION



## **P.I.E.S**

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Reflection

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Verbal Communication

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Ric

1. Bring in a talking piece that means something to you personally.
2. Circle up.
3. Introduce what the talking piece means as part of your group norms.
4. Each person shares their preferred name, pronouns, and how they're doing Physically, Intellectually, Emotionally, and Spiritually (P.I.E.S.)

This can be effective when done at the beginning and end of program to help you gauge your program's effect on each teen. After the first time you do this, you can ask a teen volunteer to lead the P.I.E.S. exercise. This activity can be used as a "Check-in" or icebreaker activity, and/or as a "Check-out" or reflection activity, but is most effective when done at the beginning and end of each program day.

### **MORE ON THE DOMAINS OF WELLNESS AT NATIONALWELLNESS.ORG**

Developed by Dr. Bill Hettler, co-founder of the National Wellness Institute (NWI), this interdependent wellness model, commonly referred to as the Six Dimensions of Wellness, includes emotional, occupational, physical, spiritual, social, and intellectual wellness. It provides the categories from which NWI derives its resources and services.

## Rose, Bud, Thorn

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Reflection

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Verbal Communication

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Staff Member Eboni

1. Circle up at the beginning or end of program.
2. Have teens share one highlight (rose), one challenge (thorn), and one thing they're looking forward to (bud) at school, in the program, or in their personal life.
3. This activity works well at the beginning of a program day to check in and share reflections on the school day or weekend. It also works at the end of a program day to reflect together.
4. As the program session progresses, invite teens to lead this check in or check out as part of your daily ritual!

## Skill Reflection

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Reflection

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Verbal Communication, Collaboration

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor Keith

1. Post your six MHA Skill Building Blocks posters in your program space.
2. At the end of each program day, give each teen three sticky notes (use three different colors).
3. On one color, teens write something they did well today: a Highlight. On the second color, they write something they saw someone else do well today: a Shout-Out. On the third color sticky note, teens write something they struggled with today: a Challenge.
4. Circle up. Each teen shares their reflections, and decides which of the six Skill Building Blocks most reflects that Highlight, Shout-Out, and Challenge. They stick the note on that poster.

As the program session progresses, you can watch the highlights, shout-outs, and challenges build up to see which skills your teens are using in program, which they are struggling with, and which you can address more robustly in activities.

## Head, Heart, Hands

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Reflection

**KEY MHA SKILLS:** Verbal Communication, Planning for Success

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Staff Member, Jillian

Circle up. Determine something you now know (head), something you now feel (heart), and something you now can do (hands). Share your head, heart, hands with the group.

## Gratitude Web

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Reflection

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Collaboration

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Nicole

1. Circle up. Have one teen hold one end of a long ball of yarn and share a reason why they're grateful for someone in the circle. While holding the end, the teen will pass the yarn to the person they offered gratitude to.
2. Teens loop the yarn around their finger and share something with someone else, passing the yarn to that person.
3. No person should get a second gratitude until everyone has been recognized. At the end, your program will have a spider-web-like structure with everyone holding the yarn. Teens can choose to cut a piece of yarn for a keepsake. This activity works best at the very end of program, after your final showcase.

## Set an MHA Goal

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**ACTIVITY TYPE:** Reflection

**KEY MHA SKILL:** Planning for Success

**SUBMITTED BY:** After School Matters Instructor, Dawn Marie

Circle your six MHA posters (Collaboration, Problem Solving, Social Awareness, Planning for Success, Personal Mindset, Verbal Communication) on the floor. If you need posters, you can print them from [mhalabs.org](http://mhalabs.org) or email [Emily.Nott@afterschoolmatters.org](mailto:Emily.Nott@afterschoolmatters.org) to receive a set. Circle teen chairs around the posters.

First, ask teens to write quietly to the prompt: "Which of these skills is your strongest and why?" Then, have teens respond to the prompt: "Which of these skills do you most want to work on in this program and why?"

Then, ask teens to turn to a partner and discuss their responses. With their partner, have each teen set a goal addressing how they want to build the skill they identified.

In the large group, share with your teens what SMART goals are (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Realistic, and Time-Bound). Have each teen work with their partner to turn their goal into a SMART goal.

Write these goals on larger paper and post them in your program space. Have teens revisit these goals at the end of each program week and discuss how they are doing with their partner or with the large group, and what supports they may need to continue.



