Opening Circle Check-In (5-7 min)

“We’ve talked about how we can experience all kinds of different emotions and how we can experience them at different levels. We’ve also talked about how we can use our strengths to help us be strong and resilient, even when things get hard. Let’s think about our Brain Trees for a moment. When a tree experiences a thunderstorm, it can get kind of shaken up, right? When we experience challenges in life, we can also get a little shaken up. Maybe our sensations, emotions, and thoughts can get bigger and feel out of balance. However, just like strong trees, strong brains and bodies can withstand storms (and even grow stronger from them!) when they are balanced and healthy. Today we are talking about different things we can do to stay balanced and healthy when we are experiencing a storm of emotions.

Let’s start by going around the circle and sharing one way that you tapped into a strength on the strengths wheel in the last week, and one emotion you experienced by practicing that strength.”

Debrief what everyone shared by thanking them and acknowledging all the different strengths in the room. You can also note that since people are always practicing different strengths we can help each other grow in a variety of areas.

Regulation Railroad (10-12 min)

“Have you ever felt like your emotions were a train running off the tracks? Sometimes, when I am feeling a big emotion, like anger, anxiety, or sadness, it feels like the emotion is running me, instead of me running my emotions. When anyone’s emotions get big, it can be hard to take back control when we don’t know what’s happening in our brains. But that’s what makes all of us so powerful, we know all about the way our brains work, and how our brains and bodies are connected with..."
our emotions. This knowledge will help us take control, that’s called regulation. So, when our emotions take off like a runaway train, we want to be able to put on our conductor hats and get that train back on its tracks. We are going to call this Regulation Railroad, which is a silly name to help us remember how to do something really important.

When you feel like your mind is starting to go off its tracks and you are not in control of your emotions, I would like you to take yourselves through the Regulation Railroad stops on the poster: The first stop I want you to make is at Stop 1: This is where we check in with our body to locate the emotion:

**Stop 1: Where in my body do I feel the emotion?** What are your Roots telling you?

Once you have a sense of what’s going on in your body, then you can steer your train to Stop 2. This is where we identify the emotion:

**Stop 2: What emotion do I feel?** What is your trunk telling you?

The next stop is Stop 3. This is where we identify how big or small the emotion is:

**Stop 3: How big is the emotion?** Can you rate them on a scale of 1 – 2 – 3 – 4 – 5?

Now you have all the equipment you need on board to steer your train back on track. You know where in your body you feel the emotion, you know what it is that you feel, and you know how big it is. The last stop is the Regulation Station. At this final stop we decide what we need to do to regulate our own body:

**Stop 4: The Regulation Station: What do I do to regulate myself?** What are your choices now that you know your emotions? What strategies can you use to get back on track? How might you use your branches to decide how you will regulate yourself, and get back to feeling safe and healthy? What strengths from the wheel have helped you get back on track?

Throughout this lesson, and the rest of the unit, we are going to be learning strategies to regulate our emotions. As we learn new strategies, we are going to add them to our very own Regulation Station."

Point out this space in the classroom, if you have one, and let students know you will be adding instructions or items for each strategy we go over, and building on that throughout the school year.

**3. Energizing Activity (5-7 min)**

“Some of the strategies we can use are ones that energize us. So if we’re feeling down, tired, bummed, or bored... we might want to try out an energizing strategy to boost our moods. Let’s try one together.”

**NOTE**

To show differences in energy levels before and after a game, take a “thumb poll” before and after the game. Thumbs up means they are feeling really energetic; thumbs down means they could use a pick-me-up. Take the same poll right after the game and students will generally show that they are feeling more energetic.

Explain that you are going to have a Rock, Paper, Scissors tournament. Clarify that it is just one round with each opponent, unless you tie. If you lose, you will stand behind the person you lost to and chant their name. If the person you are cheering for loses, your whole group stands behind the person they lost to and now cheers for them. This continues until you have two people left with roughly half the room cheering for each of them.

**ACCOMMODATION**

This is a loud, energetic game. If you have any students who have sensory needs, or if you are worried about being too loud for nearby classrooms, you can instruct students to cheer silently by using their hand movements and facial expressions.

“Who feels more energized after that?” Show of hands, no need to share out.

“What are some benefits to feeling energized?” (Helps us stay awake and alert, helps us pay better attention to
what's happening, we can focus better, cheers us up, gets us talking/laughing/connecting with others, etc.)

**4. Calming Activity (5 min)**

“There are lots of positives to feeling energized. But, have you ever felt too energetic? What happens then? (Hard to pay attention, fidgety, can't sit still, mood gets irritable, etc.) In those situations, it can be really helpful to practice a calming strategy to help us feel more balanced.”

Have students return to their seats and sit comfortably for a short mindfulness exercise. “Take a slow, deep breath in, and then slowly exhale. Keep breathing deeply.”

Pause for a couple of seconds. “Now, look around the room and think of five colors that you can see.”

Pause for a couple of seconds. “Once you've identified five colors you can see, I invite you to close your eyes if you feel comfortable. If you don’t want to close your eyes, that is totally fine - just focus your eyes on a spot on your desk or on the ground in front of you. Now, think of four things that you are touching right now.”

Pause for a couple of seconds. “Think of three things that you can hear?”

Pause for a couple of seconds. “Think of two things that you can smell.”

Pause for a couple of seconds. “And think of one thing that you can taste?”

Pause for a couple of seconds. “Keep breathing deeply, and on your next exhale, slowly open your eyes or look up.”

Pause for a couple of seconds. “How did that feel?” Take a few responses.

“When we use that strategy, we are able to use our five senses to help our Roots calm our Trunks down. This is a good ‘grounding’ strategy because our Roots are grounding us to our environments.”

Pass out the Regulation Station worksheets to students and ask them to write the strategies down on these worksheets as a reminder in case they want to go back and try one of them again.

**5. Closing Activity (2-3 min)**

Ask students to stand up and find a partner. Give them a few minutes to talk with their partner about one thing they are excited about and one thing they are curious about from today’s lesson. Take a few responses in a large group share out.
WHERE IN MY BODY DO I FEEL THE EMOTION?

WHAT EMOTION DO I FEEL?

WHAT DO I DO TO REGULATE MYSELF?

HOW BIG IS THE EMOTION?