

Connections That Matter. Everyone needs people they can count on. When things change in your life, having trusted adults who support, encourage, and believe in you can make a big difference.

MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS TO ADULTS WHILE IN CARE

Who Are Your People:

Connections That Matter is about helping you identify and stay connected to the adults who are important to you. These may be family members, former caregivers, teachers, coaches, mentors, neighbors, faith leaders, or other adults who have had a positive impact on your life.

Your Voice Matters In This Process:

You get to help identify the people who make you feel supported, valued, and connected.

The goal is to build and strengthen relationships that provide encouragement, guidance, and a sense of belonging, not just today, but as you continue to grow and move toward adulthood.

No matter where you are in your journey, everyone deserves to have trusted adults in their corner.

Quality vs. Quantity

- Focus on developing genuine, lasting relationships rather than simply increasing the number of contacts.
- What makes the relationship meaningful to you?
- Is the adult willing and able to provide long-term support?

Safety and Appropriateness

- Have potential connections been assessed for safety?
- Are there court orders, safety concerns, or family dynamics that must be considered?
- What boundaries and expectations need to be established?

Permanency and Long-Term Support

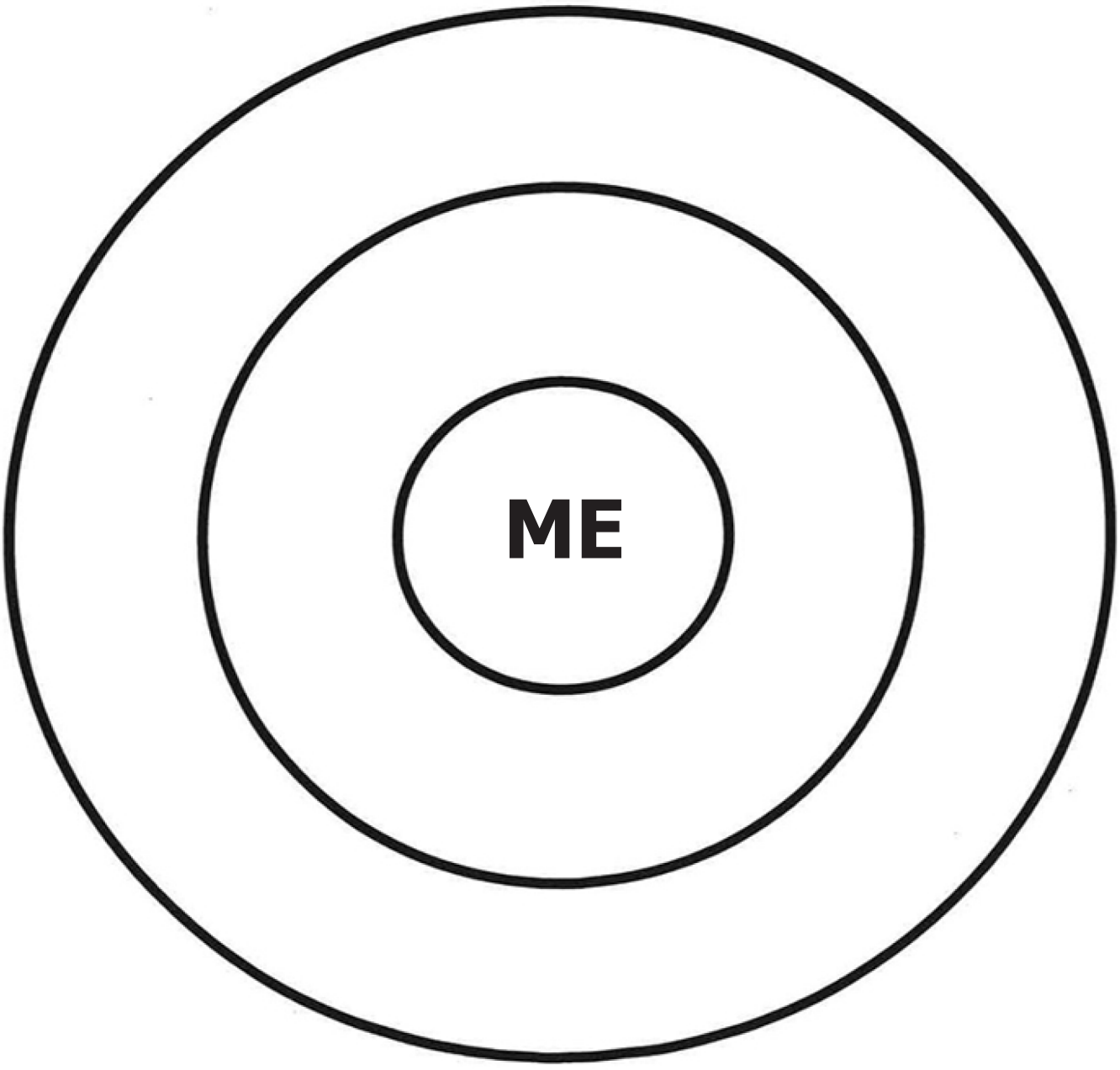
- Can the relationship extend beyond the child welfare system?
- Do you have someone you can call for advice, support, celebrations, or emergencies as you move into adulthood?

Communication and Contact Methods

- How will connections be maintained?
  - In-person visits
  - Phone calls
  - Video chats
  - Text messaging
  - Social media (when appropriate)
- What barriers exist to regular communication?

Social Atom

Identifying Important Adults:
Who are the adults already involved in your life? Are there relatives, former caregivers, teachers, coaches, mentors, faith leaders, neighbors, or family friends that you trust? Have you identified someone you would like to reconnect with?



Directions: Make a list of family members and position them where they best fit on the social atom, with those you feel the most emotionally connected to in the circle that is closest to you.

Connect Four!

Directions: Fill in the blank spaces to best represent you.

SEE

How do you see your family?



THINK

What do you think about when you hear the word "family"?



ME

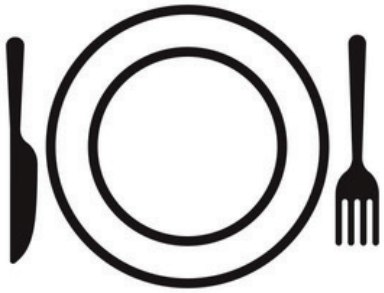
How do you feel about yourself?

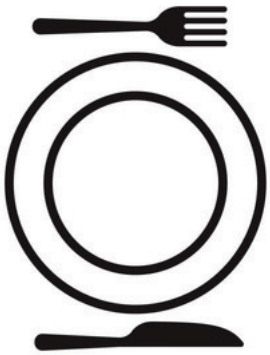


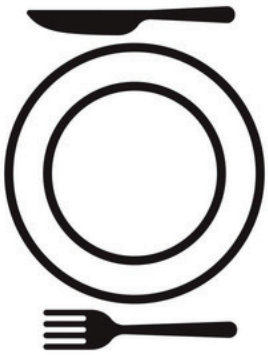
WE

Who is your family?

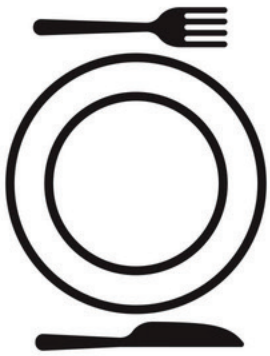


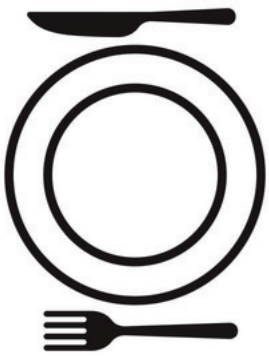




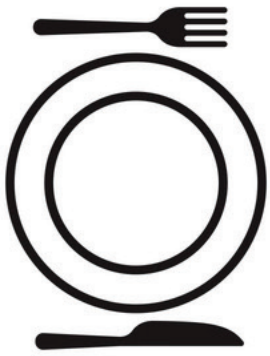


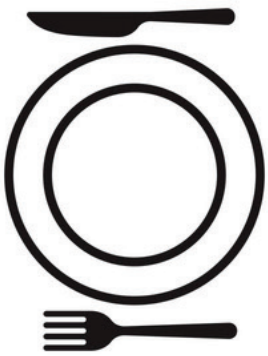
Who's At My Table

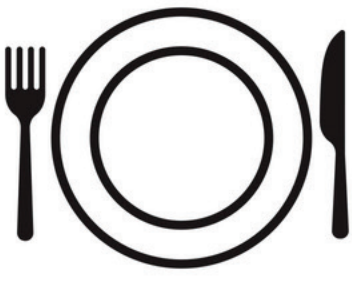


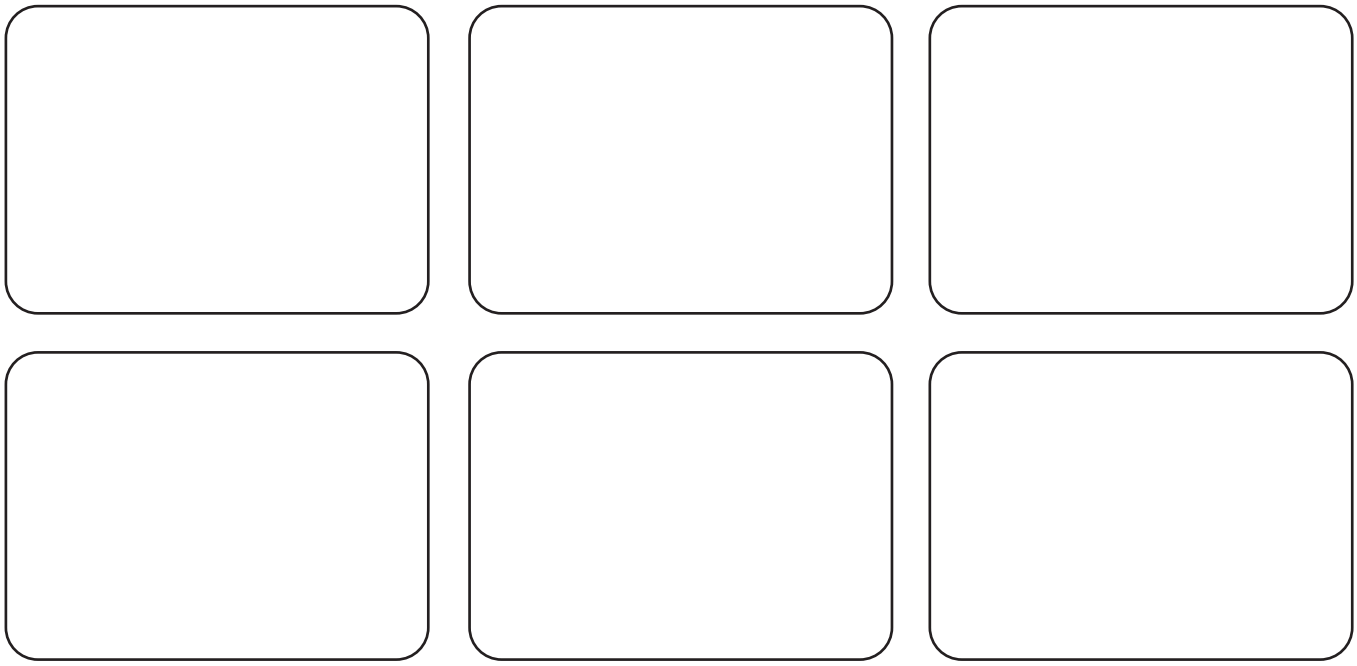


DIRECTIONS: Put a name at any place setting of the people you would like to be surrounded by.



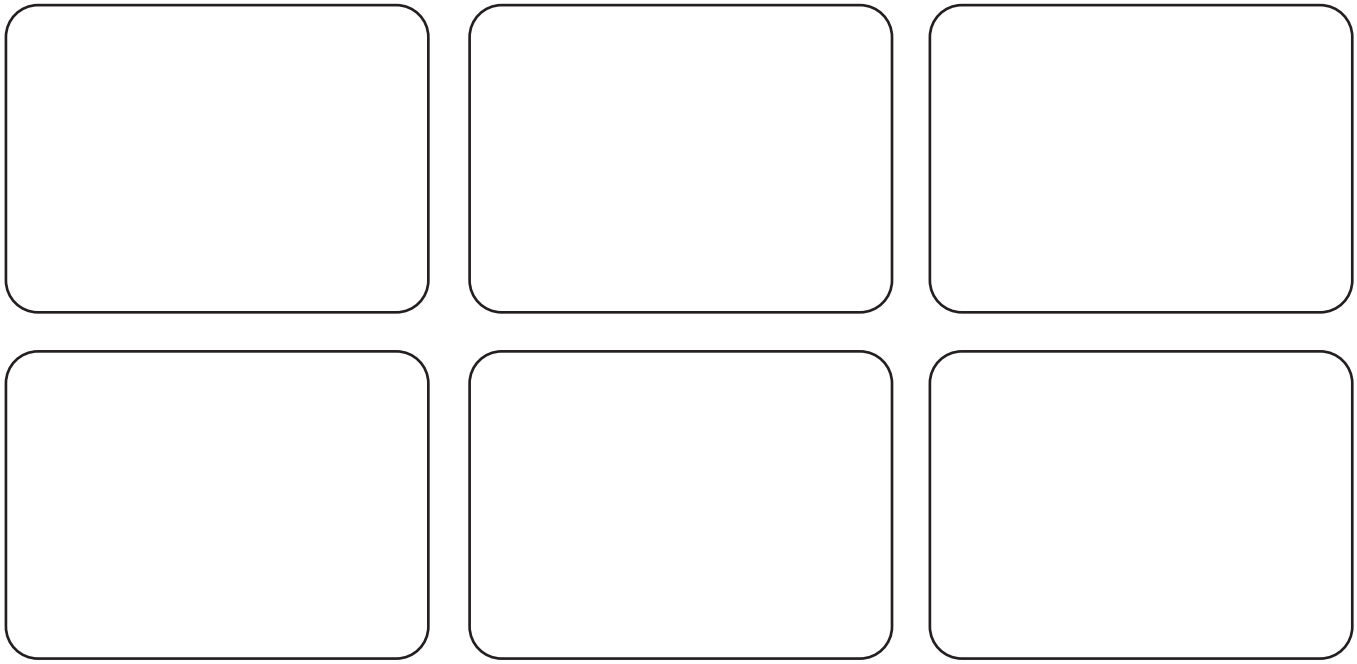


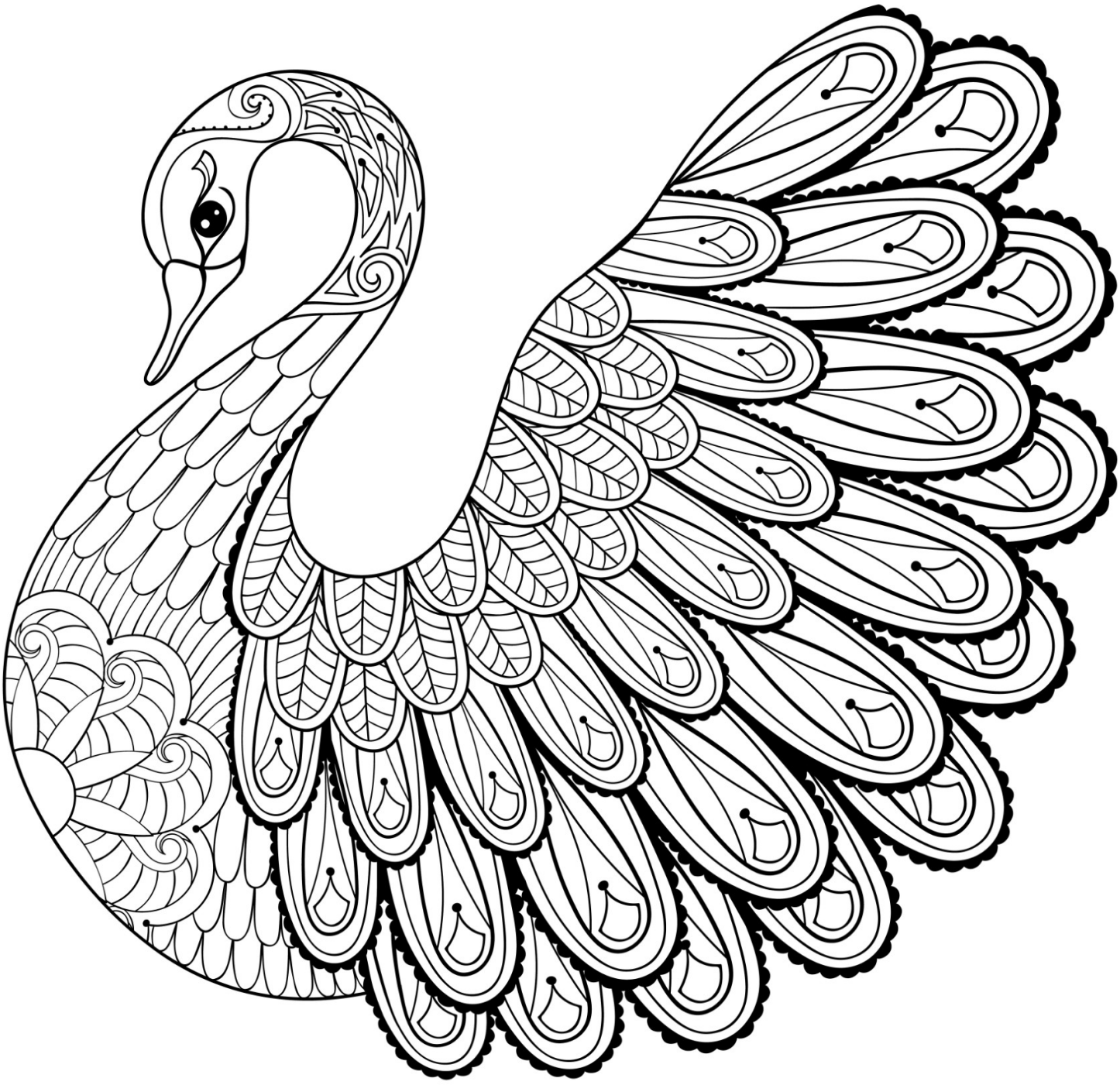


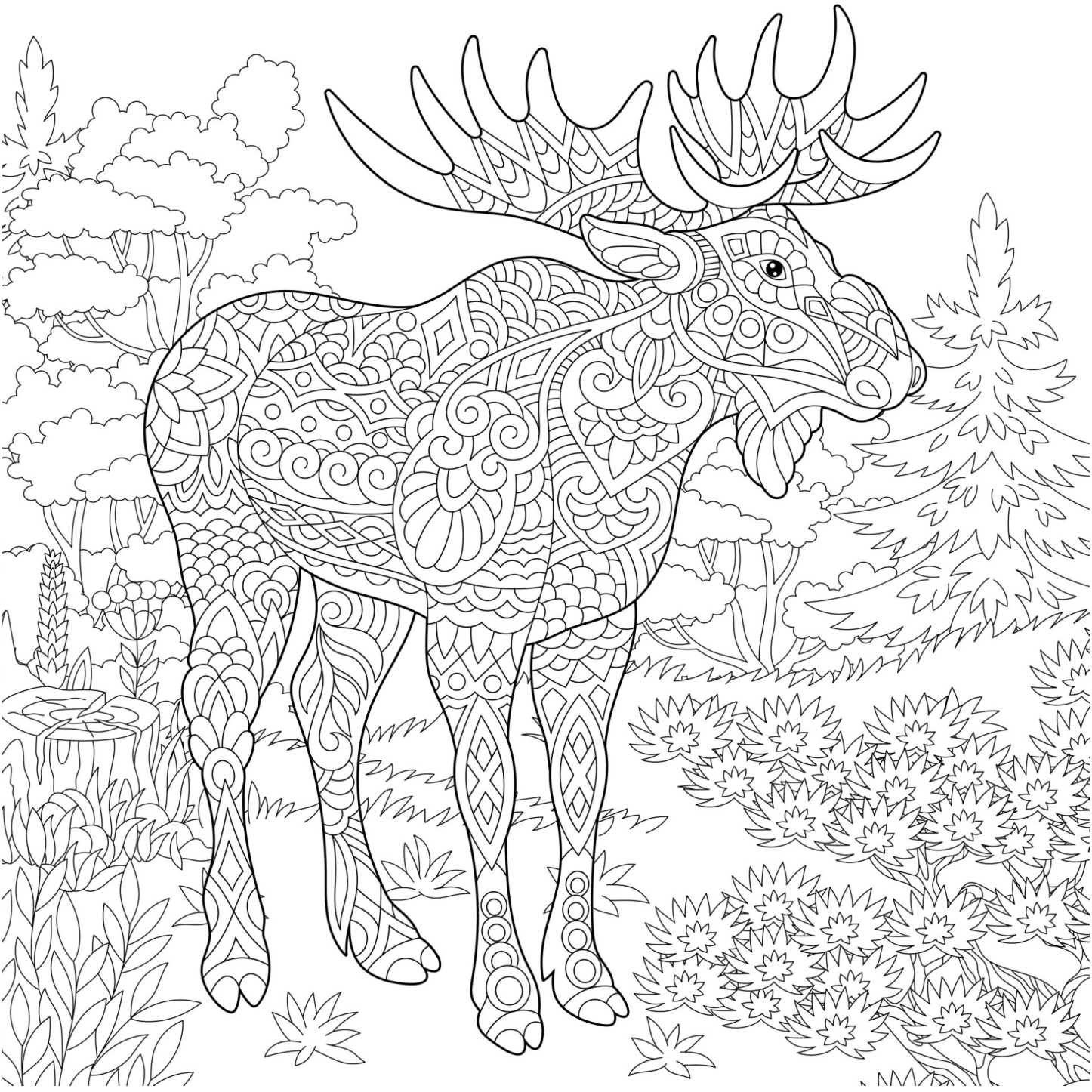


Who Do I Miss?

Directions: Write in who you miss (family, friends, teachers, pets).







HOW TO OVERCOME ANXIETY IN 5 STEPS

01

DEEP BREATHS:
Breathing is crucial when having anxiety. It helps slow your heart rate and clear your mind. Try taking 4 deep breaths- inhale for 4 seconds, exhale for 4 seconds.

02

GROUNDING:
Sometimes distracting ourselves helps calm us down too. Grounding yourself takes all of the attention away from anxiety. One way is to name 5 things you can see, 4 that you can feel, 3 that you can hear, 2 that you can smell, and 1 that you can taste.

03

KNOW YOUR FEELINGS:
There are a lot of big feelings when it comes to anxiety. It's always best to know what they are. Try writing down what you're feeling in the moment to get a clear picture of your emotions. It won't just help you relax – it will also help you identify your feelings.

04

SLEEP IS IMPORTANT:
Sometimes how much sleep we do/don't get could lead to feeling anxious. Try setting a bedtime for yourself, maybe a routine beforehand so you know it's almost time for bed.

05

TALK TO SOMEONE:
Sometimes we need someone to talk to, and that's okay! Try thinking of the one person you trust the most and ask them if you can set up a time to talk. This could be every day, week, whatever helps you. Explain your feelings. It's always best to have a person to talk to.

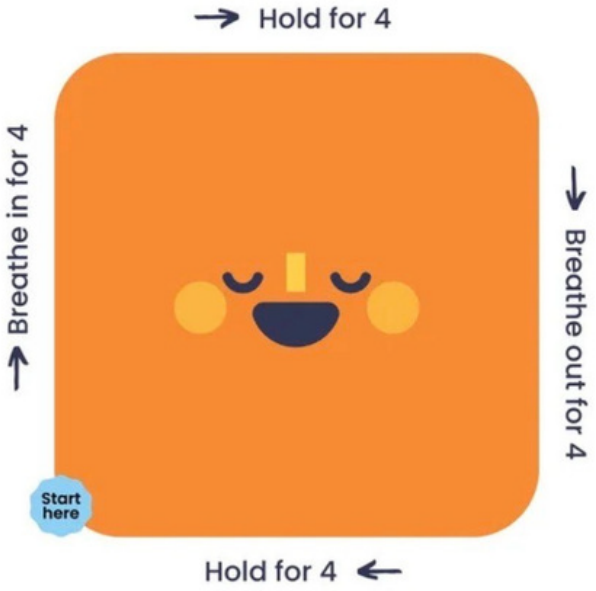
MANAGING EMOTIONS

HOW YOU MIGHT FEEL

It is normal to feel:

- Nervous, scared, or confused
- Unsure about what will happen or what decisions the judge will make
- Pressure or stress, even if no one is directly putting pressure on you
- Worried about seeing family members or parents

"BOX BREATHING"



WAYS TO DECOMPRESS & FREE OUR EMOTIONS:

- Know that it is not your fault that you are in this situation.
- Take deep breaths in through the nose & out through the mouth. Use the finger of one hand to trace the fingers of your opposite hand for each breath.
- Identify 5 things you can see, 4 things you can feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell and 1 thing you can taste.
- Step away for a moment to collect your thoughts.

Feelings Chart

How did you feel leading up to and after completing the social atom?
Choose an emotion or come up with your own and talk about why you feel that way.



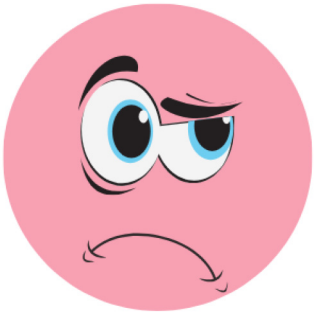
VERY HAPPY



HAPPY



CONTENT



CONFUSED



SCARED



SAD, WORRIED



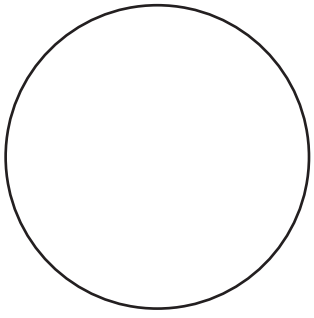
ANGRY, MAD



HURT



TIRED





CERTIFICATE
OF COMPLETION

THIS IS TO CERTIFY THAT

_____

has successfully completed the “Helping Others Support Me” Packet and demonstrated a commitment to understanding their support system, identifying their needs, and building positive connections with trusted adults.

_____

support person

Pennsylvania
Department of Human Services

University of Pittsburgh | School of Social Work

Pennsylvania Child Welfare Resource Center

YAB PA
YOUTH ADVISORY BOARD

PCYA
Pennsylvania Children and Youth Administrators