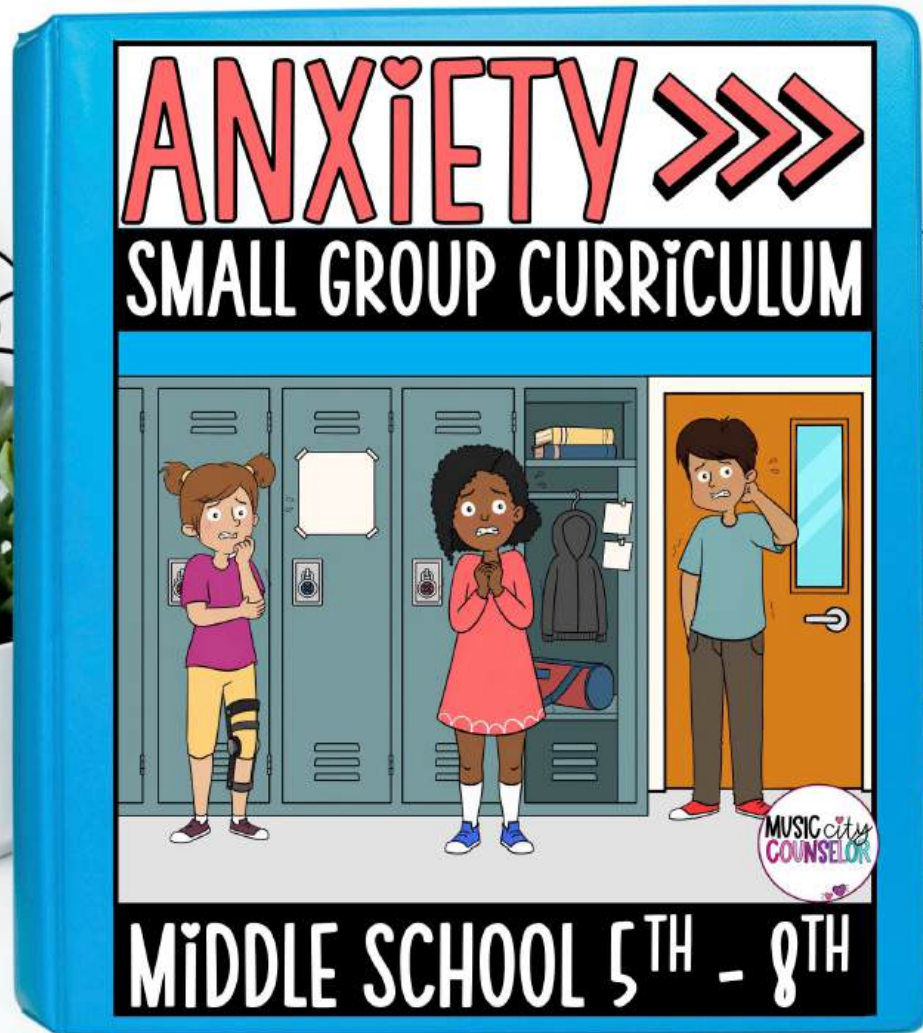




ANXIETY SMALL GROUP FOR MIDDLE SCHOOLERS

IMPORTANT NOTES:

THIS 10-SESSION CURRICULUM:

- teaches students to cope with anxiety and worry
- was designed for 6th – 8th graders
- can be used with small groups and individuals
- is aligned to ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors
- is data-driven with a provided pretest/posttest



IMPORTANT NOTES:

THIS 10-SESSION CURRICULUM:

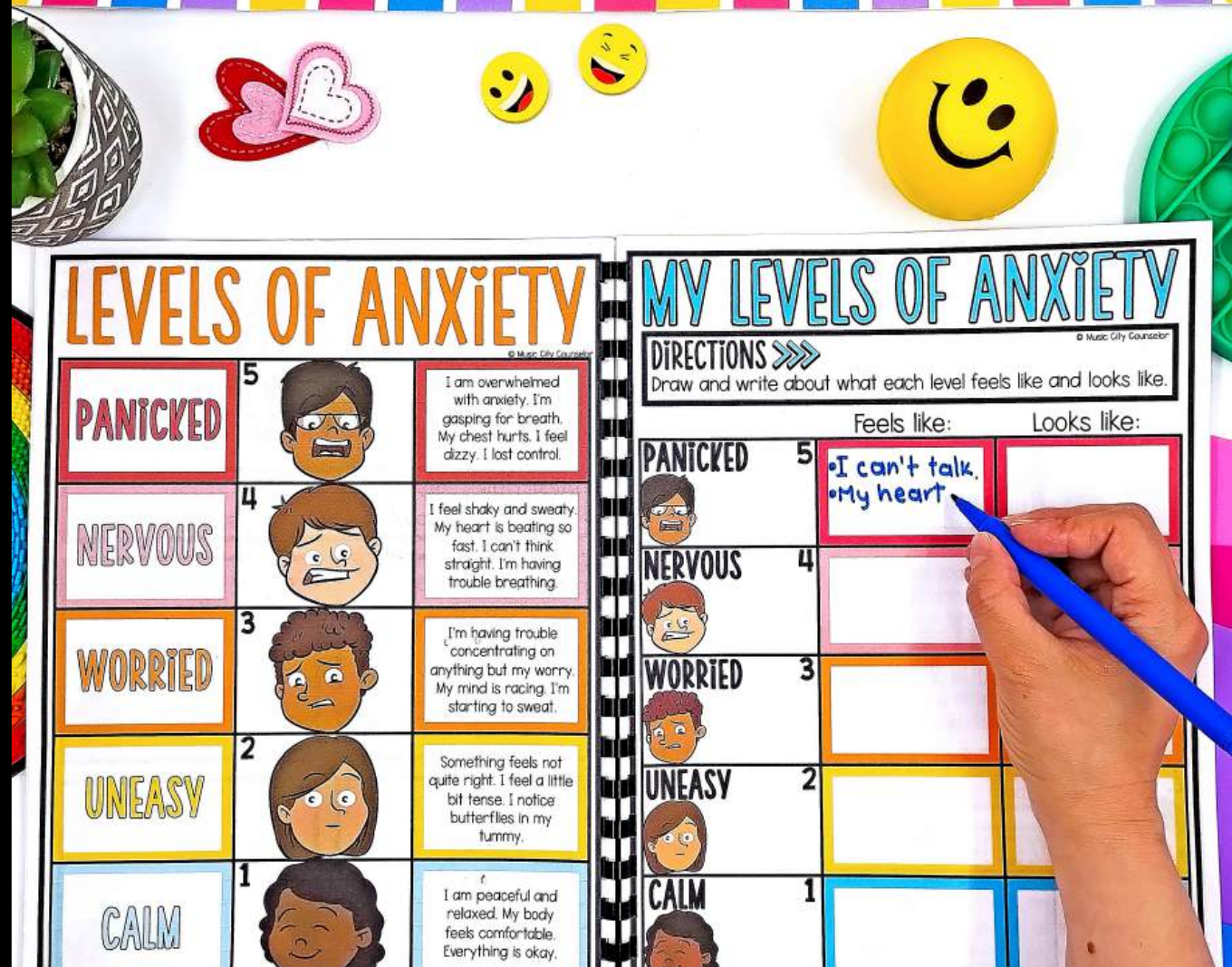
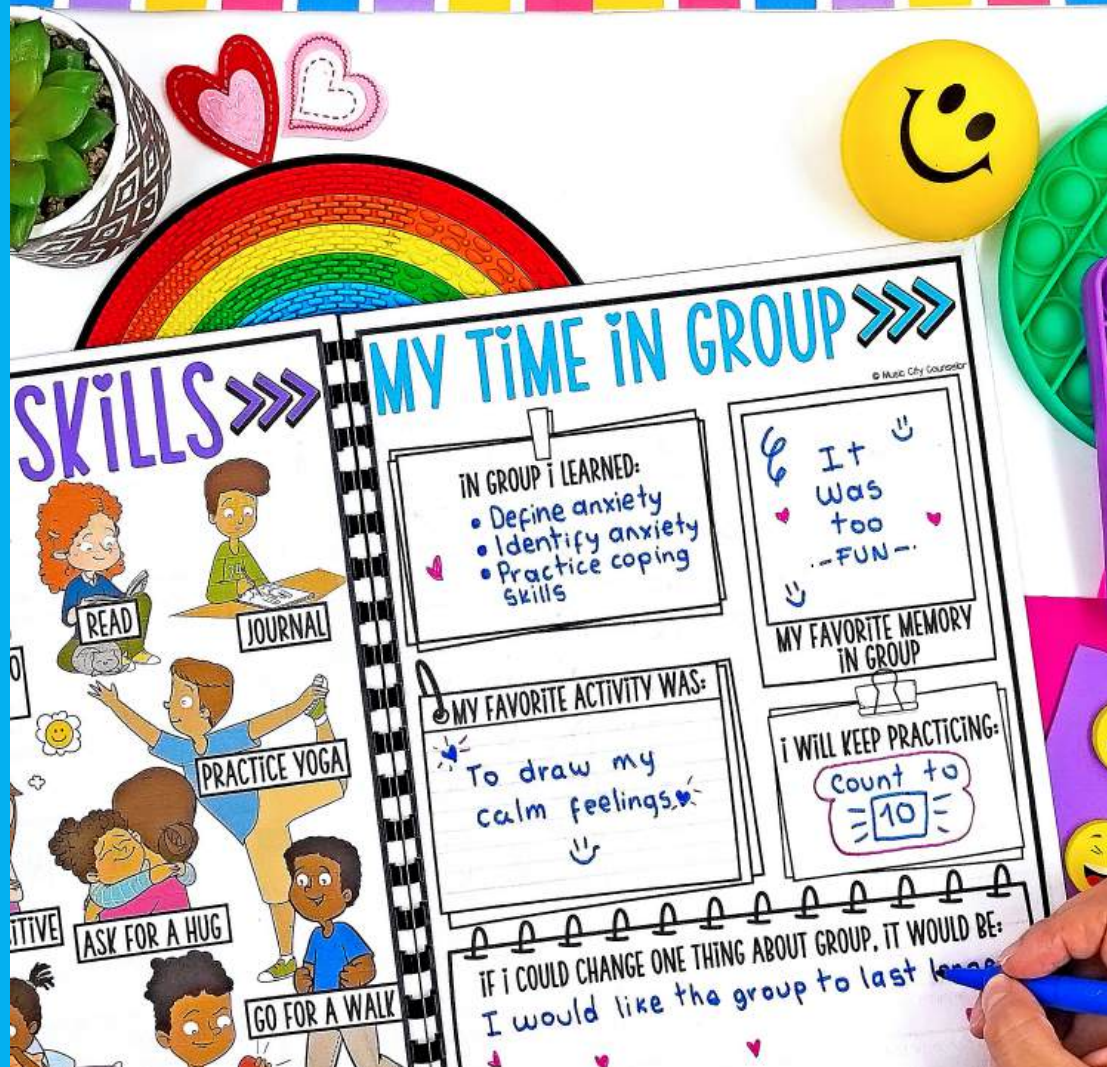
- is super-low prep and ready to go
- can be customized to fit the needs of your students and the amount of time you have
- is flexible! Implement all 10 sessions in the order presented. Or change the order, pick and choose certain sessions, or add in materials of your choice!

THE CALM CREW GROUP OUTLINE:

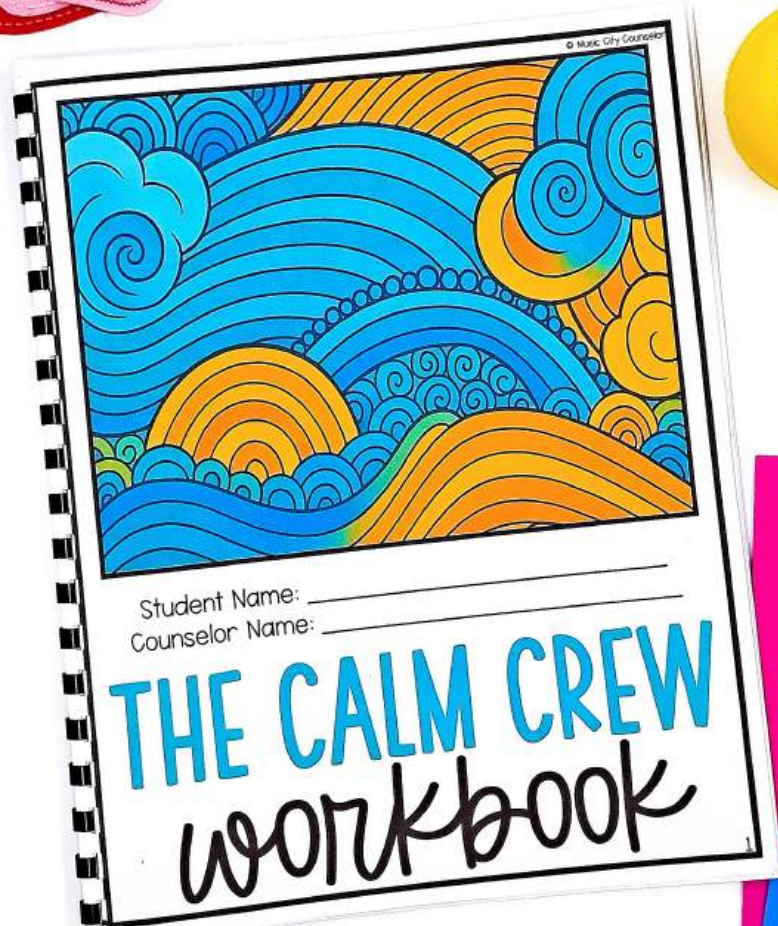
- Session 1: Introductions & Icebreakers
- Session 2: Anxiety & the Amygdala
- Session 3: Anxiety Feels Like...
- Session 4: Anxiety Triggers
- Session 5: The 5 Levels of Anxiety
- Session 6: Rating Anxiety Triggers
- Session 7: Calm Looks Like...
- Session 8: Calm Feels Like...
- Session 9: Using Coping Skills
- Session 10: Group Closure & Reflection



STUDENTS WORK THROUGH A 22-PAGE WORKBOOK.



STUDENTS WORK THROUGH A 22-PAGE WORKBOOK.





A DETAILED PLAN IS INCLUDED FOR EACH SESSION:

SESSION 1: INTRODUCTIONS & ICEBREAKERS

SESSION GOALS: >>>

- Students will introduce themselves and get to know their peers.
- Students will assess their knowledge of anxiety with a pre-survey.
- Students will learn the rules of group.
- Students will learn the definition and limits of confidentiality.
- Students will understand the purpose, goals, and content of group.

ASCA ALIGNMENT: >>>

- M.1.1. Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being.
- M.2. Sense of acceptance, respect, support and inclusion for self and others in the school environment.
- M.3. Positive attitude toward work and learning.

MATERIALS NEEDED: >>>

- 1 workbook per student
- Pencils
- Markers or crayons

DIRECTIONS: >>>

- Before students come to group, print a workbook for each student. Choose either the full color or the black line version. Staple it in the top left-hand corner.
- Start by welcoming students to "The Calm Crew" group and giving them a workbook. They can write their name and counselor's name on the blank lines on the cover page.
- Tell students that we are going to do a little icebreaker activity to help them get to know each other. Ask student to turn to page 3 in their workbook, "All About Me." This page is full of fun doodles that let students express their favorite things, hobbies, dreams, etc. Students can start by writing their name where it says, "My name is" and drawing a picture of themselves in the picture frame. Then, they can write words and draw little pictures for each category. Once they're done, ask students to share their page with the group.
- Ask students to turn to page 4 in their workbook, "Small Group Pre-Survey." Explain that this little form will help us understand how much progress they make in group. It's okay if they don't know the answers now – they'll learn as we go! Read each question aloud and ask students to circle or color the "yes" 😊, "maybe" 😐, or "not yet" 😞 faces.
- Ask students to turn to page 5 in their workbook: "Small Group: The Deets." This page explains the purpose, rules, and goals of group, as well as confidentiality and how group will make them feel. Read through each section and spark a discussion with students:
 - What do you hope to learn in group?
 - What goals do you have for group?
 - What rules would you add to this list?
 - Why is confidentiality important?
 - What does the group purpose mean to you?
- Close by saying that next week we will learn what "anxiety" means and what it looks like.

SESSION 2: ANXIETY & THE AMYGDALA

SESSION GOALS: >>>

- Students will learn the definition of anxiety.
- Students will learn the 3 manifestations of anxiety (thoughts, body, choices).
- Students will learn the brain science behind anxiety (the amygdala and fight-or-flight response).
- Students will learn about the physical signs of anxiety.
- Students will reflect on what anxiety looks like in their own body.

ASCA ALIGNMENT: >>>

- M.1.1. Belief in development of whole self, including a healthy balance of mental, social/emotional and physical well-being.
- B-SMS 2: Self-discipline and self-control.
- B-SS 9: Social maturity and behaviors appropriate to the situation and environment.

MATERIALS NEEDED: >>>

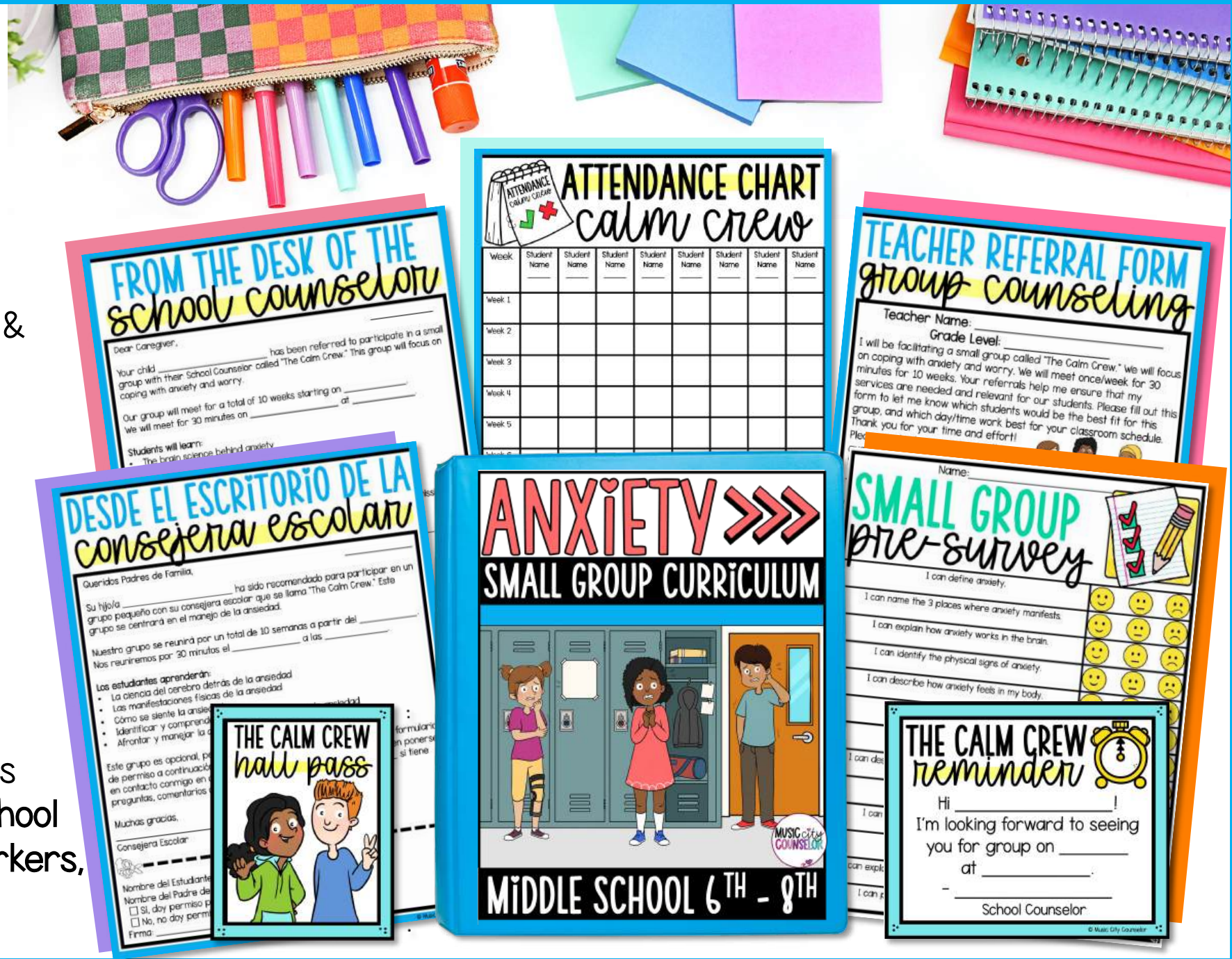
- 1 workbook per student
- 1 printed folded craft per student
- Google Slides or PowerPoint
- Pencils
- Markers or crayons
- Scissors
- Glue sticks

DIRECTIONS: >>>

- Greet students and explain that today we will dive headfirst into learning about anxiety. Learning about where anxiety comes from and what it looks like (how to identify it!) is the first step in coping with it!
- Feel free to start each session with a feelings check-in (page 2 in the workbook).
- Ask students to turn to page 6 in their workbook, "What is Anxiety?" Ask a different volunteer to read each of the 4 sections: the definition of anxiety and the 3 places that it manifests (our thoughts, bodies, and choices). Spark a discussion around:
 - How would you define anxiety? What does the provided definition mean to you?
 - How does anxiety manifest in your thoughts?
 - How does anxiety manifest in your body?
 - How does anxiety manifest in your choices?
- Pull up either the brief PowerPoint or Google Slides presentation. Go through the presentation and teach students the brain science behind anxiety (the amygdala, fight-or-flight response, anxiety as a false alarm, and the thinking brain). Spark a discussion around:
 - What is the amygdala's job? How does it help us? How can it hurt us?
 - Explain why anxiety is a "false alarm."
 - Explain the fight-or-flight response. How is it adaptive/helpful? How is it maladaptive/unhelpful?
 - How can you calm your amygdala? Which strategies work best for you?
- Ask students to turn to page 7 in their workbook, "Anxiety Physical Manifestations." Review the physical manifestations of anxiety. Relate these back to the fight-or-flight response and the amygdala preparing us for danger (real or not real!) Spark a discussion around:
 - Where in your body do you notice the FIRST signs of anxiety?
 - Which of these physical signs of anxiety do you experience most?
 - Which of these physical manifestations of anxiety do you NOT experience?
 - Do any of these common physical signs surprise you?
- Explain that next we are going to make a craft that helps us understand and remember the brain science behind anxiety. Give each student a folded craft template (full color and black/white are included). Students start by cutting out each of the outlines of the brain. Then, they glue the pages together back to front (see the sample on the next page). Then, fold the brain down the middle. Students can color the black/white version and circle the physical signs of anxiety they experience most.
- Close by saying that next week we will learn what "anxiety" means and what it looks like.

GROUP FORMS:

- Teacher Referral Form
- Bilingual Parent Letters
- Pretest
- Posttest
- Alignment to ASCA Mindsets & Behaviors
- Binder cover
- Hall passes
- Student reminder cards
- Attendance chart
- Group rules
- Confidentiality agreement
- Feelings check-in
- Completion certificate
- EDITABLE versions of all forms
- Versions for all forms for school counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists





SMALL GROUP: the deets

GROUP PURPOSE >>>
This is a safe, supportive place where you can share about anxiety and practice skills to grow your confidence and sense of calm. One of the hardest parts of anxiety is feeling like you're the only one struggling. Here in group, you'll see others have similar worries, feelings, and experiences as you do! You'll learn practical tools you can use right away! The goal isn't to get rid of anxiety, but to learn to manage and control it.

CONFIDENTIALITY >>>
What you say in here, stays in here! UNLESS:

- Someone is hurting you.
- You are hurting someone else.
- You are hurting yourself.
- You give me permission to share.

GROUP GOALS >>>

- To define and identify anxiety.
- To understand how anxiety is processed in the brain.
- To learn and practice coping skills.
- To build self-confidence and self-awareness.

GROUP RULES >>>

- What's shared here, stays here. We respect privacy. Personal stories shared in group are not repeated outside this room.
- Respect others. Be kind, accepting, and supportive. Do not judge.
- One person talks at a time. Listen when someone is speaking. Do not interrupt.
- Everyone belongs. Different feelings, identities, thoughts, and experiences are welcome here.

IN GROUP, YOU'LL FEEL >>>
This group will make you feel:

- Understood
- Supported
- Equipped
- Confident
- Capable

Name: _____

SMALL GROUP pre-survey

I can define anxiety.

I can name the 3 places where anxiety manifests.

I can explain how anxiety works in the brain.

I can identify the physical signs of anxiety.

I can describe how anxiety feels in my body.

I can define anxiety triggers.

I can name my anxiety triggers.

I can describe and identify the 5 levels of anxiety.

I can define calm.

I can identify the physical signs of calm.

I can define coping skills.

I can explain why coping strategies are helpful.

I can practice and use 12 coping skills.

FEELINGS check-in

Happy	Sad	Angry	Calm
Tired	Anxious	Hurt	Excited
Stressed	Annoyed	Content	Bored

ALL ABOUT me

My name is _____

Favorite school subject _____

Favorite ice cream _____

When I grow up... _____

Favorite sport _____

Pets _____

Favorite book _____

Favorite season _____

Favorite hobby _____

My family _____

Favorite snack _____

PASSPORT
Places I'd like to travel _____

SESSION 1: Introductions & Icebreakers

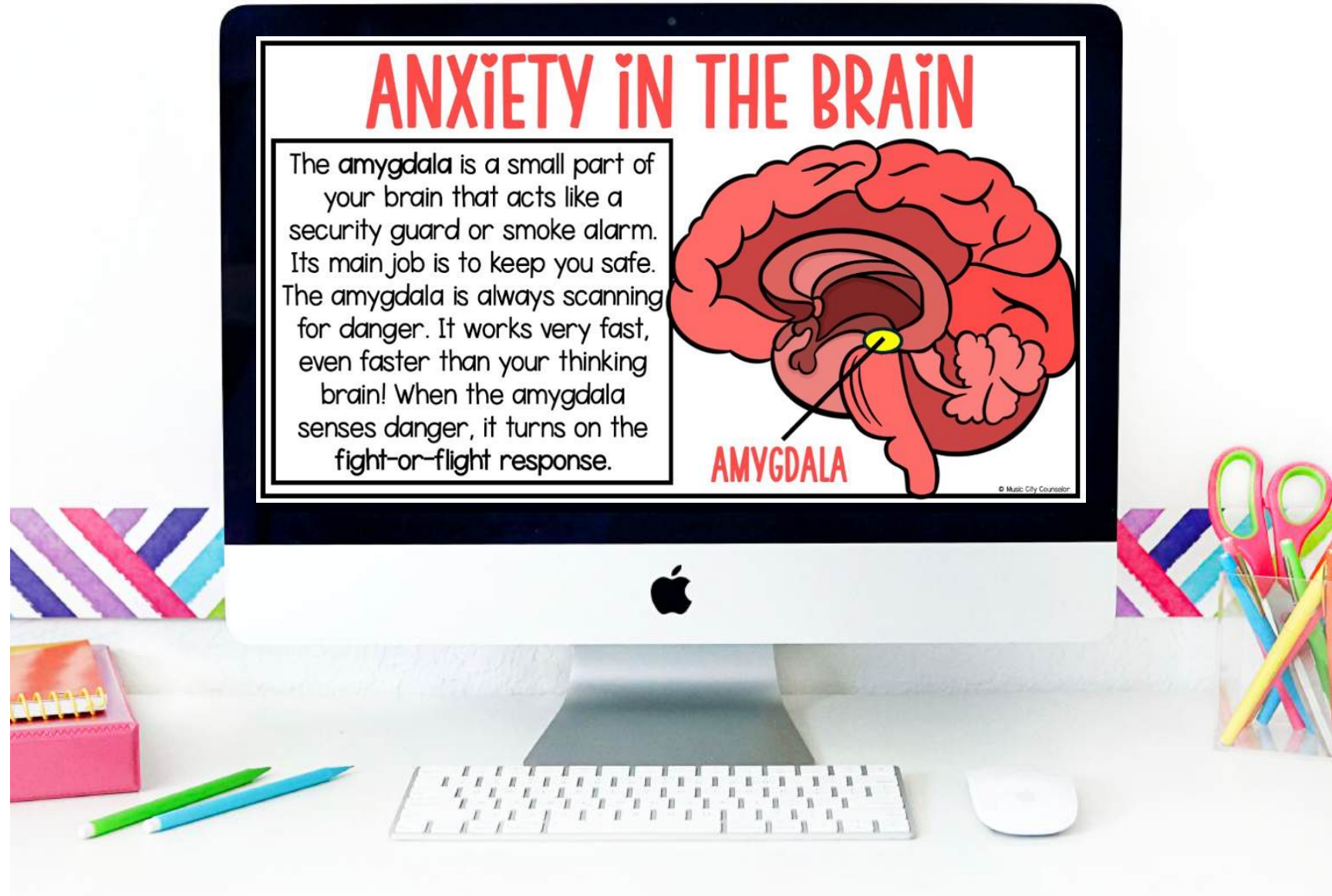
SESSION 2:

Anxiety & the Amygdala



SESSION 2:

Anxiety & the Amygdala





WHAT IS ANXIETY?

DEFINITION >>>
Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or fear. It's your brain and body's way of trying to protect you when something feels stressful, uncertain, or challenging.

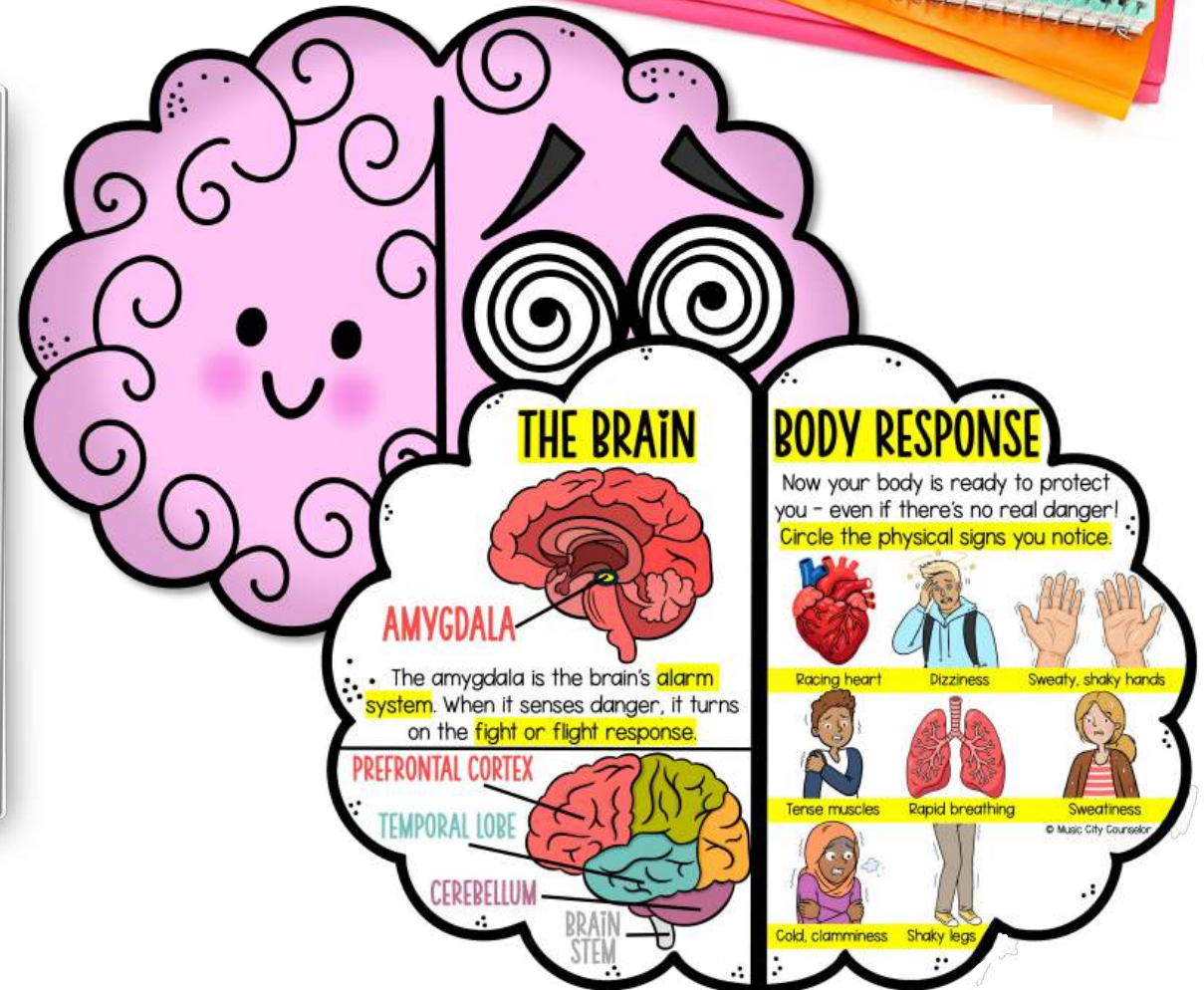
MANIFESTS IN YOUR THOUGHTS >>>
Your thoughts can become fast, racing, negative, and worried. You might expect the worst to happen, overthink, focus on the "what ifs," and doubt yourself.

MANIFESTS IN YOUR BODY >>>
Your body often notices anxiety first. Common physical signs include a fast heartbeat, tight muscles, shaky hands, stomachaches, nausea, and sweatiness.

MANIFESTS IN YOUR CHOICES >>>
Anxiety can influence your decisions. It can push you to avoid situations that feel uncomfortable, say "no" to new experiences, stay quiet, procrastinate, and seek reassurance.

ANXIETY PHYSICAL manifestations

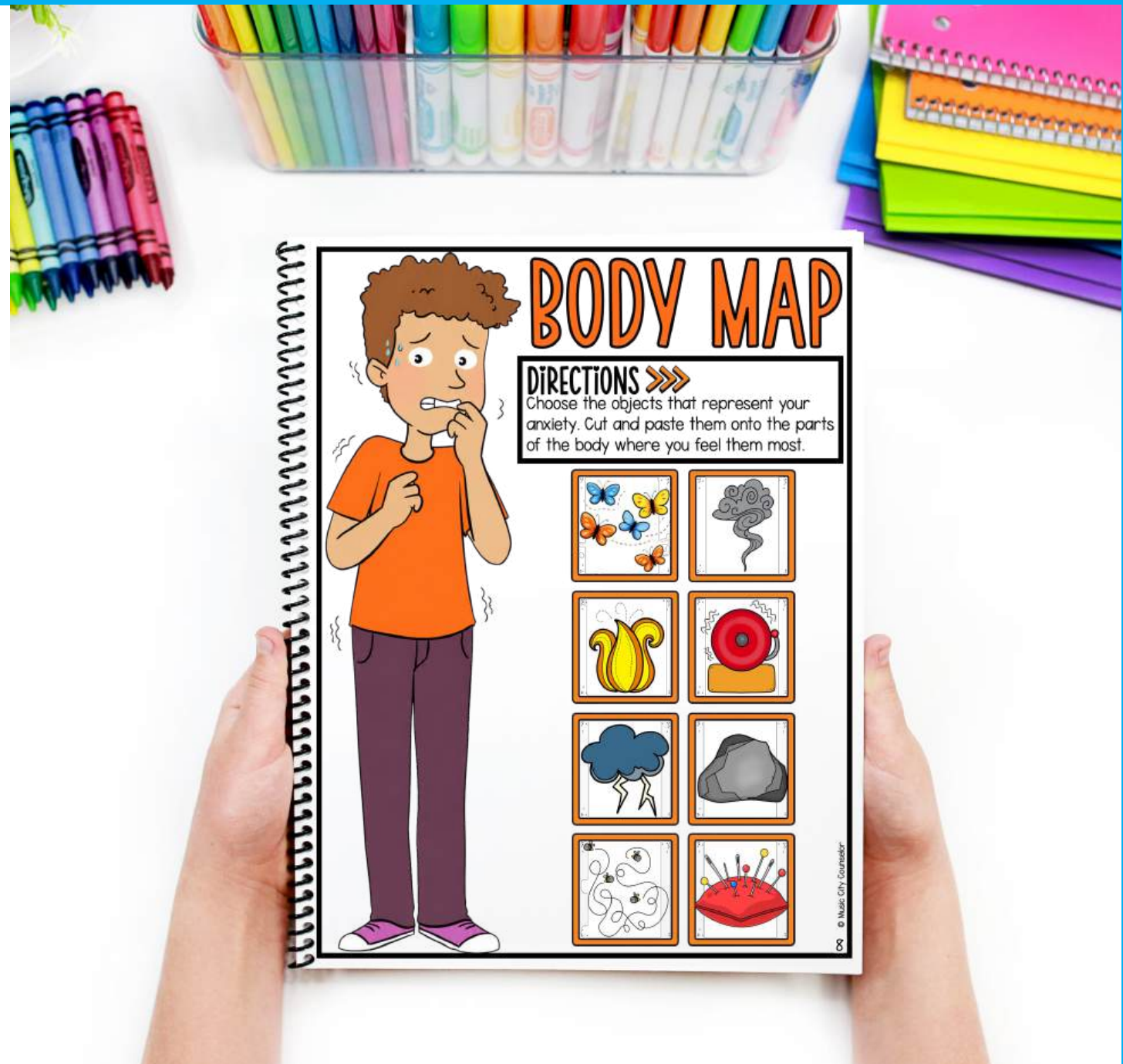
- Fast, pounding heartbeat
- Tight chest, trouble breathing
- Sweaty, shaky hands
- Stomachache, nausea
- Feeling like you might throw up
- Headache
- Muscle tension, especially in the shoulders, jaw, and neck
- Feeling tired and weak
- Dizziness, lightheadedness
- Restlessness
- Fidgeting, trouble sitting still
- Feeling hot or cold suddenly



SESSION 2: Anxiety & the Amygdala

SESSION 3:

Anxiety Feels Like...



SESSION 3:

Anxiety Feels Like...



SESSION 4:

Anxiety Triggers



SESSION 4:

Anxiety Triggers





ANXIETY levels

What does calm look like and feel like to you?

CALM

ANXIETY levels

What does uneasy look like and feel like to you?

UNEASY

ANXIETY levels

What does nervous look like and feel like to you?

NERVOUS

LEVELS OF ANXIETY

PANICKED	5		I am overwhelmed with anxiety. I'm gasping for breath. My chest hurts. I feel dizzy. I lost control.
NERVOUS	4		I feel shaky and sweaty. My heart is beating so fast. I can't think straight. I'm having trouble breathing.
WORRIED	3		I'm having trouble concentrating on anything but my worry. My mind is racing. I'm starting to sweat.
UNEASY	2		Something feels not quite right. I feel a little bit tense. I notice butterflies in my tummy.
CALM	1		I am peaceful and relaxed. My body feels comfortable. Everything is okay.

MY LEVELS OF ANXIETY

DIRECTIONS >>> Draw and write about what each level feels like and looks like.

		Feels like:	Looks like:
PANICKED	5		
NERVOUS	4		
WORRIED	3		
UNEASY	2		
CALM	1		

ANXIETY levels

What does worried look like and feel like to you?

WORRIED

ANXIETY levels

What does panicked look like and feel like to you?

PANICKED

SESSION 5: The 5 Levels of Anxiety

1 CALM >>>

2 UNEASY >>>

3 WORRIED >>>

4 NERVOUS >>>

5 PANICKED >>>

MY LEVELS OF ANXIETY

DIRECTIONS >>>
Rate the anxiety triggers on the cards. Then, glue one onto each level.

I feel...when...

5. PANICKED

4. NERVOUS

3. WORRIED

2. UNEASY

1. CALM

Maria has to take a midterm exam today.

Keldon isn't sure if he's invited to the party his friends are talking about.

Alex is planning on asking Katie to be his date to the school dance today.

Chelsea has to give a presentation in front of the class. We're having a pop quiz!

Keldon isn't sure if he's invited to the party his friends are talking about.

Alex is planning on asking Katie to be his date to the school dance today.

Chelsea has to perform in front of the class. We're having a pop quiz!

SESSION 6:

Rating Anxiety Triggers

1 CALM >>>

Chelsea has to read aloud in front of the class.

2 UNEASY >>>

No one responded to Juana's message on the group text.

Everett's teacher said, "Grab a pencil, we're having a pop quiz!"

3 WORRIED >>>

Lorena studied the wrong material for the test.

Marion's friend is sitting with someone else at lunch and she don't know where to sit.

4 NERVOUS >>>

Alex is planning on asking Katie to be his date to the school dance today.

Carla is thinking about all the things that could go wrong at school today.

5 PANICKED >>>

Ke'Marion is worried about running into the classmate that bullied him.

MY LEVEL
DIRECTIONS >>>
Rate the anxiety trigger

5. PANICKED
the wrong
to the
if he's invited
friends are
it.

4. WORRIED
Maria has to take a
midterm exam today.

3. NERVOUS
Ke' to

2. UNEASY

1. CALM



WHAT IS CALM? >>>

DEFINITION >>>
Calm is when your body and mind feel steady and relaxed, your breathing is slower, and you're able to think clearly and handle what is happening around you without getting overwhelmed.

MANIFESTS IN YOUR THOUGHTS >>>
Your thoughts are slower, clearer, and more balanced. You're able to focus, think through problems, and remind yourself that you can handle what is happening. Instead of jumping to worst-case scenarios, your mind stays grounded in the present.

MANIFESTS IN YOUR BODY >>>
Calm shows up as a feeling of ease and balance. Your breathing is slower and deeper, your muscles feel loose, and your heart rate is steady. Your shoulders drop, your jaw unclenches, and your hands relax. You feel comfortable and ready for anything!

MANIFESTS IN YOUR CHOICES >>>
You pause and think before acting. You can make thoughtful decisions, listen to others, and solve problems instead of reacting quickly or emotionally. Calm helps you choose kind words, ask for help, and handle challenges appropriately and effectively.

CALM PHYSICAL manifestations

- Breathing is slow and steady
- Heartbeat feels normal and even
- Shoulders are relaxed
- Jaw and face muscles are loose
- Hands feel steady
- Muscles are relaxed
- Stomach feels settled
- Body feels comfortable and safe
- Less fidgeting or restlessness
- Head feels clear
- Posture feels natural and upright
- Energy feels balanced

CALM LOOKS LIKE >>>

Clear, focused mind

Slow, steady breaths

Even, quiet heartbeat

Settled stomach

Balanced energy

Less fidgeting and restlessness

Loose jaw

Relaxed shoulders

Loose, soft muscles

Natural, upright posture

Comfortable, safe feeling

Write how calm feels in each of these areas:

BREATHING 	HEART 	MUSCLES
STOMACH 	THOUGHTS 	ENERGY

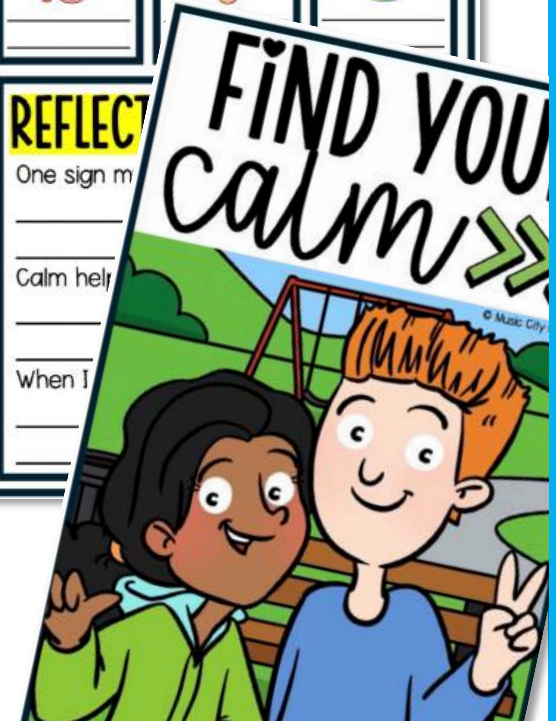
REFLECT

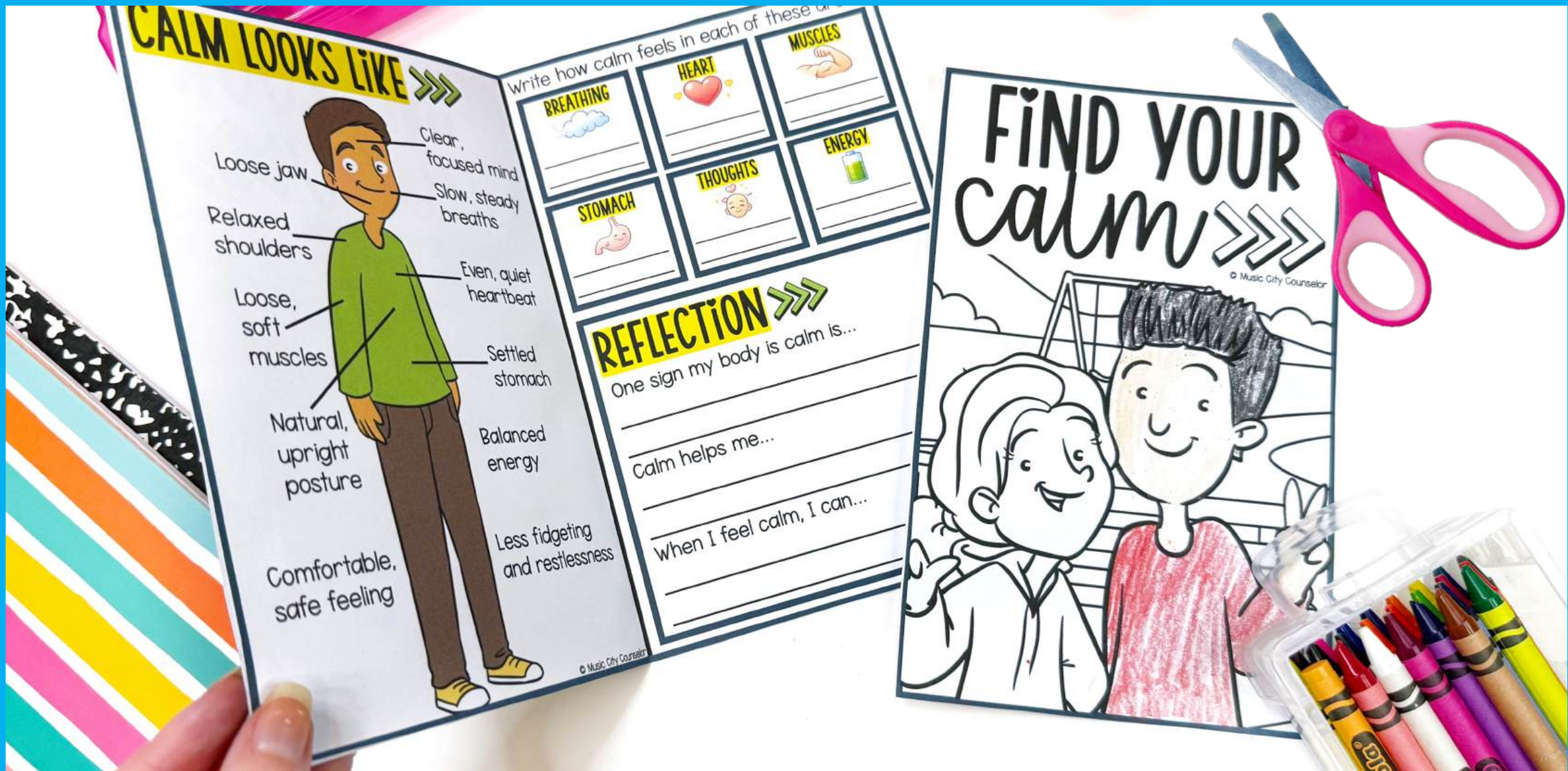
One sign m _____

Calm help _____

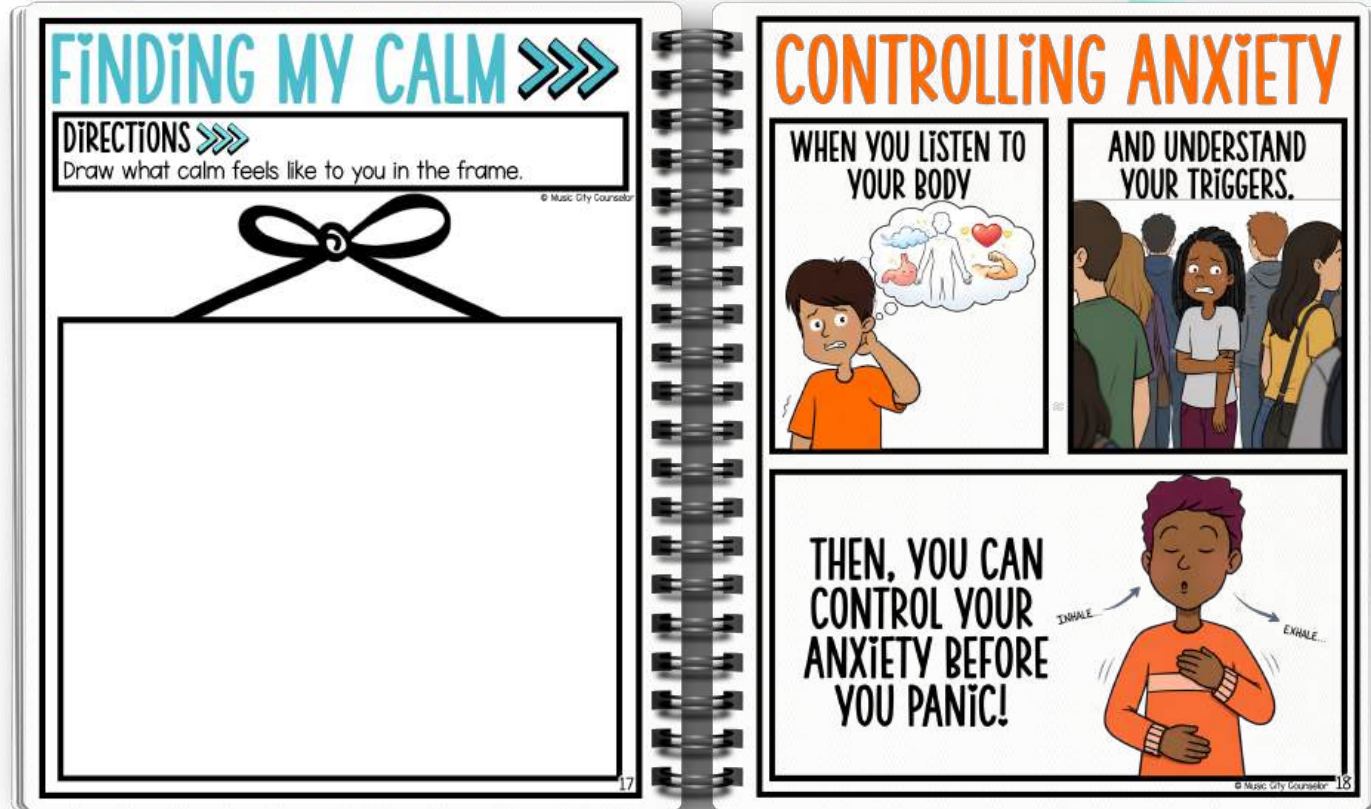
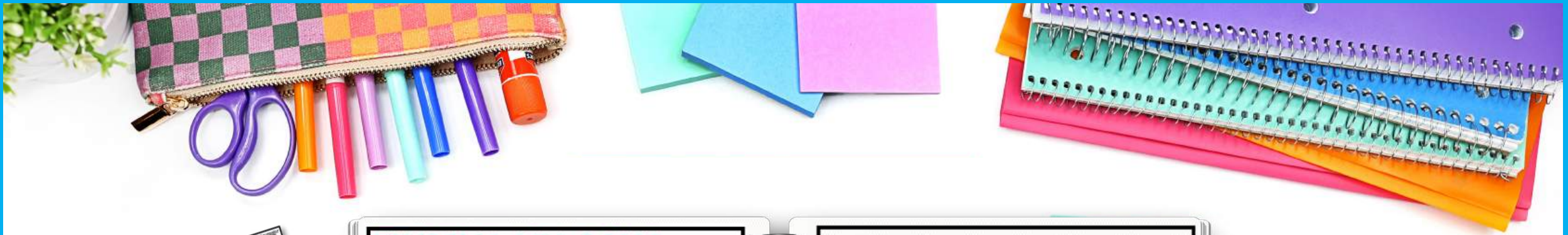
When I _____

SESSION 7: Calm Looks Like...

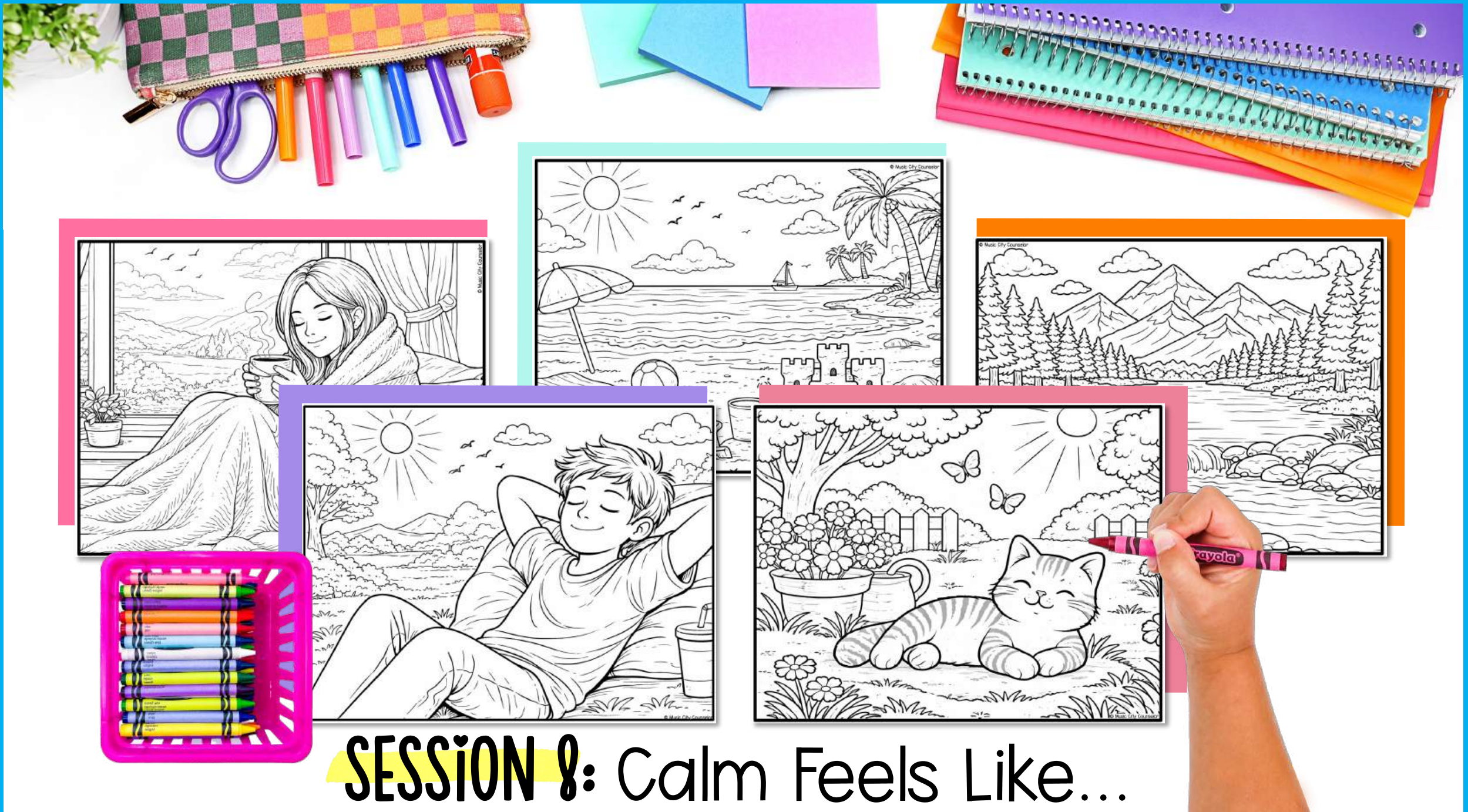




SESSION 7: Calm Looks Like...



SESSION 8: Calm Feels Like...



SESSION 8: Calm Feels Like...



COPING SKILLS >>>

WHAT ARE COPING SKILLS? >>>
Coping skills are tools and strategies you can use to handle big feelings, stress, and tough situations in a healthy way.

HOW ARE COPING SKILLS HELPFUL? >>>
Coping skills help you calm your body, clear your mind, and make good choices. They prevent you from reacting in ways you might regret. Coping skills do not make problems disappear, but they help you manage how you feel and get through challenges more effectively.

EXAMPLES OF COPING SKILLS: >>>

- Count to 10
- Breathe
- Listen to music
- Talk it out with a friend or grown-up you trust
- Read a book
- Journal, draw, or write
- Practice yoga
- Go for a walk
- Use tools (i.e. fidgets, stress balls)
- Find a cozy spot to relax
- Think positive thoughts
- Ask for a hug

COPING SKILLS >>>



SESSION 9: Using Coping Skills

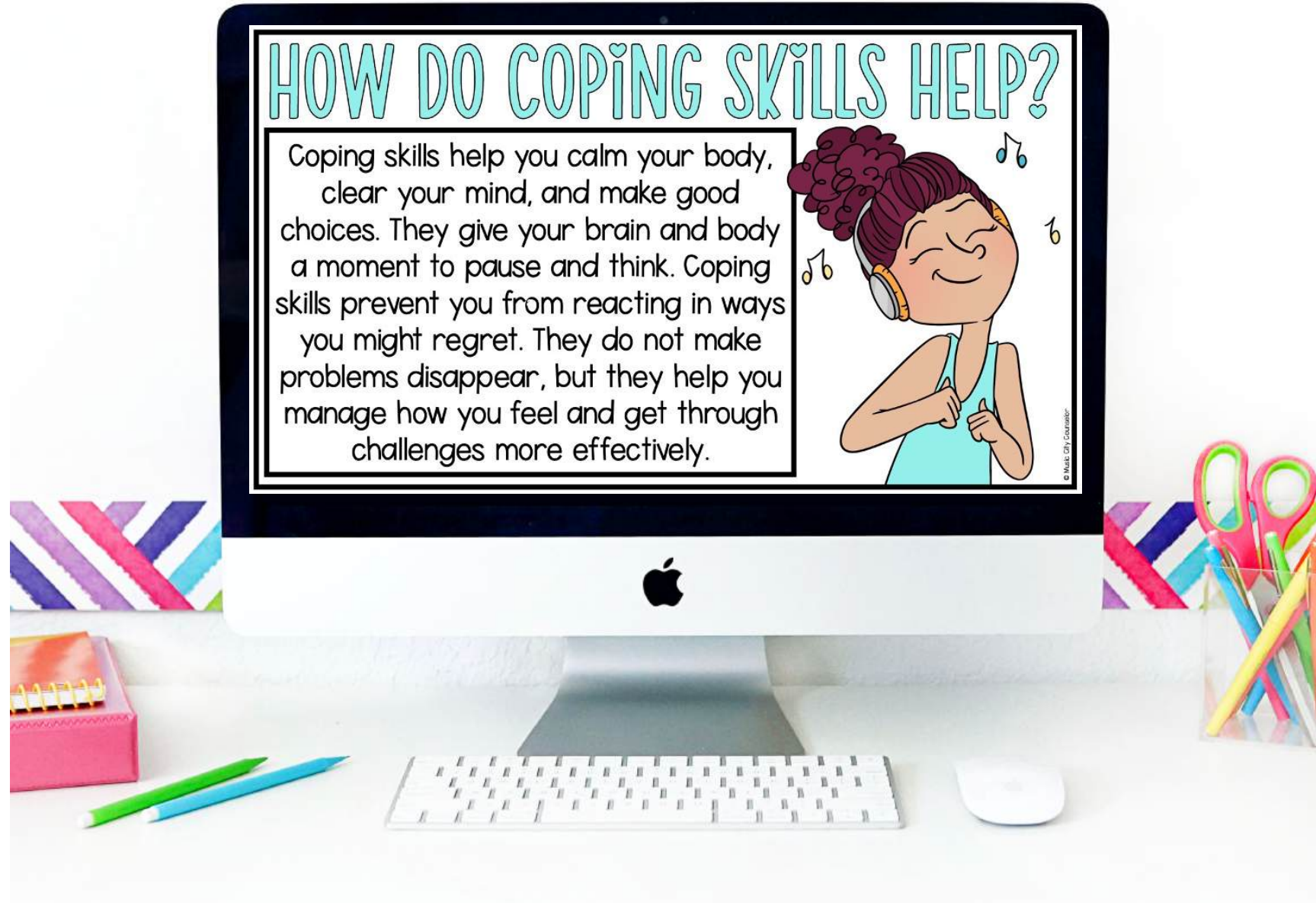
SESSION 9:

Using Coping Skills



SESSION 9:

Using Coping Skills





MY TIME IN GROUP >>>

IN GROUP I LEARNED:

MY FAVORITE ACTIVITY WAS:

MY FAVORITE MEMORY IN GROUP

I WILL KEEP PRACTICING:

IF I COULD CHANGE ONE THING ABOUT GROUP, IT WOULD BE:

21

Name: _____

SMALL GROUP post-survey

I can define anxiety.

I can name the 3 places where anxiety manifests.

I can explain how anxiety works in the brain.

I can identify the physical signs of anxiety.

I can describe how anxiety feels in my body.

I can define anxiety triggers.

I can name my anxiety triggers.

I can describe and identify the 5 levels of anxiety.

I can define calm.

I can identify the physical signs of calm.

I can define coping skills.

I can explain why coping strategies are helpful.

I can practice and use 12 coping skills.

22

CONGRATULATIONS >>>

on your completion of The Calm Crew!

School Name _____

School Counselor _____

Date _____

© Music City Counselor



SESSION 10: Group Closure & Reflection