

9th-12th Grade Levels | 35-55 Minutes

Safe Spaces For All

OBJECTIVE

To empower students to reflect on the importance of mental health and inclusion, co-create mission statements about building safe spaces for everyone, and use creative expression to visually reinforce those commitments.

Materials Needed:

- Chart paper, large sticky notes, or whiteboard space (for brainstorming)
- Regular paper for drafting mission statements
- Pens, pencils, markers
- Poster paper or large cardstock (one per group)
- Tape or sticky putty to hang posters on walls

Activity Instructions:

1

Introduction | 5-10 Minutes

Discussion Question:

What makes a space feel safe for sharing your thoughts and feelings?

Examples: People listening without judgment, respect, acceptance, kindness, boundaries

Highlight the Connection: When people feel safe, they are more likely to express themselves honestly, leading to a support network that helps to manage emotions.

2

Mission Statement | 15 Minutes

Divide students into small groups of 3–5.

Prompt: *Let's try to make our classroom a safe space for every student's mental health and well-being. How do we accomplish this? What needs to change and what do we all do to make this happen?*

Groups brainstorm words, values, and goals.

Each group writes a 2–3 sentence mission statement beginning with:

- *Our mission is to...*
- *We believe...*
- *Together, we will...*

3

Poster Creation | 20 Minutes

Provide poster paper, markers, magazines, scissors, and glue.

Each group designs a poster that:

- Features their mission statement clearly.
- Uses colors, images, or symbols that communicate safety, care, and community.
- Encourage creativity—students can collage, draw, or use powerful words/quotes.

4

Gallery Walk & Reflection | 10 Minutes

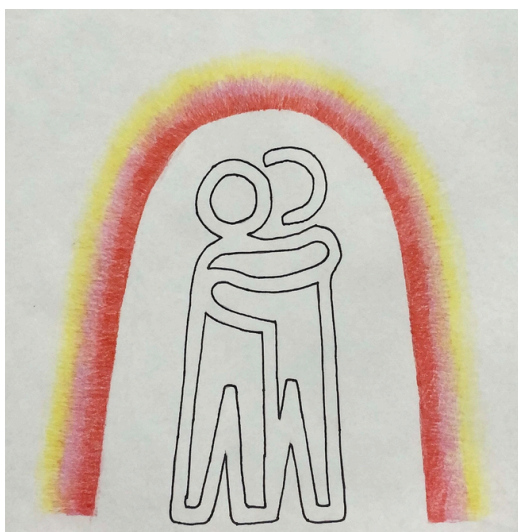
Hang the posters around the room. Students walk through and read each group's mission statement.

5

Closing Reflection | 5 Minutes

Discussion Prompts:

- *What do we notice about how we all define safety and support?*
- *How can we bring this mission into our everyday lives?*



Mental Health Angle:

- The activity promotes mental health literacy by asking students to name factors that create safe environments.
- The activity builds social-emotional skills, such as collaboration, empathy, and inclusion by fostering honest and inclusive verbal and written expression.
- Normalizing discussion about mental health in a community brings forth the fact that good mental health is a community effort, not just an individual issue.

Extensions and Variations:

- **One-Word Reminder:** After the posters are finished, each student chooses one word from their group's mission statement that stands out to them (e.g., kindness, respect, listening). They write or doodle that word on a sticky note and put it on their desk, locker, or notebook as a daily reminder.
- **Symbols of Safety:** After reviewing all the mission statements, ask each student to draw or design a small symbol that represents a safe space to them (e.g., an open door, a heart, a circle, a tree). Collect the symbols and arrange them into a big class collage or mosaic on a bulletin board titled: "Symbols of Safety."

