A Note for Facilitators

This slide deck is designed to support the delivery of the workshop in a variety of settings, from art or music classes to club meetings or support groups. You will find that some of the slides do not apply for you - feel free to download and edit it, so that it works best for your setting.

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We are so grateful for your participation. 💚

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A Note for Students

Remember to make space for you

The following activity may bring up feelings that are overwhelming in the moment. If you need to take a moment to step outside and breathe, please do. There are many people in your school community who can provide mental health support. You can also call or text 988.

We are all from many different backgrounds and lived experiences.

Please be kind and respectful to those around you. ♥

Emotional Safety First

Important Reminders:

- You control what you share!
- You may create about:
  - Yourself
  - A fictional character
  - People in general
- You never have to explain your work.
- It's okay to pause or step out if needed.
- Support is available (trusted adults, 988).

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What is Mental Health?

Mental health includes:

Our emotions

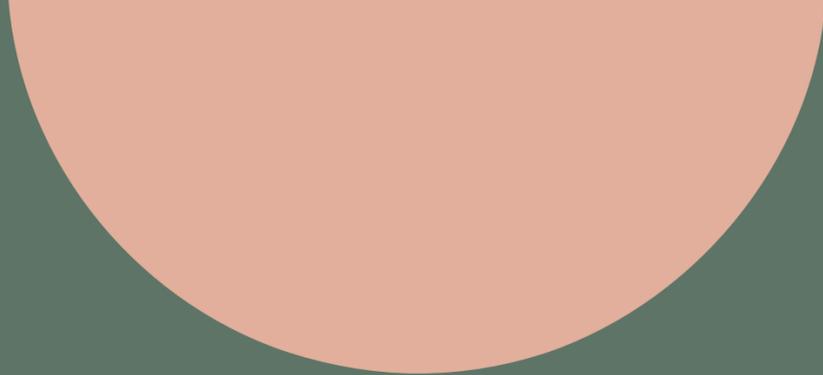Our thoughts

Our relationships

It affects how we:

Think

Feel

Act

It often determines how we:

Handle stress

Relate to others

Make choices

Just like physical health, everyone's mental health changes.

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What is Masking?

Masking Means:

- Hiding or changing parts of yourself to fit in or feel safe
- Showing the world one version while feeling something different inside

Masking is not wrong, but it can be exhausting.

Creative Expression and Mental Health

Creative expression can support our mental health in powerful ways:

- It helps lower stress and calm the body.
- It releases "feel-good" brain chemicals that improve mood.
- It gives us a safe way to express emotions that may be hard to say out loud.
- It can build confidence, connection, and self-understanding.

Creative Expression and Mental Health

When we choose to share our creative work, it can also help others. Seeing someone else's story can remind people that they are not alone.

Our voices and our art have power! They can start conversations, reduce stigma, nurture empathy, and create connection.

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Today's Creative Challenge

Behind the Mask

You will complete a creative expression that shows:

- The Mask – what is shown on the outside

- Thoughts, emotions, or experiences beneath the surface – what lies inside

Your work can be abstract or literal.

Step 1: Think & Plan

The Outside (the Mask)

- What words describe how someone appears?
  - confident, calm, funny, tough, helpful
- What behaviors hide true feelings?
  - joking, silence, posture, tone of voice

The Inside

What emotions or thoughts are beneath the surface?
If feelings were:

- colors → what colors?
- shapes → sharp, soft, tangled?
- sounds → loud, quiet, steady, chaotic?

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Step 2: Choose Your Medium

How Will You Create?

- Visual art (drawing, collage, painting)

- Writing (poem, monologue, journal entry)

- Music (contrast in rhythm, tempo, or mood)

- Film or digital media

There is no "right" choice.

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Step 3: Create

As You Work, consider:

- What do you want people to notice first — the mask or the inside?

Also, think about:

- Energy & Space:
  Is your work calm and balanced, or busy and energetic?
  How does that reflect how someone feels?

- Color & Mood:
  What colors best match the emotions you want to express?

Step 3: Create

- Revealing Feelings:
  Do inner thoughts appear right away, or do they slowly come into view?
- Connection Between Ideas:
  Do the outer and inner worlds stay separate, or do they begin to blend and overlap?

There is no correct way of completing this project. Each of your choices help to tell your story.

Step 4: Reflection

Reflect in writing, using one or more of the following stems if needed.

- One thing I noticed during this process was...

- A choice I made in my artwork that mattered to me was...

- Something I want others to understand about masking is...

- Before creating, I felt ___. After creating, I felt ___.

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Step 5: Share (Optional)

Sharing Is Always a Choice

- You may share your work with
    - Your teacher
    - your peers
    - #CreateConnectCare (createconnectcare.org/submit)
- You may talk about your process instead of meaning
- You may keep your work private

Listening respectfully matters as much as speaking.

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Start a Club

If you enjoyed today's workshop and you don't already have a BC2M club at your school, click here to apply to start one!

We provide all of the tools and support to get a mental health club up and running, so you can use your creativity to make a positive difference in your community.

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Why This Matters

Understanding Masking Can Help Us:

- Be more empathetic

- Reduce stigma around mental health

- Create safer schools and communities

- Remember we are not alone

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Grounding & Closing

Before We End...

- Take three slow breaths

- Notice one thing you're proud of today

- Remember: support is available, and asking for help is strength

Art is a journey, not a destination. Be kind to yourself. Your voice matters.

Inspiration Gallery

On the following slides you will find work submitted by students to Create Connect Care in previous years. We hope that you find them inspiring, but don't limit yourself to doing something similar - let your creativity shine!

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This is me, all that I am for all you to see.
But the curious thing about sight, always, there'll be something out of mind.

Upfront, I am sweet, rosy pink,
With loving care, and balanced fair,
I cover up my pain, and rise up for change.
Light hues of blue, to hide cracks anew,
the soft gentle smile, dark circles been there awhile.

But hidden behind the mask darkness rules amassed.
A cry for justice, a forced smile,
Broken sense of self, tell myself I'm trying
A foggy, things not yet found.
Unsure if the voice is me, or the siren sound.

I chose this category because I use art to express how I'm feeling about lots of subjects, in this case injustice and the pretense yet hope for justice.

Kelly "Karl" – 15

In the painting I submitted, a girl is smiling on the outside, but inside her mind sits a quiet, sad version of herself—worried, shy, and feeling invisible. I created this artwork to show what many people go through silently. My hope is that when others see this, they will realize that even the happiest faces can hide deep pain. I want my art to speak for those who cannot express their struggles. If even one person feels seen, understood, or less alone because of my painting, then I believe I've made a difference. We all wear masks sometimes, but we deserve to be heard without them too.

Maria – 17

I created four visual art pieces centered around the theme of awareness. Each piece reflects a different aspect of living with mental health struggles and aims to shed light on what often goes unseen. One piece shows a person smiling while storm clouds form behind their eyes, representing the hidden nature of anxiety and depression. Another illustrates tangled thoughts as chaotic lines wrapped around someone's head, expressing the overwhelm of stress and racing thoughts.

This piece shows a person smiling while a dark storm brews behind their eyes. It reflects how people often hide their mental health struggles behind a mask of happiness. The purpose of this artwork is to raise awareness about the invisible nature of anxiety and depression. Just because someone looks fine doesn't mean they are. I hope this piece encourages viewers to look beyond appearances and offer kindness, empathy, and support to those who may be struggling in silence.

Nadia – 17

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Hiding Beneath My Mask By: Michaela Chuang

I feel trapped, My life is like a complicated map, I have to hide myself, Pretend I'm fine, It has crossed the line, I can't be myself, They won't accept me, I'm afraid, Afraid of people judging, With long stares and glares, From my mind, it won't flee, They all ask the same question, "Are you ok?" With my fake smile, My teeth gridding, My mind wants to scream, No! They wouldn't understand, I have to hide, Underneath my mask, It won't last, I want to tell someone, But they might not get me, If they do, I will be free, I will stop feeling trapped, The storm in my mind will be scrapped, Clearing up like a sunny day, The storm goes away, And I will take off my mask

I took this photo with intent of displaying how many people mask their true emotions, whether it's anxiety, fear, or other emotions, most of the time it relates to mental health issues. I want people to realize how important it is to check on your relationships frequently because you never know what someone is truly feeling.

Jaiden – 16

My ceramics mask represents how our emotions are on the inside. Although there are hints on the outside to how a person may feel, we should never assume we know how someone feels unless they tell us directly. Avoiding judgement is an important part of supporting each other.

Mallory – 17

My drawing "Behind the Mask" is my way to portray how mental health struggle (in my case Anxiety) is invisible from the outside. You can't really tell what other people are struggling with inside because society might only want to see the "mask" of healthy and happy you. My anxiety has put me in chains that sometimes I doubt myself and my capabilities to the point where I don't think I'm good enough.

Olivia – 11