

The Happy Island – A Creative Mental Health Activity

Subject Areas: Visual Arts / Health Education / Language Arts

Grade Level: Grades 2–6 (adaptable)

Duration: 60–75 minutes (can be split over two sessions)

Big Ideas

- Identify personal self-care and soothing strategies.
- Use creative expression to design a symbolic mental health support tool.
- Explore emotional regulation by imagining a comforting mental “happy place.”
- Reflect on positive coping strategies inspired by “I Lost a Day.”

Materials

- Happy Place Brainstorm Worksheet (provided)
- Blank Island Template (provided)
- Drawing tools: crayons, markers, colored pencils
- Optional: scissors, collage materials, glue

Introduction from Briana

I grew up on an island for a part of my childhood. This is the happiest place I have ever been. I ran the beaches, found crabs under rocks, and played in the ocean waves with my sisters and brother. Now when I am feeling down, sad, or when I have to be brave, I think of the island. It is my 'Happy Place.' I used the real island I know and love to create an imaginary one, filled with all the things I love to do: Art, listening to music, yoga, books. My 'Happy Place' island is also filled with all the people I love and lots of nature. It is a place in my mind, just for me, where I keep all the things that give me comfort and make me feel safe. This activity will help you brainstorm ideas of what can be included in your own happy place. I hope you use the children in “I Lost a Day” for inspiration!

Extra:

WATCH AN ANIMATION OF BRIANA'S HAPPY ISLAND

https://youtu.be/6_ccQbaPNMM?si=GE5xttO99Uc2fWIj

Part 1: Brainstorming with "I Lost a Day" (20–30 minutes)

Begin by discussing the idea of a 'Happy Place'—a safe and comforting place that exists in our minds. Read or revisit parts of "I Lost a Day", and explore how the children in the book use self-care strategies to process emotions like sadness, fear, or frustration. Distribute the 'Happy Place Brainstorm' worksheet. Students can write or draw in the blank spaces, listing activities, people, memories, or objects that bring them peace or joy, the

Phase 2: Design Your Happy Island (30–40 minutes)

Provide each student with the blank island template. Using their brainstorm as a guide, they will design a detailed map of their 'Happy Island.' Encourage students to fill the island playfully, it does not need to make sense to anyone but themselves.

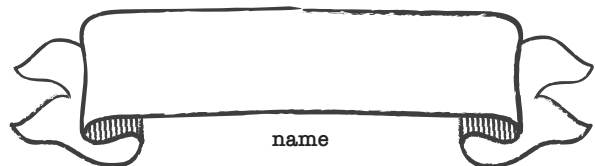
Conclusion: A Soft Place to Land

When we talk about mental health, it's important to have a positive place "a soft place to land", mentally. The Happy Island is a personal vision board that is a space where you can store ideas, memories, and comforting thoughts to return to when you need support. Just like the children in "I Lost a Day", we can all create places in our minds that help us feel safe, strong, and grounded.



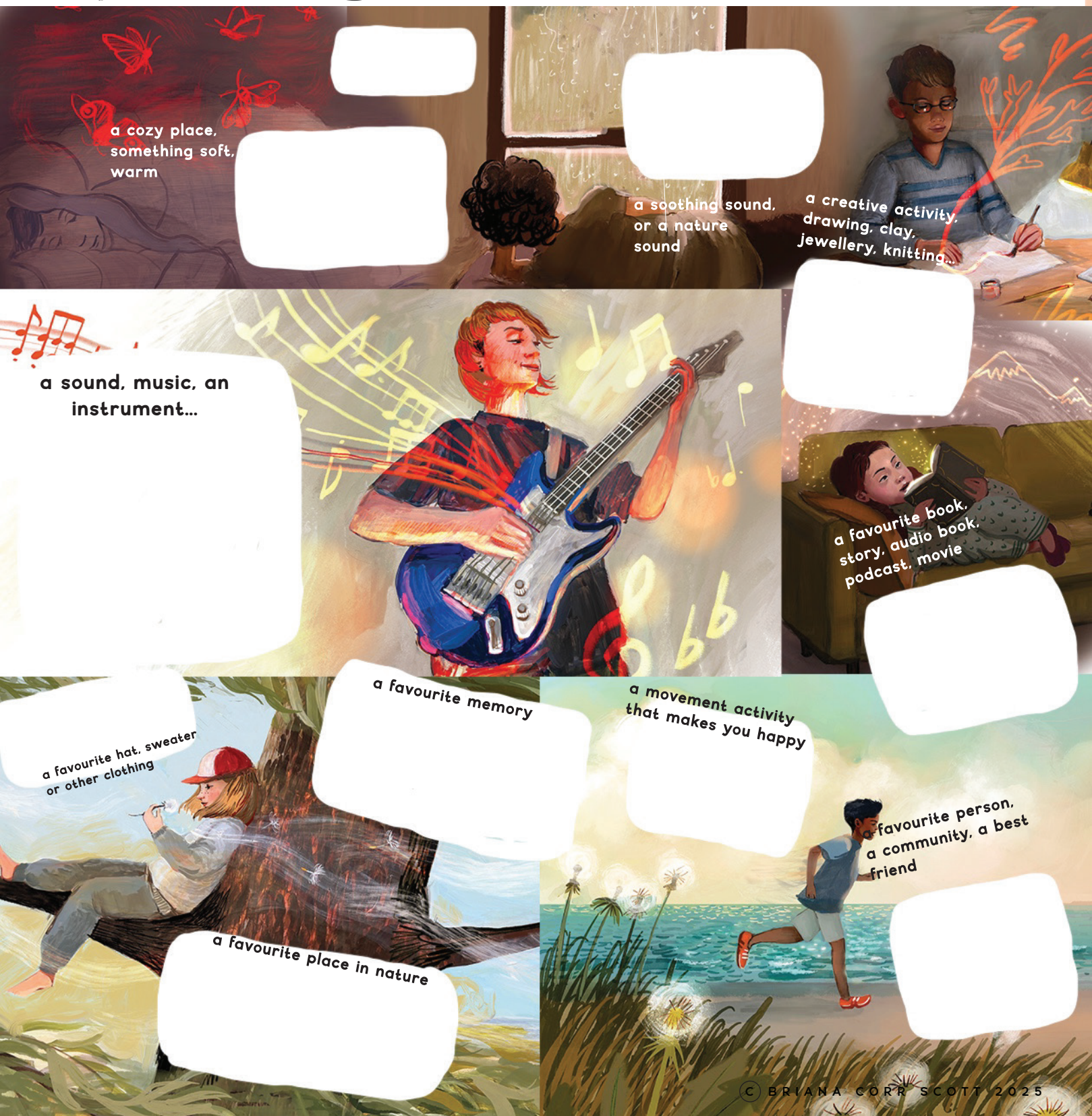
BRAINSTORM

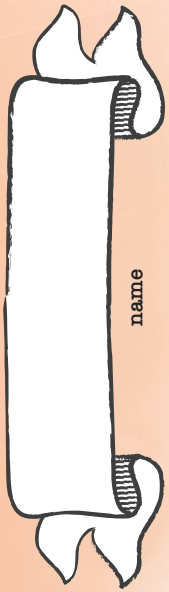
Write or draw in the white spaces.



Use the kids in "I Lost a Day" to help you brainstorm all of the comforting and soothing self-care activities that help you cope when you are feeling sad, angry, or down.

IF you don't connect to one of the prompts, don't fill it out! This about discovering the things you like to do that make you feel good.





name

Use your brainstorm to design your happy island. You can draw a map, draw pictures, collage or anything you can think of to create visual of your "Happy Place".

