

TREE OF STRENGTH

TREE ID Grades: K-8

Overview: (communicated by teacher)

When we are faced with challenging times, we pull on our strengths to help us get through something difficult. For children, it can be hard to recognize those strengths, or remember to use them as a coping method. In this activity, the Tree of Strength will help students identify their personal strengths, loved ones they can depend on for support, and positive activities they can engage in to aid in the coping process. After completing the exercise, students will have a visual collection of coping tools that they can pull from when struggling or going through a difficult time.

Method:

1. Nature Walk and Observation:

Take a nature walk with students outside, exploring various tree shapes and structure. Students can use this time for self-reflection, choosing a tree to study or quiet area to sit and consider some of their personal strengths.

2. Guided Visualization and Journaling:

Encourage students to imagine themselves as a tree trunk, and the leaves that grow on their tree as different things that make them feel good. This can include people or pets they care about, hobbies they enjoy doing, and positive personality traits.

3. Tree Outline

In the classroom, students will assemble their tree by tracing their arm (trunk) and hand (branches) on a long piece of paper. Dividing the finger tips into smaller branches, students can extend their drawing, completing it with leaves. (Smaller paper or sidewalk chalk can be used if needed).

4. Adding Strengths and Decoration:

Students will fill in the blank leaves with the different strengths they came up with during self-reflection. Afterwards they can decorate their tree using paint, markers or colored pencils.

At a glance

Skills:

Critical Thinking
Teamwork
Discussion
Urban Forestry

Lesson Delivery:

(Best/Suggested method in bold)

- Whole group
- **Small group**
- **Independent work**

Location:

(Best/Suggested location in bold)

- **Outdoor**
- **Indoors**

Materials:

Necessary

- Paper
- Colored Pencils
- Markers
- Table/writing surface

Optional

- Highlighter
- Sticky notes



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Modifications & Extensions

K-2*

Modification: Use Sentence Starters and Visual Prompts

Provide a worksheet with sentence starters like “I feel strong when I...” or “Someone who helps me is...” along with images or symbols for ideas like family, pets, drawing, or being kind. This supports younger students in expressing strengths with guidance. Students can draw pictures rather than writing.

3-5*

Modification: Provide a Strengths Word Bank

Offer a word bank with examples of personal strengths (e.g., brave, helpful, creative), supportive figures (e.g., teacher, sibling), and calming activities (e.g., drawing, reading, going outside). This helps students brainstorm ideas for their Tree of Strength. Students can draw pictures rather than writing.

6-8*

Modification: Incorporate a Guided Reflection Sheet

Provide students with structured reflection questions to help them think deeply about their emotional resilience (e.g., “What’s a difficult moment you overcame?” “What helped you get through it?”). They could put their responses into the form of a poem. This supports meaningful responses in their tree design.

Extension: Create a Class Forest of Strength

After students complete their individual trees, display them together on a classroom wall to form a “Forest of Strength.” Discuss how everyone brings unique strengths and how we support each other as a community.

Extension: Write a Strength Story

After creating their tree, students write a short story or journal entry about a time they used one of their strengths to face a challenge. This deepens self-awareness and builds narrative skills.

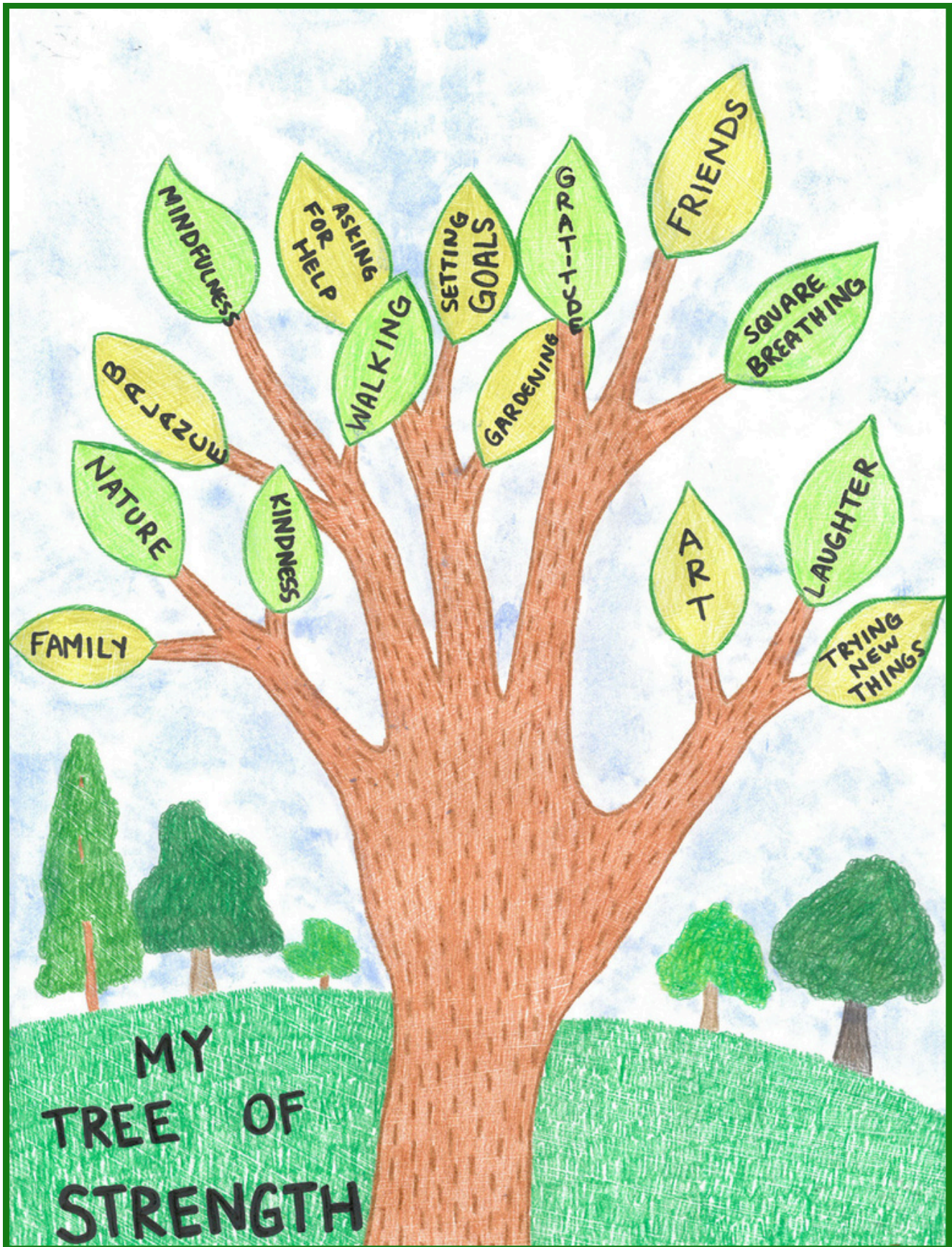
Extension: Create a Digital Tree of Strength Portfolio

Students recreate their tree using a digital drawing tool or slideshow. Each “leaf” links to a written reflection, image, or resource (e.g., a song, quote, or person) that supports their well-being. This allows for more personalized and tech-integrated expression.

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Example:



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