

# Be Here Now

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TEACHING MENTAL PREPARATION TO YOUTH GOING ON EXCHANGE  
TIPS AND RESOURCES FOR OUTBOUND AND INBOUND EDUCATORS  
NAYEN CONFERENCE 2024

# Why is Mental Health Preparation Important?



Yearly returns of in- and out-bound students



Increased incidence of global mental health issues among the teen population



Education helps decrease presentations of anxiety and increase coping strategies

**Let's be proactive**



Take a guess...

What are the top 3 issues disclosed before, during and after exchange?



## 3 Items...but not limited to...

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1. Anxiety
2. Homesickness or FOMO (Fear of Missing Out)
3. Sleep Disruptions



## Teaching Mental Preparation Education for Exchange

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### Consideration of Learning Styles

‘Learning Styles’ refers to different ways in which we learn, process, and retain information. All youth learn through meaningful hands-on experiences—through touching, doing and moving. They can also learn through seeing and hearing.



# 4 Main Learning Styles

1. Visual (Learn through seeing)
2. Auditory (Learn through hearing)
3. Tactile (Learn through touch)
4. Kinesthetic (Learn through doing and moving)





# Visual

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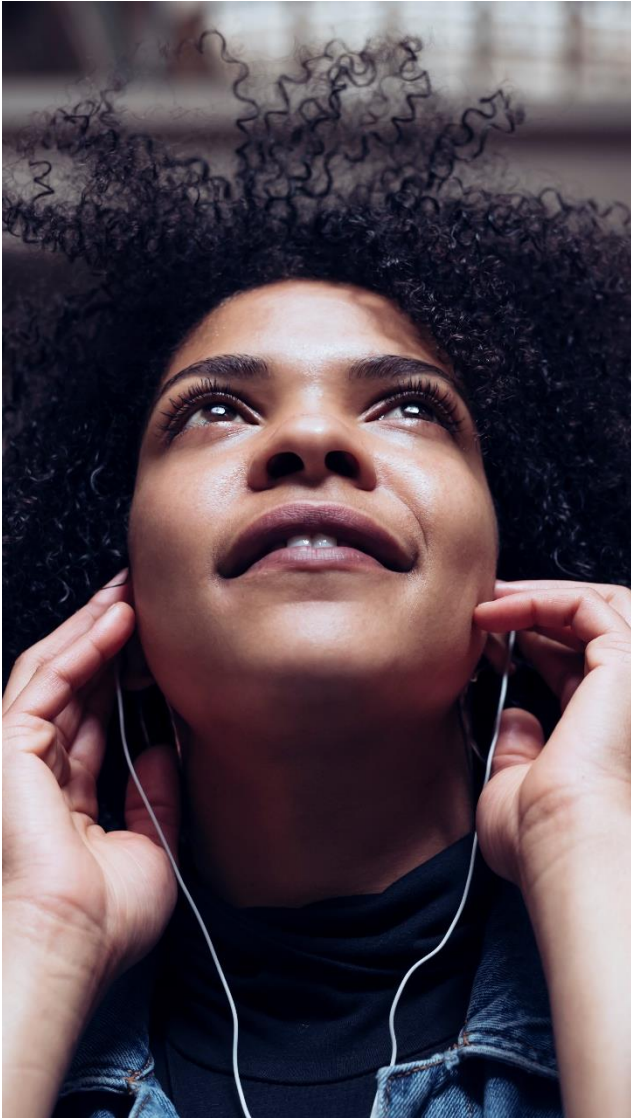
## Tips for Visual learners

-these youth are visual processors

-they observe body language and facial expressions well

-They learn through demonstrations and descriptions

Note- too much movement or action in a learning setting can cause distraction. Youth benefit from written instructions that aid to clarify verbal directions.



# Auditory

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## Tips for auditory learners

- they participate in discussions and like to talk things through
- verbal directions help clarify instructions and written information
- too much noise may be distracting and they prefer a quiet environment for learning





# Tactile

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## Tips for tactile learners

- they prefer activities that allow them to doodle, fidget or use their hands
- they like to draw or write to memorize content
- they can be prone to restlessness in a conventional learning environment ; look to add fidget tools, paper and pens on the table for youth to use.



# Kinesthetic

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## Tips for kinesthetic learners

- these youth like to move and learn by doing
- they like role play, physical sensations, and stations to learn at.
- consider group break out sessions or small group work where everyone shares ideas at stations.

(Gardener & Edwards, 1993-2002)

# Knowing the Content

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Now that we have discussed learning styles and ideas for these learners, let's discuss the content.

The common themes as an example for this session will be Anxiety, Homesickness (FOMO) and Sleep Disruptions.

It is important as an educator to be able to discuss and share materials that cover these topics....Here are some examples that can be used in sessions with students going on exchange.

# Opening Prompts & Questions for the Topic of Anxiety

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Lead with questions that create a group dialogue and start conversing:

Has anyone of you ever felt uncomfortable trying something new?

Who has ever taken steps to avoid a situation when they felt nervous?

When you think of the word anxiety, what comes to mind?





# Examples of Content Slides



# Anxiety



1. A feeling of nervousness, worry, or unease about something with an uncertain outcome
2. A strong desire or concern to do something or for something to happen

Common  
Symptoms

**Panic  
Attacks**

# Symptoms

These vary from person to person:

- restlessness
- nervousness
- feelings of danger
- rapid breathing
- sweating
- trembling
- difficulty focusing
- weakness
- trouble sleeping
- racing thoughts
- stomach pains
- avoidance
- obsessing or ruminating thoughts





## What is a Panic Attack?

1. A sudden onset of fear with excessive anxiety symptoms with or without a trigger
2. 4 or more symptoms are present





# Common Causes of Anxiety

- Hormonal Shifts and Mood Swings
- Brain Development
- Distancing from Parental Figures
- Isolation
- Social Pressures
- Stress
- Perfectionism /High Expectations
- Drug Use
- Low Mood





# Activity on Anxiety

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- Break into small groups and provide writing materials
- Ask them as a group to name up to 10 things they can think of to combat anxiety
- Give time to complete the task and when complete ask a member from each team to present a couple of the points on their list

## What can the youth do?

- Get regular exercise or join a team
- Eat regular meals...Yes Breakfast too!
- Distract themselves
- Go somewhere quiet
- Journal
- Positive visualization or praise self
- Create a balanced schedule
- Take breaks, meditate or deep breath
- Learn relaxation techniques
- Get to bed at a good time
- Limit screen time during the day and before bed
- Talk to a counselor at school
- Try some herbal remedies
- Talk to a doctor if you need more
- Connect more with the local Rotary and your host family



# Activity 2- Complete a Comfort Kit Plan

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This activity has a handout.

Provide a handout where each youth in the presentation takes a sheet and a pen and spends an allotted amount of time completing what they would use to calm themselves....

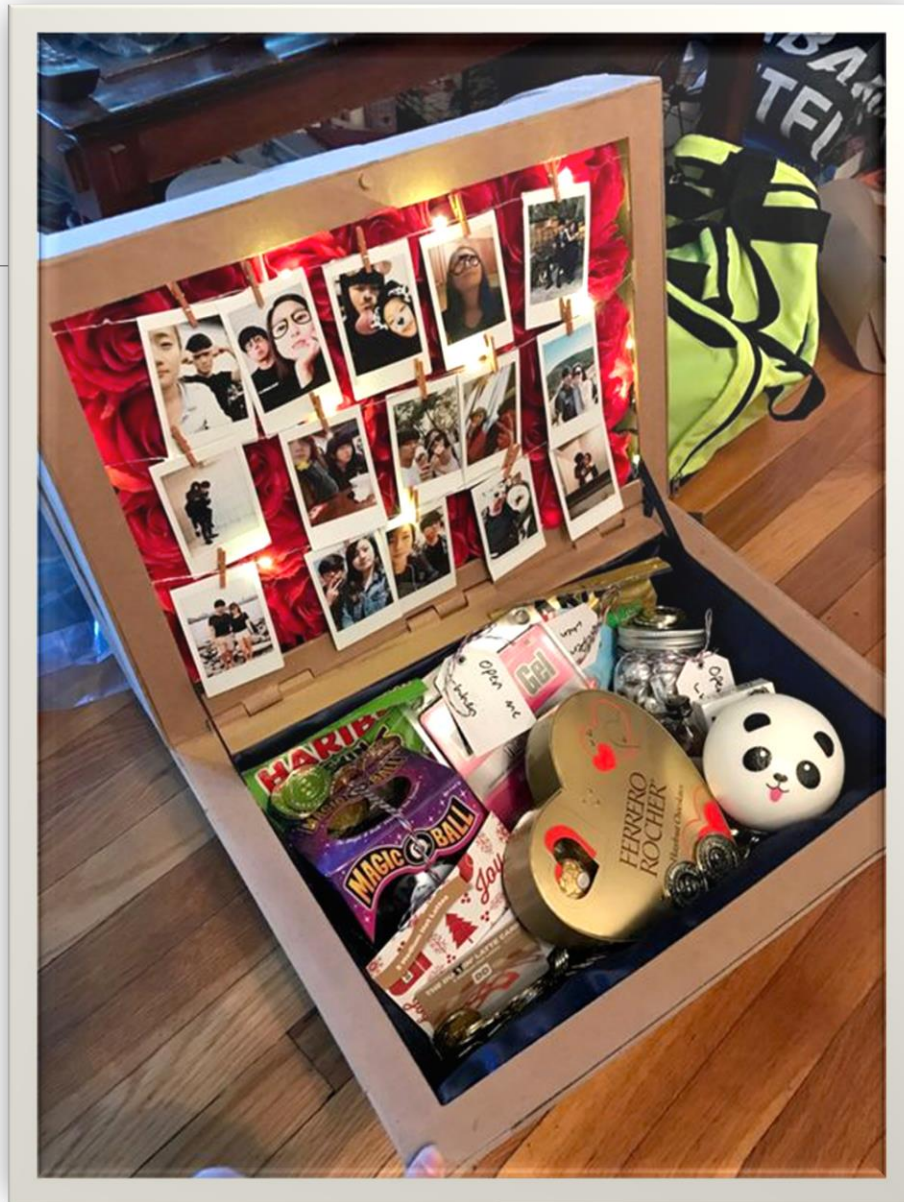
Examples could be a doodle book, a worry stone, a fidget, chewing gum, aroma therapy





Self-care  
safety  
kit

What would  
You put in  
yours?





# Activity 3- 100 ways to Relax & Unwind

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1. Handout the 100 ways to relax activity to each participant with highlighters.
2. Have the youth highlight any activity they could see themselves doing while on exchange
3. Have them cross out what they would be least likely to try
4. Anyone willing to share their 'go to activity'?

## APPS & Ideas

10 APPS for Youth to  
download before or after they  
leave:

- |                |   |
|----------------|---|
| 1. Happify     | -deep breathing   |
| 2. Brain.fm    | -music  |
| 3. Headspace   | -positive affirmations  |
| 4. Pacifica    | -exercise   |
| 5. Worry Watch | -distraction  |
| 6. Mood Path   | -build a "calm kit"; fill a pencil bag with things that could relax you |
| 7. Talklife    | -progressive muscle relaxation  |
| 8. What's Up?  | -Imagery  |
| 9. SuperBetter | -meditation/yoga  |
| 10. Talk Space | -reach out; talk to someone   |
|                | -slow down; seek quiet  |
|                | -rest   |



# Discuss Technology for Anxiety

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## Activity 4- Review and Complete a Rotary Personal Crisis Plan

Review the document with them

- Ask why a personal crisis plan might be valuable?
- Discuss who should have a copy of their plan
- Discuss when to use it
- Take some time to complete them solo and ask them to share it with their identified supports.



# Exchange Students in a Tech Driven World

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Today's youth have unprecedented access to modern technology and use them in expected and unexpected ways. Recent evidence raises concerns about effects on youth long term regarding many factors like social and academic functioning.

78 % of teens have cellular phones and recent stats say that on average they are "online" for longer than 3-5 hours a day (Simuforosa, 2013)





# Intro to Homesickness & FOMO

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Youth on exchange struggle with disconnecting from their friends and family back home

Many have identified a fear of missing out and have worries about being “left behind”.

Youth may avoid aspects of exchange based on missing home and their usual routines.

Q- Ask the youth to describe what “Being Here Now” on exchange means to them



# Tips

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Talk to others

Find healthy distractions

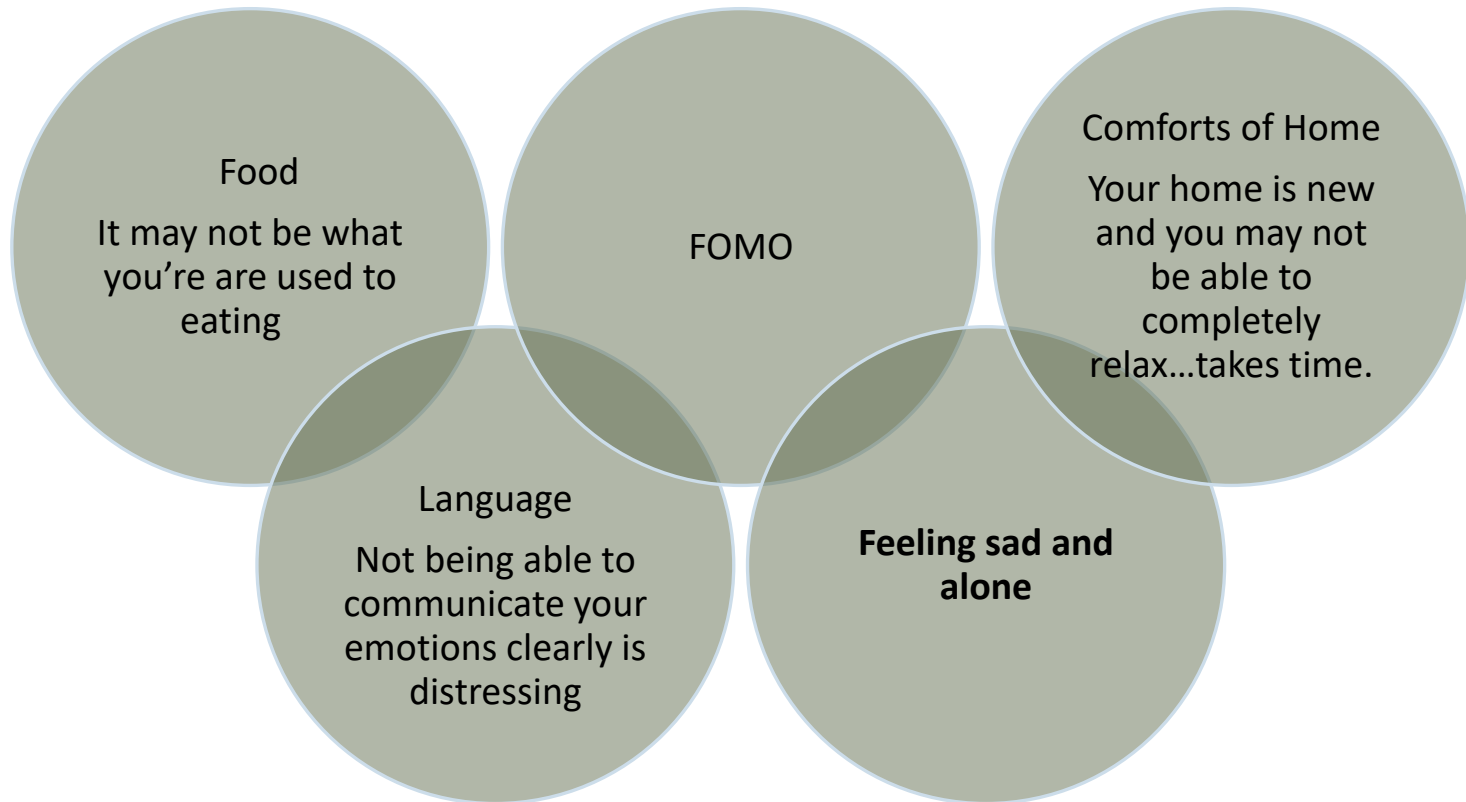
Let go of expectations

Get involved in the local community

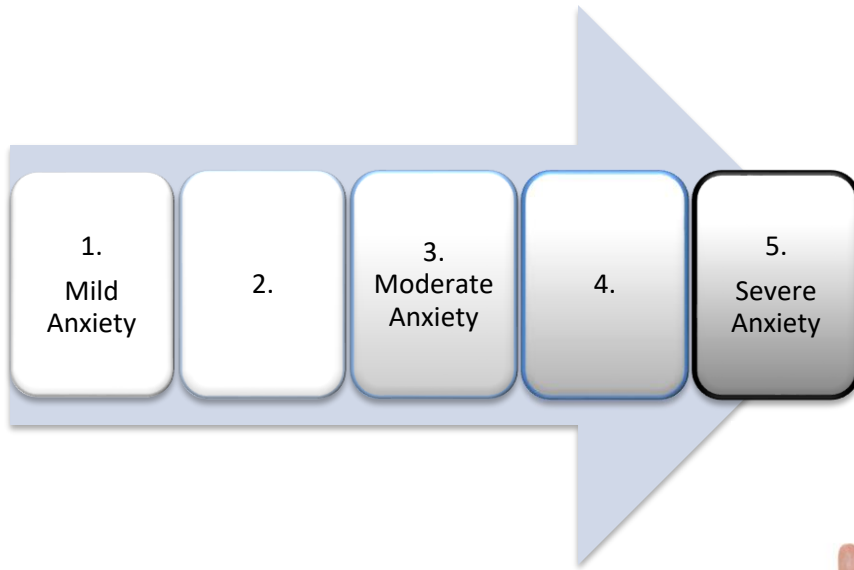
Note: Lack of language can lead to frustrations-regular dialogue can help

# Exchange Student Struggles

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## Self- Awareness

Using an **Anxiety and Depression rating scale**.....to check out how you are feeling and taking note of when to reach out.....

# Sleep- Dialogue with the students

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Consider an open dialogue about sleep and how a lack of sleep could affect the student on exchange.

Get them to list up to 5 implications for lack of sleep.

Review social media and night-time phone use with students.

Discuss time changes and making calls or being online with friends.







# How to support while on exchange....Checking in.

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It is important to check in with the group of inbound or outbound students while on exchange.

Consider reaching out in a month, after the honeymoon phase is over, or during any “Winter Blues” periods/ holidays, and before they return.

Group email works great but also, based on answers they give, can lead to facetime calls, private emails or using What's APP to delve deeper into any issues popping up.



## Communication with Youth, Families and other Rotary Members

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- Conversations generally should be confidential with a wellness clinician unless there is a notable concern.
- If there is a safety risk of any kind the members of Rotary should be made aware and plan accordingly with the Mental Wellness worker or designated support team.
- Families should be notified as well if there is a safety risk- suicidal thoughts or impulsive dangerous choices.





# Open Q & A Period

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What other questions can I answer for you on this topic at this time?

Also, consider reaching out to me on the information on the next slide.

# Contact me

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