**Drumming Activities**

Heartbeat Rhythms

The majority of the activities revolve around 5 basic heartbeat rhythms made up of 4 sounds that can be played on the drums. The different sounds that can be played on a drum are a:

* Tone – hitting the edge of the top of the drum with closed fingers
* Slap – hitting the edge of the top of the drum with open fingers
* Bass – hitting the center of the drum with your hand/palm
* Scratch – scratching your fingers across the top of the drum

The 5 different heartbeat rhythms utilize these four basic sounds. All heartbeat rhythms begin with two bass tones and finish with any of the above drum sounds. So, for example, the different rhythms include:

* Bass, bass, tone
* Bass, bass, slap
* Bass, bass, scratch
* Bass, bass, tone, tone, tone
* Bass, bass, rest (silent for one count)

Icebreaker

A really great icebreaker to use with a new group is to have students play the drum in a way that represents their feelings. This is a great way to have students think about their emotions and express them without having to say anything. Each student will take a turn playing the drum in whatever fashion they’d like, capturing what it is they are feeling and what zone they are in. Once everyone has had a turn, the teacher can ask students to share why they played what they did and the group can lead into a discussion of Zones and self-regulation. This is a good time to talk about how the club is framed around mindfulness and self-awareness. Ask students about the strategies that they use to cope with non-green zone feelings and discuss how music is a great way to find balance.

Activity 1

Gather the students into a circle, with everyone facing the middle. Start by introducing each of the sounds on the drum, using an echo procedure wherein the teacher will play the sound and students will echo it back. Next, introduce the heartbeat rhythms and have students echo each.

Once the sounds and heartbeat rhythms have been introduced, begin the drumming circle by starting with one of the heartbeat rhythms. Inform students that each person will join in one at a time, picking one of the 5 heartbeat rhythms. Once everyone has joined in, allow students to continue playing for a few minutes. Have students practice getting louder, quieter, faster, and slower as a group (making sure it is cohesive). Afterwards, allow students to choose a new heartbeat rhythm. At the end, transition out, beginning with the teacher, one student at a time until everyone stops playing.

Activity 2

Start with Activity 1, leading each student using the heartbeat rhythms. As students get comfortable, propose some small improvisation to those feeling brave enough. The improv must still start with the two bass tones, but can end in any way the students would like, as long as it matches what the rest of the group is doing. This is a great way to teach mindfulness and listening. Each student really needs to clear their mind and feel the sounds that they are hearing so that they are able to add to the small silent moments. If students are feeling even braver, ask for solos and have the students perform their improv for the class. Have the group stop the heartbeat rhythms on two bass tones before allowing the performer to play their solo (countdown helps).

Activity 3

If the students are getting the hang of the drumming techniques, relinquish the heartbeat rhythms and have students play to a four beat count. Introduce a basic drumbeat and ask for a brave volunteer to add to it. This is a safe way for students to experiment and express their creativity. Ensure that all students are actively listening and that everyone is respectful.

*Note: If someone is disrespectful, they leave the drumming circle. There is zero tolerance for rude behaviour in the circle as it ruins the safe space.*

Activity 4

Have students break of into groups of two or three. Instruct them that one person will start with a basic rhythm of their choice, and the rest of the group members will lead in slowly. Once they’ve found a rhythm that everyone agrees on, find another group and join together. Try to make the two different rhythms match each other. Once the groups have done that, continue to join groups until the entire club is back together again.

Activity 5

If students appear to be stressed, have them complete a “What zone am I in?” survey. On the back of the survey, have students write down some of the key feelings and actions that they feel in their zone. Then, allow students to improvise a song about how they are feeling. This can be done individually, in partners, or in groups. Once the students have completed, have each group share their song with the rest of the club. Then, have the students complete the survey again. If they notice that they have returned to the green zone, have them note why they think that is and what changes they feel in their mind and body.