



USE WITH:
Whole class



GRADE LEVEL:
Upper elementary, middle school, or high school



CONTEXT:
In person

CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

Weave a Web of Support

Help students see and recognize the support they have within and outside the classroom.

Created by [Search Institute](#)

Description:

Students will engage in an exercise to visualize the support that exists in their lives. Recognizing the web of support around them can help students know where to seek help in difficult times.

Prep time needed:
15 minutes

Est. time to complete:
30 minutes

Steps:

1. Ask students to sit in a circle and hand one student a ball of yarn.
2. Ask the student with the ball of yarn to name one person in their life who supports them and briefly explain how that support occurs. After the student has shared the name of someone who supports them and how, they should keep hold of the end of the yarn and throw the rest of the ball to another person in the circle.
3. The student who catches the ball of yarn should then name a person who supports them and how. After that, the student should keep hold of the yarn in one hand while throwing the ball of yarn to someone else. This process should continue until everyone has had a chance to speak and is holding onto a part of the yarn. Repeat the process until a web of yarn exists across the circle.
4. When the web has been fully spun, explain to the group that the yarn represents the web of all the people who support them. Tell your students: "Look at the web that you have created. Each of us is connected to the other. When we do something (pull,

drop, hand-off) with our part of the yarn, the entire dynamic changes (shape, slack, etc.)." Have the group look at the change in the web and ask: "How did it change? Why did it change?"

5. Now throw the beach ball onto the web of yarn. Explain that the ball represents someone who needs assistance and the web represents the people who can support them in life. Tell the group that their goal is to keep the ball from falling through the gaps in the web. If the web doesn't support the beach ball, ask the group to keep listing other people to make the web stronger. Students may hold the yarn in both hands.
6. Now ask one of the students to drop their yarn and step back from the circle. What happens to the beach ball when that occurs? If the ball does not fall off the web when one student exits, ask another to drop the yarn and leave the circle. Continue subtracting people until it is no longer possible for the web to keep the ball above the ground.
7. Conclude the activity by posing some reflection questions: How many different types of people did we name in the activity who support us? (Family, friends, neighbors.); What are some of the different ways they support us?; What similarities do you see between this activity and how we support each other in everyday relationships?; What can we do to ensure that our webs stay strong for each other?; What can we do when we see that someone else's web may be strained or have gaps?; If someone you know seemed to need more support, how would you suggest they find it?; What's one thing each of us can do to be a strong part of someone's web in the next week?

Tips for Educators:

- Required materials include: a ball of yarn or string, a beach ball, and scissors
- As an alternative to step 6, use a pair of sharp scissors to cut the connecting strings, symbolizing that we must all return to our own lives, but that we all remain part of the group and must keep working together to remain connected. If you choose, when you cut the connecting strings, have each student continue holding on, so that they end up with a piece of the web to tie around their wrist as a reminder of their reflection.
- Consider allowing students to participate in this activity in ways that make them feel comfortable. For example, students can participate as part of the web or as an observer (ex: photographing the web, drawing what they see, describing the web as it changes). This observer role can help illustrate that even when students don't see the connection, they can still feel others' support.

- To increase choice during the conclusion, consider offering options to discuss, journal, or draw their reflections. Also consider asking students to reflect quietly before sharing.



Inspired by:

1. Children who enjoy support from friends are more likely to exhibit prosocial skills, such as cooperation, and the willingness to help others.
2. Hartup, W. (1996). The company they keep: Friendships and their developmental significance. *Child Development*, 67, 1-13.