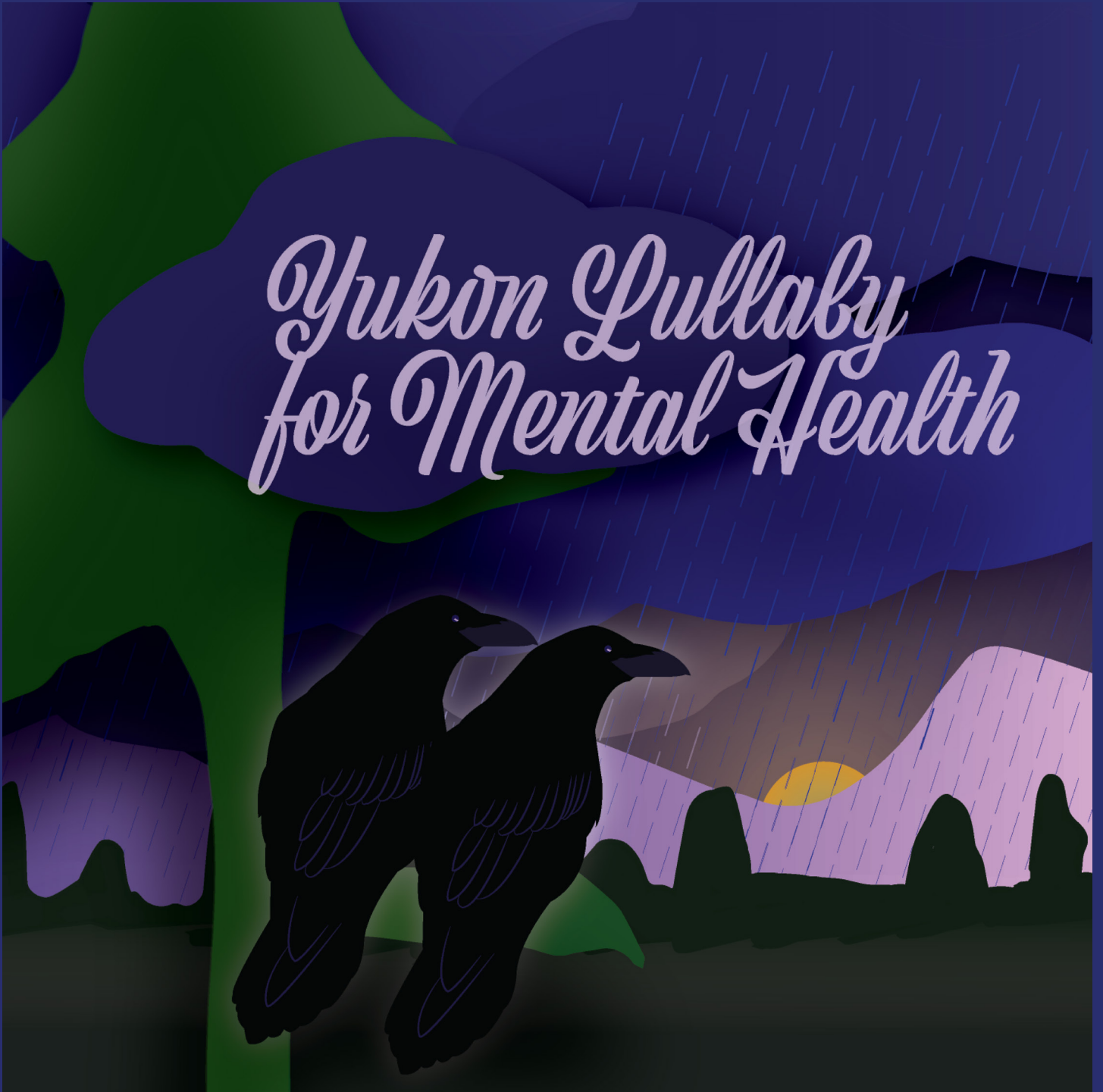


*Yukon Lullaby  
for Mental Health*





Adult Lesson Plan

Christine Klaassen-St Pierre, Guiding Teacher, Mindful Schools

# Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health

Nicole Edwards' Artist Statement

I created and sang this song to self-soothe and cope while in distress at the hospital.

My message is that we are all in this together - through light and dark times.

By practicing mindfulness tools, we can build compassion for ourselves and others.

"There is a crack in everything. That's how the light gets in."

-Leonard Cohen

# Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health

## Objective

To learn a musical strategy to calm oneself and others during stressful moments.

## Background

When people are in the stressful “fight or flight” mode, blood is being diverted from the brain to the muscles so that the brain is no longer able to tell the difference between a stressful moment or a life or death situation. Reasoning becomes beyond comprehension. Help comes by way of calm and true listening so that blood and oxygen can once again start flowing to the brain. Singing/ listening to this song, with its slow tempo and tone, brings calm attention to slow breathing. It is a powerful way to regain peace and better control of the nervous system. Slow breathing tells the nervous system that everything is OK and allows people to respond instead of react. Singing encourages deep breathing and melody is a good memory-aid.

## Preparation

- Print the lyrics and the brain diagram supplied or have a way to project them. Practice singing the song yourself – aloud. This will build confidence in leading group singing and give you the opportunity to see how it affects you emotionally.
- Have a device and speaker ready to play the 3-minute song.

## Teaching Point & Connection

“Have you had moments when you are so frustrated or angry that this feeling is all you can see, hear or feel? Have you found yourself in a situation with another person, perhaps a patient, client or child, who is showing signs of fear, anger or confusion? Well, today you are going to learn a song to help bring you out of a panicked moment into a calmer peace, with the goal to help both you and the other person”.

## Essential Question

How do people de-escalate from the “fight or flight” response?

## Time for initial lesson:

- 5 minutes for mindful breathing activity
- 3 minutes to play the recording of the song
- 10 minutes to talk about the brain science
- 10 minutes to practice the song using the posters

## Optional follow-up:

“Repeat to remember” the song i.e., singing the song during other activities or at the beginning or end of the day

# Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health

## Teaching and Active Involvement

1) “Get in a mindful posture which supports paying attention. You may want your feet grounded on the floor. Feel yourself grounded through your sit bones on the chair, eyes closed or gazing down, spine upright but not uptight. Let’s check in with our breathing, and just see if we can find an anchor point in our breath... meaning where do we feel it most... in our belly, rising and falling, or maybe our chest, or maybe even at our nose where we feel the cool air going in and the warm air coming out. Stay with that moment for a few breaths”.

2) “Now, as I name some difficult emotions, some emotions that can send us into “fight, flight or freeze” reaction, see if you can imagine yourself feeling that emotion and notice where in your body you feel tension. Maybe you might even have to remember a time at work or at home where you felt that emotion, to know where you feel it in your body. Go ahead and allow yourself to get into the story. Fear. Anger. Frustration. Disgust.” (Pause about 10 seconds between each one) “Knowing where you feel this reaction in your body is a gift so that you can see the spark before the fire. It allows you to feel when you might be going into “fight, flight or freeze” mode before it happens so you have a chance to use a mindfulness tool. For example, take a mindful breath or two to de-activate the amygdala and reactivate the prefrontal cortex. Feel your feet on the floor or the anchor of the breath in your body.” Introduce the song here by singing or playing the recording.

3) “Let’s open our eyes and come back into the room together. Let’s look at some of the brain science around this.” Post the poster of the brain, first page only, and review what is written. Key message after sharing the poster: When our brain thinks we are in a life threatening situation, but really we are just scared, frustrated or angry, the amygdala shuts down the other two most important parts of our brain which we need for making good decisions, staying focused, staying calm (prefrontal cortex) and remembering important parts of our training (hippocampus).

4) Post the lyrics and play the song. Invite people to sing along when they are ready. Repeat the song as needed.

5) Open a discussion about how the song changed the way their bodies and minds felt. Ask probing questions as attention allows, such as “Why do you think the music made a difference? Was it the melody, the words or the tempo that made a difference for you? What parts of your body changed as you tuned into the song?” If your students are shy, first have them “turn and talk” with a neighbour about the question, and then invite them to share with the group.

Link: “So today and everyday, remember that you now have a mindfulness tool – this song – to help you and others around you, whether you sing it out-loud or in your head. Whenever you are having any kind of big, overwhelming emotion, you can always SING.”

\*The dialogue above is provided as an example. Instructors are encouraged to use their own language.

# Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health

## Extension Options

### Optional Extension Teachings from the dark

Draw or paint a picture that expresses or represents how the dark can help us to notice and appreciate the light.

Discuss: Can you remember a time when a loss or difficult event ultimately showed you a valuable teaching? In life, so much is out of our control. What tools do you use for coping with fear, loss or pain? Turn and talk. Invite participants to share with the group.

### Optional Extension Tips from the perspective of a care-recipient

Many people lack the understanding to be able to identify anxiety, post-traumatic stress or learning disabilities. This can lead to people-in-distress being mistreated or misunderstood as having behaviour or attitude problems, which can trigger further escalation. A lot of incidents can be prevented or de-escalated by using mindful tools.

## Tips

- In the heat of the moment it's natural to react. Notice the reaction feeling, breathe intentionally and remember to not take the care recipient's distress personally. Blame or defensiveness is not effective at improving a situation. Calmly engage and offer help.
- Slow down. Don't rush or push the care-recipient. Wait for a response. A person with pain or anxiety needs more time to process. Escalation can be prevented by respecting the care-recipient's pace. If something is time sensitive, calmly explain why and ask how you can support them to move forward.

# Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health

## Talking Point Examples

- Discuss and provide examples of how providing support can create a “Win-Win” situation.
- Turn and talk about your own triggers and tools, invite participants to share with the group.
- How does mindfulness work to create compassion for yourself and for others, even if you might not know them?

## Activity

Examine each stanza of the song from the perspective of both a care-giver and a care-recipient. Discuss examples of how the lyrics could apply at home and work. You are invited to notice your own reactions/triggers in addition to those of the care-recipient.

Note: This song and activity could be done together with care-giver and care-recipient. Bringing your new tools to life, as a further extension exercise for people in an active caregiving role you may:

Select words or phrases from the song lyrics and introduce them as language to be used between you and the care-recipient. Hearing the song and using the language within it will reinforce the communication skills and de-escalation tools that you are developing together.

Examples include:

- “Do you need a pause?” Or “I need a pause.”
- “Let’s re-frame” or look at it in a new way.
- Reassure the care-recipient that you are “here to help” and that they are accepted, even under trying circumstances.
- “Deep breath in..... and deep breath out.....”  
Lead by example so the care-recipient can co-regulate with you.

# Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health



## 'Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health'

### CREDITS & THANKS

2019 Mindfulness lyrics and musical arrangement by Nicole Edwards [www.NicoleEdwardsMusic.com](http://www.NicoleEdwardsMusic.com)  
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Thank you Music Yukon!