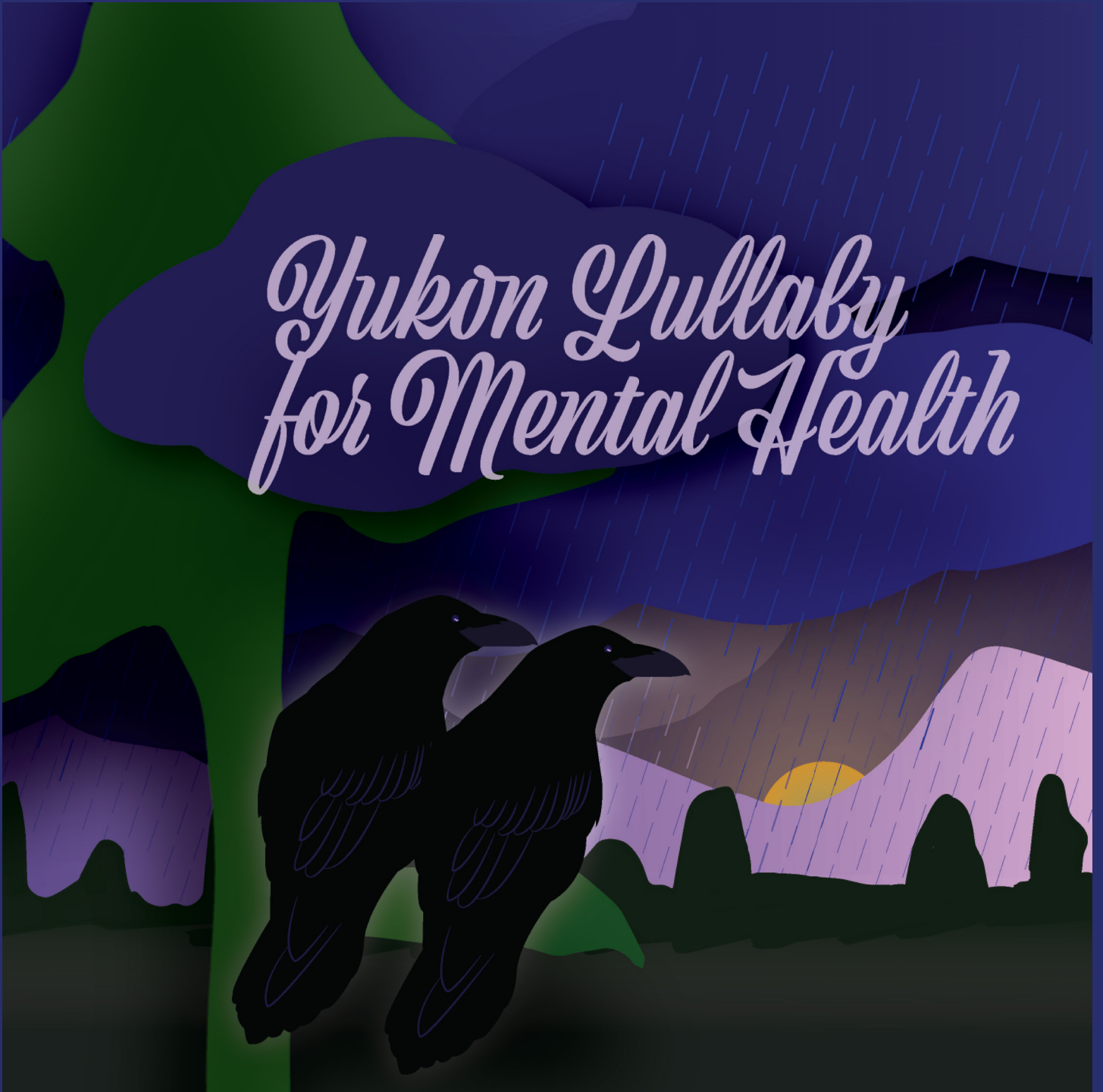


*Yukon Lullaby  
for Mental Health*





Child Lesson Plan

Jeanne Kitayama, Alaska Educator, Co-chair of  
Alaska Arts Education Consortium Board

# 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 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.

## Essential Question

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

## Time for initial lesson:

Singing with

Ages 5 and Younger  
•5 minutes

Ages 6-12 Years  
•10 minutes

Teens  
•20 minutes

# Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health

## Teaching Point & Connection

“Have you had moments when you are so frustrated or mad that this feeling is all you can see, hear or feel? Have you had moments when someone around you needs help calming down? Well, today you are going to learn a song to help bring you or someone else out of a panicked moment into a calmer peace. This song can be a guide to help you look at the situation in a different way.”

(Note lyric: It’s time to re-frame.)

## Teaching and Active Involvement

### Let’s Play a Game: Emotion Statues

1) “Let’s play: Emotion Statues. Let’s stand up in a circle, and let’s see what you would look like if you were really angry... frustrated..., happy..., or sad.” (Leave a 3 second pause between emotions.) “First, stand with a neutral body and face.” (Teacher demonstrates a neutral expression.) “I am going to name an emotion, and you will imagine yourself feeling that way. What would you look like? I will say 1, 2, 3, and you will freeze into a statue with that emotion. Ready... HAPPY ...Freeze! You are an ‘emotion statue.’ Don’t move, but notice how your body feels.”

(Teacher notices and explains aloud what they see for different emotions. For example in ‘ANGRY Freeze!’ Jane’s face is all scrunched up; Tom’s hands are in fists; etc. Emphasize this further by walking around and framing the child with your hands as you narrate what each looks like). “Now – relax, take a breath, and back to neutral.” Try a couple more emotions or scenarios (i.e. just hit by a snowball in the face; got a brand new bike, feeling tired or hungry).

2) “Let’s do it one more time, with an angry/frustrated freeze. Ready... ANGRY... Freeze! This time when you are in that frozen state, listen to the song. As the music finds its way into your brain, start humming or singing along, breathe with it and let that music un-freeze you into a more relaxed state.”

3) After everyone has loosened their tension, “Now, gently ~ have a seat.”

4) 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 or 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 used above is provided as an example. Teachers are encouraged to use their own language.

# Yukon Lullaby for Mental Health

## Optional Extensions to this Lesson

### Repeat to Remember

- Sing or hum the song whenever you need the group to settle down or when you are feeling frustrated. Maintain the song's effectiveness by not overusing it, but sing it enough so that it easily comes to mind when needed.
- Challenge children to notice situations in their lives when they could apply this mindfulness strategy song for themselves or others. For example, when tired or hungry, during a test at school, with an upset family member or friend, and discuss other stressful situations.

### Journaling & Thermometers

- Have children make/decorate and write in a journal. Prompts could be about tracking their emotions at different times of the day or in different situations.
- Make thermometers or meters out of construction paper; children can move the "heat" up or down to subtly let others know how they are feeling. (See examples by google-searching 'emotion meter images')

### 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 ended up showing you a valuable lesson? In life, so much is out of our control. What tools do you use for coping with fear, loss or pain?

# 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!