

Meet the Wobbies

Wobbies are case narratives of individual youth who are navigating through one or more parts of the Ways of Being (WOB) model. The stories of these seven characters can be used to spark conversation among youth about the social and emotional skills at play in the stories and in their own SEL development. The Wobbies were created in partnership with a team of diverse young people as part of the Youth Voice Project on Youth Ways of Being (YWOB).

Why This Matters

- The Wobbie stories provide a way for youth to begin to think and talk about the social and emotional skills of other youth as well as themselves.
- Discussing the life experiences of other people allows youth to practice social and emotional skills such as empathy, problem-solving, and understanding others' feelings.

Getting Started

- Materials: Copies of Wobbie story for each youth.
- Time: Devote at least 15 minutes to each Wobbie.
- Pick 2 to 3 stories that youth in your program might relate to.
- Before this activity, consider introducing the **Ways of Being model** so youth and staff have a common language for talking about SEL.

How To Do It

- 1) Explain to the group of youth that you will be reading stories about other youth and then discussing their experiences.
- 2) Read the story individually or read aloud as a group.
- 3) After reading a story, use the discussion questions below each story to spark a conversation.

Take It Further

- After reading the Wobbie stories, discuss with youth which Wobbie they most related to and why.
- Consider having youth create a Wobbie of themselves at this point in their lives. Have youth think about which of their SEL areas are strongest and which could be improved.
- Youth could create a play or write a story about the Wobbie of their choosing.

Meet the Wobblers

NIKKI

Nikki used to be one of those students. You know the kind: the ones who get good grades, participate in clubs and volunteer activities, and tutor younger kids after school. In middle school, Nikki was the captain of the dance team, helped organize trips for the environmental awareness club and got A's in her classes. She looked forward to high school, where they did real experiments in real science labs, where she could publish stories in the school magazine, and where the dance team would actually perform during halftime at games. But freshman year was tough. Nikki struggled in geometry class, but she was embarrassed to ask for help because she used to be one of the "smart" kids. The school magazine rejected the first story she submitted for the fall issue. Every time she got up to do a presentation in any class, she would freeze and forget everything she'd planned to say. Nikki's grades started falling. By the end of the year she had dropped out of dance team, had given up on the literary magazine and was failing math. She knew she needed to get some help with schoolwork, but wasn't sure how to. She was so far behind anyway, what was the point? School used to be so easy, but maybe she just wasn't good at it anymore, so why should she even try to do well at anything?



Discussion Questions

- What are some of the feelings that Nikki is having right now?
- Why does she feel this way?
- What advice do you have for her?
- Think about a time where you tried to do something hard. What was it? What did you do to accomplish this? How did you feel about the outcome of what you did?
- When is it important to stick with hard things? When is it okay to let those things go?
- What long-term goals do you have? What short-term goals do you have? How could you go about accomplishing these goals?

Meet the Wobblers

DREW

Drew is almost finished with a beat he's been working on for a week. He has half an hour of studio time left and he thinks he'll get it done today. When Eddie texts: "come smoke with us," Drew isn't sure what to do. If he leaves to smoke, he'll lose his last 30 minutes of studio time and won't be able to work on his music until next week. Drew doesn't even like to smoke. But if he doesn't go hang out with Eddie, he and Eddie might not be cool anymore. It's important to be cool with Eddie because Eddie knows everybody and nobody messes with him—or his friends. Drew's parents have always told him to stay away from guys like Eddie, but Drew doesn't think it's that simple. "Guys like Eddie" are everywhere. Maybe not at school, and maybe not in the teen center where the music studio is, but Drew isn't always at school, and he isn't always at the teen center. He has to navigate the outside world where there are all kinds of people, and he has to figure out how to get along with them. Eddie doesn't have the greatest reputation—he's been banned from the teen center and a lot of adults think he's a juvenile delinquent. Drew's worried not only about getting caught smoking, he's also worried that people might think he's just like Eddie.



Discussion Questions

- What are some of the choices Drew has to make in this scenario?
- What are the pros and cons of those choices?
- What would you do if you were Drew, both right now and going forward, with respect to Eddie?
- How are you similar to Drew? How are you different?
- In what situations might your personal goals be more important or less important than relationships you have with people?
- Think about two relationships from different parts of your life: they could be friendships, relationships with family members, teachers, coaches, people from your religious group, classmates. How do you act with each of these people when you're with them? Do you talk and act the same way around each group? Why or why not?

Meet the Wobbies

CHRIS

Chris has lots of friends. People like him because they say he is friendly and positive. He's good at cheering other people up, and at "looking on the bright side." He gets good grades at school, and adults think he's "mature" and "responsible." Chris has a good reputation with his friends and with adults in the community, and he knows he should feel lucky. But sometimes, Chris' life feels like an act. Sometimes he's sad. Sometimes he's mad. Sometimes he's confused, and isn't sure what he should do in certain situations. Chris likes his friends, but sometimes he feels like he doesn't fit in with them. He doesn't know how to tell them that's he's feeling bummed out or confused, because he's Chris, the Good Guy. He feels like the only time he can really say what's he's feeling is when he's in front of the mic, performing.



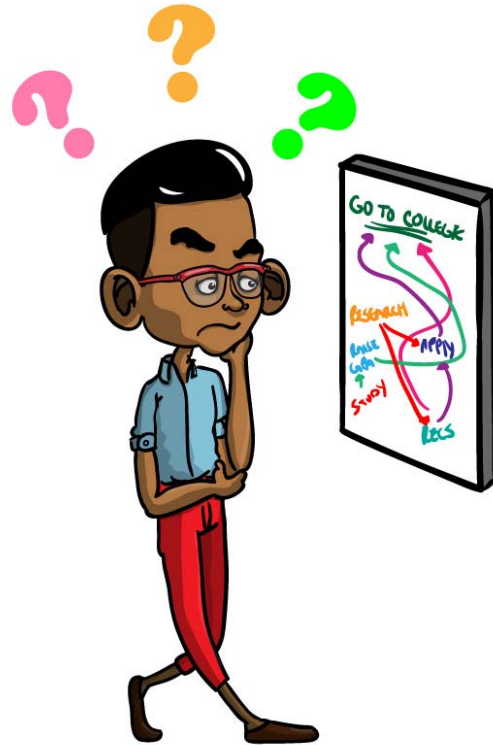
Discussion Questions

- If Chris was one of your friends, how would you support him?
- What advice would you give to Chris?
- Have you ever felt like Chris before? How did you handle the situation?
- How are you similar to Chris? How are you different?
- In what situations do you feel most comfortable sharing your thoughts and feelings? In what situations is it hard to express yourself?
- Which feelings are easy for you to express? Which feelings are hard for you to express? Why do you think certain feelings are easier or harder to share with others?

Meet the Wobblers

TONY

Tony is going to do it. He's going to be the first person in his family to go to college. His whole life, his parents and teachers have told him that he could go to college if he just worked hard enough. And Tony has worked hard. He has always gotten straight A's at school. He plays trumpet and is the section leader in band. He volunteers in the church daycare on Sundays during church services. He works as a cashier at a grocery store three nights a week, and his manager keeps telling him to apply for the assistant manager job because he's so good at calming mad customers down. Everyone tells Tony he is doing everything right, but he is worried that he isn't doing enough. The truth is, Tony doesn't know what exactly he should be doing, or when. He works hard, but he isn't sure what he should be working hard at. Tony will be a senior in the fall, and some of his friends are talking about visiting colleges and looking for scholarships, but Tony has no idea how to do any of this. Tony wants to go to college, but he knows his family can't afford it. He isn't sure how to research which colleges he should apply to because he doesn't know what he wants to study. Tony is worried that if he does one thing wrong, it will ruin his chances for getting into school, but he just doesn't know how to navigate all the steps and tasks.



Discussion Questions

- How do you think Tony is feeling?
- Have you ever felt like Tony before? How did you handle the situation?
- What pressures do you feel in your own life?
- What strategies do you use to plan for the future?
- What goals do you have for the future?
- What kind of support does Tony need? Who do you go to for support in your own life?

Meet the Wobbies

AMIRA

Amira has 1000 followers on Instagram. Every picture she posts gets “liked” right away by tons of people she doesn’t even know. Amira thinks a lot about the pictures she posts, especially the selfies. She’s careful to choose the pictures that show the best parts of her life. In her pictures, Amira always looks perfect, is doing something fun, and is with cool people. She always has something funny to say about her pictures. Lately, Amira has been wondering what people think about her based on the pictures she posts. She wonders what they would think if they saw her real life, because it’s nothing like the life she represents online. In her real life she gets in fights with her best friend. She takes care of her grandma, who sometimes needs help because she’s old and sick. She’s really good at math, and likes to watch stupid cartoons on TV. She feels like her real life is pretty normal and ordinary. Amira wonders, if she posted things about her real life, would people follow her? Would people still like her? And would it even matter, since she doesn’t know who many of them are?



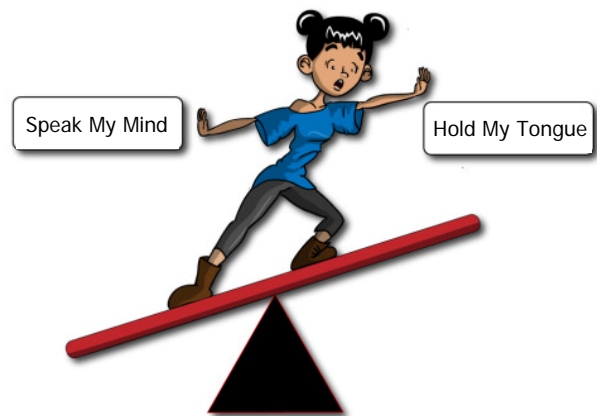
Discussion Questions

- How are you similar to Amira? How are you different?
- What parts of your life do you share on social media? What parts do you not share?
- Do you think Amira should share more about her “real life”? Why or why not?
- What are the benefits of using social media in your own life?
- Which parts of your identity are you the most open about with others?
- What parts of your identity are harder to share with others? Why do you think that is?

Meet the Wobbies

MAI

Mai transferred to a school on the other side of town at the beginning of the school year. Her new school has classes in graphic design and an exchange program that lets students spend a semester in Japan—two things she's wanted to do for a long time, but that weren't available at her old school. Her friends from her old school tease her by saying that she goes to a 'fancy school' now with the 'fancy kids.' Many of Mai's new classmates live in really nice houses and go on vacations to places she's only dreamed of visiting. Mai was a little worried that she wouldn't fit in, but she's enjoyed making new friends, and some of them just invited her to join the school's newspaper staff. She feels good about being able to do things that she likes to do, and feels like she has a lot in common with her new classmates, even though they live on opposite sides of town. Last week, she went to a basketball game where her new school played against her old school. After the game, Mai went out with some of her new friends. They talked a little about how the game went (her new school won). Then her friends started making fun of the kids at her old school. Mai felt uncomfortable, like she should stand up for her old school, but is worried that it will make them dislike her. It's just like when her friends from her old school call her new classmates snobs. But she doesn't know what to say. She loves all of her friends, and wants to get along with all of them, but she thinks what they're saying is wrong. She doesn't know whether she should speak up or hold her tongue.



Discussion Questions

- What are some ways Mai could handle the situation? What would you decide to do?
- Mai is deciding between her “speaking her mind” and “holding her tongue”. Have you been in a similar situation before? What did you do?
- Have you ever had to change schools? What was your experience like? What strategies did you use to make new friends?
- Think about the last time you had conflict with your friends. How did you handle it?
- How are you similar to Mai? How are you different?
- If you were in Mai's situation, what social and emotional skills would you use to move forward?

Meet the Wobbies

JAMES

James has to get to work on time because he wants to take Alexis to the prom. James has got prom night all planned out—a tux, a limo, dinner, flowers. Alexis is going to be so impressed. But those things aren't cheap, so first, James has to get to work at the pizza place on time. When he got hired at the pizza place, his boss made a big deal about how they never hire teens because teens are so irresponsible, like they couldn't trust him to do this important job of putting pepperonis on pies. It's not like life or death. But James also knows most of his friends are having a hard time finding jobs, and it would be stupid to lose the job he already has. He's already been late for work once, and the boss gave him this long lecture about it. James was annoyed—he's always the best worker on his shift—but he knows that the pepperonis are just part of his plan. Pizza is his ticket to the prom.



Discussion Questions

- How are you similar to James? How are you different?
- What responsibilities do you juggle in your own life?
- James is motivated to work so he is able to go to prom. What are some of your goals that motivate you? Pick one goal. What steps are you taking to achieve it?
- How do you manage your time? What gets in the way of getting everything done?
- What strategies do you use when you have a lot to get done?
- Think of a situation in your life when you felt misunderstood by adults. How did it make you feel? How did you handle it?