

INSTRUCTIONAL GUIDE

FRIEND 2 FRIEND

EMOTIONAL & MENTAL
WELLNESS

Overview

This guide provides companion lessons that can be used to introduce, localize and extend the learning of *Friend2Friend: Emotional & Mental Wellness* in your classroom. The guide contains preparation materials, handouts and two 45-min lesson plans, each with in-person and virtual options for remote learning.

Goal

Prepare students to navigate emotional and mental wellness challenges. Use experiential learning to support and empower students as they practice effective peer-to-peer communication and help-seeking skills.

✔ **Understand** statements and behavior that escalate concern for emotional and mental wellness

✔ **Apply** communication skills to help a friend and motivate them to access support when needed

✔ **Apply** communication skills to reach out to a friend you are concerned about

✔ **Recognize** potential emotional and mental wellness resources



Skills

- 01 Effective Communication Skills
- 02 Empathy & Active Listening Skills
- 03 Help-Seeking Skills
- 04 Social Awareness Skills



CASEL Core Competency Alignment

01 Social Awareness & Relationship Skills

Strengthen communication and healthy relationship skills

- ✔ Demonstrate empathy and support help-seeking
- ✔ Identify own emotions and those of others

02 Self-Management & Self-Awareness Skills

Develop strategies for making healthy decisions

- ✔ Identify and use resources of family, school community
- ✔ Identify and use coping strategies
- ✔ Build self-efficacy and growth mindset

03 Responsible Decision-Making

- ✔ Identify solutions to personal and social problems

Lesson Plan Snapshot


Includes: 2 class sessions, 45 mins each

Part 1

- 01** Mini-Lesson: Getting Ready for Friend2Friend (10 mins)
- 02** Students Complete Friend2Friend Simulation (30 mins)
- 03** Reflection & Wrap-up (5 mins)

Part 2

- 01** Mini-Lesson (15 mins)
- 02** Applying New Knowledge (20 mins)
- 03** Reflecting on... (15 mins)
- 04** Wrap-up (5 mins)



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Part 1

Prepare

- ✔ **Before inviting students to play through *Friend2Friend: Emotional and Mental Wellness*, spend some time reviewing the simulation yourself.** Try out a variety of possible choices, beyond the ones you think are correct. Explore what happens when the characters say things that foster support, and when the opposite occurs.
- ✔ **Review this lesson plan and make any adjustments** that make sense for your students and the instructional setting.
- ✔ **Keep in mind that students will have very different experiences** with the simulation because they will choose their individual responses. As a result, during class sharing they may refer to a portion of the conversation that another student did not experience during the simulation. Offering context will keep discussion clear.
- ✔ **Friend2Friend helps students build awareness and skills** to support peer emotional and mental wellness. The program encourages healthy communication and help-seeking for self and others and models a student conversation when they notice signs of concern.
- ✔ **Inform your school's administration and mental health staff that you are conducting this Friend2Friend activity**, and that they may see an increase in support requests.
- ✔ **To engage the *Friend2Friend: Emotional and Mental Wellness* simulation**, each student will need headphones and a computer with internet access.
- ✔ **Confirm** login information.
- ✔ **Notetaking Guide for all students:** Printout, or document file for remote learning
- ✔ **Review and customize Lesson Companion PowerPoint if needed**

Instruction

01 Mini Lesson: Getting Ready for *Friend2Friend: Emotional and Mental Wellness* (10 mins)

Do a quick poll with students. Instruct them that you have four statements for reflection, and for each, students should reflect on their answers, no need for show of hands or note-taking.

“When friends ask if I have time to talk with them about a problem, I am comfortable helping them.”

“Sometimes when I experience big stress, I think I’m supposed to handle it on my own.”

“I have strategies, activities, resources, and people I trust to help me manage my emotional and mental wellness.”

“If I notice a friend is in distress, I want to help them.”

Introduce the purpose of the simulation lesson, and what students can expect.

Possible teacher comments:

“We can all use some help talking about things that we’re experiencing, recognizing how to help, and who to turn to for help. This next lesson is going to give us tools to become more comfortable doing just that. You’re each going to interact with two virtual students that will guide you through conversations and helping strategies. Afterward, we’ll build on that together during some follow-up lessons.”

Introduce group norms for lesson. Customize slide companion if needed.

Group Norms Examples:

1. Actively Participate.
2. Be respectful.
3. Respect Privacy
4. Do not share names or other identifying information of students or staff.
5. Reach out to me or another trusted adult if you would like to talk.

02 Students Complete *Friend2Friend* simulation (30 mins)

Give students log-in instructions and distribute note-taking guide. Students will proceed at their own pace. The simulation will take between 20 and 30 mins. for each student. Instruct students to use the NoteTaking Guide as they watch, and to include thoughts about:

- My key takeaway(s)
- Examples of something they would like to practice in conversation with a friend
- Reason for their choice of a topic or skill to practice

03 Reflection & Wrap-up (5 mins)

- Simulation Review: Students discuss some of their key takeaways. Ask students to share about what struck them most about a conversation or scenario in the program. Encourage non-sharing students to use the time as a first kind of practice to actively listen to those who are sharing thoughts and reactions.
- Summarize and instruct students to add to their Note-Taking Guide additional behaviors and helping tips that came up in the class discussion, but they might not have mentioned on their own handouts during the simulation.
- Inform students that the next lesson will build on themes touched on in the simulation.
- Collect Note-Taking Guide or ask students to keep them for Part 2.

Note-Taking Guide

Example

My key takeaway(s):

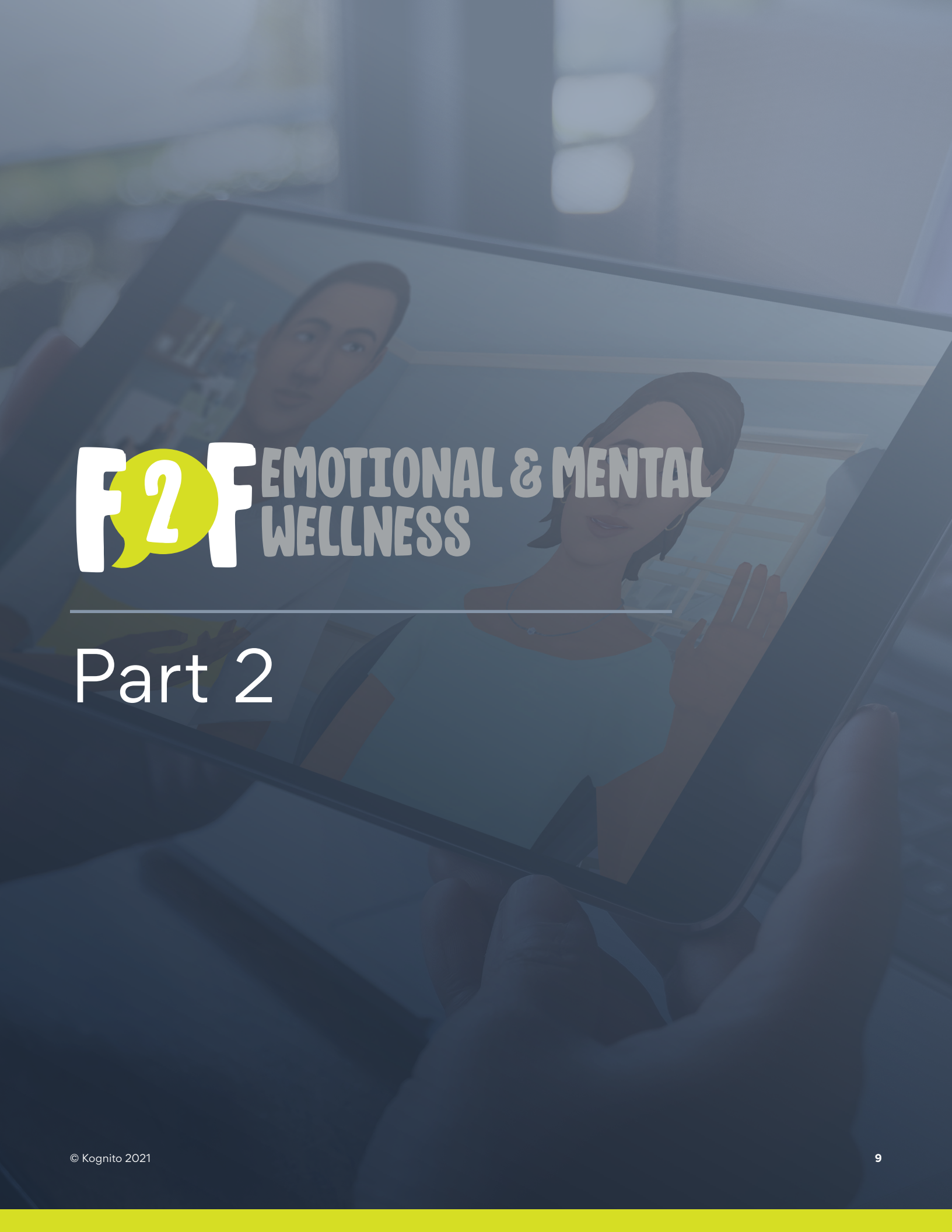
Example: *“I can make a difference in a friend’s life by listening to them and being supportive.” “If I am concerned about a friend, it is okay to ask them if they want to talk.”*

Something I learned from the simulation that I would like to try in a conversation with a friend:

Example: *“Questions that are not just yes and no answers can help my friend open up.” “It is important to avoid being negative or dismissing my friend’s feelings”*

Why did you choose that topic or conversation technique?

Example: *“I never thought about asking open-ended questions before, but it makes a lot of sense that it opens the door for people to share.” “I tend to give a lot of advice and I can see how that might feel dismissive to a friend who just wants me to listen.”*



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Part 2

Prepare

- ✔ **If learning is virtual:** determine how students will submit work, and if virtual breakout rooms will be used for discussion.
- ✔ **Handout:** “Speaking with A Friend”
(one copy for each student or display for all)
- ✔ **Review and customize PowerPoint if needed:** Slides ? - ?

Instruction

01 Mini Lesson – review wrap-up of Lesson 1 (5 mins)

Review skills used in Friend2Friend

Ask students “*Can someone remind me of what Michael was supposed to try to do or not do when he was talking with Ana?*”

Examples:

1. Ask questions
2. Summarize what you hear them say
3. Don’t criticize
4. Avoid giving advice

02 Applying New Knowledge “Speaking with A Friend” (20 mins)

Guiding question:

Why is it important to use non-judgmental language when speaking with friends or classmates, especially those whom you think may be in distress?

Organize students in groups of 3 or 4.
Distribute Handout

Explain to students/groups they will use the information gained in the simulation to reflect on how the language they use can affect conversations both negatively and beneficially. Often, neutral language is the most helpful for encouraging and supportive conversation.

Instruct students that in this activity they will be given a list of harsh, critical responses to comments from someone who is in emotional distress. Their challenge is to restate these responses in non-judgmental language, and then explain why their new statements are more effective and supportive of someone who may be in emotional distress.

03 Reflecting On..."Distress Signals" (10 mins)

Ask students to review and share some of the warning signs they remember from Friend2Friend. "So, what are the signs that a friend might be struggling emotionally? How might they be acting? Are there physical signs too?" Remind them of signs that they missed, if there are any. You can share these as a handout.

Distribute "Distress Signals" Handout

"Why does it matter if we know these signs?"

Examples:

- *Helps us know what to look for when a friend is having a hard time*
- *Helps us know when we might need some help ourselves*

Ask students to explain their answers. This would be a good time to suggest that peer-to-peer support is really important because friends pick up on signs that adults sometimes miss.

Reviewing suicide warning signs.

Ask students, *"Can someone remind me what you do if you think a friend has been engaging in self-harm? Or if you think they are thinking about killing themselves? Do they have to say the words "I want to kill myself?" Ana mentioned wanting to "disappear" in the conversation, so it was very important for Michael to just ask her if she was contemplating suicide.*

It's not easy to ask a friend this, but it's so important."

04 Wrap-up (10 mins)

Remind students of the local or national hotline for suicide and let them know who they can reach out to at the school. "You really can make a difference in someone's life."

Distribute resources Handout with suicide prevention resources and hotline. This can be printed directly from the resources section of the online program. Or it may be district specific. Please check with your administrator or school counselor.

Applying Knowledge - “Speaking with a Friend”

Example

Restate the critical responses in the left-hand column using non-judgmental language, in order to create comments that are more effective and supportive of someone who may be in emotional distress. In the column on the right, explain why you chose your rephrased statements.

Critical Statement	Neutral Statement	Reason
“You can’t just mope and do nothing. Snap out of it.”	Example: <i>“I’m sorry you’re feeling so down. How long have you been feeling like that?”</i>	Example: <i>“Shows you care. Encourage them to discuss things.”</i>
“If you’re worried about your grades, try studying, instead of whining.”	Example: <i>“Maybe talking with your teacher will help. They could offer extra help or a tutor. They can help.”</i>	Example: <i>“Let the friend know they’re not alone with school.”</i>
“You can’t just check out and play video games and think everything will be fine the next day.”	Example: <i>“Sometimes distractions can help, but it could also be really helpful to talk with someone about what’s going on. I’m here if you need me.”</i>	Example: <i>“No judgement, just an offer to be there if they want to talk.”</i>

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Student Handouts



Note-Taking Guide

My key takeaway(s):

Something I learned from the simulation that I would like to try in a conversation with a friend:

Why did you choose that topic or conversation technique?

Applying Knowledge - “Speaking with a Friend”

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Distress Signals

Emotional Signs

- ① Getting mad or annoyed a lot
- ① Crying more than usual
- ① Being negative a lot of the time
- ① Having a lot of mood swings
- ① Having trouble concentrating, seeming bored more than usual

Behavioral Signs

- ① Sleeping a lot more or less
- ① Saying or posting things that worry you
- ① Getting worse grades than usual
- ① Losing interest in activities they enjoy
- ① Isolating themselves or withdrawing from friends and family
- ① Acting out of control or reckless
- ① Using drugs or alcohol to handle stress or anxiety

Physical Signs

- ① Not taking care of personal appearance or hygiene
- ① Gaining or losing a lot of weight
- ① Complaining of frequent physical symptoms (like headaches, stomachaches, or fatigue)
- ① Harming themselves (like cutting or scratching their skin)