



# Resiliency RANGER

Mental Health & Wellness Workbook



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# Introduction

## Resilience is...

the ability to handle difficulties and recover afterwards.

## We show resiliency by...

- adapting to changes
- persevering through difficult times
- having hope and optimism
- taking care of ourselves physically and mentally

We can build our resiliency by practicing different skills, like the ones in this workbook. We encourage you to try these activities outside, whether at a nearby park, an outdoor area close to your home, or at Colorado National Monument with its twisted Utah Juniper trees, towering **monoliths**, red rock canyons, and bighorn sheep.

**Monolith**- a single gigantic stone or rock that has usually been exposed by erosion.



# Mindfulness

**Mindfulness** means paying attention to what we are thinking and feeling right now. One way to practice mindfulness is **grounding**, which helps you feel present by focusing on your senses or surroundings. The outdoors is especially good for this because it is full of sensory experiences. We can feel the sun on our skin, hear the wind in the trees, smell the fresh air, and see the details of nature around us.

## Grounding

**Silently observe your surroundings and breathe deeply.** Take time to notice as much as possible. **Then record below.**

### Five Things I Saw

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

### Four Things I Heard

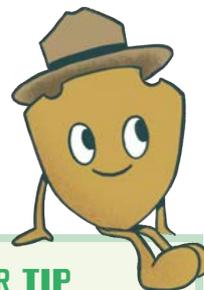
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

### Three Things I Touched

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

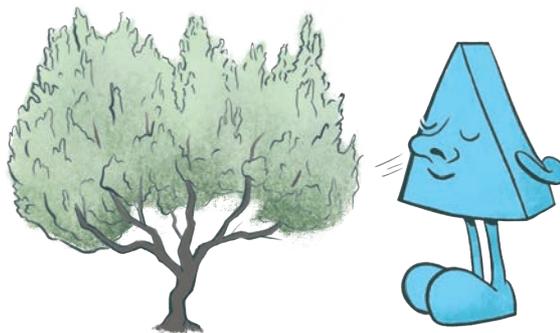
### Two Things I Smelled

- 1.
- 2.



### RANGER TIP

You can try grounding—literally!—by feeling the ground with your bare hands or feet. Does it make you feel connected to the earth?



## Reflection

How did the activity make you feel? Did you notice any thoughts that you had? **Write your thoughts below.**

### RANGER TIP

Try these optional mindfulness activities!

#### Option 1:

Breathe in as deeply as possible and then release. Then, on your next deep breath, raise your arms up as you breathe in and drop them as you release. Repeat this several times and get into a good rhythm.

#### Option 2:

Breathe in while counting to four, hold for four counts, breathe out for four counts, and hold for four counts. This is called “square-breathing.” You can imagine a square (or even draw one in the air with your finger) as you follow this cycle of breath. Set a timer for 1-5 minutes, and focus on your breath. If you want to, close your eyes.



# Positive Self Talk

The animals and plants in Colorado National Monument have special skills and adaptations that help them live in this environment. This area is a high desert, so there is not much rainfall and there are extremely hot temperatures in the summer.

Recognizing our own strengths can boost our confidence, and thinking about how we've overcome challenges in the past can remind us that we can handle new ones in the future.

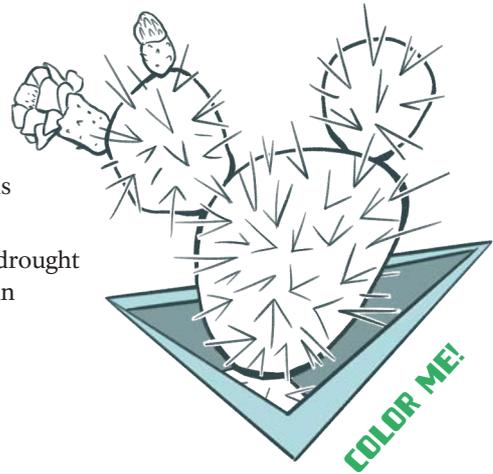
## Prickly Pear Cactus

### Strengths:

- Sharp spines protect from being eaten
- As old pads die, new pads grow roots to get nutrients and water and spread to new places

### Adaptations:

- Waxy coating on pads reduces evaporation
- Pads turn red during drought to protect from the sun



## Desert Bighorn Sheep

### Strengths:

- Blend in well with the terrain
- Flexible hooves with soft spongy pads for clinging to rocks

### Adaptations:

- Can live without water for days, losing body weight in the process
- Complex digestive system helps absorb nutrients from tough desert plants

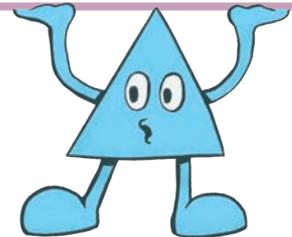
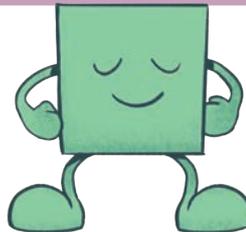
## My Strengths

What are positive traits that you have? Are there things that you do that others have complimented? **Write them in the box below.**



## My Adaptations

What are some examples of difficult times you have managed? Are there things you have faced that have made you stronger? **Write them in the box below.**



# Self-Compassion

We can't always control what happens to us, but we can control how we react. Negative thoughts can spread quickly and are hard to get rid of like invasive plants. **Invasive plants** are species that aren't from the area and can harm the environment or people. When we have negative thoughts we can try to reframe them. **Reframing** means looking at something in a different way.

We can reframe by reflecting on our thoughts and shifting our reactions. Rangers manage invasive plants in a similar way. They search for them, remove them, and restore native seedlings in their place.

## RANGER TIP

It's okay to have negative thoughts and feelings. But we can choose how we react. These are some questions to help reframe:

- Is that realistic?
- Would I think that about a friend?
- Am I only thinking about the worst-case scenario?

## Example

### Invasive Goathead weed

(*Tribulus terrestris*) is an invasive plant that produces lots of spiky seeds.

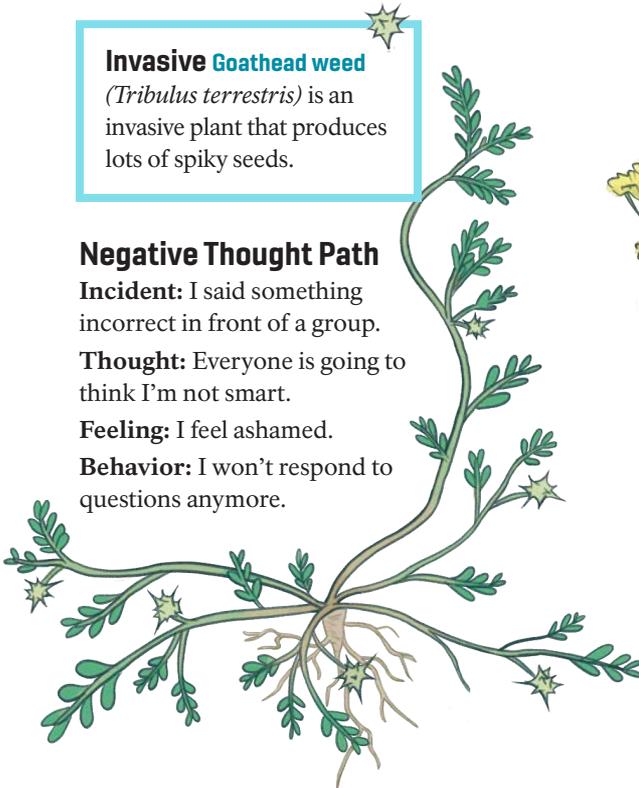
### Negative Thought Path

**Incident:** I said something incorrect in front of a group.

**Thought:** Everyone is going to think I'm not smart.

**Feeling:** I feel ashamed.

**Behavior:** I won't respond to questions anymore.



### Native Rabbitbrush

(*Chrysothamnus sp.*) grows quickly on burnt and damaged soils, which helps other species grow again.

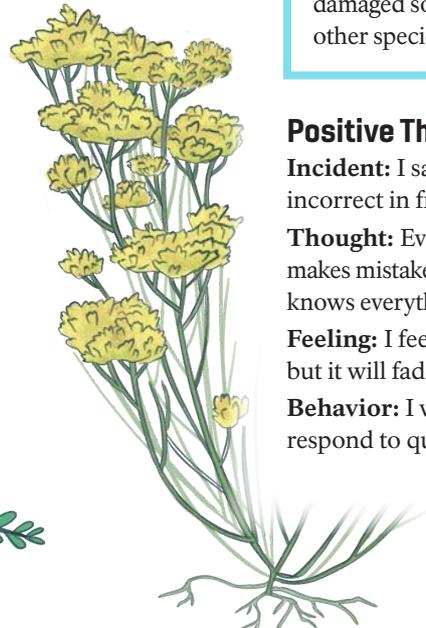
### Positive Thought Path

**Incident:** I said something incorrect in front of a group.

**Thought:** Everyone makes mistakes, no one knows everything.

**Feeling:** I feel embarrassed, but it will fade.

**Behavior:** I will continue to respond to questions.



## Your Experience

Think of a time you had negative thoughts. **Write down how you responded on the invasive plant on the left.** Then, think about how you could reframe the situation. **Write a healthier reaction on the native plant.**

**Native** The **Pinyon Pine** (*Pinus edulis*) makes nutritious pine nuts that the pinyon jays rely on for food.

**Invasive** The **Tamarisk** (*aka Tamarix*) is a tree that uses up scarce water with its deep roots, which displaces native species.

### Negative Thought Path

Incident:

Thought:

Feeling:

Behavior:

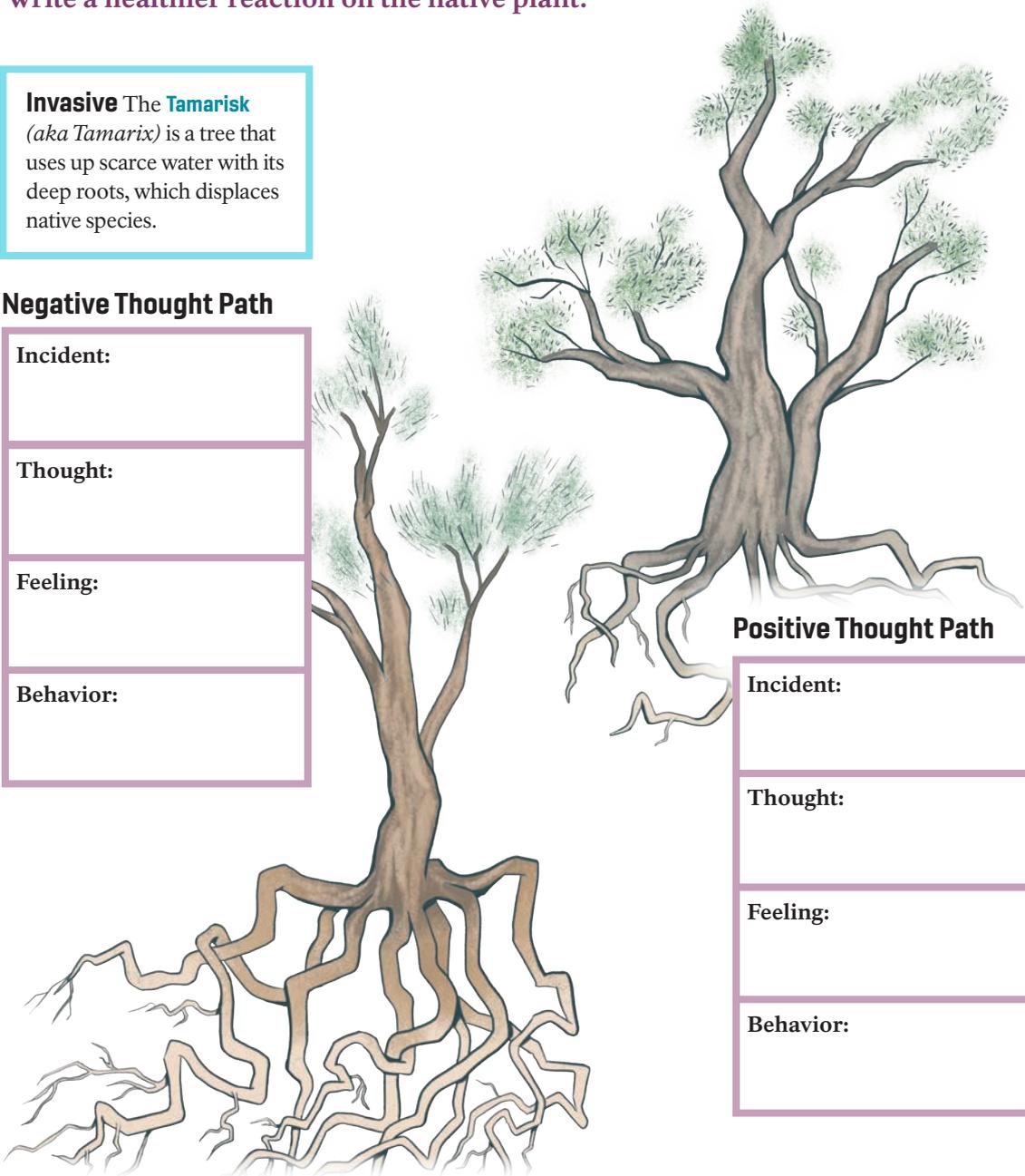
### Positive Thought Path

Incident:

Thought:

Feeling:

Behavior:



# Limitless Expression

Let's do an activity to loosen up, express ourselves, and record this moment in the outdoors. On this page you can doodle, rub dirt or sand, color, draw what you see, write about where you are, trace objects you find, and more. If you are in a national park please don't take any objects that you find, but if you're somewhere else, feel free to stick leaves or other things here. There are no wrong answers—just a chance to be creative and make this page your own!

# Signs of Stress

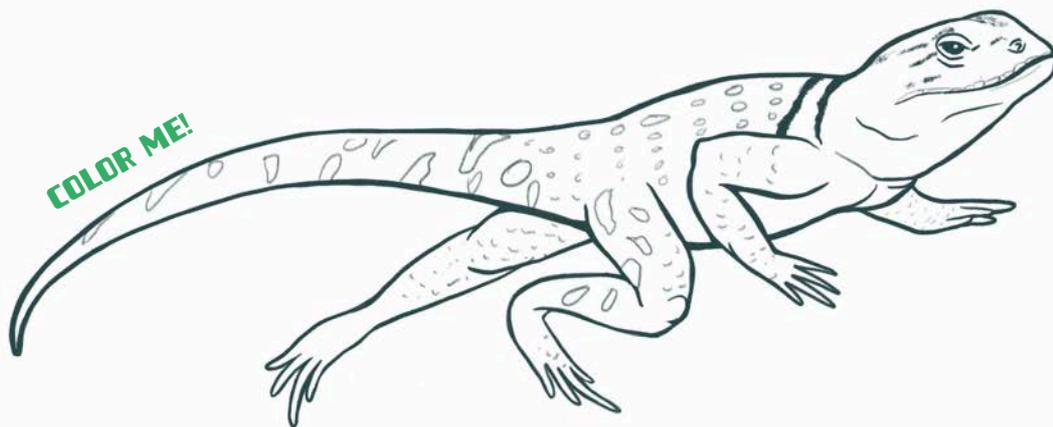
In nature, animals have adaptations to respond to danger. For example, the collared lizard runs on its back legs to escape predators. Similarly, when our brain senses danger, it sends alarms to our body, making our breath and heart rate speed up and our blood pressure rise. This sometimes happens in situations that aren't dangerous, like worrying about things we can't control. We can take steps to calm our mind and body when we notice we're feeling stressed (see the activities on the next few pages!).

## Physical Signs

What are some signs that show you're feeling stressed or anxious? For example, does your stomach start to hurt? Do you feel sweaty? **Write them in the box below.**

## Thoughts

What are some of the thoughts you notice when you feel stressed? For example, "I can't handle this right now," or "I just want to be alone." **Write them in the box below.**



# Moving Your Body

Your brain reduces stress, relieves pain, and improves your mood by sending endorphins into your body. **Endorphins** are natural chemicals that make you joyful and content. Two of the best ways for your body to make endorphins are moving your body and getting Vitamin D from the sun.

## Try it Out

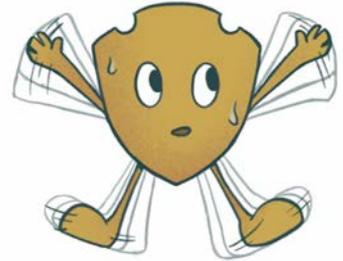
**Move your body in a way that is comfortable but challenges you a bit.** You could do...

### Regular:

- March in place or walk quickly
- Butt kicks  
(bend one knee at a time to swing backward and touch your heel to your butt)
- Arm circles  
(stick your arms out to either side at shoulder height and make circles)

### Challenging:

- Jumping jacks
- High knees  
(hold your hands at about hip height and quickly raise your knees to hit your hand)
- Mountain climbers  
(start in a plank position with your hands under your shoulders and drive your knee towards your chest while switching legs)



### RANGER TIP

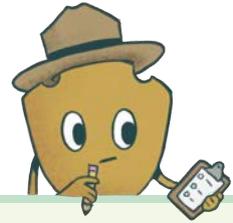
Everyone has different levels of physical ability and fitness. What one person can do easily might be hard for someone else. It's important to move in ways that feel good for you and not compare yourself to others. You can be active and healthy by doing activities that are easy and enjoyable.

**Do the activity until you feel a little out of breath. Then, pause and notice how you feel.** Pay attention to what's happening in your body and mind. **In the box below, write down how you feel compared to before you started.** Do you feel more relaxed or focused?

# Coping Skills

**Coping** means dealing with difficulties, especially emotions like anxiety, stress, sadness, and anger. **Coping skills** are actions you can take to help you cope.

**Active coping skills** are things we do to try to fix what is causing our negative emotions. These are problem-solving skills. **Passive coping skills** are actions that help us feel better or relax. These are useful when there's not a specific problem to solve, or if we want to feel better before facing a problem.



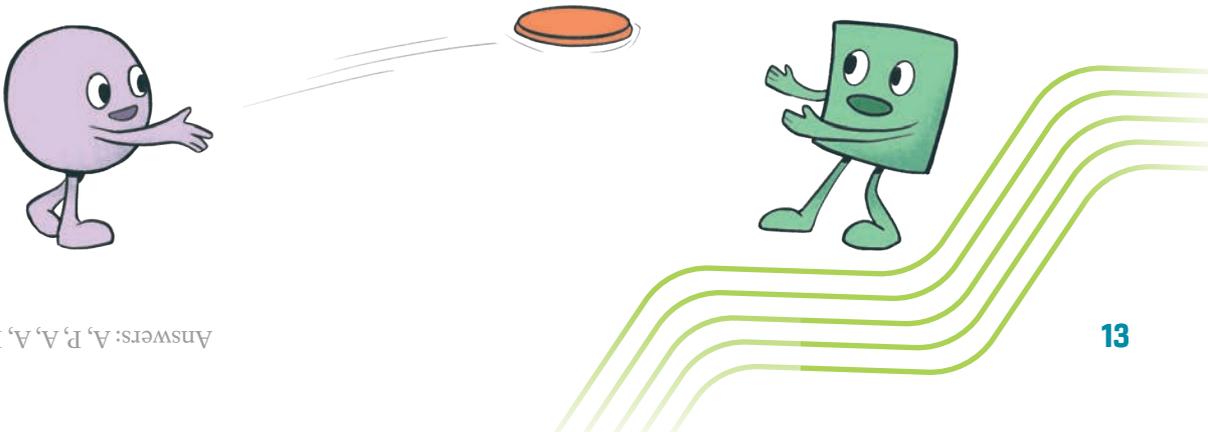
## RANGER TIP

When you are feeling bad, run through a checklist of your physiological needs (food, water, bathroom, sleep, hygiene). When our body doesn't have what it needs we often feel more upset.

## Passive vs. Active

Put an "A" next to skills that are active and put a "P" next to skills that are passive.

- Sort a problem into steps
- Do a hobby you enjoy
- Get advice from a friend or family member
- Have a conversation to resolve conflict
- Do a physical activity
- Distract yourself
- Write down and reflect on what is causing your emotion



## Picking Coping Skills

Look at the lists of passive coping skills. **Check off if you like the activity, don't like it, or want to try it.** Next time you feel negative emotions, you can use this list to pick an activity to help you cope.



### RANGER TIP

You can make your own list of your favorite coping skills. Decorate it and hang it somewhere you can see it so that you are reminded when you are feeling bad.

## Outdoor Coping Skills

These coping skills can provide Vitamin D or exercise endorphins—or both!

Skill	Like	Try	Dislike
Go on a mindful walk, observe your surroundings			
Mindful breathing or meditation			
Work outside Gardening, yard work, cleaning up a local park or area			
Take photos			
Listen to music while walking, exercising or dancing			
Play an outdoor game with friends Frisbee, tag, four-square, capture the flag, grounder, cornhole, etc.			
Ask a friend or family member to walk and chat with you			
Do an indoor hobby outdoors Read a book, craft, play an instrument, color, draw, paint, write, etc.			
Play a sport Soccer, basketball, baseball, kickball, tennis, badminton, etc.			
Exercise Jog, run, aerobics, practice yoga, etc.			
Go for a bike ride			
Play outside with a pet			



## General Coping Skills

Skill	Like	Try	Dislike
Feel your pulse			
Get a hug			
Watch a favorite movie or read a favorite book			
Write in a journal			
Stretch or massage your neck and shoulders			
Pet or play with a pet			
Practice yoga			
Rip up paper or punch a pillow (Helps if you are feeling angry or stressed)			
Squeeze an ice cube or hold something cold (Helps if you are feeling overwhelmed or panicky)			
Bake or cook			
Build something or make a craft			
Clean or organize something			
Color			
Draw or paint			
Count to 100 or 1000 (Helps if you are feeling overwhelmed or panicky)			
Do a puzzle or mind-game			
Tense and relax your muscles			
Deep breathing			
Chat with a friend			
Do a hobby you enjoy			



# Values

Values are ideas that are important to you.

Understanding your values helps you make decisions that feel right for you and guide you toward what matters.

Values can be like our compass when we make decisions.

## Colorado National Monument's Values

### Preservation

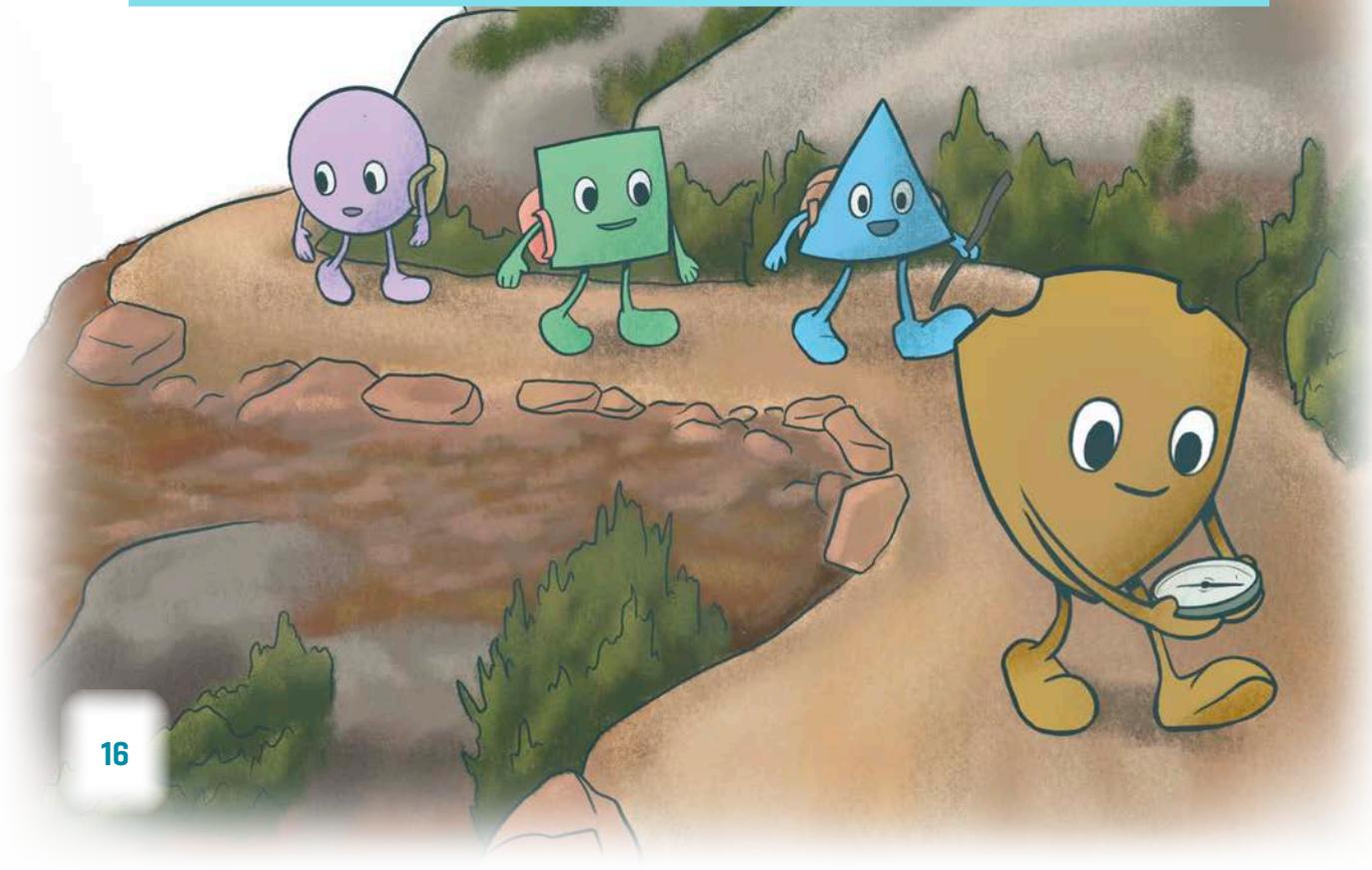
Making sure the unique geology and ecosystems stay intact and healthy for the future.

### Knowledge

Learning about the natural processes and history of the area and sharing that knowledge with visitors.

### Enjoyment

Helping others enjoy the park while encouraging them to appreciate its beauty and protect it.



## Your Values

**Underline which values from this list are important to you. Then put a star next to your top five values.** If you think of a value that is not on the list—add it!

Adventure	Gratitude	Nature
Ambition	Hard Work	Organization
Athleticism	Helpfulness	Peacefulness
Compassion	Honesty	Respect
Connection	Humor	Responsibility
Conservation	Independence	Success
Creativity	Integrity	Thoughtfulness
Fairness	Joy	Wonder
Faith	Justice	_____
Family	Kindness	_____
Freedom	Knowledge	_____
Friendship	Leadership	_____

Do any of your values relate to protecting the environment? For example, if you value responsibility, you can Leave No Trace when you are in outdoor spaces to practice that value. **In the box below, write about how one of your values relates to protecting and preserving the environment.**

# Goal Setting

In 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt started the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) to help improve public lands, forests, and parks and provide jobs during the Great Depression. At Colorado National Monument, CCC workers built Rim Rock Drive and other structures. Thanks to the CCC's teamwork and efforts towards a goal, people can now enjoy the park's stunning landscapes while driving Rim Rock Drive.



## RANGER TIP

Everyone has things they can get better at. It's important to be kind to yourself as you figure out what you want to improve - and as you work on improving it!

## Your Goal

**Set a positive goal for yourself.** Do you have a skill or habit you would like to build? Is there a value you want to focus on? What action can you take that connects to that value?

### Specific

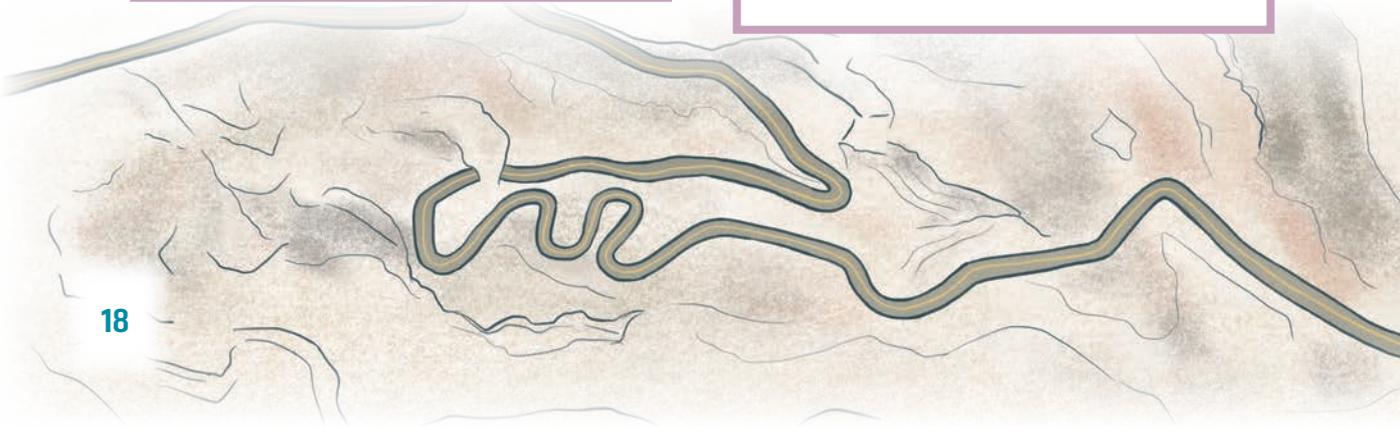
What is the action?

Example: I will go for one walk every day.

### Measurable

How will you track your progress?

Example: I will mark my calendar every day that I go for a walk.



## Achievable

Is your goal realistic? How can you make it more achievable?

Example: If I am short on time, I can do a short, ten-minute walk.

## Relevant

Why is this goal important to you? Does it relate to one of the values you selected earlier in the previous activity?

Example: I value peacefulness. Taking a mindful walk every day will let me have some quiet time to reflect on my thoughts.

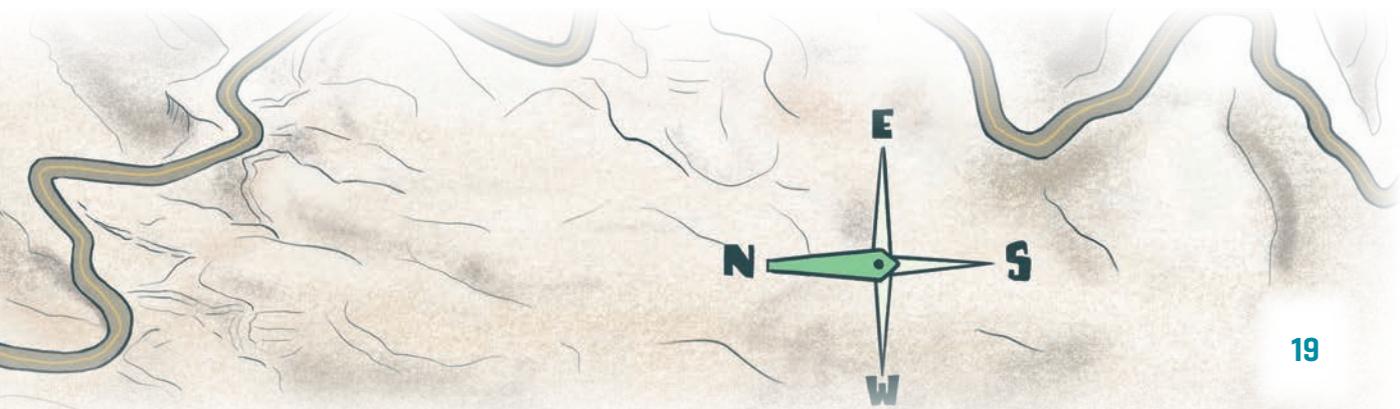
## Timely

When do you want to achieve your goal? This can be a date that you want to complete your goal or a milestone where you can check in.

Example: At the end of the month, I will see how many days I walked and reflect on how it improved my daily life.

### RANGER TIP

Rim Rock Drive took twenty years to complete due to setbacks, a break during WWII, and the difficulty of the project. Be patient; change takes time. If you don't achieve your goal on your first try, think of ways to make it more doable or ask for help. Don't get discouraged if it's not easy at first.



# Connecting and Communicating

The **Precambrian rock layer** at the bottom of the canyon is the oldest and strongest. It has persisted through 1.7 billion years of erosion because it is made up of several different types of rock; **metamorphic rocks** like gneiss and schist that form through intense heat and pressure, and **igneous rock** like granite that forms from slow cooling magma.

Like the Precambrian rock, we are stronger when we are connected with people. Friends, family, and adults we trust can give us support and advice during tough times. It might be hard to ask for help or talk about our feelings, but making a plan of who to reach out to can make it easier and less uncertain.

## Communication plan

Who can I go to when I am feeling unhappy and want to be cheered up or distracted?

Who can I go to when I need advice and support?

Who can I go to when I am experiencing a crisis? (Do you have a trusted adult at home who can help? At school you can reach out to your counselor or a teacher you feel comfortable with.)

In a mental health emergency **call 988**.

If you are a Colorado student, you can contact **Safe2Tell** by calling **1-877-542-SAFE (7233)**, texting **S2TCO to 738477** or visiting **safe2tell.org**.



## Tips on Communicating How You Feel

- Try writing down some of your thoughts and feelings beforehand if they feel too confusing and overwhelming.
- Choose a time and place where you feel comfortable talking about your feelings. Ask the person if they are able to talk with you.
- Use “I” statements in a conflict (For example, “I felt upset when...” rather than “You made me feel. . .”)

### RANGER TIP

Remember that it’s okay to feel a range of emotions, and it’s okay to express them. Be kind to yourself as you learn to communicate your feelings to others. It’s a skill that takes time and practice to develop.

## Tips on Responding When Someone Confides in You

- Listen with empathy and don’t judge or criticize them for their thoughts or feelings. Everyone experiences things differently and the emotional responses we have are a normal part of being human.
- When someone confides in you give them your full attention and avoid interrupting them.
- Sometimes people just need someone to listen without offering solutions. But, you can always ask, “Would you like to hear my suggestions or would you like support?”
- Check in later to see how they’re doing and offer more support if needed. Let them know that you’re still there for them and that you care.
- If you are concerned about their safety, you should confide in a trusted adult or use Safe2Tell. It may feel disloyal to involve others when your friend confided in you, but if someone is in a crisis, it is best for a mental health professional to help them.

# What Type of Resiliency Ranger are You?

What kind of Resiliency Ranger are you? Take this quiz to find out! **Circle the option that is the best fit and count them up at the end!**

## 1. Which outdoor skill would you like to learn most?

- a. Rafting
- b. Rock climbing
- c. Birding

## 2. What do you look for in a good friend?

- a. Someone who is social and gets along with everyone
- b. Someone who is exciting and makes me laugh
- c. Someone who is thoughtful and easy to relax with

## 3. Which would be the best gift to receive?

- a. A game I can play with friends
- b. Tickets to a concert or other fun event
- c. A book or movie that really interests me

## 4. You said something that upset your friend. Would you...

- a. Ask another friend for advice
- b. Explain yourself and laugh about your mistake
- c. Plan an apology



**5. If you found a mysterious map you would...**

- a. Gather up a crew to figure it out
- b. Set off on adventure! You'll figure it out as you go!
- c. Study and piece together the clues

**6. When you work on something would you rather...**

- a. Work with friends to make it more fun
- b. Listen to music to get in the groove
- c. Work in quiet so you can focus

**7. Your friend is feeling down. How do you cheer them up?**

- a. Invite them to hang out with you
- b. Distract them with a surprise adventure
- c. Comfort them and give them advice

**8. You are about to experience a big change in your life. How do you cope with the change?**

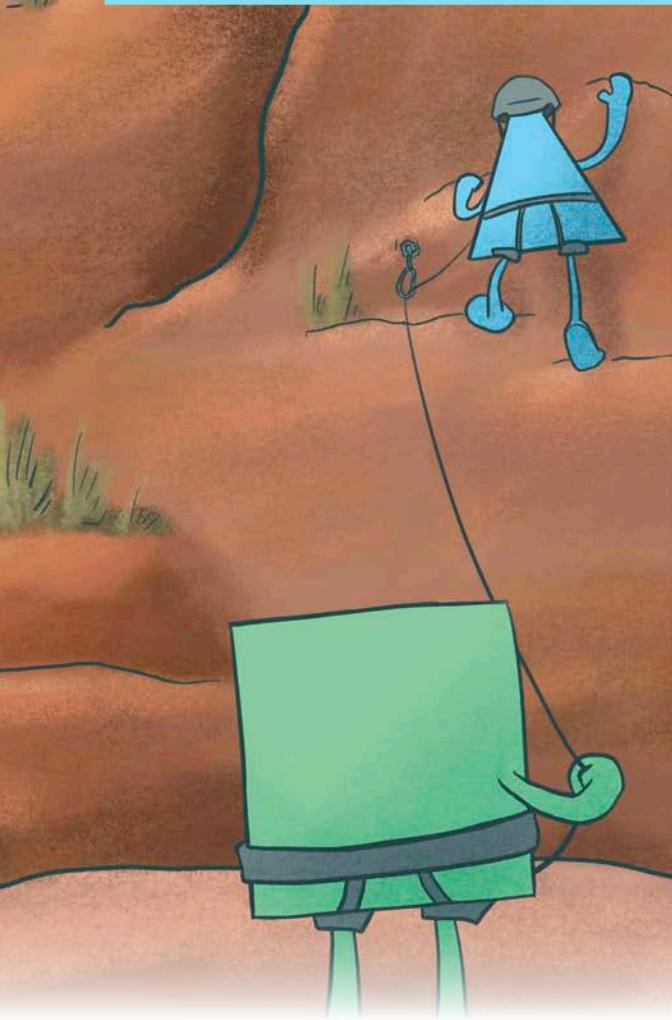
- a. Get advice from friends or family
- b. Think about all the exciting things that could happen
- c. Journal about how you feel about the change

**9. You have had a long and stressful day. Which of these would help you relax the most?**

- a. Doing a fun activity with friends
- b. Dancing to your favorite music
- c. Going for a solo nature walk to clear your head

**10. Which value is most important to you?**

- a. Friendship
- b. Creativity
- c. Thoughtfulness



## If you answered mostly **a's** you are a **Desert Bighorn Sheep!**

Desert Bighorn Sheep are social animals that travel in herds most of the year. They are tough and can handle the desert heat and cold nights. Like the desert bighorn sheep, you are social and outgoing. You're a reliable friend who values connecting with others. Just like you support your friends, make sure they support you too. Good friends encourage our growth and happiness.



## If you answered mostly **b's** you are a **Collared Lizard!**

The Collared Lizard is the most colorful animal native to the area. When it feels threatened, it can run away on its back legs, but it is usually bold and will let visitors see them up close. Like the collared lizard, you are bold and creative. You have lots of inventive ways of cheering up yourself and others. You enjoy excitement, adventure, and staying active. Because you're always on the move, it might be a challenge to take time to reflect on your feelings. Trying a calm activity like journaling, meditating, or yoga could help you check in with yourself.



## If you answered mostly **c's** you are a **Golden Eagle!**

The golden eagle is one of the best fliers among birds of prey. They are powerful hunters who are often solitary, but they choose a lifelong mate. Like the golden eagle, you are capable and think carefully before you make decisions. You're comfortable being independent, but you form strong, loyal friendships with a few people. Sometimes it can be hard for you to share your feelings openly. Remember, even though you're strong on your own, it's okay to ask for help from others when you need it.



# Conclusion

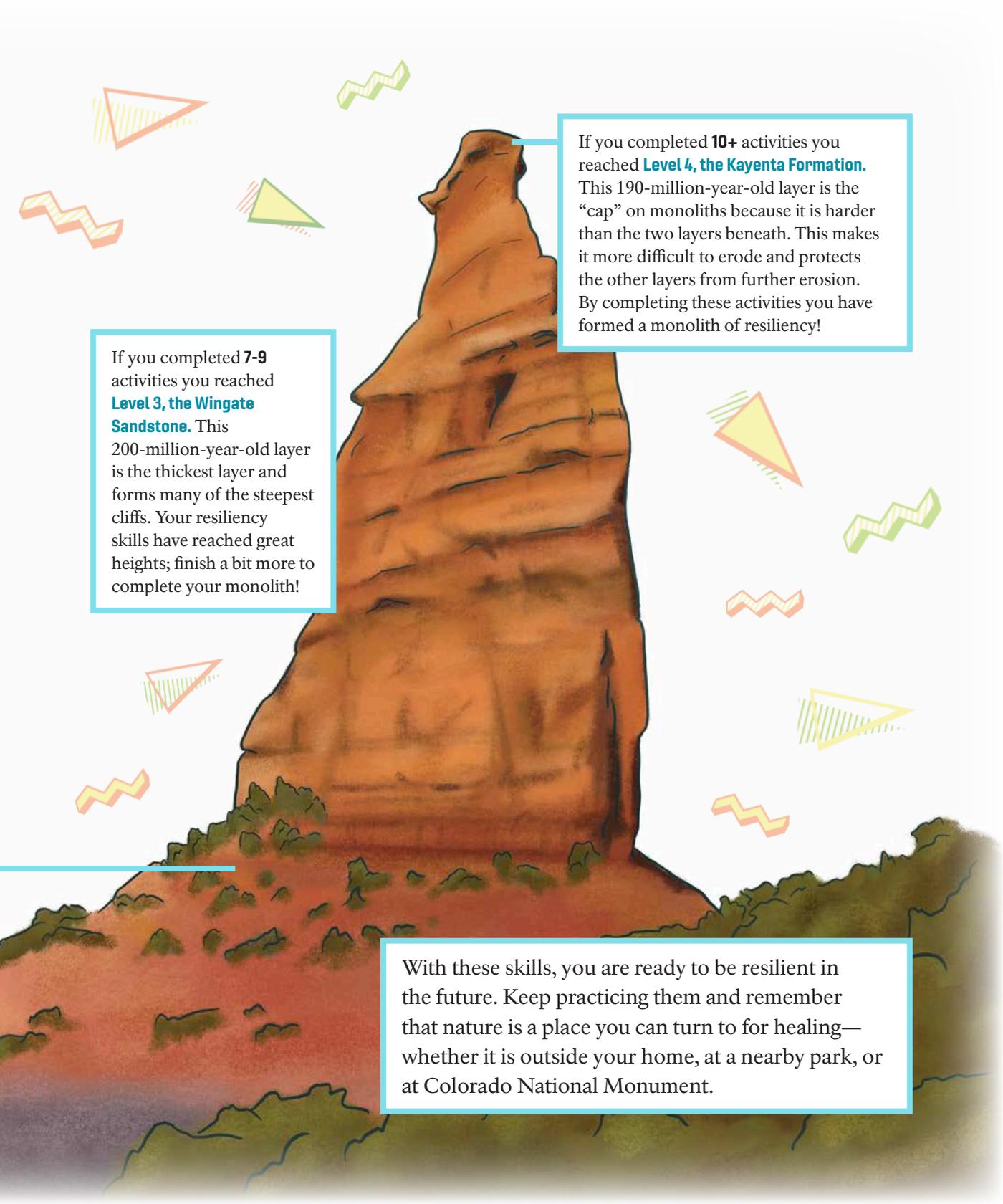
The landscape of Colorado National Monument has been shaped by millions of years of intense geological processes. Similarly, we go through intense changes and difficult times in our lives, but we are resilient. During this workbook, you learned a lot of new skills. **Check off the activities you completed below.**

## You...

- |                                                         |                                                                           |
|---------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practiced mindfulness          | <input type="checkbox"/> Selected coping skills                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Practiced positive self-talk   | <input type="checkbox"/> Identified your values                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Reframed your thoughts         | <input type="checkbox"/> Set a SMART goal                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Expressed yourself             | <input type="checkbox"/> Made a communication plan                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Identified how you feel stress | <input type="checkbox"/> Found out what kind of resiliency ranger you are |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Moved your body                |                                                                           |

If you completed **4-6** activities you reached **Level 2, the Chinle Formation**. This 210-million-year-old layer was created by sediments deposited by streams over time. Keep completing activities to build even more.

If you completed **1-3** activities you reached **Level 1, the Precambrian Formation**. This 1.7-1.5 billion year old layer is the base of the canyon. You created a strong base for your resiliency skills. Complete some more to add to it!



If you completed **7-9** activities you reached **Level 3, the Wingate Sandstone**. This 200-million-year-old layer is the thickest layer and forms many of the steepest cliffs. Your resiliency skills have reached great heights; finish a bit more to complete your monolith!

If you completed **10+** activities you reached **Level 4, the Kayenta Formation**. This 190-million-year-old layer is the “cap” on monoliths because it is harder than the two layers beneath. This makes it more difficult to erode and protects the other layers from further erosion. By completing these activities you have formed a monolith of resiliency!

With these skills, you are ready to be resilient in the future. Keep practicing them and remember that nature is a place you can turn to for healing—whether it is outside your home, at a nearby park, or at Colorado National Monument.

Made in collaboration with  
District 51 Middle School Counselors.

Written, designed and  
illustrated by Kendall Bessette.

If you or a loved one is experiencing a crisis, please call

**988** (National Suicide & Crisis Lifeline)

or

**1-844-493-8255** (Colorado Crisis Services).

These resources are available to help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

STAMP HERE

STAMP HERE

**District 51 Students** Bring this booklet to Colorado National Monument and show it at the entrance station to receive one-time free entrance for you and your family.