

New world

New skills

Teacher Notes: Looking after myself

PwC Primary School Toolkit



Teacher Notes

Overview and Purpose

This session is designed to give students an insight into how they can look after themselves, specifically their mental health. It helps the students start to think about what causes them stress or worry and how to deal with these feelings, highlighting different people or groups they can approach.

It is also important for the students to develop awareness of when others are in need of support and examples of how to help.

Objectives

By the end of the session, students will:

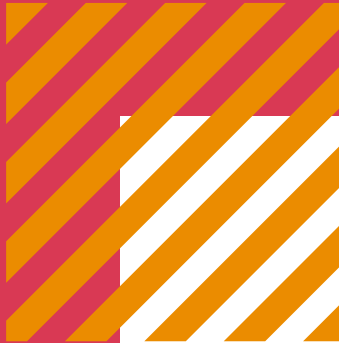
- Know what 'mental health' means
- Be aware of how to look after themselves
- Know how to support others

Key Vocabulary

Mental health - this includes our emotional, psychological and social well-being. It influences how we feel, think and act.

Physical health - this is the condition of your body, it considers the state and function of your organs and body systems.

Stress - This is a heightened feeling of worry or anxiousness we may feel when under pressure or in stressful situations.



Preparation / Materials Needed

- ☐ Chart Paper
- ☐ Marker pens
- ☐ A whiteboard/blackboard/smartboard
- ☐ Download the session PowerPoint
- ☐ Print the "Stress Bucket" handout

Lesson structure

Getting started (10 mins)

- Introduction to the session
- Starter Activity: signs of good mental and physical health
- Lesson objectives

Understanding mental health (10 mins)

- What is mental health?
- Mental health quiz

Looking after yourself (10 mins)

- How to look after yourself, coping with stress and feelings of worry or anxiousness
- Supporting your wellbeing

Looking after others (15 mins)

- Signs others might be struggling with their mental health
- Supporting others
- Activity - supporting friends with their mental health

Wrap up and reflection (5 mins)

- Reflection on the lesson
- Time for questions

Teacher Notes

Introduction: (10 mins)

- Share **slide 1** with the students and introduce the session (**1 minute**). Explain that this session is all about the looking after yourself and your mental health. It's very important to look after yourself so that you can be yourself and perform at your best.
- **Activity (slide 2)**: this is a short starter activity designed to get the student thinking about signs of good physical and mental health. There is a challenge activity if students complete their table before time is up. Ask the students to write down their answers. (**5 mins**)
- Move to **slide 3** and share the lesson objectives (**2 mins**)

What is mental health? (10 mins)

- (**Slide 4**) We're now going to explore what is meant by the phrase "mental health".
- Move to **slide 5**, ask the students to come up with ideas about what comes to mind when we say 'mental health'. Keep this discussion brief, **~1 minute**, direct the discussion towards distinguishing emotions (sadness, anger, happiness) to mental ill health (depression, anxiety disorder). Impact and duration are key. Remind students this is not about diagnosing any type of feelings, just exploring them.
- **Move to slide 6** and explain that we all have mental health just like we have physical health. Remind students that mental health is not a negative term nor does it refer to an illness - it includes our emotions, thoughts and feelings. Explain that it is normal to experience a range of emotions, usually based on what is happening around us.
- Explain that overwhelming feelings of emotion (eg. sadness, worry or stress) are more intense and stay with us for a prolonged period of time. If this is something you feel it is important to reach out for support. Highlight that if we were suffering with our physical health then we would tell somebody about it - the same should be done for our mental health.
- Remind students we all have mental health. **It is okay not to be okay**, but it is important that you know where you can find support and what coping strategies students can use to manage the daily stresses that we will experience and cannot avoid completely.
- Based on the answers of the previous activity, most students may associate mental health with negative terms such as depression, anxiety, or illness.

Activity: mental health quiz (5-10 mins)

- Move to **slide 7** - explain that we are going to complete a short quiz around mental health!
- Over the next few slides students will see a series of True/False statements. For each statement they must decide whether the statement is True or False. If they think the answer is true stand up, and if they think the answer is false sit down. The statements will appear one by one on the slide. Once decided, we will debrief the answer together before moving onto the next question.
- Move to **slide 8** and ask the first question. The answer is **true**. Explain to students what we learned earlier, all of us have mental health and we all have positive and negative emotions that come and go based on what's happening around us. The most important thing is to remember it's okay not to be okay and seek help if you have overwhelming feelings that do not go away.
- Move to **slide 9**. This statement is also **true**. Bullying in any form is hurtful and unacceptable and a risk factor for negatively impacting mental health. It is vital to report bullying you experience or you see others experience. Remember you can talk to teachers, parents or friends about this. Keep reporting it until it stops.
- Move to **slide 10**, this is **false**. Remind the students that recovery is not just probable but possible. With the right support and coping mechanisms, those who suffer from MH conditions can recover and lead healthy, happy lives. Just like someone who suffers from asthma might learn how to manage their asthma and never have an asthma attack.
- **Slide 11**, the answer is **False**. It is not always simple for people to realise and overcome mental health problems that they experience. Different people will experience different types of MH problems and so it is important we listen to that person and their concerns rather than dismiss them, encourage them to seek support.

Looking after yourself (15 mins)

- Move to **slide 12**. Now we've had a think about what mental health means, we're going to move onto thinking about how we can look after ourselves.

Activity: (10 mins)

- Move to **slide 13**, explain we experience two different types of feelings: everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings. Usually we can manage everyday feelings on our own.
- The students will complete a short exercise to understand some of the ways their own stressful everyday feelings are triggered and how to manage them. This exercise is called the **stress bucket**.
- The image on the slide has a bucket with a tap. You will have the handout entitled "Stress Bucket" for students to work through. Alternatively, students can draw their own stress bucket.
- This exercise is split into two parts. For the first part of the exercise, ask students to think about things that would fill up their stress bucket. Ask them to consider things/events that have happened in their life over the past few weeks, what has made them feel stressed, anxious or sad? For example, it may have been a test at school or maybe an argument with a sibling. Ask students to write them in the left hand box. *Highlight these are personal to the students and will not be shared with the class. (4 minutes)*
- They should now have a list of things that would fill up their stress buckets. Explain that it is easy to see how quickly these can fill up - sometimes causing it to overflow. It is therefore important that to have strategies to help release the stress and pressure, making things feel more manageable.
- For the second part of this exercise, ask students to think about things they can do to reduce the stress level of their bucket. For example, playing sports, walking the dog, listening to music. Give **4 minutes** to write these down in the right hand box of the diagram.
- Highlight that we will all experience different levels of stress/worry at different times, and we will all cope with these in different ways using different strategies. It is important to have a pool of strategies available if you find you are feeling stressed, worried or anxious. And, if students find themselves having negative overwhelming feelings that do not go away, it is important to seek help and support from others.
- Move to **slide 14**, this highlights to the students it is important they understand they are not alone; there are plenty of resources and people that are available to support you. Explain that although it might not always be easy to talk about their mental health, the person you talk to might be able to help. There are a number of different people to reach out to. You may wish to add other resources that might be useful for the students.
- **Slide 15** gives examples of a number of different things students can do to support their well-being in general. Talk through the 5 simple things they can do as part of their daily life - at school and at home. These have been proven by research to support mental wellbeing
 - **Connect:** Connect with people around you. Spend time with your friends and family. Make new friends. Use different ways to communicate. Strengthening your relationships with others is critical to boosting your wellbeing.
 - **Be active:** Go for a walk or a run. Cycle, dance or play a game. Walk to school instead of getting the bus. Go to the park. Try a new activity. Exercising makes you feel good. Evidence suggests that physical exercise changes your brain chemistry and releases happy hormones which in turn can make you feel more positive.
 - **Take notice:** Take time to be still, reflect, and become aware of your surroundings. Take time off your phones, tablets and social media to help you find calm. Notice what you are thinking and be aware of what's going on in the world around you: the everyday and the unusual. Be curious. Reflecting on your thoughts and feelings may help you to identify why you may be feeling a certain way.
 - **Keep learning:** Set yourself a goal. Learn something new. Research something you're interested in. Learn a new word or a random fact. Visit a museum. Try something different. Being curious and seeking out new experiences at school and in life more generally positively stimulates the brain.
 - **Give:** Do something nice for a friend. Thank someone. Smile. Volunteer your time. Raise money for charity. Be a good role model. Take action to improve your neighbourhood. Any acts of kindness, whether small or large can make you feel happier and more satisfied about life
- Incorporating each of these 5 simple actions into your day to day life has been proven to to build resilience, boost your wellbeing and lower your risk of developing mental health problems. Use the five ways to 'check-in' with yourself around your own wellbeing and how you're supporting yourself.

Looking after others (15 mins)

- **(Slide 16)** Now that we've spent some time thinking about how to look after ourselves, we're going to explore how we can support each other.
- Move to **slide 17**, explain that it's normal to feel sad, worried or other emotions and experience mood swings sometimes. However, if students feel that their friends are not acting as they usually do, it might mean that there's something more serious going on. The following list gives some suggestions of behaviours to look out for but your friend might experience differently. The important thing is to spot signs and offer suitable support in time.
 - **Feeling sad or withdrawn from activities:** This could mean crying regularly, feeling tired all the time or not wanting to hang out anymore
 - **Sudden feeling of overwhelming or fear for no reason:** they might experience intense feeling whilst doing daily activities
 - **Seeing, hearing or believing in things that are not real:** although imaginary play and imaginary friends are perfectly ok!
 - **Not eating, being sick and significant weight loss:** Pay attention if your friend isn't eating much at lunch or going to the bathroom right after meals
 - **Extreme out-of-control and risk-taking behaviors:** behaviours that can endanger his- or her own life as well as others
 - **Other changes in behaviour:** Your friend might get agitated more frequently or behave differently
- Move to **slide 18**, explain that if you do spot signs which suggest that someone's mental health is declining, such as when their behaviour changes from what you normally see, there are 3 main things that you can do to support them.
 - **Firstly, listen to their story.** Be understanding and accepting, often someone might just want to feel heard and understood
 - **Ask open ended questions** that need more than a yes/no answer such as "How are you feeling today?" and then follow up with questions like 'Tell me more'. Avoid saying things like "You will get over it"/"Toughen up".
 - Finally, **guide**. Give reassurance that it is okay not to be okay, and advise them to speak to an adult, either parents or teachers or school adviser(s).

Activity: Scenario based question (10 mins - 5 minutes for discussion, 5 minutes for class debrief)

- Move to **slide 19** and explain that now we're going to look at a scenario and discuss what you might do in this situation. Split students into groups of 3 (depending on class size). Ask students how they think they might be able to support Tom.
- Below are some suggestions:
 - Listen to Tom and tell him to speak to you whenever he feels worried.
 - Try and stay as calm as you can, calmness can be contagious.
 - Encourage Tom to speak with an adult, either teacher or his relatives.
 - If he seems reluctant to speak to someone, consult adults, either teachers or parents to find the support that is available and decide on the best course of support.
 - Confidentiality. You cannot keep this to yourself but do not discuss widely, start with a trusted adult.
- **(Slide 20)** Overall, when it comes to mental health problems, the small things can make a big difference. You don't have to be an expert to help someone with a mental health problem, just being there can help. **(2 mins)**

Conclusion (5 mins)

Move to slide 21 to wrap up the session. Explain to the students the key takeaways from the session:

- Firstly, we all have mental health. Mental health is about our feelings, thoughts, emotions and mood. None of these are static or fixed, they constantly change. We all have positive and negative emotions that come and go based on what's happening around us. Feeling down, angry or stressed is a normal part of life.
- Remind students that we need to take care of our mental health in the same way we do our physical health. There are lots of things students can do to manage our everyday feelings - these are personal but might include listening to music, walking the dog, or playing sport. Remember the ideas students wrote down in their stress buckets!
- Highlight the importance of seeking support if students are experiencing overwhelming feelings. There are a wide variety of resources available: friends, family members, helplines, websites and mobile apps.
- Also, students need to remember that they don't have to be an expert to help someone with a mental health problem, they are **not** there to diagnose or counsel them but just being there can help. Tell students to encourage friends to seek help from the support that is available - such as a school counsellor, family or online support such as Mind or the Samaritans.
- Finally, remember **it is okay not to be okay**.

You may wish to ask students to write a short reflection on today's session, exploring what their key takeaways are.

Ask students if there are any questions from today's session.

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