Educator Guide: What Is Mental Health? Lesson

Recommended for Grades:

7th

Time:

8 minutes

National Health Education Standards:

This lesson aligns with the following National Health Education Standards:

- Standard 1: Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
- Standard 7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

For more information about the National Health Education Standards, visit the SHAPE America website: shapeamerica.org.

Learning Objectives:

After completing this lesson students will be able to:

1. Describe three characteristics of a mentally healthy person.
2. Describe two ways to improve or maintain your mental health.

Lesson Description:

In this lesson students will learn what mental health is, and some characteristics of a mentally healthy person. They will explore multiple things they can do that will help them be mentally healthy. Students will also learn what positive self-talk is, and how to turn negative self-talk into positive self-talk. There is a worksheet that students can complete as they move through this lesson. It must be opened and saved to the computer, or printed for students to write in their answers.

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Pre and Post-Test Questions:

Use the following questions with your students in any way that you see fit (on paper, using a survey tool etc.) You may choose to combine questions from various lessons and activities that your students participate in. Correct answer choices are bolded.

1. What is one characteristic of a mentally healthy person?
    a. They have low energy.
    b. They have rapid changes in mood.
    c. They are resilient.
    d. They feel disconnected from others.

2. What is something you will do to support, or improve, your mental health? Choose all that apply.
    a. Create healthy sleep habits.
    b. Get regular physical activity.
    c. Limit social media.
    d. Connect with friends and family.
    e. Allow for downtime.
    f. Develop positive coping strategies.
    g. Practice positive self-talk.

Vocabulary:

Use the following list of vocabulary as a reference for yourself or your students as you complete the What Is Mental Health? Lesson. You may choose to use this list in any way that fits your needs. Students will also see some of these vocabulary words underlined right in the lesson. They can click on the underlined word and a definition will appear.

- Coping strategies - thoughts and actions used to deal with stressful situations
- Downtime - a time of reduced activity, or inactivity; a time to rest and relax
- Mental health - a person's emotional, psychological and social well-being
- Negative self-talk - saying things to yourself, in your head, that are negative and critical
- Positive self-talk - saying things to yourself, in your head, that make you feel good about yourself
- Resilient - able to recover from difficult times
- Self-esteem - how we value and see ourselves, based on our opinions and beliefs about ourselves
- Social media - websites and applications that allow people to create, share and exchange information and ideas in virtual communities and networks

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What Is Mental Health? Lesson Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Complete this worksheet as you move through the What Is Mental Health? Lesson. You will need to either save the worksheet to your computer or print it out and write in your answers. If you open the worksheet and forget to save it before typing, you will lose all of your work.

1. List the four characteristics of a mentally healthy person.
    a. _____
    b. _____
    c. _____
    d. _____

2. List six things you can do to support, or improve, your mental health.
    a. _____
    b. _____
    c. _____
    d. _____
    e. _____
    f. _____

3. What is positive self-talk?

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What Is Mental Health? Lesson Worksheet Answer Key

1. List the four characteristics of a mentally healthy person.

    a. They are able to deal with their emotions in a healthy way.
    b. They have positive self-esteem.
    c. They have healthy relationships with family and friends.
    d. They are resilient.

2. List six things you can do to support, or improve, your mental health.

    a. Create healthy sleep habits.
    b. Get regular physical activity.
    c. Limit social media.
    d. Stay connected.
    e. Allow for downtime.
    f. Develop positive coping strategies

3. What is positive self-talk?

    Positive self-talk is talking to yourself in kind and reassuring ways, while looking at your current situation realistically.

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Supplemental Activity: Mental Health Action Plan

Objectives:

After completing this activity students will be able to:

- Create an action plan for supporting, or improving, their mental health.

Materials Needed:

- Chalkboard or whiteboard for brainstorming
- Copies of Mental Health Action Plan Worksheet

Time Required:

30 minutes

Instructions:

Review the things that students can do to support and improve their mental health.

- Create healthy sleep habits.
- Get regular physical activity.
- Limit social media.
- Stay connected.
- Allow for downtime.
- Develop positive coping strategies.
- Practice positive self-talk.

Discuss each one and brainstorm what each could mean for different people. Then pass out the Mental Health Action Plan Worksheet to students. This can be assigned as homework, or if time allows can be completed it in class.

Check in with students periodically to see how their plan is working. Are they seeing benefits? Are they struggling? Who can they go to for help?

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Mental Health Action Plan Worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Use this worksheet to create your own personal plan for supporting, or improving, your mental health. Listed below are seven things you could include in your plan, but you don't need to include all off them. Start small and maybe choose one thing per week to work on. Everyone's situation is different, so everyone's personal plan will look different. If you are struggling with your plan, talk with a trusted adult. They can help you.

Write down at least one specific thing you can do for each of these that you choose to work on.

Create healthy sleep habits:

_____

Get regular physical activity:

_____

Limit social media:

_____

Stay connected:

_____

Allow for downtime:

_____

Develop positive coping strategies:

_____

Practice positive self-talk:

_____

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Handouts

Included on the following pages are additional resources that you and your students' families may find useful.

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Mental and Emotional Health Resources

- 988 Lifeline, 988lifeline.org, call or text 988
- Anxiety and Depression Association of America, adaa.org
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/
- Children and Adults with Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, chadd.org
- Children's Wisconsin, childrenswi.org/find-care/mental-behavioral-health
- KidsHealth, kidshealth.org
- Mental Health America, mhanational.org
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), nami.org
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), nimh.nih.gov
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (Student Services/Prevention and Wellness), dpi.wi.gov/sspw/mental-health

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Transcript

Slide 1 (video)
Sanaiah: Hi! I'm Sanaiah.

Dalton: And I'm Dalton. We're here today to talk about mental health which is such an important topic. But it can be confusing. So, what exactly is mental health anyway?

Sanaiah: That's a good question. Mental health is our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. Our mental health affects how we think, feel and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make decisions.

Dalton: That makes sense. And our mental health is just as important as our physical health so it's important that we pay attention to it.

Sanaiah: That's right. We also need to remember that our mental health can change over time, depending on lots of different things. Just like our physical health, sometimes our mental health is good and sometimes it's not as good. We all have times where we may feel down, sad, anxious, or upset, and that's ok.

Dalton: In this lesson we're going to take a look at things we can do to improve our mental health, and we'll also look at some characteristics of mentally healthy people.

Sanaiah: Great! Let's get started.

Slide 2
People who are mentally healthy often have certain characteristics. We'll focus on four of them. First, they are able to deal with their emotions, or feelings, in a healthy way. That means they have ways to cope with all the different emotions they experience.

They also have a positive self-esteem, which means in general they think positively about themselves. They realize their strengths, while also understanding their weaknesses.

Another characteristic of a mentally healthy person is that they have healthy relationships with family and friends. These are relationships with people they can rely on in good times and in bad times.

Finally, mentally healthy people are resilient, meaning they are able to overcome challenges and cope with daily life and stress.

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Slide 3

Just like it's important to take care of your physical health, it's also important to take care of your mental health. There are lots of things you can do to support and improve your mental health. Let's look at a few. Click on each one to learn more.

Create healthy sleep habits - Someone your age needs 8-10 hours of sleep each night. It's best to keep a regular sleep routine, meaning you get up and go to bed around the same time each day. It's ok to stay up late or sleep in a little on the weekends, but try to keep it to no more than an extra hour or so. It's also a good idea to turn off electronics two hours before going to sleep because the blue light emitted by them keeps you awake.

Get regular physical activity - Regular physical activity can improve your mood, help manage stress, increase self-esteem, and lessen symptoms of anxiety and depression. Aim for about 60 minutes per day, and remember that every little bit counts.

Limit social media – While there are benefits to social media, like connecting with others, it can also make you feel like you're not good enough or not liked enough. But people usually only post the best things about their life, which makes it look like they have a perfect life. That gives us an unrealistic view of other people's lives. Plus, it's really easy to get sucked in and spend all day on it.

Stay connected - It's important to stay connected to friends and family. It helps you feel less lonely, increases happiness, lessens symptoms of depression and anxiety, and increases self-esteem. And it doesn't matter how many friends you have. It's more about how connected you feel to the people in your life. It's great that we can connect with our friends and family through technology, but connecting in person is especially important for our mental health. If you want to connect more with others, focus on things you may have in common, and don't be afraid to say hi or talk with someone new.

Allow for downtime - Doing too many things each day, even if you enjoy them, can become stressful. So try not to overschedule yourself. It's important to have some downtime each day to relax…or to do nothing at all!

Develop positive coping strategies - It's important to have positive coping strategies for when you are feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or simply having a bad day. These strategies could include talking to someone you trust, taking a break, practicing mindfulness, or listening to music. Whatever works for you!

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Slide 4

Another important thing that anyone can do to improve their mental health is called positive self-talk, which means talking to yourself in a kind and reassuring way.

Positive self-talk isn't pretending that everything is always OK. It's looking at a situation realistically. For example, if you fail a test, it's ok to be disappointed and upset. However, calling yourself names or assuming you're not smart won't help you improve your next test score. The more negative things you tell yourself, the more likely you are to believe them.

Instead, try telling yourself that you will get some extra help before the next test so you can do better. That's positive self-talk!

Slide 5

Let's take a look at some examples of negative self-talk and how you can turn it into positive-self talk. Click the cloud on the left to hear an example of negative self-talk. Then click the cloud on the right to hear an example of how you could turn it into positive self-talk.

> *Left cloud* - I don't even deserve to be part of this team.
>
> *Right cloud* - I can't believe I didn't score in the game. Time to get some extra practice in so next time I'll score.

Slide 6

Let's try a few more.

> *Left cloud* - I'm so stupid and careless. Not sure why I even try.
>
> *Right cloud* - Next time I need to just slow down so I don't make so many careless mistakes. I've got this.

Slide 7

> *Left cloud* - My presentation is going to be awful. Everyone's probably going to make fun of me.
>
> *Right cloud* - I've prepared a lot for this presentation. I'm sure I'll do fine.

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Slide 8

Left cloud - There's no way I can learn how to do this. It's too hard, and I'm not that smart.

Right cloud - Ok, I think I can do this. I just need to practice.

Slide 9

Ok, last one.

Left cloud - I hate that I talk so much when I get nervous. I feel like I annoy everyone around me.

Right cloud - I'm not going to worry about my nervous habits so much. My friends like me for who I am.

Slide 10 (video)

Dalton: Nice job turning those negatives into positives! It may feel odd at first, but with practice it will feel more natural.

Sanaiah: That's right. And don't forget about all the other ways you can improve your mental health, like limiting social media, creating healthy sleep habits, and connecting with friends and family.

Dalton: Alright, well that's it for now.

Dalton and Sanaiah: Bye!

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