

# ACTIVITY 3: WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

**AIM:** Children are introduced to key mental health and wellbeing terminology and the concept of mental health as a continuum. They explore emotions as part of mental health and the right to freedom of expression (Article 13).

## Preparation:

- Review the mental health terminology and continuum
- Create a sample wellbeing wheel to show as an example

## Facilitator materials and resources:

- Activity 3 presentation
- Completed wellbeing wheel to show as an example
- Meet Paddington resource

## Participant materials:

- Piece of paper or card
- Coloured pens
- Scissors
- Clothes peg or paper clip

## Tips for those working in Early Years settings:

- Introduce emotions using a [child-friendly emotion chart](#) and prepared wellbeing [wheel](#). Make emotion faces available for children to cut and stick on the wheel.
- Ask children to practise drawing faces to match basic emotions and feelings.
- Introduce the [emotion thermometer](#) as an alternative to the health continuum.

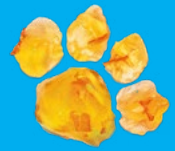
## Facilitator Introduction

*Explain to the group that every child has a right to health, and that this means both healthy minds and healthy bodies – because our physical health and mental health are connected. Explain that in this activity, we will learn more about what mental health and wellbeing means, especially in relation to emotions and feelings. We'll also invite our kindhearted friend Paddington Bear™ to help us learn more.*

## Part 1: Emotion identification warm-up

1. Use the 'Meet Paddington' resource to share Paddington's story, or ask children to retell the story from their own knowledge of Paddington.
2. Use the Activity 3 presentation to help children identify different feelings and emotions, and what might cause them, by presenting the different scenes from Paddington's story and asking 'How do you think Paddington felt when ...?' Use the emotion prompts as needed for younger children, or children less familiar with the Paddington story.
3. For a longer discussion, follow up with 'Why do you think he felt that way?' and 'Can you think of something that might make you feel that way?'. To support children who may need extra help with emotion words, print copies of the [child friendly emotion chart](#) to use for the activity. As an extension for older children, ask: 'How do you think something like this might affect Paddington in the future?'

# ACTIVITY 3: PART 2



## Part 2: What is mental health and wellbeing?

1. Using the Activity 3 presentation, introduce children to the key terms 'mental health' and 'mental health conditions'. Explain that just like our physical health, our mental health is a continuum, or range, of wellbeing.

<b>Mental health</b>	<b>Mental health</b> is something that everyone has – just like physical health. Sometimes we feel well, and sometimes we don't. Mental health refers to how we think, feel and behave, and this changes. When our mental health is good, we might enjoy being around other people and feel able to take on challenges and new experiences. But when our mental health is not so good, we can find it much harder to cope.
<b>Mental health conditions</b>	<b>Mental health conditions</b> can change a person's thinking, behaviour and ability to cope with emotions. Without support, they can affect daily life and stop someone doing the things they usually enjoy, or the ability to feel ok.

Source: adapted from [Young Minds](#)

2. Introduce the **mental health** green-yellow-amber-red continuum diagram, noting the difference between **mental health** and **mental health conditions**. Explain that just like our physical health, our mental health can change over different times. Sometimes we may be very healthy, but anyone's situation can shift if their situation improves or deteriorates. Share some examples from each category as prompted in the Activity Presentation to help children build understanding. You may also add additional examples, as shown below, as required based on the level of understanding of the group.





### Note for facilitators:

The mental health continuum is not a diagnostic tool. It is intended only for the purposes of helping children to understand that mental health is a continuum and that our behaviour can be affected by our mental health. It is adapted from the following sources:

- [Delphis](#)
- [Safehouse](#)



## ACTIVITY 3: PART 2

	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Changing moods and emotions</li> <li>▪ Sleeping well</li> <li>▪ Being active and enjoying hobbies</li> <li>▪ Comfortable with others and/or yourself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased nervousness, sadness, worrying</li> <li>▪ Feeling cross, forgetful, impatient</li> <li>▪ Not sleeping well</li> <li>▪ Not feeling like yourself</li> <li>▪ Not wanting to see the people you like</li> </ul>
	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Increased anger, anxiety</li> <li>▪ Feeling tearful and sad a lot of the time</li> <li>▪ Not sleeping well</li> <li>▪ Not wanting to see anyone at all</li> <li>▪ Finding it hard to concentrate and doing less well at school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Trouble controlling emotions, outbursts of anger</li> <li>▪ Feeling very anxious</li> <li>▪ Panic attacks</li> <li>▪ Depressed mood, feeling overwhelmed</li> <li>▪ Constant tiredness, very poor sleep</li> <li>▪ Feeling confused about what is real</li> <li>▪ Choosing not to see anyone</li> <li>▪ Thinking about, or actually, harming yourself or others</li> <li>▪ Taking unnecessary risks, like drugs and alcohol</li> </ul>

Adapted from Delphis and Safehouse sources.

**3.** Give children a few examples of physical and mental health until they are confident about placing examples on the continuum. Younger children may need additional examples. For older children, ask them to think of examples for each category – including both physical and mental health examples. Prompt as needed from the list below and highlight what the solutions for each of these examples might be.

- Getting a bump or a bruise (green, physically healthy – may need a little care, will heal quickly)
- Having an argument with your friend and felt sad afterwards (green, mentally healthy)
- If you felt sad for many days in a row and couldn't sleep (amber, mentally injured – you need help to process what you're feeling to get back to full health)
- Having chicken pox (amber, physically injured – may need some medicine, but you'll go back to healthy soon by taking care of yourself)
- Having a broken arm or leg (amber, physically injured – you'll need medical help to be healed)
- If you were very ill and had to go to hospital and stay overnight (red, physically ill – you may need medicine and regular medical help until you get better)
- Feeling sad because you don't like what's for dinner (green, mentally healthy – being happy or sad for short periods are all normal emotions)
- Worried about not going to school because of lockdown (yellow, mentally reacting – you can talk to someone or need some self-care, but can usually go back to being healthy by taking care of yourself)
- Not caring about completing school work any more after many months of lockdown (amber, mentally injured – you need help to process what you're feeling to get back to full health)
- Feeling depressed for a long time and wanting to hurt yourself (red, mentally ill – you need medicine and regular medical help until you get better).

## ACTIVITY 3: PARTS 2 AND 3

4. Prompt children to make the connections that: every place on the continuum is a completely normal place to be.

- It is normal to move back and forth on the scale.
- When we are healthy or reacting we can usually treat ourselves through self-care or the support of friends, family or carers; but when we are injured or ill, we usually need help from medical professionals to become healthy again.

# ACTIVITY 3: PART 3

## Part 3: Make your own 'wheel of wellbeing'

1. Invite children to make a list of six to eight emotions that they are most likely to feel day to day. Be sure to include a range of different emotions. For example: happy, angry, stressed, surprised, calm, scared, nervous.
2. Using white paper or card and markers, instruct children to draw a large circle on the paper, then divide the circle into the number of wedges of emotions that they have included in their list.

### TIP

*In an Early Years setting, or with younger children, when facilitating in-person, try using a [printed worksheet](#) with a blank wheel. Provide emotion faces for the children to cut and stick onto the wheel. For older children, encourage them to use their maths skills to divide and create their own wheel.*

3. Ask children to write one of the emotions from their list in each of the wedges of the circle, then decorate each wedge to demonstrate that specific feeling. For example, they might draw emoji faces for each emotion, or draw and colour the wedge how that emotion makes them feel.
4. Ask children to cut out the circle to complete the emotion wheel, then use a clothes peg or paper clip to mark how they might be feeling in the moment.
5. Explain that we can use our emotion wheel to help us identify at any time how we might be feeling. This is important because when we can identify how we are feeling, it helps us talk about it and it helps us know what actions we might take if we want to change our feelings or behaviour.
6. Complete the lesson by reminding children of the connection to Article 13 of the CRC. Children have the right to share freely with others what they learn, think and feel, by talking, drawing, writing or in other ways, unless it harms people.

### **Optional extra: emotion charades**

Invite children to play emotion charades. Write many different emotions on slips of paper and put them in a bag or hat. Ask children to take turns picking an emotion to portray. They must act out that feeling without speaking, in front of the group. The group must guess which emotion is being portrayed. If playing virtually, ask each child to think of an emotion, rather than picking out of a hat or bag.