

ACTIVITY 3: WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING?

AIM: Young people are introduced to key mental health and wellbeing terminology and understand the concept of mental health as a continuum.

Preparation:

- Prepare slips of paper with different emotions written on each and place in a small bag or box for emotion charades.
- Review the mental health terminology and continuum.

Facilitator materials and resources

- Activity 3 Presentation
- Slips of paper
- Small bag or box
- Timer
- Whiteboard and markers for scorekeeping

Participant materials

- Paper and pens



FACILITATOR INTRODUCTION

Every child and young person has a right to health, and we know that this means both healthy minds and healthy bodies – because our health and mental wellbeing is all connected. Explain to the group that in this activity, we will learn more about what mental health and wellbeing means.

Mental health 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.

Mental health conditions 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.

Like regular health, mental health is a continuum for all of us. 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 or as their situation changes.



Part 1: Emotion identification charades warm-up

1. Invite young people to play emotion charades. Write different emotions on slips of paper and put them in a bag or hat. This can be prepared in advance, or young people can create the emotion slips before the activity (leave time to review slips and remove duplicates and any words submitted that do not belong).
2. Ask young people to take turns to pick an emotion out of the bag or hat, then act out that feeling, without speaking, in front of the group. The rest of the group must guess which emotion is being portrayed. (If playing virtually, let each young person think of an emotion to act out.) Using a timer, give each team two minutes per turn. If you want to keep score, time the groups while guessing. The time elapsed is the score and the team with the lowest score wins!
3. In wrapping up the activity, ask young people to point out how often the 'actors' portrayed a physical feeling or expression to demonstrate the emotion. What does this say about that emotion?

Part 2: Mental health and wellbeing vocabulary game

1. Using the Activity 3 Presentation, introduce young people to the vocabulary game. Explain that it is important when we talk about mental health that we learn how to use the proper language. Using the right terminology when we talk about mental health can remove some of the stigma and discrimination caused by outdated language. Knowing the right language also helps normalise talking about mental health.

2. Split the group into smaller groups of three or four. Each group will need pen and paper. (For virtual facilitation this can be completed as an individual challenge.)

3. Explain that on each slide the young people will see a word that relates in some way to mental health and wellbeing. For each slide they will have two minutes for each group to discuss and write a definition for the word that they see. You may give more time for each word for younger groups or groups less familiar with the subject matter.

4. After the time is finished, ask a representative from each group to share their definition.

5. Display the actual definition for the word by clicking through the slide.

6. Work through the vocabulary slides one by one, discussing each word and giving young people an opportunity to talk about why each word is important, and how it might hurt someone or cause stigma or shame if used incorrectly. Conclude by linking the discussion back to Article 13 – we all have the right to share our opinion, but we should not use language that harms others.


Alternative facilitation: Using the notes in the Activity 3 Presentation, create a list of all the definitions in random order. As you work through the slides, ask young people to refer to the definition list and choose the definition that they feel best matches the word.



Part 3: Moving along the mental health continuum

1. Explain that just like our physical health, our mental health is a continuum, or range, of wellbeing.
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 change. Share some examples from each category as prompted in the Activity 3 Presentation to help young people 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 young people 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

The mental health continuum

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

Adapted from Delphis and Safehouse sources.



3. Give young people a few examples of physical and mental health until they are confident about placing examples on the continuum. 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 anymore 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 period of time and wanting to hurt yourself (red, mentally ill – you need medicine and regular medical help until you get better).

4. Prompt young people 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 in the green or yellow areas of the continuum we can usually treat ourselves through self-care or the support of friends, family or carers; but when we are in amber or red, we usually need help from medical professionals to become healthy again.