

ACTIVITY 5: TALKING ABOUT AND MANAGING YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

AIM: Young people understand the importance of talking about their mental health as one of many different tools available to them for managing their mental wellbeing.

Preparation:

- Preview the Health Uncovered podcast
- Prepare equipment for listening to the podcast
- Determine available resources for young people to create podcast (or a 'podcast-like' panel interview)
- Prepare materials for self-care kit if completing the optional activity

Facilitator materials and resources

- Activity 5 Presentation
- Health Uncovered Podcast plus equipment for listening to the podcast
- Computer, tablet or smart phone with recording capabilities (if resources permit)

Participant materials

- Paper and pen
- Computer, tablet or smart phone with recording capabilities (if resources permit)

Materials for optional activity:

- Shoebox or bag
- Sandwich bag and slips of paper
- Stress ball or balloon and sand to make your own
- Colouring pens or crayons and paper



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FACILITATOR INTRODUCTION

Explain to the young people that there are many different tools and techniques that we can use to manage our mental health. Two of the most useful (and free) tools are practicing mindfulness and talking to others we trust about how we are feeling.

Practicing mindfulness, like meditation, or mindful eating, walking, or even focused breathing, can help calm our minds and bodies when we experience stress. Tell the group that in this activity, we'll learn the importance of using mindfulness and having safe conversations around mental health to manage our wellbeing. These practices can also help strengthen our minds to cope better with stress the next time something comes along to challenge our mental health!

ACTIVITY 5: PART 1 AND 2

Part 1: Dice game warm-up

1. Split the young people into small groups and provide each group with a single die.
2. In each group ask young people to take turns rolling the die, and answering the question for the corresponding number rolled. They can pass if they prefer not to answer a particular question or roll again to get a different number.
3. Each young person should have enough time to complete at least one roll.

If you roll a...

- 1 ... share something that makes you feel anxious.
- 2 ... share something you like to do when you feel worried or scared that helps you feel better.
- 3 ... share a feeling that you have a hard time shifting out of.
- 4 ... share one way the COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns made you feel.
- 5 ... share something that makes you feel safe.
- 6 ... share the name of someone you trust to talk to about your feelings.

Part 2: Tools for managing emotions

1. Use the Activity 5 Presentation to introduce the idea of how mindfulness works to help us manage our emotions.
2. Ask young people to make a list of the mindfulness tools they know, or activities that they like to do when they want to shift their emotions or change their feelings. Prompt young people to include items like meditation, breathing, mindful eating, smiling, running, dancing, keeping a thankful journal, and talking about their feelings with someone they trust.

Additional activity: Using A4 paper ask young people to trace their hand(s) using non-permanent markers. On each hand ask them to write the tools that they have access to, to manage their emotions. Encourage young people to hang their hand(s) in a place where they can see them as a reminder of the mindfulness tools they already have in their hands when they need an emotional boost!

Managing your mind: ideas from UNICEF Voices of Youth

Create a self-care package

Young person Paavani Arora, from India, writes about how a 'pocket pouch' helped her take charge of her mental health. She says: "The most important thing that I learned was how to focus on the basics. Self-care doesn't mean big changes or tasks." Read more about the pocket pouch idea [here](#).

All aboard the train of self-care!

Young person Aizat Noma, from Krygyzstan, has an idea to create a 'train' of self-care. You can see her example [here](#). She says: "How are you, my friend? Not good? Don't forget that you have a free train ticket in your pocket. Come to the station of mental health and say 'I am an amazing person!' Do you hear this loud 'Everything will be ok!' sound? That means the train is coming! Get ready!"

Write a poem

Pratyusha Bhattacharjee, 22, from India, wrote a poem called *Silent Screams* to express how she was feeling about the COVID-19 pandemic. Read her poem [here](#).



Part 3: 'Health Uncovered' – safe conversations with Cel Spellman

1. Introduce participants to the Health Uncovered podcast with UNICEF UK High Profile Supporter and OutRight champion Cel Spellman, pictured above. This is a series of podcasts recorded by Cel about a variety of health issues. In four of the episodes Cel addresses different issues around mental health by talking to health experts and young people who feel safe to talk openly around their mental health challenges and conditions.

2. As a group, in small groups, or as a take-home activity (as presentation and resources permit) ask young people to listen to one or more of the mental health podcasts. All episodes are 20–25 minutes.

- Season 1 / Episode 3: Mental health, me and my emotions (20 min)
- Season 1 / Episode 5: Mental health, are you okay? (23 min)
- Season 1 / Episode 7: Mental health, taking control (23 min)
- Season 1 / Episode 8: Mental health, asking for help (25 min)

3. Facilitate the group in an open discussion in response to the podcast, asking young people to highlight two things they learned, and one thing that the podcast brought up that they would like to learn more about. Was there anything that surprised them from the podcast topic? Would they feel safe talking to others so openly about their own mental health and wellbeing challenges?

ACTIVITY 5: PART 3 AND 4

Part 4: Create your own podcast

1. In small groups, ask young people to design their own podcast topic. Ask them to consider these questions:

- What topic might be interesting to cover and help to break stigma, yet be a topic safe for participants to discuss?
- Who might you interview for the topic? Would you interview an expert on the topic? Would you interview young people or children to hear their personal stories? If so, how could you ensure the podcast would be a safe place to share their stories or opinions.
- What style would your interview be? Make a list of what questions you would ask on the podcast.
- What would you call the podcast?
- How will you share the podcast? Be sure to ask the interviewee for consent for how you are going to share their podcast. (See the OutRight 2021 consent and guidance forms [unicef.uk/outright-resources](https://www.unicef.uk/outright-resources))

2. Ask each group to present their podcast topics to the larger group to refine their idea and as a safety check.

3. As resources permit, ask the wider group to build out one or more of the ideas to record their own mental health podcast **using a smart phone or tablet**. Where resources are not available, the group could role play using the questions in the format of a panel interview.

Additional activity: Encourage young people (age 13 and above)— to join UNICEF’s [Voices of Youth](https://www.unicef.org/voicesofyouth) platform and consider submitting their podcast. Be sure that young people understand the importance of getting consent from their interviewees before sharing the podcast publicly.



ACTIVITY 5: OPTIONAL ACTIVITY



Optional activity: Create your own self-care / calm down kit

1. A self-care / calm down kit is a box or bag full of items or activities a young person might use when they need to redirect their energy in order to calm down or regulate their emotions. A kit can be created for the classroom or activity room and, as materials allow, the young people should be encouraged to create their own activity kits they can take away and keep for longer term use.
2. Ask the group to think of what tools they might want to put into a kit to help them release energy, practice mindfulness, or process their emotions. How each young person or group creates their own calm down kit will depend on the resources available within each group. The kit can be as simple as a jar full of slips of paper with activity suggestions written on them. If young people have additional resources, a calm down kit may also include homemade or low-cost physical items for mindful play or creation. See the box below for ideas.
3. Gather materials, and/or ask young people to bring in the materials to create the group kit or individual kit(s). As young people are working on their kits, encourage discussion around when they should use their kit to help manage their emotions and mental health.

Calm down kit ideas

Activity suggestions

- do 20 star jumps
- draw a picture of how you are feeling inside
- make a list of 10 things that make you happy
- take a mindfulness walk
- have a dance party
- write down a story of an imaginary friend
- do three yoga poses
- try a one-minute meditation
- write a poem

Materials

- clay
- colouring pens and a book or journal
- a mindfulness glitter jar
- balloons or a ball
- a homemade stressball
- mindfulness or emotion colouring sheets