



ACTIVITY 6: MEET THE YOUTH ADVOCATES FOR MENTAL HEALTH

AIM: Young people explore how youth advocates are using their freedom of expression and right to voice their opinion (Articles 12, 13) to break the silence and to stop discrimination around mental health (Article 2).

Preparation:

- Review the [5, 4, 3, 2, 1 mindfulness video](#)
- Review the youth advocate stories
- Ensure that groups can be split so that each group has access to a means of researching the youth activist assigned to their group.
- Write a sample haiku

Facilitator materials and resources

- Activity 6 Presentation
- [How to write a Haiku](#)
- [5, 4, 3, 2, 1 video](#)

Participant materials

- Pen and paper
- Internet access

FACILITATOR INTRODUCTION

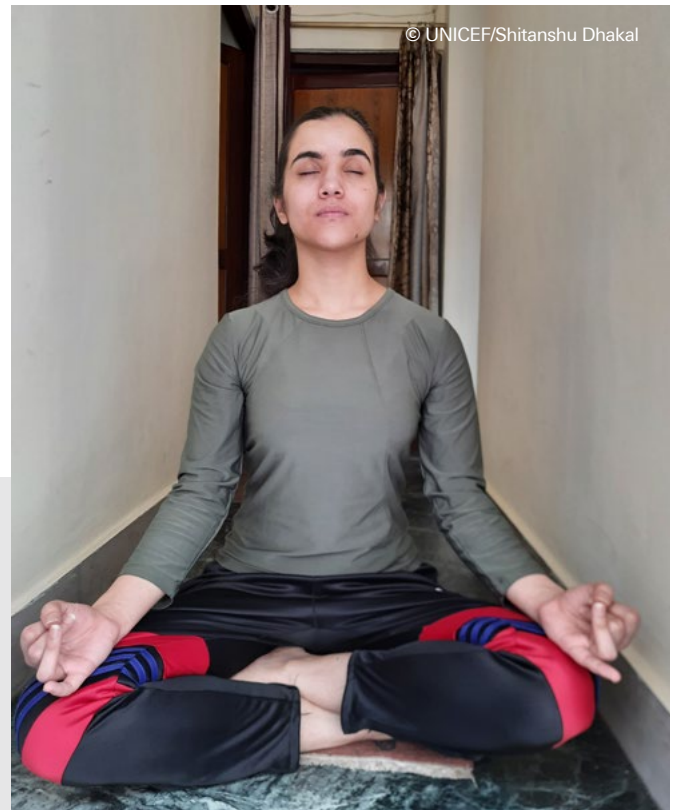
Ask the group: have you ever noticed that sometimes when you have a problem, you feel like you are the only one like this, and that no one else could ever understand? But what if you were able to share that problem and then learned that someone else had also experienced the exact same struggle as you? When we feel more free to talk about mental health, we not only make a difference for our own mental health, we also help create change for others.

Explain that around the world there are many young people who have recognised this very thing and have decided to use their own experiences to help other young people who might be struggling with mental health issues. In this activity, we are going to meet some of these advocates and begin to think about how we might also build on our own experiences and skills to become mental health advocates in our own communities or beyond.

ACTIVITY 6: PART 1

Part 1: 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 warm-up

1. Ask young people to sit in a peaceful place and explain that we are going to use our five senses to begin the activity with a practice of mindfulness.
2. Lead young people through the exercise using the following narrative, or use the 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 video to facilitate.



Take a deep belly breath to begin

5 - SEE: Look around for five things that you can see. Say them out loud.

For example: I see the desk, I see the teacher, I see the pencil, I see the water bottle, I see the whiteboard.

4 - FEEL: Pay attention to your body and think of four things that you can feel. Say them out loud.

For example: I feel the fan blowing on my face, I feel my feet warm in my socks, I feel the vibration of the ringing of the school bell, I feel the hardness of the chair I am sitting on.

3 - HEAR: Listen quietly for three sounds. Say them out loud.

For example: I hear the birds outside, I hear the raindrops falling on the window, I hear the sound of my breath.

2 - SMELL: Say two things you can smell. If you can't smell anything from where you're sitting it is okay to move to another spot and sniff something. If you can't smell anything at the moment or you can't move, then name your two favorite smells.

For example: I can smell lunch being cooked in the canteen, I can smell freshly cut grass.

1 - TASTE: Say one thing you can taste. If you can't taste anything, then say your favorite thing to taste. For example: I can taste the toothpaste from brushing my teeth this morning.

Take another deep belly breath to end.

3. Ask the young people how they feel after completing this activity. When might doing this activity help them in the future?
4. Conclude the warm-up activity by reminding young people that through mindfulness we can train our brains to be more aware so we can better cope when faced with stress; and this mindfulness practice is something anyone could complete anytime and anywhere as a way to calm themselves when they feel stress or face a tough situation.

ACTIVITY 6: PART 2



Part 2: Meet today's mental health advocates

1. Explain to young people that one reason some of the stigma around mental health is changing is that young people, like them, are using their rights to share their views and to freedom of expression (Articles 12 and 13). They are actively breaking the silence and advocating for young people to be free from discrimination around mental health (Article 2). In this activity we are going to meet seven different youth advocates from around the world who are using their own experiences to make others feel safe talking about mental health.

2. Split the group into seven small groups. Using the Activity 6 Presentation, introduce the names and images of the seven youth advocates. Each group should research and report back on one of the advocates, covering all seven between the larger group.

3. Using the resources available to them, give young people up to 30 minutes to research the advocate online and on social media to learn about their mission, their work, their motivation, and the change that they are trying to bring around the topic of mental health. How are the advocates using their unique skills or voices?

4. After each group has reported back on their advocate allow young people to ask questions. Use the biographies of each advocate (provided in the Presentation notes) to prompt the discussion or fill in any missing information.



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Part 3: Expressing ourselves on mental health: haiku project

1. Ask young people to reflect on the advocate stories they've heard. Ask them:

- Which message did you connect the most with?
- Why did you think it was powerful?
- How might you enjoy your own freedom of expression (Article 13) to speak out on mental health?

2. Ask young people to think about and pick a topic around mental health and write a haiku. These can be written on posters or A4 paper and hung around the school or community area where the group meets, or can be shared on social media (as appropriate for age and resources). Haiku topics might include breaking silence around mental health, a child's right to mental health, or a haiku around a specific emotions or range of emotions. See how to write a haiku poem.

3. As an alternative activity, young people could use a different creative medium, suited to their own skills and interests, to share a mental health message. For example, instead of haiku, write a song, create a short play, or make a poster collage with a message.

What is a haiku?

A haiku is a poem with three lines

- 5 syllables**
- 7 syllables**
- 5 syllables**

Here is an example:

**Breathe in and breathe out
We all have good and bad days
Body and mind health**

Additional activity: Encourage older children (age 13 and above) — to join UNICEF's **Voices of Youth** platform and submit their haiku or other self-expression.