



Susan Allen

Maintaining Mental Health

We're better together

We help you connect to other people, learn about yourself and develop honest and mutually fulfilling relationships.



visionworks

Maintaining mental health

The purpose of this activity is to give students the opportunity to discuss mental health openly without stigma and to show them ways they can be proactive in maintaining good mental health.

Teachers' notes

Students feel stressed for all sorts of reasons:

- problems at home
- attachment or trauma disorder
- anxiety about schoolwork
- bullying
- ...and so many more.

Sometimes these stresses can lead to mental health problems. According to the Mental Health Foundation, "About a quarter of the population will experience some kind of mental health problem in the course of a year."

Teachers are not psychiatrists and no one is asking them to be. However, rather than stand back and see if our students sink or swim, we can empower them by bringing mental health out into the open and discussing it. Of course some of our students will need professional help. But some will manage their mental health themselves, especially if they are well informed. Here are skills we can all use to help us retain good mental health; hopefully you will find the following activities helpful in passing these skills on to your students.

You will need:

- The Mental Health Foundation list for maintaining good mental health ready to show on the whiteboard at the appropriate time in the lesson. Use this address.

<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications/how-to-mental-health>

(A brief version is at the end of this document if you need it. The MHF has a printable one on their website, see above, in case you would like to give a copy to each student.)

Eat healthily

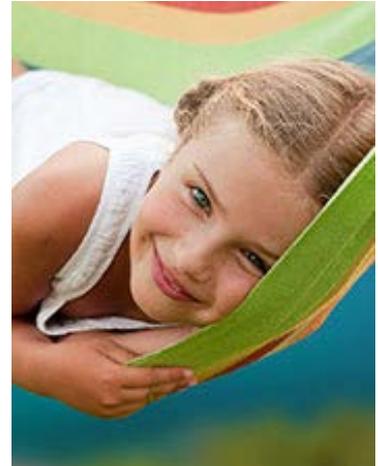


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Students will need:

- Something to write with
- Paper.

Take a break



Introduction:

Begin with a brief discussion about what we can do to keep our bodies healthy. Sometimes we need medical help, but there are things we can do to keep this to a minimum.

Then explain that there are skills we can use to help keep our minds healthy as well. Similarly, sometimes we need medical help, but there are things we can do to keep this to a minimum.

Action:

Put students into groups of 3-4 and ask them to make a list of 5 things people could do to maintain positive mental health. Ask them to be prepared to say why each suggestion would help.

Feedback.

How many have made the same suggestion/s as another group?

(Optional – make a list of all ideas that were thought of in two or more groups).

Now show them the list of 10 suggestions made by The Mental Health Foundation:

<http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/10-ways-to-look-after-your-mental-health/>

The groups see how many suggestions they share with MHF recommendations. Discuss as a class. Or think/pair/share each suggestion. It depends how much time you have.

Think/pair/share – what have they learned? What can they take away with them? Ask them to write down one change they are going to make as a result of this discussion.

Eg: exercise more; eat less sugar; make more of an effort to enjoy my family.

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Extension

Divide the class into ten groups. Allocate one of the Mental Health Foundation's suggestions to each group.

Each group research and do a 3 minute presentation on one of the Mental Health Foundation's suggestions. This can be prepared at school or for homework. Your call.

Suggested Task

Explain to the class the recommendation that they are talking about and how it can help? Create something for a display to help with your talk.

Keep active



Maintaining mental health

10 Ways to look after your mental health



Talk about your feelings

Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled. It's part of taking charge of your wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy.



Eat well

There are strong links between what we eat and how we feel – for example, caffeine and sugar can have an immediate effect. But food can also have a long-lasting effect on your mental health.



Keep in touch

Friends and family can make you feel included and cared for. They can offer different views from whatever's going on inside your own head. They can help keep you active, keep you grounded and help you solve practical problems.



Take a break

A change of scene or a change of pace is good for your mental health. It could be a five-minute pause from cleaning your kitchen, a half-hour lunch break at work or a weekend exploring somewhere new. A few minutes can be enough to de-stress you.



Accept who you are

Some of us make people laugh, some are good at maths, others cook fantastic meals. Some of us share our lifestyle with the people who live close to us, others live very differently. We're all different.

Maintaining mental health

10 Ways to look after your Mental Health continued



Keep active

Experts believe exercise releases chemicals in your brain that make you feel good. Regular exercise can boost your self-esteem and help you concentrate, sleep, look and feel better. Exercise also keeps the brain and your other vital organs healthy.



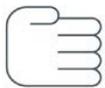
Ask for help

None of us are superhuman. We all sometimes get tired or overwhelmed by how we feel or when things go wrong. If things are getting too much for you and you feel you can't cope, ask for help.



Do something you're good at

What do you love doing? What activities can you lose yourself in? What did you love doing in the past? Enjoying yourself helps beat stress. Doing an activity you enjoy probably means you're good at it and achieving something boosts your self-esteem.



Care for others

Caring for others is often an important part of keeping up relationships with people close to you. It can even bring you closer together.