

TALKING TO TRUSTED ADULTS ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH AND REACHING OUT FOR HELP



Grades 4-7 Language Arts and Physical Education

Purpose of the Lesson:

One of the hardest components of mental health challenges in youth is that it can be isolating. You may have observed in your classroom that youth may seem to be struggling to hide their challenges, in an effort to fit in. Teaching students how to reach out for help is one of the most valuable mental health lessons, especially at a young age where they are developing their communication skills. In this lesson, students will practice using Conversation Cards to discuss mental health, which will help them develop their critical thinking and verbal communication skills. They will also leave the lesson with a “Reaching Out for Help” plan that they can keep in their back pocket for future use.

Curriculum Competencies:

Language Arts

- Recognize the role of language in personal, social, and cultural identity (Grade 4/5)
- Recognize how language constructs personal, social, and cultural identity (Grade 6/7)
- Exchange ideas and perspectives to build shared understanding (Grade 4/5)
- Exchange ideas and viewpoints to build shared understanding and extend thinking (Grade 6/7)
- Communicate in sentences and paragraphs, applying conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Grade 5)
- Communicate in writing using paragraphs and applying conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Grade 5)
- Use an increasing repertoire of conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Grade 6/7)

Physical and Health Education

- Describe and assess strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use (Grade 4)
- Describe and assess strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, for others (Grade 5/6/7)

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First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning requires exploration of one's identity
- Learning involves generational roles and responsibilities

Video

Grades 4/5: Talking Mental Health

Guiding Questions:

- *What are some signs that your mental health is struggling?*
- *How do you know when it is time to reach out for help?*
- *What is mental health?*
- *Why is mental health just as important as physical health?*
- *How can you listen to others when they need to talk about mental health?*
- *What are some examples of feelings that you can use to describe your mood?*
- *What can you do if your feelings are bothering you?*

Grades 6/7: We All Have Mental Health

Guiding Questions:

- Have you ever felt the way that the character feels in the video?
- What did you learn about mental health?
- What are the four components of mental health mentioned in the video? (Answer: feelings, emotions, thinking and mood.)
- What does good mental health mean?
- Can we still experience negative feelings if we have good mental health?
- How can we let our friends know we are there to talk if they need to?

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Preparation: Print the question cut-outs below and the Conversation Card Worksheet.

1) To introduce this lesson to students, start by watching the video about “Talking Mental Health” for Grades 4/5, (watch it [HERE](#)) and the video “We All Have Mental Health” for Grades 6/7 (watch it [HERE](#)).

2) Pause the video and use the Guiding Questions to spark discussion.

3) Once students have been introduced to the topic of the lesson, move on to the next activity. Divide your students into groups of 3 or 4, depending on the size of your class. Each group will be assigned 3 questions from our Conversation Cards. Find them [HERE](#) at the bottom of the page. (The questions are also available below to print, cut up, and hand to students.)

4) Follow-up Activity 1: Using the worksheet attached below titled “Conversation Card Worksheet,” students will first try to answer the questions assigned to them on their own, then together as a group. They will write down their answers in complete sentences. Then, go through the assigned conversation cards with each group so they can read the provided answer and write it down. At the end of the activity, students will discuss and reflect on what they have learned.

5) Get students to choose a volunteer who will share what their group has learned in the activity. They share their answers with the class.

6) Follow-up Activity 2: Now that students have learned more about mental health and stigma, they should hopefully feel more comfortable talking about their own mental health. The next part of this lesson helps students make a plan for who they will reach out to when they need help, what are some signs they should reach out, and what type of conversation starters they may use with their trusted adults. Find the worksheet titled “My Reaching Out for Help Plan” attached below.

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7) Lesson Closure: Emphasize to students that everyone has mental health, and that it is OK to talk about it. Just like they may need extra support if they broke their arm, sometimes they may also need help with their mental health. It may also be helpful to remind them that if they don't want to talk to someone at home, they can also talk to one of their teachers or school counsellors.

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

7) Follow-up Activity: Students will interpret and communicate ideas using symbols and elements to express meaning through the arts, as indicated in the Arts Education curriculum. Each student will need a canvas and acrylic paint. Get them to paint an abstract piece that represents inclusion. Allow them to have creative freedom and do not give too many instructions.

8) Lesson Closure: When students are done, hang their artwork up at school to celebrate and spread awareness about the importance of inclusion. Check in with students throughout the next week about what they learned in this lesson. When you notice a student being excluded, you can now refer to this lesson! This is a good foundation to open up further discussion about racism, sexism, homophobia, and other social justice issues. Most likely they have already been exposed to this type of exclusion or discrimination, whether it be at school or on TV. Understanding the effects that exclusion can have on someone's mental health will allow students to reflect more on their actions, and be more inclusive and accepting.

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Printable Conversation Cards Questions

1. What is mental health?
2. What is mental illness?

1. What is stigma? (Hint: judgment, assumption)
2. What is self-stigma?

1. How can stigma be harmful?
 2. How can you help eliminate stigma in school?
- (Stigma is when we make negative assumptions about a person, situation or quality based on what makes them different.)

1. Is addiction a mental illness? Explain why or why not.
2. How can you help a friend with mental illness?

1. What is depression?
2. What is anxiety?

1. Why is it important we talk about mental health?
2. Which is more important, mental health or physical health?

1. What does inclusion mean?
2. Why is inclusion important?

1. What do you do when you see one of your peers being bullied?
 2. You know, I'm just a kid. How can my voice make a difference in fighting stigma?
- (Stigma is when we make negative assumptions about a person, situation or quality based on what makes them different.)

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Conversation Card Worksheet

Talking about mental health is very important. The more we talk about it, the more we learn. Use the Conversation Cards available on the (Resources for Parents, Guardians and Caregivers) page to complete the following activity. Your teacher will assign you 3 questions. First, as a group, write down what you think the answer is. Then, write down the actual answer. Finally, reflect on what you have learned from this activity.

Question 1

Question:

Your Answer:

Answer on the Conversation Card:

Question 2:

Question:

Your Answer:

Answer on the Conversation Card:

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Conversation Card Worksheet

What did you learn from this activity? Answer this question in 2-5 sentences.

My Reaching Out for Help Plan:

Who will you reach out to when you need help? (Ex. Mom/Dad, Grandpa, Aunt...)

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)

What are some signs that you may need extra support? When can you tell your mental health is struggling? (These will be unique to you!)

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

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Conversation Starter Ideas

- *I've noticed that lately I've been feeling _____ . Can we talk about this?*
- *I have been feeling _____ because _____ OR I have been feeling _____ and I don't know why.*
- *I think my mental health is struggling. Could we chat about a plan that*
- *will help me get better?*