

FRIENDSHIP AND MENTAL WELLNESS



Grades 8-12 Friendship and Mental Wellness English Language Arts & Health Education

Purpose of the Lesson:

“As a medical doctor, I wish I could prescribe friendships for everyone,” says Kelli Harding, MD ([SOURCE](#)). One fundamental way to support mental wellness is through social connection. Remaining connected to friends can help us greatly during hard times and provide joy during good times. Mental health, physical health and overall wellbeing can be supported greatly by maintaining close friendships. This lesson explores the importance of friendships for happiness and mental wellness. The students will get a chance to reflect on their friendships and what they mean to them, and then write a letter to a friend to thank them for being in their life.

Curriculum Competencies:

Health Education

- Describe and assess strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others (Grade 8/9)
- Create and assess strategies for managing physical, emotional, and social changes during puberty and adolescence (Grade 8/9)
- Propose strategies for developing and maintaining healthy relationships (Grade 8/9)
- Develop skills for maintaining healthy relationships and responding to interpersonal conflict (Grade 10)
- Evaluate and explain strategies for promoting mental well-being (Grade 10)

After Grade 10, Health Education splits off into different subject areas. This lesson is still applicable for Grades 11 and 12.

Language Arts

- Assess and refine texts to improve their clarity, effectiveness, and impact according to purpose, audience, and message (Grade 8/9)
- Use an increasing repertoire of conventions of Canadian spelling, grammar, and punctuation (Grade 8/9)
- Select and use appropriate features, forms, and genres according to audience, purpose, and message (Grade 8/9)
- Transform ideas and information to create original texts (Grade 8/9)

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After Grade 9, English Language Arts splits off into different subject areas. This lesson is still applicable for Grades 11 and 12.

First Peoples Principles of Learning:

- Learning is holistic, reflexive, reflective, experiential, and relational (focused on connectedness, on reciprocal relationships, and a sense of place).
- Learning involves recognizing the consequences of one's actions.

Video

The critical importance of friends on your happiness - Mike Duffy

Guiding Questions:

- Why are friendships important?
- How can friendships support our mental wellness?
- How can friendships support the mental wellness of our friends?
- What are some ways you can maintain strong friendships?

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

Preparation: Queue up video/set up projector

1. Have the students watch the video “The critical importance of friends on your happiness” This can be found [HERE](#).

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

3. Discuss the connection between friendship and mental wellness. Share this information with your class:

Friends not only prevent loneliness, but they also:

- Increase your sense of belonging and purpose
- Boost your happiness and reduce your stress
- Improve your self-confidence and self-worth
- Help you cope with traumas, such as divorce, serious illness, job loss, or the death of a loved one
- Encourage you to change or avoid unhealthy lifestyle habits, such as excessive drinking or lack of exercise
- Help put your problems in context to develop a stronger sense of meaning and direction
- Increase feelings of security and help protect against stress
- Ease the emotional impact of difficulties and offer new ideas about tackling them ([Source](#))

4. Have your students reflect on their friendships. Start off by getting your students to write down some of their happiest memories - just a few lines that bring them back to happy moments in their lives. Then get your students to reflect on who they were with when those memories occurred.

Ask these questions to spark conversation:

- Were they alone?
- Were they with friends?
- Which friends were they with?
- Why were those memories happy? Was it because of their friends?

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Step-by-Step Lesson Plan

5. Explain the curriculum connections to your students. Inform your students that, as an exercise to maintain strong friendships and show appreciation for their friends, they are going to be writing a letter to a friend. These letters can take shape however your students choose - they can write it as a poem, a song, a creative writing piece, or a simple letter.

They should include: appreciation for their friend, why they are grateful to have them, and a happy memory they've shared together.

6. Lesson Closure. Discuss with your students that this activity was designed to get them to reflect upon the connections they have with their friends and how their friends support their happiness and mental wellbeing. It is important to be mindful about the way we treat those who are close to us. When we are conscious about what is important to keep friendships going, we can ensure that we maintain friendships that will last a lifetime! These kinds of friendships are so important for our mental wellness and wellbeing.