For The Instructor - Let’s Talk About Mental Health

A message to instructors ...

Mental health is a deeply personal issue that is usually difficult to discuss. Whether concerns revolve around an individual’s own mental health concerns or those of others, mental health affects entire families, colleagues, close friends and communities. Because of stigma, discrimination and fear, mental health concerns often create family secrets, e.g. something that is never discussed. Added to this dilemma is the fact that a symptom of mental illness is that people often do not recognize when their own thoughts/feelings are not normal. They may not feel sick and most of the time, people don’t have sufficient objectivity to see what others may be observing. This is one of the complexities of addressing topics and concerns surrounding mental health.

While it is a difficult challenge, please know that it’s usually a relief when people have opportunities to hear about and talk about such an important issue.

As this curriculum is taught, don’t be afraid to ask students how they’re doing or how they’re feeling. When this is done, be prepared to truly listen for the answers, even if conversations are difficult or uncomfortable. Mental health is a hard subject to teach and to truly understand. While you may not fully understand issues that arise, your most critical teaching role may be to facilitate knowledge and understanding and help people find resources. In discussing these issues, emotions - including your own - may run high. All endeavors to positively address the realities of mental illnesses and mental health challenges are needed. You’re embarking on a challenging – but worthwhile - journey to create a healthier, happier environment for those you serve.

Thank you!
**Addiction / Co-occurring disorders:** addiction problems pose mental health challenges, and mental health challenges often pose addiction problems. However, not all people with addictive disorders have mental illnesses, and vice versa. Addictions often have a strong base in genetics or inherited family genes and physical health. Addiction is not normally considered a mental illness or mental health challenge unless it occurs in conjunction with a mental illness. The facts are:

- 50% of people with an addictive disorder also have a mental illness or anxiety disorder.
- 20% of people with mental illnesses have some sort of addiction.
- There is a strong correlation between mental health and substance use, as alcohol or other substances are often used to medicate (or self-medicate) mental health symptoms.
- Addiction is not a mental health diagnosis, but addictions certainly impact and complicate how the brain - and therefore behaviors - are impacted.
- Addictions, however, may become so serious that they can lead to mental illnesses. Addiction is a vital topic to cover, check statements in the pre- and post-tests to ensure wording that’s accurate and comfortable within the context of the curriculum.

You might want to introduce the topic of genetics in this section. It’s sometimes hard to be self-aware of personal behaviors, but they may recognize those of family members or friends. Science continues to evolve, but there seem to be linkages to genetics in many mental health diagnoses as well as addiction problems. Genetics are not at the point of predicting who will develop illnesses, but it is at a point of recognizing vulnerabilities that make some people more likely to become ill.

- Additional resources to use to bring in some interesting statistics:
  - Family History and Genetics – www.ncadd.org/about-addiction/family-history-and-genetics
  - National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism
    - Binge Drinking
    - Consequences and Risks of Underage Drinking
    - Adverse Effects on Brain Development
**Let's Talk About Mental Health**

**Lesson Plan**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Materials needed</th>
<th>Handouts</th>
<th>Estimated time</th>
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</thead>
</table>
| • Dry erase board and markers  
• Pencils | “Let’s Talk About Mental Health” lesson  
“Listening Activity” handout  
Skills Practice Worksheet  
Pre-Assessment  
Post-Assessment | • 1 hour |

**NOTE TO INSTRUCTOR:** To accommodate the literacy levels and educational experiences of the participants, oral and/or group activities may be substituted for reading, writing, skills practice, and survey activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements</th>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Notes</th>
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</table>
| Preparation  | • Introduce the topic.  
(5 minutes)  
• Conduct the Pre-Assessment.  
(5 minutes)  
• Introduce the new vocabulary.  
(5 minutes) | Questions:  
1. Have you heard the term mental health before? What do you think it means?  
2. Why do you think it is important to take care of your mental health?  
   • Distribute Pre-Assessment, and ask students to turn it in when it is complete.  
   • Write the vocabulary words on the board and ask the students to read them aloud. Ask the students if they know what they mean. Provide students with the definitions from the lesson. |
| Instructions | • Read the lesson “Let’s Talk About Mental Health”.  
(10 minutes)  
• Identify the vocabulary words in the lesson.  
(5 minutes)  
• Distribute and review the Skills Practice Worksheet with the students and ask them to complete it. Use the Answer Key sheet to verify the correct answers.  
(25 minutes) | • Instructor leads guided reading of topic.  
• Students identify the vocabulary words by circling them in the lesson.  
   • **Activity 1:** Students have 10 minutes to complete this activity.  
   • **Activity 2:** Students have 10 minutes to complete this activity.  
   • **Activity 3:** Students have 5 minutes to complete this activity. |
| Concept Check| • Conduct Post-Assessment.  
(5 minutes) | • Students complete Post-Assessment. |

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*Developed by National PASS Center, Inc. – Leicester, NY and the National Center for Farmworker Justice, Inc. – Buda, TX. Funding from the Graduation and Outcomes for Success of Out-of-school Youth (GOSOSY) Migrant Education Program consortium grant.*
Let’s Talk About Mental Health

Pre-Assessment

1. It is just as important to care for your mental health as it is to care for your physical health.

   True   False

2. Which of the following is a type of mental health challenge?

   a. Depression
   b. Alcoholism
   c. Anxiety disorder
   d. All of the above

3. A very important part of your mental health is talking to someone close to you about how you are feeling.

   True   False

4. Is it healthy to be addicted to something?

   Yes   No

5. There is no treatment for mental illness.

   True   False

Total Correct:_______
Let’s Talk About Mental Health

Can you relate?
Miguel recently moved to the United States. Life in a new place can be difficult. He misses his friends and family back home. He works very hard. It seems like his supervisor always wants him to work harder. He does not make enough money to pay his bills and send money home to his family. He feels so anxious sometimes that he can’t sleep. Some days he feels very sad and tense and does not want to go to work. Luis, his friend, sees that Miguel is not doing well and goes to check on him.

"Miguel, are you okay? You were not at work today."
"I’m fine but I feel very tired. I feel stressed. Sometimes I feel very sad."
"I’m sorry, Miguel. I felt the same way when I moved here. Maybe you should talk to a counselor. It helped me a lot!"
"I don’t need to see a counselor. People who see counselors are weak. I will be fine. I can take care of myself."

"If you talk with a counselor you are not weak. You go to the doctor to take care of your body, right?"
"Well, yes."
"It is just as important to take care of your mental health."
"I had not thought of it like that!"

We all need to take care of our mental health. This is just as important as taking care of our physical health!

What is mental health?
Mental health is a state of well-being of the mind and emotions. A person who is mentally healthy can face day to day problems that occur. This is hard for a person who is not mentally healthy. This person’s feelings, thoughts or relationships can make him or her feel very anxious. There are many types of mental health conditions. Anxiety disorders, depression, and addiction problems are common types of mental health conditions. A mental health condition may be so serious that it can become a mental illness.

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<tr>
<th>Anxiety Disorder</th>
<th>Depression</th>
<th>Addiction Problems</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A person with an anxiety disorder:</td>
<td>A person with depression:</td>
<td>A person with an addiction problem:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• feels worried all the time, even when there is no reason to worry</td>
<td>• feels sad and hopeless most of the time</td>
<td>• uses alcohol or drugs to forget about problems or to try to take away pain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• thinks something bad may happen</td>
<td>• thinks he/she does not matter and is not useful to anyone</td>
<td>• feels that drinking alcohol or taking drugs is a big part of his or her life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• may feel that his/her heart beats very fast</td>
<td>• wants to be alone</td>
<td>• may have problems with family and at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• may sweat for no reason.</td>
<td>• may lose interest in activities that he/she really likes</td>
<td>• may not be able to handle responsibilities.</td>
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Where can I get help?

Getting help is important if someone wants to feel better. Getting help is a sign of strength, not of weakness. There are many people and services that can help you:

- A doctor – See your primary care doctor. Your doctor may refer you to a mental health specialist. The doctor may prescribe medicine to help you feel better.
- Counseling – Family doctors, mental health specialists, school counselors, and church leaders can help you. They are trained to listen and offer guidance when you need it.
- Family and friends – A very important part of your mental health is talking to someone close to you about how you are feeling.

If you think someone you know has a mental illness, try to show that you are there to help. For example, you can listen if the person wants to talk. You can help the person find specialists and services that can help.

With the right treatment it is possible to get better and be mentally healthy.

Vocabulary & Definitions

**Stress:** When there is a change in your life, your body can respond to that change. Good, tragic or sudden events in life can cause stress. Losing a job or getting married, for example, can cause stress. If you have stress you may not feel like yourself.

**Counselor:** A counselor is a person trained to listen and give guidance. A counselor can help with personal and mental health problems. When someone talks with a counselor, the counselor cannot tell others what the person says. This information is confidential.

**Anxiety:** Anxiety is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or tension. You may feel anxiety if you are afraid. You may also feel anxiety if you do not know what will happen.

**Depression:** A person with depression feels very sad. He or she may feel that there is no hope. These feelings can last for weeks.

**Addiction:** An addiction is when a person cannot stop using a substance such as alcohol or drugs. This can cause serious problems with family, work, and the law. Addiction can happen with drugs, alcohol or even food, sex, or the Internet.

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Let's Talk About Mental Health

Listening Activity

Listening Activity

**Purpose:** To practice listening comprehension

**Time:** 5 minutes

1. Tell your students that in this activity they will practice their listening comprehension skills.
2. State that you are going to read five different sentences twice.
3. Let them know that after you finish reading the sentence for the second time, they will need to fill in the blank.
4. At the end, check the students’ answers to make sure they are correct. If some students do not have the right answer, invite other students to participate in the discussion until the information is clear.

**Activity 3: Listen and Fill in the Blank**

Listen to your teacher’s instructions carefully and mark the correct answer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
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</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. You may have an __________ disorder if you feel worried all the time even when there is no reason for it.</td>
<td>anxiety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. You are not a __________ person when you get help from a doctor or a __________.</td>
<td>weak counselor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If you have been feeling sad, lonely, or hopeless most of the time, you may have __________.</td>
<td>depression</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When you take care of your __________, you will feel __________ and able to face your problems.</td>
<td>mental health good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. It is good for your mental health when you share your feelings with someone you trust like a __________ or a member of your __________.</td>
<td>friend</td>
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**Activity 1: Let’s Read!**

Daniela and Andrea are classmates and best friends. They are very close. They tell each other everything. But lately, Andrea seems different. She seems worried all the time. She misses school a lot. She does not spend time with Daniela. She does not tell Daniela about what is happening. Daniela’s mom tells her that Andrea’s dad lost his job recently. Daniela is very worried about her friend. She does not know what to do.

1. What do you think is happening with Andrea? What details in the story help you? ______________
   ______________

2. How can Daniela help her friend? ______________________________

**Activity 2: Vocabulary**

Match the vocabulary word from the lesson to the definition.

A. It is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or tension.

B. Losing a job or the death of a loved one can cause this.

C. This happens when a person cannot stop using substances like drugs or alcohol. This may cause serious problems with family, work, and the law.

D. A person trained to listen and give guidance, especially on personal and mental health problems. Everything you share is confidential.

E. A strong feeling of sadness and hopelessness that can last for weeks at a time.

**Activity 3: Listen and Fill in the Blank**

Listen to your teacher’s instructions carefully and mark the correct answer.

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<td>5</td>
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Let’s Talk About Mental Health  
Post-Assessment

1. It is just as important to care for your mental health as it is to care for your physical health. 
   Circle the correct answer.  
   True  False

2. Which of the following is a type of mental health challenge?
   a. Depression  
   b. Alcoholism  
   c. Anxiety disorder  
   d. All of the above

3. A very important part of your mental health is talking to someone close to you about how you are feeling. 
   True  False

4. Is it healthy to be addicted to something? 
   Yes  No

5. There is no treatment for mental illness. 
   True  False

Total Correct:__________

What should you do if you think your friend has a mental illness? (not scored)

______________________________________________________________________________

______________________________________________________________________________

____________________________  ____________________  ______________

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1. What do you think is happening with Andrea? What details in the story help you?
   Andrea seems very worried. She may be worried because her dad lost his job. She may be worried about money. She may be sad thinking about having to move away from her friend. Details are: she is worried and not talking to her best friend; she is missing school; her dad lost his job.

2. How can Daniela help her friend?
   Daniela can not tell her friend that she wants to help. When Andrea is ready to talk, Daniela can be a good listener. Daniela can recommend that Andrea see a doctor or a counselor.

Activity 2: Vocabulary
Match the vocabulary word from the lesson to the definition.

A. It is a feeling of worry, nervousness, or tension.
B. Losing a job or the death of a loved one can cause this.
C. This happens when a person cannot stop using substances like drugs or alcohol. Their use may cause serious problems with family, work, and the law.
D. A person trained to listen and give guidance on personal and mental health problems. Everything you share is confidential.
E. A strong feeling of sadness or no hope that can last for weeks at a time.

Activity 3: Listen and Fill in the Blank
Listen to your teacher’s instructions carefully and mark the correct answer.

1. You may have an **ANXIETY** disorder if you feel worried all the time even when there is no reason for it.
2. You are not a **WEAK** person when you get help from a doctor or a **COUNSELOR**.
3. If you have been feeling sad, lonely, or hopeless most of the time, you may have **DEPRESSION**.
4. When you take care of your **MENTAL HEALTH**, you will feel **GOOD** and able to face your problems.
5. It is good for your mental health when you share your feelings with someone you trust like a **FRIEND** or a member of your **FAMILY**.

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