

BEHIND HAPPY FACES

KEY



LEARNING OBJECTIVES:

The main points are included in PowerPoint presentations. In the event you do not have access to a computer/projector, write examples and instructions on flip chart paper in the front of the room.



HANDOUT:

It is time to distribute a handout/materials to participants. These can be found at the end of each lesson if it includes a handout. Make copies in advance!



WRITE ON FLIP CHART:

The main points are included in PowerPoint presentations. In the event you do not have access to a computer/projector, write examples and instructions on flip chart paper in the front of the room.



GROUP DISCUSSION:

It is time to prompt participants with questions or dialogue for group discussion.



INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY:

It is time for an activity, like scenarios or a game. These activities help participants feel more connected to the information.



INSTRUCTIONS:

Read information or directions aloud to the groups.



WATCH THE VIDEO:

Each lesson includes videos to help introduce the topic and engage viewers to take part in the lessons. It is important to make sure you test them in advance to make sure the video and audio work on your technology.

Lesson 1: Understanding Mental Health

This lesson provides a definition of mental health and discusses the reasons students do not seek help for mental health challenges. The goal is to allow students to explore their current thoughts and feelings about mental health, while offering a clear definition for them to build a positive foundation of understanding. The first step in getting someone to access help or to accept treatment is learning why she or he may be resistant. Every mental health challenge is different for each person.

FACILITATOR

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If someone is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, she could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

25 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

- State a correct definition of mental health.
- Identify personal barriers seeking help, explore the sources of those, and work on how to address them.

SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will play a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so connect a laptop to a projector and screen.

GROUP SIZE:

- Groups should be no larger than 10 (ideal size is 7) to make sure connections and conversations remain personal.
- Before the lesson begins, ask students to count off into groups of 10 (or less) then move to different areas of the room.
- We recommend placing a trusted person in each group who can help follow instructions and facilitate small group discussion.
- If you are doing this lesson with an organization that has more than 200 members, we recommend you use more than one room with different facilitators for all of the small group work.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- For each group: One flip chart piece of paper and markers
- For each person: One notecard
- Projector and screen
- "Understanding Mental Health" PowerPoint
- "Understanding Mental Health" Video

What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of this first lesson is to give students a clear definition of mental health and have them participate in an activity that allows them to connect further. When most students hear the words, “mental health,” they tend to think of negative associations. They think of mental health disorders, difficult events or celebrity breakdowns. However, the actual definition of mental health is not a person who has a problem. Mental health is how we address the challenges in our lives. The key components of mental health are communication, relationships and coping skills. Students need a clear definition of what mental health is as a starting point to be able to understand how to grow their mental health. When mental health isn’t clearly defined, then students do not think they need to work on aspects of it and they continue to equate mental health solely with people who have a mental health disorder.

As you teach this lesson you want to reinforce that mental health is as important as physical health. Both of these concepts have a lot of similarities in how we have to work hard to create what we need. Physical and mental health are greatly impacted by our biological predispositions, life experiences, socio-economic status and access to resources.

The first exercise asks students to write down all of the things they think of when they hear the words mental health. They do this activity in order to help them engage with the people, things and scenarios that they think about mental health. The second part of the exercise is for students to look at their list and determine how many of the words have a positive connotation, negative connotation or are neutral. Next, students count how many associations they have for each category and discuss why they had more of one association than another category. It’s extremely common for students to have a high amount of negative associations. This exercise engages students and allows them to see that the media and other examples have incorrectly shaped their view of mental health. When you provide the correct definition of mental health in the lesson, it offers an opportunity for students to see the correct definition in a more memorable manner.

The second exercise asks students to write down one thing that they wish people knew about them and if people did know this piece of information it would help them better understand them. This should be a meaningful experience, something that happened to them, a diagnosis they have, a way they were treated or something that shaped their lives. Students will write this on a notecard and not sign their name. The purpose of the activity is for all of the cards to be anonymous. If your classroom is small, you can collect the notecards, shuffle them and pass them back out to all of the students. If your group is very large then they can shuffled the notecards in their small groups. Students will read the notecard that they have out loud to the group. Next, they will go back around the group and say one theme that stuck out to them.

You should use this exercise as an opportunity for students to see that they are not alone, that other people go through difficult events and often stay silent and that they can become empowered with this connection. It is extremely important for you to focus on the fact that students have worked hard and are not defined by what they wrote on the cards. Most of them are the people they have become in spite of what they wrote on the cards.

This first lesson lays the foundation for students to learn more about their mental health. It provides them with an accurate definition as well as a chance to share their own experiences in a safe and anonymous manner.

FACILITATOR :

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between students identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.

VIDEO (5 MINUTES)

To start, let's watch a video that explains the purpose of the lesson..

Play the "Understanding Mental Health Video" for the group.



INTRODUCTION:

- We're going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other.
CHANGE PPT SLIDE
- 20-25% of students experience a mental health disorder each year.
CHANGE PPT SLIDE
- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for people ages 15-24.**CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Outside of mental health disorders students are dealing with lack of sleep, stress, substance abuse, body image issues and other challenges. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- 66% of students don't seek help for their mental health. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The purpose of these next exercises is to help us better understand a definition of mental health and our own personal barriers to achieving effective ways of addressing challenges in our lives. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This part of the lesson is vital to helping students understand the purpose of the activities they will be doing. Stress the introductory points to help everyone understand the goals of the workshop.

EXERCISE 1 (10 MINUTES)



PART 1 INSTRUCTIONS:

You will have three minutes to do this activity. In your groups, answer this question: What words, ideas, people, movies, songs, books, celebrities and scenarios do you think of when you hear the words mental health?

On one piece of paper, each group should make a list of everything they think of when they hear the words mental health. Remember, the categories to discuss are words, ideas, people, movies, songs, books, celebrities and scenarios. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Give the groups three (or so) minutes to discuss. Make sure each group has written at least 7 words and move them on to the next instructions.

PART 2 INSTRUCTIONS:

You will have three minutes for this next part of the exercise. On the list you just made:

- How many of the words your group wrote down have a negative connotation, how many have a positive connotation and how many are neutral? Count the totals.
- Why do you think your group had more negative or positive answers? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- *Give the groups three minutes or so to categorize and discuss.*



SHARE:

Ask each group to choose a representative to report how many negative, positive and neutral associations their group has. Each representative should also state why their group feels they had more negative or positive associations. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- We did this exercise to identify what people think of when they hear the words mental health. It's important to know your thoughts in order to have an honest conversation about the topic.
- Often people associate the words mental health with negative ideas. Some people only think of worst-case scenarios, suicide, or diagnoses of mental health disorders.
- Mental health is not when a person has a problem. Mental health is how all of us manage our emotions. You can build your mental health like you do your physical health. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The World Health Organization's definition of mental health-Mental health is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.
- By realizing that mental health is really more in connection to overall wellness, we can decrease the stigma. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 2 (10 MINUTES)

- The goal of this next exercise is to learn more about the mental health challenges we are all trying to address.
- Sometimes we aren't aware other people are going through the same difficulty we have experienced.
- This exercise will be completely anonymous.
- It requires trust and a willingness to share.
- The work in this exercise should be confidential to the group. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

You can ask the groups if they would be more comfortable reading the notecards from other groups in the room, so that they can be more anonymous. If groups decide to do this you can collect the cards from one group and give them to a different group. The goal of the exercise is for them to see what others are going through. It is ok for them to read another group's notecards.



INSTRUCTIONS:

- Each person in your group has a notecard.
- On the notecard write down one thing that you wish people knew about you. If others knew this piece of information they would better understand you.
- This should be about a meaningful experience, how you deal with emotional challenges, something that has happened to you/your family or something that affects you. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- After everyone has finished writing, one person should collect all of the cards and shuffle them. Then pass the notecards to each member of the group. It's OK if you get your own notecard.
- Each member reads the notecard aloud. No one should identify who wrote which card.
- After all notecards have been read aloud, each member of the group will say one word or thought that stayed with them from what was shared. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Give the groups 5 minutes (or so) to complete the activity.



SHARE:

- What did you learn from this exercise?
- What did you find you have things in common with other people that you didn't realize?
- How do you feel more connected to others after hearing what they wrote down? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- Each person's experience with mental health is different. This exercise showed you that you aren't alone. It's important to have conversations to feel connected to each other.
- None of you are defined by what you wrote down on the cards. Most of you are who you are because you have worked on the issues that have happened to you.
- Building a foundation of how to address mental health requires us to communicate honestly and openly.
- The stigma surrounding mental health has multiple layers and affects all of us. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

WRAP-UP:

- Remember mental health is not having a mental illness. It is a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Understanding mental health is an important. Having a connection to the emotions of our other people helps us form stronger friendships and care about each other more. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Lesson 2: Your Mental Health

The Your Mental Health lesson helps students better understand the mental health challenges in their lives, and learn about a spectrum to identify how they are addressing those challenges. Students are often overwhelmed by the amount of mental health challenges that impact them. Knowing how to categorize those challenges helps a person recognize how severe the issues are. When someone is more aware of what is affecting her or him, then she or he can begin to determine how to work towards having a balanced life.

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If someone is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, she could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

18 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

- Classify mental health challenges into five categories.
- Identify where they are on the mental health spectrum.
- Connect how mental health challenges impact where a person is on the mental health spectrum.

SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will be playing a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so you will need a computer connected to a projector and screen.

GROUP SIZE:

- Groups should be no larger than 10 (ideal size is 7) to make sure connections and conversations remain personal.
- Before the lesson begins, ask students to count off into groups of 10 (or less) then move to different areas of the room.
- We recommend placing a trusted person in each group who can help follow instructions and facilitate small group discussion.
- If you are doing this lesson with an organization that has more than 200 members, we recommend you use more than one room with different facilitators for all of the small group work.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Projector and Screen
- “Your Mental Health” PowerPoint
- “Your Mental Health” Video
- FOR EACH SMALL GROUP:
 - One piece of paper and markers.
 - One set of 24 notecards—copy and cut from the Your Mental Health handout.
- FOR EACH PERSON: One notecard

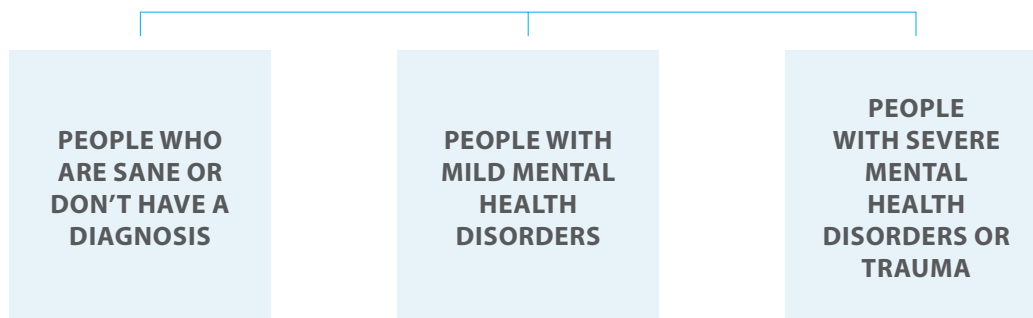
What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the second lesson is to help students develop clarity on different mental health challenges and expand their vocabulary in order to talk about their mental health in a more expansive manner. Most students believe that all of the mental health challenges they face fall under one umbrella. This creates a lot of confusion, because a student who has some level of stress may think it is the same as having an anxiety disorder. Another student may go through a breakup and think it is the same as having clinical depression. Both of these examples can be dismissive of people who are experiencing mental health disorders. The student who is stressed out, may tell the student with an anxiety disorder to just calm down. Likewise, the student who went through a breakup, may tell the student with clinical depression to get happy. Students need more of an education on the different types of mental health challenges they are trying to address.

The first exercise educates students about five categories for mental health challenges. The categories are Everyday Challenges, Environmental Factors, Significant Events, Mental Health Disorders and Developmental Disabilities. The definitions of these categories is in the lesson plan. Students will be given 24 terms and asked to separate them into the five categories. Depending on how they look at the duration of each term will greatly impact which category they want to place a term. For example, bullying could be an everyday challenge if it is happening every day. It could be an environmental factor if a sibling is bullying someone at home. It could be a significant event if it happened once and isn't happening anymore. The learning opportunity for students in this exercise is to debate about which category the more common mental health challenges fit into, which allows them to remember that Everyday Challenges, Environmental Factors and Significant Events are separate. The exercise simultaneously reinforces what constitutes a mental health disorder and developmental disability. Both of these actions further clarify that mental health disorders and developmental disabilities are not the same as other challenges.

The second exercise introduces students to a different type of mental health spectrum. The spectrum that most students are familiar with is one that ranges from people being sane or not having a mental health disorder to people having severe mental health disorders.



This spectrum is problematic for two reasons. First, it promotes the concept that people with mental health disorders can't be on the same side of the spectrum as people who are sane, which we know is not true. Second, it furthers the stereotype that only people with a mental health disorder need to seek help for their mental health.

The mental health spectrum in this lesson has five places on it and is focused on balance. The five places on the spectrum are able to balance, difficult to balance, need help to balance, need constant assistance to balance and unable to balance. The definitions for these places on the spectrum are in the lesson. The key differences between this spectrum and the one mentioned above is that everyone is on this spectrum and their place on it can change quickly depending on what is occurring in their lives. This spectrum also

normalizes mental health by placing needing help in the middle of the spectrum. When teaching this spectrum it's important to remind students that the spectrum isn't about judgment or functionality. Someone can be unable to balance their mental health due to grief, trauma or a significant event for months, but still be functioning as they typically do. There are more details about how to teach this exercise in the lesson plan.

Creating a new vocabulary to talk about mental health is a critical element of mental health literacy. Students have a lengthy list of words to describe their physical health. It's time to give them the same ability to describe their mental health.

FACILITATOR :

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between members identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

As students enter the room, assign them to small groups and hand out the 24 notecards and piece of flip chart paper to each group.



YOUR MENTAL HEALTH VIDEO (2 MINUTES:)

- We're going to watch a video that introduces this lesson.
- *Play the "Your Mental Health Video" for the large group.* **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 1 (10 MINUTES)

INTRODUCTION:

- We're going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- We don't have a vocabulary to describe mental health. When people are asked how their mental health is they often say it's good, bad or fine. Many people confuse everyday scenarios with mental health disorders. This confusion dismisses people experiences with mental health disorders. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Oftentimes students want to work on how to balance their lives—their mental health—but don't know where to begin. We need more clarity on the differences between mental health challenges in our lives.
- This lesson gives us a map to better determine what is happening to us and how to talk about our challenges. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



INSTRUCTIONS:

- This exercise is to help us better understand the range of mental health challenges students can experience in life.
- Oftentimes a person can be dealing with stress, a breakup and depression. Each of these challenges is in different categories. It's helpful to know how to separate the challenges. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Each group should turn a flip chart page horizontally.
- Write these headings across the top of the page from left to right: Everyday Challenges, Environmental Factors, Significant Events, Mental Health Disorders, and Developmental Disabilities. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Everyday Challenges	Environmental Factors	Significant Events	Mental Health Disorders	Developmental Disabilities
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FACILITATOR NOTES:

Each group should already have the 24 Your Mental Health notecards you copied and cut out before this lesson. Each card has one mental health challenge written on it. You will ask the groups to put each card into the categories. Some of these challenges like bipolar disorder should only fit in one category. Other challenges like bullying can be debated to fit under multiple categories.

THESE ARE THE DESCRIPTIONS FOR THE 5 DIFFERENT CATEGORIES:

- Everyday Challenge: Issues all of us try to balance on an everyday basis.
- Environmental Factor: Refers to how the home you grew up in, the school you attended and the way you were raised affects your mental health.
- Significant Event: Experiences with loss, change or rejection that have a major impact on a person's life.
- Mental Health Disorder: Any disorder that can be diagnosed by a mental health professional.
- Developmental Disability: A disability that manifests before a person reaches 22 years of age and can cause significant impairment in a person's life. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



INSTRUCTIONS:

- You have five minutes to discuss each of these 24 cards and decide in which category each card belongs.
- Some of the cards could be placed in more than one category.
- It's OK for you to keep those cards separate and identify the categories in which the card could fit. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Give the groups five minutes (or so) to complete the activity.

SUMMARIZE:

- Let's look at this table to see where the cards could fit.
- Depending on how you look at the duration of each card it could fit in multiple categories. For example bullying could be an everyday challenge if it is happening everyday. It could be an environmental factor because it could happen at school or at home. It could also be a significant event if it happens one time. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The goal of this exercise is for you to see the different categories where a card could fit. The only answers that have definite places in the categories are mental health disorders and developmental disabilities.
- Mental Health Disorders: The National Institute of Mental Health estimates 25 percent of the adult population in the United States experiences a mental health disorder in a given year.
- Developmental Disabilities: Estimates show that 1 to 3 percent of the U.S. population has an intellectual disability, 1 percent of people have autism/Asperger's Syndrome and 1 percent of people have ADHD. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Everyday Challenges	Environmental Factors	Significant Events	Mental Health Disorders	Developmental Disabilities
Stress	Sexual Abuse	Death	Anxiety Disorders	Autism
Lack of Sleep	Physical Abuse	Divorce	Depression	Intellectual
Low Self Esteem	Bullying	Break ups	Eating Disorders	Disabilities
Body Image Issues	Parents with drug/ alcohol addiction	Identifying Sexual	Drug/Alcohol Addiction	ADHD
		Orientation	Bipolar Disorder	
		Rejection	Schizophrenia	
		Adjusting/Applying to College	Borderline Personality Disorder	

EXERCISE 2 (5 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS:

- We are all trying to address different challenges in our lives. Yet, sometimes we aren't talking about them with those who can help.
- Opening up in these lessons allows us to support each other and know how to be there when it matters most. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Able to Balance	Difficult to Balance	Needs Assistance to Balance	Needs Constant Assistance to Balance	Not Able to Balance
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Explain each part of the spectrum to everyone. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- **Able to Balance:** A person who manages harmful stress, is aware of triggers and has effective coping mechanisms. This person is able to balance their life without often thinking about their mental health.
- **Difficult to Balance:** A person who is aware of stress, triggers and ineffective coping, but struggles to find a way to address challenges effectively. This person is aware that they have issues, but is not actively seeking help.
- **Needs Assistance to Balance:** A person who is triggered by stress, feels hopeful to change how they cope and may need therapy, meds, exercise, yoga, or set structure to specifically address her or his mental health. You don't need to have a mental health disorder to need help balancing your mental health.
- **Needs Constant Care to Balance:** A person who needs a structured life that includes, supportive, nurturing people around him/her constantly. She may need to be part of a program or treatment center.
- **Not Able to Balance:** A person who has a mental health challenge so severe that even with help she or he is unable to engage with those around her. This could be someone who went through a breakup, parents' divorce, death or has a mental health disorder. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS:

- On a notecard each person in the small group will write down where you feel you are on this spectrum.
- You can only choose one place. It is ok for you to choose a place between two locations on the spectrum. You could be between able to balance and difficult to balance etc. Your answer will be anonymous to the larger group.
- The goal is to get an accurate assessment of where you are, so you can become more aware of what you need to add balance to your life. **GO BACK TO SLIDE WITH DESCRIPTIONS THEN GO TO SLIDE FOR**
- Give the groups three (or so) minutes to discuss. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE

Ask a representative from each group to count the total numbers for each place on the spectrum and report it to the larger group. Keep track of the counts for each piece of the spectrum as the small groups report. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- If anyone is comfortable, tell us why you identified with each category on the spectrum.
- Can someone who feels they are in the Able to Balance category share why?
- Someone who feels they are in the Difficult to Balance share why you feel that way?
- Someone in the Needs Assistance to Balance?
- Someone in the Needs Constant Assistance to Balance?
- Someone in the Not Able to Balance category?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

If there is a category or categories no one identified with, it is OK. Tell the group it is OK that no one is in a category. Review the definition of the category and reassure members that if they are in that category at some point in their lives, they can find a way to balance whatever challenge they are facing.

SUMMARIZE:

- The goal of this activity is to help you identify how you are addressing your mental health.
- Where you are on this spectrum today may not be where you are on it next week or in a month.
- As our situations change our ability to address what is happening can also change. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

WRAP-UP:

- Knowing where we are on the mental health spectrum and what challenges impact our mental health better prepares us for the future and improves our ability to live in balance.
- It's important for you to have a vocabulary to talk to others about mental health. By letting each other know where you are on this spectrum you will be able to support each other with what you need to find balance.
- If you need to talk to someone about your mental health, the counseling center on campus is a great place to start. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

BIPOLAR DISORDER

DEATH

BREAK UP

LACK OF SLEEP

ADHD

LOW SELF ESTEEM

PHYSICAL ABUSE

ANXIETY DISORDERS

AUTISM	DRUG/ALCOHOL ADDICTION
SCHIZOPHRENIA	PARENTS with DRUG/ALCOHOL ADDICTION
SEXUAL ABUSE	DEPRESSION
EATING DISORDERS	UNHEALTHY STRESS

BODY IMAGE ISSUES	BORDERLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER
PARENTS' DIVORCE	REJECTION
INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES	APPLYING/ADJUSTING TO COLLEGE
BULLYING	IDENTIFYING SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Lesson 3: Changing Ineffective Coping

The Changing Ineffective Coping lesson explains the differences between effective and ineffective coping and allows students to further examine how they are addressing issues in their lives. Changing coping mechanisms can be a long process that requires awareness and effort. The process of changing coping requires one to build new pathways in the brain to break old behaviors/habits. Changing coping can help a person gain positive emotional growth.

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If someone is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, she could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

25 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

State a definition of coping.

Differentiate between effective and ineffective coping.

SETTING:

Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.

You will be playing a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so you will need a computer connected to a projector and screen.

GROUP SIZE:

Students will be working in pairs or groups of three for this lesson.

If you are doing with an organization that has more than 200 members, we recommend you use more than one room with different facilitators for all of the small group work.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

For each person: One copy of the Changing Ineffective Coping handout and a pen

Projector and Screen

"Changing Ineffective Coping" PowerPoint

"Changing Ineffective Coping" Video

What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the third lesson is to help students explore their coping mechanisms. They will do three exercises to help them understand the separation of causes of stress, feelings they have and how they cope, they will learn to distinguish the difference between effective and ineffective coping and learn about self-compassion.

The first exercise offers students the opportunity to write down three causes of stress, three feelings from those causes and three coping mechanisms they use for those feelings or causes. The goal of this exercise is to help students begin to identify what impacts their lives and how they deal with it. You will find that some students are more familiar with one category over the others. Give them an opportunity to write down answers for each category. The main reason you are having them separate causes, feelings and coping mechanisms, is because students are often coping with a feeling from stress, while confusing it for the cause. For example, a cause of stress for one student may be their family. They cope with that cause of stress by avoiding their family or fighting with them. However, they may not just be coping with the stress from their family. They may feel frustrated, angry, sad, overwhelmed, annoyed or any other emotion when they talk to their family. If they can become more aware of those emotions and how they can cope with the emotions, then they may be able to develop a deeper relationship with their family. There are many students who benefit from identifying how their emotions impact their coping mechanisms.

The second exercise has students look at their list of coping mechanisms and determine which of them are effective and which are ineffective. The definitions for effective and ineffective are in the lesson. The short definitions are that effective coping builds an individual, their mental health, their physical health and their relationships. Ineffective coping takes away from those elements. After students identify their ineffective coping skills they should write down how that coping skill could become more effective. For example, if someone's ineffective coping skill is eating jars of Nutella, that could be more effective if they put Nutella on fruit. Your role in facilitating this exercise is not to argue and judge coping skills, it's for students to become more familiar with developing this skill.

After discussing the differences between effective and ineffective coping they will learn the steps to change ineffective coping. It's important to focus on the neuroscience of habit formation when talking about how to change coping skills. The longer we use neural pathways the more automatic our behaviors become. If someone starts hiding their emotions in middle school, then it can be difficult to know how to talk openly when they get to high school or college. It can take months or years to develop new coping skills. There are many setbacks along the way. Having a supportive team of people that allows a person to fail and celebrates their small victories is critical to their success.

The third exercise is about self-compassion. Many people are familiar with the term self-esteem, which can often be a judgment or determined to be high or low. Self-compassion is how we treat ourselves. It's the internal voice we use inside our heads. We will talk to ourselves more than we will ever talk to another person. Our internal voice is often louder and more important than any external voice. The exercise the students do will have them write down a difficult event at the top of a page. On the left side they will write down what they said to themselves during the difficult event. On the right side they will write down what they would say to a friend in the same situation. Many students will realize that they treat themselves harsher than they treat a friend. It's important to have a conversation with the students about why this happens and how they can change it.

This lesson helps students begin to see the coping skills they use and what they need to do to change them. If a student has really low self-compassion then their chance of changing their coping mechanisms is extremely low. Becoming aware of the importance of using all of these skills can help a student learn how to cope more effectively.

FACILITATOR :

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between members identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

As students enter the room, give each member the Changing Ineffective Coping handout.



COPING VIDEO (2 MINUTES)

This video features an introduction about coping mechanisms and what you will learn in this lesson.

Play “Changing Ineffective Coping Video” for the larger group. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 1 (10 MINUTES)

INTRODUCTION:

- We’re going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Coping is one of the most important elements of exploring mental health. The goal of this lesson is to help us determine what our coping mechanisms are and how to change ineffective ones.
- Think about it this way: A lot of us use exercise to strengthen our bodies. Learning about coping mechanisms is a way to strengthen our minds. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- If you want to change your ineffective coping mechanisms you need to become aware of the behavior you are using, then practice effective behaviors.
- It takes a unique amount of time for different people to change coping mechanisms. Mental health disorders can also complicate this process.
- When trying to adapt or change a coping mechanism, stay patient and don’t give up. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This part of the lesson is vital to helping members understand the purpose of the activities they will be doing. Stress the introductory points to help everyone understand the goals of the workshop.



INSTRUCTIONS:

Coping is the way we deal with stress from adversity, disadvantage and other problems in our lives. Some examples of coping mechanisms are drinking alcohol, self harm, flipping out or talking about your feelings with a friend. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- For the next exercise, you are going to be working in pairs, so once I finish giving the instructions, choose a partner. If there is an uneven number it is okay to work in groups of three. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- In a survey of 500 students, the top three answers to the question, “How do you cope with stress?” were eating, drinking alcohol and exercising.
- The survey showed that the most common causes of stress are school, dating, thinking about the future and finances. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- You and your partner(s) will have five minutes to write down 3 causes of stress, 3 feelings from those causes and 3 ways you cope with those causes/feelings.
- For example someone gets stressed out when she thinks about the future. It makes her feel nervous. She copes with that by talking about the future with her friends, sometimes she copes by drinking alcohol.
- Give them 5 minutes to write down the 3 causes, feelings and coping mechanisms. Then come back together as a large group to discuss. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- I want to hear from several groups about how the causes of stress make them feel and how they cope with those causes and feelings. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- *Have at least three groups share their answers for each category.*

SUMMARIZE:

It's important to separate the causes from the feelings, because sometimes you are coping with how a cause of stress makes you feel. For example school may be a huge cause of stress, but it could be the feeling of being overwhelmed or afraid that leads you to cope a certain way.

We need to be able to identify what a coping mechanism is in order for us to be able to change it.

We don't need to change all of our coping mechanisms. The next exercise will help us determine which ones we may want to work on making more effective. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 2 (5 MINUTES)

Effective coping reduces stress, lessens the intensity of your triggers, allows you to face more challenges, helps you become more productive and allows you to be more engaged with the people in your life.

Ineffective coping reduces your ability to address stress, prevents you from developing your mental health, and can be harmful to your overall physical/mental health. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This exercise is meant for students to identify their own coping mechanisms as a guide for themselves. You do not need to engage with students to help them see that a coping mechanism they feel is effective may be ineffective. The goal is for them to begin to identify these differences on their own.



INSTRUCTIONS:

- This exercise is meant to help you identify a coping mechanism that you might want to change.
- You now have three minutes to separate your list into the categories of effective or ineffective coping.
- Discuss with your partner(s): Could any of the ineffective coping be made more effective? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- For example if someone over eats as a way to cope she could learn to eat less or eat healthy foods.
- Give the partner(s) three (or so) minutes to separate their lists and discuss.



SHARE:

- I want to hear from several groups about how an ineffective coping mechanism could be more effective.
- How can you commit to making those changes?
- For example someone gets stressed out when she thinks about the future. It makes her feel nervous. She copes with that by talking about the future with her friends, sometimes she copes by drinking alcohol.
- Give them 5 minutes to write down the 3 causes, feelings and coping mechanisms. Then come back together as a large group to discuss. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- The longer we use a coping mechanism the harder it can be to change it.
- Our brains create pathways for our actions. The longer we repeat actions the more automatic they become. There are a lot of actions we've been doing for so long, like tying a shoe or driving, we don't even think about them anymore. We just do them. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- The steps to changing a coping mechanism are important:
 1. You have to want to change your coping mechanisms. No one can do it for you.
 2. You have to be able to identify when you're using an ineffective coping mechanism.
 3. You have to replace the ineffective coping mechanism with an effective one.
 4. You have to practice the effective coping mechanism until that skill becomes more natural.
 5. You have to create a supporting environment with sisters, friends and family that allows you to maintain the new coping mechanism.

EXERCISE 3 (8 MINUTES)

HOW WE TREAT OURSELVES (2 MINUTES)

As we discuss ineffective coping mechanisms, it's good to think about how we treat ourselves. All of us have an inner voice that can play a large role in our confidence, understanding and what we think of ourselves. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- Self-compassion is the way a person treats themselves. While self-esteem can be a judgment that is high or low. Self-compassion is about the way you talk to yourself or how you manage emotions during difficult circumstances.
- All of us have an inner voice that can play a large role in our confidence, understanding and what we think of ourselves.
- We use that inner voice to talk to ourselves more than we talk to anyone else in our lives. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- When that inner voice is positive it can motivate us and support us to be our best. When that inner voice is negative we can beat ourselves up and that can really harm our ability to work on our coping mechanisms.
- In this next exercise we will learn more about how our inner voice impacts how we treat ourselves. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

This exercise can cause some students to realize how they talk to and treat themselves for the first time. It may lead to them having a lot of emotions. It's important to keep this exercise focused on the positives that can come from understanding self-compassion. If you feel your class needs to do this exercise anonymously with notecards please feel free to do so.



INSTRUCTIONS:

- Think about a time that you faced rejection or loss. It could be a breakup, parents' divorce, loss of a friend or death of a pet or someone close to you. It could also be a time when you were mistreated for the way you look or something else that isn't your fault. Write the experience you had on the top of the paper.
- Draw a line in the middle of the page. On the left side write down all of the things you said to yourself as you went through this situation.
- On the right side write down all of the things you would say to a friend who was going through the same situation. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- Let's have a few people share some of their answers.
- Please remember to be respectful of others during this exercise. Some of us may be coming to a realization for the first time and that will lead to sensitivity. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Let's have a few people share why they think they might treat a friend differently than they treat themselves. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- We did this exercise to help show you that the way you treat yourself is sometimes harsher than the way you treat a friend.
- This is extremely common and you shouldn't feel bad if you are doing this to yourself.
- The purpose of this exercise was to show you how you can improve the way you talk to yourself. Changing the way you talk to yourself will help you tremendously in being able to change ineffective coping mechanisms.

CHANGE PPT SLIDE

WRAP-UP:

- Knowing how you cope and how your friends cope is a great way to be able to support each other.
- Some of your friends may have triggers or have had difficulties in their past that leads them to ineffective coping mechanisms. Try to be supportive to help them change. A healthy environment can truly make a difference in someone's life.

CHANGE PPT SLIDE

CHANGING INEFFECTIVE COPING

Exercise 1

DIFFERENCES IN STRESS

List 3 Causes of Stress

List 3 Feelings From Those Causes

List 3 Coping Mechanisms

Exercise 2

EFFECTIVE VS. INEFFECTIVE COPING

Look at your list of 3 coping mechanisms. Separate the list into two categories: effective or ineffective coping mechanisms.

Effective coping reduces stress, lessens the intensity of your triggers, allows you to face more challenges, helps you become more productive and allows you to be more engaged with the people in your life.

Ineffective coping reduces your ability to address stress, prevents you from developing your mental health, and can be harmful to your overall physical/mental health.

Exercise 3

SELF-COMPASSION

On the back of this page draw a line down the middle of the page. At the top of the page write down a difficult event you experienced like a bad grade, parents' divorce, death or some kind of rejection. On the left side write down all of the things you said to yourself when you went through this. On the right side write down all of the things you would say to a friend in the same situation.

Lesson 4: Acute Stress vs. Chronic Stress

This lesson discusses the difference between acute and chronic stress. When most people hear the word stress they immediately think of being overwhelmed or having a breakdown. However, there are two types of stress. Acute stress is a shorter burst of stress that can often motivate someone to do a task. Chronic stress can be persistent, overwhelming and cause many problems that affect a person's short term and long term physical/mental health. This lesson will provide more understanding on the different types of stress and give students activities to do to learn how to frame good stress..

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If you have a member who is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, they could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

25 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

- Explain the difference between acute stress and chronic stress.
- Identify skills to reframe stress.
- Practice the ability to take power in some stress and slow down irrational thoughts.

SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will play a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so connect a laptop to a projector and screen.

GROUP SIZE:

- Students will work on this individually or in pairs.
- If you are doing this lesson with an organization that has more than 200 members, we recommend you use more than one room with different facilitators for all of the small group work.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- For each group: paper and pens
- Projector and screen
- Acute Stress vs. Chronic Stress PowerPoint

What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the fourth lesson is to teach students the difference between acute stress and chronic stress as well as give them three skills to practice in order to lessen chronic stress.

The introduction of this lesson is to highlight the fact that most students today are having a competition to see who can be more stressed out. When one student tells another student that they have a test to study for and a paper to write, the next student tries to one up them with more papers, tests, extracurricular activities and maybe a job to finish it off. When students are having a competition to see who can be more stressed out, it is a competition that no one wins.

At the core of this competition to see who can be more stressed out is the difference between acute/good stress and chronic/bad stress. Acute stress is often characterized by a burst of energy that advises a person on what to do, helps people meet challenges, motivates them to reach goals, produces the short term fight or flight mechanism and can improve heart function and protect from infection. An example of acute stress is when an athlete prepares for a game, a student gets ready to meet their friends or a student plans their week of homework and tests. Chronic stress is characterized by an inability to concentrate or complete tasks, getting sick more often, body aches, head aches, irritability, trouble falling asleep or staying awake, changes in appetite and being more angry or anxious than usual.

Another difference between acute and chronic stress is how the body processes the types of stress. Chronic stress is fueled by cortisol staying in the body for a long time. When cortisol is present for an extended period of time it can make a person forgetful, increase anxiety, lower serotonin and dopamine, make people freeze up and halt production of new brain cells. Chronic stress keeps a person in their sympathetic nervous system where they are in a persistent state of fight or flight. This increases their heart rate, restricts bodily functions, constricts blood vessels and raises blood pressure. Acute stress activates the fight or flight mechanism for a short burst of productivity. Living in a constant state of fight or flight is unhealthy.

Neuroscientists have found a couple of actions that are helpful in activating different parts of the brain and the body to be able to combat chronic stress. The first step is gaining some control over the cause of stress. When a person feels like they have more power in what is happening to them it can be helpful in lessening chronic stress. The first exercise that students do in this lesson helps them take power in 5 situations. For example when a student feels like they have too much homework, extracurricular activities and feel overwhelmed. They can take power in this situation by developing a plan for their homework, lessening their extracurricular activities and practicing a coping mechanism to be less overwhelmed. As you guide students through how to take power it will be important to give them realistic examples.

A second way to lessen chronic stress is to reframe the types of stress that a student is experiencing. Oftentimes when students approach a stressful situation they frame their response from a place of not wanting to fail or mess up. They will say things to themselves like this test is so hard, my plan is to not fail. One way to reframe this would be to say, this test is going to be so hard, my goal is to do my best. Or they could say my goal is to study as much as I can. Students will have the opportunity to reframe 5 scenarios in this lesson.

A third way to lessen chronic stress is to slow down irrational thoughts. A lot of students tend to spiral when they think about their stress. One student can think that if they fail a test, then they won't get into college, which means they will never get a job and then their parents will kick them out, they will be homeless and they may not make it to age 25. At the heart of stress is often an unnamed fear, or two or five. In this lesson students will have an opportunity to write down some ways that they can slow down irrational thoughts.

The main thing to remember in this lesson is that chronic stress activates the fight or flight response and keeps the brain from activating the prefrontal cortex. These 3 activities can help students activate different areas of their brains and lessen the fear response. None of this happens instantly. Students who have been living in chronic stress for a long time will need to really work hard on practicing these skills in order to see some difference in their lives.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between students identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.

EXERCISE 1 (10 MINUTES)

ACUTE STRESS VS. CHRONIC STRESS:

- We're going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Most students today are having a competition to see who can be more stressed out. When one student tells another student that they have a test to study for and a paper to write, the next student tries to one up them with more papers, tests, extracurricular activities and maybe a job to finish it off. When students are having a competition to see who can be more stressed out, it is a competition that no one wins.
- You don't win a car or ice cream. You win by being the most burned out person you know.
- It would be more useful to have a competition to see who can sleep more and get work done earlier, than it is to have a competition to see who can burn out. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- There is a big difference between acute/good stress and chronic/bad stress. Unfortunately, a lot of people are living in a state of chronic stress from middle school into college and into adulthood. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Acute stress is often characterized by a burst of energy that advises a person on what to do, helps people meet challenges, motivates them to reach goals, produces the short-term fight or flight mechanism and can improve heart function and protect from infection.
- An example of acute stress is when an athlete prepares for a game, a student gets ready to meet their friends or a student plans their week of homework and tests. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Chronic stress is characterized by an inability to concentrate or complete tasks, getting sick more often, body aches, head-aches, irritability, trouble falling asleep or staying awake, changes in appetite and being more angry or anxious than usual. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Chronic stress is fueled by cortisol staying in the body for a long time. When cortisol is present for an extended period of time it can make a person forgetful, increase anxiety, lower serotonin and dopamine, make people freeze up and halt production of new brain cells. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Chronic stress keeps a person in their sympathetic nervous system where they are in a persistent state of fight or flight. This increases their heart rate, restricts bodily functions, constricts blood vessels and raises blood pressure.
- Acute stress activates the fight or flight mechanism for a short burst of productivity. Living in a constant state of fight or flight is unhealthy. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Walk around the room to make sure students are writing down realistic solutions to each scenario. It's helpful if you can share your own example of how you try to lessen chronic stress by taking power in a situation, reframing a stressor and lessening irrational thoughts.



INSTRUCTIONS:

- Neuroscientists have found a couple of actions that are helpful in activating different parts of the brain to be able to combat chronic stress.
- The first step is gaining some control over the cause of stress. When a person feels like they have more power in what is happening to them it can be helpful in lessening chronic stress.

- Look at the six situations on your handout and write down ways that you can have more power in these situations. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- Let's have a few people share some of their answers.
- **Situation 1: You have too much homework, extracurricular activities and feel overwhelmed**
 - I will make a schedule for when my homework is due and plan when to get it done this week.
 - I will have to cut down on some extracurricular activities, because I am too busy to do all of them.
 - I will cut down on the time that I am studying and doing work while being on my phone and social media in order to focus. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- **Situation 2: You can't sleep at night, because your mind is racing or you just can't fall asleep**
 - I will download an app that has meditations and focus on creating new habits before I go to bed
 - I will charge my phone outside of my room, so that I can't use it before I sleep.
 - I will meditate each night before I sleep.
 - I will stretch each night before I lay down to sleep.
 - I will ask for help to see how I can get more sleep. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- **Situation 3: You are worried about if you will be able to get a job after you graduate and you don't know what kind of future you will have**
 - I will focus on taking the classes that support my major and look for an internship or some other way to advance myself.
 - I will talk about my fears with other people to see what they have done to cope with these types of worry.
 - I will talk to an advisor or someone at my college to see what options I have.
 - I will work hard to be ok with uncertainty and try to enjoy my time in college while taking steps to help me after I graduate. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- **Situation 4: It's hard for me to trust people with my emotions, so I usually don't open up to others and find that I'm not close to many people.**
 - I will find one person I can trust and open up to slowly in order to see how they manage what I am sharing.
 - I will make an effort to be more social and see if there are people who like to do the things that I like to do.
 - I will write about how I feel in a journal until I am comfortable enough to open up to someone. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- **Situation 5: I'm always anxious in class.**
 - I will talk to my professor about what can help me stay calm in class.
 - I will listen to some meditations, music or anything that helps me stay calm on my walk to class.
 - I will talk to a counselor about some options to help me lessen my anxiousness in class. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 2 (10 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS:

- A second way to lessen chronic stress is to reframe the types of stress that a student is experiencing. Often-times when students approach a stressful situation they frame their response from a place of not wanting to fail or mess up.
- Take a look at the following situations and how you can reframe how you change your response to the cause of stress. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- Let's have a few people share some of their answers.
- **Situation 1: This test is going to be so hard, my plan is to not fail.**
 - This test is hard, my plan is to study as much as I can
 - This test is hard, my plan is to do my best
 - This test is hard, my plan is to form study groups, take notes and review the study guide **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- **Situation 2: I don't understand this class I'm in, my plan is to just get through it.**
 - I don't understand this class, I will go to office hours to make sure I talk to the professor
 - I don't understand this class, I will make time to see the TA to see if they can help me
 - I don't understand this class I'm in, I will form a study group with other students to see if they can help. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- **Situations 3: I really like this person, but I'm sure they will never like me.**
 - I really like this person, I'll talk to them and see where it goes.
 - I really like this person, I'll ask them on a date
 - I really like this person, if they reject me it will hurt, but I will be ok
 - I really like this person, I'm going to make efforts for them to get to know me **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- **Situation 4: I'm not sure my major will help me after college, I'll wait to see what happens.**
 - I'm not sure if my major will help me after college, I'll talk to people who have majored in my subject to see what they did.
 - I'm not sure my major will help me after college, I'll talk to professors to see if they have ideas of what I can do.
 - I'm not sure my major will help me after college, I'll try to get an internship and advance myself as much as I can in college. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- **Situation 5: My college loans are so expensive, I'll never be able to pay them off.**
 - My college loans are so expensive, I will learn more about the best ways to pay them off.
 - My college loans are so expensive, I'll take each payment one at a time and eventually get through them.
 - My college loans are so expensive, I will talk to a financial advisor at school about my options **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 3 (5 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS:

- A third way to lessen chronic stress is to slow down irrational thoughts. A lot of students tend to spiral when they think about their stress. One student can think that if they fail a test, then they won't get into college, which means they will never get a job and then their parents will kick them out, they will be homeless and they may not make it to age 25.
- At the heart of stress is often an unnamed fear, or two or five. In this exercise you will have an opportunity to write down some ways that can slow down irrational thoughts. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Write down a cause of stress that gives you irrational fears. Then write down three ways that you can slow down those irrational fears.
- How can you use other parts of this lesson to stop irrational fears?

SUMMARIZE:

- We did these exercises to help you learn ways to lessen chronic stress.
- If you have been living in chronic stress for a really long time, then it will take a lot of practice to be able to see some results from these exercises.
- It will be helpful for you to practice them slowly at first to have some small positive gains, before you can build a stronger habit of lessening chronic stress. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Having a person that you can check in with who also wants to change the way that they view stress can make a big difference.
- It requires a lot of work and focus to change this culture of competing to see who is more stressed out, but it is possible.
- Some of the most successful people in our history have used acute stress to thrive in all areas of their lives. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



Lesson 4 Handout

Look at the following five situations and write examples of how you can have more power in each situation.

1: YOU HAVE TOO MUCH HOMEWORK, EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES AND FEEL OVERWHELMED.

2: YOU CAN'T SLEEP AT NIGHT, BECAUSE YOUR MIND IS RACING OR YOU JUST CAN'T FALL ASLEEP.

3. YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT IF YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GET A JOB AFTER YOU GRADUATE AND YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF FUTURE YOU WILL HAVE.

4. IT'S HARD FOR ME TO TRUST WITH MY EMOTIONS, SO I USUALLY DON'T OPEN UP TO OTHERS AND FIND THAT I'M NOT CLOSE TO MANY PEOPLE.

5. I'M ALWAYS ANXIOUS IN CLASS.

Re-Framing

Take a look at the following situations and how you can reframe how you change your response to stress:

1: THIS TEST IS GOING TO BE SO HARD, MY PLAN IS TO NOT FAIL.

2: I DON'T UNDERSTAND THIS CLASS I'M IN, MY PLAN IS TO JUST GET THROUGH IT.

3: I REALLY LIKE THIS PERSON, BUT I'M SURE THEY WILL NEVER LIKE ME.

4: I'M NOT SURE MY MAJOR WILL HELP ME AFTER COLLEGE, I'LL WAIT TO SEE WHAT HAPPENS.

5: MY COLLEGE LOANS ARE SO EXPENSIVE, I'LL NEVER BE ABLE TO PAY THEM OFF.

Intervening Irrational Thoughts

A third way to lessen chronic stress is to slow down irrational thoughts. A lot of students tend to spiral when they think about their stress. One student can think that if they fail a test, then they won't get into college, which means they will never get a job and then their parents will kick them out, they will be homeless and they may not make it to age 25.

WRITE DOWN A CAUSE OF STRESS THAT GIVES YOU IRRATIONAL FEARS. THEN WRITE DOWN THREE WAYS THAT YOU CAN SLOW DOWN THOSE IRRATIONAL FEARS.

HOW CAN YOU USE OTHER PARTS OF THIS LESSON TO STOP IRRATIONAL FEARS?

Lesson 5: Good Stress & Stopping Procrastination

This lesson continues the education about good/acute stress by focusing on two case studies that people can examine to see how a person can utilize good stress as well as a new look at procrastination. This lesson can be a great way to review lesson 4 and add some additional information to help students work on utilizing good/acute stress in their lives. Practicing these new skills to change the way that students process stress can take a long time. It's helpful to have multiple lessons to reinforce the skills from lesson 4 and help them learn new skills in this lesson.

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If you have a member who is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, they could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

25 minutes

OBJECTIVES:

- Review the difference between acute/good stress and chronic/bad stress.
- Identify what skills a person can use to utilize acute/good stress in their daily life.
- Explain the role of emotional regulation in procrastination.

SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will play a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so connect a laptop to a projector and screen

GROUP SIZE:

- Students will be doing these lessons individually or in pairs.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- For each group: paper and pens
- Projector and screen
- Good Stress and Stopping Procrastination PowerPoint

What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the fifth lesson is to review the difference between acute/good stress and chronic/bad stress, look at case studies about how students can utilize acute/good stress and review a new approach to stopping procrastination.

It's important to review the differences between acute/good stress and chronic/bad stress to see what students remember and if they are practicing any of the skills from the last lesson. Consistent exposure to these terms helps students remember the definitions and allows them to be reminded to practice the new skills to stay out of chronic stress.

The first exercise in this lesson is to review case studies of students who experience acute/good stress and chronic/bad stress to better identify how the students in the case studies can use good stress in their lives. It's often easier for students to see what others can do and this activity can make it easier to talk about the steps to take, because the focus is not as personal. In each case study there is an example of what a person does to motivate them when they experience stress and what types of stress tend to debilitate them. It's helpful for students to see these real-life examples to relate to what someone is experiencing. The lesson will walk you through the points to reinforce for the students.

The second exercise uses research from Carleton University that has found that procrastination is about being more focused on the immediate urgency of managing negative moods than doing the task that is needed. According to their research procrastination has more to do with emotional regulation than it has to do with stress. This is an important distinction for students to have. When students feel that procrastination is coming from stress, then they are less likely to see a direct path to stopping the procrastination. If students can begin to identify the negative moods they are attaching to getting work completed, and they can effectively address those emotions, then they may be able to procrastinate less.

It's helpful to check in with students in future lessons to see if they're using the strategies from lessons 4 and 5 to lessen chronic stress and address procrastination.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.

4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between students identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.

REVIEW

ACUTE STRESS VS. CHRONIC STRESS:

- We're going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- In the last lesson we discussed the difference between acute and chronic stress. Can anyone tell me what you remember about these two types of stress? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- There is a big difference between acute/good stress and chronic/bad stress. Unfortunately, a lot of people are living in a state of chronic stress from middle school into college and into adulthood. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Acute stress is often characterized by a burst of energy that advises a person on what to do, helps people meet challenges, motivates them to reach goals, produces the short term fight or flight mechanism and can improve heart function and protect from infection.
- An example of acute stress is when an athlete prepares for a game, a student gets ready to meet their friends or a student plans their week of homework and tests. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Chronic stress is characterized by an inability to concentrate or complete tasks, getting sick more often, body aches, head aches, irritability, trouble falling asleep or staying awake, changes in appetite and being more angry or anxious than usual. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Chronic stress is fueled by cortisol staying in the body for a long time. When cortisol is present for an extended period of time it can make a person forgetful, increase anxiety, lower serotonin and dopamine, make people freeze up and halt production of new brain cells. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Chronic stress keeps a person in their sympathetic nervous system where they are in a persistent state of fight or flight. This increases their heart rate, restricts bodily functions, constricts blood vessels and raises blood pressure.
- Acute stress activates the fight or flight mechanism for a short burst of productivity. Living in a constant state of fight or flight is unhealthy. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Can anyone share if you are using some of the strategies from lesson 4? The strategies are taking power in a situation, reframing a situation or lessening irrational thoughts.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Walk around the room to make sure students are writing down realistic solutions to each scenario. It's helpful if you can share your own example of how you try to lessen chronic stress by taking power in a situation, reframing a stressor and lessening irrational thoughts.



INSTRUCTIONS:

- Acute stress can motivate people to get things accomplished. People often use acute stress in situations that they enjoy like sports, preparing for performances, meeting friends or going on trips.
- Review two case studies about college students and discuss how these students could use acute stress more effectively in their lives. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- Jennifer is a sophomore in college. For her whole life she has gotten used to not sleeping the night before she has to take a test or turn in a paper. She doesn't do this with other things in her life. She always makes sure to get good sleep the night before she's playing soccer, going on a trip or going out with her friends. When she is preparing for those things she is motivated to get some rest, because she wants to enjoy those events. Jennifer always had good grades in high school and didn't study much. She would often procrastinate until the last day and didn't develop a lot of study habits. One thing that has been especially difficult for her is that she can't sleep the night before a test or when a paper is due. When she tries to go to sleep, her mind races about all of the things that could go wrong on the test and if she doesn't do well, she thinks about how that will impact her.

What are some ways that Jennifer can take what she has been doing to prepare with acute stress and use it for things that cause chronic stress? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Rashan is a gamer. When he's not in class he spends a lot of time researching how he can play games better. He watches other gamers on Youtube. He plays games 6-8 hours a day. He enters tournaments. He loves to go on-line and trash talk his friends when they are playing. He has gotten really good at specific games and gives advice to other people on what they can do. Rashan really loves the anticipation of games and the excitement he gets from competing. He uses those feelings as motivation to get better.

When Rashan is doing anything outside of gaming, he is not nearly as prepared or equipped. He regularly turns assignments in late. He doesn't get the grades he is capable of getting. Rashan often tells people that school is too stressful and he doesn't like all of the rules. His grades have slipped so low that Rashan is in danger of having to leave college.

What are some ways that Rashan can use the acute stress he has with gaming for the chronic stress he has with tests, papers and homework in college? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- What are some ways that Jennifer can use acute stress? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Jennifer can:
 - Use whatever habit she is using to get good sleep for acute stress to change her sleep before chronic stress.
 - She can prepare for her tests and papers the same way she prepares for other events, by thinking positively and focusing on the steps she needs to take to get ready.
 - She can create better habits around preparation for school.
 - She can ask for help, because she didn't develop the habits she needed before college.
 - She can create a schedule that helps her procrastinate less. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- What are some ways that Rashan can use acute stress? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Rashan can:
 - Take the same type of preparation he uses for his games and use it for his classes.
 - Be patient as he learns to improve his school work like he improved with gaming.
 - Spend more time on school and less time gaming.
 - Use some of the same competitive motivation he has with gaming to compete in his classes.
 - Try to figure out the strategy of completing work, the same way he has figured out the strategy of winnings games. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 2 (10 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS:

- Students think that procrastination is often a part of chronic stress. New research from Carleton University has found that procrastination has more to do with avoiding the negative emotions associated with doing work, than it has to do with stress. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- For example when a person has to write a paper or study for a test or do homework they associate something unpleasant with those tasks. It could be that those tasks are boring, but it could also be deeper than that. Some people may have self-doubt, low self-compassion, no confidence, anxiety or insecurity.
- They might think to themselves. I'm not smart enough to do this. This is too hard. What if I do a terrible job? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- When a person has negative emotions attached to a task, then they will often disassociate from the task they need to do and distract themselves by going out, hooking up, playing video games, cleaning or anything to avoid the task.
- When that happens it will deepen the negative emotions making the feelings worse when a person tries to return to accomplishing the task. When the person tries to complete the work they can feel a higher degree of anxiety, self-blame and low self-compassion. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The cycle gets even worse because a person is rewarded when they originally procrastinate. The more our brains get a reward the more they repeat the cycle. Over time this unhealthy reward system can lead to chronic stress.
- However, we want to be clear that procrastination itself doesn't start with chronic stress. It gets to that point after not addressing the negative emotions involved in procrastination. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The last dangerous part of procrastination is that when people do procrastinate their brains are telling them the future work is someone else's problem. The fight or flight mechanism is activated and just wants to resolve the situation by delaying the work for another day.
- Even when people know that putting off the task will create more stress in the future, our brains are still hard-wired to remove the threat in the present moment. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- So what can we do? In the case of procrastination we need to find a bigger reward than avoidance.
- Researchers have found 5 steps can help people address their emotions with procrastination
 - Forgive yourself for procrastinating. One study found that students who forgive themselves for procrastinating on a first exam will procrastinate less on the next exam.
 - Improve self-compassion. As you learned in lesson 3, self-compassion is the way you treat yourself. If your internal voice is constantly negative, then procrastinating is going to grow. You need to improve your level of self-compassion. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
 - Be curious about your emotions. When you're procrastinating start to pay attention to where you feel emotions, where they come from, how they make you feel and focus on how they affect you.
 - Think about the next step. This doesn't mean come up with a plan that has a lot of small steps in order to finish your task. It means literally what is the next step you need to take. Make that decision and do the next step necessary to get motivated. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
 - Make larger obstacles for your temptations. Put your phone outside of the room. Don't log onto social media. Don't magically become someone who wants to clean. Stay away from Youtube and Netflix binges. The harder it is for you to be tempted, the easier it will be for you to do your work. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Write down one thing that you typically procrastinate and two strategies you can use to change procrastination.



SHARE:

- Let's have a few people share some of their answers.
- Was it difficult for you to identify what you procrastinate about?
- Do you think you would be willing to try to use these strategies?

SUMMARIZE:

- We did these exercises to help you better understand how to use acute stress and learn the deeper elements that are a part of procrastination.
- Much like the skills you learned in lesson 4, these will need to be practiced on a regular basis for you to be able to have success using them.
- The goal to using these skills is not to make a massive change in a short time-frame. The goal is to practice them slowly, until you build the neural pathways for them to be used more frequently. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The information for how to change our behavior is more available now, than at any other time in human history. However, the only way for us to change it to apply the skills that have been proven to help people.
- Only you can find the motivation to put these skills into action. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



Lesson 5 Handout

Jennifer is a sophomore in college. For her whole life she has gotten used to not sleeping the night before she has to take a test or turn in a paper. She doesn't do this with other things in her life. She always makes sure to get good sleep the night before she's playing soccer, going on a trip or going out with her friends. When she is preparing for those things she is motivated to get some rest, because she wants to enjoy those events.

Jennifer always had good grades in high school and didn't study much. She would often procrastinate until the last day and didn't develop a lot of study habits. One thing that has been especially difficult for her is that she can't sleep the night before a test or when a paper is due. When she tries to go to sleep, her mind races about all of the things that could go wrong on the test and if she doesn't do well, she thinks about how that will impact her.

What are some ways that Jennifer can take what she has been doing to prepare with acute stress and use it for things that cause chronic stress?

Rashan is a gamer. When he's not in class he spends a lot of time researching how he can play games better. He watches other gamers on Youtube. He plays games 6-8 hours a day. He enters tournaments. He loves to go on-line and trash talk his friends when they are playing. He has gotten really good at specific games and gives advice to other people on what they can do. Rashan really loves the anticipation of games and the excitement he gets from competing. He uses those feelings as motivation to get better.

When Rashan is doing anything outside of gaming, he is not nearly as prepared or equipped. He regularly turns assignments in late. He doesn't get the grades he is capable of getting. Rashan often tells people that school is too stressful and he doesn't like all of the rules. His grades have slipped so low that Rashan is in danger of having to leave college.

What are some ways that Rashan can use the acute stress he has with gaming for the chronic stress he has with tests, papers and homework in college?

Stop Procrastinating

Write down one thing that you typically procrastinate and two strategies you can use to change procrastination.

THE STRATEGIES ARE:

1. Forgive yourself
2. Improve self-compassion (how you treat yourself)
3. Be curious about your emotions
4. Think about next steps
5. Make larger obstacles for your temptations

Lesson 6: Sympathy, Empathy & Compassion

This lesson focuses on the differences between sympathy, empathy and compassion. Recent studies from the University of Michigan have shown that empathy scores in college students have decreased 40% in the last decade. There have been a lot of educational programs started to help young people develop more empathy in their lives. This lesson provides clear definitions for the differences between sympathy, empathy and compassion. It also includes some intense personal story telling to help students practice empathy.

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If you have a member who is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, they could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

25 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

Explain the differences between sympathy, empathy and compassion.

Interact with another person's story in order to better experience what it is like to live in someone else's perspective.

Implement skills for sympathy, empathy and compassion.

SETTING:

Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.

You will play a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so connect a laptop to a projector and screen.

GROUP SIZE:

This lesson needs to be facilitated in small groups of 25-30 students all together at one time.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

For each group: paper and pens

- Projector and screen
- Good Stress and Stopping Procrastination PowerPoint

What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the sixth lesson is to help students understand the difference between sympathy, empathy and compassion as well as how to use these skills in different situations in their lives.

The University of Michigan has found that empathy scores on a standardized scale have decreased by over 40% in the last ten years. One of the main factors in this decrease has been our evolution into the technological age of communication. On average people aren't deep reading to better understand someone's perspective or the full history of an issue. Our communication has become much faster and we're taking less time to appreciate larger concepts.

As our society pushes for more empathy, people have begun to somewhat shame sympathy and there is confusion on what the role of compassion is in being able to respond to a friend in need. This lesson gives clear definitions for all three of these terms. Sympathy is letting someone know you are aware of her distress and you feel for her. Sympathy is validating that someone has feelings. Empathy is showing you care about someone by entering into their experience and seeing a problem from their perspective. Empathy is sharing feelings. Compassion is when you have strong feelings for others or a cause, have a desire to help and take action. Compassion is taking action. To make this easier in most emotional situations your choices for a response are sympathy, empathy and/or compassion. Validate, feel and/or act.

For this lesson you have two options for the exercise you can do. The first option is to set some strong ground rules for how students should treat each other in the lesson. You will want to stress that we're going to try an activity that requires respect, confidentiality and care for each other. The activity will be for one student to stand up and talk about a painful situation in their life for two minutes. You will keep a timer for exactly two minutes. Another student will be chosen as a listener. That student will listen to the other student's story and then stand up and repeat the story using first person language. For example, if the first person stands up and says, "One of the hardest days of my life was when my parents got divorced. I felt like it was my fault. Everything changed. I went from a normal life to missing my dad and not feeling connected..." The next student will stand up and say the same story using the words me and I in order to feel the story as if it were their own. They will have two minutes to tell the story in first person.

After, the person summarizes the story, you will ask the class a series of questions about how they felt and what emotions they heard. Then you will ask the person who told the story how it felt to tell their story. Lastly, you will ask the person who summarized the story how it felt to tell it in first person language instead of third person. This exercise can be extremely effective in a classroom environment. It can elicit a lot of emotions and connection. If you feel that you can do this exercise, then it can be a powerful way to communicate. It's also helpful if you model the first story and have someone tell your story as the first listener. It sets the tone and shows the class it is ok to do this.

If you don't think your students are ready for this type of activity, then you can do an activity that asks them to think about difficult scenarios that their friends have experienced. They can provide examples of how to express sympathy, how to express empathy and how to take action to show compassion. This exercise can be as effective in accomplishing the goals of the lesson, and is not as intensive as the first exercise option.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between students identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.



INTRODUCTION

VIDEO:

Watch this video about the differences between sympathy and empathy from Brene Brown. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1Ewgu369Jw>

SYMPATHY, EMPATHY AND COMPASSION:

- We're going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- What are some of your thoughts about this video? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- How would any of you define the difference between sympathy and empathy? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- This video makes sympathy look like the worst thing in the world, but it isn't. Sometimes sympathy is all you want to express to someone. This video is showing the major difference between sympathy and empathy. Sympathy is letting someone know you are aware of their distress and you feel for them. Sympathy is validating that someone has feelings. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Empathy is showing you care about someone by entering into their experience and seeing a problem from their perspective. Empathy is sharing feelings. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Compassion is when you have strong feelings for others or a cause, have a desire to help and take action. Compassion is taking action. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- To make this easier in most emotional situations your choices for a response are sympathy, empathy and/or compassion. Validate, feel and/or act. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Some examples of sympathy are:
 - I'm sorry about your loss.
 - How awful. Poor you.
 - I feel so sad for you. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Some examples of empathy are:
 - I feel your grief.
 - I understand this has been a great loss for you.
 - I feel and understand your pain. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Some examples of compassion are:
 - Cooking your friend a meal to make sure they eat
 - Hugging someone
 - Volunteering **CHANGE PPT SLIDE EXERCISE 1 (20 MINUTES)**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

If you are going to do the activity where students share their own personal pain. Take some time to set the expectations in the room to make sure it is a safe environment. It's helpful if you share the first story. Choose something real from your past when you were in school that the students can understand. Remember, to choose something you have processed, so that you can be vulnerable with a boundary.



INSTRUCTIONS:

- This next activity is going to require all of us to be respectful of each other. Those of us who are willing are going to share some stories about what has been painful in our lives. It's vital for us to keep these stories confidential in this classroom, to not use these stories against someone else outside of the classroom and to work hard to connect to each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- During this activity we may have some nervous laughter, because we're uncomfortable or not sure how to react. It is ok to laugh with someone, but it is not ok to laugh at someone or their story. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The activity is for one student to share a story about a painful moment in their life for two minutes. This story could be about something that happened to them, their family, their friends or just something they went through that hurt them. Some common examples that people share are being left out, made fun of, bullied, going through a parents' divorce, a breakup, a death, a loss of a friend or a time they were embarrassed. All of these events are things that everyone has gone through at some age in their life. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The student is going to share what happened to them, how it made them feel and what they did for two minutes. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Another student is going to be chosen to be a listener. That student is going to listen to the student's story and pay attention to all of the details. When the first student is finished, the second student is going to stand up and tell the first student's story using first person language by saying words I and me. That student will tell the person's story as best as they can remember it. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- We will do this with as many students who would like to share. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE: (ASK THESE QUESTIONS AFTER EACH PAIR OF STUDENTS TELLS THE STORY)

- What were some of the emotions you heard in this story?
- For the student who told their story, how did it feel to have someone else tell your story?
- For the listener, how did it feel to tell this student's story?
- What are some acts of compassion that someone could do to help a student in this situation? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- This exercise is meant to help you better understand a person's experience and the emotions that occur when they go through a difficult event.
- Empathy scores for your generation have decreased over 40% in the last decade. It's the lowest the empathy scores have been in over 30 years. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- It's important to be able to listen to someone's experience, try to understand their perspective and make a compassionate action if you want to support them.
- Empathy is a really helpful skill, and it cannot be where our understanding of another person ends. If it was then we'd all be sitting around feeling the same way and that may not lead to anyone taking action. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- All of us are different in our approaches to every emotional situation. This lesson wasn't meant to make sympathy, empathy or compassion seem better than the other. It was meant to help you understand the differences and how each one can make someone else feel. **OPTIONAL EXERCISE 1 (20 MINUTES)**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

If you don't have students willing to do this exercise. You can have them do the other exercise or have them read some case studies out loud for a similar effect. The case studies are found at the end of the lesson.



INSTRUCTIONS:

- This next activity will help us better identify the differences between sympathy, empathy and compassion. You will read a couple of people's stories and write down responses that could reflect sympathy, empathy or compassion. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Sydney is a junior. Her parents had been fighting since she was in middle school. Right before the holidays her mom calls her to tell her that they're getting a divorce. Sydney calls her boyfriend who decides now is the time to tell her he is breaking up with her. Sydney comes texts you to tell you about everything that is happening. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- What can you say to show sympathy, what you say to show empathy, what can you do to show compassion?) **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- If you want to show her sympathy you could say:
 - I feel so bad for you.
 - It's really terrible to have this happen. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- If you want to show her empathy you could say:
 - My parents got divorced and while I don't know what you're going through I do know how much this hurts.
 - This really hurts and I'm here for you as you go through this. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- If you want to show her compassion you could:
 - Offer to take her out to do something she might enjoy.
 - Comfort her.
 - Offer to help her with something she needs. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Steven is a senior. His dad got cancer during the start of his senior year and unfortunately doctors were not able to treat it. In November of his senior year his dad passed away. Steven and his dad were best friends. He doesn't want to come to school anymore and doesn't care about his future. He can't stop crying and misses his dad a lot. Steven and you are friends. He texts you about how he feels. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- What can you say to show sympathy, what you say to show empathy, what can you do to show compassion?) **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- If you want to show him sympathy you could say:
 - This really sucks.
 - I'm sorry that this happened to you.
 - I can't imagine what you're going through **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- If you want to show him empathy you could say:
 - This is such a devastating loss and I'm here for you if you need me.
 - I don't know what it's like to lose a parent. I have lost someone close to me, but never someone this close. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- If you want to show him compassion you could:
 - Do something to get him out of his house.
 - Go over to his house and watch a movie or play games.
 - Ask him if he needs to go anywhere. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Jordan is a freshman. She started a new school and made friends with a group of other students. Two months into school one of the students got jealous that people liked her, so they decided to share her secrets with the group and tell other people that she was talking trash about them. The other students in the group of friends knew this person longer than Jordan, so they believed her. Jordan lost all of her friends and felt completely alone. You're friends with Jordan from her old school. She calls you to tell you what happened. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- What can you say to show sympathy, what you say to show empathy, what can you do to show compassion?)
CHANGE PPT SLIDE
- If you want to show her sympathy you could say:
 - That's a really messed up thing for that person to do.
 - At least you still have friends at your old school. CHANGE PPT SLIDE
- If you want to show her empathy you could say:
 - I've had friends break my trust and it's awful. I'm here for you.
 - When someone tells your secrets it's so violating. CHANGE PPT SLIDE
- If you want to show her compassion you could:
 - Write a card letting her know how much you appreciate her.
 - Spend time with her to make sure she's ok.
 - Give her a hug and comfort her. CHANGE PPT SLIDE

SUMMARIZE:

- This exercise is meant to help you better understand a person's experience and the emotions that occur when they go through a difficult event.
- Empathy scores for your generation have decreased over 40% in the last decade. It's the lowest the empathy scores have been in over 30 years. CHANGE PPT SLIDE
- It's important to be able to listen to someone's experience, try to understand their perspective and make a compassionate action if you want to support them.
- Empathy is a really helpful skill, and it cannot be where our understanding of another person ends. If it was then we'd all be sitting around feeling the same way and that may not lead to anyone taking action. CHANGE PPT SLIDE

Lesson 7: Neuroscience of Happiness

This lesson gives students four actions they can take to improve their levels of happiness. Neuroscientists have learned that there are daily habits that students can do to deactivate parts of their brains that resonate with chronic stress or fear and activate parts of their brains that improve their mood and focus. These habits are important for students to be able to learn new skills to use that can help them function better during difficult times. It's really hard for people to change the causes of stress in their lives, but we can change the way that we deal with those causes. Having some basic tips can further students' abilities to change their moods.

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If you have a member who is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, they could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

25 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

- Explain four skills that can help improve a student's mood.
- Practice new habits that can help a student maintain positive mental health.
- Understand basic explanation of neuroscience.

SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will play a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so connect a laptop to a projector and screen.

GROUP SIZE:

- Students will be working individually or in pairs for this lesson.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- For each group: paper and pens
- Projector and screen
- Neuroscience of Happiness PowerPoint

What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the seventh lesson is to give students more actions that they can take to improve their mood. Neuroscientists have conducted evidence-based studies to locate some important habits to help students in a variety of ways.

The first activity you will do helps students label a negative feeling. It's common for students to have a lot of emotions. When they let those emotions build up and don't name them it can cause a lot of harm. Naming negative emotions like sadness, anger, nervousness or feeling depressed activates a different part of the brain and relieves the tension. This activity will require self-awareness for your students and it's important to have them identify emotions in a non-judgmental manner.

The second activity is to have students write down one thing they dislike in their lives and then write down three things they are grateful for in their lives. Identifying what students are grateful for releases the same neurotransmitters as anti-depressants. Practicing gratitude on a daily basis can change students' brains and help them when they are going through a difficult time.

The third activity is teach students that making a decision can relieve tension and help improve their mood. When students have a lot of homework or projects to do, they can often feel paralyzed because they don't know where to begin. Making a decision, even a small decision, can help a student feel better. Procrastination and feeling overwhelmed from having a lot to do, can paralyze a student. Making small decisions can bring them out of that short paralysis and allow them to take smaller steps to a larger goal.

The fourth activity is to have students better understand the benefits of touch. In this digital world that we live in it's common to go long periods of time without touching someone or being held. Social exclusion activates the same areas of the brain as physical pain. Human touch can increase positive neurotransmitters and lessen the chemicals involved in chronic stress.

Practicing these four activities on a daily basis can be really beneficial to a student's mental health.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.

4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between students identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.



INTRODUCTION

VIDEO: Watch the introduction video for lesson 7.

NEUROSCIENCE OF HAPPINESS:

- We're going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Everyone on social media seems to be so happy. Every. Single. Day. We constantly see images and messages of people celebrating, crushing it and enjoying their lives. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- But not all of us are happy, and that's ok. Feeling down, feeling anxious, feeling ashamed and alone or just not feeling super happy, are all totally normal. Although, just because they're normal, doesn't make them pleasant. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Fortunately, neuroscience offers some solutions. While how you feel isn't something you can totally control, there are simple steps you can take to nudge your brain towards happiness. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- This lesson is going to cover four rituals you can do to help you when you're not feeling great. It's not just about how you feel, it's about what's going on in your brain. We'll explore what neuroscience can teach us about being happy. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 1 (7 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS: (LABEL NEGATIVE EMOTIONS)

- The emotional part of the brain is perfectly content to make things difficult for you without you even being aware of it. While sometimes simply distracting yourself from a negative emotion is enough to make it go away, that doesn't always work.
- In fact, the opposite approach can be even more beneficial in the long term: instead of ignoring your emotions and hoping they'll go away, pay attention to them and name them. So when you're sad or angry or nervous, label the specific emotion that you're feeling. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- While you may not want to be the one ranting on social media, neuroscience has found that naming your emotions when you're upset changes parts of your brain.
- When you hold onto emotions you activate the parts of the brain focused on impulse and fight-or-flight. However, by naming the emotion, you activate a different part of the brain that relieves the tension. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The key is to notice how you feel in a non-judgmental way. Don't assess whether it's good or bad to feel that way, just notice what you're feeling.
- Don't get mad at yourself for being sad, or get stressed that you're feeling anxious – just label it. This type of non-judgmental awareness is a key feature of mindfulness and has been shown to increase happiness and well-being. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Take a minute to look within yourself and see what emotions are in you right now. You may find that as you do this, new emotions pop-up – just notice and label these as well.
- Start by taking a few deep breaths, slow and smooth. Pausing for a second at the top of the inhale, and again at the bottom. Then letting yourself breathe as you would normally. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- On a piece of paper make separate headings for positive, negative and neutral. Write down all of the emotions that you can label that you have felt today. Separate the emotions into the categories. Pay attention to how it feels to write down the negative emotions. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- Share some of the emotions that you felt today or this week.
- Was it difficult for you to identify the emotions that you feel? If yes, why do you think it's difficult to identify emotions?
- How did it feel to label the negative emotions? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

If students are struggling to share their emotions in this activity, then you can have them do this exercise in pairs. It's also helpful if you share all of the emotions that you have felt today and what was happening to cause you to feel those emotions.

SUMMARIZE:

- Labeling negative feelings doesn't fix how you feel. In fact, you can't fix feelings, because there's nothing wrong with them. Naming a feeling just lessens the tension around it. You'll need to take some of the other steps in this lesson to move towards more positive emotions. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The human brain pays attention to more negative events than positive events. The brain does this as a survival mechanism. In the early days for humans, we needed to pay attention to what could kill us. Now, we don't have to worry about that as much, but our brains have gravitated toward gossip, drama and other negative events.
- Labeling negative emotions is just the beginning of doing the work to activate a part of your brain to relieve tension and reassure yourself, that it is ok to have this emotion. Let's move on to the other exercises to increase happiness. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 2 (7 MINUTES)

INSTRUCTIONS: (WHAT ARE YOU GRATEFUL FOR?)

- Identifying what you are grateful for activates the same neurotransmitters as anti-depressants. The more you practice being grateful, the more automatically your brain will respond, and the easier it gets to use gratitude.
- Practicing gratitude can help you connect more to yourself and others. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- On a piece of paper, write down 1 thing you dislike in your life. Pay attention to how it feels.
- Next, write down three things you are grateful for. That could be a person, place, experience, pet or anything you are really grateful to have in your life. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- What are some things that people are grateful for?
- What was the difference you felt when you wrote down what you disliked vs. what you are grateful for?
- How can you practice being grateful each day?

FACILITATOR NOTES:

If students are struggling to share what they are grateful for in this activity, then you can have them do this exercise in pairs. It's also helpful if you share what you are grateful for.

- If you find things to be grateful for, but don't feel grateful, that's fine. Don't get upset with yourself for not feeling grateful (remember step 1? It takes practice). On the other hand, even if you don't find anything that makes you feel particularly grateful, simply reminding yourself to look in the first place will help train your brain to keep looking on its own. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Practicing gratitude can take time and it can make a big difference in your brain. Having a gratitude journal that you write in each night, keeping a note on your phone, writing thank you letters to the people you love, or just expressing gratitude whenever you feel it, can make a big difference with your mood. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 3 (7 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS: (MAKE A DECISION)

- This fast-paced life is filled with an endless number of decisions. It's easy to feel overwhelmed and stuck in a place of not knowing what to do. Luckily, making a decision, even a small one, helps you feel better.
- Making a decision includes creating intentions to act and setting specific goals. All of these actions activate parts of the brain that reduce worry and anxiety.
- You don't need to make the biggest or best decisions to feel better. You don't need to be perfect. In fact, perfectionism stresses us out even more. You just need to make a decision that is good enough to move you forward. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Look at the following person's story and write down some small decisions that this person could make in her life.
 - Every week, Kali is often overwhelmed by school and her social life. She has homework and reading to do in every class that she has. She plays a sport. She volunteers at a local hospital. She has a boyfriend who likes to text her throughout her day. She also really loves her friends and can never seem to find enough time to see them. When she gets to her room and wants to sit down to work on her homework or read a textbook for class, she often shuts down. She doesn't know where to begin. She texts her boyfriend and her friends. She scrolls through social media. She listens to music. She does lot of things, but she doesn't do her work. She does all of this for a few hours, before she realizes that it's late and she should get something done. She chooses to do whatever assignment is due the next day. She starts it so late that she doesn't get a lot of sleep and has to work on another project in the morning before school. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Write down two small decisions Kali could make to help change her constant feeling of being overwhelmed. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- Do you know anyone who has a life similar to Kali?
- What are some small decisions she can make? **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- There are a lot of options for Kali to begin practicing in order to make better decisions:
 - She could choose one subject to work on early in the day and just work on that.
 - She could have a planner for all of the homework and reading she has for the week.

- She could use a schedule to block off time for volunteering, block off time for studying, block off time for socializing.
- She could have clear boundaries and not need to text at all times of the day in order to be able to do her work.
- She could lessen some of her extracurricular activities.
- She could not have her phone open when she's studying, so she isn't distracted. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The main thing that Kali and people like her need to do is to make a clear decision about some aspect of their lives. The longer that the uncertainty of all of the possible decisions swirls in your head, the harder it is to feel like you're making progress.
- Even if you make the wrong decision, it will still lessen your anxiety, activate parts of your brain to relieve tension and help you get closer to a balanced or happy life. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 4 (7 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS: (TOUCH PEOPLE)

- When people feel excluded, it doesn't register in the brain as just emotional pain. It actually registers like a broken leg. Social exclusion activates the same areas of the brain as a broken leg. The difference is that you can see a broken leg, but you can't see a broken heart.
- Fortunately, the neurotransmitter and hormone, can help. Oxytocin is the love and trust molecule, and helps reduce painful feelings of social exclusion. And one of the easiest ways to boost oxytocin is through physical touch. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Human touch not only increases oxytocin, it also decreases the stress hormone cortisol. Research shows that 5 hugs a day for four weeks significantly increases happiness. If you have people to hug, make sure you hug them – and not one of those quick pat-on-the-back hugs. Embrace them. It changes your brain. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- And with hugs, it doesn't really matter if you're giving or getting. In practical terms, offering to give someone hug is often easier than asking for one, and you still get all the same benefits. Though it's perfectly ok to ask for a hug.
- If you don't have anyone to hug, smaller touches are still beneficial, even pats on the back, and shaking hands. Getting a massage also boosts oxytocin. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

You have a couple of options. You can let students hug each other if you're confident that they will want to do that. If you don't think your students can handle that you can do the exercise below to help them see how touch can change the way a person feels.

OPTION 1

- We're going to take some time for you to hug 5 people. Before you hug someone you need to ask for their consent to see if it is ok. If someone does not consent to hugging you, move on and ask someone else. If you do not like to give hugs or be hugged at all, it is ok to not participate in this activity. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

OPTION 2

- In order to see how touch can impact a person. You're going to ask two different people how they are doing. You are going to ask, "How are you?" The first time you ask don't touch them. The second time you ask, place your hand on their forearm, shoulder or put your arm around them. Before you touch someone you need to ask for their consent to see if it is ok. If someone does not consent to letting you touch them, move on and ask someone else. If you do not like to give touched or touch others at all, it is ok to not participate in this activity.

CHANGE PPT SLIDE



SHARE:

- What were the differences between being touched and not being touched? CHANGE PPT SLIDE

SUMMARIZE:

- Practicing these four skills together on a regular basis can greatly impact and change your mood. It's important to practice them long enough for you to form a habit.
- Pop psychology likes to say that habits are formed in 30 days. However, these skills require you to change behavior that you may have around these activities including insecurities and bad coping skills. It will take much longer than 30 days to change those behaviors, because they are deeper neural pathways that some of you may have been using for a long time. CHANGE PPT SLIDE
- The sooner you start these habits, the better you will get at them, so try to start one today!



Lesson 7 Handout

LABEL NEGATIVE FEELINGS

Make separate headings for positive, negative and neutral. Write down all of the emotions that you can label that you have felt today. Separate the emotions into the categories. Pay attention to how it feels to write down the negative emotions.

Positive	Neutral	Negative

GRATITUDE

Write down 1 thing you dislike in your life. Pay attention to how it feels.

Next, write down three things you are grateful for. That could be a person, place, experience, pet or anything you are really grateful to have in your life.

Make a Decision

Every week, Kali is often overwhelmed by school and her social life. She has homework and reading to do in every class that she has. She plays a sport. She volunteers at a local hospital. She has a boyfriend who likes to text her throughout her day. She also really loves her friends and can never seem to find enough time to see them. When she gets to her room and wants to sit down to work on her homework or read a textbook for class, she often shuts down. She doesn't know where to begin. She texts her boyfriend and her friends. She scrolls through social media. She listens to music. She does lot of things, but she doesn't do her work. She does all of this for a few hours, before she realizes that it's late and she should get something done. She chooses to do whatever assignment is due the next day. She starts it so late that she doesn't get a lot of sleep and has to work on another project in the morning before school.

Write down two small decisions Kali could make to help change her constant feeling of being overwhelmed.

Lesson 8: Talk to a Friend

The Talk to a Friend lesson helps students learn more about how to approach a friend who needs help. This lesson is important in helping students be better prepared to assist their friends. One of the most common dynamics in friendship is seeing that someone needs help, but not necessarily knowing what to do or say. The goal of this lesson is to give students tools to make seeking help more approachable for their friends.

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If someone is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, she could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

23 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

- Demonstrate what actions are helpful to approach a friend, family member, or partner, who needs help.
- Differentiate the differences between what a friend can do and what can only be done by a mental health professional.

SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will be playing a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so you will need a computer connected to a projector and screen.

GROUP SIZE:

- Ideal groups should be 7 members or no larger than 10 to make sure connections and conversations remain personal.
- If you are doing with an organization that has more than 200 members, we recommend you use more than one room with different facilitators for all of the small group work.



MATERIALS NEEDED:

- For each small group: Talk to a Friend handout
- For each person: One notecard
- Projector and Screen
- "Talk to a Friend" PowerPoint
- "Talk to a Friend" Video

What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

The purpose of the fourth lesson is to help students understand how to approach a friend who is experiencing a mental health issue. Friends often share their emotions with each other and don't seek professional help. This means that friends are on the front lines of mental health and need guidance on ways to be able to navigate challenging situations.

The first exercise is designed to engage students by allowing them to share stories from their own personal lives and see how common it is for them to be in scenarios in which they are attempting to help their friends. Students will be given a notecard. On the notecard they will write down a time when they tried to help a friend. They will share what the friend was doing, how they tried to help and if it worked or didn't work. Students won't sign their names on the notecards. If your class is smaller than 25 people you can collect the cards, shuffle them, pass them back out and have each student reach the card they have out loud to the whole group. If the group you are facilitating with is larger than 25, you should break them into small groups and have them do this exercise in their small groups.

This exercise engages students and reminds them how common it is to try to help a friend. Oftentimes the cards have extremely challenging situations. It's important to remind students that many of us care about our friends and there are times when we don't know what to do. You can ask students what they have done when they don't know what to do and lead a brief conversation about how it feels to be in that situation. This activity makes the rest of the lesson real, as students can think about the friend they tried to help for the next exercise.

The second exercise involves a handout that students will fill out in small groups. The handout covers how to approach a friend by letting them know you care about them, asking open-ended questions, what to do if they don't seek help and the situation gets worse, how to take care of themselves and a reminder that they can't be a friend's therapist. The first step is to let a friend know you care about them to try and lessen their defensiveness when informing them that someone is concerned they have a mental health issue. Asking open-ended questions is important to have friends talk about what is happening instead of yes or no questions. Knowing who to talk to or what to do if a friend refuses to get help is critical, because involving other people may be necessary. Oftentimes when a friend's mental health is going downhill, it's common for their friends to also lose their mental health. Writing down tips for self-care during these situations is helpful. Lastly, it's important to note that a friend wouldn't be able to treat a friend's broken leg and they can't treat their friend's mental health issues.

This lesson is for how to approach a friend in most situations except suicide. Empowering young people with this information can help them feel more prepared when they know someone who is struggling.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between students identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.

FACILITATOR NOTES:

As students enter the room, assign them to small groups. Give each student a notecard and each group 2 copies of the Talk to a Friend handout.

TALK TO A FRIEND VIDEO (3 MINUTES):

This video discusses what to do when you want to approach a friend who is having a mental health breakdown.

Play the “Talk to a Friend Video” for the large group. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 1 (10 MINUTES)

INTRODUCTION:

- We’re going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Sixty-seven percent of college students first disclose suicidal thoughts or mental health challenges to a friend. That means you are all on the front lines of mental health. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The goal of this lesson is to make it easier for students to talk about mental health and get the help they need. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- In this small group activity, you will share a time you intervened in a friend’s life because you were concerned about him or her.
- You will do this completely anonymously, but it requires trust and a willingness to share. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- I’m going to read the instructions and then you can get started.



INSTRUCTIONS:

- On your notecard, write down what your friend was doing that led you to feel you needed to intervene. For example, it could be after a break up, when someone wasn’t doing well in school, or another situation. If you have never helped a friend in this situation, write about a time where you think you could have.
- Next, write down if your attempts to help that friend worked or didn’t work.
- Pass all of the cards to one person in the group.
- That person will shuffle the cards and pass one to each member.
- Then read the cards aloud to the group.
- Go around the group again and have each member say one word or theme that stuck with them about helping a friend. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE:

- Let’s have several groups share some themes they heard as they did this exercise. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- We did this exercise to show how common it is to intervene in a friend’s life. While we want to help
- We’re not always successful in doing this.

- There are a lot of reasons why we may or may not be successful. The next exercise is designed to
- Help us better understand how to approach a friend. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 2 (10 MINUTES)



INSTRUCTIONS:

- This next exercise will help us understand how to approach a person experiencing a mental health challenge.
- This could mean talking to a friend who has anxiety or depression, went through a break-up, got rejected, is drinking or abusing drugs, or other similar situations.
- These exercises are not intended for someone who you think is suicidal. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- In your groups, think about the following scenario. You notice a change in your friend's behavior that causes you concern. She's not eating regularly. She is constantly stressed. You feel like she's hiding her emotions.
- You will take five minutes to discuss the questions on the Talk to a Friend Handout to help you better understand how to approach your friend.
- After your group has answered the questions, a representative from each group will report your answers to the large group. I'll let you know some positive answers. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Give them 5 minutes to write on their handouts and discuss as a small group. Then come together as one large group to discuss their answers.

FACILITATOR NOTES:



Share:

After everyone is done with the worksheet, ask several groups how they responded to each question.

Summarize:

Below we list the questions from the handout, along with positive answers to review with the chapter. After you facilitate sharing for each question, summarize the recommended responses/answers for the chapter.

Write down five ways you can express you're having this conversation because you care about your friend.

It's important to approach your friend by letting her or him know you care about them, because it can help someone feel more comfortable to talk about what is wrong and seek help. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Acceptable answers to this question should include:

- "You're not doing the things you used to do, and I'm concerned about you."
- "I'm your friend and want to make sure you're OK."
- "I know you would do the same for me."
- "Sometimes people don't think these kinds of things can get better, but it's important to try."
- "I know it can be hard to talk about these things, but it's the only way that you can find a way to address this." **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Write down five open-ended questions you could ask your friend to help him/her talk about what he/she is going through.

Open ended questions are helpful, because they allow your friend to talk to you about what is wrong. It's helpful to let them say everything they want and listen to them. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Acceptable answers to this question should include:

- “How are you?”
- “How have you been feeling?”
- “What have you been thinking about?”
- “Is there anything stressing you out right now?”
- “Do you feel like anything has changed in your life?”
- “Do you want to talk about anything?”
- “Is there anything I can do for you?” **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Write down five steps you can take if your friend refuses to get help and his/her situation gets worse.

Acceptable answers to this question should include:

- Talk to a counselor about steps you can take.
- Research the problem to see what might work for other people in a similar situation.
- Never give up.
- Let her know you care and your door is always open to her.
- Keep listening to anything they say.
- Don’t judge them. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

You’re not a psychologist.

- Look at the lists and notice there are things a doctor can do for a broken leg that you can’t. There are also things you can do that a doctor can’t. Both roles are valuable in helping a person. Much like you can’t set a bone and put on a cast, you also can’t diagnose a friend and be their therapist. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Write down six things you can do to take care of yourself while your friend is in a mental health crisis.

- As you are trying to help a friend, you may not be able to sleep, because you’re texting her all night. You stop doing normal things like eating, studying and working to be there for your friend. List steps you would take in this scenario to better care for your mental health while helping your friend. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Acceptable answers to this question should include:

- Get sleep
- Talk about how your friend is affecting your life.
- Exercise
- Make time for yourself.
- Do something fun.
- Write about your emotions.
- See other friends or family.
- Practice yoga or meditation. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

SUMMARIZE:

- When reaching out to a friend, it is important to establish trust and a system to be able to help.
- Being aware of the person’s feelings and learning how to effectively engage them leads to more success in
- Getting people the help they need.

WRAP-UP:

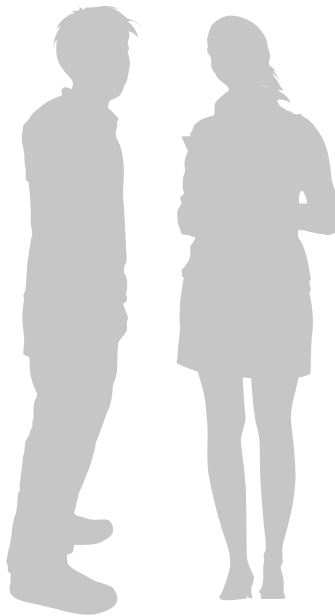
- Mental health challenges are extremely individualized. It can be hard to know exactly how to reach someone.
- If you're concerned about a friend or family member, one of the best things you can do is go to the counseling center and talk to a counselor about the person to find out more about your options. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

TALK TO A FRIEND

List 5 ways you can tell your friend you're having this conversation because you care about them:

List 5 steps you can take if your friend refuses help and their situation gets worse.

Write down 5 open ended questions to help your friend talk about what they are going through.



List 6 things you can do to take care of yourself while your friend is dealing with a mental health crisis.

Make a list of what a doctor or physical therapist can do to help your friend who has a broken leg and make a list of what you can do to help a friend.

Lesson 9: Before the Breakdown

The Before the Breakdown lesson helps students learn tips on what actions to take when someone is suicidal. This lesson is important in helping students be better prepared to assist their friends. For students who have had suicidal thoughts, 67 percent report they first disclosed them to a friend. Most people also first disclose other serious mental health challenges to friends. Helping students be prepared to take action during times of crisis is a necessary step for intervention and prevention of worst-case scenarios.

FACILITATOR:

To facilitate this lesson effectively, it is helpful to have experience or training as a facilitator in other areas of campus life. If someone is or has been a resident assistant, student organization leader, peer advocate, or is studying to be a teacher, she could be an excellent facilitator for this program.

TIME NEEDED:

18 minutes



OBJECTIVES:

- Identify warning signs of someone who may be experiencing a severe mental health breakdown.
- Differentiate the differences between what a friend can do and what can only be done by a mental health professional.

SETTING:

- Choose a room that offers a lot of open space for small groups to be able to spread out and not be distracted by others. Students will need to be able to either sit and gather on the floor or move chairs around into small groups.
- You will be playing a PowerPoint presentation and videos during the lesson, so you will need a computer connected to a projector and screen.

GROUP SIZE:

- Ideal groups should be 7 students or no larger than 10 to make sure connections and conversations remain personal.
- If you are doing with an organization that has more than 200 members, we recommend you use more than one room with different facilitators for all of the small group work.

MATERIALS NEEDED:

- Projector and Screen
- "Before the Breakdown" PowerPoint
- "Before the Breakdown" Video

What to Know About This Lesson

PURPOSE OF LESSON:

- The purpose of the fifth lesson is to help students understand what to do when a friend is suicidal. Sixty-seven percent of students first report suicidal thoughts to a friend. Many times the person who is suicidal asks their friend to keep their feeling confidential, which places another person in a really difficult situation. The goal of this lesson is not to train students on how to talk people out of suicidal thoughts or provide treatment. The goal is to give them basic information on what to do if a friend is suicidal and how to call for help.
- This lesson is taught in one large group no matter what the size of your class or student organization is. The first part of the lesson covers the differences between feeling depressed and having clinical depression. This part of the lesson ties back into lesson 2, where they learned different categories for mental health challenges. It's helpful for students to know that when someone feels depressed, upset or sad, they often have a cause. When someone goes through a parents' divorce, death, breakup or difficult event they can become sad. The opposite of feeling sad, depressed or upset is happiness. When someone has clinical depression they often don't have a cause. Everything in their life is painful. They stop doing things they enjoy, stop taking care of themselves and can have thoughts of death or suicide. The opposite of clinical depression is vitality. It's important to remind students of these differences.
- The next part of the lesson has the students naming all of the symptoms and signs of someone who is suicidal. You will go over a long list of signs with the PowerPoint in front of the class. Take time to explain as many of the symptoms as you can to help normalize how they happen. Next, you will go over the steps someone should take. The first step is calling for help. In reality, the lesson could end on that first step. You want students to know they can call the suicide prevention lifeline, adults, counseling centers or 911. The steps after that are to help support someone until professional help can arrive.
- The largest issue that most students deal with is that they often don't want to tell someone that a friend is suicidal. They think it is snitching or ratting someone out and they're worried that their friend may never speak to them again. It's vital to remind them that it's better to have a friend be angry at them, because they had to get help, then it is to not have a friend be alive. Many people who take their own lives have tragically confided in others and asked them not to say anything.
- The last part of the lesson is to go over the most frequently asked questions about suicide from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. You can read the questions and answers with the class or have students read them out loud. If you are a trained mental health professional you can open it up to questions and answer them as well. If you're not a trained mental health professional, you can have one in the room for this lesson or you can read the answers and close the lesson.

FACILITATOR TIPS:

To facilitate this lesson effectively it is helpful to:

1. Connect to students early about why mental health is important to you and why it should be important to them. If you have a personal story about why you care about mental health, then share it. Let students know they should take this seriously. The more that you can make yourself vulnerable and relatable the more effective you will be as a facilitator.
2. Make yourself vulnerable with a boundary. If you are going to share part of your personal story, make sure you share something that you are comfortable with and have processed. For example, if you share that you care about this issue, because you have been diagnosed with a mental health disorder and it affected part of your life, then the students see you presenting from a place of strength. If you share something that you are still processing and become emotional, then the students may think they need to take care of you. It's helpful if you can be real about why you care and reinforce what you learned from your experiences.
3. Keep the exercises concise. If you give students too much time they can devolve into so many other unnecessary conversations. Keep students focused.
4. Allow the exercises to be tools for students to identify how to work on mental health, but not become therapy. There's a difference between students identifying what they can work on and voicing all of their experiences or pain. Stress that you want this to start conversations, but that they can do the work outside of the lessons. This is a public health approach to mental health and not a therapeutic approach.
5. Focus on connecting students to their emotions and each other. Have fun when you can. Be positive. Make it a team building exercise that strengthens communication and connection.
6. It is important to let students know that lessons about mental health require everyone to be open, honest and non-judgmental. Students who share their stories need to feel safe and that the values of your school are being upheld. Reinforce that the main goal is to start conversations about mental health in a way that can bring everyone together.
7. If a student is sharing their story extensively and continues to provide more details about their life than the lesson is asking for, it is ok to let them know that you hear their story and also want to hear from other students. Remind all students that these lessons are a start to this topic and provide ways to open conversations that can be continued after the lessons are over.
8. The recommended time for each lesson is 20-25 minutes. This gives you enough time to do each exercise, however you might find that the group you are teaching wants to spend more time on certain exercises. It is ok to do this when you feel that the group is having a discussion that will help everyone address mental health in a meaningful manner.
9. Show the slide that sets the ground rules for the conversation at the beginning of the lesson and make sure everyone agrees the ground rules.



BEFORE THE BREAKDOWN VIDEO (3 MINUTES):

This video discusses what to do when someone is having suicidal thoughts.

Play the “Before the Breakdown Video” for the large group. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

EXERCISE 1 (10 MINUTES):

INTRODUCTION

- We’re going to do a lesson about mental health. This is a serious topic that affects all of us and can be really sensitive for students. If at any time you are triggered by the content in this lesson you can choose to not participate in the activities or leave the room to talk to someone who can help you.
- Being honest, open and non-judgmental of each other during these exercises will help us learn more about mental health and each other. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- Sixty-seven percent of students first disclose suicidal thoughts or mental health challenges to a friend. That means you are all on the front lines of mental health. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- When a person is suicidal, the steps we learned in the Talk to a Friend lesson change. The approach is more direct, and it’s vital to take action. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- In many situations, people care about a friend, but don’t know what signs to look for that they may seriously be contemplating suicide.
- In your small groups write down all of the warning signs that you know for someone who is contemplating suicide. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**



SHARE

- Now let’s come back together and make a list of the warning signs together. What do you think the signs are? Call them out and I’ll write them down. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

FACILITATOR NOTES:

Write down the warning signs that someone is suicidal on a flip chart piece of paper as students say them aloud. After you create your list go over the main signs with the PowerPoint.

SUMMARIZE

Let’s go over a list from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention to ensure we covered all of the warning signs. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

- Talking about wanting to kill herself, or saying she wishes she was dead.
- Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as hoarding medicine or buying a gun.
- Talking about a specific suicide plan.
- Consistently feeling hopeless or having no reason to live.
- Feeling trapped, desperate or needing to escape from an intolerable situation.
- Having the feeling of being a burden to others.
- Feeling humiliated.
- Having intense anxiety and/or panic attacks.
- Losing interest in things or losing the ability to experience pleasure.
- Insomnia.

- Becoming socially isolated and withdrawn from friends, family and others.
- Acting irritable or agitated in a highly unusual manner.
- Showing rage, or talking about seeking revenge for being victimized or rejected, whether or not the situations the person describes seem real. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- The actions you take when someone is thinking about suicide are important. Here are the main actions to take:
- Try to get them to a professional.
- Know the warning signs.
- Do not handle the person alone.
- Be direct with your questions about suicide.
- Do not judge.

EXERCISE 2 (5 MINUTES):

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT SUICIDE



INSTRUCTIONS:

- When someone is suicidal it's difficult to know what to say.
- We're going to go over some of the most frequently asked questions about suicide from the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: If someone really wants to end their life, is there anything I can do to stop them?

- A: Most of the time, when someone thinks or talks about suicide they actually have mixed feelings about dying. Most often, suicidal feelings come from having a mental illness, and these illnesses can be treated with professional help.
- Medication, talk therapy, or a combination of the two has been shown to save lives. The best way to help is to encourage and assist the suicidal person to get the help they need. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: What should I do if I encourage a suicidal person to get help but they refuse?

- A: To someone feeling suicidal, depressed or anxious, the idea of talking to a doctor or mental health professional can seem overwhelming. Sometimes suicide seems like the only way to control their pain.
- Continue to tell them that you're concerned about them, and to suggest that a professional who understands what they are feeling can help them to feel better.
- Let them know you're there to listen, and offer help finding or getting to a doctor, mental health professional, or hospital emergency room.
- You can also help by staying with them and calling the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800- 273-8255. If you're concerned they will hurt themselves call 911. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: If a friend confides in me that they are thinking of suicide and makes me promise not to tell, shouldn't I respect their right to privacy?

- A: Privacy is very important, but your friend's life is even more important.
- Depression and other mental disorders may be distorting their judgment and leading them to want to hurt themselves.
- Even if you lose your friendship, saving a life is the most important priority.
- Tell someone you trust about your friend and ask for their assistance getting them to a professional. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q: My friend purposely cuts herself when she is upset. Is this the same as making a suicide attempt?

- A: Some people cut or otherwise hurt themselves when they feel overwhelmed by difficult or stressful feelings, or to relieve their inner tension.

- Many people who cut themselves never attempt to kill themselves. However, in some cases, self harm is the first indication that someone may be at risk for suicidal behavior.
- Whether or not they feel an impulse to take their own lives, someone who is cutting or otherwise hurting themselves needs help.
- Health and mental health professionals are trained to determine whether a person is at risk for suicide, and to suggest a treatment plan to help them with their self-harm behavior and underlying feelings. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

Q. Is someone who has had suicidal thoughts or a recent attempt and is now feeling better still at risk for suicide?

- A. Successful treatment for serious depression or suicidal behavior significantly reduces the longterm risk for suicide.
- It can be difficult to know where a suicidal person is in their recovery.
- Someone who has felt suicidal may work hard to hide his or her feelings, and may appear to be functioning well socially, professionally or academically. In some cases, a person who has made the decision to die may seem calmer and at peace.
- Each year suicide claims the lives of people who seem happy, well liked and successful to his or her friends, families and others around them.
- Staying in treatment after the suicidal thoughts and symptoms seem to be getting better is the best way to ensure a successful recovery. The decision to stop treatment should be made together by the mental health professional and patient. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**

WRAP-UP:

- The goal of this lesson was to provide you with tips on what you might be able to do to help a friend.
- This advice should never take the place of professional help or guidance. If you are worried about a friend, please talk to a counselor, mental health professional or call 1-800-273- TALK (8255). **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**
- We gave you signs to look for when a friend is suicidal, but this does not mean you are trained to treat someone who is suicidal. The most important thing a friend can do when someone she cares about is in crisis is get that person to a mental health professional.
- If you need to talk to someone about your mental health, the campus counseling center is a great place to start. **CHANGE PPT SLIDE**