



Educator guide: Healthy minds lesson

Recommended for grades:

8th grade

Time:

8 minutes

National Health Education Standards:

This activity aligns with the following National Health Education Standards:

- Standard 1: Use functional health information to support health and well-being of self and others.
- Standard 2: Analyze influences that affect health and well-being of self and others.
- Standard 7: Demonstrate practices and behaviors to support health and well-being of self and others.

For more information about the National Health Education Standards, visit the SHAPE America website: shapeamerica.org.

Learning objectives:

After completing this lesson students will be able to:

1. Describe at least three healthy behaviors (including one that specifically helps keep the mind healthy) they can do each day.
2. Identify warning signs of common mental health diagnoses.
3. Demonstrate action steps they can take to help themselves or their friends with a mental health concern.

Lesson description:

In this lesson students will learn about what makes a healthy mind and everyday habits that are good for the mind. They will learn about some common mental health concerns and how to help a friend that they think may be struggling with a mental health challenge.

Pre and post-test questions:

Use the following questions with your students in any way that you see fit (on paper, using a survey tool, etc.) You may choose to combine questions from various lessons and activities that your students participate in. Correct answer choices are bolded.

1. Which of the following could be a warning sign of a mental health concern?
Choose all that apply.
 - a. Withdrawing from social activities**
 - b. Sleeping more than usual**
 - c. Better concentration
 - d. Mood swings**
 - e. Increased hunger

2. If your friend is struggling with a mental health concern, what should you do?
Choose all that apply.
 - a. Leave them alone.
 - b. Check in with them regularly.**
 - c. Include them in your plans.**
 - d. Talk to an adult.**
 - e. Keep their secret.

Vocabulary:

Use the following list of vocabulary as a reference for yourself or your students as you complete the Healthy minds lesson. You may choose to use this list in any way that fits your needs.

- ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) – a common brain disorder marked by persistent inattention, hyperactivity and sometimes impulsivity that begins in childhood and often persists into adulthood
- Anxiety – a feeling of worry, nervousness or unease
- Brain – the organ inside the head that controls thought, memory, feelings and activity
- Depression – a common mental health disorder that causes long-lasting feelings of sadness, and/or a loss of interest in activities, lasting two or more weeks
- Down time – time spent where a person is not focused on anything in particular and just lets the mind wander, or simply relaxes, helping the brain recharge
- Mental health – a state of well-being in which a person realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stressors of life, can work productively and is able to make a contribution to their community
- Mental health professional – a healthcare professional or community services provider who offers services for the purpose of improving an individual's mental health, or to treat mental health disorders
- Mental illness– conditions or disorders that can affect your mood, thinking and behavior
- Sleep – the natural state of rest in which the eyes are closed and the body is inactive, allowing the body and brain to rest and recover

Healthy minds worksheet

Name: _____ Date: _____

Instructions: Complete this worksheet as you move through the Healthy minds lesson.

1. List three characteristics people who are mentally healthy have.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

2. List two facts about mental illness.

a. _____

b. _____

3. List three common mental health challenges.

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

4. What is the definition of an anxiety disorder?

5. What is the difference between being sad and having depression?

6. What are two things that kids and teens who have ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) struggle with?

a. _____

b. _____

7. What are three signs to look for if you think a friend may be struggling with a mental health concern?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

8. What are three things you can do to help a friend who may be struggling with a mental health concern?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____

9. What are three everyday healthy habits that are good for your mind?

a. _____

b. _____

c. _____



Healthy minds worksheet answer key

1. List three characteristics people who are mentally healthy have.

The ability to laugh and have fun, the ability to deal with stress, a sense of meaning and purpose, the flexibility to learn new things and adopt to change, the ability to build and maintain healthy relationships and a sense of balance

2. List two facts about mental illness.

Anyone can experience mental illness, mental illness is not caused by doing something wrong, you can't catch a mental illness from someone else and someone with a mental illness can get help and get better

3. List three common mental health challenges.

- a. Anxiety

- b. Depression

- c. ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder)

4. What is the definition of an anxiety disorder?

A common mental health disorder characterized by excessive fear or nervousness, oftentimes to the point where it interferes with sleep, behavior and relationships

5. What is the difference between being sad and having depression?

Depression causes long-lasting feelings of sadness, usually along with a loss of interest in activities that you used to enjoy, that lasts two weeks or more and it can occur without a specific sad event.

6. What are two things that kids and teens who have ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder) struggle with?

Paying attention, listening, waiting, staying focused, fidgeting and managing impulses

7. What are three signs to look for if you think a friend may be struggling with a mental health concern?

Avoiding spending time with friends, looking really tired, talking about hurting themselves in some way, severe mood swings, changes in behavior, personality or sleep, sleeping a lot more than usual, barely sleeping at all, changes in their ability to concentrate and being more easily distracted



8. What are three things you can do to help a friend who may be struggling with a mental health concern?

Ask them how they are feeling, ask if there's anything they want to talk about, use "I" statements; offer to go with them to talk to a trusted adult, check in with them regularly, include them in your plans and talk to a trusted adult

9. What are three everyday healthy habits that are good for your mind?

Getting 8-10 hours of sleep each night, making time for things you enjoy, taking time to connect with others in person and relaxing and letting your mind wander



Supplemental activity: Reduce the stigma

Objectives:

After completing this activity students will be able to:

- Create a campaign to reduce the stigma around mental health.

Materials needed:

- Chalkboard or whiteboard for brainstorming
- Art supplies such as poster board, paper, markers, etc.
- Copies of Ways to fight mental health stigma handout (included below)

Time required:

90 minutes

Instructions:

Using the chalkboard or whiteboard, have a discussion about what stigma is and what the stigma around mental health looks like.

- **Stigma** - a strong feeling of disapproval that most people in a society have about something, especially if it is unfair.

Discuss with students different ways they can reduce the stigma around mental health in their families, schools and communities. The Ways to fight mental health stigma handout can be a great way to start this discussion.

Tell students they will be creating their own campaign to reduce the stigma around mental health at their school. It may be helpful to brainstorm general ideas and then narrow down the list. From there, students can be divided into smaller groups based on their interest. For example, the class may decide that they want to create something for the morning announcements. There may be a group of students who would like to write scripts for this and record it for the announcements. If the class decides they want posters up around the school, there may be a group of students that wants to use their creativity and create those posters.

As a class, document the plan for the campaign in writing with specific details describing how the ideas would be implemented in their school setting. The campaign could be designed to last a week, a month or the entire school year. Encourage students to be creative and think of strategies to address several of the ways to fight mental health stigma. One of the small groups should be assigned to speak with the administration at the school to get approval with moving forward with the campaign. Designing the campaign may take 1-2 class periods. Then, depending on how much time you have, smaller group assignments could be worked on in future class periods or assigned as homework.



Ways to fight mental health stigma

Below are different ways that we can all help to fight against mental health stigma.

Talk openly about mental health.

Talk about what it's like to have a mental illness, or to live with someone who is struggling with mental illness. This makes others who may be dealing with mental illness feel less alone. Talk openly about treatment that you may be receiving for mental illness. Just like saying you have an appointment with your primary care doctor, you should be able to speak openly about seeing a mental health professional.

Educate yourself and others.

Learn the facts about mental illness. Find opportunities to pass on facts and dispel myths about people with mental health concerns. If friends, family, co-workers or even the media present information that is not true, challenge their myths and stereotypes. Let them know how their negative words and incorrect descriptions affect people with mental health concerns by keeping alive the false ideas.

Be conscious of the language that you use.

Refrain from using mental health conditions as adjectives. These illnesses and conditions do not define a person. The way we speak can affect the way other people think and speak. Avoid using hurtful or derogatory language.

Be aware of your attitudes.

We've all grown up around prejudices and judgmental thinking. But we can change the way we think! See people as unique human beings, not as labels or stereotypes. See the person beyond their mental illness. They have many other personal attributes that do not disappear just because they also have a mental illness.

Encourage equality between physical and mental illness.

Just like physical illness, people can experience a mental illness anytime. When someone is sick they go to a doctor to get well. People with a mental illness can go to a mental health professional for help when they need it. Just like we shouldn't talk negatively about someone who has cancer or diabetes, we shouldn't talk negatively about someone who has a mental illness. Both are diseases that can strike anyone.

Show compassion for those with mental illness.

Treat people who have a mental illness with dignity and respect. Think about how you'd like others to act toward you if you were in the same situation. If you have family members, friends or co-workers with mental health concerns, support and encourage their efforts to get well.



Handouts

Included on the following pages are additional resources that you and your students' families may find useful.



Nutrition and physical activity resources for parents, caregivers and educators

- American Heart Association, [heart.org](https://www.heart.org)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), [cdc.gov](https://www.cdc.gov)
- Children's Wisconsin, [childrenswi.org](https://www.childrenswi.org)
- KidsHealth, kidshealth.org
- Mental Health America, [mhanational.org](https://www.mhanational.org)
- National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), [nimh.nih.gov](https://www.nimh.nih.gov)
- Society of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology, [effectivechildtherapy.org](https://www.effectivechildtherapy.org)
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), [myplate.gov](https://www.myplate.gov)
- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Student Services/Prevention and Wellness, dpi.wi.gov/sspw



Transcript

Slide 1 (video)

Tayler: We've talked a lot about how to keep our bodies healthy. But in order to be truly healthy, we need to have a healthy mind too. When your body is healthy, you feel good and you're able to go to school, hang out with friends and do all the things you need, and want, to do every day.

Camara: And a healthy mind lets you learn, connect with others and enjoy life. Having both a healthy mind and body are both very important. Just like physical illness, people can experience a mental illness anytime. Having a mental illness can change how you think, feel or act. It can sometimes make it harder to do things you want to do. Just like when your body is sick and you go to a doctor, someone with a mental illness can go to a mental health professional and get help.

Tayler: And you know what? Everyone has good days and bad days. Having a bad day, or even a few bad days, doesn't necessarily mean you have a mental illness. The things we'll be learning about today are all good reminders for all of us because everyone can improve their mental health.

Camara: In this lesson you'll learn about different things you can do every day to improve your mental health. You'll learn about some common mental health concerns that people may be dealing with, and how to help a friend if you think they are struggling.

Tayler: Don't forget to open the worksheet and either save it to your computer or print it. Complete this worksheet as you move through this lesson.

Slide 2

First let's define what having a healthy mind means. Having a healthy mind, or being mentally healthy, isn't just the absence of mental health problems, or mental illness. It is much more than that. People who are mentally healthy have the ability to laugh and have fun, the ability to deal with stress, a sense of meaning and purpose and the flexibility to learn and adapt to change

They are able to build and maintain healthy relationships, and they have a sense of balance in their life.

These positive characteristics of mental health allow you to participate in life to the fullest extent possible through productive, meaningful activities and strong relationships. And they will help you cope when you're faced with life's challenges.

Slide 3

Anyone can experience mental health concerns. It doesn't matter where you live, what kind of family you have or how old you are. Mental illness is not caused by doing something wrong, and you can't catch a mental illness from someone else. Someone with a mental illness can, however, get help and get better.

Slide 4

There are many types of mental health challenges that can affect teens your age. Anxiety, depression and ADHD, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, are among the most common. We're going to take a closer look at each one.

Slide 5

Have you ever felt nervous before taking a big test or having to give a speech? Feeling nervous, or anxious, is a normal reaction to stress and can actually be beneficial in some situations. Anxiety disorders are different though. When someone has an anxiety disorder their fear or nervousness is excessive, oftentimes to the point where it interferes with their sleep, behavior and relationships. So, for example, some kids and teens develop "test anxiety". It's perfectly normal to get nervous before a test, but anxiety is more severe. Prior to the test, someone with anxiety may worry about being late to the test, or not having what they need with them during the test, or even that they won't finish on time. If this occurs regularly, it could be considered an anxiety disorder.



Slide 6

Depression is another common mental health concern that affects many people. Everyone has a bad day here and there, and everyone will experience events that are sad in their life at some point. But being sad is not the same as having depression. Depression causes long-lasting feelings of sadness, usually along with a loss of interest in activities that you used to enjoy. This sadness and loss of interest in activities usually lasts for more than two weeks, and it can occur without a specific sad event.

Slide 7

Everyone has trouble at times with paying attention, listening or waiting, but people with ADHD, or Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, struggle with these things almost all the time. People with ADHD have a harder time staying focused and they may be more fidgety than others. ADHD can make it harder to manage impulses and pay attention, so kids and teens who struggle with this may get in trouble more.

Slide 8 (video)

Camara: If you're worried that a friend may be struggling with a mental health concern, there are some signs to look for. Are they avoiding spending time with friends? Do they look really tired? Are they talking about hurting themselves in some way?

Taylor: You can also look for severe mood swings and changes in their behavior, personality or sleep. Is he or she sleeping a lot more than usual? Or, barely sleeping at all? Look for changes in their ability to concentrate too. Do they seem more distracted or "lost in space" than usual?

Camara: It's important to remember that part of being a good friend is helping them get support that they need and deserve. Ask them how they are feeling, and if there's anything they might want to talk about.

Taylor: Yeah, try to use "I" statements instead of saying "you". For example, instead of saying "You are sleeping all the time lately" try saying "I've noticed that you seem really tired lately and have been sleeping a lot more than you used to."

Camara: Keep in mind that your friend might not be ready to talk about what they're going through. You can't force someone to get help, so just do your best to be there for your friend. Offer to listen and talk when they are ready, or offer to go with them to talk to a trusted adult.

Taylor: Check in regularly with your friend. This lets them know that you care about them and haven't forgotten about them. Include your friend in your plans, even if they don't always come.

Camara: If you become really concerned with their behavior, or they mention anything about hurting themselves, you should always feel confident in telling a trusted adult. You may be hesitant to do that though if your friend asked you to keep something they told you confidential. But if your friend is in danger of hurting him or herself in any way, it's time to get an adult involved. And, oftentimes, someone struggling with a mental health concern can really benefit from seeing a mental health professional.



Slide 9

There are lots of everyday healthy habits that are good for your mind too. One of the best things you can do for your body and mind is to get good sleep. Someone your age needs 8-10 hours of sleep each night. And one of the best ways to do that is to get electronics out of your bedroom at night.

It's also important to spend some time each day doing something that you enjoy. That might mean listening to music, painting, reading a good book or going for a walk.

Each day you should also take time to connect with other people, ideally in person, rather than through a computer or phone. It's important to spend time with people that you enjoy, including other kids your age and trusted adults.

Having down time each day is important too. Down time is when you are not focused on anything in particular and you let your mind wander, or you just simply relax. This helps your brain recharge.

Slide 10 (video)

Taylor: I know sometimes I get wrapped up in my daily life and I forget to take time to just relax. So, I'm definitely going to remember that simply doing nothing is good for my brain!

Camara: And sometimes I'm up too late at night texting with my friends. I really do need to try and get more sleep!

Taylor: I think we all could stand to do more of what we've learned about here. And please remember, if you or a friend is struggling with a mental health concern, don't hesitate to reach out to a trusted adult.



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