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**MAKE IT COUNT.**

**MENTAL HEALTH IS  
NOT EXTRACURRICULAR.**



Mental Health  
Foundation



**Guide for teachers**

# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

We all have mental health, just as we all have physical health. Being mentally healthy means that we feel good about ourselves, make and keep positive relationships with others and can feel and manage the full range of emotions. These can range from happiness, excitement and curiosity through to less comfortable feelings such as anger, fear or sadness. Good mental health allows us to cope with life's ups and downs, to feel in control of our lives and to ask for help from others when we need support.

# MENTAL HEALTH SPECTRUM

Mental health and mental illness are part of a 'spectrum' just as physical health and illness are. Throughout our lives, many different things can lead us to move up and down the spectrum such as the start or end of relationships, getting a new job or being made redundant, changes in physical health and good news or worries about those we are close to. It is important to remember that recovery is possible, even from severe mental ill health, and that people with a mental ill-health diagnosis may be managing their condition well and still experiencing high levels of wellbeing.



# THE FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

It is often life events that are outside our control which can damage our mental health, and this is made worse if we feel powerless to do anything about them. One of the ways we can re-gain a sense of control and nourish our mental health is to remember the 'The Five Ways to Wellbeing' which have been found in research to improve mental wellbeing in children and adults (<http://neweconomics.org/2008/10/five-ways-to-wellbeing-the-evidence/>).

GIVE TO  
OTHERS



HOW ARE  
YOU?

CONNECT



BE  
AWARE



BE  
ACTIVE



KEEP  
LEARNING



# TOP TIPS FOR TEACHERS

## CREATING MENTALLY HEALTHY SCHOOLS

Creating mentally healthy schools will always be a task for the whole school community rather than one individual. No matter how much or little your school currently does to support good mental health, there are still things you can do as an individual teacher to improve the situation.

## START WITH YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH . . .



### USE THE FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

It's difficult for anyone to support someone else if they are not feeling mentally well themselves. Use the Five Ways to 'check-in' with yourself around your own wellbeing and how you're supporting yourself.



### ASK FOR HELP

Asking for support shouldn't be something to feel ashamed about – we all move up and down the mental health spectrum throughout our lives. Talk to a trusted friend or colleague and seek advice from your GP if necessary.

## IN YOUR CLASSROOM. . .

Here are a few suggestions to incorporate mentally healthy practice into your classroom:



### TALK ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH

One of the most important things you can do is to talk to pupils about mental health in a non-stigmatising way, explaining that it affects us all and is not black and white but a spectrum. The 'What's on your Mind?' by See Me resources below provide some helpful guidance in how to do this.



### SHARE THE FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING

The Five Ways messages are simple to understand and easily adapted to age ranges across primary and secondary schools. They could be integrated into the classroom for example by creating a display board or by using each of the ways as a daily theme for form/tutor time.



### IF YOU TEACH PSHE

Take a look at the PSHE Association's 'Guidance on Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing' <https://www.pshe-association.org.uk/news/launching-our-new-guidance-preparing-teach-about>



### MODEL GOOD HABITS

Children often learn from copying what they see around them. Sharing with them the ways that you take care of your own mental health can help normalise the idea of looking after our mental as well as physical health.



### LISTEN AND EMPATHISE

If a pupil shares their worries with you, try to empathise rather than giving advice, trying to 'fix' their problem or immediately referring them on to another staff member or service. Empathy involves acknowledging what the young person is feeling, attempting to understand things from their point of view and avoiding judgement. If you have any concerns about their safety, follow your school's safeguarding policy and discuss with your designated safeguarding lead.

## ACROSS YOUR SCHOOL . . .



### ORGANISE FIVE WAYS TO WELLBEING ASSEMBLIES

Work with pupils to create whole school or year group assemblies to share the importance of looking after our mental health across the whole school.



### SUGGEST A MENTAL HEALTH INSET DAY

This can begin a discussion among staff, if it isn't already taking place, around how pupil and teacher mental health is supported by the school, and what might improve the situation.



### WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH

The most effective way to build mentally healthy schools is to adopt a whole school approach. This means involving everyone from the Senior Leadership Team, through to parents, staff, pupils as well as local services such as CAMHS and counselling provision. For more information about whole school approaches to mental health see <https://www.mentallyhealthyschools.org.uk/whole-school-approach/>

## FIND OUT MORE...

Use the resources below to find out more about mental health and wellbeing:

The **Mental Health Foundation** website has a useful A-Z of key mental health topics: <https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/a-to-z>

The **Charlie Waller Memorial Trust** has resources on young people's mental health for parents and professionals, including guidance on supporting student mental health during GCSE exams and a wellbeing Action Plan for use with students (<https://www.cwmt.org.uk/resources>)

'**What's on your mind?**' by SeeMe is a three-module pack for teachers of secondary school children to learn about mental health and develop the skills and confidence to tackle stigma and discrimination (<https://www.seemescotland.org/young-people/whats-on-your-mind/>)

**Talking Mental Health: Animation & Teacher Toolkit** by the Anna Freud Centre (<https://www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/resources-for-schools/talking-mental-health-animation-teacher-toolkit/>). Lesson plan and videos for use with primary school children

**Heads Up! Toolkit** A variety of session plans to run with young people to promote mental health and emotional well-being around specific issues such as self-harm and supporting friends ([www.phf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Heads20Up20Final20Approved20version.pdf](http://www.phf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Heads20Up20Final20Approved20version.pdf))



**mentalhealth.org.uk**

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