

Lesson 3: Recognising mental ill-health and when to get help

Key stage 4

This is the third of a series of four key stage 4 lessons exploring mental health and emotional wellbeing. Whilst this suite of lessons focuses primarily on promoting emotional wellbeing, this lesson focuses on mental health issues that can affect young people, examining mental ill-health warning signs and the range of sources of support available. This lesson should always be followed by content on positive steps to support mental health and emotional wellbeing, as provided in lesson four of this suite of lessons.

**Neither this, nor any of the accompanying lessons, is designed to be taught in isolation, but should always form part of a planned, developmental PSHE education programme.*



Learning objective

Students will learn:

- how to recognise signs that someone might need support for mental health concerns
- about mental health issues that most commonly affect young people.



Learning outcomes

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to:

- recognise signs that someone might have mental health issues such as a mood disorder, stress or anxiety
- explain when and whom to tell if concerned for theirs or someone else's mental wellbeing
- describe the range of support available for those with emotional or mental health problems, including how best to access local services.



Climate for learning

Before teaching these lessons, ensure that you read the accompanying PSHE Association document [Teaching about mental health and emotional wellbeing](#) for guidance on establishing ground rules, the limits of confidentiality, handling questions, and additional advice relating to teaching about mental health effectively and safely.

N.B. Be aware of young people who may be particularly affected by learning about specific mental health issues and liaise with pastoral staff to address their needs.



Resources required

Box for anonymous questions



Resource 1: Common mental health conditions & challenges



Resource 2: Help?



Resource 3: Sources of support grid



Resource 3a: Sources of support grid – teacher notes



Resource 3b: Sources of support grid (optional support sheet)



Key words

Anxiety, depression, mood disorders, stress, signs, symptoms, support



Activity	Description	Timing
1. Introduction	Revisit ground rules and introduce lesson objectives and outcomes.	5min
2. Baseline assessment	Respond to a quote	5min
3. Common conditions	Watch video clips on depression, anxiety and stress and note key learning points	15min
4. Help?	Prioritise the need for help in each of six scenarios and explain what to do in each	15min

5. Analysis of support	Outline positive and negative aspects of seeking help from different sources	15min
6. Endpoint assessment	Revisit baseline quote and comment on learning	5min

Baseline assessment



Introduction

Establish or reinforce existing ground rules – add or emphasise any ground rules that are especially relevant to this lesson. Ensure students know they have a right to pass and that there should be no personal stories. Remind students that they can ask anonymous questions using the question box/ask it basket throughout the lesson.

Introduce learning objectives and outcomes. Explain that today's lesson will look at some common mental health concerns that can affect young people, so that they can recognise when they or someone else might need help. If a person shares some of the characteristics, signs or behaviours we are discussing, it does not necessarily mean they have a mental health concern. However, if the lesson raises any issues for a student, they should talk to someone about it e.g. a tutor or parent. Explain there will be an activity focused on seeking support later in the lesson and that the next lesson will include additional strategies to promote good mental health.



Baseline assessment activity



Ask students to rate their level of agreement (strongly agree, agree, not sure, disagree, strongly disagree) with the following statement and write a comment in their books to justify their opinion.

"People only need help with their mental health when they tell people they need help."

Ask volunteers to share their views to gain a baseline understanding of students' attitudes and awareness of signs of ill health.

Raise key points such as:

- the need to respect a person's boundaries versus the need to support people in need
- the importance of accessing help early when experiencing mental health concerns, rather than letting them develop
- we all have times when we are more or less happy than usual
- sometimes people who need help aren't aware of it
- sometimes people are worried about asking for help or don't know how to
- sometimes it takes time for a person to be ready to seek or accept help.

Core activities



Common mental health conditions and challenges



Ask students to watch the clips on common mental health conditions. As they watch, students complete **Resource 1: Common Mental Health Conditions**.

(Cont.)

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Watch the clip on depression here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m82jEQXRurg>

Watch the clip on anxiety here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IKWolwgiLRk>

Watch the clip on stress here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CZTc8_FwHGM

Ask the class:

- Was there anything that surprised them?
- Is there anything else they want to know more about?

Raise points of interest from the videos to check understanding. Teacher notes are available in **Resource 1a**.

When using video clips, be sure to consider the guidance on pages 10-11 and 13 of the [teacher guide](#).

Support:



Some students might prefer to discuss what they have seen/heard rather than noting the content in their worksheet.

Challenge



Ask students to suggest three key points they think it is important young people know about each different mental health condition/challenge.



Help?

In pairs or small groups, students read the statements on **Resource 2: Help?** and share ideas about:

- what could be happening in the situation
- how the person explaining the situation might be feeling (i.e. the person considering whether to/ how to get help)
- what the person could do in the situation and the first steps to getting help

Take quick feedback on each. If time is limited, allocate one scenario to a pair/group of students.

In addition, explore the following questions:

How do we decide the point at which to get help for someone?

Each situation is unique but it's worth remembering that different people may have spotted different things. So one person may have noted a change in eating patterns and another knows they quit band practice. Gossiping isn't helpful but confiding in a mutual friend or seeking help from a trusted adult can help to understand the situation better. Sometimes people with mental health concerns do not show obvious warning signs to begin with so people dismiss smaller changes. But it is easier to help at an earlier stage than later on when mental health issues may have caused other problems. So it's always best to say or do something, and to use your 'gut feeling' about how much and what to do in a situation.

At what point should a person seek help for a friend, even when they have asked that their situation is kept quiet?

Discuss the balance between loyalty to a friend and the need to protect their safety and wellbeing. Raise the point that when people are very unwell, they often aren't able to think clearly or recognise the problem. It is always best to convince a person to seek help themselves than to do so without permission, and sometimes it can take time for a person to feel ready to find help, but sometimes we need to get help anyway if a person's wellbeing, safety, or life is at risk.

Do we have a responsibility to get help for people we don't know all that well?

Discuss the moral arguments about helping others in need. Often those close to someone find it harder to be objective about how much help their friend needs, or they are afraid of harming the friendship, so it can be helpful for an 'outsider' to act. Explore that it may be that the person is already receiving help but the additional information provided can be helpful.

What are the consequences of not saying anything to a teacher or parent in these situations?

It is important not to 'guilt' young people into acting. However, it may be helpful if students have not already volunteered the potential risks, to explain that the risk of a friendship being undermined is potentially very upsetting, but the risk to a friend's health and wellbeing must outweigh this risk as the potential for harm is serious.

It can feel quite a big responsibility to support someone who is going through emotional difficulties. What advice could we give to someone who is feeling like that?

Sometimes being a good friend means putting others first. But in first aid, we always recommend that the first aider prioritises their own health. The same is true in this situation – not because the person is mean or is not a good friend, but because they cannot provide good quality support without risking their own mental wellbeing if they don't look after themselves too. In the scenario, the friend could suggest helplines like Samaritans and Childline as places their friend can get support late at night – that way, they can maintain their own health and have the emotional and physical energy to help in other ways.

Support:



Ask young people to focus only on 1 or 2 examples.

Challenge



Invite students to write a response as if the quote were an online blog post asking for advice.



Analysis of support

Students complete **Resource 3: Sources of support grid** which requires analysis of the best types of support in different situations. Once complete, discuss findings from students' analysis and reflection. Raise key issues such as:

- sometimes people need to access a number of different sources of help to find the right one;
- online support can be less scary to contact initially so is a good place to start but sometimes people need something more individualised which often means contacting a person via phone or in person – friends can help with doing this;
- different people are best to approach for different types of support but most people can help find someone else to go to if they don't know how to help themselves – the key thing is to talk to someone early on to get help.

Remind students of the support available at home, in school (e.g. through their form tutor, head of year, or school nurse) and out of school, through local and national organisations. Explain to students that there are lots of different ways that young people can seek help from reputable organisations, including text-based support, digital chat support and online counselling, as well as face to face or via phone.

Share the following websites and phone numbers with students:

Young Minds - www.youngminds.org.uk

Childline - www.childline.org.uk Phone: 0800 1111

Samaritans - www.samaritans.org Phone: 116 123

Shout - a 24-hour text service for someone experiencing a crisis and needing immediate help: 85258

End with a discussion about how to access these different sources of support e.g. is there a referral system in the school, are there local charities or phone-lines supporting young people?

Support:



Differentiated handout:

Provide differentiated handout (Resource 3a) which has reduced options and suggested topics for discussion in order to assist learners.

Challenge



Analysis of web content:

Invite students to critique the support available via the Childline and Samaritans websites. Ensure students only use these two sites to avoid them accessing inappropriate or unsafe sites. It is best to provide criteria to enable effective assessment of support. For example, students might consider usability, reliability, level of detail, relevance, suggestions that go beyond the obvious, safety of resources.

Plenary/ Assessment of learning



Assessing progress

Ask students to revisit the opening statement and write a comment in their books which adds to or changes their original opinion.

“People only need help with their mental health and emotional wellbeing when they tell people they need help.”

Ask volunteers to share what they have learnt in the lesson today. Use this to help assess progress and check understanding of key points from today's lesson.

****It may be necessary to lift the mood after this learning - ensure the lesson ends on a positive note, using a strategy of your choice (see accompanying PSHE Association document [Preparing to teach about mental health and emotional wellbeing p12](#)).***

Extension activities

Poster Campaign



Create a poster campaign to highlight the relevant sources of support, with the best to be put up around school.

Self-care strategies



Encourage students to look up the self-care strategies recommended by other young people: <https://www.annafreud.org/on-my-mind/self-care>. This website lists a wide variety of strategies and reviews the evidence base for them.