

Lesson 1: Mental health and keeping well

Key stage 2: Year 5/6

This is the first in a series of three upper KS2 lessons written for Year 5 or 6 exploring mental health and wellbeing. This first lesson builds on learning from lower KS2 about different feelings and emotions and shifts the focus to 'mental health' – what we mean by this and how we look after it. Neither this, nor any of the other lessons, is designed to be taught in isolation, but should always form part of a planned, developmental PSHE education programme.



Learning objective

Pupils will learn:

- about mental health; what it means and how we can take care of it



Learning outcomes

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

- explain what is meant by the term 'mental health'
- identify everyday behaviours that can help to support mental (and physical) health
- recognise that we can take care of our mental health (as well as our physical health)



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.



Key words

Feeling, emotion, moods, thoughts, body, mind, mental, physical, health, wellbeing, balanced lifestyle



Resources required

Box for anonymous questions



A4 paper (blank)



Pens and pencils



Sticky-notes



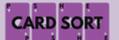
Resource 1: Mental health definitions



Resource 1a: Mental health thermometer



Resource 2a: Activities for health cards



Resource 2b: Activities for health cards – teacher guide



Resource 3: Jay's story



Optional: magazines & newspapers, scissors, glue or sticky-tape



| Activity | Description | Timing |
|------------------------|---|-----------|
| 1. Baseline assessment | Pupils draw/write or make a collage of words/images associated with mental health | 10-15mins |
| 2. Introduction | Pupils choose and explain the best definition to sum up mental health | 5-10mins |
| 3. Class discussion | Class discussion about how we know if someone feels good in their body and their mind | 10min |

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|-------------------------------------|--|-------|
| 4. Card sort: activities for health | Pupils work in groups to sort activities that support physical health, then mental health – every day, sometimes, if there is a problem, rarely, or not at all | 15min |
| 5. Mental health thermometer | Pupils apply the thermometer to a scenario and suggest ways to support being mentally healthy | 10min |
| 6. Plenary and endpoint assessment | Pupils consider one strategy they could use in their own lives to help support their mental health | 5min |
| 7. Endpoint assessment | Pupils go back to their 'mental health words wall' they completed at the beginning of the lesson and add to or amend them in light of their new learning | 5min |
| 8. Extension activity | Pupils make a top tips checklist of things to support mental health | - |

Baseline assessment



Mental health - first thoughts

Ensure this activity is completed before delivering the lesson.

On a blank piece of A4 paper, ask pupils to write down all the words, feelings and emotions they think are associated with mental health. Alternatively, pupils may prefer to draw or make a collage from magazine and newspaper cuttings.

The purpose of this activity is to enable you to find out pupils' existing knowledge, understanding and attitudes towards mental health. Pupils should work individually. Whilst they are working, do not prompt them in any way. When complete, ensure pupils write their name at the top of their paper. Collect in and note any responses and any misconceptions that need addressing through the lesson. Keep the papers - pupils will return to this activity at the end of the lesson to assess their learning.



Introduction: What is mental health?



Establish or reinforce existing ground rules and highlight any rules that are especially relevant to the lesson. Explain that talking about mental health may make them think about themselves or people that they know who are experiencing a difficult time with their feelings or emotions. Remind pupils of the people in school that they can talk to if they are concerned.

Display **Resource 1: Mental health definitions around the classroom.**

Pupils stand next to the one they think best sums up what we mean when we talk about mental health - explain and justify their ideas.

Explain that in the same way as everyone has physical health (which is about their body), everyone also has mental health – both children and adults – which is about their mind, their emotions and feelings. It can include how we feel about ourselves, our relationships and how we deal with challenges and difficulties. Explain that physical and mental health are connected. Being fit and well physically helps us to be fit and well mentally and vice versa.

It may be useful at this point of the lesson for the class to come up with a shared definition of mental health

as there is a lot of confusion surrounding the term 'mental health'. The definition that the pupils agree upon will support a shared understanding and will enable them to talk about mental health in a way that is not confusing or alarming. Pupils may find it helpful to be given the following definitions as a starting point for their discussion.

The World Health Organisation describes mental health as being:

'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.'

NHS England describes it as:

'How we think, feel and behave.'

Display Resource 1a: Mental health thermometer. Explain that our mental health can be thought of as being on a scale that can move up or down, a bit like a thermometer. Mental health can move anywhere up or down the thermometer, between being healthy or unwell. We can all move along the scale at any time, but there are things that we can do to support us to stay in the health and coping areas. Sometimes, we may go in to the struggling or unwell areas. To support us with our mental health, we can put things in place to help us feel better and move out of the struggling or unwell areas.

Leave the thermometer on display through out the lesson.

Core activities



Class discussion: Signs of wellbeing



Display a drawing of a person on a piece of flipchart paper (a stick-person is fine).

Discuss with the class how we know if someone feels good in their body (physical health) and their mind (mental health). Write the pupils' ideas around the body outline.

Pupils might say things like: they seem quite happy most of the time; can talk about how they feel; take exercise; get out and about; skin and hair look fresh and glossy, look clean and tidy.

Then discuss clues that might mean someone does not feel good in their body. How do we know? What about if someone does not feel good in their mind? Are there similar clues? Are we always able to tell how someone feels (physically or mentally)?

Pupils might say things like: they feel ill, are tired all the time, look sad, don't have any get-up-and-go, skin looks pale or grey, need to take medicine

Explain that how a person looks or behaves can suggest how they are feeling (in their body or mind), but we cannot always tell – sometimes illness or ill-health is not obvious to others.



Card sort: activities for health



Working in small groups, pupils organise **Resource 2a: Activities for health cards** under headings written on flipchart paper: things we should do 'everyday'; 'sometimes'; 'if there is a problem'; 'rarely or not at all'.

First, ask pupils to do this for physical health (looking after bodies).

Then ask them to repeat this activity, but this time considering mental health (looking after minds – feelings and emotions).

Pupils should place the cards according to what they consider to be a 'best fit'.

For possible responses, see **Resource 2b. Activities for health cards – teacher guide.**

Compare responses. Draw out that taking care of our mental health is just as important as taking care of our physical health and that the two are closely linked; many of the activities that help people's physical health also support their mental health.

It may also be worth pointing out that in order for some people to maintain good health (physical or mental) there may be things they have to do every day, that other people may only do sometimes e.g. taking medication.



Mental health thermometer



Read pupils the following scenario. This is provided for pupils on **Resource 3: Jay's story**:

Jay enjoys drawing cartoons and skateboarding. Jay is quiet and thoughtful, has good friends and likes school. Mostly Jay feels generally happy, although like everyone, Jay has ups and downs.

Jay has recently started feeling sad. Most days the sadness seems to come and go, but some days it feels as though a dark cloud is gathering above and following Jay around all day. Skateboarding takes Jay's mind off it and when the feelings start to get stronger Jay draws a cartoon that shows the feelings and the cloud.

Jay feels very sad most of the time. Every day when Jay wakes up, Jay feels the day ahead is just too much. Everything feels grey and dark. Jay is finding it hard to concentrate at school and some days doesn't want to go to school at all. Nothing seems enjoyable anymore, not even skateboarding! Jay's friends are worried.

Pupils should plot Jay's mental health on the thermometer, then suggest ways to strengthen Jay's ability to cope, so that Jay can manage his wellbeing to avoid moving in to the struggling zone, and reduce his chances of being in the unwell area.

Support:



Pupils may need additional support for this activity, and can be supported by **Resource 2a: Activities for health cards.**

Challenge:



Pupils work individually or in pairs.

Plenary/ Assessment of learning



Reflecting on today's learning and signposting support



Explain that if they, or someone they know, does not feel good, help and support are available. In the first instance and if possible, they should talk to a trusted adult (at home or school). Advice can also be accessed at Childline: www.childline.org.uk; 0800 11111, including for mental health. Ask pupils to show on the thermometer scale where seeking help and advice would be a good idea.

Pupils consider one strategy from today's lesson that they think they could use in their own lives, to support their own mental health and wellbeing. Invite them to write it on a sticky note and to keep it as a reminder.



Endpoint Assessment

Pupils revisit their **mental health – first thoughts** activity from the beginning of the lesson, amend it in the light of their new learning or add any further ideas or thoughts, words or images, using a different coloured pen or pencil or additional collage materials.

Extension activity

Top Tips for (mental) health

Pupils work in groups to compile a top tips checklist to help people take care of their mental health. They could choose a specific audience to write for, such as other primary pupils, parents/grandparents or teachers.

These could be shared with the rest of the school community via the school website, class blog, in a school assembly, or form a display in a communal part of the school building. You might also include a selection of pupils' ideas in the school prospectus or handbook so that parents can see the value placed on taking care of mental wellbeing within the school community.