



LIFE SKILLS

MENTAL HEALTH AND EMOTIONAL WELLBEING >

Session plan



Prince's Trust

START SOMETHING

TESCO

YOUNGMINDS

AT A GLANCE >

This session will help young people to understand key terms when discussing mental health, what might negatively impact it and explore what might help us maintain positive mental health.

For further information regarding mental health illnesses, direct information can be found at: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/>

Support for a young person in crisis can be found here (access for young people, professionals and parents): <https://youngminds.org.uk/find-help/get-urgent-help/>



MATERIALS

- ✓ Adviser reference material - Resilience framework
- ✓ Key definitions resource
- ✓ Get support handout (usable within certain activities as referenced, or as a handout for young people to take away)
- ✓ Mental health matrix PowerPoint
- ✓ Whiteboard/flipchart
- ✓ Post-it notes
- ✓ Pens

LEARNING OUTCOMES >

- ✓ Understand and define mental health, emotional wellbeing and resilience
- ✓ Address the impact of stigma on mental health
- ✓ Articulate that mental health in of itself is not negative
- ✓ Describe what mental health means and how we all have it, just like physical health
- ✓ Recognise the positive value that emotional wellbeing and resilience can have upon our mental health

ACTIVITIES >

ACTIVITY	TIME	PAGE
<u>Introduction</u>	5-10 minutes	<u>03</u>
<u>Game: Stop, jump, clap</u>	10 minutes	<u>05</u>
<u>Mental health thought storm</u>	20 minutes	<u>07</u>
<u>The mental health continuum</u>	20 minutes	<u>09</u>
<u>Wrap up</u>	10 minutes	<u>12</u>

INTRODUCTION >



TIME REQUIRED

5-10 minutes



MATERIALS

- ✓ Flipchart paper or whiteboard
- ✓ Pens

ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. Introduce the session to the group. Explain that you will be exploring the key terms related to mental health, as well as what negatively impacts mental health and what can help maintain positive mental health.
2. Recognise that due to the personal nature of some of the topics you might discuss, it is important that everyone feels safe. Ask all young people for a joint agreement on ground rules for this session. Guidance on what to include and the importance of not skipping this step is outlined below, under the heading 'Group contracting'.
3. Record your agreed rules onto flipchart paper or a whiteboard and leave it displayed in the room for the duration of the sessions, for reference.

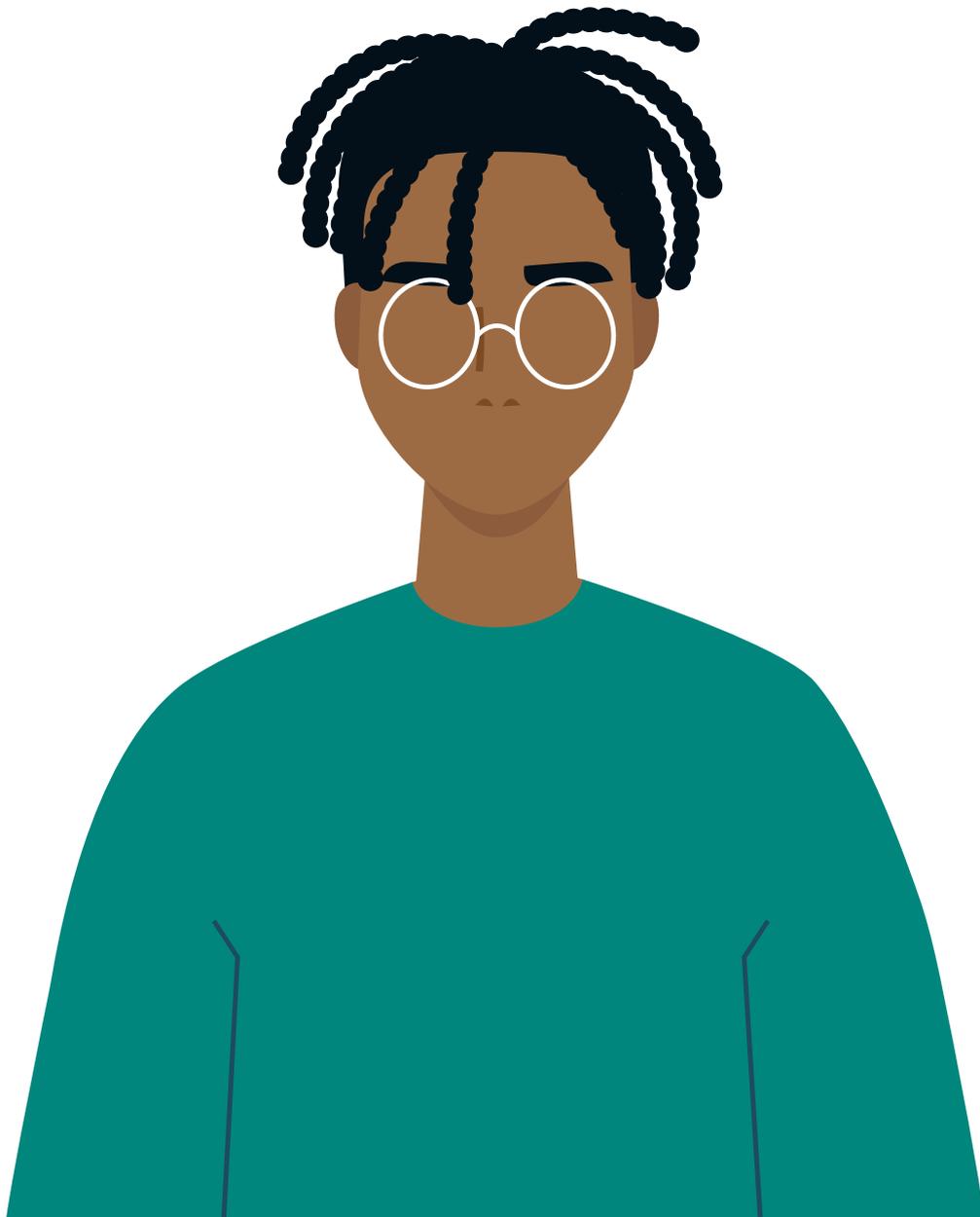
GROUP CONTRACTING

As with any group session, ground rules/contracting should be established in advance by the group. It is assumed that this would have already taken place prior to these sessions being delivered. However, that said, due to the nature of the content being discussed it is recommended that a reminder of established ground rules are re-examined in relation to the benefits of creating safe spaces for discussion in relation to this content.

As a guideline, emphasis and discussion should be placed on the following boundaries for establishing a 'safe space':

- *Confidentiality* – explore what this means to each participant and as a group. Recognise and explore differing individual interpretations and agree upon a shared group understanding.
- *Only volunteering yourself* – ensure participants are not volunteering others to share their personal experiences.
- *Speaking in the 'I'* – speak in the first-person ('I') vs pluralised pronouns of 'we' and 'you'. This ensures participants are supported to speak from their own perspectives and avoids the risk of experiences being assumed onto others. For example "if you meditate it really helps you reduce stress" vs "when I meditate I feel less stressed".

Note that some young people may find some of the topic areas difficult to explore based on their own experiences of mental health, including those with and without mental health diagnoses. Contracting is vital to support with this, however for some young people they may require additional support and signposting. The 'Get support' handout is provided to be used at any time during this unit with your young people, or it could be displayed permanently in your teaching space.



GAME: STOP, JUMP, CLAP >

Please note: any game might be used here that the group enjoy and that facilitates competition whereby participants may be 'out' during the game, i.e. they become spectators and are unable to continue participating.



TIME REQUIRED

10 minutes



MATERIALS

- ✓ Cleared space to walk around

ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. Tell the group you are going to start by playing a game. Firstly, ask everyone to randomly walk around the room without speaking. Emphasise taking care of yourself and each other by not making physical contact.
2. Inform the group that you will call out instructions that everyone should follow. If they fail to carry out the correct instruction, then they will be out of the game. You will be the referee and have final say on who is in or out. The first instruction will be walk and stop.
3. Call out stop - everyone should stop. Call out walk - everyone should walk. Call out walk again and see if anyone stops - if they do, they are out of the game and must sit to the side.
4. Introduce new instructions to the group - walk and stop now mean the opposite. So that when you say walk, it now means stop, and when you say stop, it means walk. Carry out these instructions, calling anyone as out that makes a mistake following the instructions.
5. Now include two extra instructions: clap and jump (the other instructions remain opposite as per step 4). Continue to catch people out.
6. Ask the group, 'what instruction am I going to include next?' They may guess that all four instruction are now the opposite - stop=walk, clap=jump, etc. Continue to call people as out until only two people remain. Congratulate them both on winning the game!

7. Hold a discussion after the game is finished. Ask the group the following debrief questions one at a time and allow for open discussion:
- How did you find the game?
 - What strategies did you use to play the game?
 - What was it like being 'out' during the game? How might this relate to mental health?

ADVISER GUIDANCE

The debrief questions are intended to support young people in a fun way to start thinking about the topic of mental health and stigma. Discussion for the last question may be guided, if not suggested by young people, to how being 'out' may relate to how you feel when you are experiencing poor mental health. Young people may also recognise this experience as relating to stigma playing a part when discussing and experiencing poor mental health, where people feel excluded and unable to take part due to others' judgements on their mental health.



MENTAL HEALTH THOUGHT STORM



TIME REQUIRED

20 minutes



MATERIALS

- ✓ Key definitions resource
- ✓ Adviser reference material - Resilience framework
- ✓ Flipchart paper and pens

ACTIVITY STEPS

1. Explain to the group that in this activity you will be following on from your discussion in the last activity, to explore what we mean by the terms 'mental health' and 'stigma'. Equally, the young people may have also heard of 'emotional wellbeing' and 'resilience', so there will also be a chance to unpick and define these terms.
2. Put the terms 'resilience', 'emotional wellbeing' and 'mental health' on separate pieces of flipchart paper and stick them on 3 different walls. Encourage the group, in pairs or threes, to walk around the room and write on the paper any words or phrases that come to mind and that relate to each term.
3. After 5-10 minutes, gather the group together and read out some of their thoughts and suggestions from each piece of flipchart paper.
4. Encourage group discussion by asking:
 - How did you find the activity?
 - Do you think all three terms mean the same thing or are they different?

Definitions of each term can be found in the key definitions resource, which you can use to facilitate discussions. It might also be at this point that you choose to give out the key definitions resource to young people (you may want to adapt the resource first) and explore the definitions as written vs what young people have suggested.

KEY MESSAGE:

Resilience can be built but you are also not alone in doing this. Throughout this unit we will explore how to develop resilience, as well as elicit help from others who can play a role in supporting us to be resilient.

5. Continue to facilitate the group discussion by encouraging the young people to read the definitions on the key definitions handout and asking:
- What do you notice in the language used for each term?
 - How are they related to each other?

Note here you can just capture ideas and let the group know that you will explore this next in more detail. Allow the group to lead this process as there are no right or wrong answers in relation to key definitions, rather ways of thinking about the terms. The focus lies on allowing young people to name and observe the negative associations with the terminology of 'mental health' vs 'emotional wellbeing' or 'resilience', and how stigma can affect us and our ability to have an open dialogue around mental health.

KEY MESSAGE:

'Mental health' itself is neutral as a term, i.e. neither negative nor positive, and is something that everyone has.

THE MENTAL HEALTH CONTINUUM >



TIME REQUIRED

20 minutes



MATERIALS

- ✓ Post-it notes
- ✓ Mental health matrix PowerPoint

ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. Write the below labels onto post-it notes and stick them in a line on the wall - leaving about 3 metres from each end to create the mental health continuum (you will need space to walk up and down).

Mental illness Struggling Moderately mentally healthy Complete mental health - flourishing

2. Talk through each label; moving from 'complete mental health' down to 'mental illness' and back up. You could say, "We all have mental health, this continuum shows where you might be with your mental health at one point in your life, which may change day to day, week to week, etc. When towards the left-hand side (walk towards this from the right), our mental health is very poor and we are likely to be experiencing a diagnosable mental illness (e.g. depression, anxiety etc.), and when we are fully to the right-hand side (walk back up) we have 'complete mental health' and are flourishing."

It is important to mention that it can be the accumulative 'everyday' things that make you move up and down the continuum, as well of the 'not so everyday' or bigger life events.

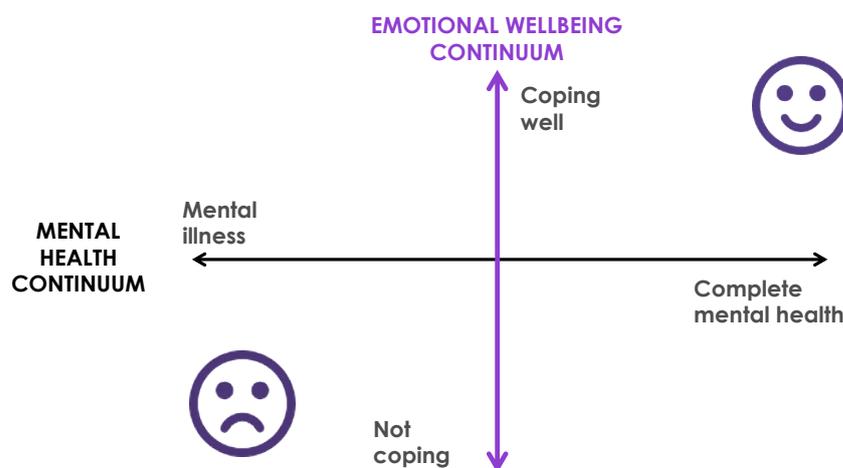
3. If there is time, you may choose to ask young people for their own examples of what may impact their mental health, both positively and negatively, in relation to the continuum.

Common examples may include: exam stress, family break ups, arguments with friends, or in the other direction, praise from a teacher, achievement in sport, going to the beach with friends, etc.

4. Give the analogy here of physical health, where at the left-hand side of the continuum you may have a broken leg, and at the right-hand side, you feel fully fit and able to run. Note that this is not permanent, no more than is your mental health, but that certain things can help you to cope regardless of where you are on this continuum.

Ask the group what they think this might be called? Use the PowerPoint presentation here to show the two continuums layering on top of each other and intersecting. Based on the last activity, young people are likely to suggest either emotional wellbeing or resilience. As such, the following steps are interchangeable in relation to the order in which you choose to explain them.

5. Explain that 'emotional wellbeing' (referring back to the first activity) helps you cope, regardless of where you are on the mental health continuum. Place the post-it notes so that they vertically intersect the middle of the mental health continuum on the wall to create a matrix. Explain that we might have a diagnosed mental illness but when we look after our emotional wellbeing, we can be coping well (this may of course also include medication and therapy, dependent on advice of the young person's doctor).



You might choose to give an example, e.g. 'When I had a bereavement I felt really low and far down the mental health continuum', but because you slept regularly, continued to go to the gym, and ensured you received time off from work, your emotional wellbeing was high, and so despite being very sad, you were coping well and still enjoying parts of life. Consider inputting your own example here, highlighting that emotional wellbeing allows us the wellness to cope in some, if not always all, aspects of our life during tough times. Providing us with the opportunity to potentially move back up the mental health continuum and flourish again. Providing young people with personal examples gives young people permission to also explore in their own minds how this may apply to them.

6. Based on the relationships you hold with your group (and if you have extra time), you may at this point choose for young people to offer examples of how this might apply to them as you discuss the emotional wellbeing continuum. For example, an upcoming exam that they haven't revised for moves them down the continuum, whereas getting a good night's sleep, meeting up with friends and eating well may move them back to 'coping well'.

7. Explain that resilience (referring back to the first activity) is the toolbox we all have that helps us stay up or move back up the mental health continuum after and during tough times. For example, if you fell out with a close friend, using your resilience tools will help you to problem solve the situation, see tomorrow as another day or seek support that will mean, despite the outcome of your friendship, you will be able to move back up the mental health continuum and feel positive again.

8. Summarise for the group that mental health can change, but that emotional wellbeing provides the environment and resilience toolkit to cope and feel better, moving back to flourishing mental health. Where both emotional wellbeing and resilience are low, this is when we are most at risk of continuing to struggle. It is during this time when we struggle for extended long periods (e.g. consistently for more than 2 weeks), that we are more at risk of developing a mental health illness. Reassure the group that the good news is that emotional wellbeing and resilience skills are easily learnt and we will be looking at this in the next session.

KEY MESSAGE:

We all have mental health, just like physical health, that can move up and down. The next session on resilience will provide you with tools that will help support you to remain healthy and thrive.

OPTIONAL EXTENSION

As an additional activity following this session, you and the group might choose to leave the continuum on the wall. The group and staff, might then create their own miniature stick person drawing to place on the matrix at the beginning of each day (though you may also want to encourage them to move throughout the day as well). This allows young people to create a visual representation of how they are feeling for the day, and enables both staff and young people to 'keep them in mind'. This activity can help foster trust and empathy for others for groups where delivery staff have pre-established boundaries and safety.

WRAP UP >



TIME REQUIRED

10 minutes

ACTIVITY STEPS >

1. Move quickly from the end of the last activity to end the session positively with the following go round. Each young person should be given time to answer:
 - Name one thing that's made you smile in the last week, and something you are looking forward to doing today.

FEEDBACK

If you would like to share your feedback on this session plan or the entire unit, please complete our survey [here.](#)

