

Mental Health Matters

Summary

At the conclusion of this lesson, students will understand the continuum of mental health and recognize the warning signs of mental health problems.

Main Core Tie

Health Education II (9-12)

[Strand 2: MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH \(MEH\) Standard HII.MEH.3](#)

Additional Core Ties

Health Education II (9-12)

[Strand 2: MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH \(MEH\) Standard HII.MEH.4](#)

Health Education II (9-12)

[Strand 2: MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH \(MEH\) Standard HII.MEH.6](#)

Materials

Handout: [Various Mental Illnesses](#), [Who Ya Gonna Call](#), [School and Personal Resources](#)

Video: "Mood Disorders" Hope for Tomorrow (for copy of video, contact [The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Utah \(NAMI Utah\)](#) or call 801-323-9900 or toll free 1-877-230-6264.)

- [Posters: Mental Illness, Who is Affected, Stigma, Eliminating Stigma, Treatment, Why Early Intervention and Treatment is Important](#)
- [Mental Health Matters Powerpoint](#)

Background for Teachers

Note to teacher (please read):

This lesson offers an opportunity to provide accurate information about a subject that many people don't understand and about which they have inaccurate beliefs. Because of the potentially sensitive subject we recommend that you alert the school counselor to let them know that you will be teaching about mental illness. Let students know if they have any concerns about themselves or a friend to talk with the counselor or a trusted adult.

Intended Learning Outcomes

- Compare the different attitudes towards physical illness and mental illness
- Understand the continuum of mental health (good health to severe and persistent illness)
- Recognize the warning signs of mental health problems
- Understand the symptoms of the early-onset mental illnesses
- Recognize how mental illness affects a person's thoughts, feelings and behaviors
- Identify ways to improve mental health and get help if needed

Instructional Procedures

Readiness or Setting the Focus (getting the lesson started)

Explain that the purpose of our discussion on mental illness is to raise awareness about mental illness, erase stigma, and foster hope.

Show the poster, "Mental Illness," and explain that mental illnesses are conditions that affect the brain (biological brain disorders). When the brain gets sick it's no different than when other parts of the body get sick. They can change the way people feel, think, and or

behave. They can disrupt daily functioning and the ability to relate to others.

Reinforce that like other health problems, like diabetes or asthma, mental illnesses can happen to anyone. Mental illnesses can affect anybody regardless of race ethnicity, gender, age, or background.

Explain that mental illnesses are not the result of personal weakness or poor upbringing. Make it known that they are not related to a person's character or intelligence and cannot be overcome through "will power."

Show the poster, "Who is Affected," and explain that mental illnesses are surprisingly common. About 50 million people in the U.S. are affected by mental illness and that almost every family in America is affected. Further explain that symptoms of mental illnesses typically begin to appear in adolescence or young adulthood (half of all lifetime cases begin by age 14, three quarters have begun by age 24).

Ask students to share what they know about mental illness. Have them share what words come to mind when they see or hear the word mental illness. List the words on the board.

Show the poster, "Stigma," and explain that there is often a stigma when it comes to mental illness. Define stigma (something judged by others as a sign of shame, embarrassment, disgrace, or humiliation).

Explain that the stigma is perpetuated through the use of derogatory language and labels, ignorance, misconceptions, and preconceived notions, stereotypes and hurtful representations in the media. Have the class give examples of language, misconceptions, and stereotypes that add to the stigma.

Use the poster, "Eliminating Stigma" and explain and give examples of how stigma can be hurtful, and lead to ridicule and mistreatment. Give examples of how it can also create barriers and cause people to turn their back on people with mental illnesses, which can lead to isolation, exclusion, and discrimination. It can also prevent people from seeking treatment or getting the help they need because of embarrassment or fear of ridicule and mistreatment.

Discuss ways to eliminate stigma such as:

- Use respectful language

- Don't label people with words like crazy, or wacko.

- Make a distinction between the person and the illness (say "he or she has bipolar," not "he or she is bipolar.")

- Learn the facts about mental illness and share them with others.

- Treat people with mental illnesses with respect and dignity, as you would anyone else.

- If someone tells you about his or her mental illness, be understanding and supportive.

- Respect the rights of people with mental illnesses and speak out about unfair treatment.

Strategies and activities

Explain that there are more than 200 types of mental and emotional disorders ranging from mild to severe. Have students suggest a mental disorder they are familiar with.

Give students a copy of the Common Mental Illnesses handout and discuss various mental disorders.

Explain that like physical illnesses, mental illness requires treatment. Use the posters, "Treatment," "Why Some People Don't Seek Help and Treatment," and "Why Early Intervention and Treatment is Important" to help with this discussion.

- Ask students to give examples and briefly discuss various types of treatments for mental illness. (Medication, therapy, support groups, counseling, or even hospitalization)

- Have students give examples of why they think some people don't seek help and treatment. Reinforce that some people feel ashamed or afraid to seek help due to the stigma. Some people don't realize they are ill or think it will just go away and they can get

over it on their own. Some people don't realize their illness can be treated, or they don't know where to go to for help.

Reinforce that it is very important to seek help if you suspect that you or someone else you know has a mental illness. Treatment works. There is help and there is hope.

Watch Hope for Tomorrow DVD "Mood Disorders" segment.

Review what students learned about mood disorders. Have students give examples of how the mood disorders not only affect the person with the illness but also family and friends.

Ask students to give other examples of the effects mental illness can have on individuals, and society.

Ask students what they learned about treatment and especially what the young people in the video said about treatment.

Explain why early intervention and treatment is important.

Reinforce that mental illness can be successfully treated. Relate the discussion to physical illnesses that can be treated.

Treatment can help most people feel better and stay better.

Treatment can relieve symptoms and many people recover completely, just like with physical illnesses.

Early treatment can prevent more serious problems and can lead to the development of additional mental illnesses just like with physical illnesses.

Closure

Divide the class into groups. Give them about 10 minutes to list as many school and community resources that young people can go to for help and support for mental or emotional problems. You may want to supply each group with a local phone book to help them find additional resources. Use the handout, "Who Ya Gonna Call" and "School and Personal Resources" to help guide the activity.

Have each group share their results. Discuss the various school and community resources as well as Internet sites.

Ask the students which resources young people are most likely to access and why.

Have students share ideas on what can be done to so young people are more likely to seek help and treatment.

Ask students to share what they learned to

Raise awareness about mental illness.

Erase stigma about mental illness.

Foster hope.

Distribute handout, "[Various Mental Illnesses](#)" and have students complete the worksheet.

Extensions

Resources and opportunities for continued development and independent practice.

- What teachers need to know:

Review "[Recommendations on Helpful Ways for School Professionals and Families to Talk about Mental Health Related Concerns](#)" included with this lesson.

- Additional teacher resources:

Hope for Tomorrow a free mental health education curriculum with components for students, teachers, and parents on mood disorders, substance use disorders, and eating disorders. A program of The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Utah see www.namiut.org or call 801-323-9900 for more information.

Mind Matters - Understanding Mental Illness <http://www.mindmatters.edu.au>

- Local resources:

The National Alliance on Mental Illness of Utah (NAMI Utah) <http://www.namiut.org> or call

801-323-9900 or toll free 1-877-230-6264.

Information and Referral <http://www.informationandreferral.org> or call 211 or 1-888-826-9790.

Authors

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