



# School Mental Health Resource Training Center

## We All Have Mental Health

Mental Health & Wellness  
Education for Youth





The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. is proud to have successfully advocated for the passage of Article 17 of Education Law Section 804 that requires schools to provide mental health instruction as part of the K-12 health education curricula.

We are committed to supporting educators and schools as they work to advance the mental health literacy of the entire school community, including students, staff and families. As part of that commitment, we are happy to offer this set of lesson plans to New York State districts at no cost, with funding from the NYS Legislature and Executive.

### **Please consider a few things when using these lesson plans:**

- 1) Student support staff and community mental health professionals can be valuable resources when talking with youth about mental health. Invite School Social Workers, School Counselors, School Psychologists or School Nurses into the classroom to help facilitate instruction. A collaborative approach allows the classroom teacher to be attentive to the reaction of students to this sensitive and sometimes personal topic, and introduces the school support staff or community professional as an important and approachable resource.
- 2) When delivering instruction, do not qualify emotions as positive or negative; in reality we all experience a range of emotions. Empower students to understand and manage their emotions.
- 3) These lesson plans were developed with attention to vertical and horizontal alignment. We hope that school districts will make an effort to use them for kindergarten through 12th grade.
- 4) We welcome your feedback; please visit the link below to complete an online survey about your experience using these lessons. [www.surveymonkey.com/r/BCXMTWS](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BCXMTWS)
- 5) These lesson plans are a sample of the resources available to help schools teach students about mental health. Please visit the School Mental Health Resource and Training Center

The Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. would like to express sincere thanks to Jessica Hull, Amy Preston and Dustin Verga, Health Educators from the Shenendehowa School District in Clifton Park, NY for their efforts in developing these lesson plans.

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These lesson plans were developed with fundamental beliefs about mental health that are consistent across all grade levels. We call these beliefs **“Enduring Understandings”**.

- There are Multiple Dimensions of Health. Two models are presented to illustrate this concept: the Health Triangle for younger students and Whole Person Wellness for older students. See Appendix A and B for images of both.
- Health is expected to fluctuate day-to-day, which can affect all areas of our health, including mental health. Like physical health, our mental health exists on a continuum, ranging from well to unwell. We can take responsibility for maintaining wellness by:
  - engaging in self-care to navigate the ups and downs of daily life and maintain wellness
  - identifying symptoms of mental health issues early and seek help when needed; and, managing mental health issues by actively engaging in a path to recovery built around our unique needs and strengths.
- It is important for people to identify feelings (of self and others), to understand their personal stressors and risk factors, and to develop healthy and effective personal coping to help build resiliency.
- It is important not to qualify emotions as positive or negative, when in actuality we all experience a full range of human emotions. Classifying some emotions as negative, implies that they are bad, and can decrease one’s desire to seek help.
- It is important to develop the skills to manage one’s response to emotions (appropriate behaviors, the use of coping strategies) to become empowered, active participants in maintaining personal mental health and wellness.
- In the absence of positive coping strategies, people often turn to negative and unhealthy coping behaviors. Learning positive coping strategies empowers people and builds resilience.
- Flow activities, such as play, games, sports and other activities that make one feel good inside, have many health benefits, including both the reduction of stress and improvement in mood.
- Resilience is the capacity to recover from adversity and pursue your goals despite challenges. It is something that one develops over the course of a lifespan. There are things that a person can do to become more resilient.
- Empathy (the ability to put oneself in another person’s shoes) and compassion (a desire to help someone who is in distress) are important components of self-care, and contribute to the wellness of others.
- Self-care and personal responsibility are as important for mental health as they are for physical health.
- Seeking help, and finding valid resources, is an effective tool for maintaining mental health.
- Seeking help for any health issue (physical, mental/emotional, and social) should be equally encouraged, and should be seen as a sign of strength, and as a proactive health behavior.

## Vocabulary Terms and Definition Introduction per Grade Level

Definitions	K	1st	2nd & 3rd	4th & 5th	M.S	H.S
The Health Triangle: A. Physical: The body – the way it looks and works. B. Mental/Emotional: Your thoughts, feelings and learning. C. Social: Your relationships with family, friends & trusted adults.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Feelings Individuals can experience different emotions and understand that these feelings are OK.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Coping Learning to deal with the ups and downs of everyday life in a healthy way, such as the inclusion of flow activities.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Resources Identifying when to ask for help, and individuals that can provide support (ie: professionals, trusted adults at home/school).	X	X	X	X	X	X
Support Identifying trusted adults at home and in school with whom you can share your feelings.	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wellness The importance of all areas of health being in balance.		X	X	X	X	X
Empathy The ability to put oneself in another person's shoes.			X	X	X	X
Compassion A desire to help someone who is in distress.			X	X	X	X
Resilience How well one bounces back from negative experiences.				X	X	X
Psychological Hygiene Developing self-care strategies and coping skills to enhance mental health and overall well-being.						X
Stigma Negative beliefs and attitudes because of misinformation.						X
Multidimensional Understanding of Wellness Health has multiple dimensions. These dimensions include elements of physical, emotional, social, intellectual, spiritual and occupational well-being. When combined together, this creates whole person wellness.						X



## Lesson One:

Students should understand that health includes physical, mental/emotional, and social aspects.

1. Ask students to name a problem that someone could have with their health. Generally, students come up with physical health issues.
2. Then, facilitate the conversation to include social health (such as arguing with a friend), and mental/emotional health (such as feeling happy, satisfied, angry, confident, frustrated, joyful, sad, etc). It is important for students to understand that all of these areas of health are equally important.

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## Lesson Two: :

1. Discuss what “feelings” means. Ask students to share feeling words.
2. Using the book listed below in Lesson Materials, read the story to the class. Stop after each situation to prompt students to identify the feeling being described. Then, reveal the picture showing the emotion, and ask students to demonstrate that emotion.
  - Extension question: Can you think of a time when you might feel this way?

## Lesson Material(s):

**On Monday When It Rained, by Cherryl Kachenmeister**

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## Lesson Three:

From the makers of the PBS show Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood, use the app called Daniel Tiger’s Grr-ific Feelings. It features games, songs, and activities encouraging emotional awareness and respect. They are designed to help children express their feelings, and to recognize emotion in others, which is the beginning foundation of learning empathy and compassion.

### Extension Activity:

Print pictures of scenes either from Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood or use images in Appendix A that depict a range of emotions. Have students explain why the children/characters might be feeling that emotion - essentially creating mini stories. For emotions that make you feel bad, you could further discuss what they might do to feel better.

## Lesson Material(s):

- **Daniel Tiger’s Grr-ific Feelings App (This app is available on multiple platforms)**
  - **Printed pictures showing a variety of emotions/feelings (Appendix A).**
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## **Lesson Four:**

It is important for children to understand that everyone experiences a wide range of emotions. They should understand these concepts:

- It is okay to feel many different feelings, in fact, it is expected;
- Expressing feelings is important, but we need to learn healthy ways to do so; and,
- Knowing when to get help from others, and doing so, is essential.

Show the video listed below in Lesson Materials to your class. Use this as a platform to have a conversation about the variety of feelings someone might encounter, express, and need assistance with.

Finally, be sure to include a discussion of the trusted adults, including school personnel, who they may reach out to for help - you may consider bringing one or more of them into your classroom for students to begin to develop a relationship with them.

## **Lesson Material(s):**

- **Daniel Tiger's Neighborhood, Season 2, Episode 19 Daniel's Day of Many Feelings.**
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## Lesson One:

Students should understand that health includes physical, mental/emotional, and social aspects. It is important for students to understand that, just as we care for our physical health, it is important to care for our social and mental/emotional health to maintain wellness.

1. Ask students to name a problem that someone could have with their health. Generally, students come up with physical health issues. okay to feel many different feelings, in fact, it is expected;
2. Then, show them an image of the health triangle (Appendix B).
3. Next, facilitate discussion to think of things that might fit into each category of one's health
  - For example, physical health (illness, nutrition, exercise, sleep, etc), mental/emotional health (such as feeling happy, satisfied, angry, confident, frustrated, joyful, sad, etc), and social health (arguing with a friend, relationships, family, etc

## Lesson Material(s):

- An image of the “Health Triangle” (Appendix B).

## Lesson Two:

Discuss what “feelings” means. Ask students to share feeling words. Read the book listed below to the class: Stop after each situation to prompt students to identify the feeling being described.

- Extension question: Can you think of a time when you might feel this way?

## Lesson Material(s):

- The Way I Feel by Janan Cain

## Lesson Three:

Class Book of Emotions: Create a class book, and/or individual books, about emotions. Students can use the sentence stems located below and draw pictures (or you could take photos of students demonstrating the emotions to use) to accompany them.

- I feel sad when \_\_\_\_\_. To cheer myself up, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- I feel excited when \_\_\_\_\_. To celebrate, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- I feel angry when \_\_\_\_\_. To calm down, I \_\_\_\_\_.
- Someone I know might get upset when \_\_\_\_\_. I could help make them feel better by \_\_\_\_\_.

**\*Note: The above sentence is an important first step in teaching empathy and compassion, both of which support mental and emotional health of self and others.**



## Lesson Three (Continued):

### *Extension Activity*

Read the books listed below to the students to help them identify additional flow activities and what they can do to help manage their emotions

- Books- Theme: Flow Activities
  - o Things I Like by Anthony Brown
  - o Take Time to Relax by Nancy Carlson

## Lesson Material(s):

- **Student prompt worksheet with above sentence stems.**
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## Lesson Four:

It is important for children to understand that everyone experiences a wide range of emotions. They should understand these concepts:

- It is okay to feel many different feelings, in fact, it is expected;
- Expressing feelings is important, but we need to learn healthy ways to do so; and,
- Knowing when to get help from others, and doing so, is essential.

### *Identifying and Meeting Resources*

1. Lead the students in an exercise to brainstorm people in the school who students can go to in order to get help with regard to their health (examples of trusted adult include: teachers, principal, school nurse, counselor, social worker, psychologist, etc.), and what each of these support people can do to help.

2. Then, plan an “in-school field trip” to tour the building to see where these valuable resources are located, and to introduce students to these support people.

It is important for students to understand that:

- They can begin to develop a relationship with them;
  - It can destigmatize accessing these types of resources (for example, it is no different going to the school nurse for a medical issue than it is going to the counselor with a mental health issue); and, it improves school culture.
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## SECOND & THIRD GRADE



### Lesson One:

Students should understand that health includes physical, mental/emotional, and social aspects.

1. Ask students to name a problem that someone could have with their health. Generally, students come up with physical health issues.
2. Then, show them an image of the health triangle (Appendix B).

It is important that they understand that all sides are equal because all aspects of health are of equal importance (you could demonstrate this by showing other types of triangles to compare - ie. isosceles).

- Then, facilitate a discussion to brainstorm things that might fit into each category of one's health. For example, physical health (such as illness, nutrition, exercise, and sleep), mental/emotional health (such as feeling angry, frustrated, or sad), and social health (such as arguing with a friend, relationships, and family).

Takeaway: Just as we care for our physical health, to maintain wellness, it is important to care for our social and mental/emotional health equally.

### Lesson Material(s):

- An image of the "Health Triangle" (Appendix B)

### Lesson Two:

1. Discuss what "feelings" means and ask students to share feeling words.
  2. Read the book listed in Lesson Materials below to the class
    - Have students think about a time when they were feeling a particular feeling.
    - Using the following format (that is similar to the book), have them create a short story about that feeling and how it "makes their day" (these can be about a wide range of emotions). Additionally, they can create drawings, paintings, or other works of art to accompany their story.
- Today I feel \_\_\_\_\_ (insert mood). I feel like this because \_\_\_\_\_.

### Optional:

*This can be compiled into a class book that will demonstrate the variety of emotions (and their causes) one might experience.*

*Takeaway of Class Book: Have an understanding that we all experience a wide range of emotions that varies from day-to-day, and that this is expected throughout one's life.*

### Lesson Material(s):

- **Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day by Jamie Lee Curtis.**
- **Student prompts in format listed above.**

Coauthored by: Jessica Hull, MSED, Amy Preston, MSED, and Dustin Verga, MSED, for the Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc. 9

### Lesson Three:

Conduct a “Reader’s Theater” using a book(s) that is/are about emotion and feelings. Students can both read a passage and act out the scene or emotion being discussed. Some examples of books that could be easily used for this activity are in the materials listed below in Lesson Materials.

To help develop empathy and compassion, following each passage, and/or story, students can discuss, demonstrate, or act out how others can help someone experiencing emotions that make them feel bad, or join in and celebrate emotions that make them feel good together.

### Lesson Material(s):

- **Today I Feel Silly & Other Moods That Make My Day** by Jamie Lee Curtis (this would be a perfect extension activity from lesson 2 above)
- **The Way I Feel** by Janan Cain (this was used in a previous grade level Toolkit in a teacher-led read-along, so it would be a perfect extension activity)
- **Sometimes I Feel Like A Mouse** by Jeanne Modesitt (this book is at a lower reading level, and, therefore, might be a good fit for struggling readers)
- For more book suggestions: Scholastic Book Wizard is a great resource for teachers to identify both reading grade level and guided reading level, and can also sort by subject area. Use this link ([www.scholastic.com/teachers/bookwizard/](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/bookwizard/)) to access the site, and enter the Keywords: feelings and emotions.

### Lesson Four:

It is important for children to understand that everyone experiences a wide range of emotions. They should understand these concepts:

- It is okay to feel many different feelings, in fact, it is expected;
- Expressing feelings is important, but we need to learn healthy ways to do so; and,
- Knowing when to get help from others, and doing so, is essential.

### *Identifying and Meeting Resources*

- *Lead the students in an exercise to brainstorm people in the school who students can go to in order to get help with regard to their health (exs. Trusted adults including: teachers, principal, school nurse, counselor, social worker, psychologist, etc).*
- *Invite some of these school resources to come to your class to talk about what they do to help others, as well as circumstances when it would be appropriate to seek their help.*

The emphasis should be on the idea that seeking help is a sign of strength, and is a good way to maintain personal health (no different than if they were to go to a teacher for help learning something they don’t understand, or to a doctor when they are not feeling well).

## FOURTH & FIFTH GRADE



### Lesson One:

Students should understand that health includes physical, mental/emotional, and social aspects.

- Ask students to name a problem that someone could have with their health. Often students come up with physical health issues. It is important for students to understand that, just as we care for our physical health, it is important to care for one's mental/emotional and social health equally. Use an image of the health triangle (Appendix B) on the board (projected, poster, etc) to illustrate.
- Facilitate a discussion with the class and brainstorm the following: What are ways we can work to stay (or be) healthy in each area of the health triangle? Examples might include:
  - o Physical Health - wash your hands, practice good personal hygiene, get an appropriate amount of sleep (9-11 hours for school-aged children), eat a well-balanced diet of fruits and vegetables, and exercise daily
  - o Mental/Emotional Health - recognize a full range of feelings, finding healthy ways to cope with emotions such as stress, anger, frustration, and sadness, learning new skills \*please note: academics and life-long learning fit into this category, recognize personal triggers for negative reactions, engage in flow activities, recognize that it is okay to seek help
  - o Social Health - healthy relationships, being your own person, avoiding peer pressure, and practicing empathy and compassion.

### Lesson Material(s):

- An image of the “Health Triangle” (Appendix B)
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### Lesson Two:

Show the movie *Inside Out*. Highlighted discussion points could include:

- Everyone experiences a full range of emotions, and allowing yourself to do so is healthy. Acknowledgement, and recognition of your emotions (feelings) is an important part of mental/emotional well-being. It is important to find healthy ways to express and manage your emotions.
- ALL emotions have a purpose:
  - o they help us to express our emotional health;
  - o they help us to grow because we learn from them; and,
  - o they help us to become more resilient (how well we bounce back from negative experiences).
- Sometimes we experience more than one emotion at the same time.
- Everyone experiences changes in life (which helps us to grow) and can be difficult to deal with. To help others who are experiencing difficult emotions, you can show empathy (expressing that you have had a similar experience, so they don't feel alone) and compassion (doing something to help them).

Following the movie, have the students reflect on the following questions:

- How would it be helpful for Riley to have talked about what she was feeling?  
\*Note: It is important to talk about what is happening because, while people want to help, they may be unaware of how you are feeling. \*
- What could people in Riley's life have done to help her to cope with what she was going through?  
\*Note: Try to connect this with empathy and compassion.\*

### Lesson Material(s):

- **Inside Out – Pixar Animation**
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## FOURTH & FIFTH GRADE



### Lesson Three:

Print or display pictures of the characters from Inside Out: Joy, Anger, Fear, & Sadness.

#### *Writing Assignment:*

Students will need to select Joy, plus 1 of the following characters on which to base their reflection: Anger, Fear, & Sadness. For each of the two emotions selected, students should think of a specific example of when they experienced it, and write a reflection by including the following information. They could do art work to accompany this as well.

1. For Anger, Fear, & Sadness:
  - What was the emotion you felt?
  - When did you feel that way?
  - Why did you feel that way?
  - How did you show that emotion?
  - In the future, how could you handle a similar situation in a positive way?
2. For Joy:
  - When was a time you felt joy?
  - Why did you feel that way?
  - How did you show your emotions?
  - In the future, what is another way that you can plan to feel joy again?

### Lesson Material(s):

- **Displayed pictures of Inside Out characters**
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### Lesson Four:

It is important for children to understand that everyone experiences a wide range of emotions. They should understand these concepts:

- It is okay to feel many different feelings, in fact, it is expected;
- Expressing feelings is important, but we need to learn healthy ways to do so; and,
- Knowing when to get help from others, and doing so, is essential.

### *Identifying and Meeting Resources*

- 1. Have students identify the key people in the school who are sources for mental / emotional health.*
  - 2. Additionally, lead the students in an exercise to brainstorm resources one can find in the community who can help with mental/emotional health.*
  - 3. Identify personal supports a person might have who can help with mental / emotional health (For example: family, friends, coaches, and other trusted adults). Have students identify (privately, or shared) what trusted adult they would go to if they needed help.*
  - 4. Invite some school and/or community mental health providers into your classroom to foster the development of relationships between students and providers. Have them explain, and/or demonstrate, what it is like for a child during a typical first visit to a mental health provider. (For example, describe the setting, simulate conversation starters, teach them a few coping strategies)*
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## Lesson One:

Students should understand that health includes physical, mental, emotional, and social aspects.

- Ask students to name a problem that someone could have with their health.
  - o Here is a list you can use to get started:
  - o Physical - Nutrition, Sleep, Exercise, & Doctor/Dentist Checkups
  - o Mental/Emotional - Self-esteem, Feelings, Academics, & Emotion Management (ie. Stress & Anger)
  - o Social - Support Networks (family, friends, relationships), Media, Peer Pressure, & Communication
- Often students come up with physical health issues. It is important for students to understand that, just as we care for our physical health, in order to maintain wellness, it is important to care for one's mental/emotional and social health equally. Once the class has brainstormed examples to put in the triangle- they should be posted or positioned on the triangle (this may be done with magnets, sticky notes, or electronically) where they seem to best fit.
- Next, engage in a conversation including the following takeaways:
  - A. While the examples are now positioned where they seem to best fit at first glance, see if students can make an argument for moving them to different places.

(For example, Sleep might originally be in the physical category because it impacts the way your body functions. It can also be mental & emotional because it makes one emotionally over-reactive and impacts academic focus. Sleep can also influence social health because it impacts your interactions with others based on mood.)

**\*Please note:** In this way, all items really could ultimately be placed anywhere, even in the very middle of the triangle.
  - B. Because these things are all interconnected, a small change in one area of the health triangle (positive or negative) can produce a change in another area of their health triangle.

(For example, if a person who does not manage their stress well, learns some strategies to do so positively, this will create a positive change in their mental/emotional health. Additionally, it creates momentum to cause positive change in the other areas, such as, an increase in physical energy and more positive social interactions.)

## Extension Activity:

Ask students to come up with examples of how a positive change in one area of the health triangle can produce positive changes in the other areas too.

## Lesson Material(s):

- **An image of the “Health Triangle” (Appendix B).**

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### Lesson Two:

Show students the movie *Wonder*; a great platform to discuss feelings. Highlighted discussion points could include:

- Everyone experiences a full range of emotions, and allowing yourself to do so is healthy. Acknowledgement, and recognition of your emotions (feelings) is an important part of mental/emotional well-being. It is important to find healthy ways to express and manage your emotions.
- **ALL** emotions have a purpose:
  - o they help us to express our emotional health;
  - o they help us to grow because we learn from them; and,
  - o they help us to become more resilient (how well we bounce back from negative experiences).
- Sometimes we experience more than one emotion at the same time.
- Everyone experiences changes in life (which helps us to grow) and can be difficult to deal with. To help others who are experiencing difficult emotions, you can show empathy (expressing that you have had a similar experience so they don't feel alone) and compassion (doing something to help them).
- Summary reflection questions:
  - o What is resilience, and what does it look like?
  - o In what ways did Auggie demonstrate resilience - what did that look like?
  - o How did he BUILD resilience and strength?
  - o In what ways did people show empathy (the ability to put yourself in someone else's shoes) and compassion (taking action to improve Auggie's circumstances)?
  - o What were missed opportunities for some of the other characters to have shown empathy and compassion?
  - o How could more empathy and compassion along the way have made a positive difference for Auggie?

### Lesson Material(s):

- *Wonder*, Lionsgate Films
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### Lesson Three:

In the movie, *Wonder*, Auggie's condition, Treacher Collins Syndrome, is easily visible. Many of us face challenges in life, both large and small, that are not always easily seen. While physical health issues are sometimes easier to see, mental/emotional health issues are often only visible when someone allows them to be.

- Can you think of an example of how some of the other characters in the movie (such as Auggie's sister, Via, or his friend, Jack Will) kept mental/emotional issues hidden rather than openly discussing them, and explain how it affected them, or their interactions with others.

\*\*\*Keep in mind as guiding this discussion that people can't help you with what they can't see, and this could cause the issue to:

- o worsen before the person gets help that could improve their circumstances
  - o negatively impact their social relationships; and,
  - o create physical ailments.
- Then, have students think about a time when they did not openly share their feelings. Use the following questions to guide a discussion:
    - o What prevented them from doing so? (For example, fear of judgement or non-acceptance, inability to articulate it, fear that it might be viewed as a weakness, or underestimating the significance of the issue)
    - o How could it have helped them to do so? (For example, people could have provided them with support, or had an opportunity to show them empathy, or compassion)
    - o How can sharing how you feel help you to become a more resilient person? (For example, you are given an opportunity to borrow resilience from someone who may have experienced something similar)
  - In addition to talking about the issue, there are many ways that people can cope with challenges (big or small). Have students brainstorm positive ways to cope. This discussion should include: flow activities (games, sports, or activities that one loves to do that make one feel good inside and do not involve the use of drugs), time management strategies, stress management strategies, mindfulness activities, diversion (distraction) techniques, forwarding thinking (ie. the ability to envision a clear picture of the future they want, to make choices that support them getting there), and understanding that your current situation doesn't have to define you - things can get better.

### Lesson Three (Continued):

Extension activity:

Students can create a project based on the following principles, reflecting on what they currently do well, and where they might improve. You may also want to have them depict flow activities they currently practice, and some they would like to try. This may be done electronically or in the form of an art project.

- o Accepting yourself, flaws & all - Nobody is perfect!
- o Taking care of yourself - Physically, Mentally/Emotionally, & Socially - AND Seeking Help if needed.
- o Having a Growth Mindset:
  - a. Allowing yourself to make mistakes (and to learn from them)
  - b. Allowing yourself to grow (and valuing doing so)
  - c. Having the belief that you can improve your talents and learn through hard work and practice
  - d. Believing that struggling with something is an opportunity to learn and grow, and that through failure we learn
  - e. Don't allow the fear of failure (alone or in front of others) prevent you from trying new things
- o Valuing yourself enough to recognize that your dreams, goals, & interests are worth while and should be a priority

### Lesson Material(s):

- Wonder, Lionsgate Films
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### Lesson Four:

It is important for students to understand that everyone experiences a wide range of emotions. They should understand these concepts:

- It is okay to feel many different feelings, in fact, is expected;
- Expressing feelings is important, but we need to learn healthy ways to do so; and,
- Knowing when to get help from others, and doing so, is essential.

Discuss the importance of these concepts with students:

- Why asking for help is a sign of strength - not weakness  
(For example: it is self-advocacy; it is viewed as a sign of strength when one seeks help for a physical health issue, and this should be no different; it shows self-awareness; it demonstrates ability to access resources, and a willingness to receive them; and, actively seeking help empowers the individual (the first step towards mental wellness).
- How do you know when it is time to seek help? Consider the 3 R's: when challenging emotions, feelings or behaviors interfere with a person's ability to
  - o fulfill Responsibilities (i.e. go to school, work, complete chores)
  - o maintain Relationships (i.e. you withdraw from others, become impatient or angry)
  - o enjoy Recreation (i.e. when you stop doing the things you used to enjoy)

Extension Activities:

- Invite mental health providers (both from within the school and local community) into your classroom to interact with students
- Identify personal supports a person might have who can help with mental/emotional health (ie. family, friends, coaches, and other trusted adults).

## Lesson One:

Students should understand that health includes multiple dimensions of health. One model that can help illustrate this concept is “Whole Person Wellness” (see Appendix C).

- Brainstorm attributes, characteristics, behaviors and habits, etc that would fit into each dimension.
- Using a graphic organizer, (Appendix D) have students independently reflect on, and illustrate, how they currently live each dimension, and ways to improve/grow in each dimension.
- Additionally, it is important for students to understand that:
  - ALL** emotions have a purpose:
    - they help us to express our emotional health;
    - they help us to grow because we learn from them; and,
    - they help us to become more resilient (how well we bounce back from negative experiences).
  - o Sometimes we experience more than one emotion at the same time.
  - o Everyone experiences changes in life (which helps us to grow) and can be difficult to deal with. To help others who are experiencing difficult emotions, you can show empathy (expressing that you have had a similar experience so they don't feel alone) and compassion (doing something to help them).

## Lesson Material(s):

- Image of “Whole Person Wellness” (Appendix C)
- Graphic organizer (Appendix D)

## Lesson Two:

Have the class do the following:

1. Use a jar of jelly and a large spoon that cannot fit into the jar. Ask for a volunteer to try to scoop out the jar using the scoop end of the spoon.
2. While they are attempting to do this, please say the following things to them:
  - a. Try harder
  - b. Don't you want to make this happen?
  - c. Are you even trying?
  - d. Why can't you do this for me?
  - e. Just do it
3. After the class realizes this is an impossible task, debrief with the following questions:

### **Ask the volunteer:**

- a. How did this make you feel?
- b. Did the questions encourage or discourage you?
- c. Did you feel like you were letting the teacher down because you couldn't accomplish the task

### **Ask the class:**

- d. What might have made this seemingly impossible task possible? (For example, a smaller spoon, use the spoon handle instead, pour the jelly out, etc.)



## Lesson Two (Continued):

4. Now, lead the discussion to connect this demonstration to physical vs. mental health.
- Often people will say the kinds of things the teacher said in this activity to someone expressing concerns or challenges associated with mental health. For example, they might say, “You have everything going for you; why can’t you just see that and be happy?” However, we wouldn’t say to someone with a broken leg, “Oh, just walk on it. You will be fine.”
  - If someone had a physical health challenge, we know from very young ages that it needs to be addressed, and that there is a progression in how we do so. Ask students what course(s) of action they would take, or advise others to take, when dealing with physical health issue. (For example: first aid; treatment options; medication; therapy; go to a doctor; and seek out help.)
  - Why do people sometimes say things such as the following when people are dealing with mental health challenges? Try harder; don’t you want to make this happen; are you even trying; why can’t you just do this for me; or just do it? (For example: they don’t know how to help; they don’t understand the treatment options available; and/or, stigma)
  - Sometimes people forget that it is just as important to care for their mental and emotional hygiene as it is to care for their physical health.
  - What are helpful things that one can do when dealing with one’s own mental health challenges? (For example: healthy sleep; mindfulness; communication with parents; friends; professionals; developing self-awareness; and, practicing self-care.)
  - What are ways that we can help others who are dealing with mental health challenges? (For example: showing empathy; care; compassion; support; and, being non-judgmental.)

## Lesson Material(s):

- **Jelly in a jar with a narrow top and large mixing spoon**

## Lesson Three:

Show the following Ted Talk listed below in Lesson Materials. The theme of this Ted Talk is: Emotional Hygiene, and Skills to Increase Resilience and Mental Well-Being. Then, use the following information to lead a discussion:

### Discussion Questions/Talking Points:

**Pay attention to emotional pain** - What did the psychologist say about our society's emphasis on physical vs. emotional pain? In what ways is this problematic? (Keep in mind favoritism, loneliness, failure, and resilience)

Avoid favoritism of body over mind.

For example, small children understand basic physical health practices (brushing teeth, caring for cuts), but we, as a society, often neglect emotional well-being.

Loneliness = emotionally and socially disconnected, and can happen even when surrounded by other people. Loneliness creates a deep psychological wound - one that distorts our perceptions and scrambles our thinking.

Another psychological wound is failure. Be aware of your response to failure - it can trick your mind into thinking you're incapable. But, don't become convinced that you can't succeed. You have to fight feelings of helplessness. You have to gain control over the situation and break this kind of negative cycle before it begins. Failure, instead, can be a learning experience; it creates an opportunity for resilience

**Negative Self-Talk** - In what ways do we sometimes make our emotional wounds worse?

If you wouldn't say it to a friend, why would you say it to yourself?

We don't intentionally make physical injuries worse, so why would we do so for emotional ones?

Seek help when needed.

Learn from your experiences to help you build resilience.

**Protect your self-esteem** - What is rumination, and why is it a problem?

Rumination is when you become stuck on a thought that is troubling or negative, which then keeps you in a negative emotional state far beyond the bounds of the event itself. Even just a 2 minute distraction can prevent rumination, allowing for a quicker bounce back.

### Lesson Material(s):

- **Ted Talk: Why Do We All Need to Practice Emotional First Aid? (Guy Winch)** [https://www.ted.com/talks/guy\\_winch\\_the\\_case\\_for\\_emotional\\_hygiene](https://www.ted.com/talks/guy_winch_the_case_for_emotional_hygiene)

## Lesson Four:

Use the following bullet points to lead a group discussion. Following the discussion, there are four activities that you may choose to do with your class.

- Treatment for physical health and mental health should be treated the same.
- Guy Winch gives the following analogy in his TedTalk (shown in Lesson Two):  
“When individuals struggle with mental health issues, people sometimes say things like ‘get over it, it is all in your head;’ however, we rarely treat physical health issues in the same manner. You would never say to someone with a fractured leg “get over it; it is all in your leg.” Similarly, you would not discourage them from seeking help (or judge them for doing so).”
- Sadly, according to current research, it takes many people with mental health struggles, on average, a decade to seek help. In contrast, when people have physical health issues, they typically seek help rapidly, which enables them to be treated before the issue worsens.
- Sometimes there are concrete answers, and sometimes there are not.
- There are often many treatment options that can be successful.
- Sometimes it is acute (short-term), and sometimes it is chronic (long-term).
- Sometimes solutions are simple, and sometimes they are complex.
- There are many people who seek treatment for mental health, who go on to lead happy and productive lives.
- You do not have to have a diagnosable mental health condition to sometimes need help with mental/emotional health - it’s a matter of degree.
- There is NO shame in seeking help for any type of health concern.
- Threshold - People want to help us, but if we keep our mental/emotional struggles hidden they can’t. It is important to not hide our struggles - and it is important to seek help.

## Lesson Four (continued):

Suggested Additional Activities: \*Please note, you can do some, any, or all of these activities.

### **Activity # 1: Journal**

Allow students to process and reflect individually through the following writing prompts:

1. What does stigma look like? How might it present in ways we can identify?
2. Pretend you just had an incident occur in your life where you are left feeling sad, lonely, depressed (such as, a breakup, a death in the family, etc.). What effect would stigma have on the way you feel about that situation?
3. Statistics tell us that people who have a mental health condition wait close to 10 years from the time they begin to experience symptoms, until they begin receiving treatment. Explain the role stigma might have in this treatment gap? Why?
4. Why do you feel stigma can exist in some areas of health but not in others? For instance, the difference between getting help for your dental hygiene vs. your mental hygiene/health?

### **Activity # 2: Advocacy**

Have students create a short story, poem, song, PSA, art project or other activity that deals with the topics of stigma, coping, and/or resilience. The project can focus on awareness, challenges and the importance of using resources to work through mental health challenges. As they are working on their creations, it might be helpful to keep the following in mind:

- What might make a person not want to discuss/share mental health challenges? (For example, it may not always be the appropriate setting, or they might be afraid.)
  - Why is it a problem that mental/emotional aspects of a person are only seen if people allow them to be? How might suffering in silence and keeping these challenges hidden be problematic?
  - Have students think about a time when they experienced a mental health challenge and worked through it successfully. What did they learn from it? How did they grow?
-

## Lesson Four (continued):

### **Activity # 3: The Importance of Seeking Help/Treatment**

Using current media sources or websites, locate some articles that highlight celebrities, famous athletes, or notable people who have a mental health condition. This normalizes the fact that people with mental health conditions can live productive lives.

See this example about Kevin Love, a professional basketball player:

<https://www.theplayerstribune.com/en-us/articles/kevin-love-everyone-is-going-through-something>

Using a celebrity as an example, do some research about the treatment options that exist for the chosen celebrity's mental health condition. Each treatment option should be explained, using research from reputable websites. Beyond treatment, there are many methods to support those who might be dealing with mental health conditions that are not diagnosed. Therefore, have students research methods for self-care to work through acute challenges and/or to support someone living with a mental health condition.

### **Activity # 4: Community Mental Health Resources**

Students can seek out local agencies in the community to interview. The students' focus is to understand the recommendations that professionals use for treatment options. Some examples of talking points/questions might include:

- What are some recommendations for strategies or tools that anyone can use to help support their mental health?
- When should someone decide to seek the help of a community professional vs. using self-care?
- What are some treatment options? Are there any that are more effective for specific mental health disorders?
- If someone came to your agency for treatment, what can they expect? What is the process?
- Are there effective treatment options or strategies for specific situations that some people may feel anxious about, such as taking a test, public speaking, flying, etc.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



### Resources for Identifying Books

- Ask the school librarian to pull grade level books about emotions and relationships that could be used to create a thematic reading center in the classroom or to be used for extension activities.
- Reach out to local book seller(s) and/or representative(s) working directly with schools. They have a extensive understanding of new books that may be related to topics of interest.
- Scholastic Book Wizard is a great resource for teachers to identify reading grade level, guided reading level, and can sort by subject area. Use this link [www.scholastic.com/teachers/bookwizard/](http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/bookwizard/) to access the site and enter the Keywords: **Feelings** and **Emotions**.

### Resources and Tools to Enhance Classroom Activities and Learning

- Mindfulness strategies are personally empowering, positive, coping tools that can help students with regard to mental/emotional health. There are numerous programs available to train educators in the use, and incorporation, of ongoing mindfulness in a classroom.
  - o For example: Calm Schools Initiatives; this app provides educators with the tools and resources to teach students about mindfulness. Use the link [www.calm.com/schools](http://www.calm.com/schools) to learn more.
- Greater Good is a magazine published by the Greater Good Science Center at UC Berkeley. Their mission is to create a happier and more compassionate society by providing individuals with science-based information and tools by using multiple platforms (articles, videos, quizzes, podcasts). Use the link, [greatergood.berkeley.edu](http://greatergood.berkeley.edu) to learn more.
  - Based on research in neuroscience, The Center for Healthy Minds provides thoughtful and innovative strategies for supporting the well-being of students (and other). Visit [centerhealthyminds.org/jointhe-movement/children](http://centerhealthyminds.org/jointhe-movement/children) for information and resources.
- Brain Breaks are movement activities that are aimed to improve student attention and behavior within the school environment.
  - o For example: GoNoodle, [www.gonoodle.com/](http://www.gonoodle.com/)
  - o Action for Healthy Kids, [www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/1252-brain-breaksinstant-recess-and-energizers](http://www.actionforhealthykids.org/tools-for-schools/1252-brain-breaksinstant-recess-and-energizers)
- Edutopia is a K-12 education resource that provides a wealth of useful information for social and emotional learning, classroom management, teaching strategies, literacy, etc. Use the link [www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning](http://www.edutopia.org/social-emotional-learning) to learn more.

### Resources to Create Interactive Games

- [kahoot.it](http://kahoot.it) • [flipquiz.me/](http://flipquiz.me/)



## APPENDIX A IMAGES OF EMOTIONS



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School Mental Health  
Resource Training Center



Coauthored by: Jessica Hull, MEd, Amy Preston, MEd, and Dustin Verga, MEd, for the 30  
Mental Health Association in New York State, Inc.



## APPENDIX A

### IMAGES OF EMOTIONS



## APPENDIX A IMAGES OF EMOTIONS





## APPENDIX B

### THE HEALTH TRIANGLE



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## APPENDIX C WHOLE PERSON WELLNESS



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**APPENDIX D**  
**WHOLE PERSON WELLNESS**  
**GRAPHIC ORGANIZER**



DIMENSIONS	DESCRIPTION	YOUR STRENGTHS	OPPORTUNITIES FOR GROWTH
<b>Physical</b>	<b>Healthy habits and lifestyle choices</b>		
<b>Emotional</b>	<b>Resiliency and coping strategies</b>		
<b>Social</b>	<b>Positive relationships with others</b>		
<b>Intellectual</b>	<b>Personal growth and expression</b>		
<b>Spiritual</b>	<b>Greater than self; meaning and purpose</b>		
<b>Occupational</b>	<b>Use of talents, skills and knowledge</b>		