

Improving Mental Health

Taking care of your mental health can mean seeking professional help, but it is also important to be able to take your own steps to improve emotional health.

Pupils are facing increasing pressures that can affect their mental health. Therefore, it is important for students to understand that they have the power and tools to improve their resilience and emotional health. They do not have to wait until they are in a crisis to make mental health a priority.

This short classroom activity explores different ideas that can improve mental health and helps the students to think about what can work for them personally.

Please do adapt this task to best suit your pupils and your school.

Time

40 minutes + (but can be adjusted to suit)

Objectives

- To be able to understand different ways to improve mental health
- To have a plan of what they can try to incorporate into their daily lives to improve mental health

Part 1 Introduction – 5 minutes

Taking care of your own mental health should be just as important as the steps you take to maintain your physical health. Below are some of the ways you can improve your mental health.

- **Tell yourself something positive**
How you think about yourself can have a powerful effect on how you feel.
- **Write down a list of things you are grateful for**
By taking the time to focus on the good things in your life you naturally become more positive.
- **Practice mindfulness**
Simply noticing what is happening right now, in this moment and paying attention to it. It helps to keep you calm and relaxed.
- **Exercise**
Your body releases endorphins before and after you exercise, endorphins are chemicals that help relieve stress and boost your mood.

- **Eat a good meal**
Nourish your body and brain with healthy foods like fruit, nuts and vegetables.
- **Do something for someone else**
Being helpful and kind is a great way to make you feel happy.
- **Go to bed on time**
Not getting enough sleep can have a significant negative effect on your mood.

Everyone is different and what works for some people might not work for others. It's important to find what works for you and incorporate it into your daily life.

Part 2 Activity – 30 minutes

1. Ask the pupils to think about ways to improve mental health and particularly what would work for them. E.g. spending time on their BMX or walking their dog.
2. Next get the students to create a poster (using research online) of their ideas to improve mental health. Encourage the students to tailor their work to what they think would work best for them.

Note

If the students do not have access to the internet please print off some of the below articles for them to get information from.

<https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/health-and-families/ways-to-improve-mental-health-daily-habits-walk-tall-exercise-a8050651.html>

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sport/supermovers/47134988>

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/improve-mental-wellbeing/>

Part 3 Sharing/Reflection – 5 minutes

1. Ask everyone to pick their favourite idea from their work and share with the group and how they can build this into their daily life.