



Workshop 2: Health & Wellbeing



U OK? is a series of workshops, co-produced with students. They aim to support student mental health through the transition out of further education, into higher education, the world of work and training.

Each workshop is led by two student facilitators, Mental Health Ambassadors.



HEALTH & WELLBEING WORKSHOP

The purpose of this workshop is to explore how lifestyle choices can impact mental health, and how healthy activity looks different from person to person.

You're not expected to have all the answers, but to help start the conversation that will get them thinking about how to manage their mental health, and to signpost them to where they can go for support should they need it.

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Timings

We give you an indicative timing for each activity. You might find this needs adjusting slightly as you prepare. We suggest an optional task that you can run if you have time. If you don't have time, skip the optional task and move on to Reflection & Close.

How to do it

The instructions for each activity are split into steps, which you should either: DO (handing things out, putting up slides), SAY (the key messages and instructions for the activity) or ASK (prompt questions to extend the discussion or gauge understanding).



Discussion based
activity



Activity



Break

Notes and troubleshooting

We provide extra information that may be helpful when you're running the activity, such as adaptations you could make, considerations about managing the class, or key preparations for the lesson.

Read the lesson plan in advance

As part of your preparation, you should read the lesson plan in full.

You'll need to decide with your co-Mental Health Ambassador who will deliver each section of the lesson.

It's not a script:

The session plan provides sentence examples, but it's not a word-for-word script that you can simply read out. It may be helpful to make key notes about what you're going to say but avoid writing full sentences.

Try and practice beforehand so you feel more confident and less likely to read from the page.



OVERVIEW



Workshop aims:

- ✔ To explore the connection between physical and mental health
- ✔ To explore cost-effective ways to look after mental health through establishing healthy habits around diet and lifestyle.
- ✔ To explore issues around drug and alcohol use
- ✔ Signpost to services that can support: The Loop, The Mix, etc.

Resources you will need:

In Person:

- ✔ Pens and paper
- ✔ Signposting resource

Online:

- ✔ Jamboard
- ✔ Signposting resource

Preparation Checklist

- ✔ Meet with co-facilitator(s) and decide who will run each section
- ✔ Check you can access all resource materials
- ✔ Make sure you have the Zoom link for the call (if delivering online)
- ✔ Read the session in full

Health & Wellbeing Workshop



TIMETABLE



Workshop Duration: 2 hours

Introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Icebreaker• Welcome• Ground rules	20 mins
Making Connections <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree or disagree activity and discussion around five themes<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Diet◦ Exercise and meditation◦ Partying and lifestyle◦ Sex and relationships◦ Sleep	50 mins
Break	10 mins
Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stop, start, continue activity	30 mins
Close	10 mins

Introduction



INTRODUCTION

Welcome

5 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

Thank the group for attending, explain that yourself and your other MHAs will be facilitating this workshop

If comfortable sharing, tell the group why you are passionate about mental health.

Explain:

- Mental health is something we all have, and we all have pressures that impact it in different ways. Some of these pressures increase or change when we transition from further education to higher education, employment or training. This workshop aims to explore what some of these pressures are, and what we can do about them.



INTRODUCTION

Ice-breaker

10 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

Explain that you will spend a few minutes on introductions and learning a little about each other.

ASK:

Everyone to write three things they are grateful for this week (on post-it notes in person, or on the jamboard online)

Starting with MHAs, ask everyone to share their;

- **Name, pronouns (if comfortable) and course**
- **The three things they are grateful for**

SAY:

Practicing gratitude is good for our mental health. Gratitude is not a denial of hardship, it's a light in the dark – it is acknowledging that everything is not easy or perfect, but finding positives in the everyday, even in the mundane, is a powerful tool in re-framing how you see your world.

VARIATIONS:

Feel free to swap the icebreaker out for one of your own or use one of the alternatives on page 13

Introduction



INTRODUCTION

Ground rules

5 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

To make sure we get the most out of this session, together we will create a list of ground rules.

ASK:

Ask everyone to share rules that would help them feel safe, supported and get the most out of the session. Examples include;

- Treating each other with respect
- Not interrupting
- No phones

DO:

Add "be aware of triggers" if it is not mentioned by participants, and explain:

- That talking about mental health can be personal and sensitive.
- That you want everyone to feel free and open to share, but they should consider how sharing personal stories might make others in the group feel.
- If it could be triggering for others but it's something they feel like they need support with, they should message one of the MHAs who will be able to signpost them to the appropriate person or organisation.

VARIATIONS:

You can create this list by asking people to call out, or anonymously using post-it notes, or online using the jamboard.



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Introduction

5 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

SAY:

“What is mental wellbeing?”

Lead a discussion making sure the below is covered:

KEY MESSAGES:

Mental wellbeing does not have a single universal definition, but it does encompass factors such as:

- The sense of feeling good about ourselves and being able to function well individually or in relationships,
- The ability to deal with the ups and downs of life, such as coping with challenges and making the most of opportunities,
- The feeling of connection to our community and surroundings
- Having control and freedom over our lives,
- Having a sense of purpose and feeling valued.

How good we feel mentally is connected to many other health and wellbeing factors. Our physical health, how well we have slept, our relationships with other people, all play a part in our mental health.



MAKING CONNECTIONS

Activity
45 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

RESOURCE: Facts & Statements resource (for MHAs) page 13

SAY:

Explain:

- that one end of the room will be agree, the other disagree.
- that you will read a number of statements, and each person should move between agree and disagree, depending on how much they agree or disagree with the statement.

DO:

- Read out a statement from the 'diet' section. Once everyone has moved, ask a few people to share their thoughts.
- Read out another statement from the same section. Has anyone moved? Why, why not?
- Continue through the statements (you don't need to use all statements pick the most appropriate)
- Use the facts from the "facts bank" as appropriate, in any order you choose, to illustrate different points and to encourage further debate. Be sure to share facts from the "facts bank" that double up as advice, even if the debate is over.
- Move on to the 'exercise and meditation' section and so on.

See this activity as a discussion, and encourage them to share what works for them, building healthy habits into their routines. Make sure to include any specific tips related to what's available at your institution, or anything you've learned from your own experience.

ADAPTATION:

Before or part way through the activity, ask students to put forward stereotypes or thoughts that can be used as statements, and then use these in the activity.

FOR ONLINE DELIVERY:

Use a jamboard as the 'room', get participants to move a sticky note with their name on to one side of the jamboard if they agree and the other if they disagree.



BREAK

10 minutes



Reflection

Stop, Start, Continue Activity

30 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

RESOURCE: Pen and paper (in person)/Jamboard (online)

SAY:

We all use strategies to look after our mental health, often without realising.

Some things we do have a long lasting positive impact on our mental health, and we call these 'helpful coping strategies'. Others relieve stress or pressure for a short amount of time but can end up contributing to more stress in the long term. We call these 'unhelpful coping strategies'.

ASK:

Individually, ask everyone to think about;

- one thing they currently do in each of these areas that is good for their mental health and that they will CONTINUE to do,
- one thing they don't currently do but will START doing,
- and one thing that they currently do but find unhelpful, and will STOP.

They should do this for each of the five themes from the previous activity.

In pairs, ask them to;

- share and discuss their stop, start, continue for each theme.

Altogether, ask them to;

- choose one stop, one start, and one continue each; write them on post-it notes and add to the board. In person use 3 sheets of flipchart - one stop, one start, one continue. Online use a jamboard.

e.g.

STOP – Sleep: Looking at my phone right before bed

START – Diet: Meal planning and eating more vegetables

CONTINUE – Exercise: Practicing yoga using online videos each week



REFLECTION & CLOSE

Close
10 minutes

HOW TO DO IT

RESOURCE: Tips and Signposting Handout

DO:

Share the link to the Tips and Signposting Handout and explain that it covers some of the topics we have looked at in the session, and signposts for more information and resources.

DO:

Share the link to the feedback sheet and ask everyone to complete it. The more feedback we have the more we are able to evidence the use and impact of workshops like these, and encourage more institutions to run them.

Ask the group to complete the feedback survey before leaving the session. The link and QR code to access it are below.

Feedback is vital to the success and expansion of this project.

<https://linktr.ee/mhfuok?>



Alternative Icebreaker Ideas

ALTERNATIVE ICEBREAKERS

There are suggested icebreakers for each workshop, feel free to swap these out with one of your own, or one of the ideas on this page.

You can add icebreakers into the session to boost energy, after the break can be a good time for this.

High to low

Ask the group to organise themselves in order, start off with quick easy ones like height or birthday and then move onto some that involve more conversation, you could even theme them for the workshop you are running.

E.g. for the Academic Pressure Workshop, ask if they thrive under pressure, or prefer more time and preparation to complete an assignment. Ask them to place themselves in order from Less Pressure to Most Pressure.

Desert island

Ask the group what three items you would bring on a deserted island. Then ask them which three items they would bring on an Island paradise. Are they similar or drastically different?

Word Association

Ask everyone in the group to say the first thing that comes to mind when asked the word "health" and again with "wellbeing". Can start off with a less obvious word to encourage creativity e.g. "Tasty"

Visualisation

- If your day/ week was a film/ book/ song, which would it be and why?
- If you or your day/week/life were an animal/ character/ condiment/ meal etc, what would you be and why?

Lucky dip

Everyone in the group has to write out a random word, they then muddle the words up and pick one out at random. They then have to speak about this topic for 30 seconds to one minute. Can be used to represent how social situations might make it difficult for someone to communicate.

FACTS & STATEMENTS

DIET

Statements

What I eat impacts how I feel

It is impossible to eat healthily on a low budget

Calories are the main thing I look at when deciding if food is healthy or not

I would eat more healthily if I had a higher income

I prefer ready meals and takeaways to cooking from scratch as it saves time

Two meals a day is enough to keep me going

Breakfast is the most important meal of the day

Facts bank

Food can have a long-lasting effect on your mental health. Your brain needs a mix of nutrients in order to stay healthy and function well, just like the other organs in your body. A diet that's good for your physical health is also good for your mental health.

Three meals a day or five smaller snacks throughout the day, plus plenty of water, is ideal for maintaining good mental health.

"Breakfast is the most important meal of the day" was a slogan created by Kellogg's to sell cereal in 1917. It's not true that it's the case for everyone.

What you eat and drink can impact your sleep. Eating rice and oats can produce chemicals that increase our desire to sleep. As well as the obvious caffeine, in terms of food and drink to avoid, foods high in sugar can keep you awake if consumed late in the day. A big meal after mid-evening can also stop you from sleeping.

Meal planning and bulk cooking can make eating healthily on a budget easier.

Tips and recipes from people like – The Starving Student, Miguel Barclay's £1 meals, Jack Monroe's Cooking on a Bootstrap, can help you to eat healthily on a budget.

Cheap and free food is available through food waste apps like OLIO and Too Good To Go.

Student discount is accepted in Co-op.

Frozen veg is cheaper, lasts a long time and has the same nutrients as fresh veg.

Cooking for others and sharing food with others can help motivate you to ensure you're eating proper meals, and trying new things. New experiences with people can improve your mental health.

EXERCISE & MEDITATION

Statements

A walk doesn't count as proper exercise, you have to get sweaty to have a real workout

Getting fit at home is impossible

I can't afford gym membership, so can't workout

I feel better after getting out for some fresh air

I hated PE at school and I'm still not a sporty person

Mindfulness is a fad

Mindfulness definition: meditation which focuses on being aware of what you're sensing and feeling in the moment, without judgment. It involves breathing methods, guided imagery, and other practices to relax the body and mind and help reduce stress.

Facts bank

Exercising on a regular basis can help us sleep, helping to reduce anxiety and relieve stress. Exercising earlier in the day is better, as exercise increases the body's adrenaline production, making it more difficult to sleep if done just before bedtime.

Being active doesn't have to mean doing sport or going to the gym, and you don't have to sweat. There are lots of ways to be active; find the one that works for you.

Everyone can exercise, even with a physical barrier. Any activity that raises your heart rate, makes you breathe faster, and makes you feel warmer counts towards your exercise!

Physical activity has a huge potential to enhance our wellbeing. Even a short burst of 10 minutes' brisk walking increases our mental alertness, energy and positive mood.

Participation in regular physical activity can increase our self-esteem and can reduce stress and anxiety. It also plays a role in preventing the development of mental health problems and in improving the quality of life of people experiencing mental health problems.

Exercise not only has a positive impact on our physical health, but it can also increase our self-esteem. Self-esteem is how we feel about ourselves and how we perceive our self-worth. It is a key indicator of our mental wellbeing and our ability to cope with life stressors. Self-esteem can be improved just by doing some physical activity, even without working towards a goal.

Evidence suggests that physical activity can ease symptoms of depression and reduce levels of anxiety in people with mild symptoms. Physical activity is available to all, has few costs attached, and is an empowering approach that can support self-management.

Facts bank

Research suggests that doing physical activity in an outdoor, 'green' environment has greater positive effects on wellbeing compared to physical activity indoors. Going for a walk gets you outdoors and into nature, which is also good for your mental health.

There are tons of free and accessible workouts available online – Joe Wicks, Yoga with Adrienne, the Nike Training app.

Mindfulness is recommended by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) as a way to prevent depression in people who have had three or more bouts of depression in the past.

Many people find practising mindfulness helps them to manage their day-to-day wellbeing, but it doesn't always work for everyone.

PARTYING

Statements

Drugs are more dangerous than alcohol

Alcohol is not a drug

Alcohol is a good coping mechanism

Partying is an essential part of university life

It's hard not to give into the pressure to drink to fit in and have a good time at university

I am more fun when I am drunk

Facts bank

Alcohol is a drug.

When the drink wears off, you can feel worse because of the way the alcohol has affected your brain and the rest of your body. It can cause dehydration, headaches, and lack of energy. Drinking is not a healthy way to manage difficult feelings.

Occasional light drinking is perfectly healthy and enjoyable for most people.

Alcohol is a depressant – it alters the chemicals in your brain and can worsen depression.

Using certain drugs over a long period of time can cause mental health problems. Excessive use of Cannabis can increase your chances of developing psychosis.

Cannabis has some medicinal benefits – THC and CBD (the two main components of cannabis) are sometimes used as pain relief and sickness relief.

Drugs can be safe, if taken sensibly and safely. Check out organisations like the Loop for information about how to be safe when taking drugs.

Drugs and alcohol can make it feel like pressure, stress, and problems have gone away in the short-term, but they won't solve the problem in the long run.

One in five university students in the UK don't drink.

Questions to help the discussion

- How do you deal with pressure to drink or take drugs?
- Do you feel like the decisions you make are well-informed?
- If you don't want to drink, is it easy to tell your friends?

SEX & RELATIONSHIPS

Statements

Casual sex lowers a person's self-esteem

If you don't make friends on your course or in your flat you are unlikely to make any

You shouldn't have sex on the first date

When a relationship gets hard you should end it

Maintaining old friendships from home is difficult

STIs are embarrassing

Using condoms makes sex less enjoyable

It's impossible to have any alone time for self-care while at university

Facts bank

STIs can feel embarrassing but they shouldn't be. Getting one is common – a young person is diagnosed with an STI every four minutes. The best way to prevent them is using condoms, even if you or your sexual partner are using another form of birth-control.

It can be difficult to make friends, even when it looks like others aren't finding it difficult. There are so many opportunities to make friends, and not just in your first year. Join societies, get a part time job, look for volunteering opportunities.

It's worth working at relationships that make you feel loved or valued. But, if you think being around someone is damaging your mental health, it may be best to take a break from them or call it a day completely. It's possible to end a relationship (or friendship) in a way that feels okay for both of you.

There are conflicting opinions on whether casual sex improves or lowers a person's self-esteem. There have been studies that show casual sex giving people's self-esteem a boost, and other studies that show casual sex lowering people's self-esteem.

The important thing when deciding to have sex is that everyone involved feels comfortable, is consenting, and is doing it for the right reasons. Some healthy reasons are:

- I fancy this person and want to act on my feelings for them
- I am excited to have a sexual experience and I trust this person enough to share that with them
- I want to explore my body in a sexual way

You can do discreet, free postal STI tests across the UK. They test for common STIs without having to go into a clinic.

CONTINUED...

Statements

You shouldn't talk about your relationship with other people

It's normal to spend more time with your partner than your friends

The number of people you have sex with says a lot about your character.

Facts bank

You can get unlimited free condoms from sexual health clinics – you don't need an appointment.

There are so many brands of condoms that feel different to each other, there are brands with thin latex, meaning you are still protected but don't lose as much sensation.

It is your right to insist on the use of a condom, even if a sexual partner says it makes sex less enjoyable.

If you are ever feeling threatened or uncomfortable when out on a date or with someone you have just met, you can go to the bar and 'Ask for Angela'. Bar staff across the country are trained to discreetly help you escape a worrying situation.

If you are a victim of domestic abuse you can 'Ask for Ani' at a pharmacy. Trained pharmacy staff will then provide a private space, phone, and check you need police or other services.

Questions to help the discussion

- How do you deal with social pressure?
- Do you think your friends would be embarrassed to admit they had an STI? What could you do to address that stigma?
- Do you think your friends understand consent? What can you do to educate them?

SLEEP

Statements

You need 8 hours of sleep a night

Naps are bad for you

Unusual sleep patterns are bad for you

What you eat can impact your sleep

I'm just someone who can't sleep well

Some people work better late at night

If I can't get enough sleep, I'll drink coffee to keep me going throughout the day

Getting too much sleep is a waste of time.

Facts bank

Eating rice, oats and dairy products can produce chemicals that increase our desire to sleep. As well as the obvious caffeine, in terms of food and drink to avoid, things high in sugar can keep you awake if consumed late in the day. A big meal after mid-evening can also stop you from sleeping.

Although it can make you feel tired and can help you get to sleep, alcohol often impairs the quality of your sleep and makes you more likely to wake up during the night as the effects wear off, and you may need to go to the toilet frequently or wake up dehydrated, needing to drink water. Even if you sleep well that night, it can affect your sleep on following nights.

Exercising on a regular basis can help us sleep, helping to reduce anxiety and relieve stress. Exercising earlier in the day is better, as exercise increases the body's adrenaline production, making it more difficult to sleep if done just before bedtime.

If you're finding it difficult to get to sleep, don't just lie there worrying. Get up for a while and get a drink (no sugar or caffeine, remember!) try reading for a little while and go back to bed when you're feeling a bit sleepier.

The bedroom should be somewhere that we associate with sleep. Where possible, you should try to remove distractions from your bedroom. It is better to work, watch TV, check social media and eat in another room. This will allow you to relax with no distractions in your bedroom. If that's not possible, at least try not to do these things in or on your bed.

There are so many different things to try if you're someone who struggles to sleep. Apps like Headspace have Sleepcasts – podcasts designed to help you get to sleep. Some people find it helpful to listen to white noise, do yoga or meditation before bed, or stop looking at screens an hour before bed.

Facts bank

Primarily, sleep is for the brain, allowing it to recover and regenerate. During our sleep, the brain can process information, consolidate memory, and enable us to learn and function effectively during daytime. This is why we are encouraged to get a good night's sleep in the run up to a job interview or exam rather than staying awake all night to prepare.

Sleeping poorly increases the risk of having poor mental health. In the same way that healthy diet and exercise can help to improve our mental health, so can sleep.

There is no universal answer to the question of how much sleep a person needs. This varies from person to person. What is important is that people find out how much sleep they need and ensure that they achieve this.

As the person reaches adulthood they tend to sleep 7–8 hours per day. Older adults tend to sleep roughly 6–7 hours per day, but take more frequent naps throughout the day. The amount of time an average adult needs to sleep varies from person to person, and can range between 5 and 11 hours.

Melatonin is the hormone that makes us feel tired. Some people experience a delay in their melatonin levels rising in the evening, and don't feel tired until much later. This is a common experience for people with ADHD. We're all different, and the important thing is to regularly get the number of hours sleep per day that our body needs.

Serotonin is a chemical that affects sleep; produced by the brain, insufficient levels of serotonin are also related to mental health problems such as depression and anxiety. Levels of serotonin are highest in the brain when we are awake and active, and the brain produces more serotonin when it is lighter outside. This is why most people feel tired at night-time, and why it is a good idea to turn off the lights when we are trying to sleep.



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