



ADDITIONAL ACTIVITY IDEAS

This contains additional information if you want to go beyond the Toolkit. This section contains more ideas for different activities arranged around different mental health themes.

Activities to talk about mental health generally

Venn diagram

Draw a Venn diagram with one side labelled "good mental health" and the other side labelled "poor mental health".

Ask the group to say as many words and phrases for each as they can. Ask them if any ideas fall in the middle and can sometimes vary e.g. socialising can be healthy but not if it is excessive.

Listen and draw

Hand out a piece of paper to everyone in the group. Tell them that you will be describing a scene and they need to draw what you are describing.

"Me and my friend are sitting on the beach, we just went in the sea and we will go and enjoy an ice-cream now. I can see a boat in the sea and birds in the sky."

Give the group 5 minutes to finish their drawings.

After get everyone to compare their drawings and explain that we all interpret information differently. That's why empathy is very important when we listen and communicate with others.

ACTIVITIES AROUND JOURNALING



Capturing the moment

Ask the group to write down whatever happens to be on their minds in that immediate moment that is bothering them. Ask them to think about another time that they felt this way, how did they manage these feelings in the past?

How do they feel to manage them now?

Lastly ask them to shift their focus on something positive that they have achieved recently.

Empathy Journaling

Provide students with a series of scenarios or short stories that involve various challenges or conflicts. In pairs or individually, students write journal entries from the perspective of the characters involved, focusing on their emotions, motivations, and challenges.

Encourage students to put themselves in the characters' shoes and explore different ways to approach and solve the problems.



ACTIVITIES AROUND COPING STRATEGIES

Coping strategies are the things that we do to manage feelings of stress and pressure, they are the things we naturally do, or habits we can embed into our lives.

Helpful/healthy strategies

Things that relieve stress and pressure in the long run, that can be built into our lives to help us manage our mental health.

E.g. talking to a trusted person, sleeping well, eating well, exercise. Use this [Best Tips resource](#) to explore more coping strategies.

Unhelpful/ unhealthy strategies

Things that can relive stress and pressure in the short term but don't have a lasting impact

E.g. avoidance of the problem, using drugs or alcohol to cope, unbalanced healthy coping strategies - socialising too much or too little, sleeping too much or too little.



STOP, START, CONTINUE

Discuss helpful and unhelpful coping strategies and ask everyone to think about what theirs are. Use the Best Tips resource to aid this discussion.

Ask everyone to share

- 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.

ACTIVITIES AROUND COPING STRATEGIES CONTINUED

REFLECTIVE DRAWING



Ask everyone to draw something to depict their stresses, their sources of pressure, and the positive strategies they use/are going to use to protect themselves from this pressure. They should label the picture. For example, a person in the rain:

- The clouds represent the source of pressure
- The rain represents the pressures
- And the umbrella and raincoat are the coping strategies and healthy habits used to manage the pressures

BUILDING BLOCKS



Ask the group to either draw, or imagine, a wall. Ask them to think about coping strategies for stress, once they have a few ideas ask them to "add" them to wall as though they were bricks.

Consider whether they have been able to finish the wall or whether it has empty gaps? Use this as a starting point for a group discussion on coping strategies and peer support for emotional difficulties. This can be used to explore other topics too.

EXPANDING STRATEGIES



Using the [Best Tips resource](#), ask each person to write down which of the tips they don't do and what the barriers to doing it are.

E.g. Tip - 'Sleep well'. Barrier - the thing that prevents them doing this. 'My mind races at night and I can't switch off'

Then each person should review each others and add advice to help them overcome that barrier.

E.g. Advice - 'try avoiding screens before bed', download Headspace, their sleep casts work for me every time'

ACTIVITIES TO DISCUSS BODY IMAGE



The Window

Split a whiteboard/ jamboard into four sections with a cross in the middle. Tell the group that this is a window and each pane looks out onto a different view. The top left is our we see ourselves and the top right are the things we don't notice about ourselves. The bottom left are how we imagine other people to see about us and the bottom right represents the things we might imagine but we cannot know for sure.

Compare each of the views, to see the impact that guessing and negative visualisations can play on our body image.

ACTIVITIES TO EXPLORE MINDFULNESS



5, 4, 3, 2, 1

Ask the group to reflect on:

- 5 things you can see: Your hands, the sky, a plant in the classroom
- 4 things you can physically feel: Your feet on the ground, a ball, your friend's hand
- 3 things you can hear: The wind blowing, laughter, your breath
- 2 things you can smell: Fresh-cut grass, coffee, soap
- 1 thing you can taste: A mint, gum, the fresh air

Explain that this exercise helps you shift your focus to your surroundings in the present moment and away from what is causing you to feel anxious. It can help interrupt unhealthy thought patterns.

Deep breathing



Ask the group to find a sitting position so that they are comfortable and close their eyes. Rest their hands on their lap or on the table in front of them. Now that they are settled, take a few normal breaths. Ask them to notice where they feel their breath most strongly – is it in their nose? Chest? Stomach?

Next ask the group to take a series of deep breaths – holding their breath in and then breathing out. Remember, it's not about holding their breath for as long as possible, but about slowing down their breathing process.