

Activity one: understand the issue



Mental health first aid kits

Time 60 minutes

You will need

Blocks (such as Jenga blocks, Lego bricks, milk bottle tops, plasters, or pieces of paper)

Plain paper gift bags

Stickers

Coloured pens or pencils

Paper

Before you begin

- Prepare the blocks by writing feelings on them. You could write onto the blocks, use sticky labels, or use sticky tape or sticky tack to attach paper.
- Try to include a mix of feelings, for example, happy, sad, upset, angry, and so on.

Talk about feelings

1. Everyone should get into a circle.
You could split up and do this activity in smaller groups if you want to.
2. The person leading the activity should spread the blocks out in the middle of the circle.
3. Everyone should take it in turns to pick up one block, and describe the feeling on it. The person leading the activity can help with reading. If anyone wants to open up, they could talk about whether they've ever experienced these feelings.
4. The person leading the activity should remind everyone that everybody experiences a whole range of feelings – they're naturally part of our mental health. However, experiencing feelings such as anger or sadness for too long can mean that someone's mental wellbeing is low; they should take action to improve it or get support.
5. Everyone should take turns to think about how they can create happy feelings, especially when they're feeling sad, upset or angry. People may think about things such as 'playing football with my sister', 'watching my favourite cartoon', 'talking to my teacher', or 'cuddling my pet'.
6. Everyone should write down or draw their ideas. Everyone's ideas will be a bit different, and that's OK.

Make a mental health first aid kit

1. The person leading should give everyone a paper bag.
2. Everyone should decorate their bag using coloured pens and stickers.
3. Everyone should put the ideas they wrote down (or drew) in their mental health first aid kit.
4. The person leading the activity should explain that if people are feeling sad (or angry), they could use the ideas in their kits to help them to feel better. If they don't think anything in their kit can help, they should talk to someone for extra support.

Talk about mental and physical health

1. The person leading the activity should help everyone think about the similarities between physical and mental health.
2. The person leading the activity could ask questions such as 'what happens when someone's injured or hurt?' and 'what happens when someone's feeling sad or scared?'. Are people's answers the same? What about the people who help? The person leading the activity could ask everyone who makes sure that they're OK, and who helps them to look after their mental and physical health.

Just like a green first aid kit can help with some things (for example, a cut finger) but not others (for example, a broken arm), a mental health first aid kit might not help every time. If the feelings are particularly bad or last a long time, people might need to ask someone for more support. They should talk to someone they trust, or their GP – just like they would for a physical injury.
3. Everyone should take their mental health first aid kits home and add to them. People could include pictures of their friends and family, positive quotes, toys, paper and pencils, stress toys, or other trinkets.

Note:

This might be the first time that someone's explored the issue of mental health or thought about speaking to a GP about it. It's OK if people don't know the answers to one (or all) of the questions – they don't need to worry. The questions can be tricky to answer, so no one should feel embarrassed for not knowing.

The aim of the questions is just to highlight that while we often know what to do if someone's physically hurt (and how to describe it, for example, to a doctor), things aren't always as straightforward when it comes to mental health.