

Mental Wellness Basics Offline Lessons



What is Mental Wellness Basics?

Mental Wellness Basics is the first comprehensive, no-cost digital program designed to help educators foster mental wellness in their classrooms and equip students with lifelong skills to promote positive mental health. The 4 self-paced digital lessons can be easily integrated into any classroom setting.

Mental health is an important element of total health and wellness. Research shows that equipping students with knowledge and tools such as cognitive-behavioral skills not only improves their ability to deal with stressful situations but it also lays the groundwork for preventing significant mental health issues in the future.

By demystifying and defining what mental wellness is, modeling and reinforcing positive behavior, our Mental Wellness Basics course blends evidence informed content with engaging digital activities. This online program teaches students the importance of paying attention to their mental health and the impact of stigma, reinforces the difference between mental wellness and mental illness, helps students understand specific mental illnesses, and provides strategies and steps students can use to seek help when necessary.

Each of the four lessons scaffold students' knowledge to build a comprehensive understanding of what mental wellness is and how to achieve it. Interactive scenarios and digital stories allow students to face stressful situations and manage their mental health effectively while learning how to identify warning signs and how to get help for yourself and for others.



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Key Details

Course Length

4 Lessons, approximately 10-15 minutes each

Target Audience

Grade 8-10

Subject Fit

Health

Standard Alignment

National Health Education Standards (NHES); State Academic Health Standards

Topic Areas

1. Mental Health Basics
2. Understanding Mental Health Disorders
3. Healthy Coping Skills
4. Getting Help

Course Overview

- Lessons:
The course consists of 4 online modules, each lasting approximately 10-15 minutes. Students must first complete the Introduction module entitled “Mental Health Basics,” after completion of the first module, students may complete the remaining modules in any order.
- Assessments:
Each lesson consists of five pre-assessment questions and ten post-assessment questions to measure knowledge gain.
- Offline Lessons:
You can extend the digital program with this package of robust offline lessons, discussion questions, and classroom activities.

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How to Use Mental Wellness Basics Offline Lessons

Mental Wellness Basics is accompanied by 8 offline extension lessons, discussion questions, and classroom activities that extend the concepts in each lesson. Each offline lesson can take approximately 25-75 minutes to complete.

The offline lessons are scaffolded, building off of the digital lessons and extending learning into classroom exercises. Mental health is a topic that many of your students have likely been impacted by in some way. As such it is important to be mindful and sensitive to this fact as you engage in the exercises contained in this guide. Conduct follow up discussions as needed, and check in with students about how they are processing and understanding the topics and issues raised in the digital course. Additionally, ensure that you have a resource to direct students to in the event that they would benefit from additional support. This could include a school counselor, one of the resources listed in the digital course, or another individual who has been identified to be able to support students in this capacity.

Digital Lesson	Discussion Questions	Discussion Activity	Extension Lesson
Mental Health Basics	Lesson 1: Debrief and check for understanding with students after completing the digital lesson. (25 mins)	Lesson 1.1: Activity to draft plans to strengthen personal mental health. (45 mins)	Lesson 1.2: Lesson on risk and protective factors and the need for resilience. Digital addiction is addressed. (45 mins)
Understanding Mental Health Disorders	Lesson 2: Debrief and check for understanding with students after completing the digital lesson. (25 mins)	Lesson 2.1: Activity to destigmatize mental disorders by comparing to physical ailments. (45 mins)	Lesson 2.2 Research lesson on mental disorders, finding reputable sources and avoiding stigmatizing language. (75 mins)
Healthy Coping Skills	Lesson 3: Debrief and check for understanding with students after completing the digital lesson. (25 mins)	Lesson 3.1: Activity to understand the positive and negative effects of stress. (45 mins)	Lesson 3.2: Extension Lesson to reframe negative “self-talk.” (45 mins)
Getting Help	Lesson 4: Debrief and check for understanding with students after completing the digital lesson. (25 mins)	Lesson 4.1: Activity to understand and identify stigma. (45 min)	Lesson 4.2: Recognizing and Combating Stigma: A PSA Project. (45 min)

LESSON 1

Introduction to Mental Health

🕒 25min Prerequisite: None

Discussion Questions:

- What did you learn about mental health?
- What does stress feel like for you?
Can you give an example of positive or negative stress either in your life or examples that you have seen?
- What can you do to be mentally healthy? (See Lesson 1.1 reference page)
- What were some of the issues students were dealing with in the module and how could they improve their situations?

Student Experiences

Refer to student experiences (below) from the digital Mental Health Basics lesson to serve as examples or as checks for understanding about how they could deal with their situations.

Brian

- ⓘ Brian got into an argument with his parents this morning. He's been thinking about their conversation so much that it's made it hard to pay attention in his classes all day.
- ⊖ Brian's emotions are negatively impacting his day. He may be hurt, angry, or confused, but if he works on his *emotions* he can name what he's feeling and that can help him understand what's causing them. Once he understands what he is feeling, he can start to take action to feel better. This may include sharing his feelings with friends, which could strengthen his *relationships*.

Matias

- ⓘ Matias is feeling exhausted from working a part-time job and trying to keep up with school. He got assigned detention today for sleeping in class.
- ⊖ One area that Matias could work on is getting more sleep. By building healthy *habits* he may be better able to deal with his demanding schedule. To get more sleep, try deep breathing, meditation, reading, listening to calming music, and turning off phones and video games an hour before going to bed.

ⓘ Issues that they faced ⊖ How they could deal with issues

Student Experiences

Zara

- ❗ Zara is a new student at school who feels lonely and isolated. She thinks everyone already has friends and she's scared she doesn't fit in.
- ⊖ Making new friends can be hard, but one thing Zara could try is building new *relationships*. She could start small by reaching out to classmates for advice or to work together on assignments. She could also work on her positive *mindset* by reminding herself that she has a lot to offer. Making good friends can take time, but when she treats herself with compassion, she may feel more confident.

Imani

- ❗ A couple of Imani's classmates have been targeting her on social media. It's made her feel so bad that she's been coming in late a lot and some days avoids school altogether.
- ⊖ Imani can improve her *relationships* by telling family, friends, teachers, and/or counselors what is happening in her life. She can also work on a positive *mindset* by reminding herself of her strengths, that she doesn't deserve what is happening to her, and that this situation won't last forever.

Jennifer

- ❗ Jennifer is juggling honors courses and sports while trying to live up to her parents' high expectations. She regularly skips lunch to catch up on school work.
- ⊖ To be mentally healthy, Jennifer should strengthen her healthy *habits* by eating well-balanced meals and healthy snacks throughout the day. She should also work on her *relationships* and *emotions* by reaching out to friends and family for support and to share her feelings. If she understands that grades are not as important as her mental health, she'll gain a more positive *mindset*.

Sarah

- ❗ Sarah recently had a death in the family and dealing with her emotions has been really hard. She doesn't want anyone to know how upset she is, so she tries to be funny and outgoing so everyone thinks she's okay. She leaves school everyday with a headache and doesn't know why.
- ⊖ Sarah feels like no one understands her. By reaching out to a friend or trusted adult to share her feelings, she could strengthen her *relationships* and realize she's not alone. Sarah could work on her *emotions* by naming what she's feeling and not hiding them.

We encourage you to ask students to write a reflection on what they learned after discussing.

- ❗ Issues that they faced
- ⊖ How they could deal with issues

LESSON 1.1

Strengthening Mental Health Foundations

🕒 45min **Prerequisite:** Mental Health Basics Lesson in Mental Wellness Basics by EVERFI

Objectives

- Define mental health
- List behaviors that can maintain and contribute to positive mental health
- Evaluate the implementation of the four foundations of mental health in your own life
- Make a plan to improve and strengthen mental health foundations

Materials

- Pencils
- Discussion Handout
- Teacher Reference Page
- Additional Paper for individual plans

Notes (Differentiation, student groupings, additional questions, etc.)

Opening

🕒 4 min

Format: Partner discussion, class share

Discussion Prompt:

- Did your idea of what mental health is change after completing the module?
- What do you understand now that you didn't before?
- Did anything surprise you?

New Learning

🕒 5 min

Format: Class discussion

Inform students that in today's lesson they will be making a plan to support and strengthen their own mental health.

Ask students if they are aware that they can improve their mental health and also ask how that might be done.

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Activity

🕒 20 min

Format: Write personal definitions and plans, class share

Write personal definitions, share out with the class:

- Have students write their definition of mental health on the handout and be prepared to share with class.
- Before proceeding, be sure that students have some form of the definition that includes mental health as a state of being that enables one to overcome life's challenges.
- Since it deals with personal challenges have students write (what they feel comfortable sharing) their challenges on the handout to help frame the subsequent discussion around how students can handle such challenges.

Discuss in groups, share out with the class:

- Tee up next activity by stating that the foundations of positive mental health are the four foundations of mental health. Have students discuss their recollections of the four foundations of mental health from the online course and fill in handout with what they remember (see Teacher Reference Page for full text). Discuss findings with the class until students have a clear understanding of the four foundations of mental health.

Write personal plans for supporting their own mental health:

- On a separate sheet of paper, have students draft a plan for how they will focus on their foundations of mental health to deal with the challenges that they face. (See examples on Teacher Reference Page).

Students share their plans for supporting mental health. This can be done as a group or anonymously. Discuss how the actions taken will support mental health and make it possible to deal with life's challenges.

Discussion

🕒 10 min

Format: Class share

Remind students that mental health is like physical health and there are things that you can do to strengthen and maintain positive states of mental health.

Closing

🕒 1 min

Format: Formalize learning with the whole group

Look over personal plan (or look over partner's) and assess the impact of the plan and possible effectiveness using the assessment rubric.

Evaluation

🕒 5 min

Format: Access individually



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Learners needing support

Learners ready for extensions

Notes for next time



Strengthening Mental Health Foundations

STUDENT HANDOUT: LESSON 1.1

Name:

Date:

What is your definition of mental health?

What challenges do you have in your life this year?

Positive Mindset

Healthy Habits

Positive Relationships

Emotional Awareness

Strengthening Mental Health Foundations

ASSESSMENT PAGE: LESSON 1.1

Copy and cut a half sheet for each student. Have students evaluate their own plan and turn in together or hand in only the assessment based on level of privacy desired.

Name:

Date:

1. Will this plan help with your mental health now? Explain:

2. Will this plan will help with your mental health in the future? Explain:

How effective will this plan be in helping you overcome your challenges?
(Put an X on the scale below to indicate how effective it might be)



Effective



Somewhat Effective



Not very Effective

Name:

Date:

1. Will this plan help with your mental health now? Explain:

2. Will this plan will help with your mental health in the future? Explain:

Strengthening Mental Health Foundations

TEACHER REFERENCE PAGE: LESSON 1.1

Definition of Mental Health (as it appears in Mental Wellness Basics)

Mental health is a state of well-being that helps you deal with life’s challenges. It includes your thoughts, emotions and behaviors.

Mental Health Foundations

Positive Mindset

Believing that good things are possible can improve your overall well-being. For example, when you believe that you deserve to be happy and that you have the ability to overcome challenges it can help you tackle challenges with confidence.

Healthy Habits

Eating a healthy and balanced diet, staying active everyday, and getting plenty of sleep are just a few things that can help you deal with stress. When your body is healthy and well rested, it reduces tension and helps keep you centered and calm.

Positive Relationships

One of the most important things you can do for your mental health is build meaningful connections with others. Focus on relationships that support you and allow you to be open and honest about who you are. These may be with family members, friends, or people you meet through school or community groups.

Emotional Awareness

Understanding your own emotions is an important step in staying healthy. If you notice that your emotions are out of sync with how you want to feel, think about how they’re connected to your thoughts and environment. Emotions can’t always be controlled, but noticing what is causing them is a great first step in helping you work through them.

Example of Personal Plans for Strengthening and Supporting Mental Health



My biggest challenge is keeping up with all my school work.

I plan to deal with this challenge by supporting my *Healthy Habits* by getting enough sleep and eating right. I also connect with my friends to study or work together so that the class work does not separate me from them and also helps with getting things done. This will help me keep my Positive Relationships and support my mental health.

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