

TALKING ABOUT MENTAL HEALTH TO ADOLESCENTS (11—16 YEARS)

Tips for Educators

Here are some points and scripts you can use to talk about mental health to your students. There are some questions for reflection and an exercise to practice with your students. Encourage them to reflect and share.

Introduction

"Hello everyone. Today, we're going to discuss something very important: mental health. Just like we take care of our physical health by eating right and staying active, it's crucial to take care of our mental and emotional well-being too. Mental health affects how we think, feel, and handle stress."

Understanding Mental Health

"Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It influences how we deal with challenges, relate to others, and make choices. As you're growing up, you might also see your body, your friendships, your relationship with your parents and your feelings changing. Everyone experiences a range of emotions, and it's normal to feel stressed, anxious, or down sometimes. What's important is how we manage these feelings."

Reflection Question: Why do you think mental health is important?

Why Mental Health Matters

"Taking care of your mental health is important because it helps you handle stress, build positive relationships, and make good decisions. Just as you would see a doctor for physical health issues, it's important to seek help for mental health challenges."

Here some ideas on how you can take care of your Mental Health

- **Talk About Your Feelings:** "It's important to talk about how you're feeling, whether it's with a friend, family member, or counsellor. Expressing yourself can help you feel understood and supported."
- **Manage Stress:** "Find healthy ways to manage stress, such as through hobbies, sports, or relaxation techniques. Exercise, mindfulness, or even just taking a walk can help clear your mind."
- **Get Enough Sleep:** "Good sleep is essential for mental well-being. Aim for 8-10 hours of sleep each night. A consistent sleep routine can help you feel more balanced and less stressed."
- **Maintain a Healthy Diet:** "Eating a balanced diet can affect how you feel. Try to include a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains in your meals, and stay hydrated."



- **Set Realistic Goals:** "Setting small, achievable goals can help you stay motivated and feel a sense of accomplishment. Break tasks into manageable steps and celebrate your progress."
- **Manage your electronic use:** "The internet can be a fun place with YouTube, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat, Discord and video games. It can help you connect with your friends, learn new skills and provide entertainment. How you spend time on your electronics and for how long can have huge impact on your mental health. Some things to try are setting a couple of hours a day as screen free time, keeping meal time and sleep time screen free, limiting your notifications. If spend time on electronics is making you feel worried, sad or angry -it's a sign that you need to change what you're viewing."
- **Pay attention to how you talk to yourself:** "When you face a difficulty with your studies, friends or parents, you might tell yourself- no one loves me, I am a loser, I am ugly. Talking like this about ourselves can make us feel hopeless, helpless and discouraged. Pay attention to how you speak to yourself, encourage yourself how you would a close friend. Try telling yourself I am capable, I have strengths, I am feeling stressed right now, I can get help for this".
- **Support each other:** "Let's work together to create a supportive and understanding environment. Be there for each other, and remember that everyone's experience is different."



Reflection Question: What are some other ideas to take care of your mental health?

Conclusion

"Taking care of your mental health is as important as taking care of your physical health. If you're feeling overwhelmed, it's important to reach out for help. Talk to a school counsellor, therapist, or trusted adult. Asking for help is a sign of strength, not weakness. Your well-being is important, and it's okay to seek support when you need it."

"Do you have any questions or anything you'd like to discuss about mental health?"

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