

A MENTAL HEALTH VIDEO RESOURCE FOR SCHOOLS

Stop Wondering, Start Knowing



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Developed by...

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About Foundry

Foundry empowers young people ages 12–24 to lead healthy lives by providing easy access to tools and strategies for wellness. Foundry is working to transform access to care through a province-wide network of centres and online resources. Foundry centres and foundrybc.ca bring together a variety of resources in one place to help BC’s young people and families find the support they need, when and where they need it. Foundrybc.ca, powered by BC Children’s Hospital, complements the Foundry provincial network of centres, which is supported by a team based at Providence Health Care. Visit foundrybc.ca for more information.

Acknowledgments

Project Managers

Nicole Chovil, PhD, *Coordinator, Projects and Initiatives, Child, Youth & Young Adult Mental Health & Substance Use Services, Fraser Health*

Michelle Cianfrone, MPH, *Project Manager, Health Literacy, BC Children's Hospital, An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority*

Meagan Colenutt, MPH, *Project Manager, Health Literacy, BC Children's Hospital, An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority*

Charlene King, MPH, *Project Manager, Health Literacy, BC Children's Hospital, An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority*

Kimberley Korf-Uzan, MPH, *Project Manager, Health Literacy, BC Children's Hospital, An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority*

Special thanks to the advisory group members for their invaluable feedback and support in the development of this resource

Julie Collette, F.O.R.C.E. Parent in Residence, Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

Alexis Gunderson, Teacher, School District 57

Jennica Hague, MPH Practicum Student, Health Literacy, BC Children's Hospital, An agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Sarah Irving, F.O.R.C.E. Youth in Residence, Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

Dave MacKenzie, School Counsellor, School District 22

Brent Seal, F.O.R.C.E. Youth in Residence, Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre

Natalie Sorensen, Outreach Wellness and Learning Teacher and School Counsellor, School District 68

Theresa Temlett, School Counsellor, School District 43

Sandra Teves, Mental Health Educator, Speak Up Mental Health Literacy Education, Fraser Health Child, Youth & Young Adult Mental Health and Substance Use Services

Linda Wowk, Mental Health Educator, SPEAK UP Mental Health Literacy Education, Fraser Health Child, Youth & Young Adult Mental Health and Substance Use Services

Point Blank Creative, for video production, animation & design – pointblankcreative.ca

And special thanks to the courageous youth who volunteered to share their stories.

Introduction

Dear Educator,

Welcome to ***Stop Wondering, Start Knowing***.

Mental health is becoming a key topic in education, but it is a topic that is not always easy to discuss.

Stop Wondering, Start Knowing is designed to help you and your students to:

- Better understand and be more aware of mental health
- Recognize the early signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges
- Reflect and share ideas about mental health
- Help decrease the stigma around mental health
- Learn about resources available for support

It is important that mental health challenges are recognized and dealt with at an early stage to prevent them from getting worse. You can have a major impact on how your students learn to deal with stressors and challenges by using this resource and encouraging discussion about mental health in the safety of your classroom.

The resource consists of a facilitation guide and five short videos (18 minutes total) that are connected to each section of the guide. The videos include an introduction to mental health, three interviews with youth who have experienced mental health challenges, and a wrap up video. The powerful and personal interviews feature real British Columbian youth sharing what it was like to experience and overcome mental health challenges, and how they manage their mental health now.

This resource is based on best practices and was developed in consultation with mental health professionals, school professionals and youth. Preliminary evaluation results show improvements in students' mental health literacy and attitudes towards mental health and substance use.

Thank you for your commitment to raising awareness about mental health in your school community. If you have any questions about how to use this resource, or if you want more information about mental health resources and services for youth, please contact **webinfo@foundrybc.ca**.

Sincerely,

The ***Stop Wondering, Start Knowing*** Resource Development Team

How to Use This Guide

The Stop Wondering, Start Knowing resource is flexible and may be used during one or multiple classroom sessions. It is designed for use in grades 8-10, but it can be used for other groups at the discretion of the facilitator. There are additional activities included to extend students' learning about mental health.

We strongly recommend that you use the resource in its entirety to ensure the best learning for your students. This resource is an introduction to the topic. You can find more information on mental health and substance use challenges and disorders on the foundrybc.ca website and through the links available at foundrybc.ca/schools.

As the facilitator, your main role is to facilitate discussion among students, to encourage and help them to actively reflect on the videos and learn from each other. Other than becoming familiar with these materials, no preparation time is required. You do not need to have any background knowledge or expertise in mental health.

The lesson plans in this guide include:

- Learning Objectives
- Key Messages
- Materials List
- Video Links
- Discussion Questions and Answer Guide
- Additional Information
- Optional Activities

We recommend that you inform fellow teachers and school counsellors that you will be using this resource so they can support students who may have questions or concerns afterwards. You may also share the memo on page 30 with parents and families.

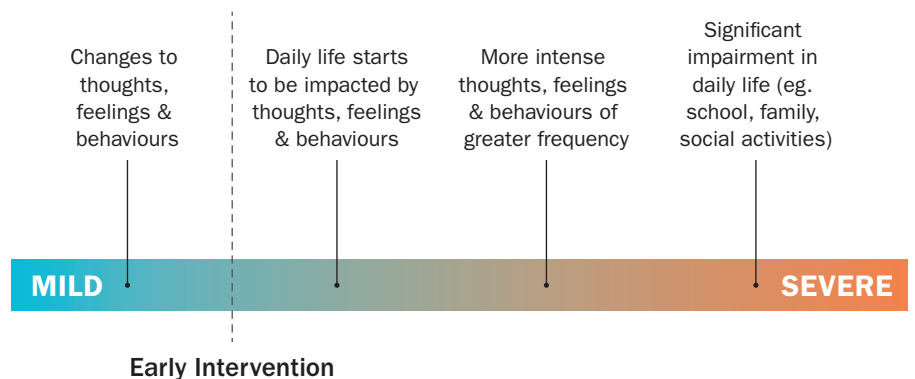
There are many mental health and substance use resources available to support educators and youth. For lists of recommended resources, please visit foundrybc.ca/schools. We encourage you to review the resource lists and make print copies available to students and staff in your school.

Mental Health 101

Mental health is defined in many ways but usually refers to our capacity to feel, think and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. Mental health is an important part of our overall health and can range from a state of positive mental well-being to a state of disabling thoughts, feelings and behaviours. At any moment in time, our mental health is somewhere on this continuum.

Mental health challenges are changes to our thoughts, feelings and behaviours (referred to as signs and symptoms) that affect our ability to function well. These can range from small changes in how we feel, think and act to changes that are more intense, severe and of longer duration. When the symptoms last for long periods and begin to impact a person's daily life, the person may be diagnosed with a mental health disorder. Some examples of mental health disorders are depression, anxiety disorders, psychosis and eating disorders. Mental illness is a general term that covers the wide range of mental health disorders.

MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES CONTINUUM



Source: Healthy Minds, Healthy Youth: SpeakUp Presentation, Child, Youth and Young Adult Mental Health and Substance Use Services, Fraser Health in partnership with Coast Capital Savings, 2013.

Most of us, at some point in our lives, will be touched either personally with a mental health challenge, or have family, friends or colleagues who experience challenges. There are many reasons that people develop mental health disorders. Scientific studies suggest that mental health disorders involve biochemical changes in the brain and other biological factors, such as genetics. We also know that psychological, social and environmental factors can also affect our mental well-being.

NOTE

When mental health is the focus of a class, the topic may trigger emotional reactions in students who may be struggling or have someone close to them who is struggling. You may be someone a student turns to for help. You can support your students by listening to them, connecting them with a school counsellor, or encouraging them to visit foundrybc.ca.

Mental health and substance use challenges are the most common health issues for young people in their teens and early 20s. Most mental health disorders emerge during childhood or adolescence. It is critical to help youth better understand mental health so that mental health challenges are recognized and dealt with effectively.

Early intervention for mental health and substance use challenges can:

- Prevent mental health challenges from getting worse
- Decrease the risk of more serious problems
- Reduce recovery time
- Reduce the burden of illness

Many youth do not recognize the early signs of mental health challenges or know where to go for help. The **Stop Wondering, Start Knowing** resource is designed to help youth become more comfortable talking about mental health and to reduce fear and stigma about mental illness. With better understanding and the right kind of support, youth and their families can successfully navigate their way through periods of poor mental health.



Overview of Lesson Plan



Section One: What is Mental Health?

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand what mental health is and why it is important to everyone

Video 1: What is Mental Health? (1:08 min.)

This video was filmed at the 2014 Balancing Our Minds conference. Youth and mental health experts were asked the question: “What is mental health?” The video shows that people define mental health in different ways, but that most of those definitions are part of a “wellness continuum”.

Section Two: Recognizing Mental Health Challenges and Achieving Mental Wellness

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To be able to identify early signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges
- To be able to identify positive strategies that support one’s mental health

Videos 2 (5:07 min.), 3 (4:37 min.) and 4 (4:32 min.): Interviews

Maddy’s Story: Body image and anxiety

Maddy had a very difficult time during puberty. She was paralyzed by anxiety and insecure about her body and the changes she was going through. School, violence at home and emotional abuse were all too much for a young girl to face alone. With the help of counsellors and others, Maddy was able to reach out for help and start talking about her challenges.

Alex’s Story: Anxiety and stress

Alex didn’t have serious mental health challenges in his early teens, but when he moved to Canada from Iran in grade 11 he started to struggle. Things got especially difficult when he started university. Alex was under intense pressure to succeed in a program that he wasn’t passionate about. Also, he was still adjusting to living in a new country without his friends and family. He began to have panic attacks for the first time in his life.

The panic attacks were a wake-up call for Alex. After he learned what a panic attack was he looked for resources to support his mental wellness. Alex worked with a professional counsellor, learned more about mental health and found a better social circle. He began to understand how his mind and body are connected, and how he can take a more active role in creating a happy life for himself.

Natasha's Story: Depression and substance use

In her early teens, Natasha felt alone and isolated from her family. She became depressed and started to abuse alcohol and other drugs. Natasha didn't have the skills to deal with depression, and people around her said that ups and downs were just a normal part of growing up.

A counsellor and some mindfulness practices helped Natasha out of her deep depression. Her life didn't change in an instant, but medication, caring medical professionals and family members helped her along her journey to wellness one day at a time.

Section Three: Talk and Take Action

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand the importance of talking about mental health
- To have some basic strategies for helping a friend who may be struggling
- To know how to find mental health resources and supports

Video 5: Wrap Up (2:17 min.)

In this video, Natasha, Maddy, Alex and two other youth, Nadia and Connor, move from talking about their stories, to sharing some advice. These youth have overcome mental health stigma and have many insights they share with the audience. They make suggestions about what students can do to help themselves and others, such as talking openly about mental health, asking others how they are doing, and taking the self-checks on foundrybc.ca.

Materials

- Discussion Questions Worksheet (p. 11)
- Resources for Youth handout (available at foundrybc.ca/schools)

Optional Materials:

- Coloured pens and blank paper
- Sticky notes
- Problem Solving and Goal Setting Worksheets
(available at foundrybc.ca/schools)



Discussion Questions

While you are watching each video, think about the following discussion questions. There will be time to discuss these questions with the class at the end of each video.

VIDEO 1: WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

1. How would you define mental health?

VIDEO 2: MADDY'S STORY

1. What are some changes that Maddy noticed in herself when she was struggling with body image and anxiety, or that others might have noticed in her?

2. How does talking about her mental health challenges help Maddy?

3. How does Maddy take care of her mental health? What do you do to take care of your own mental health?

4. Maddy talks about negative comments that were made about her body. What else might affect how we feel about our body size or shape?

VIDEO 3: ALEX'S STORY

1. What signs and symptoms did Alex experience when he was having panic attacks?

2. What supports did Alex access when he was struggling? How were these supports helpful for Alex? Who are some adults a young person could turn to if they wanted to get support?

3. As Alex experienced, school can be stressful. What are other possible sources of stress?

4. Alex describes a mind-body connection. In what ways can you take care of both your physical and mental health?

VIDEO 4: NATASHA'S STORY

1. What were some changes that Natasha noticed in herself when she was struggling with a depressed mood, or that others might have noticed in her?

2. What other changes might you notice in a friend or family member who is struggling with a mental health challenge?

3. Natasha did a number of positive things to keep herself feeling well when she was dealing with her depressed mood. What were some of these coping tools?

4. What supports might Natasha need in order to stay away from negative influences (for example, parties, certain friends, substances, etc.)?

VIDEO 5: WRAP UP

1. What might have been different for Natasha, Alex and Maddy if they sought help earlier?

2. What are some key learnings and messages that you are taking away from this lesson?

NOTE:

All of the youth in the videos have dealt with serious mental health challenges. They are examples of how people can experience significant challenges, but can recover and go on to live full, meaningful lives. They chose to be part of this resource so that other youth can learn what to look for and what they can do to prevent mental health challenges from getting to the point where significant professional help is needed.

The videos show how important it is to take action early. You will learn about mental health and the changes that indicate the beginning of a possible challenge. If caught early, these challenges can often be dealt with by using some simple self-care resources. In other situations, professional help may be needed.

SECTION ONE

What is Mental Health?



Learning Objectives

- To understand what mental health is and why it is important to everyone

Key Messages

Mental health affects us all.

Materials

- Discussion Questions Worksheet (p. 11)
- (Optional) Coloured pens and blank pieces of paper for each group of students

Lesson Plan

Before starting, it's a good idea to create a "community agreement" and "parking lot" with the class on the board or a flip chart. Post them during the lesson.

The "community agreement" is a list of rules made by the students to guide the discussion and help create a safe place for sharing (e.g. do not interrupt, listen, be non-judgmental, wait your turn, etc.). Ask students what they think should be included here.

The "parking lot" is a place for students or the teacher to write down important things that come up during the lesson that can't be discussed immediately. It's a way for students to feel heard without taking the lesson off track.

Introduce the topic of this lesson to your students.

Mental health is something we generally don't talk too much about. Ask the students what comes to mind when they hear the term mental health. Why do they think many people don't talk about it? Ask your students to take a minute to think about these questions and share their thoughts with a neighbour.

Distribute the Discussion Questions Worksheet to students. Encourage them to think about each question and make notes as they watch the videos. An answer guide is available on page 25.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Collaborative Drawing Exercise

Separate the class into small groups. Give each group a coloured felt pen and blank sheet of paper and ask one person from each group to draw what mental health looks like to them. After 30–60 seconds of drawing ask students to pass their paper to the person beside them, who will then build on the illustration. This continues until everyone in the group has drawn on the paper. The last person to add to the drawing explains the finished work to the class. The drawings could be used to make one large class poster titled “What is Mental Health?”. Subsequent activities can also add to this poster, which could become a graphic recording of the lesson discussions and activities.

▶ PLAY VIDEO 1: *What is Mental Health?*



DISCUSS:

1. How would you define mental health?

Additional Information

There are many ways to define mental health and to different people, it can mean a lot of different things. Mental health generally refers to how we think and feel and how we deal with events in everyday life. It also relates to our ability to handle change, significant life events and stress. Poor mental health affects our ability to cope with and manage our lives, and can decrease our ability to enjoy and participate fully in life.

It helps to think of mental health on a continuum that ranges from positive well-being at one end to extreme poor mental health at the other end. All of us will be somewhere on the continuum at any one time. Our mental health can fluctuate and is affected by what goes on in our lives and how we take care of ourselves. We all have good and bad days, and positive and negative feelings. Mental health challenges can range from mild to severe, from temporary setbacks to longer, ongoing problems.

Mental health is part of a person’s overall health. This means there is no health without mental health. Our mental health is a vital part of all of us, in our day-to-day lives and across our entire lifespan. Mental health is an important factor in how we cope with everyday life. Good mental health helps us to stay balanced, to enjoy life and cope with everyday stress and negative life events.

SECTION TWO

Recognizing Mental Health Challenges and Achieving Mental Wellness



Learning Objectives

- To be able to identify early signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges
- To be able to identify positive strategies that support one's mental health

Key Messages

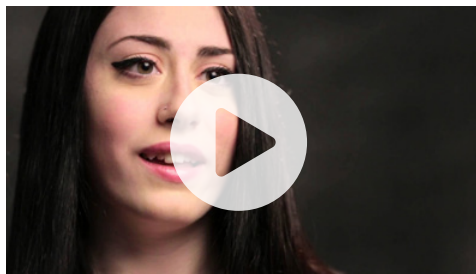
It is important to recognize when thoughts, feelings and behaviours are becoming too much to handle, and to identify the early signs and symptoms of mental health challenges. There are actions we can take to improve our mental health and different ways to cope with a mental health challenge.

Materials

- Discussion Questions Worksheet
- (Optional) Sticky notes
- (Optional) Problem Solving and Goal Setting Worksheets - available at foundrybc.ca/schools

Lesson Plan

▶ PLAY VIDEO 2: *Maddy's Story*



💬 DISCUSS:

1. What are some changes that Maddy noticed in herself when she was struggling with body image and anxiety, or that others might have noticed in her?
2. How does talking about her mental health challenges help Maddy?
3. How does Maddy take care of her mental health? What do you do to take care of your own mental health?

SECTION TWO Recognizing Mental Health Challenges (continued)

NOTE:

All of the youth in the videos have dealt with serious mental health challenges. They are examples of how people who have experienced significant challenges, can recover and go on to live full, meaningful lives. They chose to be part of this resource so that other youth can learn what to look for and what they can do to prevent mental health and substance use challenges from getting to the point where significant professional help is needed.

The videos show how important it is to take action early. Students will learn about mental health and substance use and the changes that may indicate the beginning of a challenge. If caught early, these challenges can often be dealt with by using some simple self-care resources. In other cases, professional help may be needed.

4. Maddy talks about negative comments that were made about her body. What else might affect how we feel about our body size or shape?

▶ PLAY VIDEO 3: Alex's Story



💬 DISCUSS:

1. What signs and symptoms did Alex experience when he was having panic attacks?
2. What supports did Alex access when he was struggling? How were these supports helpful for Alex? Who are some adults a young person could turn to if they wanted to get support?
3. As Alex experienced, school can be stressful. What are other possible sources of stress?
4. Alex describes a mind-body connection. In what ways can you take care of both your physical and mental health?

▶ PLAY VIDEO 4: Natasha's Story



💬 DISCUSS:

1. What were some changes that Natasha noticed in herself when she was struggling with a depressed mood, or that others might have noticed in her?
2. What other changes might you notice in a friend or family member who is struggling with a mental health challenge?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

***Identifying Signs and Symptoms
and Strategies for Promoting
Mental Wellness***

Provide students with sticky notes or small pieces of paper. Ask them to write down one sign or symptom of a mental health challenge on each piece of paper.

Ask the class to share what they have, and how that symptom can impact a person's life. Then post them on the board or flip chart, grouping similar responses together.

Next, ask students to write down strategies for promoting mental well-being, one per piece of paper. Ask the class to share what they have, and then post on the board or flip chart, grouping similar responses together.

Alternatively, these can be added to the "What is mental health?" poster (created during the optional activity in Section 1) with headings titled "What can mental health challenges look and feel like?" and "Achieving mental wellness."

3. Natasha did a number of positive things to keep herself feeling well when she was dealing with her depressed mood. What were some of these coping tools?
4. What supports might Natasha need in order to stay away from negative influences (e.g. parties, certain friends, substances, etc.)?

Additional Information

Signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges

Changes in how you think, feel or behave can indicate that you may be developing a mental health challenge, especially if the changes are troublesome and you can't seem to get back to your regular self.

Some examples of these changes are:

- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities
- Feeling numb or empty
- Problems sleeping; staying in bed all day long
- Ongoing tiredness and lack of energy
- Too much energy, a high mood with rapid shifts of rage or sadness
- Big changes in weight or appetite
- Disruptive or aggressive behaviour
- Withdrawal from friends and activities
- Excessive concern about social embarrassment or humiliation
- Extreme worry about routine life events/activities, more days than not
- Relying on alcohol or substances to help you escape from worries or problems
- Problems at school, work or in your relationships as a result of your drinking or substance use
- Thinking that if you lose some weight you will be happier
- Frequently going on diets
- Hearing, seeing, tasting, smelling or feeling things that are not there
- Family or friends are very concerned that you're not your usual self

These thoughts, feelings and behaviours can vary in intensity, from mild to severe. They may last for only a short period or continue over longer periods of time. If they are distressing, or continue for more than a short while, you should take action. This could include talking to a trusted adult or checking out the self-checks on foundrybc.ca to get a better idea of what's going on.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Problem Solving and Goal Setting

Distribute and discuss the Problem Solving worksheet and/or the Goal Setting worksheet. (available at foundrybc.ca/schools)

Tips for Good Mental Health

To keep your mind healthy, it is also important to take care of your physical health. The way you eat, sleep and stay active can have a big effect on your mental health. Healthy routines can improve self-esteem, affect the way you think and make it easier for you to deal with stress. Social support from friends and family can also affect our mental health. Here are some basic strategies for achieving mental wellness:

- Eat well
- Be physically active every day
- Get enough sleep
- Find something you enjoy that helps you relax (getting outside, doing art, being creative, reading, meditation or mindfulness exercises)
- Take time to have fun
- Connect with friends, family, and other social supports
- Help others, give back, volunteer
- Develop good problem solving skills and goal setting skills
- Talk with someone and get help when you need it



SECTION THREE

Talk and Take Action



Learning Objectives

- To understand the importance of talking about mental health
- To have some basic strategies for helping a friend who may be struggling
- To know how to access mental health resources and supports

Key Messages

It is important to talk about mental health. Most mental health challenges begin during the teen and young adult years. It is important to seek help when needed, and know what resources and supports are available.

Materials:

- Discussion Questions Worksheet
- Print copies of Resources for Youth handout
(available at foundrybc.ca/schools)

Lesson Plan

▶ PLAY VIDEO 5: *Wrap Up*



🗨️ DISCUSS:

1. What might have been different for Natasha, Alex and Maddy if they sought help earlier?
2. What are some key learnings and messages that you are taking away from this lesson?

OPTIONAL ACTIVITY

Stand Up If You ...

Begin with all students sitting at their desks. Ask them to stand up if the following statement is true for them, look around the class, and discuss.

1. **Stand up if you think it is sometimes hard to talk about mental health.** Why is it so hard to talk about? What would make it easier to talk about mental health?
 2. **Stand up if you think it is important to talk about mental health.** Why? What can be done to prevent and address stigma around mental health?
 3. **Stand up if you know where you can go for help or who you would turn to if you feel like you're not doing well.** Would anyone be willing to share? Any other ideas where you could go?
 4. **Stand up if you would reach out to a friend who appears to be struggling.** What are some strategies you might use to support them, what can you say or do?
-

ACTIVITY:

Instruct students to turn to the person next to them and discuss how they might talk to a friend they are worried about. After a few minutes, ask students to share their ideas. Some suggested answers are listed below.

- How would you start the conversation?
- What might be helpful things that you could say to your friend if they were struggling?
- What are things you could do to support your friend?

HOW WOULD YOU START THE CONVERSATION?

- Use “I” messages (e.g. I notice, I’m concerned, I feel...when I see, etc.)
- Start by sharing with your friend what you have noticed and why it concerns you. Have this conversation in a comfortable, familiar but private place where the two of you can talk without any interruptions.

WHAT MIGHT BE HELPFUL THINGS THAT YOU COULD SAY TO YOUR FRIEND IF THEY WERE STRUGGLING?

- Ask them “what do you need from me?”
- Tell them that no problem is too big or too small to be significant
- Let them know that you are there to support them in whatever way they need
- Ask them how they are doing (be specific)

WHAT ARE THINGS YOU COULD DO TO SUPPORT YOUR FRIEND?

- Let them know you are there for them
- Stay connected
- Show them that you care – what can you do to show you care?
- Connect them to a caring adult
- Tell a caring adult that you are concerned
- Listen – what can you do to show someone you are listening?
- Ask them what they need
- Connect them to foundrybc.ca

Please refer to foundrybc.ca/friends for more information about how to support a friend.

Distribute Resources for Youth handout (available at foundrybc.ca/schools).

Homework

Ask students to explore foundrybc.ca to learn more about:

- Signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges and disorders
- Self-care resources
- How to get support
- How to support a friend

Suggest they also complete one of the foundrybc.ca self-checks.

Additional Information

Let your students know that it can be hard to open up about mental health challenges and that there are times when problems seem too big to sort out on their own. If they're feeling like this, then it's good to talk with someone about what's going on. It's often best to talk to an adult, because he or she is likely to know more about services and supports in the community. It's up to the student to decide who that person will be – it could be a parent, school counsellor, family doctor or another trusted adult. Visit foundrybc.ca/get-support for more information about support services available for young people.

Friends can be the first to notice changes in other friends. Many young people turn to their friends if they are having a problem. Knowing how to support a friend is an important part of friendship, but it can be really tough to talk about personal stuff. All of us have probably experienced times when a friend seems to be struggling, but we don't know what to say or how they will react. For information about how to support a friend, visit foundrybc.ca/friends.

ANSWER GUIDE FOR

Discussion Questions

Video 1: What is Mental Health?

1. HOW WOULD YOU DEFINE MENTAL HEALTH?

- Mental health has been defined in many ways but usually refers to our capacity to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face
- Mental health can range from poor mental health to positive well-being, and all of us will be somewhere on the continuum at any given time
- We all experience good and bad days, and positive and negative feelings
- Our mental health can fluctuate, and is affected by what goes on in our lives and by how we take care of ourselves

Video 2: Maddy's Story

1. WHAT ARE SOME CHANGES THAT MADDY NOTICED IN HERSELF WHEN SHE WAS STRUGGLING WITH BODY IMAGE AND ANXIETY, OR THAT OTHERS MIGHT HAVE NOTICED IN HER?

What she noticed in herself:

- She felt anxious and sad
- She started isolating herself
- She started comparing herself to her classmates (she felt all the other girls were prettier and skinnier)
- She disliked how she looked and felt like a “whale”
- She felt like a “car alarm”; extremely sensitive to day to day situations (e.g. dropping books in the hall)

What others noticed in her:

- She was moody
- Mom discovered that she was self-harming

2. HOW DOES TALKING ABOUT HER MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES HELP MADDY?

- She feels more connected to other people and less isolated
- She accepts herself
- She feels more relaxed and calm
- She can go to school
- She can now do things that interest her
- She realizes how strong she is

3. HOW DOES MADDY TAKE CARE OF HER MENTAL HEALTH? WHAT DO YOU DO TO TAKE CARE OF YOUR OWN MENTAL HEALTH?

Tools Maddy uses:

- Build a support network
- Focus on acceptance
- Open up to family and friends (e.g., boyfriend, mom)
- Take time to do things for herself

Other examples may include (but are not limited to):

- Music, acting, sports, poetry, humour, yoga, mindfulness techniques/meditation, etc.

4. MADDY TALKS ABOUT NEGATIVE COMMENTS THAT WERE MADE ABOUT HER BODY. WHAT ELSE MIGHT AFFECT HOW WE FEEL ABOUT OUR BODY SIZE OR SHAPE?

- Images of ideal body type in the media – tv, news, radio, movies, internet, etc.
- Friends/social circle, comparing our body size or shape to others
- Pressure to diet
- Low self-esteem
- Sports – needing to be fit

Video 3: Alex's Story

1. WHAT SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS DID ALEX EXPERIENCE WHEN HE WAS HAVING PANIC ATTACKS?

- His legs were heavy; felt like there was a giant weight
- He lost his breath
- He felt very terrified and strange
- He felt like he was having a heart attack
- He felt isolated
- He had negative thoughts about himself

2. WHAT SUPPORTS DID ALEX ACCESS WHEN HE WAS STRUGGLING? HOW WERE THESE SUPPORTS HELPFUL FOR ALEX? WHO ARE SOME ADULTS A YOUNG PERSON COULD TURN TO IF THEY WANTED TO GET SUPPORT?

Supports Alex accessed:

- Professional help/resources
- He felt an inner calling to change, to take control of his life

The supports were helpful because:

- He felt empowered
- He had new ways of thinking and different beliefs about himself
- He found the person he truly is

Examples of adults to turn to:

- Parent, teacher, counsellor, coach, doctor, etc.

3. AS ALEX EXPERIENCED, SCHOOL CAN BE STRESSFUL. WHAT ARE OTHER POSSIBLE SOURCES OF STRESS?

- Family problems
- Girlfriend/boyfriend relationship problems
- Juggling a lot of responsibilities and/or activities
- Arguments with friends
- Being bullied
- Serious illness or health problems
- Major life changes e.g. moving, parents divorcing, etc.

4. ALEX DESCRIBES A MIND-BODY CONNECTION. IN WHAT WAYS CAN YOU TAKE CARE OF BOTH YOUR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH?

- Sleep
- Healthy eating
- Meditation
- Mindfulness
- Exercise (running, walking, sports, etc.)
- Journaling
- Connecting to others
- Support groups

Video 4: Natasha's Story

1. WHAT WERE SOME CHANGES THAT NATASHA NOTICED IN HERSELF WHEN SHE WAS STRUGGLING WITH A DEPRESSED MOOD, OR THAT OTHERS MIGHT HAVE NOTICED IN HER?

- She isolated herself
- She stayed in her bedroom
- She was not talking to her family
- She often fought with her parents
- She started using alcohol, marijuana, and other drugs
- She felt like she was in a “freezer”; darkness, numb, not being able to talk or feel anything

2. WHAT OTHER CHANGES MIGHT YOU NOTICE IN A FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER WHO IS STRUGGLING WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGE?

- They don't seem to enjoy activities as much anymore
- They seem distracted or are having trouble staying focused
- They are unusually worried about things that don't seem to be a big deal to you or others
- Their eating habits have changed – they avoid hanging out at lunchtime or make excuses for why they're not eating
- They are always tired or complain they aren't sleeping well
- They are missing more and more time from school or work
- They've increased how much they drink and/or use drugs
- They are sad much of the time and find it hard to see any positives in their life
- They are spending more time alone – don't want to hang out with friends or do any of their usual activities

3. NATASHA DID A NUMBER OF POSITIVE THINGS TO KEEP HERSELF FEELING WELL WHEN SHE WAS DEALING WITH HER DEPRESSED MOOD. WHAT WERE SOME OF THESE COPING TOOLS?

- Mindfulness
- Drawing
- Playing with her puppy
- Knitting
- Taking walks
- Meditation
- Yoga
- “Me” time
- Talking with family

4. WHAT SUPPORTS MIGHT NATASHA NEED IN ORDER TO STAY AWAY FROM NEGATIVE INFLUENCES (E.G. PARTIES, CERTAIN FRIENDS, SUBSTANCES, ETC.)?

- Create a support network of friends and family
- Setting goals
- Being regular with medication
- Avoiding parties with drugs and alcohol

Video 5: Wrap Up

1. WHAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT FOR NATASHA, ALEX AND MADDY IF THEY SOUGHT HELP EARLIER?

- Natasha may have not used substances and gotten along better with her family
- Alex may have been able to avoid panic attacks
- Maddy may not have self-harmed and had more self-confidence

2. WHAT ARE SOME KEY LEARNINGS AND MESSAGES THAT YOU ARE TAKING AWAY FROM THIS LESSON?

- Understanding that taking action early is key to preventing mental health challenges from getting worse
- Knowing that mental health is part of everyone's health
- Knowing that you are not alone
- Knowing how to support a friend
- Knowing there are resources that can help prevent issues from getting worse (e.g. self-care resources)
- Knowing that there are people who can help you

Memo for Families

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Re: Stop Wondering, Start Knowing: A Mental Health Video Resource for Schools

I would like to let you know about a lesson that will be taught in your child's class called **Stop Wondering, Start Knowing**. It is designed to help increase student and school staff understanding of mental health. They will learn about the early signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges and the resources that are available for support. The aim is to increase discussion about mental health in school communities and decrease the stigma around mental health.

Why address mental health awareness?

Mental health and substance use challenges affect all Canadians personally or through a family member, friend or colleague. One in five youth in BC will experience a mental health disorder serious enough to cause distress and affect their ability to function at home, at school or in their community. Most of these challenges can be dealt with effectively, especially if they are identified early.

Some of the topics in the lesson plan include:

- What is mental health?
- What are signs and symptoms of mental health and substance use challenges?
- How to achieve mental wellness
- How to support a friend
- The importance of getting help when needed
- Supports and resources available

We encourage you to talk with your teen about what they have learned about in class. Together you may want to explore foundrybc.ca, a website for youth and young adults. foundrybc.ca offers tools that youth can use to check out how they're feeling and connect to support early and quickly. The Kelty Mental Health Resource Centre is another great place for parents to learn more about mental health. For more information, visit: keltymentalhealth.ca.

Sincerely,



· F O U N D R Y ·
WHERE WELLNESS TAKES SHAPE