



MENTAL HEALTH

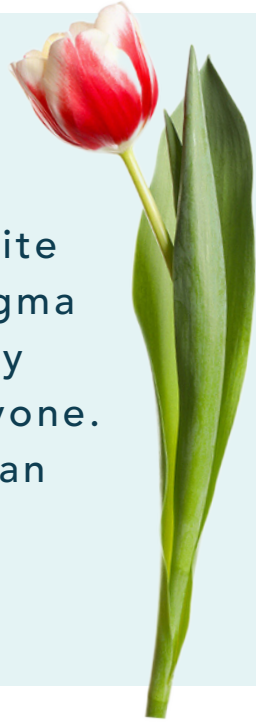
FOUR WEEKS OF EASY ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY TEACHERS TO BRING MENTAL HEALTH ALIVE WITHIN THEIR CLASSROOMS.

- Week 1: Introduction to Mental Wellness
- Week 2: Kindness, empathy and gratitude
- Week 3: Healthy relationships & connectedness
- Week 4: Resilience, stress and coping



WELCOME!

For four weeks in May, Southwestern Public Health's and Middlesex-London Public Health's School Health Teams invite you to try some easy activities to reduce mental health stigma and incorporate daily wellness activities. A mentally healthy school community creates connections and caring for everyone. Try the activities in this package with your students. You can also talk to your school nurse for more ideas and support!



Week 1: Keeping Ourselves Mentally Well

What is Mental Health?

Mental health is a state of well-being which includes your emotional, social, and cognitive well-being. Everyone has a different state of mental health just like everyone has a different state of physical health.

What is Mental Illness?

Mental illness is when an individual deals with disturbances with their thoughts, feelings, and perceptions that create difficulties in their day-to-day life. You can have a mental illness, but with treatment and supports in place, may still experience good mental health.

Factors that promote good mental health

- Healthy/strong relationships and connectedness
- Having a sense of self
- Knowledge and utilization of positive coping strategies
- Partakes in nutritious meals
- Physical exercise, whether that be through walking, gym class, or a sports team
- Full night of sleep (9-10 hours)

Week 1: Keeping Ourselves Mentally Well

Four Activities to Promote this Theme:

- **COLOURING:** Try this mindfulness activity from Kids Help Phone. [Print](#), colour and post!
- **NATURE SCAVENGER HUNT:** Make a list of common things you find outside. As a class, get outside and see what you can find!
- **OUTDOOR GRAFFITI:** Find [messages, quotes or pictures](#) that create a warm, inclusive, and diverse environment and create those messages using chalk!

Daily Announcements:

MONDAY: Let's talk about mental health. Everyone has mental health, and it is important we care for our own mental health so that we can cope with life's challenges. To care for your mental health, try out some of our mental wellness activities like a scavenger hunt or gratitude graffiti!

TUESDAY: Mindfulness is a way of being and thinking. When we are mindful, we focus our attention on what is happening in our body, our mind and in our environment in the moment. With mindfulness, we live in the present and focus on what is happening right now. Today, think about being present in the moment and try out a colouring exercise as a mindfulness activity!

WEDNESDAY: Sleep plays a vital role in good health and our mental well-being. We need sleep to keep us healthy, active and at our best! When we are well rested, we perform better in school. This helps our mood and we solve problems more effectively. It is recommended that kids ages 5-12 need an average 10-12 hours of sleep.

THURSDAY: Why is physical activity important for our mental health? Physical activities release “feel good” chemicals in the brain, which decrease stress, help you sleep better, focus your mind, and boost your self-esteem. Try walking, or dedicating some time to stretching in the morning!

HAPPY FRIDAY! Have you been trying out the mental health activities? Share your pictures on social media or print and post in the classroom. It's great to stay connected with the community about mental health. Don't forget that it is also nice to connect with friends, family or peers whenever you need support!

Book Recommendation

Maybe Tomorrow by Charlotte Agell ([YouTube](#) version)



Week 2: Kindness, Empathy & Gratitude

Prosocial actions and emotions are proven to boost our mental health. Acts of service or helping others, as well as practicing moments of gratitude and empathy, help make our bonds and connections with people deeper and more meaningful. They also help us to focus on things outside of ourselves as individuals while boosting our self-esteem. People of all ages can learn these as daily habits by being intentional with words and actions (Source: [2022 Toolkit- Canadian Mental Health Association](#)).

Three Activities to Promote this Theme:

- **Gratitude Jar:** Every classroom has a jar that sits on the teacher's desk or somewhere in the room. Everyone is invited to write a note about what they are grateful for and place it in the jar. Share the jar's contents at the end of the week or month if desired!
- **Random Acts of Kindness Challenge:** Open the door for a friend, help someone with a math problem or share something together! Challenge students and staff in the classroom and within the whole school community to find moments to express kindness toward others. If you notice someone doing something kind, give them a shout out!
- **Empathy:** [Walking in Your Shoes: Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource](#)

Book Recommendations

Friendship and Kindness- [Meesha Makes Friends](#), by Tom Percival

Empathy- [Stand in My Shoes: Kids Learn about Empathy](#), by Bob Sornson

Gratitude- [Kindness is my Superpower](#) by Alicia Ortego



Week 2: Kindness, Empathy & Gratitude

MONDAY: Did you know that this week we are focusing on Kindness, Empathy and Gratitude as part of Mental Health May? Every class will have the chance to join in on activities to help us learn why kindness, empathy and gratitude are good for our mental health! Try to get creative with your class this week about what you can do to practice kindness, empathy, and gratitude too!

TUESDAY: Did you know there are easy ways to show kindness to others? You can hold open a door, leave someone a nice note, help someone younger than you, invite someone to play a game with you at recess or give a compliment! We challenge everyone in the school to try to do these random acts of kindness all month long! If you see someone doing something kind, let them know!

WEDNESDAY: Having empathy means we can share and understand the feelings of other people around us. It means we can try to put ourselves in someone else's position to imagine what they may be thinking or feeling. We try to relate to them. Empathy helps us see we are more alike than different! We challenge you to try to use this skill this week!

THURSDAY: Mindfulness helps our mental health and well-being. Mindfulness means we take a moment to pause or reflect - to be in the moment. Taking time to think about the things we are grateful for or that make us happy is an important thing we can do to feel good about ourselves and the life we have. What are you grateful for or thankful for today? Try to ask someone near you what they are grateful for.

FRIDAY: Have you been doing any activities this week related to kindness, empathy, and gratitude for Mental Health May? If so, tell us what you have been doing! Share your photos on Twitter or invite another class to check out your work! We can even share your successes in our newsletter blast to our school community!

For Educators Using Social Media:

- Tweet photos of your school community participating in the activities!
- Share your beautiful gratitude jar or acknowledge those doing random acts of kindness!
- Tweet at other classes or schools to challenge them to take part!
- Tag Southwestern Public Health and the Middlesex London Health Unit on Twitter (@SW_PublicHealth, @ML_SchoolHealth) so we can share what you are doing!
- Share the creative ways you are celebrating and acknowledging mental health month.

Week 3: Healthy Relationships & Connectedness

What is a healthy relationship?

We all have relationships with many people, such as our parents, siblings, extended family members, and friends at home and at school. Positive relationships and connections with other people make us feel good about ourselves and enhance well-being.

Why are healthy friendships and connections important?

- Early friendships are a source of joy and a way to practice adult relationships. Positive relationships help to develop key social skills such as communication, cooperation, problem solving, and the ability to overcome challenges.
- Connections with other people enhance our self-esteem and create a source of social and emotional support.
- Increased student connectedness promotes classroom engagement and school attendance and a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- Relationships at school connect students with someone else to talk to, making them feel less alone.
- Students who have quality friendships are less likely to engage in, or to be victims of, bullying.
- Students can use quality friendships to learn to regulate their emotions and behaviour in a socially appropriate way.

Three Activities to Promote this Theme from Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource

- [Listen Hear](#) - 10 - 15 minutes
- [High-five to friendship](#) - 10 - 15 minutes
- [Finding solutions](#) - 10 - 15 minutes

Book Recommendations

The Little Book of Friendship by Zach Bush and Laurie Frideman
([YouTube video](#))

[The Hundred Dresses](#) by Eleanor Estes (for older kids)



Week 3: Healthy Relationships & Connectedness

Daily Announcements

MONDAY: All week, we will be talking about friendships and relationships. Good friends and belonging are important for our mental health. We can talk to our friends and listen when our friends talk to us. Friends can help us with problems that life throws at us. Making new friends and keeping friendships strong is worth it!

TUESDAY: Did you know that smiling is contagious? When someone is smiling, they light up the room and make things happier for others! Make someone smile by saying thank you, giving a compliment, sharing a funny joke or story, or with an act of kindness. Today, think about how you make someone smile!

WEDNESDAY: Spending time with people helps our mental health! Being connected to others here at school helps us all feel that we belong. Be interested in others and you could learn something new about a classmate! Ask them a question and then share your story to see what things you have in common. Who know, you might just connect with a new friend!

THURSDAY: For a friendship to begin, someone must take the first step. You could invite someone to participate, or you could join in with what others are already doing. Try saying:

- Do you want to play basketball?
- Can I sit next to you?
- Would you like to come over after school?

Presenting a positive attitude will attract others to spend time with you, -- so smile, make eye contact, and invite others to be your friend!

FRIDAY: Great friends take the time to lend a helping hand to others at school, at home, or in the community. You could hold the door open, share your markers, help someone with their homework, clean your room, or walk the dog. The possibilities are endless! With many helping hands, we can make (name of school) an awesome place to belong! Make your relationships with others great by being helpful in little ways each day.

For Educators Using Social Media:

- Share a picture of a hallway art display, such as the “high five to friendship hands,” qualities of positive friendships, or brainstorm your own mental health wall ideas.
- Share a picture/description of your “classroom smiles” (photos or drawings).
- Share a video of your class with each child contributing what makes a good friend (with friend qualities on cards or pictures/drawings instead of showing actual faces).

Week 4: Resilience, Stress and Coping

Resiliency is an ongoing process that supports mental health through helping individuals problem solve, cope with challenges and bounce back from disappointment. Through recognizing sources of stress, you can identify healthy coping strategies and effectively use them in order to bounce back from stressors and not let them negatively impact your life.

Positive Coping Behaviours
Exercise
Relaxation techniques such as deep breathing
Reading
Listening to music

Three Activities to Promote this Theme

- **Tense and Relax:** Help students develop the skills to notice how their body feels when they are tense and relaxed. Teach them how to relieve tensions and to self-regulate their emotions through body exercises.
- **Emojis are us:** Print out the emoji worksheet (page 16 of linked resource) and ask your students to identify each emotion and ask them to imagine why the emoji would feel that way.
- **Happy Place Meditation:** Students can quietly sit with the lights dimmed while a staff member guides them through a meditation about their happy place to reduce stress.

Book Recommendations

Listening to my body by Gabi Garcia (YouTube)

Resilience: A book to encourage resilience, persistence and to help children bounce back from challenges and adversity by Jayneen Sanders (YouTube)

My Many-Colored Days by Dr. Seuss (YouTube)



Week 4: Resilience, Stress and Coping

Daily Announcements

MONDAY: During this week we are going to focus on resiliency - also known as bouncing back! Bouncing back means getting back on our feet after you have had a tough time and being able to go back to doing things you enjoy! Can you think of a time you have bounced back? Make sure to try out the activities and take part in building your resiliency!

TUESDAY: Did you know that an important part of bouncing back is emotional awareness? By being aware of your feelings and emotions you are better able to express how you feel and react appropriately. Remember to pause and reflect on your feelings - and THEN act!

WEDNESDAY: Today let's think about OPTIMISM. We are all faced with challenges, but it is important to focus on the positives. Optimism is all about looking on the bright side of things. Try this out today and ask yourself what was great about your day!

THURSDAY: To bounce back we need to believe in ourselves, and in our abilities and goals. These beliefs will help us tackle problems as they come. Showcase some of your favourite "believe in yourself" moments this week while talking with your friends.

FRIDAY: Have you participated in any of the activities this week related to resilience, coping or emotional awareness? If so, share what you have been doing with your friends and classmates. It's important to share this important message together as a community so we can all bounce back together!

For Educators Using Social Media:

- Reach out and share a picture of your school taking part in Mental Health May Resilience activities by tagging @SW_PublicHealth and @ML_SchoolHealth on Twitter
- Taking part in your own creative activities for Mental Health Month? Share them by tagging @SW_PublicHealth, @ML_SchoolHealth and other local schools on Twitter!
- Tag another school and challenge them to participate in resilience activities.
- What does a mentally healthy school look like to you? Take photos of your mental wellness activities and share them on Twitter!
- This is (name of school). During this week's mental health awareness topic, we participated in (name of activity). Add a photo and a description about your successes!