WE Well-being Grades 9-12

This activity is to support students in understanding the importance of mental health literacy as it pertains to their own lived experience and their relationships with others. Students will explore definitions of mental health and mental health literacy, learn about their importance from the perspective of Dr. Stan Kutcher, and participate in conversations about mental health literacy with members of their personal community.

Lesson 1: Mental Health Literacy
**Purpose:**

- Introduce students to the concept of mental health literacy
- Explore how mental health literacy plays a role in our well-being and lived experience
- Share knowledge and curiosity through discussion and collaboration with others

**Skills:**

- Reflection
- Communication Skills
- Self-Awareness Skills
- Critical Thinking

**Materials:**

Projector and screen or monitor; writing paper; chart paper; markers; whiteboard/chalkboard or SMARTboard.

**Time:**

50 minutes

**Brain Bites**

*Did you know?* When a person seen as competent makes a mistake or acts in a clumsy way, they are found to be more likeable in comparison with people who portray to be always perfect. This is known as the “pratfall effect.”
Part 1: Investigate and Learn (35 minutes)

Investigate and Learn

- Identify the importance of mental health literacy
- Learn how mental health literacy can strengthen one’s personal well-being, communication skills and relationships

Let the class know that today, we’ll be talking about mental health and the concept of mental health literacy. To gather students’ prior knowledge, facilitate a class brainstorm.

On two separate pieces of chart paper or two separate sections of the board, write “Mental Health” and “Mental Health Literacy”.

First, have the class brainstorm Mental Health. You may prompt them toward the following topics:

- How would you define mental health?
- How do we promote good mental health?
- What topics are important when we talk about mental health?

Next, brainstorm Mental Health Literacy. You may prompt them toward the following topics:

- How would you define mental health literacy?
- How do we practice mental health literacy?
- Why might mental health literacy be important?

Show the class this video from Dr. Stan Kutcher, where he speaks to why mental health literacy is important for everyone. After watching the video, re-visit the mental health literacy brainstorm to create a common definition of mental health literacy. Direct students to draw the following conclusions:

Mental Health Literacy:

- An overall understanding of mental health, why it’s important, factors that can promote mental health, and factors that can lead to mental health problems or disorders
- Can help us understand how to promote and maintain good mental health
- Can help us understand mental disorders and their treatments
- Can reduce stigma
- Can help us to care for others and ourselves, so we know what to do and what not to do
- Can help us increase self-efficacy and self-advocacy (voicing what we need to support our own good mental health)

After watching the video and establishing a common definition, have students work in small groups or pairs to discuss the following questions:

- What is something that stood out to you from the video with Dr. Stan Kutcher?
- What is something new that you learned?
- Why do you personally think mental health literacy is important?

Share answers as a large group, and then write down each of the four things from Dr. Stan’s video on a piece of chart paper or on a different section of the board:

- Understand how to obtain and maintain good mental health
• Understand mental disorders and their treatments
• Decrease stigma
• Support with help-seeking efficacy (asking for help when we need it)

In two different coloured markers, have students brainstorm the following under each section from Dr. Stan’s video:

* you may choose to assign a group to each section, or to have groups rotate through each section for

1-2 minutes so everyone can contribute to each concept, building upon one another’s ideas

• What are some ways we can practice this as a class and individually?
• Who are some of the people in our communities that we could share this information with? What are some factors we would need to consider?

Part 2: Application (10 minutes)

Application

• Think about how students can empower themselves to share the importance of mental health literacy with others

As a class or in small groups, review and discuss students’ answers to the brainstorm questions.

Collectively, come up with a few ways to practice mental health literacy, based on students’ responses to the first question. Keep the chart paper in plain view to reference as a class throughout the year and remind students of the ways they have identified to practice mental health literacy throughout the year.

Next, review some of the ways that you might talk about mental health literacy with different people in students’ lives. If helpful, you may brainstorm some conversation starters, questions or facts to share. For example:

• Did you know that one in five Canadians will experience a mental health problem in their lifetime?
• Why do you think there is so much stigma around mental health?
• Compare how the topic of mental health is addressed in school with an older family member’s experience

Brain Bites

Did you know? Your brain does not reach full maturity until the age of 25. This means your brain can easily learn new skill sets, languages, sports, instruments, or anything challenging.
Part 3: Action & Reflect (5 minutes)

**Action**

- Have a conversation about mental health literacy with a member of your personal community
- Reflect on and share findings from your conversation

As a take-home activity, ask students to find some time this week to chat with someone in their life about mental health literacy. Ask students to be mindful of factors that may affect someone’s understanding or opinion of the topic (age, culture, experience with their own mental health) and to be curious and non-judgemental about their responses.

As an extension, you may invite the class to journal or share their experiences with the class. You may refer to the following suggested debrief questions:

- Who did you talk to about mental health literacy?
- How did it feel to bring up the topic?
- What kinds of questions did you ask?
- Did your conversation partner share anything that surprised you?
- What did you find most interesting about the conversation?
- Why do you think it’s important to discuss mental health with the people in our lives?

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