

Module 1:

Understanding Mental Health

- Everyone has mental health
- Mental health has a wide range of states, including no distress, mental distress (aka stress), mental health problems and mental disorders
- Mental health is more than a positive mood (mental health isn't just feeling happy)
- It is important to use appropriate words to describe our emotions, to regulate and cope



Module 1:

Understanding Mental Health

Mental health refers to health related to our thinking / cognition, mood (e.g. emotions and feelings) and behaviours. There are two widely accepted definitions of mental health:

- “ The World Health Organisation (WHO) defines mental health as “a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”
- “ The Surgeon General of the USA provides a definition of mental health: “Mental health is a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with people and the ability to change and cope with adversity.”



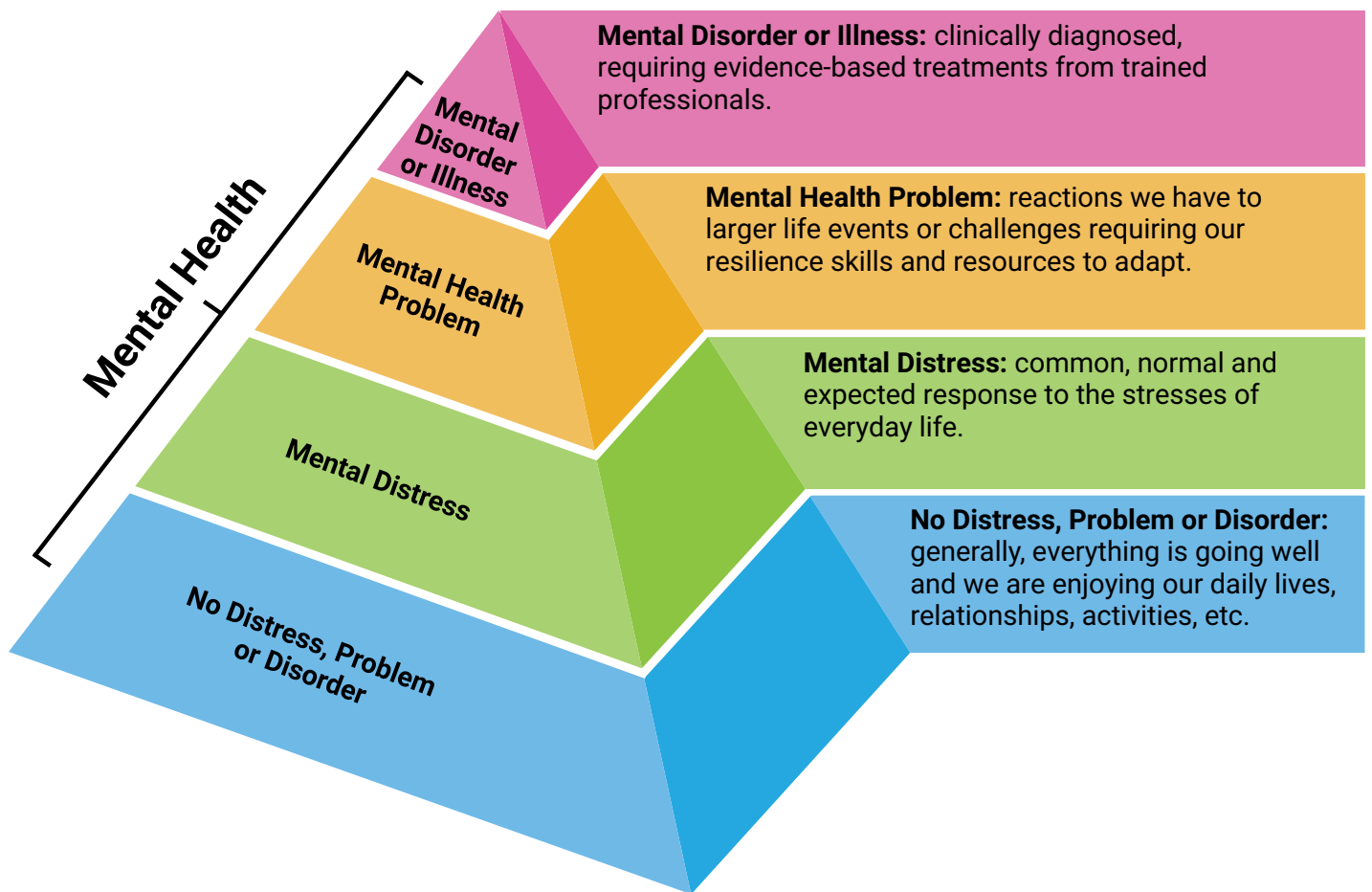
Watch *Mental Health Literacy Pyramid Explained*:
<https://youtu.be/VgYmIsYmUIU>

The Surgeon General’s definition underlines the importance of developing competencies to challenge the demands of life, while the WHO definition focuses more on the state of wellbeing.

It is essential for teachers to help students understand that everyone has mental health which involves a number of states, including: no distress, mental distress, mental health problems, and for some, mental disorders.



The term mental disorder encompasses both mental illnesses and neurodevelopmental disorders, in accordance with the DSM-5-TR.



You can download a printable PDF on the pyramid of mental health states from:
<https://mentalhealthliteracy.org/product/using-the-right-words/>



Remember:

- Mental health states are not a continuum. People DO NOT necessarily progress from mental distress to developing a mental disorder.
- Any person can experience some or all of these mental health states within a short period of time (such as an hour), or over a longer period of time (weeks, months or even years). Sometimes a person may be in multiple states at the same time.

Links for Activities:



Classroom Slide Deck (see Module 1):

- [Google Slide Deck](#)
- [PDF Slide Deck](#)



Student Activity Sheets

- [Digital](#)
- [Colour \(printable\)](#)
- [Black & White \(printable\)](#)



MHL Journal

- [Digital](#)
- [Colour \(printable\)](#)
- [Black & White \(printable\)](#)

- See [Appendix E](#) for download instructions
- Please see individual activities for video links, sample quiz links and all other resources

Conceptual Knowledge	Procedural Knowledge	Handle with Care
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Everyone has mental health • Mental health is more than a positive mood. (all emotions are part of mental health) • It is important to use appropriate words to describe our emotions, to regulate and cope • Mental health has a wide range of states, including no distress, mental distress (aka stress), mental health problems and mental disorders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be able to define and describe mental health • To apply appropriate words to describe different emotions, and their intensity • To distinguish different states of mental health associated with different life events and situations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This topic explores the common misuse of diagnostic language. • Some students may have a diagnosed mental / neurodevelopmental disorder. Using accurate clinical terms will help to better reflect students' lived experiences with a disorder. • When providing examples around mental health problems, avoid discussing PTSD or trauma experiences. This topic needs to be addressed individually by a trained clinician. If a student shares a trauma experience, calmly redirect the conversation. If you are concerned about a student's disclosure, please follow your school's protocols to access further support. See Appendix F for more.



Activity I - How Do I Feel? Emotions Emojis

Purpose: Build on students' vocabulary to describe emotional feeling experiences

Conceptual Connection:

- All feelings are okay and everyone experiences a situation differently
- There are many words to describe feelings according to their intensity
- The language used to represent an emotional experience can affect how it is perceived and responded to by others
- Even the act of differentiating and naming a feeling helps with regulation



Ask students to think about how they are feeling today.

Show the class the *Today I feel...* slide.

Show the Feeling Word Family chart (see next page).

Explain that there are many many feeling words to express our emotions. Feeling words can be grouped into broad categories, or 'feeling word families'.

Resources:

- Digital Activity Sheets
- Printable Activity Sheets
- Classroom Slide Deck



Brainstorm two to three more words for each Feeling Word Family.

Resource: See the table on the next page and slide notes for examples



Provide students with blank *Today I Feel...* and *Feelings Thermometer* student activity sheets.

Resources:

- Digital Activity Sheets
- Printable Activity Sheets



Point out 'When we think about emotions we often think about their intensity like the temperature on a thermometer. In a single day, it is normal to experience a range of emotions from different emotion families and at different intensities. Learning to use many different words for our feelings helps us to more accurately understand both ourselves and others'.



Brainstorm with the students how the emotions listed on the chart might correspond with the thermometer.

Invite students to fill in their thermometer using one of the emotion word families.

Resource: Classroom Slide Deck



Review with the students how emojis can represent emotions and share a few visual examples (on the slide).

Resource: Classroom Slide Deck



Assign each student an emotion vocabulary word and have them create their own emoji on a paper plate. Make sure they write their emotion word on the bottom. Attach the paper plate to a popsicle stick. At the end of the lesson you can create a classroom display with the emojis.



Digital Delivery:

Assign each student an emotion vocabulary word and have them make a digital drawing of an emoji with a labelled emotion. Screen share it or include it in their notebook or MHL Journal.



Prompt: Think about your emotions today. What words can you use to describe some of your different feelings? Make a list or map of feeling words that you can use to describe your day.

Resources:

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

*The student-designed emoji can be added to their journal or shared with the class via a shared digital document.

Feeling Word Families

Sad	Happy	Mad	Afraid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unhappy • disappointed • miserable • upset • heartbroken • (others – blue, down, gloomy, hopeless) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • glad • joyful • content • terrific • pleased • (delighted, ecstatic, wonderful) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • angry • annoyed • frustrated • furious • grumpy • (enraged, grouchy, crabby) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uncomfortable • unsure • worried • fearful • nervous • (terrified, alarmed, suspicious)

Activity II - What is Mental Health? Think, Pair, Share

Purpose: Draw students' attention to the understanding that we all have mental health. Review the key components that define mental health

Conceptual Connection: People think about mental health differently so it is important to know how to properly define it



Ask students to respond to the question, 'What is mental health?' (think)

Invite them to share with a partner giving each student one minute to share. (pair)

Ask one member from each pair to share an idea from their pair discussion with the class. Record the ideas; look for common themes together. (share)

Resources:

- Classroom Slide Deck
- MHL Journal or usual class notebook



Digital Delivery:

- Use a digital whiteboard or share the slide to present the question 'What is mental health?'.
- Give students a few minutes to write down some ideas on their own.



Review these two definitions of mental health:

“ The World Health Organisation defines mental health as “a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.”

“ The Surgeon General of the USA provides a definition of mental health: “Mental health is a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with people and the ability to change and cope with adversity.”

Ask students 'Do these definitions say that good mental health means being happy all of the time... without any stress?' (Clarify: no!).



Prompt students to consider if a definition of mental health for children and youth would emphasise different components.

Ask 'What do you think should be emphasised for good mental health for children and youth? Would it be the same or different from good mental health for adults?'

(Some ideas might be - for good mental health, children and youth need: to feel safe, to feel heard, time to play and explore, adults to help them, to have the opportunity to learn, to practise problem-solving and be provided what they need to be healthy...)

Resource: Classroom Slide Deck



Digital Delivery:

- Use digital breakout rooms to pair-share, then bring students together to discuss and consolidate learning on a digital whiteboard.
- Together, look for common themes.



Summarise the key components of mental health for the students. Let students know they will be learning more about how they can boost their mental health in upcoming modules.

Resource: Classroom Slide Deck



Digital Delivery:

Create a classroom definition of mental health on the digital whiteboard.



Prompt: Write a definition of mental health in your journal. Does anything about the definition of mental health surprise you?

Resources:

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

Activity III - States of Mental Health

Purpose: Introduce students to the concept that there are different states of mental health

Conceptual Connection:

- Mental health describes a range of mental states
- Having a mental problem is not the same as having a mental disorder even though similar emotions can be experienced in both states



Watch the video titled *States of Mental Health*.

Resource: <https://youtu.be/x3-ZhE7zscI>



As the students watch the video, they can raise their paper plate emojis when they think it represents how the character in the video might be feeling. When several students raise their emoji, discuss how emotions are very individual and that a variety of emotions are okay in any given situation (i.e. no 'right' answer here! Emotions give us feedback for what we may be thinking and are influenced by our different life experiences).



Digital Delivery:

Prompt students to use the emoji reactions in the virtual meeting software to represent how the character in the video might be feeling at specific times.



Provide a large copy of the States of Mental Health Pyramid on a poster board or show and provide students with the *States of Mental Health* pyramid student activity sheet so they can fill in their own copy (paper or digital).

Resources:

- Classroom Slide Deck
- Digital Activity Sheets
- Printable Activity Sheets



Digital Delivery: Use a whiteboard or the slide to display the pyramid.



Discuss examples of when the students might experience the various states:

- Someone's cat doesn't come home one night
- Someone doesn't get chosen for the basketball team
- Someone's grandparent dies
- Someone moves to another province
- Someone has a big presentation to finish

Elicit more examples from the students, making sure to redirect discussions of trauma experiences

Digital Delivery:

Use a shared digital whiteboard / slide / document that students can add to throughout the unit. Keep it linked somewhere that is easy for students to access. Revisit after Module 6 to compare to *The Big 5*.



Prompt students to fill in one situation / example and one feeling word for each of the categories on their *States of Mental Health* student activity sheet.

Resources:

- Classroom Slide Deck
- Digital Activity Sheets
- Printable Activity Sheets



Explain:

- Mental mental / neurodevelopmental disorder is a medical condition diagnosed by trained health professionals (e.g. doctors, psychologists) using medical diagnostic criteria.
- Mental disorders are brain-based disorders just like asthma is a lung-based disorder.
- Mental disorders are when a person experiences problems with their thoughts, feelings and behaviours that are serious, major and lasting.
- Inform students that in future lessons they will learn about common mental / neurodevelopmental disorders.
- Describe for students how it is possible to have a mental disorder, mental health problem and mental distress all at the same time. (e.g. a person could have OCD, be grieving the loss of their dog, feel worried about an upcoming test and at times forget all these issues and have a great moment with friends). All of these are states of mental health.
- We will learn how we can take care of our mental health just like our physical health.



Prompt: Review the definition of mental health you wrote down earlier. Would you change your definition based on what you've learned? How is it different? In what ways is it the same?

Resources:

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

Alternative Activities

Create a Class Mental Health Literacy Poster

Display a large poster paper for the duration of time covering the EMHLR. Continue to add healthy strategies that boost mental health whenever they are mentioned throughout the mental health unit. After Module 6, revisit this poster to see how many of the items on the poster are congruent with *The Big 5* for mental health. A shared Jam Board could be used digitally.

'The Manner of the Word' Charades

Make a list of simple actions that could be done in a classroom setting (e.g. pick up a pencil, close a door, wave hello, etc.). Then have another list of adverbs / emotion words (e.g. angrily, sheepishly, slyly, joyfully, confidently, etc.). Students will then pick / be assigned an action and a random corresponding emotion / adverb. Each student then performs the action while other students guess 'the manner of the word'. Help students connect that the thoughts we have about an event influences the intensity of our emotional reaction. We can all improve our skills in tuning in to how others are feeling, as well as managing our own emotional responses.

'Guess the Emotion' Digital Option

Have students pick an emotion word (or assign emotion words) and have students post a corresponding gif, image or emoji. Other students can then guess their emotion word.



