

Module 6:

Getting Mentally Healthy

- What is good for physical health is good for mental health
- Coping with stress appropriately will help build resilience and new skills
- 'The Big 5' pillars of health enhance both physical and mental health



Links for Activities:



Classroom Slide Deck (see Module 6):

- [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"> • Coping with stress appropriately can help us build new skills and increase resilience • The brain and body are connected • What is good for physical health is good for mental health • Positive lifestyle choices can enhance mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand that we need some stress to perform well • To learn that stress can be managed • To recognize the brain-body connection related to the stress response • To develop strategies to promote strong mental health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students come from a variety of backgrounds (e.g. from households that may experience income instability, food insecurity, insufficient social support networks, etc.) • For classroom activities, consider the many factors that are outside of a student's control, which may influence what The Big Five looks like for them • Avoid judgement of student lifestyles / circumstances



Activity I - Managing the Stress Response

Purpose:

- Help students understand that we need some stress to perform well
- Learn that stress can be managed

Conceptual Connection: Coping with stress appropriately can help us build new skills and increase resilience.



Ask students to describe their understanding of stress.



Watch the *Understanding Your Stress Response* video.

Resource: <https://youtu.be/ps3kPWjgOkM>



Ask students if their understanding of stress has changed after watching the video:

- 'How can the stress response be helpful?'
- 'When is stress more challenging?'
- 'What are some helpful ways to manage the stress response?'



Invite students to complete the *Making Friends With Stress* and the *Your Stress Coping Skills* student activity sheets.

Resources:

- Printable Activity Sheets
- Digital Activity Sheets



Digital Delivery:

- Invite students to complete the digital *Making Friends With Stress* and the *Your Stress Coping Skills* student activity sheets.
- Alternative: use an online quiz to complete one or both activities.



Prompt: When has stress been helpful in your life? What are your coping strategies to help you face a stressor? How do you know when a stressor is too big to handle alone and you need support?

Resources:

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

Activity II - The Brain-Body Connection

Purpose: To recognize the brain-body connection as it relates to the stress response

Conceptual Connection:

- The brain and body are connected
- What is good for physical health is good for mental health



Share with students, 'Our bodies often give us clues about how we are feeling.' Then ask students 'How does the body let us know when the stress response has been activated?'

Encourage students to tune in to their own bodies and share examples of how they experience stress physically (e.g. heart pounding, sweaty palms, face turning red, headache, quick breaths, wobbly voice, butterflies in stomach, etc.). Note: it can be helpful for students to reflect on a time when their stress response showed up (e.g. when they felt nervous for a sports game or performance, or they tried something new).



Provide instructions on how to complete the *Know Your Stress Response* student activity sheet. Students can draw on / colour / annotate the body outline in the areas where they tend to feel their stress response.

Remind students that every person's physical experience of the stress response is a little bit different, so their drawings will each look a little different too.

Resources:

- Printable Activity Sheets
- Digital Activity Sheets



Ask 'How does your stress response show up in your body? In what ways is this similar to others' experiences of the stress response? In what ways is it different?'



Prompt: How did each of the characters experience the stress response in their body? How is this similar or different from the ways you experience the stress response?

Resources:

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

Activity III - The Big 5

Purpose: Develop strategies to promote strong mental health

Conceptual Connection:

- What is good for physical health is good for brain health
- Positive lifestyle choices can enhance mental health



Review with students the brain-body connection in response to stress.

Ask students, 'How do we keep our bodies healthy?'



Watch the *Introducing... The Big 5!* video.

Resource: <https://youtu.be/TDbnrCOU8CE>



Engage students in a discussion of how what is good for physical health is good for brain health. Encourage them to share personal examples.

Record The Big 5 on the active board / whiteboard.

- restorative sleep
- healthy nutrition
- vigorous exercise
- strong, supportive relationships
- helping others



Provide students with the *Big 5 Mobiles* student activity sheets. Direct students to illustrate one activity / strategy for promoting each of The Big 5. These can be drawn, or students may use magazine/computer pictures.

Resources:

- Printable Activity Sheets
- Digital Activity Sheets



Digital Delivery: Provide students with the digital version of the *Big 5 Mobiles* student activity sheets. Students can add clipart, digital drawings or photos they take on their own device to the boxes.



The *Big 5 Mobiles* can be displayed in the classroom. Afterwards, they can be put on a metal ring and attached to the students' binders, backpacks, etc. as a reminder of the importance of The Big 5.



Prompt: Is it easy to embrace The Big 5? Why or why not? How are you able to include The Big 5 in your life? What ideas for The Big 5 did you learn from the characters in the video?

Resources:

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

Alternative Activities

The Most Helpful Class

Remind students that helping others is one of The Big 5. Brainstorm ways that your class can help others in the school and the community. Remember that helping others can be big or small (e.g. being kind, holding the door, playing with someone who doesn't have a friend at recess, helping clean up at the end of the day, picking up garbage when you see it on the ground, helping at home, etc.). Maybe the students would like to fundraise for a cause of their choice, help at an extended care facility, help a class buddy, clean up a beach or park, help a conservation / stewardship group, etc. The possibilities are endless!

Thanks A Lot Stress

Remind students that, most of the time, stress is actually helpful. When someone helps us through a challenge, we usually say thank you. Have students create a thank you card or note for their stress! Encourage them to include ways stress has helped them build new skills. Here's a sentence starter if needed: 'Thank you stress, you really taught me how to...'

Big 5 School Announcements

Create a radio play / tips and tricks about The Big 5 that can be shared on morning announcements.

Big 5 Puppet Show

Create a puppet show to teach a younger class about The Big 5 for mental health.

Make a Big 5 Pie

In their MHL Journal, have students draw a pie shape with five slices. In each slice, have students draw themselves doing actions that support The Big 5 for mental health. This activity could also be completed using a computer program, magazine pictures for collage, etc.



Alternative Activities

Once Upon a Time...

Students can think-pair-share stories of when they faced a stressor. How did they feel before they faced the stressor? How did they feel afterwards? What calming skills, thinking skills or problem-solving skills did they use? Did they ask anyone else for help along the way? Now that they've faced the stressor, what advice would they share with others in a similar situation?

Design Graffiti or a Tattoo

Students might also choose to create a graffiti page or a tattoo with a mantra or encouraging thought to help them get through a stressor. These can be posted around the classroom or kept in the MHL Journal.

Living the Big 5 Bulletin Board

Set goals as a class and as individuals to practice The Big 5. Over the course of the year, students can add stickies to the bulletin board to describe things they are doing for themselves and others to promote The Big 5. Class activities to support The Big 5 can also be added (e.g. helping others, making a class meal, etc.). At various points throughout the year, encourage students to reflect on what they notice about The Big 5 in their lives. Is it easy to embrace The Big 5? Did you reach the Big 5 goals you set for yourself? Why or why not? Did you realise Big 5 goals that you didn't set for yourself? Do you notice any patterns? How can you set realistic goals for your Big 5?

