

## Module 4:

# Common Mental / Neurodevelopmental Disorders

- All mental disorders reflect difficulties in thoughts, emotions, daily activities, physical health, behaviours and signalling
- The sooner people receive proper treatment and support, the better the outcome
- It is important to distinguish between expected life challenges and having a mental / neurodevelopment disorder.



# Links for Activities:



## Classroom Slide Deck (see Module 4):

- [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"> <li>• All mental disorders reflect difficulties in thoughts, emotions, behaviours and signalling</li> <li>• The sooner people receive proper treatment and support, the better the outcomes</li> </ul> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To distinguish between expected life challenges and mental / neurodevelopmental disorders</li> <li>• To demonstrate an understanding of common mental / neurodevelopmental disorders affecting children</li> <li>• To identify ways that people with mental disorders can live a fulfilling life with appropriate treatments</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This topic explores the common mental / neurodevelopmental disorders of childhood. There may be students in each classroom diagnosed with these disorders who may want to share their experiences, or who may feel uncomfortable with the topic. Pre-discussion with these students about their feelings and wishes regarding this topic is advised</li> <li>• When discussing mental disorders, the topic of suicide may arise. Respond with, "sometimes when a mental disorder is more intense, it may lead to thoughts of suicide. Thoughts of suicide is a sign we need to get help. It is important to reach out for help when we need it."</li> <li>• If a student expresses suicidal ideation, please follow your school's protocols to access timely support.</li> </ul>

# Activity I - What Do I Know About Common Mental / Neurodevelopmental Disorders? (True or False)

**Purpose:** Assess student knowledge prior to watching the core concept videos on each disorder

**Conceptual Connection:**

- There is a difference between expected life challenges and mental / neurodevelopmental disorders
- All mental / neurodevelopmental disorders reflect difficulties in thoughts, emotions, behaviours and signalling
- People with mental disorders can be treated and live a fulfilling life



**Provide** students with the five True or False statements regarding the specific mental / neurodevelopmental disorder(s) being taught (see [Appendix D](#)). This can be done as a whole class discussion, an individual MHL Journal response, or through a group movement activity.

**Resource:** Classroom Slide Deck



**Ask** students to decide if each statement is True or False and prompt them to explain their choice.

- Students can individually record a written response in MHL Journal, or they can physically move to one side of the room or the other based on their response.
- The teacher can tally the class responses as a whole group and record 'why' answers.
- Students can choose to stand on either side of the classroom, indicating their position on the statements 'True' or 'False' and share their thoughts.

**Resource:** Classroom Slide Deck

**Digital Delivery:**

- Use an online quiz instead of the movement activity. Quiz links:
  - [Anxiety disorder](#)
  - [Specific learning disorder](#)
  - [Depression](#)
  - [ADHD](#)
  - [OCD](#)
  - [ASD](#)
  - [Specific phobia](#)
- Or use the waterfall technique for students to synchronously answer true or false, or a thumbs up, thumbs down reaction.



**Prompt:** Why is it important to have factual information about mental / neurodevelopmental disorders?

**Resources:**

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

## Activity II - Character Study Videos and Viewing Guides: What Do I Know About Common Mental / Neurodevelopmental Disorders?

**Purpose:** Through the use of engaging character stories, illustrate the signs and symptoms of each disorder and how each can impact daily functioning

**Conceptual Connection:**

- There is a difference between expected life challenges and mental / neurodevelopmental disorders
- All mental disorders reflect difficulties in thoughts, emotions, behaviours and signalling
- People with mental / neurodevelopmental disorders can be treated and live a fulfilling life



**Provide** a copy of the viewing guides about the disorders, titled *Understanding \_\_\_\_\_*, and discuss each section (seven activity sheets in total).

**Resource:**

- Printable Activity Sheets
- Digital Activity Sheets



**Digital Delivery:** Instruct students to keep the viewing guides in their digital MHL notebook open in a separate tab to make notes after each video.



**Watch** each video based on available lesson time (e.g. 1 or 2 videos at a time).

- Anxiety Disorder / Learning Disorder (Jared): <https://youtu.be/7DN2Giuwx9E>
- Depression (Owen): <https://youtu.be/EyqzjKWQgC0>
- ADHD (Angela): <https://youtu.be/RiWA1BoBeew>
- OCD (Hazel): [https://youtu.be/PEP4Hez\\_jDw](https://youtu.be/PEP4Hez_jDw)
- ASD / Specific Phobia (Alex): [https://youtu.be/c\\_uxt9N8RnA](https://youtu.be/c_uxt9N8RnA)



After each video, have students complete the corresponding character viewing guide(s).

**Resource:**

- Printable Activity Sheets
- Digital Activity Sheets



**Digital Delivery:** After each video, allow students some time to complete the reflection, or use small group breakout rooms.



**Prompt:** Imagine you are one of the characters. What signs or symptoms of their disorder might show up at school? With friends? With family? (Hint: 'signs' are what others can see / what a video camera would pick up. 'Symptoms' are what someone feels inside).

**Resources:**

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

# Activity III - True or False Reviewed: What Do I Know About Common Mental / Neurodevelopmental Disorders?

## Purpose:

- Review student knowledge after watching the core concept videos on each disorder
- Dispel myths about the seven common mental / neurodevelopmental disorders

## Conceptual Connection:

- There is a difference between expected life challenges and mental / neurodevelopmental disorders
- All mental disorders reflect difficulties in thoughts, emotions, behaviours and signalling
- People with mental / neurodevelopmental disorders can be treated and live a good life



Following the core concept videos on each specific mental / neurodevelopmental disorder – repeat the True or False process (see [Appendix D](#)) having students agree or disagree with the same statements in the same format.



## Digital Delivery:

Use an online quiz instead of the movement activity. Quiz links:

- [Anxiety disorder](#)
- [Specific learning disorder](#)
- [Depression](#)
- [ADHD](#)
- [OCD](#)
- [ASD](#)
- [Specific phobia](#)



**Ask** students to reflect on any changes to their thinking. 'Why is it important to be knowledgeable about the facts when discussing mental / neurodevelopmental disorders?'



**Prompt:** What are the signs and symptoms of each disorder? What helps? How can you be helpful to someone who has this disorder? (Hint: 'signs' are what others can see / what a video camera would pick up. 'Symptoms' are what someone feels inside).

## Resources:

- Digital MHL Journal
- Printable MHL Journal

# Alternative Activities

## View and Discuss

While watching each video, students can work individually, together, or as a whole class to identify for each character: character name, strengths, name of disorder and interests.

Use the following two questions to guide discussion and learning. 'What are the signs and symptoms of the disorder? What helps?' (Hint: 'signs' are what others can see / what a video camera would pick up. 'Symptoms' are what someone feels inside).

## Mental Disorders Review Game

Play the Jeopardy-style Brain Game (as described in Module 3) to review the disorder names, 'signs and symptoms' and 'what helps?' associated with each character.

## Myth vs. Fact

Drawing on the questions and answers in the True or False game, students can design their own myth vs. facts cards or posters about each of the common mental / neurodevelopmental disorders. These can be displayed in the classroom or added to the student MHL Journal.



# Appendix D

## Module 4 True or False Questions

### Anxiety Disorder

1. When we talk about an Anxiety Disorder, this includes worry thoughts AND physical symptoms (e.g. stomach-aches, headaches...). **(True)** *Our brain and our body are connected. Anxiety Disorder includes both persistent worry thoughts **and** physical symptoms in the body.*
2. Because I worry about a school performance once in a while, I have Anxiety Disorder. **(False)** *Worrying about things in our daily life is normal because our system is designed to deal with difficult situations. However, if worries are persistent and get in the way of school, work or other areas of functioning, it may be time to talk to a mental health professional.*
3. Our feelings of anxiety are tied to our fight or flight system. **(True)** *This is part of our brain's 'alarm system' to help keep us safe. Our higher thinking (prefrontal cortex) helps turn the alarm off.*
4. People with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) can easily control their worries if they really want to. **(False)** *GAD is diagnosed when a person finds it difficult to control worry on more days than not for at least six months and has three or more physical symptoms (e.g. feeling tired, breathing rapidly, increased heart rate, trouble sleeping).*
5. If you have an Anxiety Disorder, it is important to avoid situations that make you feel 'stressed.' **(False)** *Treating yourself as if you are weak and avoiding risks leads to feeling demoralised. Avoiding stressful situations tends to reinforce anxiety over time.*





## Specific Learning Disorder

1. It is normal to struggle with reading, writing or math once in a while. **(True)** *Yes, we all struggle with reading, writing or math sometimes.*
2. Children with a Learning Disorders (LD) cannot learn. **(False)** *Children with LDs are as smart as everyone else and can learn. LDs mean learning in different ways.*
3. There are many ways a student with a LD can be supported to improve reading, writing or math skills. **(True)** *There are effective ways to help children with Learning Disorders, including: providing extra academic support and applying supportive tools (e.g. visuals) or accommodations (e.g. extra test time, stress reduction techniques).*
4. People with a LD can have a very successful career in many fields. **(True)** *Yes, if youth with LDs are taught effective learning strategies and efficient accommodation use, they can be very successful both in life and at work.*
5. LDs mean difficulty in one or more areas of learning (e.g. math or reading) but not overall intelligence. **(True)** *Learning Disorder is not because of low intelligence or because a person isn't motivated to learn.*

## Depression

1. Depression is just feeling sad once in a while. **(False)** *Feeling sad is a normal reaction to a loss, disappointment, problem, or other difficult situation. Depression is a mental illness and it is much more than sadness or low mood.*
2. Depression will go away by itself. **(False)** *Depression does not usually go away on its own. Additional treatment and support may be needed for it to improve.*
3. People with Depression don't enjoy things as they usually do. **(True)** *A common symptom of Depression is losing interest in activities that the person used to find enjoyable, such as extra-curricular activities or spending time with friends.*
4. Depression is caused by sad events. **(False)** *The exact causes of Depression are not entirely clear. However, Depression happens as a result of the interactions between genetics and the environment.*
5. If you think someone is depressed, the best way to help is to try to cheer them up. **(False)** *The important strategy to support someone with Depression is to help get them connected to a mental health professional....and remain a supportive friend!*



## Attention-Deficit / Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

1. A child with ADHD chooses to misbehave. **(False)** *ADHD is a medical brain-based disorder, not a condition of the child's will.*
2. Only boys have ADHD. **(False)** *Boys are more than twice as likely as girls to be diagnosed with ADHD. Part of the reason is that ADHD can look different in boys than in girls, making it a little harder to diagnose in girls. For instance, girls tend to have less trouble with hyperactivity and impulse control than boys do.*
3. Children with ADHD may have lots creativity, can do lots of things at once and often volunteer to help others. **(True)** *Yes, children with ADHD have lots of strengths and skills to share!*
4. Children with ADHD are all hyperactive. **(False)** *Not every child with ADHD is hyperactive. There are children with ADHD who may be the quiet ones in class who are often forgetful, distracted, or seem like they are in their own world.*
5. A child who can concentrate on video games / LEGO<sup>(TM)</sup> for hours couldn't possibly have ADHD. **(False)** *It is quite common for a child with ADHD to be very distractible in one setting, but highly, highly focused in other settings (usually during preferred activities). ADHD does not mean no capacity for attention. Really, ADHD means dysregulated attention.*

## Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

1. Everyone has occasional intrusive thoughts and repetitive behaviours. **(True)** *It is absolutely normal; we all have unwanted or unplanned thoughts at times. For example, getting a song stuck in your head!*
2. OCD is a girl disease. **(False)** *According to science, OCD affects girls and boys at the same rate.*
3. OCD is a disorder of both thinking (obsessions) and behaviours (compulsions). Obsessions are repetitive thoughts, urges or images that are intrusive and unwanted. Compulsions are repetitive behaviours used in an effort to reduce the anxiety associated with an obsession. **(True)** *OCD includes both obsessive thoughts and compulsive behaviours. People know these thoughts, urges or images are not real but they struggle to move on from them.*
4. OCD is all about being obsessively tidy and clean. **(False)** *Not really. Although one common obsession is the fear of dirt or germs, there are many other ways that obsessions can show up for people with OCD.*
5. Stress causes OCD. **(False)** *While stressful situations can make the symptoms worse in people with OCD, stress alone does not cause OCD. A combination of genes and the environment cause OCD.*

## Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

1. Children with Autism don't want to make friends. **(False)** *People with ASD can and do have fulfilling relationships with family, friends, partners and children.*
2. Autism characteristics start early and continue throughout life. **(True)** *With proper assessment and diagnosis, it becomes clear that a person with ASD showed symptoms from a young age. People with ASD can be well supported through a variety of treatments.*
3. People with Autism are only good at repetitive tasks. **(False)** *People with ASD have many diverse strengths, talents and skills that can benefit others and the community.*
4. All children with Autism do not do well at school. **(False)** *69% of children with Autism do not have an intellectual disability.*
5. Each person with Autism has unique strengths and challenges. **(True)** *Just like the rest of us, people with ASD have their own unique areas of strength and areas of difficulty.*

## Specific Phobia

1. Everyone has some mild fears such as heights, animals or seeing blood. **(True)** *It is ok that we all fear some things in life.*
2. A Specific Phobia is an intense, ongoing fear of something that poses little to no actual danger. **(True)** *The fear or anxiety is much greater than the actual danger, and it lasts a really long time.*
3. People with phobias are just being silly and should have more courage. **(False)** *Having a phobia has nothing to do with a person's 'strength.' Telling someone who has a specific phobia to 'just calm down' is like telling someone who needs glasses to 'just see better.'*
4. If you sometimes fear the dark, monsters, or being left alone, then you have Specific Phobia. **(False)** *A specific phobia causes functional impairment in your life. This means it keeps getting in the way of you doing the things you need to do.*
5. Avoiding a Specific Phobia is the best way to deal with it. **(False)** *Avoiding a phobia will make it even worse the next time.*