

9th GRADE: SELF-HARM & SUICIDE

LESSON 1 OVERVIEW



Stress, Anxiety, Depression



Lesson Time:

30 Minutes

Materials Provided:

- Video: "[Young People Give Their Tips for Tackling Anxiety](#)" (3:15)
- Handout: "Mental Health Concepts" (printed one per student)
- Lesson Slides [Download](#)
- Parent Letter (shared electronically or printed one per student) [Download](#)

Materials Needed:

- Projector with Video/Audio Capability

Objectives:

Students will be able to...

1. Define the terms mental health, stress, anxiety, depression.
2. List some stress management techniques.
3. Share alternatives for dealing with anxiety.
4. Recognize symptoms of depression.

Educators:

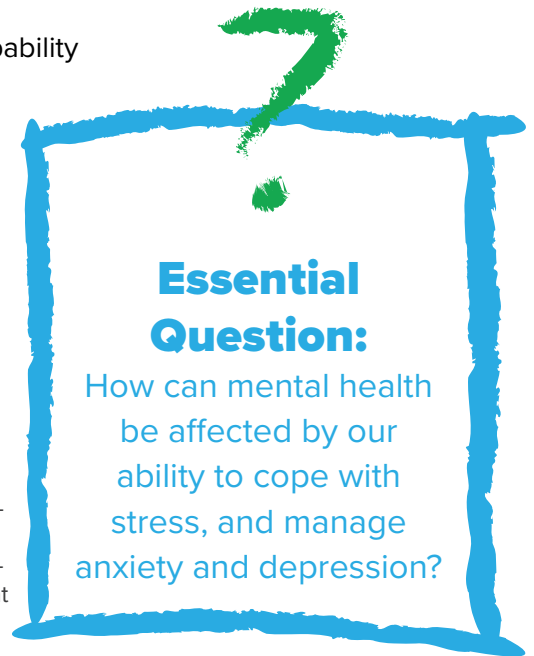
Did You Know?

According to the CDC in 2019, nearly 3,000 young people ages 13-18 died by suicide, making it the second leading cause of death among youth. As we await updated results from the CDC, we anticipate the following results: that new challenges such as the global pandemic, social isolation, and increased uncertainty have caused the number of suicide attempts to rise and possible age for those attempts to lower. In the last five years many needs assessments have identified mental health support as the number one need among young people. Meanwhile, there is a severe shortage of inpatient acute beds, mental health counselors, and outpatient services. There has been a shift that now identifies children ages 9 to 17 as the population with the greatest mental health needs. Life has always been and will continue to be full of unexpected challenges. Directly teaching students social and emotional competency can greatly impact their overall mental health. As educators, we can ensure a positive climate and safe environment to give students reassurance that they do have caring adults in their lives who possess the resources to support them.

Educator Prevention Tips:

As you teach this lesson, be aware that students in your class may have had a close encounter with suicide – by either a personal attempt or the loss of a loved one to suicide. We ask that you, too, learn from this lesson and become aware of the delicate approach needed when discussing vulnerable topics such as stress, mental health, and suicide.

Overall, help your students see the value of seeking help for themselves. Encourage them to self-advocate and to realize that speaking up shows strength, not weakness. This unit will often speak about the development of positive coping strategies and resiliency, and that will be the foundation of our approach to wellness. Pay attention to those who seem evasive or distressed during the lesson. This may be a clear sign that they need your support or a referral to the school counselor. Most importantly, listen to your inner voice and refer all concerns to a counselor.



Stress, Anxiety, Depression



Lesson Introduction: (1 minute)

In this lesson, we will define terms related to mental health such as stress, anxiety, and depression. We will also explore various facets of mental health including prevalence, risk-factors, and coping skills. The overall goal of the lesson is to increase awareness about mental health, reducing the stigma around it. *Based on the response of the lesson activity, you may want to extend the lesson time or revisit it the following day if you feel more follow-up is needed.*

Core Lesson: (2 minutes)

It is no surprise that our emotional and mental well-being seriously impacts how we feel physically, how we perform academically, and how we get along socially. You already know that when you are stressed, for example, you may not perform as well on a test or when you are angry you may not be able to think clearly. Because all of these things are so closely connected, it is important to be open about our own mental health and to be supportive of those who struggle with mental health issues.

For many years this subject had little respect, but the last few years mental health awareness has gained positive attention. *Insider Online* shared that Lisa Nicole Carson, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, Demi Lovato, Kendrick Lamar, & Ryan Reynolds are just some of many performing artists who have opened up about their struggles with issues such as depression, bi-polar disorder, social anxiety, and more.

* “28 celebrities who have opened up about their struggles with mental illness.” *Olivia Signh. May 24, 2019. Insider.com*

Key Terms: (3 minutes)

Today as we discuss mental health, our goal is for you to learn some basic definitions, understand the prevalence of stress, anxiety, and depression. Then I will share a few tips for reducing our negative reactions to them. *(Read definitions to class.)*

- **Mental Health** – Mental health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.
- **Stress** – a state of mental or emotional strain or tension resulting from adverse or very demanding circumstances.
- **Anxiety** – an emotion characterized by feelings of tension, worried thoughts, and physical changes. (American Psychological Association)
- **Depression** – Depression is a mood disorder characterized by low mood, a feeling of sadness, and a general loss of interest in things and is not a short-term response.

Slide/Handout

Mental Health

Affects how we think, feel and act.
Helps to determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices.
Is important at every stage of life, from childhood through adulthood.

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Lesson Script/Talking Points

Mental Health: Stress, Anxiety and Depression (10 minutes)

Let's examine each of these separately.

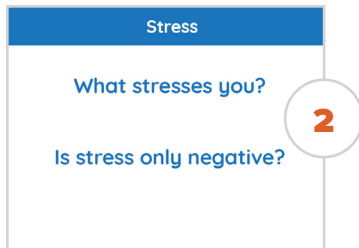
Slide 1: Mental Health

It affects how we think, feel, and act. It also helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important at every stage of life, from childhood and adolescence through adulthood. What types of things do you think affect our mental health? *(Allow for responses.)*

Answer this important question: If you were coughing a lot and then two weeks later you were still coughing, what would your parent or guardian do? What if you

Core Lesson (cont)

Slide/Handout



Lesson Script/Talking Points

couldn't breathe and your heart was racing? What if you had a headache or were chronically tired every day? Would going to the doctor be an option? Probably so. We need to learn more about mental health so that we begin to understand that our genetics, experiences, and environment influence our mental health and that seeking treatment is just as important for that as for coughing, nausea, headaches or any other physical illness. In fact, many of those things can be symptoms of stress.

Slide 2: Stress

This is a topic that could take us hours to explore because most teens could write a book on stress. For our talk about stress, I want to challenge you to think of stress differently. Sometimes our perspective can affect our reactions. Understand that everyone has stress, and learning to set boundaries, respect others, and being good to people you encounter allows for better relationships and allows you to avoid taking your stress out on others.

Discussion & Notes:

Let's brainstorm a list of things people your age stress over. (*Write their answers on the board.*) There are so many stressors for teens, so please know that when these are overwhelming, it's important to have a support system. That support system should include at least one person on this campus, me or someone else you feel could be trusted. What feelings come to mind when I say the word stress? (*Write the list on the board.*) I want you to notice that most if not all of what we have shared are negative. (*Write ☹ on the board above the list they created assuming most are negative. Then make a new column with a ☺ heading. Add the underlined words below as a list of ways to view moderate stress in positive ways. Challenge students to see your new list as applicable to stress and list these underneath ☺.*)

But not all stress is bad. Stress also...

Challenges us – For example, when we don't make a team, we may begin working harder to make it the following year.

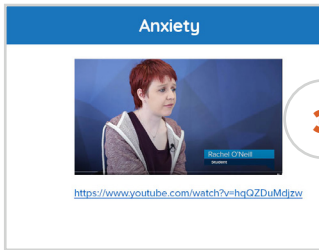
Allows for creative thinking – For example, sometimes we are challenged to come up with new ways to solve a problem.

Promotes collaboration – For example, when stressed by a strained relationship with a friend, you may work with another friend who is also close to both of you to try to resolve the issue peacefully in which case you have to work together to make progress.

Keeps us motivated – For example, you could be behind on a project and that strain may cause you to have to work more quickly or efficiently.

Core Lesson (cont)

Slide/Handout



Lesson Script/Talking Points

Slide 3: Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal and often healthy emotion. However, when a person regularly feels disproportionate levels of anxiety, it might become a medical disorder.

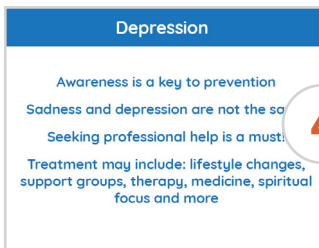
Without naming names, describe what people usually have in mind when they think of anxiety attacks? (*Allow for discussion.*) Anxiety disorders form a category of mental health diagnoses that lead to excessive nervousness, fear, apprehension, and worry. Anxiety disorders affect 40 million people in the United States. These disorders alter how a person processes emotions and behave, also causing physical symptoms. Mild anxiety might be vague and unsettling, while severe anxiety may seriously affect day-to-day living. Although it's a diagnosable disorder, that also means it's treatable. There are ways to recognize your triggers and consciously work to calm the person (or self). Let's watch a video to understand what having anxiety feels like and some tips for dealing with anxiety. (*Play video below.*)

Short video clips:

"Young People Give Their Tips for Tackling Anxiety" 3:15

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hqQZDuMdzv>

Anxiety is more than just stress. When you have anxiety or know someone who struggles with anxiety, they need your understanding. Be patient with them, and get them some adult support if possible. There are ways to consciously work on our responses to events.



Slide 4: Depression

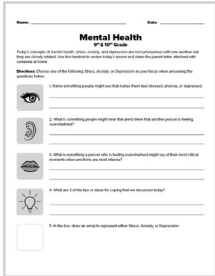
Depression can strike at any time, but on average, first appears during the late teens to mid-20s. Awareness is a key to prevention. Sadness and depression are not the same. We all have life experiences that cause us sadness. You and your peers are at an age in which we must begin to really focus on self-care in order to use positive coping skills to ward off depression.

First, know the symptoms so that you can take care of yourself or be on the lookout for friends in need. (American Psychiatric Association). Symptoms can vary from mild to severe and can include:

- Feeling sad or having a depressed mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed
- Changes in appetite — weight loss or gain unrelated to dieting
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Loss of energy or increased fatigue
- Increase in purposeless physical activity
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Difficulty thinking, concentrating or making decisions
- Thoughts of death or suicide

Core Lesson (cont)

Slide/Handout



Lesson Script/Talking Points

Treatment: First, if you, yourself, are struggling, or if you suspect someone else is struggling, seeking professional help is a MUST. If you have learned anything in this unit, I hope it was the importance of getting help and not feeling embarrassed to do so. Treatment could include Lifestyle Changes, Support Groups, Therapy, Medicine, Spiritual Focus, and more.

Closing: Essential Question (14 minutes)

How can mental health be affected by our ability to cope with stress, and manage anxiety and depression? (Allow for responses.)

Today we learned a lot about the concepts of mental health, stress, anxiety and depression. These concepts are not synonymous with one another, but they are closely related. We are going to end the lesson with a review of those concepts and some of the tips we discussed for coping with stress, anxiety and depression. *(Distribute the Mental Health Concepts handout. Allow 7 – 10 minutes for students to complete the handout. Allow several students to share their answers.)*

[Click Here to Provide Feedback on this Lesson](#)

Name: _____ Date: _____

Mental Health

Today's concepts of *mental health*, *stress*, *anxiety*, and *depression* are not synonymous with one another, but they are closely related.

Directions: Choose ONE of the following *Stress*, *Anxiety*, or *Depression* as your focus when answering the questions below.



1. Name something people might see that makes them feel stressed, anxious, or depressed.



2. What is something people might hear that alerts them that another person is feeling overwhelmed?



3. What is something a person who is feeling overwhelmed might say at their most critical moments when emotions are most intense?



4. What are 3 of the tips or ideas for coping that we discussed today?



5. In the box, draw an emoji to represent either Stress, Anxiety, or Depression.