

# 8th GRADE: SELF-HARM & SUICIDE

## LESSON 1 OVERVIEW



## Mental Health: How We Think, Feel, & Act



### Lesson Time:

30 Minutes

### Materials Provided:

- Handout: “Stress, Anxiety and Depression Note-Taking Guide” (printed one per student)
- Parent Letter (shared electronically or printed one per student) [Download](#)
- Lesson Slides [Download](#)

### Materials Needed:

- Projector with Video/Audio Capability
- White Board/Smart Board/Chart Paper

### Objectives:

Students will be able to...

1. Define the term mental health and recognize its application to every person.
2. Explain the differences among stress, anxiety, and depression.
3. Recognize ways to identify when we are experiencing stress, anxiety, or depression, and develop strategies to help ourselves or get help from others.

### Educators:

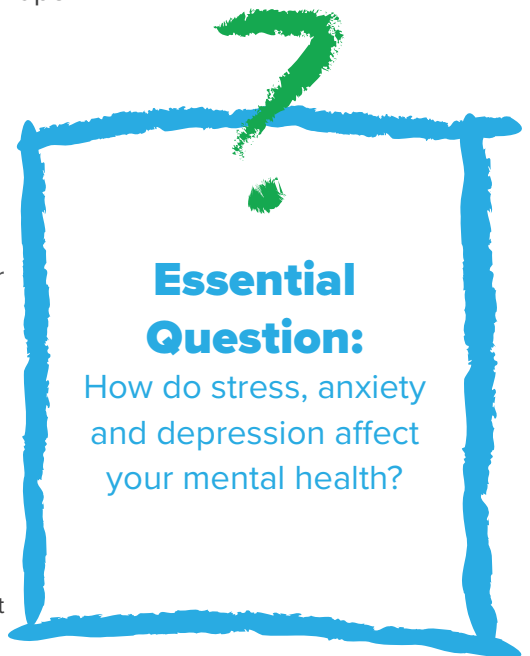
#### Did You Know?

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.



# Mental Health: How We Think, Feel, & Act



## Slide/Handout

**Mental Health Note-Taking Guide**

What are some things you might do to take care of your mind?  
What are some things you might do to take care of your physical health?  
What are some things you might do to take care of your emotional health?  
What are some things you might do to take care of your social health?

What are some stressors in your life?  
How do you manage your stress?  
How do you manage your emotions?  
How do you manage your social relationships?

Mental health: Stress is...  
Depression is...  
Anxiety is...

Physical health: Exercise, Sleep, Nutrition, Hydration, Stress Management

Emotional health: Mindfulness, Journaling, Talking to a friend, Seeking professional help

Social health: Spending time with friends, Joining a club, Volunteering, Helping others

**Mental Health Note-Taking Guide - Answer Key**

What are some things you might do to take care of your mind?  
What are some things you might do to take care of your physical health?  
What are some things you might do to take care of your emotional health?  
What are some things you might do to take care of your social health?

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## Lesson Script/Talking Points

### Lesson Introduction: (2 minutes)

Today we are going to brain-storm and list all of the words that come to your mind when we think about the word HEALTH. (Write the word HEALTH on the white board/smart board/chart paper. Allow up to 3 minutes for students to brainstorm their word associations for Health. Write down all plausible answers on the whiteboard/smartboard/chart paper. Ask students to assist you in grouping the words into two columns: those that relate to mental health and those that relate to physical health. Note that there may be some overlap since mental health issues can cause physical health problems and vice versa.)

Mental health is as important to our wellness as physical health. Just as we strive to take care of our bodies, inside and out, we must also learn to take care of our minds. Today we will focus on three big mental health topics: stress, anxiety and depression. As we begin our lesson, I am going to give you a Stress, Anxiety, and Depression Note-Taking Guide. This handout aligns with our lesson today and will be a good way for you to keep track of the key points of the lesson. As we go through the following information, take notes on your handout that you can refer back to later. (Provide each student with a copy of the printed handout.)

### Core Lesson Slideshow: Slides 1-9 (20 minutes)

#### SLIDE 1

When you tried to define physical health in your mind, what are some thoughts you had?

Did you think about what it looked like to be healthy...or unhealthy?

Did you contemplate ways to prevent bad health, and measures to take when you're sick?

Or did you think about things you can do to stay in good physical health?

(Allow discussion between each question.)

#### SLIDE 2

How many of you have ever cooked something on the stovetop? What are some measures of safety involved with cooking?

(Pause for answers. Answers may include: use a potholder, stay a safe distance from the hot surface, set a timer, keep careful watch on the food in the pot.)

What could happen that would harm you physically?

(Pause for answers. Answers may include: you get burned.)

- How could you have prevented getting burned? (Pause for answers.)
- How do you know you were burned? (Pause for answers.)
- What do you do to take care of the burn? (Pause for answers.)
- How does getting burned change the way you cook next time? (Pause for answers.)

Think about how this situation might compare to a situation when you are hurting mentally. What are some similarities?

Possible answers:

- recognizing the mental pain

**MENTAL HEALTH**

How is mental health as important as physical health?

Think about it...

1

**MENTAL HEALTH**

Now we're cooking!

What could happen so physically hurt you in this situation?

How can this situation compare to one in which you are hurting mentally?

Use your note-taking guide to help you think!

2

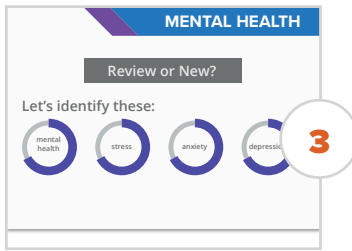
# Core Lesson (cont)



## Slide/Handout

## Lesson Script/Talking Points

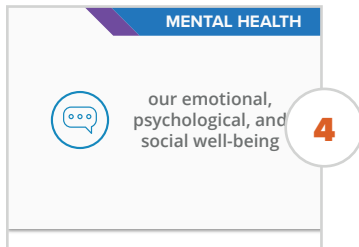
- figuring out how to take care of it
- learn about signs it's coming and ways to prevent



### SLIDE 3

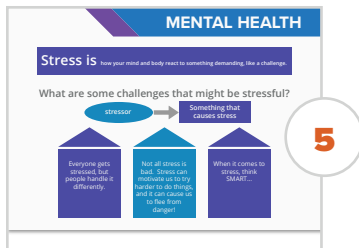
These may be terms that are familiar to you, or they might be new. Let's see what you know. How do we define these terms?

- mental health - condition of wellness in our mental and emotional state
- stress - a force that applies pressure or tension; includes our body's reaction to the force, can be real or imagined
- anxiety - an emotion of fear or tension, anticipation of events to come, often evoking physical responses
- depression - feelings of or condition of extreme sadness, characterized by persistent fatigue and loss of interest; can be diagnosed as a major depressive disorder; beyond the mental health arena, depression literally means a sunken space which is also applicable to our conception of depression



### SLIDE 4

Mental health - our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. "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."



### SLIDE 5

Stress is how your mind and body react to something demanding, like a challenge.

What are some challenges that might be stressful?

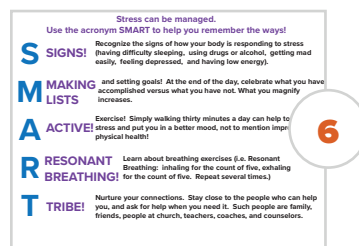
Possible answers might be:

- Having to give a presentation in front of the class
- Studying for a test coming up
- Having to learn to do something physical in a short amount of time
- Having to pay for something and you don't have the money yet

Something that causes stress is called a stressor. It's important to recognize how you personally deal with things that cause you stress so that you know if and when to ask for help.

Here are some things you should know about stress:

- Everyone gets stressed, but people handle it differently.
- Not all stress is bad. Stress can motivate us to try harder to do things, and it can cause us to flee from danger!



### SLIDE 6

Stress can be managed. Use the acronym SMART to help you remember the ways!

S is for SIGNS! Recognize the signs of how your body is responding to stress (having difficulty sleeping, using drugs or alcohol, getting mad easily, feeling depressed, and having low energy).

M is for MAKING LISTS and setting goals! At the end of the day, celebrate what

# Core Lesson (cont)



## Slide/Handout

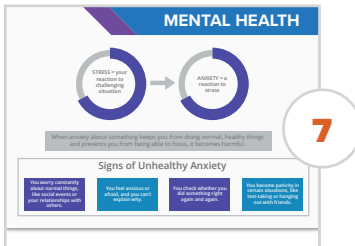
## Lesson Script/Talking Points

you have accomplished versus what you have not.

A is for ACTIVE! Exercise! Simply walking thirty minutes a day can help to alleviate stress and put you in a better mood, not to mention improving your physical health!

R is for RESONANT BREATHING! Learn about breathing exercises (i.e. Resonant Breathing: inhaling for the count of five, exhaling for the count of five. Repeat several times.)

T is for TRIBE! Nurture your connections. Stay close to the people who can help you, and ask for help when you need it. Such people are family, friends, people at church, teachers, coaches, and counselors.<sup>3</sup>



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### SLIDE 7

Whereas stress is your reaction to a challenging situation, anxiety is a reaction to stress. When anxiety about something keeps you from doing normal, healthy things, and prevents you from being able to focus, it becomes harmful.

Signs you might have unhealthy anxiety:

- You worry constantly about normal things, like social events or your relationships with others.
- You feel anxious or afraid, and you can't explain why.
- You check whether you did something right again and again.
- You become panicky in certain situations, like test-taking or hanging out with friends.<sup>2</sup>



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### SLIDE 8

Unmanaged stress or even outside stressors can cause anxiety, which can in some cases lead to depression. One does not mean you will absolutely have problems with the next, but it is important to keep them under control and learn techniques to deal with each.

Depression is serious. Although it can happen at any age, symptoms often start in the teens or early adulthood. This means that your very age is a critical age to learn about it and begin taking mental health very seriously. It is a true medical illness, characterized by a constant feeling of sadness, emptiness, and/or unworthiness. Sleeping, eating, and time management can all be affected by depression, and it can be associated with substance abuse.

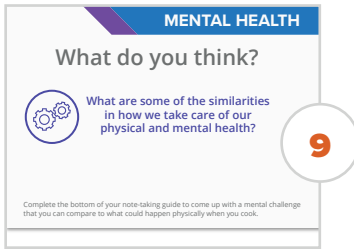
If you think you are feeling any of the signs of depression, reach out and talk to someone. Your mental health, future success, and well being depends on it. If you are worried about someone else, let them know or tell an adult. Be a friend to someone in need. You never know when one small act can make a tremendous positive difference. We have many people on this campus who should be considered your Go-To People.

7 in 10 U.S. teens said anxiety and depression is a major problem among people their age in the community where they live, according to a Pew Research Center survey of teenagers ages 13 to 17 conducted in fall 2018. You probably have a similar number of people that you know who struggle.<sup>4</sup>

# Core Lesson (cont)



## Slide/Handout



## Lesson Script/Talking Points

### SLIDE 9

*(Students should have completed most of the note-taking handout as the above slides were covered. However, take a few moments and review the answers for the upper portion of the handout to ensure that the students have the correct information regarding these topics.)*

Now, let's take a look at the final portions of our note-taking handout. For the bottom portion of the handout, I want you to come up with a mental challenge that you can compare to what could happen physically when you cook. Break this mental challenge down within the chart on the handout so that you can see how important it is to take care of your mental health, as well. Once you are finished, please flip your handout over and write in your own words why it is important to take care of your mental health.

### Activity: Sharing Positive Coping Strategies (7 minutes)

Since much of our mental health is a result of how we respond to stress, I want each person to think about how you deal with your stress. We probably all have responses that are not so good. I know too that we also do some things that are helpful. Let's all stand in a large circle around the room and be ready to share your positive strategies. I will give the first speaker this object (*could be a small ball, marker, anything to pass from student to student*). Whoever has the object will share one positive way or good thing you do to help you when you are stressed. This can be something that helps you deal with bad days, bad moods, anger, and negative experiences. Each person will share and then pass the object to the next person so that everyone has a chance to share. If you can not think of a strategy you are allowed to say "pass" or to repeat a strategy that someone else has said if it is a coping strategy you use, as well. (*Allow up to six minutes for sharing. You may have to add or prompt students to think of various options.*) We all can learn from one another ways to make life more manageable.

### Closing: Essential Question (1 minute)

**How do stress, anxiety and depression affect your mental health?** (*Allow for responses.*)

Today we discussed how taking care of ourselves physically compares with taking care of ourselves mentally, and that each is just as important as the other. Although stress, anxiety, and depression are similar, they are not the same. They are degrees of mental health and need to be recognized and taken care of in different ways. After this lesson you can use the back of your note-taking guide to write your favorite stress strategies that some of your classmates shared. Everyone experiences stress, and everyone gets sad every once in a while. Recognizing when it's normal and when you might need some help is important when analyzing your mental health status. Your health is your number one priority in your teen years...mind and body!

### References:

1. 5 Things You Should Know About Stress. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/publications/stress/index.shtml>
2. Alli, R. A. (2018, July 08). Anxiety in Teenagers: Tips for Coping & Treatment. Retrieved from <https://teens.webmd.com/anxiety-and-teens#1-2>
3. Steffen, P. R., Austin, T., DeBarros, A., & Brown, T. (2017, August 25). The Impact of Resonance Frequency Breathing on Measures of Heart Rate Variability, Blood Pressure, and Mood. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5575449/>
4. Teen Depression. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.nlm.nih.gov/health/publications/teen-depression/index.shtml>
5. What Is Mental Health? (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>

Click Here to Provide Feedback on this Lesson

What are some things you might do to stay safe when you cook? \_\_\_\_\_  
 What could happen that would harm you physically if you're not being careful? \_\_\_\_\_

- How could you have prevented getting burned? \_\_\_\_\_
- How do you know you were burned? \_\_\_\_\_
- What do you do to take care of the burn? \_\_\_\_\_
- How does getting burned change the way you cook next time? \_\_\_\_\_

**What are some stressors in your life?**

**Stress can be managed! How?**  
**Be SMART about stress!**  
**S** \_\_\_\_\_  
**M** \_\_\_\_\_  
**A** \_\_\_\_\_  
**R** \_\_\_\_\_  
**T** \_\_\_\_\_

Mental Health \_\_\_\_\_

Stress is \_\_\_\_\_

stress is your reaction to a challenging situation

anxiety is \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

anxiety can \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

List at least two signs of unhealthy anxiety

Depression is serious.

Symptoms often start in the \_\_\_\_\_ or early \_\_\_\_\_.

It is an illness characterized by feelings of \_\_\_\_\_ and/or \_\_\_\_\_.

Depression can affect \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_.

Health Comparison	Physical Health	Mental Health
Activity	Cooking	List an activity that can cause stress _____
What harm can happen?	Burn	
What can you do to help fix the harm?		
What can you do prevent future harm?		

On the back of this paper, write in your own words why it is important to take care of your mental health.



What are some things you might do to stay safe when you cook? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Use a potholder, keep a distance from heat, stir carefully...etc.

What could happen that would harm you physically if you're not being careful? **GET BURNED!** \_\_\_\_\_

- How could you have prevented getting burned? Used a potholder or put more space b/t me and the pan.
- How do you know you were burned? It hurt!
- What do you do to take care of the burn? First aid, cool water, salve, etc.
- How does getting burned change the way you cook next time? I'll be more careful with my actions.

Mental Health our emotional, psychological, and social well-being.

Stress is how your mind and body react to something demanding, like a challenge.

**What are some stressors in your life?**

Sample answers: tests or tryouts coming up, a family fight, a loved one being unhealthy, feeling left out

Stress can be managed! How?

Be SMART about stress!

**S** Signs (Know the signs of stress)

**M** Make Lists (list your priorities and goals so you have more control)

**A** Active (exercise helps to relieve stress)

**R** Resonant breathing (there are many breathing exercises that can help)

**T** Tribe (know the people you can go to for help)

stress is your reaction to a challenging situation

anxiety is  
a reaction to stress  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

anxiety can  
lead to depression  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**List at least two signs of unhealthy anxiety**

- You worry constantly about normal things, like social events or your relationships with others.
- You feel anxious or afraid, and you can't explain why.
- You check whether you did something right again and again.
- You become panicky in certain situations, like test-taking or hanging out with friends.

Depression is serious.

Symptoms often start in the **teens** or early **adulthood**.

It is an illness characterized by feelings of **sadness** and/or **emptiness**.

Depression can affect **sleep, appetite, and time management**.

Health Comparison	Physical Health	Mental Health <b>SAMPLE ANSWERS</b>
Activity	Cooking	List an activity that can cause stress <b>test coming up</b>
What harm can happen?	Burn	<b>Lose sleep, negative thoughts, loss of focus</b>
What can you do to help fix the harm?	<b>Salve, cool water</b>	<b>Take breaks in studying to breathe, study partner</b>
What can you do prevent future harm?	<b>Pot holder</b>	<b>Make a study schedule ahead of time</b>

On the back of this paper, write in your own words why it is important to take care of your mental health.