Your Thoughts Matter
Navigating Mental Health

NAME

AGE (as of January 1 of the current year)

COUNTY

CLUB NAME

ADVISOR

The Ohio State University
College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences
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Congratulations! A 4-H member has asked you to serve as a project helper. You may be a parent, relative, project leader, friend, club advisor, or another person important in the 4-H member’s life. Your duties begin with helping the youth create and carry out a project plan, as outlined in the Member Project Guide. This is followed by helping the youth focus on each activity, providing support and feedback, and determining what was done well, what could have been done differently, and where to go next.

As a project helper, it is up to you to encourage, guide, and assist the 4-H member. How you choose to be involved helps to shape the 4-H member’s life skills and knowledge of the importance of mental health.

Your Role as Project Helper
Your contributions are critical to delivery of the 4-H program, which is committed to providing experiences that strengthen a young person’s sense of belonging, generosity, independence, and mastery. Your interactions should support positive youth development within the framework of the Eight Essential Elements (also known as the Eight Key Elements):

1. A positive relationship with a caring adult
2. An inclusive environment
3. A safe emotional and physical environment
4. Opportunity for mastery
5. Engagement in learning
6. Opportunity to see oneself as an active participant in the future
7. Opportunity for self-determination
8. Opportunity to value and practice service to others

For more information on the Eight Key Elements, please refer to the Ohio 4-H Volunteer Handbook available online at ohio4h.org. On a practical level, your role as a project helper means you will strive to do the following:

- Guide the youth and provide support in setting goals and completing this project.
- Encourage the youth to apply knowledge from this project book.
- Serve as a resource person.
- Encourage the youth to go beyond the scope of this 4-H project book to learn more about mental health.

What You Should Know About Experiential Learning
The information and activities in this book are arranged in a unique, experiential fashion (see model). In this way, a youth is introduced to a particular practice, idea, or piece of information through an opening (1) experience. The results of the activity are recorded on the accompanying pages. The member then (2) shares what he or she did with the project helper and (3) processes the experience through a series of questions that allow him or her to (4) generalize and (5) apply the new knowledge and skill.

What You Can Do

- Review the Learning Outcomes (project skill, life skill, educational standard, and success indicator) for each activity to understand the learning taking place. See the inside back cover for the Summary of Learning Outcomes.
- Become familiar with each activity and the related background information. Stay ahead of the learner by trying out activities beforehand.
- Begin the project by helping the learner establish a plan. This is accomplished by reviewing the Member Project Guide.
- After each project area is completed, conduct a debriefing session that allows the learner to answer the review questions and share results. This important step improves understanding from an experiential learning perspective.
- Help the learner celebrate what was done well and to see what could be done differently. Allow the learner to become better at assessing his or her own work.
- In the Member Project Guide, date and initial the activities that have been completed.
Welcome to the Your Thoughts Matter project! Your Thoughts Matter is designed for advanced-level youth who are interested in learning more about mental health, why it is important to overall well-being, and steps that promote more positive understanding and action. The following interesting topics await you:

- What mental health means and its impact on those around us
- The differences among some common but serious mental health disorders
- How society communicates about this issue in casual speech and in the media
- Self-help and becoming part of the solution

The amount of time to complete each activity varies. Some activities require internet access and research, creativity, craft materials, someone to talk to, journaling, or even movie time. Before you begin, take a moment to read the entire activity and, if necessary, make plans for its completion.

This project is easily completed within one year.

Check your county’s project guidelines (if any) for completion requirements in addition to the ones below, especially if you plan to prepare an exhibit for the fair.

Step 1: Project Activities

Complete all 10 activities and all of the Talking It Over questions. The More Challenges activities are optional. As you finish activities, review your work with your project helper. Then ask your project helper to initial and date your accomplishment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Project Helper Initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT AREA: What Is Mental Health?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Defining Mental Health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Know the Numbers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Investigating Impact</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking It Over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT AREA: Mental Health Disorders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Anxiety</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Depression</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Self-Harm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking It Over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Step 2: Learning Experiences

Learning experiences are meant to complement project activities, providing the opportunity for you to do more in subject areas that interest you. What are some learning experiences you could do to show the interesting things you are learning about? Here are some ideas:

- Attend a clinic, workshop, demonstration, or speech related to mental health.
- Help organize a club meeting based on this project.
- Go on a related field trip or tour.
- Prepare your own demonstration, illustrated talk, or project exhibit.
- Participate in county judging.

Once you have a few ideas, record them here. Complete at least two learning experiences. Then, describe what you did in more detail. Ask your project helper to date and initial in the appropriate spaces below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Project Helper Initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7. Think Before You Speak</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Media Messages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking It Over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROJECT AREA: Self Help and Resources</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Exploring Resilience</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Helping Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking It Over</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Step 3: Leadership and Citizenship Activities

Choose at least two leadership/citizenship activities from the list below (or create your own) and write them in the table below. Record your progress by asking your project helper to initial next to the date as each one is completed. You may add to or change these activities at any time. Here are some examples of leadership/citizenship activities:

- Teach someone about mental health.
- Help another member prepare for his or her project judging.
- Host a workshop to share tips about mental health.


- Encourage someone to enroll in a mental health project.
- Arrange for a mental health professional to speak to or visit your club.
- Plan your own leadership/citizenship activity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What I Did</th>
<th>Date Completed</th>
<th>Project Helper Initials</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Invited a mental health counselor to speak to our club.</td>
<td>6/12/YR</td>
<td>J.D.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Step 4: Project Review**

All finished? Congratulations! After you’ve completed the activities in this book you are ready for a project review. This process will help assess your personal growth and evaluate what you have learned.

Use this space to write a brief summary of your project experience. Be sure to include a statement about the skills you have learned and how they may be valuable to you in the future. Now, set up a project evaluation. You can do this with your project helper, club leader, or another knowledgeable adult. It can be part of a club evaluation or it can be part of your county’s project judging.

Now, set up a project evaluation. You can do this with your project helper, club leader, or another knowledgeable adult. It can be part of a club evaluation or it can be part of your county’s project judging.
Have you ever thought you know what a word or phrase means only to find out you’ve been using it completely wrong? Like any medical field, mental health has a lot of words and phrases that are easily misunderstood. Just what is mental health?

### What to Do

Take a look at the chart below. You have probably heard or even used these words and phrases and have a general idea of what they mean. Fill out the second column with your definition of the term. Try writing down what you would say if a friend asked you, “What does this mean?”

Next go to youth.gov, choose Mental Health from the Youth Topics drop-down menu, and click on Go. Now click on Key Terms to find official definitions. Write the definitions in column three. Some definitions are lengthy. Shorten them to the basic concepts if needed.

Finally, compare your definitions with the official ones. If your definition is correct or similar to the official definition, give yourself a star in the last column. If you learned that you are using the word or phrase incorrectly, make a note of the difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>My Definition</th>
<th>Youth.gov Definition</th>
<th>Comparison</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental illness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recovery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interventions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive mental health</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check your responses with the Answer Key on page 35.
Background

Health is an important part of 4-H. After all, an entire H is devoted to it! Nutrition, exercise, and avoiding unhealthy choices such as smoking are part of good health. Mental health is an important part too because it affects all aspects of daily living. Successful performance of mental function leads to being productive, enjoying relationships, and coping well with change and adversity. Having positive mental health does not mean everyone is stress-free or happy. It means being able to still function when facing a challenging time.

When someone feels physically ill, knowing when to take an over-the-counter medication, when to rest, and when to go to the doctor can be the key to recovery. The same is true for mental health. Sometimes a person becomes stressed or sad and cannot handle daily activities. If this continues for longer than three weeks, the next step is to seek help from a mental health professional. Psychologists and psychiatrists are doctors who treat mental health disorders. A family doctor would prescribe an antibiotic for an infection. Similarly, mental health doctors would help those facing mental health disorders by creating a plan that leads to recovery.

More Challenges

Share what you’ve learned about these definitions with your family or club members by giving a talk or creating a video or flyer.

RESOURCES

Youth.gov is a U.S. government website that helps you create, maintain, and strengthen successful youth programs. Find the tools to get a program up and running, including how to find funding.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Project skill: Writing definitions of mental health terms
Life skill: Processing information
Educational standard: NHES 15.1: Describe the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health
Success indicator: Compares own definitions with official ones

Did you know?

Mental health counselors and psychologists help patients by offering therapy and support groups. These types of support are called interventions. Psychiatrists are medical doctors who specialize in mental health. They use the same support methods as well as prescribing medication to mental health patients.
Project Area: What Is Mental Health?

Know the Numbers

One in 4 American adults is diagnosed with a mental disorder in his or her lifetime. This statistic is similar for teens: 1 in 4 or 5 adolescents also meet the criteria for a mental illness. Half of all mental disorders begin by age 14 and three quarters by age 24. With the prevalence being so high, take a few minutes and think about how mental health disorders affect you, your family, friends, neighbors, or others.

What to Do

Review the national statistics for mental health disorders below and make an infographic about them. An infographic uses graphics, color, and different sizes of print to make information easy to read and understand. (See example on the right.)

Notice that the stats are for youth ages 12 to 17. Your infographic can feature some or all the statistics, or focus on just one in more detail.

Brainstorm with your club about where you could share this information with others. List a few locations here:


The spaces in the grid for your state’s or county’s statistics can be filled in for the optional More Challenges.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Health Disorder</th>
<th>National Frequency Percentage (ages 12–17)</th>
<th>Median Age of Onset</th>
<th>Frequency in My State or County (optional)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anxiety Disorder</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depression</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse Disorder</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>20</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Disorders</td>
<td>2.7%–3%</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Suicidal Self Injury</td>
<td>5–19%</td>
<td>17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mood Disorders</td>
<td>14.3%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruptive Behavior Disorders</td>
<td>4–9%</td>
<td>6–10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schizophrenia</td>
<td>0.3–0.7%</td>
<td>23</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first six terms are glossary words.
More Challenges

Now that you know the statistics for the country, look into the statistics for your state or county. Your state or county health department website is a good place to start. On the previous page, fill in the third column of the table to show your findings.

Did you know?

MentalHealth.gov states that only 20 percent of children and adolescents, and only 44 percent of adults receive the treatment they need. Caring family and friends can guide someone who is struggling with mental health issues to get treatment.

Background

Do the statistics surprise you? According to the U.S. Census Bureau, approximately 40 million teenagers live in the United States. Using the stats from the previous table, this amounts to more than 12 million teens living with anxiety, and five million living with depression. However, this does NOT mean that 17 million American teens live with anxiety or depression. Why not? The answer is comorbidity. Comorbidity is the presence of two diseases or conditions in a patient at the same time. Some who suffer from a mental illness also have another mental illness or medical problem. A teen could have anxiety and depression, which is very common.

If you stop and think about these disorders, it makes sense that someone could have more than one mental health problem. A person with depression may also develop a social phobia. A person with anxiety may develop an eating disorder. The percentages above do not account for comorbidity. They cannot be used accurately to show a total number of teens diagnosed with a mental disorder.

RESOURCES


Learn more about mental illness, find support, and become part of the solution by going to the National Alliance of Mental Illness’s website at nami.org.
Have you ever thrown a rock into a lake or pond? When the rock hits the surface, the water ripples outward from the point of impact. A ripple effect is described as an event that causes a chain of other events to happen. When a family member, friend, or community member is diagnosed with a mental illness, the ripples reach each of us. Sometimes they reach you directly and affect your daily life. Sometimes they reach you indirectly and affect a specific situation.

What to Do

A mental health experience can be a private matter. Some people are not willing to talk about how mental health has changed their lives. So, let’s try understanding the ripple effect from a behavioral health professional’s view. The idea is to find out the ways the professional has witnessed mental health disorders and the effects on individuals, families, and communities.

Call your local community mental health provider or your mental health and recovery board to find a mental health professional to interview. Identify yourself and explain why you are calling. Set up a time to meet face-to-face or speak on the telephone. Ask the questions below and write at least three of your own before the interview. Emailing a copy of the questions to the individual ahead of time might be helpful.

Date of interview _______________________________
Professional’s name _______________________________
Organization and position _______________________________

Beginning Interview Questions

1. How long have you been working with individuals who have mental illness?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

2. What are some ways that mental illness affects families?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________

3. How do you help people recover from a mental illness?
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
Project Area: What Is Mental Health?

My Interview Questions

4. 

5. 

6. 

7. 

8. 

More Challenges

Using what you’ve learned, write a short story about how mental health affects an individual and those around him or her, including members of the community. You could also write a song or produce an original video. Feel free to be creative. Share what you create with your project helper.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Project skill: Interviewing a mental health professional  
Life skill: Thinking critically  
Educational standard: NHES 1.8.6: Explain how appropriate health care can promote personal health  
Success indicator: gathers information from a mental health professional about mental illness
Background

When someone takes care of someone who has an illness, they are called a caretaker. One ripple effect of mental illness is that a person’s caretaker faces challenges too. Many times caretakers feel stressed and overwhelmed. One estimate is that 1 in 4 caregivers develops depression themselves.

The first step is for caregivers to learn about the illness and discuss specific situations. Asking open-ended questions such as “How does it feel?” or “What things help you feel better?” can help a caregiver learn how best to help. Caregivers should encourage loved ones to seek treatment, and they should seek treatment for themselves. Caregivers have a difficult job. Part of a counselor’s or therapist’s job is to provide caregivers with support and resources to help them cope with daily stressors.

Most of all, caregivers must remember to take care of themselves. Devoting 100 percent of their time to a loved one is not healthy for anyone. It can even lead to a negative relationship. Caregivers should strive to get enough sleep, exercise, and time each week for activities they enjoy. This could be as simple as sitting outside to read and relax, taking a long drive, or taking a class.

Did you know?

Whether you realize it or not, your life has been affected by someone with mental illness. Many famous people have been diagnosed with mental illness, including President Abraham Lincoln (depression), Britain’s former Princess Diana of Wales (eating disorder and depression), and musician Lady Gaga (post-traumatic stress disorder).
Talking It Over

Project Area: What Is Mental Health?

SHARE  Describe a situation when you saw the ripple effect touch your life or someone else’s life.
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

REFLECT  What do you think is the biggest obstacle to receiving proper treatment for a mental health diagnosis?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

GENERALIZE  Where do you see the biggest need for mental health awareness and education?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

APPLY  What are some ways you can make changes in your community to address mental health education and awareness?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
4 Anxiety

What have you been worrying about lately? Worry is a normal part of life. You may worry about your next test, your performance in a sporting event, or your upcoming driver’s exam. While it is uncomfortable, worry can be a healthy part of your life. It can help you avoid dangerous situations or solve your problems. For example, if you are worried about the big game and that worry motivates you to practice more, your performance may improve. But when does worry turn into a mental health problem?

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Project skill: Keeping a worry journal for one week
Life skill: Keeping records
Educational standard: NHES 7.8.2: Demonstrate health practices and behaviors that will maintain or improve the health of self and others
Success indicator: Evaluates journal for patterns and effectiveness

What to Do

Use a worry journal to keep track of your worries for the next week. You can use a notebook, diary, or even a folded piece of paper. When you experience worry, take a few minutes to log it in your journal. Make sure to note the date, time, and what you are worried about. You can write a few sentences, draw a picture, glue images into a collage, or log your worry in any way that helps you remember what is bothering you. Also, keep track of how you feel, mentally and physically, at the time. At the end of the week, revisit your worries and try to answer these questions about each experience:

1. Did this worry stay in your thoughts only or were there physical reactions as well?

2. Was this worry specific, such as tomorrow’s math test, or about school work in general?

3. Did worrying about this lead to specific steps to solve the problem?

More Challenges

Challenge your friends to create a worry journal for one or two days. When the challenge is over, get together and discuss which worries you have in common and how you can support each other.
Background

How can you tell the difference between normal, healthy worry and an anxiety disorder? A person with anxiety disorder may feel worried or anxious about a general topic, instead of a specific event. Another sign that worry has become an anxiety disorder is a lack of problem-solving skills. When a healthy teen is worried about a test, she may be prompted to solve the problem by studying more or asking for a tutor. A teen with anxiety disorder can become overwhelmed with worry and fear of the test. In this mental state, he is unable to think of problem-solving steps. At times, worry can interfere with someone’s ability to function at school or work and maintain relationships. If this happens, it is a signal to see a behavioral health care professional.

Anxiety can also have physical symptoms. These symptoms often mimic a heart attack—pounding or rapid heartbeat, shortness of breath, dizziness, sweating, numbness, and nausea. The symptoms of an anxiety attack and heart attack are similar. It can be difficult to know what kind of help to provide. If you are near someone experiencing these symptoms, it is best to call 911 right away.

Did you know?

“Anxiety disorder” is a broad term that covers many conditions. Examples include panic disorder, phobic disorders, and post-traumatic stress disorder.

RESOURCES

If you or someone you know would like to read more about anxiety, see if your school or public library has these books:

Mindfulness for Teen Anxiety: A Workbook for Overcoming Anxiety at Home, at School, and Everywhere by Christopher Willard, PhD.

The Anxiety Workbook for Teens: Activities to Help You Deal with Anxiety and Worry by Lisa M. Schab, LCSW.

What to Do When You Worry Too Much: A Kid’s Guide to Overcoming Anxiety by Dawn Huebner, PhD.
Many times, adolescents feel sad, tired, angry, or worthless, or feel they want to be alone. These feelings on occasion are part of teenage development. However, when these feelings last more than two or three weeks, they could be signs of depression.

What to Do

In the chart below, the goal is to begin to identify some of the emotions and signs that may signal someone with depression. Read the scenarios. Ask yourself if the behaviors describe a friend who is showing “typical” teen behavior or if they describe someone who is suffering from depression. Next, fill in the columns asking how you might help this person.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Typical or depressed?</th>
<th>How can you respond to offer help?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A. Sam, age 16, has been playing soccer since he was 4. Sam was just told he was cut from the high school soccer team. Sam has been very angry and keeps talking about how worthless he is.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. Two months ago, Joy, age 12, was the passenger in a car accident that happened when her mother was driving. Joy and her mother have never had a close relationship. Her mother suffered serious injuries from the accident while Joy was unharmed. Joy’s grades have been slipping and she has begun sitting by herself at lunch.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Check your responses with the Answer Key on page 35.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Project skill: Assessing mental health-related scenarios  Life skill: Solving problems  Educational standard: NHES 5.12.2: Determine the value of applying a thoughtful decision-making process in health-related situations.  Success indicator: Determines appropriate response to adolescent behavior
Background

Being depressed is more than a feeling of being “down in the dumps” for a few days. When you think about depression, you may think of someone who is sad or withdrawn. These signs could mark depression. Other possible signs are irritability, anger, difficulty sleeping or oversleeping, energy loss, changes in weight, a lack of focus, and thoughts of death or suicide, to name a few.

Depression is characterized by one or more of these signs that last for more than three weeks. They persist and interfere with everyday life. They can affect someone’s ability to complete daily activities and maintain relationships.

Depression does not have one single cause. There are many factors that can lead to a person’s risk of developing depression. These can be biological, psychological, social, or all three. Some risk factors include family history, living in poverty, losing a loved one, abuse, or lack of a close relationship with another. Bullying can also contribute to depression. Bullying is a behavior that is intentional and includes an unevenness of power. Bullying can happen face-to-face or through social media sites.

Did you know?

Depression and other mental health illnesses are serious because they can lead to suicide. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), suicide is the third leading cause of death for people ages 10 to 14, and the second leading cause of death for youth ages 15-24.
Many risk factors increase the chances of someone experiencing a mental health problem like non-suicidal self-injury, but did you know there are also protective factors?

**What to Do**

Protective factors are environments, supports, and behaviors that may help a person remain mentally well. Examples include high self-esteem, consistent routines, family support, good social support systems, and community bonding.

Boost your peers’ self-esteem and demonstrate the power of a good social support system with something as simple as a message on a restroom mirror. Think of a positive message to write to give your friends a boost of encouragement. In the mirror below, write two or three reassuring or uplifting notes. They can be a quote, song lyrics or just as simple as “You are beautiful.”

**More Challenges**

Get approval from your school principal to add words of encouragement and affirmation to your school’s restroom, either on the mirror (using a dry-erase marker) or on signs placed in the stalls. If you are able to share some positive notes, share what you do with your project helper.

**Learning Outcomes**

Project skill: Creating a resourceful flyer for peers who may need assistance  
Life skill: Communicating  
Educational standard: NHES 1.5.5: Describe when it is important to seek health care  
Success indicator: Posts flyers in high-traffic areas
Background

According to the National Council for Behavioral Health, between five and 19 percent of middle and high school students use non-suicidal self-injury as a way to cope. Those who use this negative coping method often need professional help.

Self-injury can take many forms including cutting, burning, pulling out hair, and other behaviors. The basis for these actions can be depression or anxiety. A youth may feel hopeless or worthless and not know positive coping methods. Others may self-injure to fit in socially, to rebel, or to experience intense feelings. Regardless of the reason, connecting with a mental health professional is the best solution to discover healthier coping skills.

It may seem surprising that eating disorders are in the self-injury category, but self-harm means hurting oneself on purpose. So, another form of non-suicidal self-injury is an eating disorder. Eating disorders are a serious mental and physical health problem. Youth with eating disorders often connect their self-worth with their body image and their ability to control it. Signs of an eating disorder include following a strict diet, and deliberate vomiting or laxative overuse. Other signs can be obsessive exercise routines and weight changes. The risk for permanent harm to the body is high. So, youth with eating disorders should be encouraged to seek professional mental health services.

Did you know?

The Crisis Hotline helps with any mental health situation, including thoughts of suicide. If you are concerned about a friend or loved one, call 1-800-273-TALK (8255). You can also text “HELP” to 741-741 to talk with a trained crisis counselor.
SHARE  What do you think is the most common mental health disorder in your school or community?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

REFLECT  Do you think teens in your school or community feel they have a safe place to talk about their emotions and stresses? Why or why not?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

GENERALIZE  Do you think the leaders in your school or community are aware of the number of teens who may be suffering from anxiety, depression, or engaging in self-harming behaviors? Why or why not?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

APPLY  What changes do you think could be made so teens who need help receive it? What are you willing to do to make these changes happen?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
Think Before You Speak

Have you ever been offended by something a friend says in a casual situation? Many common phrases used in our society are offensive to some people. Comments like “that’s retarded” or “that’s so gay,” were once very common in language a decade ago. How do you think they are perceived now? The language used by your friends, family, and the media can impact your opinions. You may not even realize that the language you use is hurtful or offensive to those around you.

What to Do

Many words and phrases from mental health are used in our everyday slang. For this activity, make a list of at least seven words or phrases related to mental health that you’ve heard used by your family and friends. Some examples might be “I’m going crazy,” “The weather is bipolar today,” or “If that happens, I’ll kill myself!” After you’ve completed your list, pick five of the phrases and complete this table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fill in the phrase</th>
<th>How would this make those with a mental disorder feel?</th>
<th>How can I re-phrase this?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
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<td>5.</td>
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</table>
More Challenges

Talk to a parent, grandparent, or other adult about how they learned about mental health when they were your age. Has the language changed? Has the public’s perception changed? Share what you discover with your project helper.

Did you know?

According to a SAMHSA survey, youth are more likely to know someone with mental illness. This may make a difference in reducing discrimination.
Background

Language is one factor that shapes how society views mental health. In 2006, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) did a Health Styles Survey with Americans ages 18 to 24. The survey found that 24 percent believed that a person with mental illness is dangerous. A mere 55 percent believed that treatment options exist that can help people with mental illness lead normal lives. Only 27 percent believed that recovery from mental illness was possible.

These misconceptions are a leading reason why many suffering from mental illness do not seek help. Those who suffer do not want to face discrimination and may feel embarrassed by their disorder. Unfortunately, feelings of shame and loneliness raise the risk of more mental health problems and even suicide.

Taking negative mental health slang out of our language is one small step to reversing the stigma surrounding mental health. SAMHSA suggests we need to work on being more accepting and inclusive of those with mental health disorders. Here are simple steps you can take now to reduce the stigma of mental health:

- Avoid using negative labels and slang.
- Speak openly and often about mental health and the facts you’ve learned from this project.
- Be a friend who reassures and encourages others to seek treatment when needed.

Think of the Person First

“He’s an addict” vs. “He lives with addiction.” Find out more about Person First Language at pacerteensagainstbullying.org/experiencing-bullying/language-is-important.
Do you believe everything you see online or on TV? Of course not, but the messages we receive from the media do shape our thoughts and opinions both positively and negatively.

What to Do

Select a movie from the following list. After watching it, write a summary of how mental health was depicted in the film. What do you think moviegoers learned about mental health by watching the movie? Did the film provide a positive or negative impression about mental health? How could the film be shaping society’s view of mental health? Write a journal entry to share your thoughts.

- A Beautiful Mind (PG-13)
- Benny & Joon (PG)
- Silver Linings Playbook (R: Those under 17 require accompanying parent or adult guardian.)
- Inside Out (PG)
- What’s Eating Gilbert Grape? (PG-13)
- The Soloist (PG-13)
- It’s a Wonderful Life (PG)
- What Dreams May Come (PG-13)
Background

Mass media is information that reaches many people quickly. It includes the internet, television, newspapers, magazines, and radio. Just try to imagine a world without it and you’ll understand the power of media messages.

Magazines showing only size 2 models send the message that thin is beautiful. Television shows and movies about college often show a lot of drinking, drugs, and parties. Is that really college life? Seeing these scenes might lead you to believe it is. You know the messages in both of these examples are not exactly true. Size does not determine beauty, and college life actually includes a lot of classes, studying, and library time.

This activity brought attention to the types of mental health messages in the media. Paying attention to these messages helps determine if they are accurate. The way the media presents mental health is one of the top ways Americans learn about the subject. However, research shows that much of what Americans learn is inaccurate and negative. Many stereotypes on television are actually the opposite of the facts. One example is the idea that those suffering from mental illness are violent. In reality, research shows those with mental illness are less likely to commit a violent crime. In fact, they are more likely to be the victim of one.

In recent years, many media outlets have realized the damage they are doing with these negative reports. They now work to include a more accurate picture of mental health. In 2013, the Associated Press even added a mental health section to their stylebook to guide journalists in addressing this topic. This one small step shows a move toward changing the stigma perpetuated by the media.

Did you know?

According to Science News for Students, screen time on all devices should be limited to less than two hours per day. Going over two hours can start to have negative effects on your mental health.

LEARNING OUTCOMES
Project skill: Logging mental health references from media sources
Life skill: Processing information personal and family health
Success indicator: Evaluates effects of media messages
Educational standard: NHES 2.12.5: Evaluate the effect of media on
**SHARE**  Why do you think mental health stigmas exist?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

**REFLECT**  Are you finding it easier to talk about mental health with your friends and family? Why or why not?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

**GENERALIZE**  What have you noticed about mental health stigmas? Has anything surprised you? Why or why not?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

**APPLY**  Consider taking the team approach and asking a group you are in to work toward changing stigmas. The group can be your family, friends, team, or 4-H club. What are some ideas for doing this?
_________________________________________________________________________________
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FOR USE IN 2021
Resilience

Have you ever wondered why some situations affect you differently than they affect others? Why getting a C on a test is “no big deal” for some, but life-altering for others? This has to do with resilience. Resilience is the ability to “bounce back” or to recover from difficulties. Maybe you have experienced setbacks and feel you are resilient. Maybe you aren’t sure what this means. You are going to examine resilience in this activity.

What to Do

Choose eight objects around your home. Take the items outside and place them on a tarp. You will hit each object with a hammer and observe each item’s resiliency by answering the questions: What did it look like before? What did it look like after? Does it have high or low resilience? Record your observations in the chart below.

Here are some suggestions: modeling clay, potato, rubber band, paper clip, banana, sweatshirt, bouncy ball, bag of chips, empty bottle or can, full bottle or can, book, eraser, pencil, pillow.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Object</th>
<th>Appearance Before</th>
<th>Appearance After</th>
<th>High or Low Resilience</th>
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</table>
What are some characteristics of the items with high resilience?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

What are some characteristics of the items with low resilience?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

Can any of these characteristics be applied to humans?
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

More Challenges

Now that you’ve seen objects that have resilience, create a list of coping strategies you can use to be resilient through a stressful situation.
Background

Resilience is a characteristic you can develop. If yours is a little low, do not worry. The American Psychological Association has the following suggestions for recovering from set-backs:

- Make connections with others.
- Accept that change is a part of life.
- Develop a positive attitude about yourself.
- Take care of yourself.
- Learn about yourself.
- Define goals.
- Have a hopeful outlook.

Volunteering or taking part in after-school activities or community service also can help build your resilience.

Mindfulness is a practice some people use to re-set their perspective each day. The basics are to guide the mind to be present in the moment and nonjudgmental about how we think, feel, and behave. Mindfulness activities like deep breathing, yoga, journaling, and listening to music can help you center your focus. When you become more aware of your thoughts and feelings, you can begin to change your responses to situations. In time, this can help make you more resilient.

Did you know?

Helen Keller, who was born blind and deaf, said, “When one door of happiness closes, another opens; but often we look so long at the closed door that we do not see the one which has been opened for us.”
Sometimes, just knowing you or a loved one does not have to face a difficult time alone makes a huge difference. Many outstanding local, state, and national resources are available to help those who need mental health care.

**What to Do**

You can be a helpful resource to those struggling with mental illness in your community. The first step is going on an information-gathering mission. Start by contacting your local health department and asking if they have a community resource directory. Then, contact your local police or sheriff’s department and ask who they contact when they encounter someone who needs assistance with mental health issues. You also can contact local mental health professionals and ask about helpful agencies or hotlines. At the end of these phone calls, ask the person helping you if he or she knows of other agencies or groups you could add to your list.

Create a flyer, website, video, or other promotional tool that points individuals to the resources you found. Attach a copy of it to this page, or provide a link to your resource. Now, think of ways to post your flyer or bring your community’s attention to your resources.

Description of promotional tool: ____________________________________________

Where will you place your promotional tool? __________________________________

How will you distribute it? ________________________________________________

**More Challenges**

Talk to a family member or friend who has a mental health disorder. Discuss ways you can help this person daily and create an action plan of what to do if a mental health crisis arises.
Background

The mental health field offers many health care professions. Here are a few examples:

- psychiatrists
- psychologists
- licensed social workers
- certified peer counselors
- licensed nurse practitioners
- licensed professional counselors

All have the same goal of helping those with a mental health illness, as well as their families.

Many mental health agencies are funded by government and grant dollars. This helps keep the cost of services low for individuals who need help. Many offer no-cost or sliding scale payments for individuals. Sliding scale payments are based on a person’s ability to pay. Instead of facing a fixed cost, patients pay for services according to their income. Cost should not be a barrier to getting needed help.

Did you know?

75% to 80%

In the United States, 75 to 80 percent of children and youth in need of mental health services do not receive them.

A Promise Worth Breaking

In spite of promises not to tell, sometimes our help alone is not enough. Your awareness of these warning signs and your willingness to contact a professional are critical. Signs someone may have decided to attempt suicide include these:

- Giving away possessions
- Seeming much sadder
- Seeming suddenly happier
- Seeking access to means to complete suicide, such as a firearm, pills, etc.
- Verbal and written statements of intent

It is not out of line to ask “Are you thinking of killing yourself?” If you believe someone is in danger of harming themselves or others, call 911 immediately.
Talking It Over

**SHARE**  Do you think adolescents today have high or low resilience? Share your thoughts.

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

**REFLECT**  What are some ways you can become more resilient?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

**GENERALIZE**  Identify at least one local resource (school or community) that focuses on building resilience in teens? Please list them.

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________

**APPLY**  Many communities provide programming for teens but some gaps may exist leaving out teens who need help. What can you do to help close the gaps?

_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________
anxiety disorder. Excessive worry and anxiety that can cause restlessness, fatigue, loss of focus, muscle tension, disturbed sleep, and irritability. There are several different types of anxiety disorders. Examples include generalized anxiety disorder, panic disorder, and social anxiety disorder.

behavioral health. The connection between a person’s well-being and his or her behavior. Medical professionals encourage healthy eating, regular exercise, adequate sleep, and a positive attitude for good behavioral health.

comorbidity. The presence of two or more diseases or disorders that occur with a primary disease or disorder. Two examples include a patient with anxiety and insomnia, or a diabetic with high blood pressure.

depression. Depression is a serious medical illness that involves the brain. Some of the signs of depression include feeling sad and/or hopeless, a loss of interest in hobbies or activities, low energy, a lack of focus, and appetite or weight changes. Clinical depression is when these and other symptoms occur nearly every day and last more than two weeks.

discrimination. The unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people or things, especially based race, age, gender, etc.

eating disorders. These disorders involve extreme emotions, attitudes, and behaviors related to food and weight. The most common eating disorders include: anorexia nervosa, binge eating, and bulimia.

interventions. Interventions are intended to cure or reduce the symptoms or effects of a mental health disorder. They can be formal psychotherapy such as individual, family, or group psychotherapy, or other evidence-based practices offered by a trained or licensed professional.

mental health. A state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and to cope with adversity. Mental health is vital for personal well-being, family and interpersonal relationships, and contribution to community or society.

mindfulness. The practice of continually being aware of the present moment and striving to be nonjudgmental about your thoughts, feelings, and life events.

mood disorders. These disorders may involve feeling sad all the time, losing interest in important parts of life, and changing between extreme happiness and extreme sadness. The most common mood disorders are depression, bipolar disorder, seasonal affective disorder (SAD), and self-harm.

positive mental health. High levels of life satisfaction and positive affect (emotional well-being) and psychosocial functioning (psychological and social well-being).

psychiatrist. A highly trained physician who diagnoses and treats mental disorders and is able to prescribe medicine.
psychologist. A highly trained person who provides psychological care and counseling to individuals who do not need prescription drugs.

mental health disorder. A clinically significant behavioral or psychological pattern in an individual that is associated with distress (such as pain), disability (impairment in one or more areas), or with a significantly increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom.

mental illness. A term that refers collectively to all diagnosable mental disorders.

non-suicidal self-injury. Self-injury, also known as self-harm, self-mutilation, or self-abuse occurs when someone intentionally harms herself or himself in a way that is impulsive but not intended to be lethal. The most common methods are skin cutting, head banging or hitting, and burning. Most individuals who engage in non-suicidal self-injury hurt themselves in more than one way.

recovery. A process of change individuals go through that improves their health and wellness, develops a self-directed life, and strives to reach their full potential. The four major dimensions that support a life in recovery are health, home, purpose, and community.

resilience. Being able to recover from change or a negative event.

ripple effect. The series of things that occur after one event or situation. This term comes from the ripples that form outwardly when an object is dropped in water.

risk factors. Any behavioral, hereditary, environmental, or other situation that increases the likelihood of developing a disease or disorder, or becoming involved in dangerous situations.

stigma. A mark of disgrace associated with a particular circumstance, quality, or person.

substance abuse. Substance use disorders can refer to substance use or substance dependence. Substances can be drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or any other mood-altering substances, such as whip-its.

worry. A state of mental distress due to concern about an upcoming event, risk, or threat.

Activity 1: Defining Mental Health

Your definitions do not have to match the following definitions adapted from youth.gov, but they should include the important points.

**Mental health:** A state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with others, and the ability to adapt to change. Mental health is important to personal well-being, interpersonal relationships, and contributing to the community.

**Mental disorder:** A behavioral or psychological pattern associated with an inability to function within personal relationships, or with an increased risk of death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom.

**Mental illness:** A term that refers collectively to all diagnosable mental disorders.

**Recovery:** A process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.

**Interventions:** The act of someone trying to improve the medical condition (including a mental disorder) of a loved one. These actions attempt to cure or reduce the symptoms of the condition. Assistance can be in the form of psychotherapy, educational programs, or other strategies that lead to better health.

**Positive mental health:** High levels of life satisfaction and positive affect (emotional well-being) and psychosocial functioning (psychological and social well-being).

Activity 5: Depression

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Is this typical OR depressed adolescent emotion/ behavior?</th>
<th>How can you respond to offer help?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| A. Sam   | **Typical:** Symptoms occur for 1-2 weeks.              | **Typical:**
|          |                                                          | 1. Listen to Sam as he vents his frustration. |
|          |                                                          | 2. Invite him to hang out with you doing activities you both enjoy. |
|          |                                                          | 3. Assure him that, although he may feel worthless, he is the same special person he has always been. |
| B. Joy   | **Depression:** Symptoms affect someone’s ability to live, laugh, and love for more than 3 weeks. | **Depressed:**
|          |                                                          | 1. Ask Joy if she has shared her feelings with a parent, trusted adult, or her doctor. |
|          |                                                          | 2. Share that you are worried about her and are wondering if she needs help with anything. Show your concern by offering some helpline numbers or asking if she can go with her to talk to a trusted adult. |
|          |                                                          | 3. Encourage her to try something she enjoys to get her mind off of what is happening such as yoga, reading, exercise, dancing, or another activity. |
|          |                                                          | 4. Ask Joy if she is thinking of killing herself. If she says “yes,” ask if she has a plan. Call a trusted adult, 911, and/or the Crisis Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK. |
Sources

Activity 2
Youth Mental Health First Aid® USA Teaching Notes ©, Mental Health Association of Maryland, Missouri Department of Mental Health and National Council for Behavioral Health, Maryland: Mental Health Association of Maryland, Inc., 2013.

Activity 3
“Being an Effective Caregiver.” Accessed June 30, 2017. mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/being-effective-caregiver.

Activity 5
Mental Health First Aid USA® for Adults Assisting Young Peoples, National Council for Behavioral Health, Mental Health Association of Maryland, Inc., 2016.

Activity 7

Activity 8

Activity 9

Activity 10
### Summary of Learning Outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Project Skill</th>
<th>Life Skill</th>
<th>Educational Standard*</th>
<th>Success Indicator</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Project Area: What Is Mental Health?</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Defining Mental Health</td>
<td>Writing definitions of mental health terms</td>
<td>Processing information</td>
<td>NHES 1.5.1: Describe the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health.</td>
<td>Compares own definitions with official ones</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Know the Numbers</td>
<td>Mentally organizing national statistics</td>
<td>Visualizing information</td>
<td>NHES 1.2.2: Recognize that there are multiple dimensions of health.</td>
<td>Creates a visual representation of mental health-related statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Investigating Impact</td>
<td>Interviewing a mental health professional</td>
<td>Thinking critically</td>
<td>NHES 1.8.6: Explain how appropriate health care can promote personal health.</td>
<td>Gathers information from a mental health professional about mental illness</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Area: Mental Health Disorders</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Anxiety</td>
<td>Keeping a worry journal for one week</td>
<td>Keeping records</td>
<td>NHES 7.8.2: Demonstrate health practices and behaviors that will maintain or improve the health of self and others.</td>
<td>Evaluates journal for patterns and effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Depression</td>
<td>Assessing mental health-related scenarios</td>
<td>Solving problems</td>
<td>NHES 5.12.2: Determine the value of applying a thoughtful decision-making process in health-related situations.</td>
<td>Determines appropriate response to adolescent behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Self-Harm</td>
<td>Creating a resourceful flyer for peers who may need assistance</td>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>NHES 1.5.5: Describe when it is important to seek health care.</td>
<td>Posts flyers in high-traffic areas</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Project Area: Stigma</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Think Before You Speak</td>
<td>Listing phrases using mental health slang</td>
<td>Managing yourself</td>
<td>NHES 2.8.2: Describe the influence of culture on health beliefs, practices, and behaviors.</td>
<td>Evaluates slang that could be offensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Media Messages</td>
<td>Logging mental health references from media sources</td>
<td>Processing information</td>
<td>NHES 2.12.5: Evaluate the effect of media on personal and family health.</td>
<td>Evaluates effects of media messages</td>
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<td><strong>Project Area: Self-Help and Resources</strong></td>
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<td>9. Exploring Resilience</td>
<td>Testing resilience of various objects</td>
<td>Understanding systems</td>
<td>NHES 11.2.3: Analyze how environment and personal health are interrelated.</td>
<td>Determines resilience of everyday items</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Helping Others</td>
<td>Gathering mental health resources to benefit your community</td>
<td>Communicating</td>
<td>NHES 1.5.5: Describe when it is important to seek health care.</td>
<td>Creates a promotional tool to help others who need mental health information</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The educational standards cited here are from the National Health Education Standards (NHES) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s School Health Education Resources (SHER). They are available in their entirety by visiting [cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm](http://cdc.gov/healthyschools/sher/standards/index.htm).*

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FOR USE IN 2021
I pledge

My **head** to clearer thinking,
My **heart** to greater loyalty,
My **hands** to larger service, and
My **health** to better living,
For my club, my community, my country, and my world.