

Mental Health – Lesson 1/3 (next two to follow in week 3 and 4)

### **What is Mental Health and how can we take care of it?**

Last week we posted a lesson on mental health which was specifically designed (by the PSHE Association) for home-learning. There are also a series of 3 lessons that were designed to be taught in school, but I think we can adapt them for home-learning – much of the PSHE curriculum is discussion based, so the children will really benefit from being able to discuss their ideas with you. Just do as little or as much as is helpful for you and your child.

The first activity is very similar to one you did last week, feel free to repeat it or miss it out – maybe just discuss what you decided last time.

#### **Activity 1 Resource 1: Mental health definition**

Pupils pick the one they think best sums up what we mean when we talk about mental health - explain and justify their ideas.

Explain that in the same way as everyone has physical health (which is about their body), everyone also has mental health – both children and adults – which is about their mind, their emotions and feelings. It can include how we feel about ourselves, our relationships and how we deal with challenges and difficulties. Explain that physical and mental health are connected. Being fit and well physically helps us to be fit and well mentally and vice versa.

*The World Health Organisation describes mental health as being:*

*‘A state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community.’*

*NHS England describes it as:*

*‘How we think, feel and behave.’*

**Discussion Resource 1a: Mental health thermometer.** Explain that our mental health can be thought of as being on a scale that can move up or down, a bit like a thermometer. Mental health can move anywhere up or down the thermometer, between being healthy or unwell. We can all move along the scale at any time, but there are things that we can do to support us to stay in the health and coping areas. Sometimes, we may go in to the struggling or unwell areas. To support us with our mental health, we can put things in place to help us feel better and move out of the struggling or unwell areas.

#### **Activity 2**

### **Discussion: Signs of wellbeing**

Draw a stick person and write some ideas around the person about how we know if someone feels good in their body (physical health) and their mind (mental health).

*Pupils might say things like: they seem quite happy most of the time; can talk about how they feel; take exercise; get out and about; skin and hair look fresh and glossy, look clean and tidy.*

Then discuss clues that might mean someone does not feel good in their body. How do we know? What about if someone does not feel good in their mind? Are there similar clues? Are we always able to tell how someone feels (physically or mentally)?

*Pupils might say things like: they feel ill, are tired all the time, look sad, don't have any get-up-and-go, skin looks pale or grey, need to take medicine*

### Activity 3

#### Card sort: activities for health

Organise **Resource 2a: Activities for health cards** under headings: things we should do '**everyday**'; '**sometimes**'; '**if there is a problem**'; '**rarely or not at all**'. First, ask pupils to do this for physical health (looking after bodies). Then ask them to repeat this activity, but this time considering mental health (looking after minds – feelings and emotions). Pupils should place the cards according to what they consider to be a 'best fit'.

### Activity 4

Read pupils the following scenario. This is provided for pupils on **Resource 3: Jay's story**:  
*Jay enjoys drawing cartoons and skateboarding. Jay is quiet and thoughtful, has good friends and likes school. Mostly Jay feels generally happy, although like everyone, Jay has ups and downs.*

*Jay has recently started feeling sad. Most days the sadness seems to come and go, but some days it feels as though a dark cloud is gathering above and following Jay around all day. Skateboarding takes Jay's mind off it and when the feelings start to get stronger Jay draws a cartoon that shows the feelings and the cloud.*

*Jay feels very sad most of the time. Every day when Jay wakes up, Jay feels the day ahead is just too much. Everything feels grey and dark. Jay is finding it hard to concentrate at school and some days doesn't want to go to school at all. Nothing seems enjoyable anymore, not even skateboarding! Jay's friends are worried.*

Pupils should plot Jay's mental health on the thermometer, then suggest ways to strengthen Jay's ability to cope, so that Jay can manage his wellbeing to avoid moving in to the struggling zone, and reduce his chances of being in the unwell area.

Pupils consider one strategy from today's lesson that they think they could use in their own lives, to support their own mental health and wellbeing. Invite them to write it on a sticky note and to keep it as a reminder.

Hope you are all doing ok. Remember that getting outside for fresh air – even when you might not feel like it, or it is raining, is one of the best ways to improve our mental wellbeing.

Stay safe and look after yourselves,

Mrs Bennett x

