



LESSON PLAN: MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS-RAISING POSTERS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- **Learn how to make an attention-grabbing informational poster**
- **Expand your knowledge on mental health by demonstrating your research skills**
- **Create a resource that can be referred to and help destigmatize the talk around mental health through education**
- **Learn how to use a graphic design platform**
- **Navigate group works effectively (this only applies if the posters are made in groups)**

LESSON MATERIALS

- Computers
- A graphic design platform such as Canva (<https://www.canva.com/>), which is free

INTRODUCTION

Mental health is “the condition of being sound mentally and emotionally that is characterized by the absence of mental illness and by adequate adjustment especially as reflected in feeling comfortable about oneself, positive feelings about others, and the ability to meet the demands of daily life.” It is also a way of referring to our “emotional, psychological, and social well-being.”

Mental health is important throughout our whole life and affects more or less every individual. It is a spectrum that can be affected by numerous characteristics such as biological factors (genes, brain chemistry), life experiences (trauma, abuse), and a family history of mental health problems.

Mental illness on the other hand is “a health condition involving changes in emotion, thinking or behavior (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities.”

Poor mental health does not necessarily indicate a mental illness; however, they often come hand in hand.

Untreated mental illness will transgress into adulthood and limit the opportunities to live fulfilling lives. However, only 50.6% of youth with a mental illness received treatment in 2020. Individuals with mental health problems can improve and recover completely. Treatments for serious mental illnesses alone are between 70 and 90% effective in the significant reduction of symptoms and improved quality of life. The earlier the treatment, the more effective it is. This is why early identification is crucial.

The classroom should feel like a safe space for your students to open up about their mental health. If they are experiencing emotional discomfort, they shouldn't be afraid to reach out for help.

Mental illness and mental health problems are common. Globally, one in seven 10-19 year-olds experiences a mental disorder, accounting for 13% of the global burden of disease in this age group according to the World Health Organization (WHO). The most prevalent mental illnesses among teens are Anxiety Disorders and Depression, which share common symptoms, and half of the time those diagnosed with Depression are also diagnosed with an Anxiety Disorder.

The stigma that surrounds the mental health conversation and mental illness decreases the belief that mental disorders are real and treatable, and increases hostility towards those affected. Raising awareness by educating ourselves and others is an effective way of activating the conversation around mental health as well as reducing the emotional and financial barriers that stigma has put in place in our society.

When creating these posters with your students, you are playing a part in breaking down these barriers and improving the quality of life of those that surround you.





AGENDA

STEPS	ACTIVITIES	OBJECTIVES
DAY 1 - Introduction to mental health	Instructor introduces mental health and the importance of destigmatizing mental illness. Students/Participants brainstorm a topic for their poster.	→ Expand your knowledge about mental health
DAY 1 - Research	Students/Participants research statistics, definitions, etc. whilst referring to the poster-making guide and their instructor.	→ Demonstrate research skills
DAY 2 - Finalize and organize research	Students/Participants finalize their research and then organize it into sections that will then come out on the poster.	→ Demonstrate research skills
DAY 2 - Learn how to use graphic design platform	With the help of the instructor, students/participants will navigate a graphic design platform and search for templates, graphic elements. They will also make the main aesthetic choices such as color scheme and font.	→ Learn how to use a graphic design platform
DAY 3 - Poster Conception	Using the guide, students/participants will begin piecing together their posters with the help of their instructor and peers for feedback. By the end of this session, the poster should be practically finished and include a title and the main research elements.	→ Learn how to make an attention-grabbing informational poster → Create a resource that can be referred to and help destigmatize the talk around mental health through education
DAY 4 - Finalize Poster Conception	This time should be used to touch up on the posters and listen to comments in order to perfect the designs. The instructor can choose to have the students/participants share their research in the form of a presentation with the poster as visual support.	→ Learn how to make an attention-grabbing informational poster → Create a resource that can be referred to and help destigmatize the talk around mental health through education

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BACKGROUND - DEFINITIONS FROM THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF MENTAL HEALTH



Eating disorders

"Eating disorders are serious and sometimes fatal illnesses that cause severe disturbances to a person's eating behaviors. Obsessions with food, body weight, and shape may also signal an eating disorder."

Anorexia Nervosa

"Anorexia Nervosa is characterized by a significant and persistent reduction in food intake leading to extremely low body weight in the context of age, sex, and physical health; a relentless pursuit of thinness; a distortion of body image and intense fear of gaining weight; and extremely disturbed eating behavior. Many people with anorexia see themselves as overweight, even when they are starved or severely malnourished."

Binge Eating Disorder

"Binge eating disorder is characterized by recurrent binge eating episodes during which a person feels a loss of control and marked distress over his, her [or their] eating. Unlike bulimia nervosa, binge eating episodes are not followed by purging, excessive exercise, or fasting."

Mental Illnesses

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

"Obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD) is often a long-lasting disorder in which a person has uncontrollable, reoccurring thoughts (obsessions), and behaviors (compulsions) that he or she [or they] feel(s) the urge to repeat over and over."

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

"Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can develop after exposure to a potentially traumatic event that is beyond a typical stressor. (...) People who experience PTSD may have persistent, frightening thoughts and memories of the event(s), experience sleep problems, feel detached or numb, or may be easily startled. In severe forms, PTSD can significantly impair a person's ability to function at work, at home, and socially."

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)

"Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is one of the most common childhood disorders and can continue through adolescence and into adulthood. Symptoms include difficulty staying focused and paying attention, difficulty controlling behavior, and hyperactivity (over-activity)."

Major Depression

"Major depression is one of the most common mental disorders in the United States. For some individuals, major depression can result in severe impairments that interfere with or limit one's ability to carry out major life activities." It is "a period of at least two weeks when a person experienced a depressed mood or loss of interest or pleasure in daily activities, and had a majority of specified symptoms, such as problems with sleep, eating, energy, concentration, or self-worth."

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

"Generalized anxiety disorder is characterized by excessive anxiety and worry about a variety of events or activities (e.g., work or school performance) that occurs more days than not, for at least 6 months. People with generalized anxiety disorder find it difficult to control their worry, which may cause impairment in social, occupational, or other areas of functioning."

Borderline Personality Disorder

"Borderline personality disorder is a serious mental disorder marked by a pattern of instability in moods, behavior, self-image, and functioning. These experiences often result in impulsive actions and unstable relationships. A person with borderline personality disorder may experience intense episodes of anger, depression, and anxiety that may last from only a few hours to days."

Bipolar Disorder

"Bipolar Disorder, sometimes referred to as manic-depressive disorder, is characterized by dramatic shifts in mood, energy, and activity levels that affect a person's ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. These shifts in mood and energy levels are more severe than the normal ups and downs that are experienced by everyone."

Schizophrenia

"Schizophrenia is a mental disorder characterized by disruptions in thought processes, perceptions, emotional responsiveness, and social interactions. Although the course of schizophrenia varies among individuals, schizophrenia is typically persistent and can be both severe and disabling."

SOURCES:

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health>

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/mental%20health>

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health>

<https://psychiatry.org/patients-families/what-is-mental-illness>

[https://namica.org/what-is-mental-](https://namica.org/what-is-mental-illness/#:~:text=The%20best%20treatments%20for%20serious,and%20psychosocial%20treatments%20and%20supports.)

[illness/#:~:text=The%20best%20treatments%20for%20serious,and%20psychosocial%20treatments%20and%20supports.](https://namica.org/what-is-mental-illness/#:~:text=The%20best%20treatments%20for%20serious,and%20psychosocial%20treatments%20and%20supports.)



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