

## Breaking the Stigma Activity

Lesson Plan: Breaking the Mental Health Stigma

Grade Level: 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> grade

Curriculum Outcomes:

Health 1: Define stigma related to mental and behavioral health.

Lesson Objectives:

1. Define stigma related to mental and behavioral health and understand its impact on individuals and communities.
2. Recognize and challenge common stereotypes and misconceptions about mental health.
3. Promote empathy, compassion, and a supportive attitude towards individuals dealing with mental health challenges.
4. Develop strategies to break the mental health stigma in the school and community.

Duration: 1 class period (45-60 mins)

Materials:

1. Whiteboard or interactive display
2. Markers and colored pens
3. Breaking the Mental Health Stigma worksheet (attached)

Procedure:

A. Introduction (10 minutes)

- Begin the lesson by discussing the concept of mental health stigma. Explain that stigma refers to negative attitudes, beliefs, and stereotypes associated with mental and behavioral health issues.
- Mental health stigma resources:
  - o [Reducing Mental Health Stigma in Schools – Reach Out](#)
  - o [Talking to Adolescents and Teens: Starting the Conversation – Mental Health America](#)
  - o Videos:
    - [Mental health: What it is and why it matters – CBC Kids News](#)
      - 4:27 Stigma explained
    - [Break the Stigma Around Children’s Mental Health – Children’s Hospital Colorado](#)
- Ask students if they have heard or seen examples of mental health stigma in their community or the media.

B. Stigma Discussion (10 minutes)

- Facilitate a class discussion on common misconceptions and stereotypes related to mental health. Write some examples on the board for reference.
  - Encourage students to share their thoughts and feelings about these stereotypes.
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- Discussion Prompts:
  - o Think about the language used in the example. Is it respectful and supportive, or does it contribute to stigma? How can we use language to promote a stigma-free environment?
  - o Reflect on a time when you may have heard or witnessed mental health stigma. How could you have responded differently to challenge the stigma effectively?
  - o What are some ways we can support individuals who are facing mental health challenges and encourage them to seek help without judgment or fear of stigma?
- These critical thinking questions encourage students to analyze examples of mental health stigma, consider its impact, and develop a deeper understanding of the importance of challenging stereotypes and promoting empathy and understanding. It also prompts them to think about concrete actions they can take to create a stigma-free environment and support those experiencing mental health challenges.

#### C. Identifying Stigma (15 minutes)

- Hand out the Breaking Mental Health Stigma worksheet.
- Individually, in pairs, or in small groups, have students complete the worksheet.

#### D. Challenging Stigma (10 minutes)

- Regroup as a class and discuss the examples of stigma students identified in the previous activity.
- Encourage students to brainstorm ways to challenge these misconceptions and promote a stigma-free environment.

#### Conclusion:

- Review the main points discussed during the lesson, emphasizing the definition of mental health stigma and its impact on individuals and communities.
- Encourage students to be advocates for mental health awareness and to challenge stigma whenever they encounter it in their lives.
- Remind them of the importance of creating a supportive and empathetic environment for those dealing with mental health challenges.

#### Assessment:

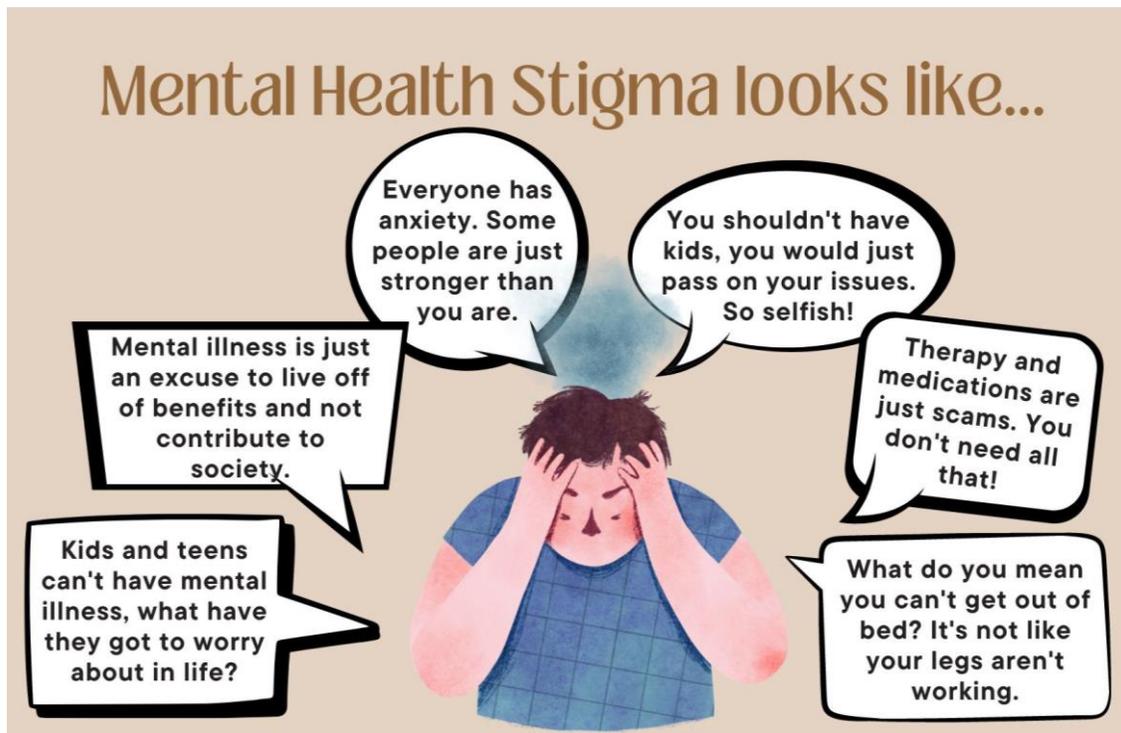
- Assess student participation during class discussions, group activity and worksheet completion.
  - Review completed worksheets to ensure students have grasped the concept of mental health stigma and its implications.
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## Breaking the Mental Health Stigma Worksheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Below are common misconceptions related to mental health stigma. Analyze each example and think about why they are incorrect and the harm these ideas can cause. Then, answer the questions.



1. What is mental health stigma, and how does it affect individuals who experience it?
  2. From the examples above, choose one and identify the stereotype or misconception related to mental health. How might this stereotype negatively impact someone's well-being?
  3. How can spreading awareness and knowledge about mental health help reduce stigma?
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