

LESSON PLAN

Learn about the chemicals in the brain that impact mental health, the stigmas associated with mental health, and ways to promote mental well-being to rewrite the narrative around mental health.

Explore brain chemistry, how to care for oneself, and brain health. With unique features, including youth-generated instructional videos and tips for taking concrete action against mental health stigma and bias, learn about how mental health is addressed globally while working to create a kinder, more compassionate world.



About Global Nomads Group

For over 25 years, Global Nomads Group has leveraged technology to host digital safe spaces for young people around the world to share their stories, challenge assumptions, engage with and learn from each other, and, by doing so, foster a more just world.

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Objectives

By the end of this module, students will be able to:

1. Examine the chemical reactions in their brain
2. Understand the different chemicals that are released in times of happiness and stress

Introduction

- Begin the lesson by asking the students if they have ever thought about how their brain works.
- Ask them to share their thoughts and knowledge about the brain.
- Explain that the brain controls many functions in our bodies, including our mood, movement, and ability to do certain activities.

Video: The Chemicals in Your Brain that Make You Happy

- Show the video “The Chemicals in Your Brain that Make You Happy” to the class.
- After the video, ask the students what they learned about the chemicals in the brain that affect happiness. Go over each of the chemicals listed on the video and their functions in the brain.
- Ask the students to give examples of how these chemicals affect their daily lives.
- Here’s a list of chemicals that you can share with your students:
 - Dopamine: Involved in mood and movement.
 - Serotonin: Mainly involved in mood, specifically happiness.
 - Oxytocin: Released during physical connection, associated with happiness.
 - Cortisol: Released during stressful situations, can cause physical effects such as increased heart rate, expanded lung capacity, sweat, headaches, and nausea.
 - Adrenaline: Also released during stressful situations, can cause physical effects such as increased heart rate, expanded lung capacity, sweat, headaches, and nausea.

Mental Health and Brain Chemistry

- Discuss with the students how brain chemistry affects mental health.
- Explain that while everyone's brain produces these chemicals, the chemical makeup of each person's brain differs.
- Emphasize that it is important to take care of mental health because it affects our ability to do various activities, our interactions with others, and our mindset about life.
- Provide examples of how mental health can be taken care of, such as getting enough sleep, exercising, and doing activities that one finds relaxing.

Mental Health Matters

- Ask students to read the many ways you can take care of your mental health.
- Ask them to work in pairs and come up with additional ways to add to the ones they've already read.
- After completing the activity, ask each pair to share their ideas with the class.
- Here's a list of ideas you can share with your students:
 - Getting enough sleep (8-12 hours per night).
 - Exercising regularly.
 - Eating a healthy diet.
 - Practicing relaxation techniques (meditation, deep breathing).
 - Spending time with loved ones.
 - Pursuing hobbies and interests.
 - Seeking professional help if needed.

Explore

Show the students the map, and explore the stories, articles, and videos that have been provided by their global peers. Ask the youth to pick their top three stories, and share them with their peers.

Share

Students will answer the following prompts:

1. Think of a time when you were stressed. Consider what was causing your stress, and how you were feeling during that time.
2. Consider what chemicals in your brain could have contributed to your stress.
3. Remember what things you did to take care of yourself during that time.
4. How does understanding the chemicals in your brain help you manage stress?
5. What are some ways that you would like to try to manage stress in the future?

At the end of their stories, students should mention 2-4 stories and resources they've explored and would recommend to their global peers.

Objectives

By the end of this module, students will be able to:

1. Explore the stigma surrounding mental health in their local community
2. Reflect on the ways that mental health stigma is created and perpetuated

Introduction

- Start the class by asking students if they have ever heard or used any of the following words to describe someone: crazy, deranged, psycho, weak, selfish, bad, or any other derogatory words related to mental health.
- Ask students to share their experiences or thoughts on why people use these words.
- Explain that these words are examples of mental health stigma, which is a major barrier to individuals seeking and receiving mental health treatment.

Types of Mental Health Stigma

- Divide the students into groups of four or five.
- Assign each group one of the four types of mental health stigma: public stigma, self-stigma, stigma by association, and structural stigma.
- Ask each group to read and discuss the provided text in the course and identify examples of their assigned type of stigma.
- Each group will then present their findings to the class on the whiteboard or poster paper.

Personal Experience Reflection

- Show students the video “Sharing Our Stories”.
- Have the students take a few minutes to reflect on a personal experience where they felt stigmatized due to mental health or witnessed someone else being stigmatized.
- Ask them to write a brief summary of their experience on a piece of paper.

- Invite students who are willing to share their experiences with the class and discuss how stigma impacted them or the person they witnessed being stigmatized.
- Emphasize the importance of creating a safe and supportive environment for individuals to talk about their mental health experiences.

Combating Mental Health Stigma

- Ask the students to brainstorm ways that they can combat mental health stigma in their community.
- Encourage them to think about how they can support individuals who are seeking mental health treatment and create a more positive and accepting community.
- Write down the ideas on the whiteboard or poster paper.

Conclusion

- Recap the main points of the lesson:
 - The different types of mental health stigma.
 - How stigma impacts individuals and the community.
 - Ways to combat stigma in our community.
- Encourage students to continue to learn and talk about mental health in a supportive and understanding way.
- Remind students that it's okay to seek help and support for their mental health, and that they can make a difference in creating a more accepting community.

Explore

Show the students the map, and explore the stories, articles, and videos that have been provided by their global peers. Ask the youth to pick their top three stories, and share them with their peers.

Share

Students will answer the following prompts:

1. Think about the stigmas people have about mental health in your community.
2. Ask yourself:
 1. Do people in my community make mental health a priority?
 2. How are people with mental disorders and poor mental health treated in my community?
3. Consider a time when you noticed a stigma about mental health in your community.
4. Explain how those with mental disorders and poor mental health are treated in your family, your school, and your local community.

At the end of their stories, students should mention 2-4 stories and resources they've explored and would recommend to their global peers.

Objectives

By the end of this module, students will be able to:

1. Consider the role of social media in mental health.
2. Explore methods of reducing stress and mental health challenges in their daily life.

Introduction

- Ask students how much time they spend on social media every day.
- Discuss the reasons why they use social media.
- Present the information given in the prompt about the average time spent on social media by people between the ages of 18-24.

Discussing Social Media

- Explain how social media can cause low self-esteem, FOMO (fear of missing out), and can enhance feelings of loneliness and anxiety.
- Show the image of a young girl sitting on a beige couch, holding a tablet in her hands.
- Discuss how social media is designed to be addictive and how it can cause some users to become addicted to social media, feeling like they are unable to live without their phones.

Effects of Social Media on Gen Z

- Show students the video “Effects of Social Media on Gen Z”.
- Discuss with students the effect of social media on Gen Z and let them share their ideas and thoughts.
- Ask your students the following questions to keep them engaged in the discussion:
 - How can social media be both beneficial and harmful?
 - What can be some reasons why people turn to social media when feeling lonely or sad?

- What are some ways to prevent social media from negatively affecting our mental health?

Conclusion

- Discuss the answers to the discussion questions as a class and ask students to share their opinions.
- Provide some simple changes that can be made to prevent negative effects of social media, such as turning off notifications and setting a time limit to social media use.
- Ask students to brainstorm some more ideas and list them on the board.
- Ask students to select the change they would like to make in their everyday life to prevent negative effects of social media.
- Ask students to reflect on what they learned in the lesson and how they can use this knowledge in their daily lives.

Explore

Show the students the map, and explore the stories, articles, and videos that have been provided by their global peers. Ask the youth to pick their top three stories, and share them with their peers.

Share

Students will answer the following prompts:

1. Think about a time when you decided not to use your phone or computer for a long time (at least a couple of hours!).
2. If you can't think of a time, try putting your phone down/stepping away from the computer for a few hours this week.
3. Consider how it feels to be away from your phone and computer.
4. Explain whether being away from screens made you feel anxious, calm, bored, or any other emotion. Do you think you'll try to look at your phone and computer less in the future?

At the end of their stories, students should mention 2-4 stories and resources they've explored and would recommend to their global peers.

Objectives

By the end of this module, students will be able to:

1. Set a goal to support positive mental health for all.
2. Know how stories help connect us to one another.

Introduction

- Begin the lesson by asking students to reflect on the statement: “Youth are connected more than ever.”
- Ask them to share their thoughts and feelings about this statement.
- Introduce the concept of SMARTIE goals by explaining what each letter in the acronym stands for.

SMARTIE Goal

- Divide students into small groups.
- Show students some examples of SMARTIE goals and let them discuss the examples. You can use the following example:

A Smartie Goal should be:

S - Specific: Reflects a concrete, definable goal that you seek to accomplish, connected to a broader values-based purpose. Guiding Questions: What specifically do you want to do? Is the purpose of your goal clear? What is your desired result?

M - Measurable: Includes clear measures that show whether the goal has been reached (in numbers or a measurable change). Guiding Questions: How will you measure your progress? How will you know when you have achieved your goal?

A - Ambitious: Challenging enough that reaching the goal will make a difference in people’s lives. Guiding Questions: Is your goal aligned with the issue? Is your goal

challenging enough? Is your goal meaningful and relevant? Why does your goal matter? What makes attaining this goal important?

R - Realistic: Something you can actually accomplish. Guiding Questions: Is this goal within your power to accomplish? Do you have the resources you need to accomplish your goal? Do you have access to the contacts, support, training, facilities, education, skills that your goal requires?

T - Time-bound: Includes clear deadlines. Guiding Questions: When exactly do you want to accomplish this goal? What time frame do you need to reach your goal? When will your goal be achieved and at what pace?

I - Inclusive: The goal brings people who are directly affected, particularly those most impacted, into reaching the goal. Guiding Questions: Are all the people affected accounted for in your goal? Does it bring in traditionally marginalized people? How can you make your goal be inclusive towards/positively impact people from marginalized groups? Is your goal taking a diverse universe into consideration?

E - Equitable: Seeks to address injustice, inequity, and oppression. Guiding Questions: Does it seek to address systemic injustice, inequity, or oppression? How can you adapt your goal so that it actively and intentionally seeks to promote equity and limit the disparity of access to resources? How can you make your goal purposefully seek to share power amongst groups?

- Let's explore how regular goals differ from SMARTIE Goals. Check out the example below:

Regular Goal: I feel like using ableist language all the time without even thinking about it. I'd like to try to use words like "crazy", "idiot", and "lunatic" less since they portray people with mental health disabilities negatively.

SMARTIE Goal: I will stop using ableist language by marking down a tally each time I catch myself saying an ableist term. I hope to reduce my use of these words by half each week. This goal is difficult, because I usually use ableist language without even thinking about it – but that shows how easy it is to be ableist, and I don't want to exclude disabled people in the way I speak. I think reducing my use of ableist terms each week is a realistic goal, because it may be hard to make myself stop all at once. I'll need some time to get used to changing the ways I use language. I am planning to measure my use of ableist language and try to reduce it over a period of three weeks, and, at the end of the three weeks, I will re-evaluate myself in order to figure out how he would like to proceed. I am dedicated to meeting my goal for doing my part in creating a welcoming environment for neuro-diversity. I hope that by using ableist language less, I can influence others to do the same, which will help to create a more inclusive environment for everyone!

Ask each group to create a SMARTIE goal that addresses the issue they were given. After 15 minutes, have each group share their SMARTIE goal with the class.

Individual Activity

- Provide each student with a worksheet to create their own SMARTIE goal.
- Ask students to think about an issue that is important to them and create a SMARTIE goal that addresses that issue.
- Allow time for students to work on their own, and then have volunteers share their SMARTIE goal with the class.

Encourage students to use SMARTIE goals to make positive changes in their lives and in the world around them.

Explore

Show the students the map, and explore the stories, articles, and videos that have been provided by their global peers. Ask the youth to pick their top three stories, and share them with their peers.

Share

Students will answer the following prompts:

1. Create a SMARTIE Goal that outlines your plan to take action to support mental health for everyone.
2. Make sure your goal is Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Realistic, Time-bound, Inclusive, and Equitable.

At the end of their stories, students should mention 2-4 stories and resources they've explored and would recommend to their global peers.