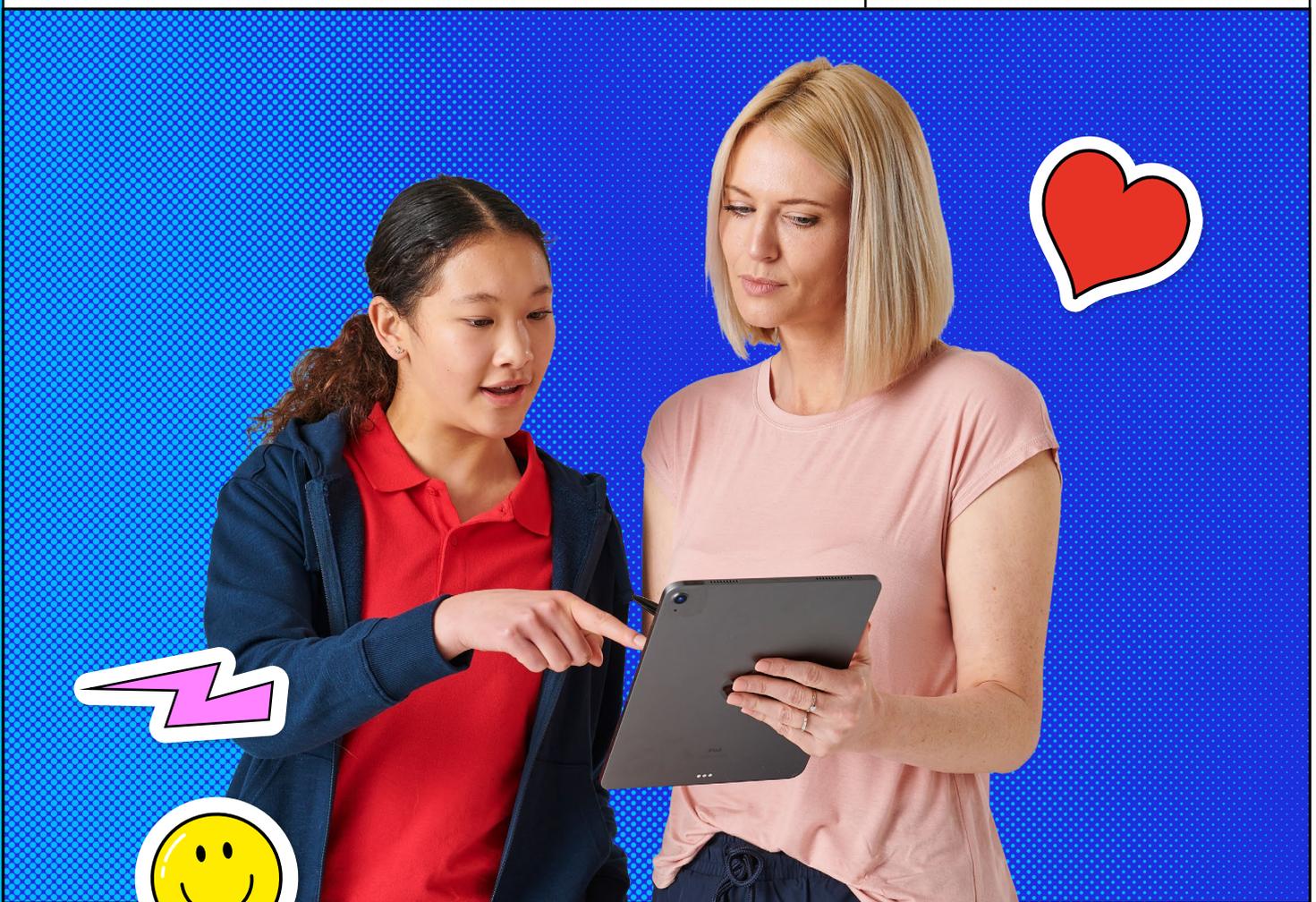


AFL GOALS

DECODING MENTAL HEALTH

Students will be introduced to the concept of mental health and wellbeing and the role this plays in their lives.

**SECONDARY SCHOOL
MODULE 1
LESSONS 1-4**



GENERAL CAPABILITIES:

**Personal and
Social Capability**

ELEMENT

Self-Awareness

SUB-ELEMENT

Personal Awareness

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Students will be introduced to the concept of mental health and wellbeing and the role this plays in their lives. They will reflect on their own mental health and wellbeing and learn that it is normal for this to move up and down throughout their lives. Students will start to learn about the various things that can impact mental health and wellbeing both positively and negatively, and reflect on how the daily choices they make can play a role in improving or diminishing their own mental health and wellbeing. Students will consider what constitutes normal 'ups and downs' and what might constitute a more serious mental health concern like anxiety and depression. Students will explore various healthy and unhealthy coping strategies from screen time and drugs/substances to breathing and grounding exercises, and reflect on the role these play in maintaining overall mental health and wellbeing. They will consider who in their lives can be approached for support and discuss ways to ask for support. Students will then consolidate this learning in a Physical Education or on-field practical lesson. Suggested activities incorporate AFL-specific skills. If you would like to build your capacity or familiarise yourself with how to teach these skills, you may like to learn more through our professional learning platform [Professional Learning - Play AFL](#). In addition, there is a range of free, downloadable content that supports the teaching of practical skills on the AFL Play/Schools website under [Teacher Resources](#).



LESSON SUMMARIES

LESSON 1

In this lesson students are introduced to the concept of mental health and wellbeing and the various factors that influence it including purpose in life, autonomy, mastery, positive relationships, self-acceptance and personal growth. Students will start to think about different ways to look after mental health and wellbeing, and think about it as sitting on a continuum from good mental health to feeling overwhelmed. Students will learn that it is normal for individuals to move up and down on this continuum throughout life.

LESSON 2

After learning about the Mental Health Continuum students will look in more detail at how emotions can go up and down and that this is a normal part of life. They will start to identify signs that might indicate a mental health concern like anxiety and depression that sit outside of these normal emotional ups and downs. The lesson will then focus on factors that can influence mental health and wellbeing with a focus on screen time and drugs/substances. Students will look at how these things can be used as coping strategies when experiencing negative emotions, and how this can be dangerous.

LESSON 3

Students will reflect on who and where they can go for help if they need to talk about mental health, and consider various strategies for seeking help including what to say, how to say it, and when/where to have these conversations. Following on from the discussion around unhelpful coping strategies like screen time and drugs/substances in Lesson 2, students will be introduced to various healthy coping strategies including physical exercise, breathing and grounding exercises, and positive thinking.

LESSON 4

The final lesson is an on-field activity that can be taught as a full 40-60 minute PE lesson outdoors or in a gym. Students will consolidate learnings from this module, making the connection between ways to stay mentally fit and physical health. Students will reflect on where they sit on the Mental Health Continuum before and after the lesson, thereby strengthening the connection between physical health and mental health.



FOR TEACHERS

The **Reflection Journal** has been provided to record student learning. This is an opportunity for students to make notes about their thoughts, feelings and reflections throughout the module.

Key Inquiry Questions

- What positive actions contribute to the health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity levels of the wider community?
- How can I effectively manage my own and support others' health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity?

Outcomes

- examines and demonstrates the role help-seeking strategies and behaviours play in supporting themselves and others (PD4-2)
- recognises how contextual factors influence attitudes and behaviours and proposes strategies to enhance health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity (PD4-6)
- investigates health practices, behaviours and resources to promote health, safety, wellbeing and physically active communities (PD4-7)
- plans for and participates in activities that encourage health and a lifetime of physical activity (PD4-8)
- demonstrates self-management skills to effectively manage complex situations (PD4-9)

Content

- Students examine factors that influence health and wellbeing
 - describe health and its dynamic nature
 - explore the term 'wellbeing' and examine factors that contribute to overall wellbeing
 - examine how contextual factors influence attitudes and behaviours towards health and wellbeing
- Students propose and develop protective strategies to effectively manage their own personal health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS073)
 - analyse how emotions, strengths and decision-making can affect outcomes in different scenarios
 - explore the impact of stress and coping on mental health
 - practise ways to communicate concerns about health, safety and wellbeing to a variety of support people
- Students recognise potentially unsafe environments and describe strategies to promote their own and others' health, safety and wellbeing in a variety of real-life situations:
 - classify drugs and describe the short-term and long-term effects of drug use on health, safety and wellbeing
- Students plan and use health practices, behaviours and resources to enhance the health, safety, wellbeing and physical activity participation of their communities (ACPPS077)
 - investigate different approaches and develop personal plans for promoting their own positive mental health and wellbeing, eg mindfulness, relaxation, healthy eating
- Students investigate the benefits of a balanced lifestyle and explore strategies that contribute to community health, wellbeing and participation in a lifetime of physical activity
 - discuss the physical, social, emotional and spiritual benefits of being active in outdoor and natural environments to community health and wellbeing

NSW CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

CURRICULUM AREA

Personal Development,
Health and Physical
Education (PDHPE)
Stage 4

STRAND

Health, Wellbeing
and Relationships

Key Inquiry Questions

- What skills and strategies can be used to manage change, challenges and seek help?

Outcomes

- examines and demonstrates the role help-seeking strategies and behaviours play in supporting themselves and others (PD4-2)

Content

- Students practise and apply skills and strategies to seek help for themselves and others(ACPPS072)
- propose individual support networks and external support services
- practise communication techniques to persuade someone to seek help in different situations, eg mental health concerns, drug use, relationship or family and domestic violence
- identify barriers to seeking help and propose strategies to overcome these barriers
- recognise scenarios that involve change and challenge for young people and rehearse help-seeking strategies to overcome each situation, eg ending a relationship, when feeling overwhelmed, grieving or losing someone

CURRICULUM AREA

Personal Development,
Health and Physical
Education (PDHPE)
Stage 4

STRAND

Movement Skill and
Performance

Key Inquiry Questions

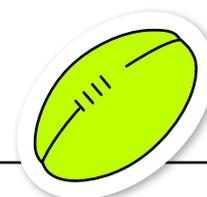
- How can I apply my skills to collaborate, communicate, solve problems and include others in physical activity?

Outcomes

- applies and refines interpersonal skills to assist themselves and others to interact respectfully and promote inclusion in a variety of groups or contexts (PD4-10)

Content

- Students practise and apply interpersonal skills when undertaking a range of roles in physical activities (ACPMPO86)
- participate in initiative/challenge physical activities designed to develop teamwork, cooperation and problem-solving



LESSON

1

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Year Level

Lower Secondary

Learning Area

Health & Physical Education

Duration

40–60 minutes



OVERVIEW

This lesson explores what mental health is, various factors that influence it, and ways of thinking about mental health using the Mental Health Continuum.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand what mental health and wellbeing is
- To identify the various factors that contribute to mental health
- To understand that mental health can be seen as operating on a continuum

RESOURCES

- ▶ Video: [Decoding Mental Health: Booksmarts](#)
- ▶ Video: [6 Points With Mia King](#)
- 📄 Student worksheet: [Mental Health Continuum](#)

STUDENT SUCCESS CRITERIA

- 1 I can explain what mental health and wellbeing is
- 2 I can identify several factors that contribute to mental health and wellbeing
- 3 I can explain the Mental Health Continuum and consider where I might sit on it at a moment in time

CURRICULUM LINKS

NSW Curriculum / Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) Stage 4

- **Content Strand:** [Healthy, Safe and Active Lifestyles](#)
- **Key Inquiry Questions:**
 - What positive actions contribute to the health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity levels of the wider community?
- **Outcomes:** recognises how contextual factors influence attitudes and behaviours and proposes strategies to enhance health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity (PD4-6)
- **Content:** Students examine factors that influence health and wellbeing
 - describe health and its dynamic nature
 - explore the term 'wellbeing' and examine factors that contribute to overall wellbeing
 - examine how contextual factors influence attitudes and behaviours towards health and wellbeing

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

INTRODUCTION

5-10 mins

Start by sharing the learning objectives and student success criteria.

- Opening question (individual reflection, group or class):
 - What is health? What can we do to be 'healthy'?

Have students brainstorm responses to this question and write on the board. Students may naturally distinguish mental health from physical health. If they do not, help them to do this by explaining that while physical health is the health and wellness of our body, mental health is how we feel inside but can manifest as physical symptoms e.g. recurrent tummy pain. Ask students to look at their ideas on the board for ways to be healthy

(e.g. sleep, diet, exercise): do any solely apply to physical health or mental health and not the other? Can students underline factors that contribute to physical health in one colour, and mental health in another? Chances are many will cross over.

Explain that the following video will introduce the concept of mental health and explain some of the key things that can influence it.

Video

- ▶ Play [Decoding Mental Health: Booksmarts](#)



MAIN LESSON CONTENT

30–40 mins

Activity 1

Ask students to try to remember the six areas of mental health and wellbeing from the video. Run through each of the areas using the explanations and examples below.

- **Purpose in life:** feeling like you have dreams and goals
 - E.g. You'd like to be a teacher when you grow up
- **Mastery:** feeling that you're good at something
 - E.g. You really love drawing and feel like you're getting better at it
- **Autonomy:** having choices in your life and feeling like you can freely express yourself
 - E.g. You're not allowed to quit an after-school activity even though you hate it
- **Positive relationships:** feeling like you have happy, healthy relationships with family and friends
 - E.g. You had a fight with a friend and it's really affecting how you feel
- **Self-acceptance:** accepting yourself for who you are
 - E.g. You wish you were taller, shorter, had different hair, a different cultural background, etc.
- **Personal growth:** feeling that you're improving and evolving into your best self
 - E.g. When you think back to last year, you realise you've learnt heaps about yourself and what you like to do

Extension 1

Divide students into six groups and assign them one of the areas of wellbeing. Students brainstorm examples of what good mental health looks like in their area, then report back to the class.

This could be run as a relay activity: have six stations around the classroom with paper and pens. Each piece of paper has one of the areas of wellbeing written on it. Each group starts at a piece of paper and writes down as many examples as they can of what good mental health looks like in that area, then moves to the next station. Each group rotates around to each station then returns to their original one to see what has been added.

Extra

Each group receives 10 stickers and can place stickers next to what they think are the best examples on each sheet. They only place stickers on stations 2–6 i.e. not the one they started on. When returning to their station see which examples have the most stickers next to them, i.e. are deemed most significant by the class. Why do you think this is?



MAIN LESSON CONTENT

Extension 2

Explain to students that knowledge and understanding of these six areas of mental health and wellbeing in one's own life can be really tricky. It is not always easy to talk about, or even identify where you are at. Have students sit quietly and read the following fill-in-the-blank statements aloud. Tell students it is not about writing things down or having a 'correct' answer, but just about reflecting with your own thoughts. Try to complete the sentence, but don't worry if you don't have an answer for every statement.

Optional extra

As a teacher try to share your own answers aloud with the class.

- **Self-Acceptance:** The last mistake I made was ... and forgiving myself for it was (easy, hard, impossible)
- **Purpose in Life:** When I am an adult I want to be (this might be a specific job e.g. teacher, artist, or it could be more general e.g. happy, rich)
- **Independence:** An activity I choose to do regularly is ...
- **Positive Relationships:** One really special person in my life is ... because ...
- **Mastery:** I am really good at ...
- **Personal Growth:** This time last year I wasn't as good at ... as I am now

Explain that in the following video Mia King will share some of the things she wishes she knew in high school.

Video

 Play [6 Points With Mia King](#)

Discussion questions

- What 6 things did Mia wish she knew in high school?
- How many of these things did you already know? What one thing stood out as most significant for you?

FOR TEACHERS

Knowing yourself well enough to reflect on these things is challenging even for many adults! The questions here are designed to give an indication in each area of a connection students might have that is positively impacting their mental health and wellbeing. Feel free to come up with your own questions instead.



WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

MAIN LESSON CONTENT

Activity 2

Ask students if they remember what the Mental Health Continuum is (from the first video in this lesson).

- It shows the different states of mental health, and can help us describe how we're going. Emotional ups and downs are normal, and it's normal to move around on the continuum.

Draw a Mental Health Continuum on the board and introduce descriptions of each zone.

- **Good Mental Health:** You regularly have more positive feelings than negative ones.
- **Coping:** You sometimes feel upset but have mostly positive feelings.
- **Struggling:** There are times when you're upset and it really affects you.
- **Feeling Overwhelmed:** Your negative feelings are impacting your everyday life.

Ask students to copy the continuum onto paper or use the **student worksheet: Mental Health Continuum**. Colour in and decorate.

Use split pins to attach an arrow. Give students imaginary situations (e.g. looking forward to a holiday, have a big exam coming up, their parents/caregivers have told them they have to move school/house/city) and ask them to identify where the arrow would move in that situation. Discuss their answers in pairs, e.g. moving house would move the arrow up because they would be really excited to choose a new bedroom and decorate.

Explain to students that another way of thinking about good mental health is 'thriving'. Based on everything so far, what do students think thriving might look like? E.g. filled with joy, excited to get up and live each day, having some really strong relationships with people you care about, feeling motivated etc.

Optional extra

Explain to students that the Mental Health Continuum is complex – at any one time there are dozens of things that contribute to where we might be on it, pulling us one way or another. Imagine if all the scenarios from earlier happened at once! How might this impact where you are on the continuum?

Reflection (5–10 mins)

Support students to think reflectively about whether they've met the lesson's success criteria.

- Can students describe what mental health is? Do students have a different answer from the start of the class?
- What are the six areas of wellbeing?

Reflection could be written, verbal, in class or set as homework.

Classroom Integration

This week encourage students to check in with the Mental Health Continuum at regular intervals. Rather than focusing on which zone they might be 'in' encourage them to think about how they are feeling compared to the last check-in. Why? What has happened since then to cause them to move on the continuum? This will prepare students for the learning to come in this module and beyond.

LESSON 2

UNDERSTANDING AND RECOGNISING PROBLEMS

Year Level

Lower Secondary

Learning Area

Health & Physical
Education

Duration

40–60 minutes



OVERVIEW

This lesson explores the difference between strong emotions like anxiety and sadness and a mental health concern. It is important for students to be able to recognise that feeling sad or anxious at times is normal. Equally, it is important to be able to identify when feelings of sadness or anxiety might present a mental health concern instead, and what to do if this happens.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To understand that strong feelings like anxiety and sadness are normal parts of life
- To understand what anxiety and depression can look like
- To consider how screen time and drugs can impact mental health

RESOURCES

- ▶ Video: [Decoding Mental Health: IRL](#)
- ▶ Video: [Ask Me Anything with Mia King](#)
- 📄 Student worksheet: [Screen Time: Pros and Cons](#)

STUDENT SUCCESS CRITERIA

- 1 I can recognise that strong feelings like anxiety and sadness are a normal part of life
- 2 I can explain the signs that might indicate a mental health concern like anxiety or depression
- 3 I can explain the link between screen time and drugs and mental health

CURRICULUM LINKS

NSW Curriculum / Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) Stage 4

- **Content Strand:** [Healthy, Safe and Active Lifestyles](#)
- **Key Inquiry Questions:**
 - How can I effectively manage my own and support others' health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity?
- **Outcomes:** demonstrates self-management skills to effectively manage complex situations (PD4-9)
- **Content:** Students propose and develop protective strategies to effectively manage their own personal health, safety and wellbeing (ACPPS073)
 - analyse how emotions, strengths and decision-making can affect outcomes in different scenarios
 - explore the impact of stress and coping on mental health
- **Content Strand:** [Healthy, Safe and Active Lifestyles](#)
- **Key Inquiry Questions:**
 - What positive actions contribute to the health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity levels of the wider community?
- **Outcomes:** investigates health practices, behaviours and resources to promote health, safety, wellbeing and physically active communities (PD4-7)
- **Content:** Students recognise potentially unsafe environments and describe strategies to promote their own and others' health, safety and wellbeing in a variety of real-life situations:
 - classify drugs and describe the short-term and long-term effects of drug use on health, safety and wellbeing

**LESSON
2****UNDERSTANDING AND RECOGNISING PROBLEMS****INTRODUCTION****5-10 mins**

Start by sharing the learning objectives and student success criteria.

- Opening questions (individual reflection, group or class):
 - What is anxiety? What is depression?

Option

Tell students that instead of a lesson today they will have a 50-minute test to determine what they know about mental health. Allow them to process this. Then tell them – surprise! Just kidding. What did they feel in that moment? Why? Link to strong emotions like anxiety and panic.

Explain that the following video will tell us more about strong emotions like anxiety and sadness, and when these cross over into becoming a significant problem.

Video

 Play [Decoding Mental Health: IRL](#)



LESSON 2

UNDERSTANDING AND RECOGNISING PROBLEMS

MAIN LESSON CONTENT

30–40 mins

Activity 1

The video features host Jazz talking to guest Chloé Hayden about the difference between depression and anxiety. Go over Jazz and Chloe's explanations from the experts on depression and anxiety. How do these differ from sadness and anxiousness? (Signs of a mental health concern can be the strength and duration of feelings – if feelings last for more than two weeks, if you are not enjoying the things you normally enjoy anymore, or if it's impacting daily life.)

Ask students to think of a time they have felt anxious e.g. a test coming up, Sports Day, a really important footy game. What did it look like? Feel like? Sound like? Remind students that anxiety can look and feel different for everyone. It is important to know what it is for you so that when you experience it you can be aware of this and take steps to manage it.

Brainstorm

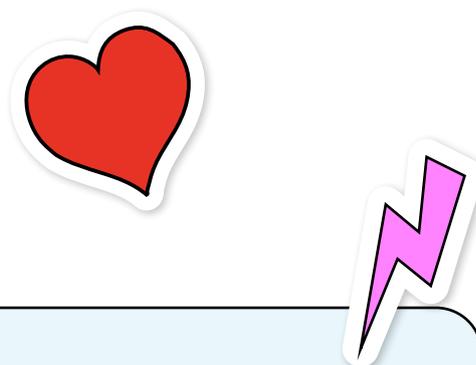
What can you do if you or someone around you might be presenting with a mental health concern? E.g. talk to a trusted adult, see a GP, do some research online (discuss what might make a website reputable).

Extension 1

Explain that if you aren't sure who to speak to but you want to learn more about mental health, there are other ways to get help and information. Introduce five websites:

- [Kids Helpline](#)
- [Beyond Blue](#)
- [Lifeline](#)
- [13YARN](#)
- [ReachOut](#)

Allow students some time visiting the websites for Lifeline, Beyond Blue, Kids Helpline, ReachOut and 13YARN. Set a website scavenger hunt or questions to answer, e.g. who is this website for, find the phone number, find (and draw) the logo, what does each website help with?



FOR TEACHERS

Familiarise yourself with each website beforehand. [Kids Helpline](#) is for young people and can help with lots of issues, not just for mental health; [13YARN](#) is specifically to support First Nations

people; [Lifeline](#) is for people with more serious mental health concerns; [ReachOut](#) is focused on support for teens, and [Beyond Blue](#) offers support for anxiety, depression and other mental health concerns.

LESSON 2

UNDERSTANDING AND RECOGNISING PROBLEMS

MAIN LESSON CONTENT

Option

Divide class into groups and assign each group one of the websites. Each group researches the website and reports back to the class or creates an informational poster on the website.

One of the first steps to get help if you think you might have a mental health concern is talking to someone. But talking to a trusted person can also be a good strategy just for dealing with the things life throws at us – even if you don't have a concern like anxiety or depression. Reinforcing the learning so far, the following video will discuss how Mia King finds support for her wellbeing.

Video

▶ Play [Ask Me Anything with Mia King](#)

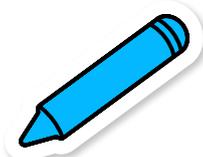
Discussion questions

- Who does Mia go to for support and why?
- Who do you like to go to for support when you have a rough day or need to debrief about something? Why?

Activity 2

Ask students:

- Who has rules at home about screen time/devices?
- What are our classroom/school rules?
- Why do you think we have these rules?



Explain that screen time can affect your mental health. It can be fun but can also take time away from other activities. So playing computer games at night might take time away from sleep. One study showed that too much screen time can negatively impact learning in students as well as making it harder to concentrate.

FOR TEACHERS

More information on the [physical impacts of screen time](#) can be found here and [its impact on sleep](#) here.

Have students create a pros and cons list for screens using the [student worksheet: Screen Time: Pros and Cons](#). Examples could include: communicating with friends/family, funny memes, chilling out playing a game after a big day vs. FOMO (fear of missing out) based on other's social media posts, disrupting sleep, bullying/trolling.

Explain to students that sometimes when we are feeling sad or anxious we might be drawn to spending time on our screens to avoid dealing with whatever is making us sad or anxious. For example, instead of studying for a test you binge-watch Netflix for 6 straight hours. Ask students how they might feel after this. Likely still anxious/stressed, and possibly guilty... as well as still unprepared for the test! Explain that this is what is known as an unhelpful coping mechanism. Can students think of any other unhelpful coping mechanisms? (e.g avoidance, procrastination, drugs or substances)

LESSON 2

UNDERSTANDING AND RECOGNISING PROBLEMS

MAIN LESSON CONTENT

One other example of an unhealthy coping mechanism is drugs. Explain that a drug is a substance that changes a person's mental or physical state. They can affect the way your brain works, how you feel and behave, your understanding and your senses.

Ask students to brainstorm as many drugs as they can think of on the board. Make sure that a range of substances are on the board e.g. legal drugs like caffeine, alcohol, paracetamol (Panadol) and nicotine as well as illegal drugs like cannabis, cocaine etc.

- Can the drugs/substances be grouped? E.g. legal/illegal, stimulants/depressants. Prescribed or not.
- Why might people be drawn to substances? (Peer pressure; curiosity; some people use drugs as an 'escape' to cope with stress or pain)
- What advice would you give someone who told you they were tempted to use drugs to cope - whether an illegal drug like cannabis, or drinking energy drinks each day to get through?

Explain to students that illegal drugs and alcohol can have negative long-lasting impacts on the body and brain. This is particularly important when you are in your teens and your body and brain are still developing. Even legal drugs should be approached carefully - for example, only take as much Panadol as recommended on the packet.

Optional Extension

Have students in groups research the short and long-term effects of different drugs and substances e.g. vaping, nicotine, alcohol, cannabis, cocaine.

Explain to students that exercise and eating well both ensure our bodies get what we need to support our mental health. By looking after our physical health we can protect our mental health, without the risks associated with substance abuse/misuse.

FOR TEACHERS

Teens: alcohol and other drugs

Classroom Integration

The screen time section lends itself to maths activities such as surveys, tallies, bar charts, graphs and an exercise around averages (mean, median and mode).

Reflection (5-10 mins)

Support students to think reflectively about whether they've met the lesson's criteria.

- What is the difference between experiencing strong emotions like anxiousness and sadness, and having a mental health concern like anxiety or depression?
- Next time you find yourself reaching for your phone/TV/sugary drink in order to avoid your problems, what could you do instead?

Reflection can be written, verbal or set as homework.

LESSON 3

HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

Year Level

Lower Secondary

Learning Area

Health & Physical
Education

Duration

40–60 minutes



OVERVIEW

This lesson looks at where students can go for support with their mental health and things to keep in mind when giving and asking for help. It also explores healthy coping strategies like breathing and grounding exercises, positive thinking and physical activity.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To learn about who can be approached for help, and how one might ask for help.
- To learn about and practise healthy coping strategies.

RESOURCES

▶ Video: [Decoding Mental Health: Gameplan](#)

▶ Video: [Drills with Mia King](#)

STUDENT SUCCESS CRITERIA

- 1 I can list several people/places I can go to for support, and have an idea of how to ask for help if I need it.
- 2 I have at least one healthy coping strategy I feel confident to use when I am struggling.

CURRICULUM LINKS

NSW Curriculum / Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) Stage 4

- **Content Strand:** [Health, Wellbeing and Relationships](#)
- **Key Inquiry Questions:**
 - What skills and strategies can be used to manage change, challenges and seek help?
- **Outcomes:** examines and demonstrates the role help-seeking strategies and behaviours play in supporting themselves and others (PD4-2)
- **Content:** Students practise and apply skills and strategies to seek help for themselves and others (ACPPS072)
 - propose individual support networks and external support services
 - practise communication techniques to persuade someone to seek help in different situations, eg mental health concerns, drug use, relationship or family and domestic violence
 - identify barriers to seeking help and propose strategies to overcome these barriers
 - recognise scenarios that involve change and challenge for young people and rehearse help-seeking strategies to overcome each situation, eg ending a relationship, when feeling overwhelmed, grieving or losing someone

LESSON 3

HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

• **Content Strand:** Healthy, Safe and Active Lifestyles

• **Key Inquiry Questions:**

- How can I effectively manage my own and support others' health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity?
- **Outcomes:** examines and demonstrates the role help-seeking strategies and behaviours play in supporting themselves and others (PD4-2)
- **Content:** Students propose and develop protective strategies to effectively manage their own personal health, safety and wellbeing(ACPPS073)
- practise ways to communicate concerns about health, safety and wellbeing to a variety of support people

Students plan and use health practices, behaviours and resources to enhance the health, safety, wellbeing and physical activity participation of their communities (ACPPS077)

- investigate different approaches and develop personal plans for promoting their own positive mental health and wellbeing, eg mindfulness, relaxation, healthy eating



LESSON
3

HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

INTRODUCTION

5-10 mins

- Start by sharing the learning objectives and student success criteria.
- Opening question:
 - Think of a time someone has come to you with a problem. How did you respond? Think about what you said, how you said it, and what you did.

Tell students that the following video will look at some of the people you can approach to talk about mental health concerns, as well as what happens to our bodies when we feel strong emotions.

Video

▶ Play [Decoding Mental Health: Gameplan](#)

FOR TEACHERS

Explain anonymity to the class and how it is important to protect people’s privacy. Students can share examples, but must not share names, locations or specific details that might identify a person.



**LESSON
3****HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES****MAIN LESSON CONTENT****30–40 mins****Activity 1**

Ask students to list all the people/places they can think of to go to for support. Consider options specific to your school e.g. school counsellor or wellbeing leader, as well as others like friends, family, doctor, teacher and the internet. Write these on the board.

Go through the options and discuss pros and cons for each. For example, a friend might understand what you're going through, but might not be able to do anything to help, while the internet may have lots of information – but is it trustworthy/reliable? Write pros in one colour, and cons in another. Based on this discussion, what are the best options for support?

Divide students into groups and explain that you will read aloud various scenarios. After each scenario, students discuss in their groups who they would speak to from the list on the board and why.

- Your best friend tells you they are moving to another city and you feel really sad.
- You are on the internet and you see/read something that makes you feel bad. You can't stop thinking about it.
- Each week before Art class you get panicky, sweaty and shaky. You spend the whole week dreading it and worrying about what you will have to do in the next lesson.
- You've felt sad for months and months now and you're not really sure why.
- Your mum signed you up for hockey club for the whole term. It's only week 4 and you absolutely hate it. You feel sick all week thinking about it, and on the day you can't concentrate or think about anything else. Nothing seems to make you feel better.

Barriers

Explain to students that even though someone might recognise the need for help, and want to access it, there are sometimes barriers to getting it. What kind of barriers might be in place preventing someone from asking for support? For example, stigma around mental health issues, fear, embarrassment, lack of support from family/friends.

Extension 1

Brainstorm strategies for overcoming these barriers, e.g. enlist a friend to help you talk to your parents.

Now go through the scenarios again but this time imagine you are the person asking for help. How would you ask for help? Think about:

- What would you say
- How would you say it
- When/where would you say it
- Any barriers that might be in your way, and how you could overcome them

Have students choose one scenario (they can also create their own) and create a Y chart either individually or in pairs/groups. Draw a large circle on a page and divide it into 3 sections. In one section, write all the things you could say. In another section, write ideas for how you would say it, and in the final section write about when/where you could say it. Around the edge of the circle write down possible barriers and strategies for overcoming them.

Once the Y chart is complete, divide students into pairs and have them roleplay these scenarios. One person is asking for help, the other is the parent/caregiver, teacher, GP etc.

LESSON 3

HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

MAIN LESSON CONTENT

Extension 2

Ask students to imagine a friend is experiencing one of the scenarios discussed. Based on everything they have learnt, how would they recommend their friend prepare for a conversation with a trusted adult? As a class, make a list and write on the board e.g. come up with specific examples of how they are feeling and what triggers it, explain why they think is such an issue and how it is impacting them, think about when and where they will feel comfortable having the conversation. You may like to divide the ideas into 'what to say', 'how to say it' and 'when/where to say it'.

Video

Explain to students that talking to someone can be really helpful when we are facing challenging times or experiencing mental health concerns. But there are plenty of other things we can do in the meantime to protect our mental fitness. The following video will show some of the things Mia King does to look after her mental fitness.

 Play [Drills with Mia King](#)

Discussion questions

- What did Mia do to look after her mental fitness today?
- What could you do to look after your mental fitness today?

Activity 2

Remind students that in the last lesson we looked at examples of unhealthy coping strategies. Can students remember any examples of these? (Screen time and drugs.) Explain that today we will look at some healthy coping strategies. Can students come up with any of these based on everything they've learnt so far?

Three common healthy coping strategies are exercise, grounding or breathing exercises, and positive thinking. Like physical fitness, our mental health requires regular work to stay strong. When we are stressed, anxious or sad, healthy coping strategies can help us manage that situation/feeling more effectively, and strengthen our mental fitness in the long term.

Try 1, 2 or all 3 of these strategies with the class:

Exercise: head out for a walk, free time on the playground/oval/gym, or a structured game.

Grounding/breathing: Try an activity as a class. You can find information on specific exercises in [grounding](#) or [breathing](#) at the links here. Emphasise that it's normal to find your mind wandering. Ask your students how they feel afterwards – they could rate their relaxation on a scale 1–10.

Positive Thinking: Students write down 3 things that went well today e.g. Today the sun was shining! Explain that it might feel odd to do this at first, but it gets easier with practice. Students could also write these on Post-it notes and stick onto a positive thoughts wall to be added to regularly.

[Additional information on positive thinking can be found here.](#)

LESSON 3

HEALTHY AND UNHEALTHY COPING STRATEGIES

MAIN LESSON CONTENT

Extension 1

Run all three activities with the class then reflect on which one students liked the most, which one they liked the least, and why. Remind students that each person will respond differently to the different strategies. It is important to try a range of them to work out what works best for you.

Extension 2

Integrate grounding, breathing or positive thinking exercises and/or regular physical exercise into your classroom this week e.g. the beginning or end of each lesson, or while calling the roll.

Reflection (5–10 mins)

Support your students to think reflectively about whether they've met the lesson's success criteria.

- Who/where could you go to for support and why?
- How can you integrate healthy coping strategies into your life today? This week?

Classroom Integration

Begin or end each lesson with a positive thinking practice. Each student turns to a partner or as their name is called on the roll and shares something that went well today.



In-class Module Reflection

This reflection can be completed at the end of this third lesson or after completing the on-field activity.

The **Reflection Journal** has been provided to record student learning. This is an opportunity for students to make notes about their thoughts, feelings and reflections throughout the module.

- What have you learnt about mental health and wellbeing over the last few lessons?
- How can factors like screen time and drugs/substances harm our mental health and wellbeing? How can we protect our mental health and wellbeing from these things?
- Who could you approach in your life if you were going through a tough time or had concerns about mental health?

ON-FIELD ACTIVITY

Year Level

Lower Secondary

Learning Area

Health & Physical Education

Duration

40–60 minutes



OVERVIEW

This on-field activity is designed to be used as part of a Physical Education class to reinforce learnings in this module. Students will reflect on the various factors that can influence mental health and wellbeing, and explore ways to stay mentally fit.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To reflect on some of the different ways we can stay mentally fit
- To work on building my fitness and ball-handling skills

SKILL FOCUS

- Running
- Reflecting
- Critical Thinking

EQUIPMENT

- 4x cones
- 4 x signs labelled Never, Sometimes, Often, Always
- One football (or alternative balls e.g. soft, tennis) per student
- Goal posts

STUDENT SUCCESS CRITERIA

- 1 I can reflect on some of the ways I can keep myself mentally fit.
- 2 I can practise my running and ball-handling skills.

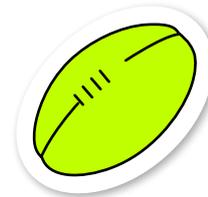
CURRICULUM LINKS

NSW Curriculum / Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) Stage 4

- **Content Strand:** Healthy, Safe and Active Lifestyles
- **Key Inquiry Questions:**
 - What positive actions contribute to the health, safety, wellbeing and participation in physical activity levels of the wider community?
- **Outcomes:** plans for and participates in activities that encourage health and a lifetime of physical activity (PD4–8)
- **Content:** Students examine factors that influence health and wellbeing
 - describe health and its dynamic nature
 - explore the term ‘wellbeing’ and examine factors that contribute to overall wellbeing
- Students investigate the benefits of a balanced lifestyle and explore strategies that contribute to community health, wellbeing and participation in a lifetime of physical activity
 - discuss the physical, social, emotional and spiritual benefits of being active in outdoor and natural environments to community health and wellbeing

ON-FIELD ACTIVITY

- **Content Strand:** Movement Skill and Performance
- **Key Inquiry Questions:**
 - How can I apply my skills to collaborate, communicate, solve problems and include others in physical activity?
- **Outcomes:** applies and refines interpersonal skills to assist themselves and others to interact respectfully and promote inclusion in a variety of groups or contexts (PD4-10)
- **Content:** Students practise and apply interpersonal skills when undertaking a range of roles in physical activities(ACPMPO86)
 - participate in initiative/challenge physical activities designed to develop teamwork, cooperation and problem-solving



ON-FIELD ACTIVITY

WARM-UP ACTIVITY

5-10 mins

Explain to students that this lesson will help consolidate what they have learnt in the last few lessons about mental health; what it is, and some of the things we can do to look after it. It will also give them a chance to get outdoors and be physically active - which we know is one of the key things that can help enhance our mental health or fitness.

Ask students to share how they are feeling right now at the start of this PE lesson: from Good, to Coping, to Struggling, to Feeling Overwhelmed (these are the terms used on the Mental Health Continuum but for the purposes of this activity we are just looking for a real time idea of how students are feeling going into the lesson).

Give students an activity that gets them warmed up. Use any activity or game you like - we suggest something like **Red Rover** or **Stuck in the Mud**. When focusing on one of the key skills or sports in PE e.g. football or kicking then use this as a basis for the warm-up activity.



Red Rover

Divide players into two even teams and have them stand in two straight lines opposite one another. One team says 'Red rover, red rover, I call over, everyone who...' and inserts qualifier here. This could be a physical descriptor like everyone who has brown hair, glasses, blue eyes, or something non-physical like everyone who has a dog, has a car, etc. Whoever the statement applies to has to run forward and try to break through the opposite team's lines and get to the other side without being tagged. Anyone who gets tagged joins the opposing team.

Stuck in the Mud

Divide the class into two teams. One team is the chasers, the other the runners. The goal of the chasers is to 'tag' members of the other team (on the shoulder or arm). If a player gets tagged they are 'stuck in the mud' and must stand frozen with legs wide apart and arms held out in a straight line. Members of the runners team must try to avoid being tagged, and can also 'free' their teammates by crawling between their legs and out the other side. They must avoid being tagged themselves while doing this, or they too are 'stuck in the mud'. Set a time limit e.g. 3 minutes and at the end of this, if the runners team has more people free than 'stuck in the mud' then they win. If there are more people 'stuck in the mud' then the chasers win.

ON-FIELD ACTIVITY

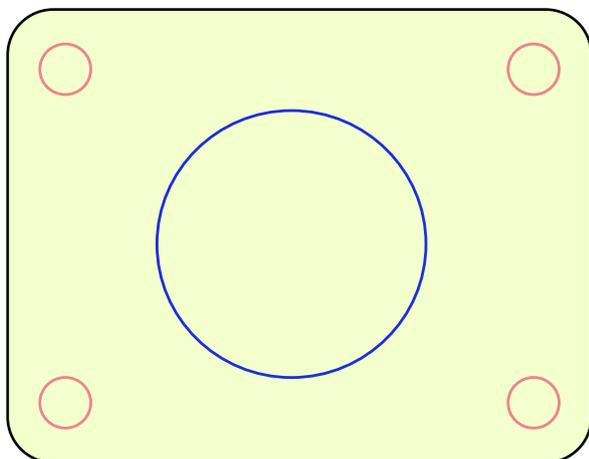
ACTIVITY 1

10-15 mins

Bring students together and remind them of the connection between being physically active and having good mental health. Ask them if they can remember any of the other things that can help us stay mentally fit and healthy (diet, sleep, seeing friends/family, doing things you enjoy).

Around the Globe is a fun group activity designed to get students thinking about how and where mental fitness strategies (like sleep, movement, nutrition) fit into their daily routines.

- Place 4 cones at 4 corners of a field/gym space. On each cone stick one sign; Never, Sometimes, Often, Always. Ensure the signs are far away enough from each other that students need to run a little bit, but not so far that they will become exhausted.
- Create a circle in the middle of the space or use a hoop (equal distance from the cones) and fill it with enough footballs (or other balls) for one per student.
- Have students begin by standing around the edge of the field/gym, outside of the cones. When you read a statement aloud, students have to run to the middle, grab a ball, then run to the appropriate sign that indicates how often that scenario applies for them.



- Once in their zones, give students time to share with the other people in the zone why they chose that response.
- Then reset the activity: students return balls to the centre of the field and take up places at the edge ready for the next statement.
- Use the following scenarios, and/or create your own as relevant. Remind students there are no right or wrong answers – everyone uses different coping strategies.
 - I like to find time to exercise outside of just PE Classes as it makes me feel good
 - Being part of a team makes me feel like I belong
 - I like being able to communicate with my friends through social media
 - I find it hard to concentrate at school if I haven't had much sleep
 - If I'm having a snack I prefer 'treat' foods like chips, chocolate and soft drinks.
 - I put off homework until the last second
 - When I feel stressed out, sad or anxious I talk to someone about it (once students have run to the appropriate zone have them share who they talk to and why)

Optional: ask students to come up with their own scenarios.

To teach a different skill like kicking or handball, have students run to their chosen response zone then kick/pass the ball from inside the zone, before sharing why they chose this zone with their peers.

ON-FIELD ACTIVITY

ACTIVITY 2 (OPTIONAL)

Up to 30 minutes

If you have extra time try Diamond Break or another game from the AFL site that involves running. Or you can run a practice game of football.

COOL DOWN/REFLECTION

5 minutes

At the end of the lesson bring students back together. Remind them again of the key ways we can look after our mental health and fitness (being active/exercise, diet, sleep, limited screen time).

Ask students how they are feeling now: from Good, to Coping, to Struggling, to Feeling Overwhelmed. Has their response changed since the start of the lesson? Why/why not?

Emphasise that today we have focused on movement and running. Explain that exercise is proven to produce endorphins and other chemicals that provide an instant boost to our mood.



Disclaimer

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Credits



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