



Mental Health Month

Tune In suggested lesson plan

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About this lesson guide

This PowerPoint is designed to help students understand and apply some of the basic concepts behind the Mental Health Month theme "Tune In"

There are 5 topics covered in the PowerPoint:

- Tune in to you, which focuses on basic mindfulness skills
- Tune in to others, which focuses on communities and connection
- Tune in to learning, which focuses on learning about mental health through sharing knowledge
- Tune in to hope, which focuses on developing positive, hopeful mindsets
- Tune in to mental health, which introduces some basic mental health concepts to help challenge stigma

They can be presented as one lesson, or split into 5 separate sessions (one per topic)

Each topic has suggested activities for each stage, as well as additional activities which link to, and enhance, the topic.

Tune in to you

Early stage 1

Aims: students have a basic understanding of how mindfulness can be helpful and learn some beginner mindfulness techniques.

Introduction: Tuning in to ourselves can help us to feel calmer and help us get through difficult times. It can be as simple as slowing down, taking a breath, and taking notice of things that we can feel.

Activity:

Ask the class to sit comfortably and take a breath in and out.

Ask the students to answer the following in their mind:

Tune in to your sense of touch – what can you feel right now? Are you clothes soft or scratchy?

Are you sitting on something hard or soft? Is your body tense or relaxed?

Ask students who are happy to share if they can raise their hand and name one thing they noticed.

Additional activities:

Ask children to name one thing they are grateful or thankful for – it may be helpful for the teacher to start this off with their own example.

Tune In jars or bottles:

Materials: clear jar or plastic bottle (1 per student); loose glitters (fine glitter works best, but including chunky glitter can be good as an addition), sequins, beads or similar; funnel (for pouring glitters into bottles); food colouring or water-based ink; loose cotton wool (optional); dish liquid; water

Get each child to choose a selection of glitters, beads, sequins, and some cotton wool if using, and put these in their bottle or jar. Put one or two drops of dish liquid into each container, then fill with water. Ask each child to choose a colour to add to their bottle and add a few drops so the water is coloured. Place lids on top (these can be sealed with hot glue or low-temperature hot glue for plastic bottles)

Once the jars/bottles are complete, ask students to sit comfortably and shake their bottles/jars. Then encourage them to watch the swirling glitter, breathing deeply in and out as they watch it sink to the bottom of the jar.

Tune In Safari:

Go for a walk around the school with the class and ask them to notice as many different things as possible. It's useful to focus on a specific category, for example, animals, colours, plants, or textures.

Stage 1

Aims: Students develop an understanding of basic mindfulness techniques and how these relate to feelings.

Introduction: Tuning in to ourselves can help us to feel calmer and help us get through difficult times. It can be as simple as slowing down, taking a breath, and taking notice of things that we can feel.

Activity:

Ask the class to sit comfortably, close their eyes, and take a breath in and out.

Ask the students to answer the following in their mind:

Tune in to your sense of touch – what can you feel right now? Are you clothes soft or scratchy? Are you sitting on something hard or soft? Is your body tense or relaxed?

Ask students who are happy to share if they can raise their hand and name one thing they noticed.

Ask students to think about how different things they touch might make them feel – for example, does touching something soft help them feel calm? Does having a hug with a friend help them feel happy? Does itchy clothing make them feel irritated?

Ask students who are happy to share if they can raise their hand and name what they thought of.

Additional activities:

Ask children to name one thing they are grateful or thankful for – it may be helpful for the teacher to start this off with their own example.

Tune In jars or bottles:

Materials: clear jar or plastic bottle (1 per student); loose glitters (fine glitter works best, but including chunky glitter can be good as an addition), sequins, beads or similar; funnel (for pouring glitters into bottles); food colouring or water-based ink; loose cotton wool (optional); dish liquid; water

Get each child to choose a selection of glitters, beads, sequins, and some cotton wool if using, and put these in their bottle or jar. Put one or two drops of dish liquid into each container, then fill with water. Ask each child to choose a colour to add to their bottle and add a few drops so the water is coloured. Place lids on top (these can be sealed with hot glue or low-temperature hot glue for plastic bottles)

Once the jars/bottles are complete, ask students to sit comfortably and shake their bottles/jars. Then encourage them to watch the swirling glitter, breathing deeply in and out as they watch it sink to the bottom of the jar.

Tune In Safari:

Go for a walk around the school with the class and ask them to notice as many different things as possible. It's useful to focus on a specific category, for example, animals, colours, plants, or textures.

Stage 2

Aims: Students explore mindfulness and how this can help positively impact emotions and behaviour.

Introduction: Tuning in to ourselves means taking time to slow down and become aware of what's happening within us and around us. Often there are lots of things that distract us from how we're feeling and what we're experiencing, which can make it difficult to do things that are good for us and those around us. By taking time to tune in to ourselves, we can start to develop skills that will help us learn how we're feeling.

Activity:

Ask students to sit comfortably and take a moment to slow their breathing.

Ask the students to answer the following in their mind:

Tune in to your sense of touch – what can you feel right now? Are your clothes soft or scratchy? Are you sitting on something hard or soft? Is your body tense or relaxed?

Tune in to your feelings – how are you feeling right now? Are you happy? Sad? Bored?

Where in your body does this feeling live?

Ask students to take a few more breaths and open their eyes slowly.

Open a class discussion by asking students what they noticed during the activity.

Additional activities:

Ask children to name one thing they are grateful or thankful for – it may be helpful for the teacher to start this off with their own example.

Craft activity:

Body Map – use the printable body outline (attachment “P1 Body Map”) and ask students to fill in where they feel different emotions. Encourage students to be creative and think about what colour and shapes different emotions feel like. You might prompt them with questions like “where do you feel happiness? What colour and shape is happiness?” Reassure students there is no wrong way to do the activity.

Tune In Safari:

Go for a walk around the school with the class and ask students to notice as many different things as possible. It's useful to focus on a specific category, for example, animals, colours, plants, or textures.

Stage 3

Aims: Students explore mindfulness and how this can help positively impact emotions and behaviour.

Introduction: Tuning in to ourselves means learning how to be aware of what is going on in us and around us. We can build this awareness through paying attention, on purpose, to the present moment non-judgmentally. This can help us be aware of our thoughts and feelings and help us to recognise what is happening and how we respond. When we take time to tune in, it can help us respond to situations in ways that are positive and helpful for us and those around us.

Activity:

STOP mindfulness activity.

Explain to students that this is a skill they can do many times throughout their day to help them tune in to themselves.

Ask students to sit comfortably and read out the following:

S: Stop. Whatever you're doing, just pause momentarily.

T: Take a breath. Re-connect with your breath. The breath is an anchor to the present moment.

O: Observe. Notice what is happening. What is happening inside you, and outside of you? What can you touch, see, hear, smell, taste? Where has your mind gone? What do you feel? What are you doing?

P: Perceive and proceed. Think about what you noticed when you observed things and what you might want to do next. If you're feeling big emotions, you might want to take some time to calm down before continuing with what you were doing. If you're feeling uncomfortable you might want to find a different position for your body. Be mindful of what your body and thoughts are telling you and try and find a way to attend to things that you need. Or just proceed with what you were doing, but still being aware of what you observed.

Invite the class to discuss times when doing that skill might be helpful.

Additional Activities:

Ask students to write down one thing they are grateful for today, and encourage them to write down one thing each day during Mental Health Month

Texture bag:

Ask students to get into pairs or small groups. Give each group a bag with several small, interestingly shaped or textured objects inside. Have each student close their eyes and select an item from the bag, then describe the object to their group.

Craft activity:

Body Map – use the printable body outline (attachment “P1 Body Map”) and ask students to fill in where they feel different emotions. Encourage students to be creative and think about what colour and shapes different emotions feel like. You might prompt them with questions like “where do you feel happiness? What colour and shape is happiness?” Reassure students there is no wrong way to do the activity.

Tune In to others

Early Stage 1

Aim: Students begin to explore different ways they connect with others

Introduction: Connecting with others is really important to helping us feel safe and happy. There are lots of different ways we can connect with others, and different groups we are part of.

Activity: using the PowerPoint graphic, ask students to raise their hands for each group or community they are part of. Are there other groups that they are part of that aren't pictured?

Ask students to name something they like about being part of a group (either generally or a specific group).

Additional Activities

Drumming connections:

Have the students sit in a circle. Start by getting all students to drum with their hands on the floor or gently on their knees in a steady rhythm. Then go around the circle and get each student to clap a new pattern which the whole class then copies. This activity encourages connection through activating mirror neurons.

Stage 1

Aim: Students begin to explore different groups they are part of and ways they connect with others

Introduction: Connecting with others is really important to helping us feel safe and happy. There are lots of different ways we can connect with others, and different groups we are part of.

Activity: using the PowerPoint graphic, ask students to raise their hands for each group or community they are part of. Are there other groups that they are part of that aren't pictured?

Ask students to name something they like about being part of a group (either generally or a specific group), is there something they don't like about being part of that group?

Ask students to name the ways that group connects – for example, a sport group might meet once a week to play sport and they could also see other people from that group for play dates. There might be a newsletter that gets sent to group members

Additional Activities

Drumming connections:

Have the students sit in a circle. Start by getting all students to drum with their hands on the floor or gently on their knees in a steady rhythm. Then go around the circle and get each student to clap a new pattern which the whole class then copies. This activity encourages connection through activating mirror neurons.

Mirror mirror:

In pairs, get students to try and mirror their partner's movements. Students should move slowly, starting with just their hands. After a minute ask them to change leader and follower.

Stage 2

Aim: Students explore different communities they are part of and how these communities connect. Students begin to explore ways that they contribute to their communities.

Introduction: We all have lots of different groups and communities that we are a part of. Being connected to others through groups and communities can help people feel safe, accepted, and can give us a sense of pride. It is also a way that we learn more about ourselves, and how to help others feel safe and connected.

Activity: using the PowerPoint graphic, ask students to raise their hands for each group or community they are part of. Are there other groups that they are part of that aren't pictured?

Ask students to name something they like about being part of a group (either generally or a specific group), is there something they don't like about being part of that group?

Ask students to name the ways that group connects – for example, a sport group might meet once a week to play sport and they could also see other people from that group for play dates. There might be a newsletter that gets sent to group members

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Mirror mirror:

In pairs, get students to try and mirror their partner's movements. Students should move slowly, starting with just their hands. After a minute ask them to change leader and follower.

Stage 3

Aim: Students explore different communities they are part of and how these communities connect. Students begin to explore ways that they contribute to their communities. Students begin to explore how communities might be easy or difficult to be part of for others.

Introduction: Being part of a group or community is important for our wellbeing, it helps us feel safe and connected. Sometimes it's easy to be part of a community, but other times it can be difficult, people might feel left out. There are things we can do to make our communities easier for people to access to ensure as many people as possible benefit from being part of a community.

Activity: using the PowerPoint graphic, ask students to raise their hands for each group or community they are part of. Are there other groups that they are part of that aren't pictured?

Ask students to name something they like about being part of a group (either generally or a specific group), is there something they don't like about being part of that group?

In small groups, ask students to think about a specific community, and how people access the community. In what ways might people be excluded? Ask students to reflect on what people might feel if they're left out of a community's activities. What are their ideas for making people feel more included?

Additional Activities

Drumming connections:

Have the students sit in a circle. Start by getting all students to drum with their hands on the floor or gently on their knees in a steady rhythm. Then go around the circle and get each student to clap a new pattern which the whole class then copies. This activity encourages connection through activating mirror neurons.

Inclusive Community

In small groups, get students to create an artwork of an ideal, inclusive community, what does the community do to make everyone feel included and able to access the best parts of the community.

Tune in to Learning

Early Stage 1

Aim: Students begin to explore how they can learn from others about emotions and going through difficult situations. Students identify some emotional qualities in people they know and begin to link those qualities with behaviours.

Introduction: When we are going through tough times, we don't always know what to do, but other people might have been through something difficult, and we can learn from them.

Activity

(All students can answer all questions, or the questions can be broken up amongst the class)

Ask students to name a person they think is strong. What makes that person seem strong?

Ask students to name a person they think is happy. What makes that person seem happy?

Ask students to name a person they think is calm. What makes that person seem calm?

Additional Activities

What can you teach others? Ask students to think of something they are good at that they could teach others. This can be done as a discussion, or as a creative activity. If done as a creative activity, help students to write their "skill" in the middle of a page, and decorate it with things relating to that skill. For example, if their skill is "cooking" they might decorate it with carrots, spoons, etc. (though there is no wrong way for students to decorate their work – if they write "cooking" and decide to decorate it with pictures of cats, that is valid too)

Stage 1

Aim: Students explore how they can learn from others about emotions and going through difficult situations. Students identify some emotional qualities in people they know and begin to link those qualities with behaviours.

Introduction: When we are going through tough times, we don't always know what to do, but other people might have been through something difficult, and we can learn from them.

Activity

(All students can answer all questions, or the questions can be broken up amongst the class)

Ask students to name a person they think is strong. What makes that person seem strong?

Ask students to name a person they think is happy. What makes that person seem happy?

Ask students to name a person they think is calm. What makes that person seem calm?

Additional Activities

How would they react:

Ask students to think of one of the people named before. How would that person react if they were sad? How would they react if they were afraid? How would they react if they felt lonely?

What can you teach others?

Ask students to think of something they are good at that they could teach others. This can be done as a discussion, or as a creative activity. If done as a creative activity, help students to write their “skill” in the middle of a page, and decorate it with things relating to that skill. For example, if their skill is “cooking” they might decorate it with carrots, spoons, etc. (though there is no wrong way for students to decorate their work – if they write “cooking” and decide to decorate it with pictures of cats, that is valid too)

Stage 2

Aim: Students explore how they can learn from others about emotions and going through difficult situations. Students identify some emotional qualities in people they know and begin to link those qualities with behaviours.

Introduction: When we are going through tough times, we don’t always know what to do, but other people might have been through something similar, and we can learn from them different ways of getting through. We might have things we do to get through tough times that we can teach others.

Activity

Ask students to name someone they admire. What do they admire about them? What do they wish that person could teach them?

How do they think that person would act if they were sad? How do they think that person would act if they were scared?

Ask students to name someone that has been through something difficult (or a time they have faced a difficult time) and think about what they did to get through it. What was their attitude to the difficult time? What were some of the things they did to help get through.

Additional Activities

What can you teach others?

Ask students to think of something they are good at that they could teach others. This can be done as a discussion, or as a creative activity. If done as a creative activity, help students to write their “skill” in the middle of a page, and decorate it with things relating to that skill. For example, if their skill is “cooking” they might decorate it with carrots, spoons, etc. (though there is no wrong way for students to decorate their work – if they write “cooking” and decide to decorate it with pictures of cats, that is valid too)

Stage 3

Aim: Students explore how they can learn from others about emotions and going through difficult situations. Students identify some emotional qualities in people they know and begin to link those qualities with behaviours.

Introduction: When we are going through tough times, we don't always know what to do, but other people might have been through something similar, and we can learn from them different ways of getting through. We might have things we do to get through tough times that we can teach others.

Activity

Ask students to name someone that has been through something difficult (or a time they have faced a difficult time) and think about what they did to get through it. What was their attitude to the difficult time? What were some of the things they did to help get through.

In small groups (3-5 students), assign each group one of the following scenarios. Ask students to discuss what things different people might feel in those scenarios, and how they might behave. What are some things people might do in that scenario that are helpful to themselves and others? What might people do that would be unhelpful? Students should consider multiple people in each scenario – e.g., for the first scenario, students should discuss the perspective of the kid who breaks the window, parents/caregivers, other family members.

Scenarios:

A kid accidentally breaks a window in their house

Family doesn't have enough money to pay for groceries

Someone deliberately floods a room at school

A pet gets into the rubbish bin and makes a mess through the home

An exciting event is cancelled last-minute

A student fails a test they had been studying for

Additional Activities

What can you teach others?

Ask students to think of an emotional skill they are good at that they could teach others. For example, they might be good at getting challenging feedback, or coping with disappointment. This can be done as a discussion, or as a creative activity. If done as a creative activity, students should write their "skill" in the middle of a page and decorate it with things relating to that skill. Encourage students to consider their emotional reaction, their thoughts, and their actions. For example, if students write "getting challenging feedback" they might include feelings like worry, sadness, determination, and actions like listening, asking for clarification, making a plan to improve.

Extended version: either as a class or in small groups, have students teach the class their skill.

Tune in to Hope

Early Stage 1

Aim: Students spend time focusing on hope, which can have a positive impact on mental health.

Introduction: Hope is really important for our mental health. It helps us get through difficult times and can make us feel happier.

Activity

Ask students to name one thing they are looking forward to this week. Ask them why they are looking forward to it. Write down the reasons given and group them together and reflect to the class some of the common themes. For example, if many students say variations on the word “fun” group them together and say something like “I noticed that lots of us are looking forward to things that are fun, what are some other fun things you like to do?”

Additional Activities

Hope collage:

Get students to use collage and drawing to make a picture of things they are looking forward to or things they hope will happen.

Stage 1

Aim: Students spend time focusing on hope, which can have a positive impact on mental health. Students begin to engage with positive planning.

Introduction: Hope is really important for our mental health. It helps us get through difficult times and can make us feel happier. Sometimes it’s hard to feel hopeful so planning things we can look forward to can help us be hopeful.

Activity

Ask students to name one thing they are looking forward to this week. Ask them why they are looking forward to it. Write down the reasons given and group them together and reflect to the class some of the common themes. For example, if many students say variations on the word “fun” group them together and say something like “I noticed that lots of us are looking forward to things that are fun, what are some other fun things you like to do?”

Ask students to name one skill they would like to learn and what the first step to learning that skill would be?

Additional Activities

Hope collage:

Get students to use collage and drawing to make a picture of things they are looking forward to or things they hope will happen.

Stage 2

Aim: Students spend time focusing on hope, which can have a positive impact on mental health. Students begin to look at the link between hope and mental health.

Introduction: Hope is really important for our mental health. It helps us get through difficult times and can make us feel happier. Sometimes it's hard to feel hopeful so planning things we can look forward to can help us be hopeful.

Activity

Ask students to write down two things they hope for, one for themselves, and one for a group or community that they are part of, that they feel comfortable sharing with the class. Ask students to share their hope and how they might feel if the thing they hoped for happened.

Additional Activities

Ask students to write down one skill they would like to learn and write some basic steps they would need to take to learn the skill. Ask students to write down how they might feel when they learn that skill. Teachers can use the "hope map" printable (attachment "P2 Hope Map").

Stage 3

Aim: Students spend time focusing on hope, which can have a positive impact on mental health. Students look at the link between hope and mental health.

Introduction: Hope is really important for our mental health. It helps us get through difficult times and can make us feel happier. Sometimes it's hard to feel hopeful so planning things we can look forward to can help us be hopeful.

Activity

Ask students to write down two things they hope for, one for themselves, and one for a group or community that they are part of, that they feel comfortable sharing with the class. Ask students to share their hope and how they might feel if the thing they hoped for happened.

In small groups, ask students to discuss how it might be to have nothing to hope for. Ask them to think about the tasks listed below and how doing those things might be impacted by not feeling hope. Then ask students to switch and consider how doing each task might be impacted if someone had lots of hope.

Going to school

Brushing your teeth

Watching a favourite show

Doing household chores

Doing homework

Spending time with friends

Cleaning your room

Reading a book

Additional Activities

Ask students to write down one skill they would like to learn and write some basic steps they would need to take to learn the skill. Ask students to write down how they might feel when they learn that skill. Teachers can use the “hope map” printable (attachment “P2 Hope Map”).

Tune in to Mental Health

Early Stage 1

Aim: Students are introduced to basic concepts of mental health. Connections between feelings and behaviour are explored in order to help students develop compassion towards those who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

Introduction: Mental health is a bit of a funny concept, but if we learn about it, we can start to understand it.

Everyone has times when they are happy, sad, angry, afraid, and our mental health is one of the main things that shapes how we act when we feel those things, and how we get through tough times.

Some people might find it a bit easier than others to get through bad situations, or you might find things easy one day, and difficult the next.

Sometimes we feel ashamed of how we feel and that makes it difficult to ask for help when we need it.

Activity

Using the slide provided (slide number 8) ask students to think about how they act in response to the different feelings listed. For example, do they cry when they are sad? Laugh when they are happy?

Additional Activities

Using the slide (slide number 9), go through the different actions and ask students what people might be feeling when they do those things.

Stage 2

Aim: Students are introduced to basic concepts of mental health. Connections between feelings and behaviour are explored in order to help students develop compassion towards those who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

Introduction: Mental health is a bit of a funny concept, but if we learn about it, we can start to understand it.

Everyone has times when they are happy, sad, angry, afraid, and our mental health is one of the main things that shapes how we act when we feel those things, and how we get through tough times.

Some people might find it a bit easier than others to get through bad situations, or you might find things easy one day, and difficult the next.

Sometimes we feel ashamed of how we feel and that makes it difficult to ask for help when we need it.

Activity

Using the slide provided (slide number 8) ask students to think about how they act in response to the different feelings listed. For example, do they cry when they are sad? Laugh when they are happy?

Using the slide (slide number 9), go through the different actions and ask students what people might be feeling when they do those things.

Additional Activities

Ask students what they find helpful when they are doing one of the actions from the slide above? How do they like other people to treat them?

Stage 2

Aim: Students are introduced to basic concepts of mental health. Connections between feelings and behaviour are explored in order to help students develop compassion towards those who may be experiencing mental health difficulties.

Introduction: Mental health is a bit of a funny concept, but if we learn about it, we can start to understand it.

Everyone has times when they are happy, sad, angry, afraid, and our mental health is one of the main things that shapes how we act when we feel those things, and how we get through tough times.

Some people might find it a bit easier than others to get through bad situations, or you might find things easy one day, and difficult the next.

It's good to remember that just because someone finds it a bit difficult, it doesn't mean they're wrong. It can be good to think about what else might be going on when we don't understand another person's feelings.

For example, it might seem like someone is just sad all-of-a-sudden, but maybe they had a fight with their parents before school.

Mental Health stigma is the way we think about and treat people because they have difficulties with their mental health.

Activity

Using the slide (slide number 9), go through the different actions and ask students what people might be feeling when they do those things.

Use the iceberg printout (Attachment P3 Iceberg) to encourage students to think about what might be going on for people when they act a certain way. Ask students to pick one of the prompts and write it at the top of the iceberg. At the bottom of the iceberg, get students to write down things that might be going on "under the surface".

Additional Activities

It's ok to feel poster: In small groups or as a class. Make or print a large poster with the words "It's ok to feel..." in the centre. Ask students to write down things it's ok to feel on small pieces of paper and decorate the poster with them. Prompt students by asking "what do you want other people to know about their feelings?" "What do you want other people to think about their own and others' feelings?"

Stage 3

Aim: Connections between feelings and behaviour are explored in order to help students develop compassion towards those who may be experiencing mental health difficulties. Students are introduced to concepts around mental health stigma.

Introduction: Everyone has times when they are happy, sad, angry, afraid, and our mental health is one of the main things that shapes how we act when we feel those things, and how we get through tough times.

Some people might find it a bit easier than others to get through bad situations, or you might find things easy one day, and difficult the next.

Mental Health stigma is the way we think about and treat people because they have difficulties with their mental health.

There are lots of myths, misunderstandings, and assumptions around mental health. These can all lead to stigma – a feeling that mental ill-health is something to be ashamed of, or something that should be hidden.

Stigma also connects to prejudice – the judgements we make about others based on their mental health. This can become discrimination when those judgements impact what people can do and access.

Activity

In small groups, ask students to read through the handout (attachment P3 Stigma).

Ask students to think about one stereotype about mental health and what might be going on underneath that and how they can challenge that stereotype.

Ask students to share with the class.

Think about some of the common stereotypes about mental illness and find different ways of looking at things. For example, one stereotype about people experiencing mental ill-health is that they are lazy. Instead of this negative stereotype, think about the different things someone might be experiencing that could lead to them feeling overwhelmed or exhausted. Often dealing with the symptoms of mental ill-health takes a lot of internal energy, making it difficult to do everyday tasks. Whilst this may be perceived as laziness from the outside, what we don't see is that an individual is doing a lot of hard work that is invisible to the outside.

Additional Activities

Ask students to work together to create a “Mental Health Ally Action Plan” for the classroom and/or school. Use the included printout (Attachment “P4 Action Plan”)