

Taking actions,

creating options

Intention

In this session it is intended that students:

- develop an understanding that mental illness is an issue that may directly concern them
- identify and practice a range of behaviours related to self-help and help for others
- identify barriers and difficulties in taking action in support of people experiencing a mental illness or those affected by it.

Resources

- Section 3 of the *MindMatters* video
- Space for role-plays and class discussion

How to

ACTIVITY 1: Getting help

1. Section 3 of the *MindMatters* video shows the use of role play technology in dealing with two situations involving young people: a suspected eating disorder in a young woman, and a young man who is experiencing depression and withdrawal from his peers.
2. Play section 3 of the video for the class.
3. Rewind and replay the first scenario dealing with the suspected eating disorder. Use the sample questions to guide class /group discussion of the issues.

Sample questions

- Could it happen at this school?
- If it did happen within your group of friends, what would you do, where could you go? Where would you go?
- Why is it possible that the girl's parents had 'done nothing' about her situation?

Setting up role-plays

It helps the actor if they know:

- who they are playing
- what the scene is about
- when the scene is taking place
- where the scene is taking place
- what their character wants.

Managing role-plays

- Try simultaneous role-play first to build confidence and engagement. In a simultaneous role-play all actors are at work, and there is no audience.
- Keep it short. Complete stories are not required.
- Stop and start the action to guide focus of discussion.
- Use replay, discussion and interview techniques.
- Ask reality testing questions, for example, 'Was that more like real life or more like a soap opera / comedy version?'
- What would the real life drama look like?

Debriefing

Use the sample questions as part of the debriefing process.

- How easy would it be for you to go to her parents to say that you are concerned about her health?
- How easy would it be to go to a local health service and get help?
- Script out a conversation between yourselves and her parents or the health service. Script out a conversation between yourselves and the girl if she realised that you had been speaking to her parents. Role-play one or both of these situations.

4. Replay the second scenario dealing with the young man who is staying away from school and his friends. Class / group discussion of these issues could focus on the following sample questions.

Sample questions

- Is this situation common among young men at this school? Among young women? Do you think there are differences between young men and women in relation to depression and losing contact with friends? If so, what could explain these differences?
- Is Luke experiencing an episode of mental illness, or is he just going through a 'normal' part of adolescence?
- What could be the results of Luke dropping out of school?
- Who is likely to be able to support him in dealing with his difficulties? What could his friends do if they were concerned about him?
- Are there any resources in your school or the local community that could help Luke? If you can't answer this question, how would you go about finding out this information?
- What other situations are there where you might have to seek help for friends in relation to their mental or emotional health? Each group could sketch out one situation and explain it to the rest of the class, including what action they and others in the local area could take to help the person.

Protective interrupting is

where a teacher interrupts a student so that a story is not shared or told. It is a teaching strategy designed to protect:

- **the person telling the story** from disclosing into the public arena, or from damaging their reputation
- **those who the story is told about** they have the right to privacy
- **the class member** from distress at hearing a disclosure, or from covert pressure to be engaged in social activities of 'high status' risky behaviours
- **the course and the teacher** from side tracking off the discussion activity, or from allegations that the course is an arena for gossip or intrusion upon the privacy of others.

ACTIVITY 2: Actions and reactions

1. This activity uses role-play in the classroom around other situations. The teacher can select issues that have been raised in earlier work in this unit, that are relevant in the local community, or select from the list below.
2. In each case, the purpose of the role-play is to pose a situation, explore feelings, actions and reactions of the characters, identify options for action, and things that might make it difficult for young people to take action about their own health or that of their friends or relatives. The teacher plays a crucial role in prompting students' thoughts and moving them forward during the role-play, in using other students to identify what individual characters are thinking or feeling, or in persuading them to take certain actions (even where these 'persuaders' play the part of the person's own mind).
3. **Possible situations**
 - A student returns to school after an episode of mental illness. Lots of rumours are going around the school. You are a friend, and are a bit afraid of how, or even whether, to approach your friend.
 - You find out that Jane's mother has schizophrenia. Jane is one of your group of friends.
 - One of your teachers has had a 'breakdown'. He has been on sick leave but is just about to come back to school, and he will be your home group teacher again. You'll have to see him every day.

ACTIVITY 3: Discussion

1. Use the sample questions to guide discussion of the role-play scenarios.

Sample questions

- How could these characters take action in support of their friends?
- How might the attitudes of others affect this character?
- Where could this person go for help?

Face to face

Intention

In this session it is intended that students:

- be exposed to and consider personal experience of living with mental illness from the perspective of both consumers and carers
- develop an understanding of the impact of mental illness on both consumers and carers.

Resources

- Visiting speakers *or*
- Mental illness videos (see Resource list on the back page)

How to

ACTIVITY 1: Guest speaker

1. Invite as a guest speaker a person who has direct experience of a mental illness and /or a person who has cared for someone with a mental illness.
Community mental health services, relevant support groups, and mental illness associations may be able to supply details of suitable speakers.
2. It is important that the visiting speaker is given a brief on the context within which the visit is occurring, or on the nature of the class group.
3. Students also need to prepare for the visit. Based on what they have learned so far in this unit, they are to develop a list of questions and issues they want covered.
4. Before the presentation begins, establish whether the speaker is happy to have questions asked during the talk or would prefer them left to the end.
5. After each talk it is beneficial for students to be given as much time as possible to interact with the presenter(s), asking questions and discussing issues.

ACTIVITY 2: Reflecting upon the new information

1. This activity may take place after the presenters have left or while they are still there, depending on time available and the needs of particular classes.
2. In groups or as a homework reflection, students are asked to discuss what they learned from the talks, using the sample questions as a guide.

ACTIVITY 3: Selected video

1. Use a video concerning the personal experiences of mental illness. Select from the videos listed in the Resource list on the back page.
2. Watch the video with the class.
3. Use the sample questions to guide discussion about the video.

Sample questions

What did you learn from the talks or video that:

- helped you understand mental illness better?
- you did not know before?
- seemed to you particularly important?
- surprised you?
- contradicted something you had always believed about mental illness?
- made you rethink your previous views on mental illness?
- made you feel more (or less) positive and hopeful about mental illness?
- helped you to understand better how community ignorance and stigma affects carers and consumers?
- made you feel more or less afraid of mental illness?
- made you feel happy or sad or angry or embarrassed or some other emotion?

Be sure that adequate preparation is given to this session so that the presenters and the teacher are clear about:

- time available
- students' prior experience
- context of school
- any special circumstances of students.

It should be made clear to groups that the questions are provided to help them explore their responses. They must not feel limited by them: they must be encouraged to allow discussion to move off the questions, so long as it continues to deal with their responses to the talks.

Resource list

MindMatters bibliography

<http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters>

Websites

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/>

National Institute of Mental Health

US Department of Health and Human Services

Comprehensive information on specific mental disorders, their diagnosis and treatment

<http://www.health.gov.au/mentalhealth>

National Mental Health Strategy.

Useful information and brochures on depression, schizophrenia, eating disorders and anxiety disorders

<http://www.kidshelp.com.au>

Kids Help Line

Help line for young people and information on issues such as relationships, prejudice, and suicide

<http://www.reachout.asn.au/>

New Australia Foundation Ltd

Comprehensive information about youth suicide including advice and support

Videos

For copies of the full videos used in the *MindMatters* showreel video, please contact:

Attitude: World of the Mentally Ill

Attitude: Suicide

ABC TV Program Sales

(02) 9950 3173

Flipping Out and Hanging On

Marcom (07) 3340 8900

Spinning Out

Film Australia (02) 9413 8777

One in Five (advertisements)

One in Five (video)

State of Mind

Mental Health Branch

Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services

1300 653 227

Mental health brochures

Available from:

Mental Health Branch of the Department of Health and Ageing

GPO Box 9848

Canberra ACT 2601

Tel 1800 066 247,

Fax 1800 634 400