

Welcome! This lesson is about emotional health and well-being



What's ahead...

01.

Is this normal?!

Going through changes in emotional health as a young adult

02.

Emotions

Tips for identifying how you feel + why this is an important skill

03.

Disorders + self care

The importance of taking care of your emotional well-being

04.

Stigma

YOU have the power to change the way we talk about mental health

05.

Friendships

Strategies for developing healthy friendships

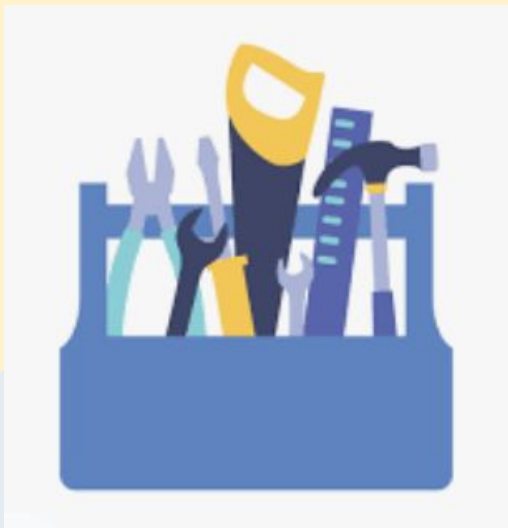
Introduction to emotional health

Emotional wellness is an important aspect of your overall health.

It is just as important to tend to your emotional health and well-being as it is to take care of your physical health.



What to expect in this lesson



This lesson offers strategies for understanding and navigating the changes we all experience in our emotional well-being throughout adulthood.

We will refer to this knowledge as “tools” that will fill up the “**toolbox**” you carry with you for the rest of your life; helping you **create healthy relationships with yourself and others.**

Let's get started!

01.

**Is it normal to feel
like this?!**



YES.

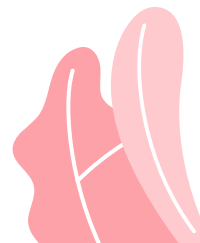
It is NORMAL to experience changes in your emotional health and well-being throughout your life.

Everyone experiences temporary ups and downs in their mood and emotions.



Just like the highs and lows of a rolling hill or mountain

The way you manage your emotions affects everything in your life, which is why it is so important to have a **toolbox** full of strategies and knowledge about emotional wellness



Going through changes

It is **NORMAL** to be experiencing new, strong emotions as you enter adulthood

Feeling emotions is a normal and **beautiful** part of being **human**



You are probably starting to see the world differently from when you were a small child.

As a young adult, you are also presented with new life experiences and challenges.

These changes can evoke new and complex emotions.

Puberty + Emotional Wellness



Fluctuations in the way you are feeling are *especially* normal as a young adult, as your bodies and minds are going through big changes.

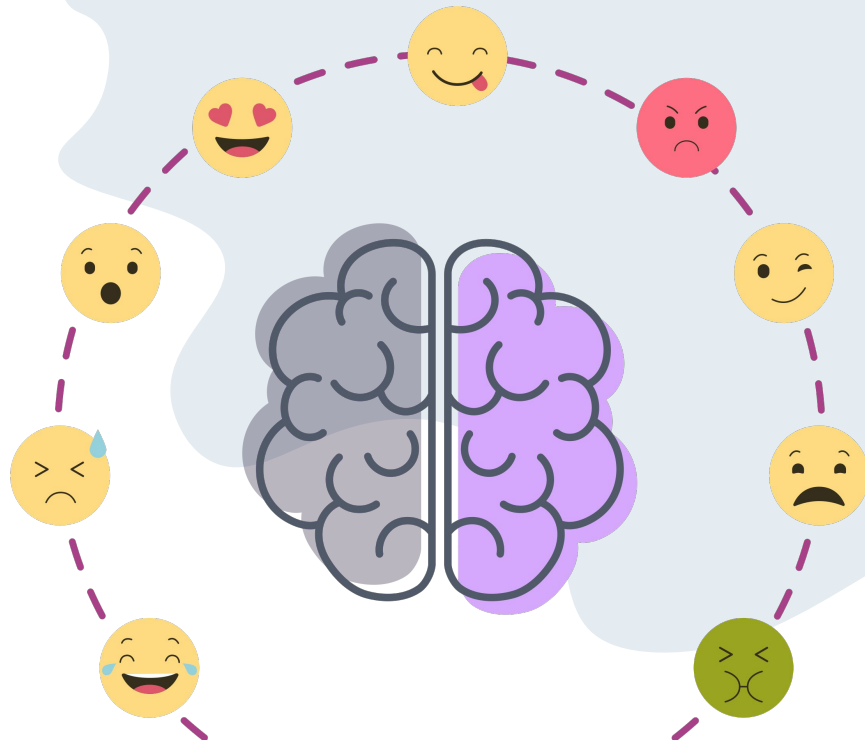
Puberty causes chemical changes in your brain

As a developing adult, your brain produces hormones that are responsible for affecting your mood. As you undergo puberty, it is very normal to feel irritable, sad, or frustrated as a result of these hormonal changes.

(check out the Sexual Health + Puberty lesson to learn more!)



02. Emotions




Why identify our emotions?



Many life events, big or small, can change how you are feeling day-to-day or for an extended period of time.

Sometimes it may even feel like your mood changes for no reason at all.

This is normal, too, and is why it can be really helpful to identify how you are feeling.



Putting a name to the emotion(s) you are experiencing helps you identify the best strategies to support that feeling.

This is an important tool to keep in your toolbox throughout your life.

What can influence your emotional well-being?

adverse life experiences

(loss of a loved one, violence, alcohol or drug dependency in the family, physical, verbal, or psychological abuse, enduring racism, non-life threatening injury or accidents)

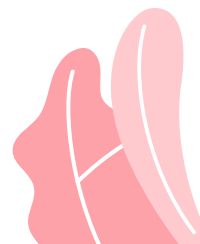
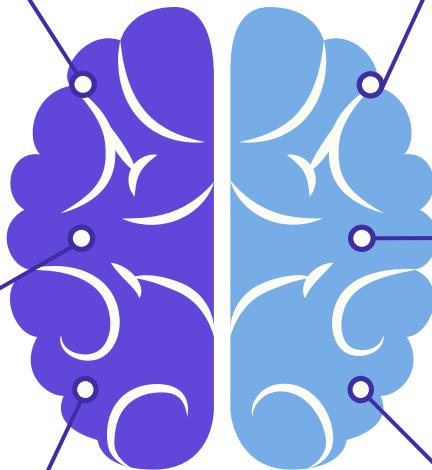
lack of sleep

major life changes or transitions

stress (we will talk more about stress soon!)

genetics; certain emotional trends or disorders may run in the family

unhealthy friendships / relationships



Emotion Wheel

The next page presents an 'emotion wheel'

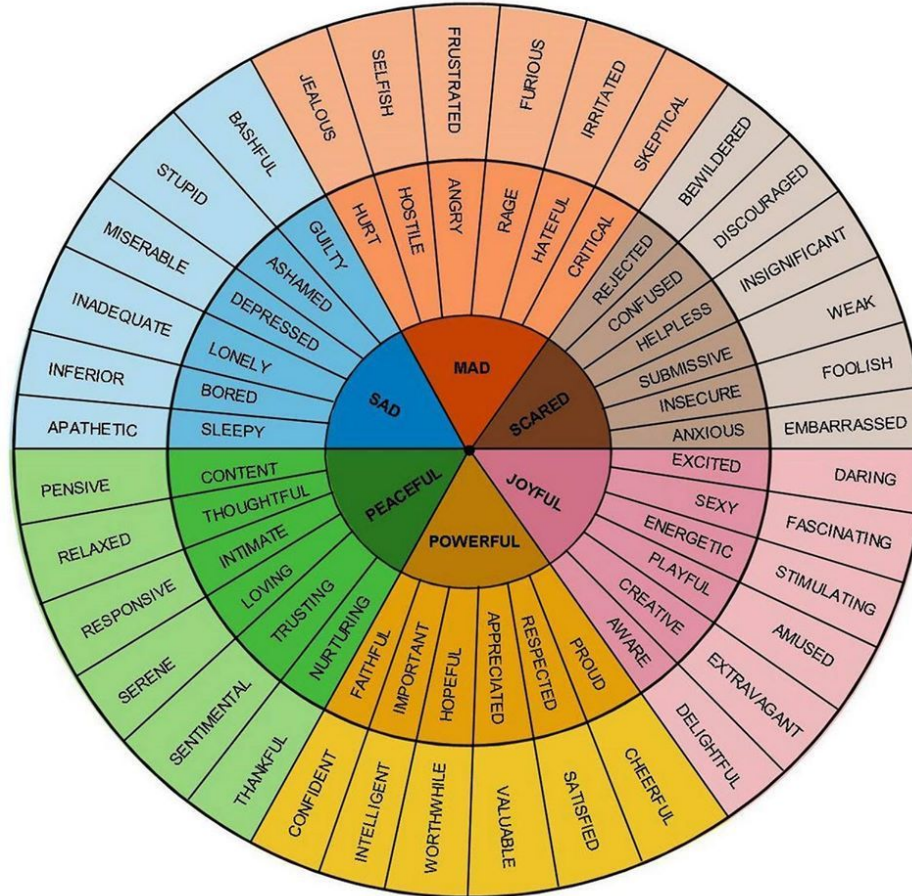
This is a tool you can refer to anytime you need help identifying your emotions

Tips:

It's normal to feel multiple, or contradictory emotions at the same time.

Identifying the most specific, or *nuanced* emotion will help you best decide **how to serve and support this feeling** (these are the emotions located closest to the outside of the wheel).

Emotion wheel



Strategies for identifying emotions:

Listening to your body

Try it!

Sometimes it can be difficult to pinpoint exactly how you are feeling. This is normal.

One strategy for identifying emotions is by **looking for cues from your body.**

How do you know when you feel happy? Where in your body do you feel it? In your stomach? In your heart?

What about when you feel mad? Does it feel different in your body than when you feel sad?

How does your body language change when you feel different emotions?

Expressing emotions

Benefits of expressing how you really feel:

- Can help you see the problem in a new light
- Can relieve built up tension or anxiety
- Can make decision-making easier
- Takes power or strength away from the feeling - it no longer controls you

Feel your feelings

It's okay to not be okay

You don't need to pretend you are happy if you are not

Expressing your emotions does not mean using violence or aggressive behavior.

Expressing your emotions does not have to look physical at all. Sometimes, saying to yourself “I feel really angry, or sad, or frustrated right now. And that is okay” can put your mind at ease.

Don't forget to take deep breaths

Activity 1: Exploring emotional awareness



Take a few minutes to think about a recent experience that gave you strong feelings -they can be positive or negative feelings.

Using the Emotion Wheel, how would you describe those feelings? Were you experiencing numerous emotions at once? What emotions do you feel today when you think about this recent experience?

What different sensations do you feel in your body when you experience these emotions?

The ability to identify your emotions is a really useful skill often called **emotional awareness**.

03.

Disorders and self-care



What is mental health?

Mental health is your state of emotional wellness. This includes your psychological and social well-being.

Your mental health will fluctuate throughout your life because it is influenced by many factors. Changes in your mental health are normal, especially as a young adult.

The state of your mental health affects everything you do.

Importance of mental health care



Emotional health struggles, if left unaddressed, can make it practically impossible to live a full life.

It can become difficult to perform well in school, complete everyday tasks, support your family, or work an important job.



In Africa in 2015, 17.9 million years were lost to disability (inability to live a fully-functional life) as a consequence of mental health problems.

Disability caused by infectious disease accounted for the loss of 18.5 million years. The impact of mental health is almost as severe as that of infectious disease.



Clinical Depression

Depression is a mental health disorder that results in persistent low mood and impairment of everyday tasks.

Depression is a serious disorder that affects over 300 million people globally.

Depression is a health condition that can be diagnosed by a professional.

The symptoms and experiences of those with depression vary in severity (mild to extreme) and duration (months to years)



Depression is very common among young adults



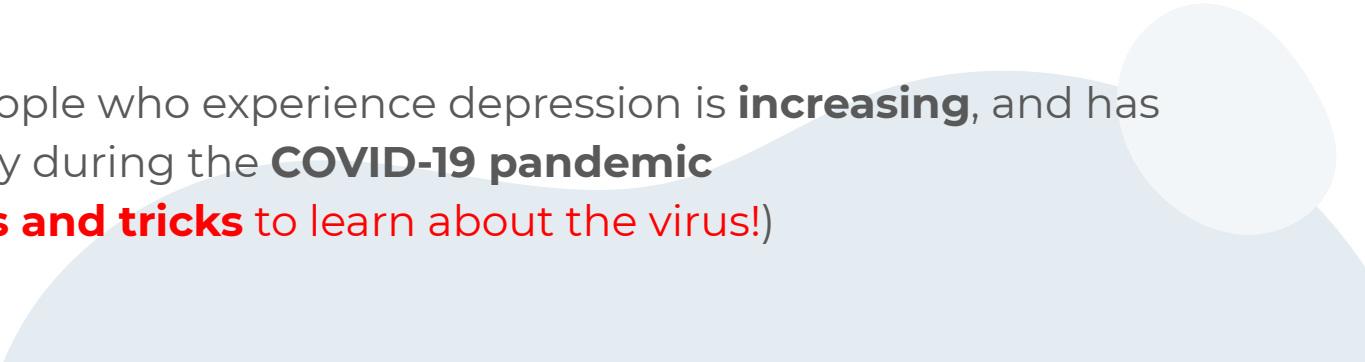
According to the World Health Organization,

4.4% of the world's population have been diagnosed with depression (around **322 million**)

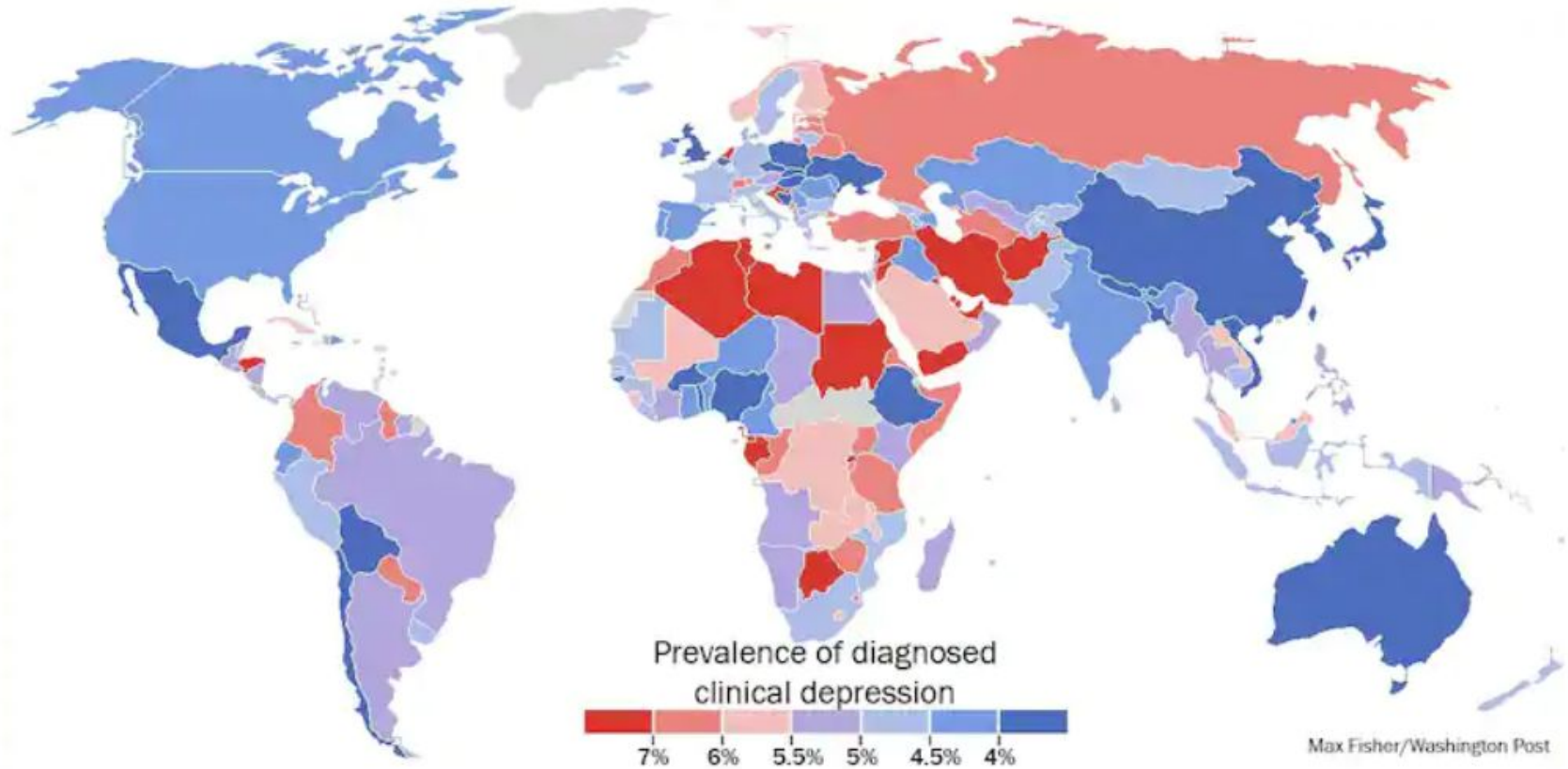
Approximately **29.19 million** individuals in **Africa** are experiencing depression (as of 2017).

Globally, females are almost **twice** as likely to experience depression as males

The number of people who experience depression is **increasing**, and has grown significantly during the **COVID-19 pandemic** (see **COVID-19 tips and tricks** to learn about the virus!)



Depression rates around the world



Redder countries have higher depression rates. Bluer countries have lower depression rates. (Max Fisher/The Washington Post)

Common signs and symptoms

Persistent low mood

Depression can be accompanied by strong feelings of sadness, loneliness, grief, fear, stress, and worthlessness.

Poor
concentration

Change in sleep
patterns

Change in
appetite

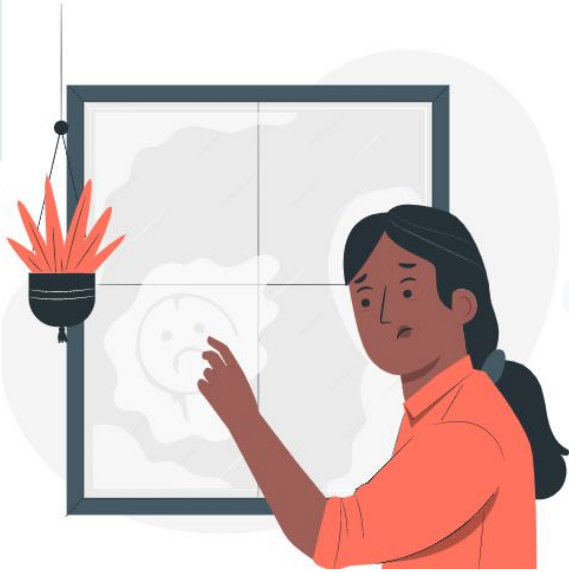
Low-self esteem

Loss of interest

In people or
activities you
usually enjoy

Severe depression
can lead to
thoughts of
ending one's life

People with depression experience symptoms differently



Some people may notice they experience one or two symptoms, some may endure all of them.

Depression is a spectrum, having anywhere between mild and severe effects.



It can be difficult to tell when a person is experiencing depression simply by looking at them. The only TRUE way to know how someone is doing is by checking in with them.

We will discuss strategies for being a supportive friend later in this lesson

“I think I might be depressed. Does this mean I’m crazy?”

No!

People who
experience
depression are
NOT crazy

People who express
the symptoms of
depression are **NOT**
acting, or trying to
get attention

If you are experiencing
depression, remember
this:

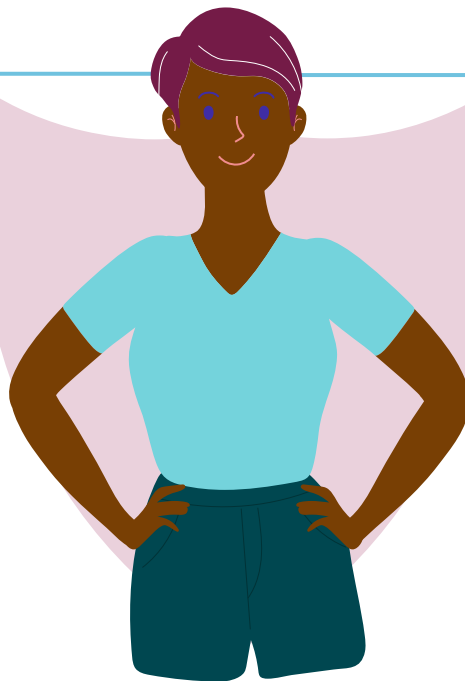
You are **WORTHY** of love
and support from family
and friends. There is
nothing wrong with you.

Treatment



Therapy

Talking about your emotions and experiences with a **mental health professional** can have many benefits. Many people find they develop a stronger connection with a therapist who can relate to their identity in some way, such as sharing the same race/ethnicity or gender.



Antidepressants

These medications regulate the chemicals in your brain to **stabilize your mood**, and are prescribed to you by a **doctor**.

What if I can't access a therapist or doctor?

If left unaddressed, depression can impact your life in so many ways. There are numerous strategies you can try on your own which can improve your quality of life. **Many people need professional support to fully recover, however.**

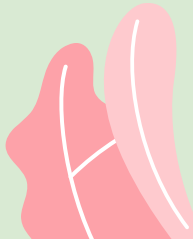
Talk about it

Sometimes having conversations about how you are feeling with friends or family can have similar benefits as therapy...

Connection with others can ease feelings of loneliness, and loved ones are often eager to offer comfort and support

Write / draw about it

If you don't feel comfortable sharing your emotional experiences with others, you can try writing about it, or taking some time alone to reflect deeply. See the next slide for journaling and reflection exercises.



Journaling

Grab a writing utensil and something to write on, and **try out some of these journaling prompts** next time you are experiencing uncomfortable feelings.



2. Identify the emotion you are feeling, as well as where in your body you feel this. What color would you give this feeling? What would it look like as a shape?

1. **Start by taking a slow, deep breath.** This will help you tune into your thoughts.

3. List 3 things you are grateful for. They can be as big or small as you'd like.

4. For about 2 minutes, write down every single thought that pops into your head. They may be ridiculous, embarrassing, or emotional.

When you are ready to finish, walk away from your writing. Feel free to tear apart the paper, or throw it away -whatever helps you **let go**.

Mindfulness

What is mindfulness?

This is a process of bringing your awareness to your surroundings and the present moment. Mindfulness can help you tune into your body, and focus on calmly accepting your thoughts, feelings, experiences.



1.

For 2 minutes, see how many things you can notice using all 5 of your senses.
What can you see? Hear? Smell? Taste? Touch?

2.

Body Scan

Taking slow, deep breaths, close your eyes and slowly bring your attention to different parts of your body. The tips of your fingers, your nose, your chest. Try to release any tension you feel in each body part as you scan through them

We're gonna need a bigger toolbox!

Negative self-talk

The way you talk to yourself can have a big impact on your emotional well-being.

Negative self-talk is inner dialogue that puts yourself down or questions your abilities.

Examples of negative self-talk:

I hate myself, I can't do anything right, people aren't going to like me



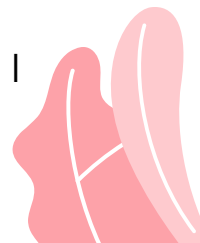
Positive self-talk

Being patient and kind to yourself is really important as you work through uncomfortable feelings, depression, or anxiety.

The first step to overcoming negative self-talk is by noticing these thoughts. Next, brainstorm ways to re-frame, or change this thought to sound more supportive and compassionate

Instead, try:

I forgive myself, I am doing my best, I am proud of who I am



Stress

Stress is a normal human reaction that everyone experiences

Our bodies are really good at sending us signals when it is stressed. **Stomach aches, trouble sleeping, jaw tension**, these can all be caused by stress.

Sometimes stress has **positive effects**. If you have an important school assignment coming up, the stress you feel might motivate you to prepare ahead of time.

Stress becomes negative when you go extended periods of time without relieving the tension or worry. Severe stress can make it difficult to live a full life.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder is a condition diagnosed by a doctor when you experience persistent stress.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

It is normal to feel anxious at times throughout your life, however, it is important to know when this may be an anxiety disorder.

Anxiety disorders are similar to feeling stressed, fearful, or worried, except that an anxiety disorder can be diagnosed by professionals and can last for long periods of time.

These intense feelings of panic and stress can make everyday tasks a big challenge, and may make it difficult to achieve your life goals.



Anxiety disorders are very common



Around 264 million people globally experience anxiety disorders



About 25.91 million African individuals have an anxiety disorder



Anxiety disorders are more common among females than males



Many people experience depression and anxiety simultaneously

Common Signs + Symptoms of Anxiety

The symptoms of anxiety can be experienced internally, as well as physically / externally.

Physical symptoms:

- body aches
- soreness
- chest pain or tightness
- panic attacks



A **panic attack** is a short yet sudden + intense feeling of terror or fear, when there is often no immediate threat present. Many people experience a fast heartbeat and difficulty breathing

?

Internal symptoms:

- excessive worrying, fear, stress
- impaired concentration
- irritability
- restlessness
- fatigue, difficulty sleeping

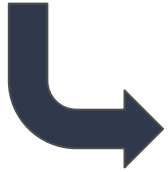
Triggers / Causes of Anxiety Disorders



Usually, a combination of these factors causes people to experience an anxiety disorder, and the exact moments or events that trigger anxiety varies from person to person.

For your toolbox...

Since everyone experiences anxiety differently, it is important to **identify your unique triggers**, as this allows you to manage them effectively.



Identify what **causes** you frustration, worry, fear, or sadness.



You may not be able to remove these stressful events or people from your life, but taking care of your emotional health during stressful experiences can have a huge positive impact.



Breathing Exercise

The simple act of breathing **with intention**, can have many benefits for your emotional well-being

Try it!



Decreases tension, calms the mind, give you energy, helps you fall asleep

- find a quiet place. You can sit, stand, or lie down, as long as you are comfortable
- close your eyes and place a hand on your lower **belly**
- breathe in deeply + slowly through your **nose**, feeling your belly expand into your hand
- hold your breath for 4 seconds
- breathe out slowly through your **mouth**
- hold once more for 4 seconds, then **repeat** with another deep breath for a couple minutes



PTSD - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

PTSD is a common disorder among individuals who have witnessed or experienced trauma - such as war, fire, sexual assault, or loss of a loved one

It is very normal to feel afraid during and after a dangerous or traumatic event, and it can be hard to recover emotionally from such an experience.

PTSD can occur at any age.
Symptoms may last from a few months to years.

It is estimated that **22%** of individuals in Sub Saharan Africa endure symptoms of PTSD
(Ng, 2020).

Signs + Symptoms of PTSD



Fear is an emotional state that causes changes in your body.

1. **Re-living** / recalling unwanted memories of the event.
2. **Avoidance** of situations or people that bring back memories
 "Shutting down" - Distancing self emotionally from the present moment
3. **Arousal** - Difficulty concentrating, exaggerated reactions to something startling, feeling irritable / having outbursts of anger or aggression

These symptoms can make it difficult to perform daily tasks

I think I am experiencing PTSD... how can I improve my quality of life?

It is possible to fully recover from PTSD - most people require professional support. The tools we discuss throughout this lesson can be helpful to soothe intense feelings and process emotions, hopefully improving quality of life. Don't forget the value in talking about your feelings with trusted friends and family.

Activity 2: Disorders + self-care



What are the common signs and symptoms of depression?

What are the common signs and symptoms of anxiety?

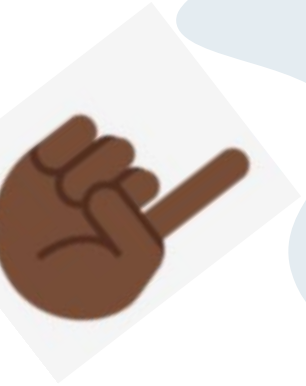
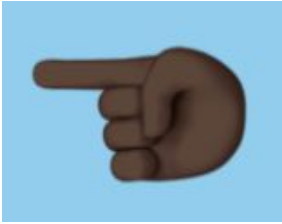
What are the common signs and symptoms of PTSD?

What is one way you can cope if you ever feel any of these symptoms?

Which tools would you be most likely to try if you ever felt the need?

Share what you have learned about the causes and symptoms of these two mental health disorders with a friend or a family member. For extra credit, show a family member or friend how to practice one of the coping tools discussed in this chapter.

04. Stigma





What is stigma?



Stigma is invented to shine a negative light on something in order to keep people away from that thing.

All around the world, there is a **stigma** surrounding mental health.



Fear of stigma prevents people from asking for help or openly expressing and discussing their feelings with others.



Stigma also prevents us from realizing that the person next to us might be experiencing very similar feelings.

Stigma + Gender

Females experience depression and anxiety almost twice as much as males, however it is still very common and normal for males to struggle with their mental health.



But instead, the opposite is true. It takes great amounts of **courage, strength, and confidence** to talk about your emotions. And as we have already mentioned, openly sharing with others can have many benefits.

As a male, it can feel especially challenging to process and express your emotional struggles with others.

You may have been told that as a man, you need to “deal with your problems”.

Stigma has led males to believe that they will be looked down upon if they speak openly about their mental health, or even appear emotional.

It's normal to talk about our physical health, why not our mental health?



Mental health does not equal mental illness.
Experiencing changes in your mental health are NORMAL - enduring disorders such as anxiety and depression do not make you any less important or valuable to society.

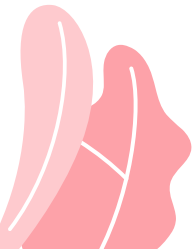
We cannot improve rates of depression + anxiety if we continue spread negative stigma about openly discussing emotional wellness and reaching out for help.



Watch this Ted Talk titled *There is no shame in taking care of your mental health*, presented by Sangu Delle, an entrepreneur from Ghana.

https://www.ted.com/talks/sangu_delle_there_s_no_shame_in_taking_care_of_your_mental_health

If video isn't possible, turn this into slide w key quotes telling Mr Delle's story

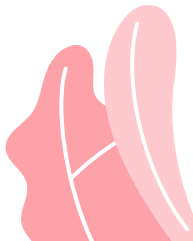


You Can Challenge Stigma

It's normal to feel the weight of stigma and shame, but it is SO important to speak about your stress and emotions. Your emotional health IS as real of an issue as your physical health - it's not something to be ignored.

Like Sangu Delle, you too can be a leader in **challenging and identifying** stigma surrounding emotional wellness and mental health.

African governments invest less than 1% of their health care budget in mental health. There is also a shortage of mental health professionals in Africa, but this shouldn't mean you have to endure challenges alone.



Activity 4: Challenging stigma



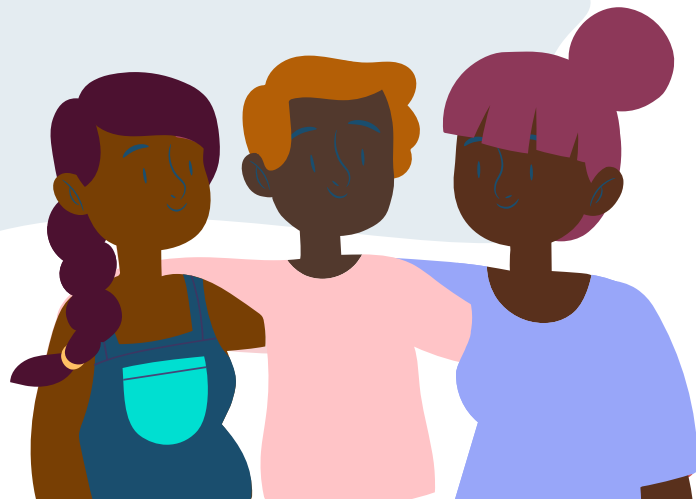
Have you noticed or experienced stigma surrounding mental health disorders, expressing emotions, or another aspect of emotional health? Think of one example - how was this experience related to stigma?

Based on what you have learned in this lesson so far, how do you think the stigma surrounding mental health should change?

What can you do to challenge stigma and create a more inclusive and supportive community? Brainstorm ideas with friends, family, and teachers



05. Making Friends



What is this section about?



Friendships are important, especially as a young adult

Friends can
offer support
during
challenging
times

Friends can
increase your
sense of
belonging and
purpose

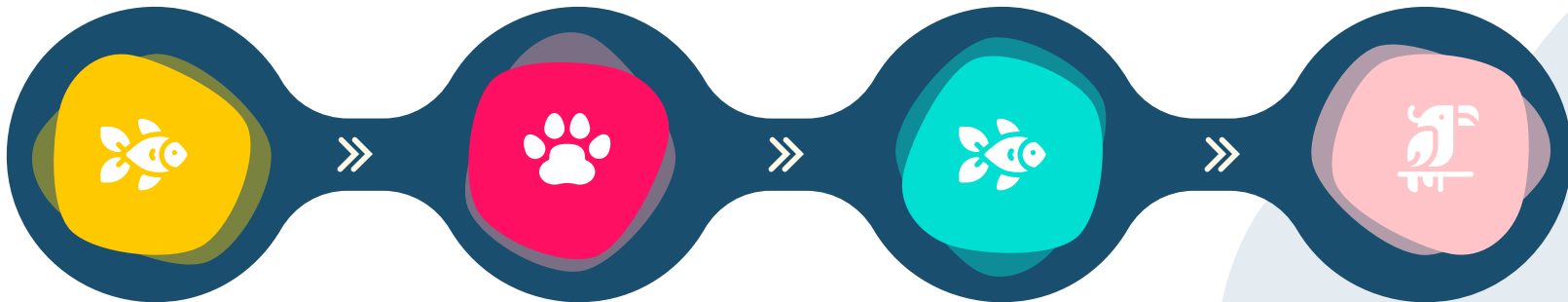
Friends
can be someone
safe to talk to about
emotional
well-being

Friends can
celebrate good
times / exciting
things with you

Friends can
boost your
happiness,
and reduce
stress

What does a healthy friendship look like?

A good friend...



Knows you well, and knows how you best want to be supported

Is someone you feel comfortable being honest with about your emotional wellness

Is non-judgmental, a good listener, values your well-being

Discourages you from dangerous or irresponsible behavior, as well as negative thoughts

A good friend is someone you feel like you can be *yourself* around them; you don't need to pretend to be someone you aren't. **A real friend doesn't try to change you.**

Signs of an Unhealthy Friendship



Being able to identify unhealthy or unsupportive aspects of friendships is an important step towards creating positive relationships, and improving broken ones.

Examples of a **toxic** friend:

lying, selfishness, jealousy/comparison, physical/verbal abuse, pessimism, taking advantage/manipulative, stealing, peer pressure



*Take
caution*

Continue reading for suggestions on how to address these issues with your friends and improve friendships...



Strategies for Making Friends

It can be hard to create honest, meaningful friendships from scratch. Real friendships can take time, effort, and a little persistence.

The first step is to *know what a real friend looks like*.

Once you have an idea of what it means to be a good friend, *BE that person*. Your healthy and supportive qualities will attract people with similar values.

Quality over quantity! Having 1 amazing friend is more meaningful than a group of people who don't share your values.

Look for what you have in common, whether that is shared life experiences, activities you enjoy, etc



How To Be a Good Friend

Be kind - treat all humans the way you would like to be treated

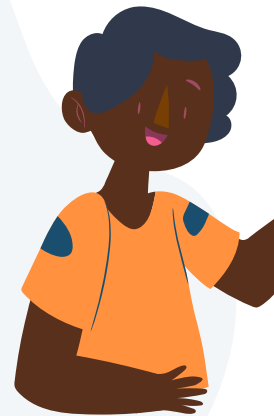
Open up - talk about your emotions, what's troubling you, what you love in the world, etc. This is a great way to *really* get to know each other and establish **trust and honesty**

Build trust - don't gossip about your friends, spread rumors, or share their secrets



Listen - to their words, but also their body language. You can't always tell how someone is feeling from their words.

Address conflict productively - be thoughtful about your words. See next slide for some strategies!



Tips for Improving Friendships

Strategies for healthy communication / providing constructive criticism...

If a friend's actions have left you feeling less than equal or unsupported, there are ways to communicate this. ***When you tell them what you need, a good friend will respond respectfully.***

Try filling in the blanks of this phrase: "It made me feel _____ when you _____, and I would prefer if you _____"

If the hurtful behavior/words/etc continue, consider turning your time and energy to new friendships, temporarily or permanently.

Example:

"I feel uncomfortable when you raise your voice at me, and I would prefer if we both listened to each other explain their needs in a peaceful manner."

You *deserve* to surround yourself with compassionate people.

Tips for supporting a friend who is struggling with their mental health

You can't tell
just by looking
at someone how
their mental
health is

- Some people want to be alone, or need space.
- Some people don't want to talk about it, but would rather have a hug, or someone to sit with.
- Some people want to talk about it a lot.

YOU shouldn't have
to work out your
mental health issues
alone, and neither
should your friends
/family



It is not helpful to
assume how a loved
one wants to be
supported:
just ask!

If you or someone you know is considering suicide

When you or someone you know is considering ending their life, **taking action is always the best choice**

As a friend/family member, simply showing you care can make a big difference. Make sure they know you are there for them.

Ask questions

Be direct.
It's okay to say: "are you thinking about hurting yourself or committing suicide?"

Know warning signs

If someone is expressing many of the symptoms of depression, it may be a good time to check in with them

Offer support

If they feel comfortable talking about how they are feeling, let them know you're listening and take them seriously

Seek help

Your friends and family love you very much. It is okay to talk to them and ask for support.

Activity 5: Friendships



Take a few minutes to think about a friendship you have. In what ways is this relationship healthy and supportive? Are any aspects of this relationship unhealthy or toxic?

In addition, think about the role YOU play in this relationship. Name one instance when you showed compassion or support to this friend. How did it make you feel? Did these efforts affect your friendship in any way?

Extra credit Activity! As we have learned, friendships are SO important, especially as a young adult. Introduce yourself to someone new this week, study for school with someone you haven't studied with before, or give a stranger a thoughtful compliment. These efforts could make someone's day, and even turn into a special friendship.

This is the end of this lesson - nice work!

In summary...

1. Experiencing changes in your mental health as a young adult is a **normal** part of growing up. There are so many factors that play a part in your mental health state, *none of which make you crazy or a burden to your family.*
2. Depression and anxiety disorders are common, and should be taken seriously. **You are never alone** in your efforts to overcome mental health challenges.
3. You are loved; reach out to people you trust when you need emotional support. The way you feel in this moment, no matter how painful, is not permanent. *This will pass - do not kill yourself*
4. **Review these tools:** journalling, mindfulness, deep breathing, re-wording negative self-talk, opening up to friends/family about your emotions

Interested in learning even more?

Up next: Check out the modules on COVID-19 and Sex Ed to continue your learning on health and wellness!

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