

Explore Mental Health:

A Notebook for Grade 8 Health and Physical Education



Name: _____

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WHAT'S INSIDE?

This student notebook was created as a space to support your mental health learning and to provide opportunities for reflection. The notebook will not be submitted for assessment, so you can feel comfortable to personalize it and make it your own.

- tools to support your learning through all three modules
- places to doodle and brainstorm
- opportunities for reflection



WHAT ARE WE LEARNING ABOUT?

These modules will help you understand stigma related to mental health and mental illness and actions you can take to counteract it, ways to prepare for and manage the everyday stresses we all face (including seeking support when we need to), and how to support the mental health of our friends while also taking care of ourselves.

Your mental health matters, and you matter, too!



Doodles and Thoughts

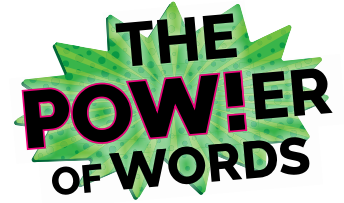
Use these spaces throughout to draw, doodle, take notes, reflect... *Make this notebook your own!*

MODULE 1 – MENTAL HEALTH AND STIGMA

MINDS ON

Understanding Stigma – The power of words

Stigma refers to negative attitudes, beliefs, or behaviours about or towards a group of people because of their situation in life. Sometimes stigma comes from other people, and sometimes we have heard negative messages so often we even say them to ourselves. This is called self-stigma. Definition from [stigma-why-words-matter-factsheet-en.pdf](#) (canada.ca).



Where does stigma come from? How does it spread?	What kinds of factors influence our experience/understanding of stigma?



Video

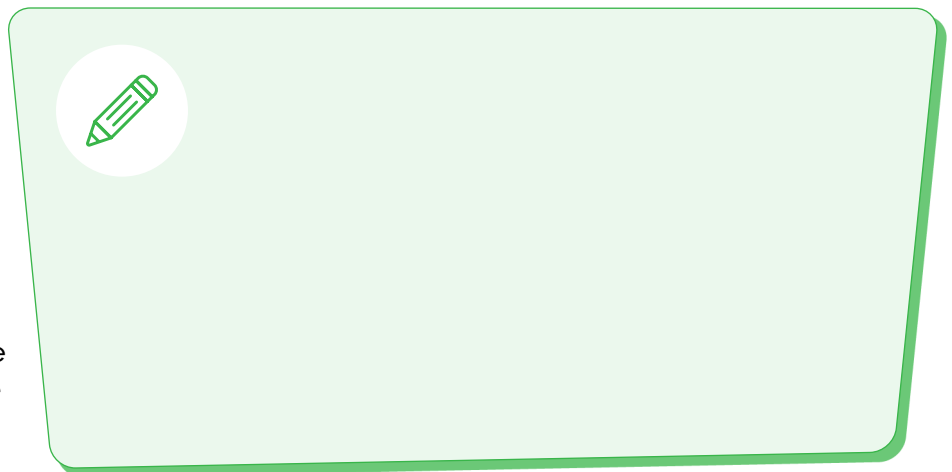
Stop Stigma: What do you *really* mean?

We can change the negative impact of stigma by changing the words that we choose. Words that are thoughtful, respectful, and kind can make a huge difference.

<p>For each text conversation...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you notice language that could be stigmatizing? Why? • What words could you use instead to say what you really mean? • Are there any other actions you could take? 	
Minh and Tasha	
Pierre and Javon	
Saumya and Dimitri	
Hassan and Grace	

For reflection

- Where do you find reliable information about mental health and mental illness?
- What helps you talk about your mental health?
- What are the characteristics of the people you feel most comfortable talking with?



Extension

Taking Action

In addition to the words you use, one way you can counteract stigma related to mental health and mental illness is by sharing some of what you learned in this lesson. How can you take action?



WHAT do you want to say or do?	
Choose an action or specific language that can counteract stigma.	
WHO do you want to hear it?	
For example - friends, parents/guardians, younger students, a community group, a business or company, etc.	
HOW do you want to share it?	
For example - school announcements, an image or poster placed in a bathroom stall, school or class newsletter, letter to a specific individual or business, a message for a class or school social media account.	

MODULE 1 – MENTAL HEALTH AND STIGMA

WRAPPING IT UP



What did we learn?

- There is still **stigma** related to mental health and mental illness in our society.
- This stigma can **negatively impact** how we talk about mental health and mental illness, how we treat people experiencing mental illness, and how comfortable people are seeking support.
- Our **word choices** can contribute to stigma and even cause harm, or they can empower others, create openings to share experiences, and support seeking help.
- The words we use not only **influence** how we make **others feel**, they **influence** how **we feel**, too.
- There are **additional actions** that can help reduce stigma too, such as showing kindness, compassion, and empathy for other people's feeling and experiences; respecting what is different and unique about each of us; and educating others.



Things I learned that were interesting or helpful:



Things I learned that were surprising:



Things I am still wondering about:



Changes in the way I think about mental health:

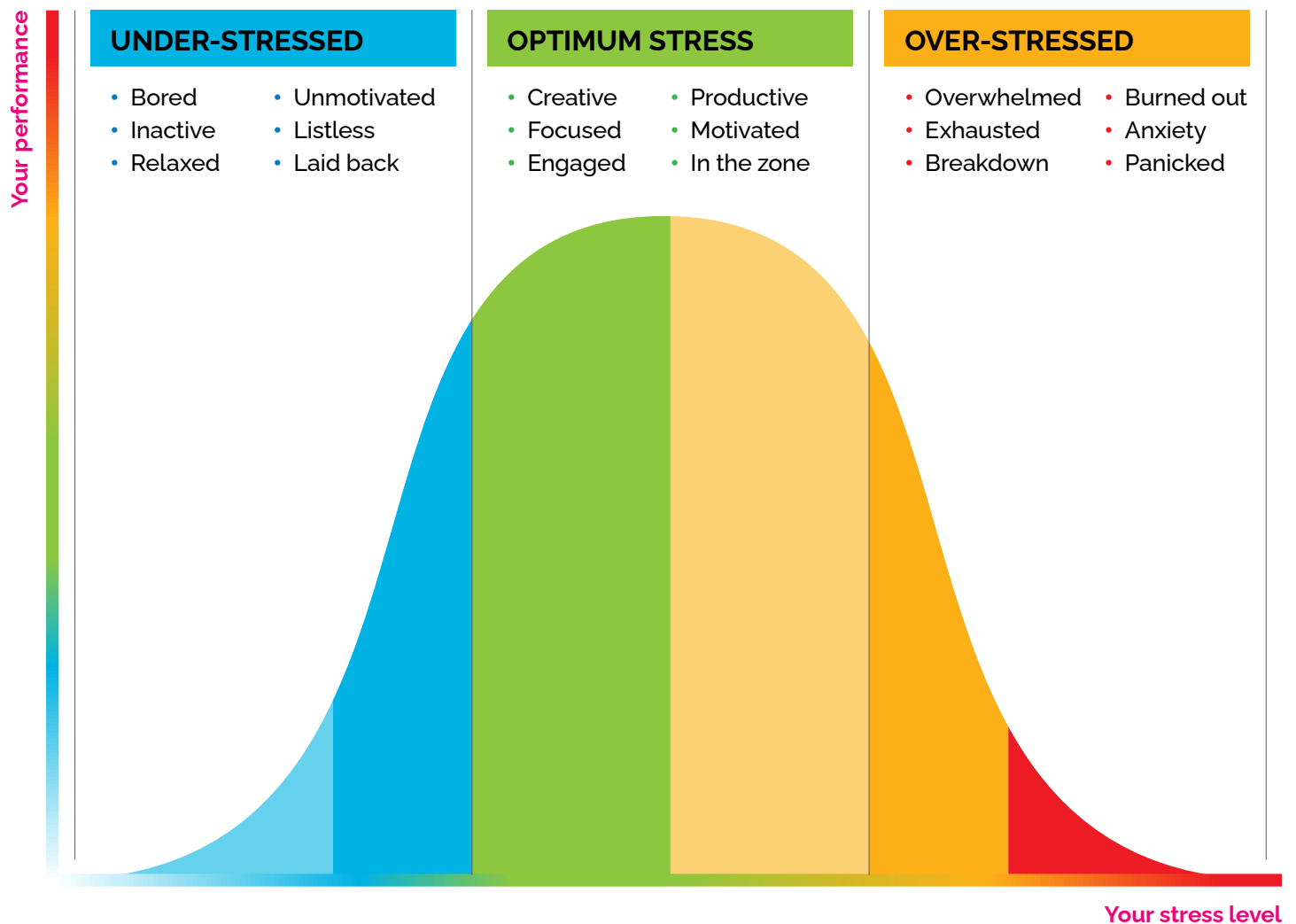
We all have mental health. Here are some things that support mine:

MODULE 2 – MANAGING STRESS

MINDS ON

Understanding stress

Stress is the pressure, tension, discomfort, and sometimes worry that can come from many different situations, like when we have a big test coming up, or we try out for a team, or when we're excluded from our peers or made fun of for something that's important to us. Sometimes even things we are looking forward to can cause stress, such as graduation, because they require us to adapt, grow, and try new things.



For reflection

How do you know you are stressed? How does it show up in your..

- Body (e.g., stomach aches)?
- Actions (e.g., spending more time alone)?
- Emotions (e.g., worrying)?
- Thoughts (e.g., expecting not to do well)?

Stress feels different for each of us. Knowing what it looks like for you can help you choose strategies to help and know when to use them.



Video

Building Skills Through Routines, Relaxation, Reframing, and Relationships

Stress is an everyday part of life. We can't get rid of stressors or challenges all together, but we can learn **strategies** to help manage them and keep stress in a zone that works for us. You may already know many! And **Routines, Relaxation, Reframing, and Relationships** are here to help, too.

THINGS I DO NOW	THINGS I'D LIKE TO TRY
Routines	
<i>What is working well about your current routines?</i>	<i>Where do you see opportunities for improvement?</i>
Relaxation	
<i>Are the relaxation strategies you use the same or similar to what was shared in the video?</i> List them here:	<i>What new strategies are you inspired to try?</i>

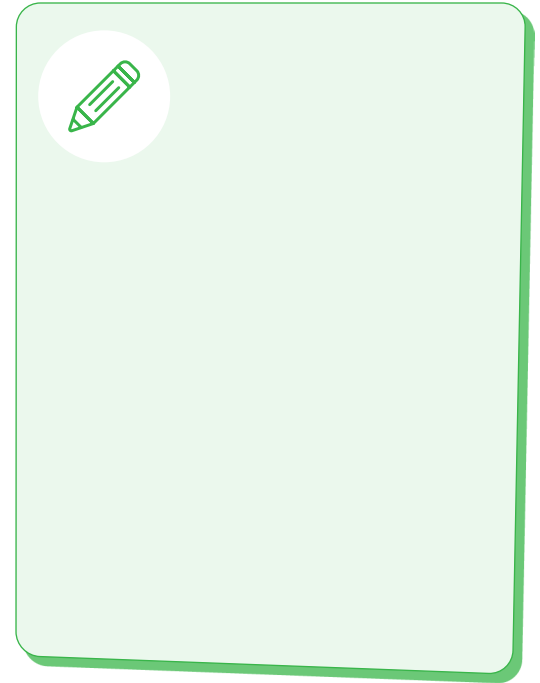
For reflection

How do you know if a stress management strategy is supporting you?

- How do you feel after you use the strategy?
- Does it support your values, goals, and the plans you have for your life, or get in the way of them?
- Are there other strategies that might better support you? (If so add them to the chart on page 9!)

Think about the strategies you use. Do they deserve your time and energy? You deserve healthy strategies that do what you want and need them to do!


- How do you really feel when you get off social media?
- Are you worried that vaping could affect your health?
- Do video games get in the way of other things you need to do?



Extension

Music Matters

There are many different strategies that can help impact our mood and help us feel well, music can be one of them!

MY SONG:	
<p>Things to think about...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does this song support you? • Does it inspire you, offer encouragement, boost your energy level, remind you of someone you care about or a meaningful experience, or something else? 	
<p>New songs for my playlist</p> 	<p>Jot down any songs shared by classmates that interest you so you can add to your playlist later.</p>





MODULE 2 – MANAGING STRESS

WRAPPING IT UP



What did we learn?

- We **all** feel stress at times.
- Some stress is a **good thing!** It can help us in many ways.
- Managing stress is a skill we can **practice** and **get better** at. There are strategies that can help.
- Different strategies may work at different times, so it's important to have a few **options available** and to **practice** them **regularly**.
- When we don't get a break from stress—like stress that is related to experiences of marginalization—it can **impact** our mental and physical health. When that starts to happen, it's time to **seek more support**.

 Things I learned that were interesting or helpful:	 Things I learned that were surprising:	 Changes in the way I think about mental health:
	 Things I am still wondering about:	
What is one new healthy strategy you could make part of your daily life?		

MODULE 3 – HELPING A FRIEND

MINDS ON

Being a Supportive Friend

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE TO BE A SUPPORTIVE FRIEND?

Think about it...

What does it look like to be a supportive friend to someone with a mental health problem?

You may notice that **the same things that make you a supportive friend in general also make you a supportive friend when someone has a mental health problem.**

For reflection

- What does a healthy relationship with a friend look like and feel like to you?
- How are healthy friendships balanced between both people?
- If you realize a friendship isn't balanced, what could you do about it? Who could you talk it through with?









Video

Share and Care, Connect and Respect

This video will explore how to notice when your friends may be in need of help, and the steps you can take to support them and to help them support themselves. To make the steps easier to remember, we've named them: Share and Care, Connect and Respect.

SHARE WHAT YOU NOTICE		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How did Tasha share what she noticed with Minh? 	
SHOW THAT YOU CARE		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are some words you could use to show your friend support and start a conversation? What do your friends say or do that makes you feel supported? 	


CONNECT TO MORE SUPPORT		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What if your friend asked you not to tell anyone? How could you encourage a friend to connect with support? • What if your friend still doesn't want you to tell anyone? 	
RESPECT YOUR OWN NEEDS		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How could setting boundaries be healthy in a friendship? • What are some ways you could set boundaries that respect your own needs and the needs of your friends? • How can you be sure that both people are feeling supported in the friendship? 	

For reflection

What if a friend or classmate was experiencing a mental health problem and said the following about seeking support:

- People won't look at me the same way if they find out.
- Everyone is so busy. I don't want to bother them with my problems.
- What if no one takes me seriously?
- Maybe this is all my fault.

What could you say to support your friend?



Record the words and remember to offer them to yourself, should you ever need them. You deserve the same care and compassion you give your friends. Your mental health is just as important!

MODULE 3 – HELPING A FRIEND

WRAPPING IT UP



What did we learn?

- We may play an **important role** in supporting our friends.
- Sometimes we need **other people** to play a role, too. We don't have to manage our concern for a friend all alone.
- Even if our friend asks us not to, we need to **seek support right away** if there is a risk to their safety or anyone else's.
- It's okay to **prioritize our own mental health** while we are helping a friend. Our mental health matters, too.



Things I learned that were interesting or helpful:



Things I learned that were surprising:



Changes in the way I think about mental health:



Things I am still wondering about:

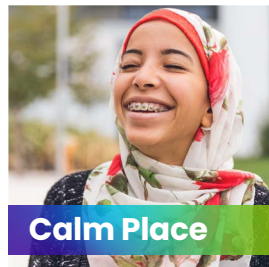
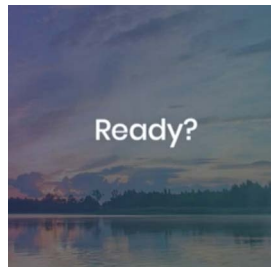
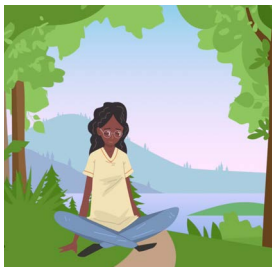
What is one way you can care for yourself as you support others?

Mindful Practices to Support Your Mental Health

Taking the time to centre ourselves through the use of mindful practices and strategies can be a simple yet powerful tool. The following links provide examples of strategies that you can try as you build your toolkit to support your mental health. You know yourself best. What works for each of us is unique and what works for you now may change in the future. It's good to have a range of tools that work in different situations.

Visualization

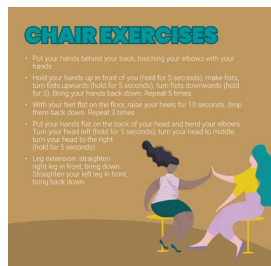
Guided imagery provides an opportunity to shift our focus away from worries. It can help students to relax as they visualize an image that promotes feelings of calm.



- [Forest Visualization Video](#)
- [Simple Visualization Exercises](#)
- [Calm Place](#) (poster and audio file)

Muscle relaxation

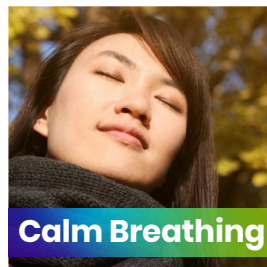
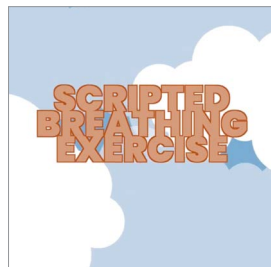
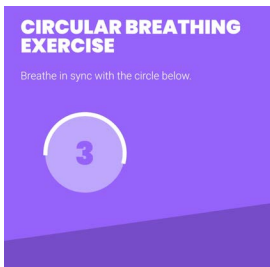
Muscle relaxation exercises can help us manage stress. Feeling anxious affects our bodies and minds. Muscle relaxation exercises can help us decompress and feel better physically, which in turn helps us feel better mentally.



- [Tense and Relax](#)
- [Chair Stretch](#)
- [Muscle Relaxation Exercises](#)

Breathing

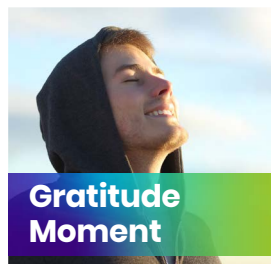
Practicing deep breathing several times a day can help to increase alertness and reduce feelings of anxiety and stress. It can also help to enhance positive feelings, promote positive behaviour, and provide a sense of calm.



- [Circular Breathing](#)
- [Finding Calm Guided Breathing Video](#)
- [Calm Breathing](#) (poster and audio file)

Affirmation

Viewing the world and relationships through a lens of affirmation can help us to notice and appreciate the positives in life, even when facing a challenge. Noticing and sharing gratitude can support healthy relationships and the development of resilience.



- [Gratitude Practices](#)
- [Gratitude Moment](#) (poster and audio file)
- [Four Finger Affirmation](#) (poster and audio file)

When Help is Needed

There are many things you can do to feel well, but sometimes things get in the way. If you try the strategies from this notebook and they aren't helping, you don't have to do it on your own. There are **people who can help**, and remember, **you deserve support**. Talk to an adult you trust or check out the resources below. If you aren't sure how to start the conversation, you could use words like...

"Something has been bothering me. Can you help me find someone to talk to about it?"

"I've been feeling stressed a lot lately. Can I talk to you about it?"

"Do you have some time to talk? There's something I need help with."

STUDENT RESOURCE LIST

Black Youth Helpline

- Call: 416-285-9944 or toll-free 1-833-294-8650
- Multicultural youth helpline serving all youth
- Services available in English



Kids Help Phone

- Call: 1-800-668-6868
- Text: CONNECT to 686868
- [Resources Around Me - Kids Help Phone](#)
- Available to young people across Canada
- Services available in English and French (additional languages also offered)
- Support in Cree, Ojibway, and Inuktitut varies from week to week, so you may need to call to request services in those languages



* Service availability varies. Be sure to check the websites for availability in your time zone.

Remember

- There are people in our school and community who are here to help you feel well and there are strategies to help you feel better.
- Problems don't have to be big to talk to someone about them.
- Finding the right fit is important. If the first support doesn't work for you, keep trying!
- Feeling better can take time. It's a process – stick with it. You are worth it!

A large, light green rounded rectangular box with a thin green border. In the top-left corner, there is a small circular icon containing a pencil. The rest of the box is empty, intended for a student to write their own thoughts or reflections.

**You deserve help. Your feelings matter.
You don't have to carry this alone.**