



# We All Have Mental Health

A Program for Middle & High School Remote Learners

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Erika's Lighthouse is a not-for-profit depression and mental health education organization that educates middle school and high school communities about teen depression, eliminates the stigma associated with mental health issues and empowers teens to take charge of their mental health. For more information and other programs and resources, go to [www.erikaslighthouse.org](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org).

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This program was written for educators, professionals and other adults working with adolescents to educate them regarding the issues surrounding depression. While Erika's Lighthouse consults with clinical, therapeutic, legal, and child development experts, nothing in this program should be construed as specific or general medical or psychological advice. Erika's Lighthouse assumes no responsibility for any actions taken as a result of the material or information contained in the program. Every child's and family's situation is unique, and Erika's Lighthouse urges children, adolescents, parents, and educators to seek and find competent professional advice appropriate for specific individuals and actions.

## **Welcome to We All Have Mental Health: A Program for Middle & High School Remote Learners.**

Maintaining good mental health is among the most challenging issues affecting today's youth, and the stressors young people face can be intense. Depression is an important—and often a required—topic for schools to address with their students. At Erika's Lighthouse, we have a strong track record of creating depression education classroom programs that are teen-centered, effective, impactful and hopeful.

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### **This program was inspired by a young person named Erika.**

Erika was a bright light who, sadly, lost her battle with depression in 2004 at age 14. Erika's Lighthouse was founded in her honor and is dedicated to helping other young people learn about depression and overcome the stigma surrounding mental health disorders. We All Have Mental Health was designed to be taught in a remote learning setting, led either by a teacher and/or a school mental health professional. The lessons provide opportunities for students and staff to engage in open and safe conversations about depression and good mental health.

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### **This program consists of one 45-minute (or 3 shorter) engaging and interactive lesson(s) designed to be taught remotely to provide students with increased:**

- knowledge of key concepts related to everyday feelings, overwhelming feelings and depression
  - empathy and understanding toward young people with depression
  - self-advocacy and peer-to-peer intervention
  - ability to identify and access valid and reliable sources of information
  - awareness of how they can support their own mental health and well-being and contribute to a positive mental health culture in their school and community.
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## **CLASS NORMS/GROUP AGREEMENTS**

If this program is being offered as part of an existing health education program, you will probably already have established norms or group agreements. If this is the case, this is a good time to review existing group norms with your students and refine them in preparation for this curriculum.

***This curriculum addresses sensitive topics.*** In order for students to feel safe and be fully engaged in the lessons, it is important to establish group norms and/or agreements. Group norms are ways that groups of people can work together in a thoughtful, respectful, safe and productive way. If you have already established group norms, be sure that each of the following guidelines have been addressed.

***If you have not developed group norms,*** here are some guidelines you may find useful in helping students come up with them:

- Everyone should be involved in creating the group norms.
- Use guiding questions to help students identify the norms that will achieve a safe and caring classroom:
  - How can we be sure that people will be able to safely share private information and feelings?
  - How can we be sure that everyone has a chance to freely share and that they are heard?
  - How can we be sure that people are not forced to say or do something that makes them feel uncomfortable or unsafe?

Some examples of group norms that are brainstormed may include:

- Listen to others' perspectives
- Maintain confidentiality
- Participate
- Right to pass
- Respect differences

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## HOW TO ANSWER DIFFICULT QUESTIONS PROTOCOL

Sometimes when covering sensitive content such as emotions, social influences, and personal topics, questions may arise that are difficult to answer. Sometimes, the question may relate to personal values that are not universally shared. Or the question might have more than one answer depending on a person's values, beliefs, and personal history.

It may be helpful to follow this protocol when responding to difficult questions:

1. ***Affirm that the student's question is legitimate.*** Restate it for clarification and acknowledge that others might also wonder about this. "Thanks for asking that. I am sure other people would like to know about..."
2. ***Identify if there is a belief/value that is inherent in the question.*** Point out anything about the question that might be opinion-related. It is important to express the range of opinions without identifying that any single opinion is the right one. "Some people might believe...while others believe..."
3. ***Answer the factual part of the question.*** "Here is what is known to be true..."
4. ***Refer to a trusted adult.*** "This would be a great question to ask your (aunt, dad, caregiver, etc.)"

5. **Check back.** "Did I answer your question?"
  6. **Leave the door open.** "If you have any other related questions, I hope you will feel free to ask."
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## SENSITIVE & PERSONAL ISSUES

Any time sensitive topics are addressed in class, it is important to ensure that all students are protected from potential trauma, particularly those who may have had adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). Social, emotional and mental health education may deal with issues of interpersonal relationships, suicide and substance use.

The teacher's capacity to listen non-judgmentally, with empathy, and to demonstrate a comfortable attitude in dealing with students' beliefs and feelings associated with mental health and emotions is crucial to the curriculum's successful implementation. Students come to the classroom with many different values, cultural and religious beliefs, and ideas about these topics. Teachers should keep in mind that because their students come from many backgrounds and traditions, some may have difficulty sharing ideas and discussing these issues with their peers.

When a student has experienced trauma of some sort in their life, it may have an impact on their ability to thrive and be healthy. These resources will provide guidelines and suggestions for helping to avoid further trauma to students affected by ACEs.

<https://www.weareteachers.com/10-things-about-childhood-trauma-every-teacher-needs-to-know/>

<https://www.weareteachers.com/video-every-teacher-needs-know-childhood-trauma/>

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Teachers can go a long way towards helping a child who has depression by noting what they see, consulting with the school's health staff, and treating the child with respect and sensitivity.

But it is important to note that teachers are not responsible for either diagnosing or treating a child who has depression. Only a trained mental health professional can do that.

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## TEACHING THIS PROGRAM

Erika's Lighthouse wants educators to be successful when teaching this program. Here are a few suggestions to ensure that:

1. Review all of the materials before teaching: it is suggested that each teacher reviews all parts and the accompanying materials before teaching.
2. While teaching the program, take notes on how the lesson went in different classes. Take notes on how you might adapt the lesson in the future. If you have a suggestion for an edit or adaptation, feel free to share with Erika's Lighthouse staff.
3. If you have student work samples from any worksheets, feel free to share with Erika's Lighthouse as examples of student work!
4. Remote Learning can be challenging and this is a difficult topic. If any of the content leads to a high level of distress or emotional discomfort for you or students, please reach out to a mental health clinician. Please contact Erika's Lighthouse staff immediately.

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**Crisis Text Line**  
(text HELP to 741741)

**National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**  
(dial 1-800-273-8255)

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PLEASE CONTACT US AT ANY TIME AT  
**[info@erikaslighthouse.org](mailto:info@erikaslighthouse.org)**

# **We All Have Mental Health:**

*A Program for Middle & High School Remote Learners*

## **Slide 1: Introduction Script**

"Today we are going to be learning about mental health, how we can better understand it and our feelings, how to practice good mental health and how, if we are struggling with our mental health or concerned about a friend, we can get the help we deserve.

KEEP IN MIND: If anything shared today prompts a feeling that you need to talk to someone, make sure to go to a trusted adult or contact the mental health professional's office here at school by emailing: \_\_\_\_\_ or calling: \_\_\_\_\_. Please feel free to ask questions at any time, but if you want to reach out to me after this lesson that is fine too."

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## **Part 1: Good Mental Health**

*15 min*

In Part 1, students will learn about stress and factors that can improve our mental health. The crux of the lesson is based around the Slideshow, Lecture and Discussion Questions. As the facilitator, you will also guide students through a 60-second mindfulness exercise. This lesson includes a number of ancillary worksheets that students may complete.

## **Slide 2: Part 1 Introduction Script**

"We can't always control our emotions or how we feel, but as we'll learn today there are things that people can do to promote good mental health and reduce stress. Many of the decisions we make everyday about what we eat, how much we sleep, how active we are and the ways we manage our lives can make an enormous impact on the way we feel emotionally."

"In the first part we will learn:

- Everyone deserves good mental health
- Mental health is balance, the ability to manage stress and achieve one's potential
- Stress is normal, but too much increases the risk for health problems, like depression
- Small improvements in nutrition, sleep, exercise and coping skills can help us to better manage stress and achieve mental health."

## **Slides 3-10: True/False Activity**

In order to set the stage to learn about mental health, engage students with a True/False Activity. Utilize a poll system in your LMS or have students raise their hands or give a thumbs up on camera to answer four questions as True or False.

## **Slides 11-13: Introduce Mental Health**

Lecture through these slides.

## **Slides 14-17: Stress & Poor Mental Health**

Engage your class in a discussion on what stands in the way of good mental health and what physical factors could result. Remind them that stress is NORMAL, but too much can cause problems.

**Slide 18-22: Good Mental Health Behaviors**

Ask students what are some ways to practice good mental health? It is the same as good physical health! Follow the slides on ways to improve or maintain good mental health.

**Slide 23: Mindfulness**

Conclude Part 1 with a brief exercise on mindfulness that students can practice at home along with you.

**\*STOP\*** *If you are using this as 3 short lessons, please review the Optional Program Additions, on the Resource Portal, for group discussions, exercises or at-home worksheets.*

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## Part 2: Understanding Feelings

20 min

In Part 2 students will learn the difference between everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings, that depression is a common and serious mood disorder and how to recognize the warning signs and symptoms. This part relies on a short video introducing two teens.

**Slide 24: Introduction Script**

"Now we are going to begin a conversation about understanding our feelings, learning the difference between everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings, and learning about teen depression. This information may help you identify depression in yourself or others."

"Depression is a real illness that is both common and serious, it is not something you can just 'snap out of' and it is certainly not your fault. Like any other illness, depression requires professional treatment. And, most importantly, you can get better and go on to live a happy, healthy and productive life."

"In Part 2 you will learn:

- The difference between everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings
- Positive coping strategies
- That depression is a common and serious mood disorder
- That depression is treatable"

**Slide 25: Video Script**

"We will start by watching a video about two teens with two different experiences with mental health challenges."

**Slide 26: Discuss Differences in Feelings**

Engage the class in a discussion on the differences between their feelings. Steer the conversation to be about "Everyday feelings vs. Overwhelming feelings" as introduced in the video.

**Slide 27-29: Explain & Identify**

Explain the difference between everyday feelings vs. overwhelming feelings. Then lead the class in identifying different types of feelings and where they may land on the Venn Diagram.

Examples of everyday feelings might include: happiness, joy, disappointment.

Examples of overwhelming feelings might include: loss, grief, despair.

It is important to note that in mental health, any feelings can be overwhelming feelings if there is an underlying mental health condition.

**Slides 30-33: Coping Mechanisms**

Lead the class through a discussion/brainstorm on a few of the things Sasha & Andre did to improve their mental health. Identify that what worked for Sasha didn't work for Andre because his feelings were more severe and what works for one person may not work for another.

**Slides 34-35: Stigma**

The concept of stigma may have already been brought up, but now is the time to identify stigma and explain how it can make it difficult for people to ask for help or identify their overwhelming feelings. Remind students that Andre was hesitant to talk to his friend and an adult about how he was feeling.

**Slides 36-41: Depression**

These slides introduce depression to students by first identifying what Andre was struggling with and then explaining it through the signs and symptoms. Lastly, engage your class in a discussion of how depression impacted Andre's life through the Depression Hurts diagram.

***\*STOP\*** If you are using this as 3 short lessons, please review the Optional Program Additions, on the Resource Portal, for group discussions, exercises or at-home worksheets.*

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## Part 3: Helping Yourself or a Friend

10 min

Part 3 will promote help-seeking behavior by covering where teens can find valid and reliable information, where they can find help and support and how they can ask for help for themselves or a friend.

**Slide 42: Introduction Script**

"Now that we know about and understand depression, we are going to talk about where you can find valid and reliable information, where you can find help and support and how you can ask for help for yourself or a friend."

**Slides 43-44: Trusted Adults**

Introduce teens to the idea of a trusted adult by defining the term and engage your students in identifying potential titles of trusted adults at home, school or in the community. Adults like parents, teachers, social workers, religious leaders, coaches and others are all excellent examples. A trusted adult is an adult who is reliable, dependable, trustworthy and can help you.

**Slides 45-46: Getting Help**

Walk students through how they can get help for themselves or their friends.

**Slides 47-49: Other Information**



Walk students through where they can learn more by brainstorming valid and reliable sources of information. Reliable information is a source of information that can be accessed easily and consistently. Also direct them to a local school counselor or social worker they can speak with if they are struggling. *Now is a great time to send out the Teen Depression Bookmark that contains reliable information and an opportunity for teens to identify their specific trusted adult.*

**Slide 50-51: Conclusion**

Remind students that if they are struggling, there is hope and they should speak with someone. Review what students should have learned in the lesson and encourage them to complete the student evaluation.

**\*STOP\*** Please review the *Optional Program Additions*, on the Resource Portal, for group discussions, exercises or at-home worksheets.

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**What have your students learned?**

Please take 3 to 5 minutes to have students fill out the survey through this QR code



or

<http://elhrl.info>

For additional resources and support materials, check out the Professional Development and Teacher Support section of our Resource Portal.