

# Facilitator's Notes

## OBJECTIVE

**To increase student engagement in activities which promote good mental health.**

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## | OVERVIEW |

In Lesson 3, students will learn about stress and factors that can improve our mental health.

The crux of the lesson is based around the Lesson 3 **Lecture** and **Discussion Guide**.

The remainder of the lesson will be the start of the Lesson 3 **Exercise**, a seven day experiential exercise for students to discover new mental health activities to incorporate into their daily routine and reflect on the experience through journaling.

## | PREPARE |

### REVIEW | LESSON 3 CONTENT

Review the Introduction.

Review the Audio/Slideshow lecture.  
(found on the Program CD or at [erikaslighthouse.org](http://erikaslighthouse.org))

Make sure you will have access to a computer with Microsoft PowerPoint, a projector and sound.

Review the Exercise Key.

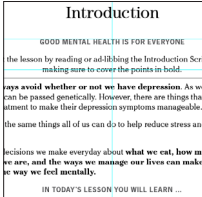
# Facilitator's Notes



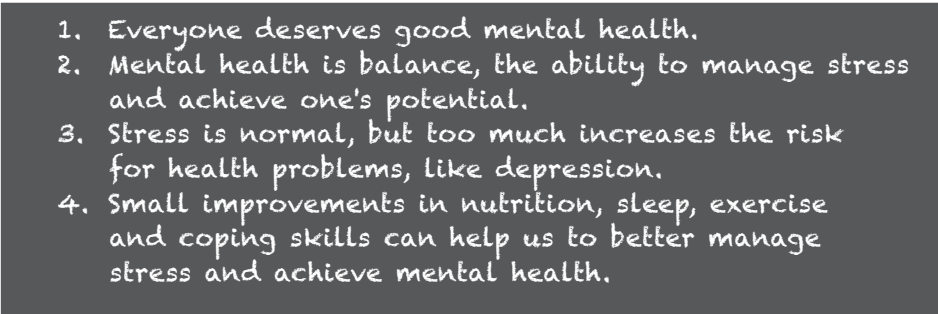
| TEACH |

TOTAL INSTRUCTION TIME

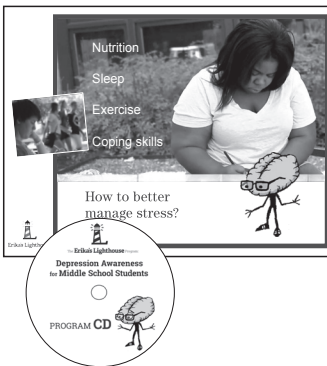
3 minutes | **1. READ THE LESSON 3 INTRODUCTION TO THE CLASS**



Write the learning goals on the board prior to beginning the program.



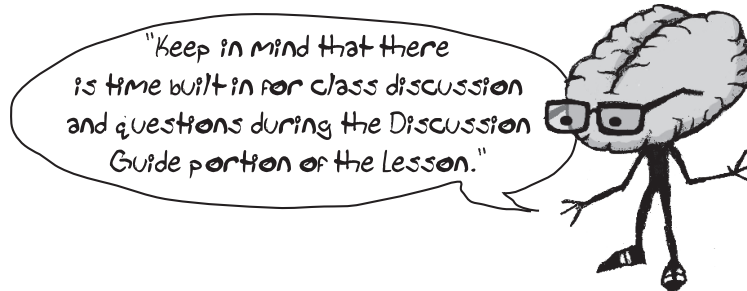
12 minutes | **2. PLAY THE LECTURE**



Slideshow and Audio Lecture can be found on the Program CD or at [erikasighthouse.org](http://erikasighthouse.org).

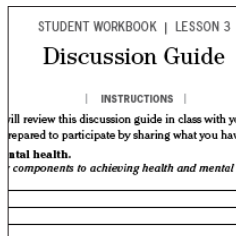
Play the Audio Lecture and project the Slideshow at the same time.

If you want to follow along with the Lecture Script, that can be found in the Appendices.



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15 minutes | **3. REVIEW THE LESSON 3 DISCUSSION GUIDE**

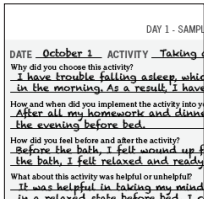
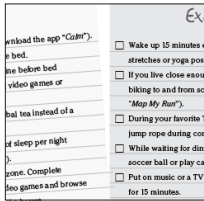
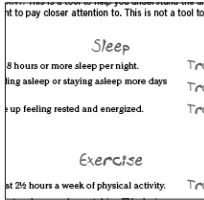


Ask students to take out their Student Workbook. In small groups, students will fill out the Discussion Guide. After 10 minutes, answers should be shared as a class.

# Facilitator's Notes

| TEACH (cont.) |

## 15 minutes | 4. INTRODUCE THE LESSON 3 EXERCISE



**MENTAL HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE:** First, instruct students to take out their Student Workbooks and fill out the Mental Health Questionnaire. After, you will share the point value for each answer from the Mental Health Questionnaire Key and ask students to add up the total for each category. Higher scores indicate areas of our lives that may need some change. **NOTE:** Let students know that this is a tool to help them understand the areas of their health that they may want to pay closer attention to. It is not a tool to diagnose health problems.

**MENTAL HEALTH CHECKLIST:** Next, ask students to choose one activity from the Mental Health Checklist. **NOTE:** Encourage students to consider choosing an activity from the same category as their highest score from the Mental Health Questionnaire.

**MENTAL HEALTH JOURNAL:** Explain that over the next seven days, students will engage in the activity of their choice and journal about their experience in their Mental Health Journal. Students can opt to engage in the same activity for the entire seven days, or try new activities throughout their experience.

**MENTAL HEALTH PARTNER:** Finally, ask students to choose (or be assigned) a student from their class to act as their Mental Health Partner.

Explain to students that each following day in class, they will spend a few minutes and report to their Mental Health Partner about their experience with the previous day's activity. Their Mental Health Partner will initial next to that day's journal entry indicating that they have completed the activity.

# Introduction

## GOOD MENTAL HEALTH IS FOR EVERYONE

Start the lesson by reading or ad-libbing the Introduction Script below, making sure to cover the points in bold.

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**"We can't always avoid whether or not we have depression.** As we have learned, sometimes it can be passed genetically. However, there are things that people can do outside of treatment to make their depression symptoms manageable and they are the same things all of us can do to help reduce stress and promote mental health.

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 TODAY'S LESSON YOU 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 and**
- **Small improvements in nutrition, sleep, exercise and coping skills can help us to better manage stress and achieve mental health.**

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### TODAY'S LESSON WILL INVOLVE THREE PARTS ...

1

A lecture about stress and ways to improve mental health.

2

The **DISCUSSION GUIDE** found in your **STUDENT WORKBOOK**. Please be prepared to participate in discussion and share what you learned.

3

Finally, the lesson will conclude with an **EXERCISE** found in your **STUDENT WORKBOOK**. This exercise has several parts that will challenge you to look at your lifestyle, introduce healthy activities to incorporate into your daily routine and give you an opportunity to reflect on those changes.

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### 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 visit the mental health worker's office here at school which is located \_\_\_\_\_.

Please feel free to ask questions at any time."



# Discussion Guide | KEY

## | INSTRUCTIONS |

Review this discussion guide in class with your students after they have had 10 minutes of small group discussion. Tell students to be prepared to participate by sharing what they have learned.

Please read the statement in bold aloud before asking each of the questions to the class.

### **Everyone deserves good mental health.**

1. **Q.** *What are the four major components to achieving mental health?*
  - A. 1. Nutrition
  2. Sleep
  3. Exercise
  4. Coping skills

### **Mental health is balance, the ability to manage stress and achieve one's potential.**

2. **Q.** *Is it possible to be free of mental illness, and yet, not mentally healthy? Why or why not?*
  - A. Yes. Mental health is much more than the absence of mental illness. Mental health is balance, the ability to manage stress and achieve one's potential through a lifestyle of good nutrition, sleep, exercise and practicing healthy coping skills.

### **Stress is normal. But too much increases the risk for health problems, like depression.**

3. **Q.** *What is stress? What are some things that can cause stress?*
  - A. Stress is the body's natural reaction to a situation that is worrisome or threatening, and results in a feeling of being hypervigilant or on-edge. The body releases a chemical called cortisol to activate "fight, flight or flee response" needed in a threatening or high pressure situation. Stress can be helpful in motivating us to work effectively to solve a problem. However, too much stress can have a negative impact on our mind and body and even trigger depressive symptoms. What is considered too much will look different from person to person.

Many things can cause stress and those things differ from person to person. For some people it could be the pressure of school, trying to fit in or the break-up of a relationship. For others, it may include being bullied, having family trouble or experiencing a serious trauma. Stress is a certainty for all of us from time to time. Therefore, we all need to practice daily mental health habits to manage it.

4. **Q.** *How do you know you are stressed – how do you experience it in your body? Why is it important to be aware of your own personal stress indicators?*
  - A. Accelerated heart rate, shortness of breath, excessive sweating, headaches, chest pain, dry mouth, sleep problems, change in eating, lack of concentration, irritability and tension or jitters.

The sooner you recognize you are under stress – the sooner you can make changes and exercise coping skills to feel better.

### **Small improvements in nutrition, sleep, exercise and coping skills can help us better manage stress and achieve mental health.**

5. **Q.** *What does a balanced meal include? Why is it important?*
  - A. Balanced meals should include whole grains, lean proteins, fruits, vegetables, low-fat dairy and healthy fats. It is also important to drink enough water each day. Eating balanced meals full of vitamins and minerals are important because it promotes healthy brain and body functioning, putting us in a good position to manage stress.

## Discussion Guide | KEY

6. **Q.** *How does food impact the brain?*
  - A. When you do not eat enough, blood sugar drops and it becomes difficult to maintain emotional balance, think clearly or focus.
7. **Q.** *How does sleep impact wellness?*
  - A. Sleep is the brain and body's way of rebuilding and restoring itself – giving us the ability to function throughout the day, think clearly and maintain emotional balance.
8. **Q.** *What are some things we can do to improve our sleep?*
  - A. Anything you can do to create a sleeping space that is cool, quiet and dark is recommended for an optimal sleep environment – consider fans, black out shades, eye masks or ear plugs. Consider using the time before bed to read a book or magazine you enjoy, drink a cup of caffeine-free herbal tea or take a hot bath for relaxation.
9. **Q.** *Why do teens need more sleep than adults?*
  - A. Teen brains continue to grow until age 25.
10. **Q.** *Why are electronics bad for sleep?*
  - A. Devices with back-lit screens communicate to the brain to be alert and awake – just as the sun does in the morning.
11. **Q.** *How does exercise help to improve our mood?*
  - A. Any kind of exercise that raises the heart rate is a great mood booster. When the heart rate is increased, endorphins are released which is a natural chemical that makes us feel good. The extra confidence from a healthy physique is always a plus, too.
12. **Q.** *How much exercise should we strive for each week?*
  - A. At least 2.5 hours.
13. **Q.** *What are coping skills? Provide examples.*
  - A. Coping skills are anything we can do to keep mental health problems at bay or reduce the impact of everyday stress. Coping skills usually help us to deal with a problem more effectively or to distract us from the problems we can not change.  
  
Healthy coping skills include doing things we enjoy, spending time with positive people, relaxation techniques like deep breathing or taking a hot shower, staying organized, reminding ourselves of what we are grateful for, journaling, volunteering and talking about the things that are bothering us to someone we trust.  
  
Negative coping skills can include things like self-harm or using substances. These outlets don't have a lasting effect and are harmful to our minds and bodies in the long run.
14. **Q.** *What are your impressions of the mindfulness exercise? How did you feel before and then after?*
  - A. Mindfulness is a practice that has been around for thousands of years. Current research indicates that just a few minutes a day can lower stress, improve sleep, memory and the ability to focus. Mindfulness also helps us understand and manage our thoughts and emotions in a more productive way and it may even protect us from mental health problems. All in all, mindfulness can improve our lives in school, activities and even relationships with ourselves and others.

| GO TO THE LESSON 3 EXERCISE |

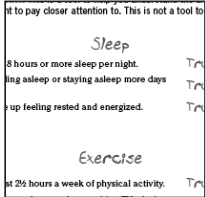
*Nutrition, sleep, exercise and coping skills can make a big impact on our ability to manage stress, prevent depression and improve mental health.*

# Exercise | KEY

## Mental Health Questionnaire | KEY

### | INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask the students to take a few minutes to answer the questions below. Once the students are finished, share the point value. Ask the students to add up the total for each category.



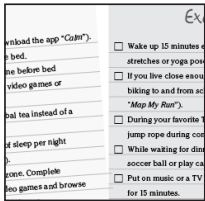
1. On average, I get 8 hours or more sleep per night. T[1] F[2]
2. I have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep more days than not. T[2] F[1]
3. Most days, I wake up feeling rested and energized. T[1] F[2]
4. I engage in at least 2½ hours a week of physical activity. T[1] F[2]
5. I spend more than two hours a day watching TV, playing video games or browsing the Internet. T[2] F[1]
6. I walk or ride a bike most places. T[1] F[2]
7. I eat a fruit or vegetable at nearly every meal. T[1] F[2]
8. I eat fried food, fast food or food packed in bags/boxes more days than not. T[2] F[1]
9. I eat three meals a day almost every day. T[1] F[2]
10. When I'm stressed, I know what I can do to manage it. T[1] F[2]
11. When I have a problem, I usually ignore it and hope it goes away. T[2] F[1]
12. If I had a problem too big to manage on my own, I have an adult in my life who I can go to. T[1] F[2]

## Mental Health Checklist

### | INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask students to choose an activity from this list that they would be interested in trying out in their daily routine.

Encourage students to consider choosing an activity from the same category as their highest score from the Mental Health Questionnaire.



## Mental Health Journal

### | INSTRUCTIONS |

Ask the students to choose someone in class to be their Mental Health Partner.

Explain to students that over the next seven days they will incorporate a new activity(s) into their daily routine that may help them reduce stress and improve mental health. The first activity they engage in will be the activity they chose from the Mental Health Checklist. Instruct students to choose a new activity to try each day or engage in the same activity over a series of days. A helpful tip is to use the information from the Mental Health Questionnaire to guide their decision.

Each day the students should engage in the activity of their choice and respond to the questions in their journal.

The next day in class, ask the students to spend a few minutes with their Mental Health Partner and report on their activity experience and listen to their partner's experience. After, each student should initial each other's journal entry.

