



The Anyone Program

Everyday vs Overwhelming Feelings

Lesson 2

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Erika's Lighthouse is a not-for-profit depression and mental health education organization that educates upper elementary, 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.

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Welcome to The Anyone Program Everyday vs Overwhelming Feelings Lesson 2

Maintaining good mental health is among the most challenging issues affecting today's youth, and the stressors young people face can be intense. Erika's Lighthouse has historically focused on teen depression, but this program for grades 4-6 provides a more introductory approach to mental health and focuses on the idea of being able to identify the differences between everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings. While many elementary students have already been engaged in Social Emotional Learning (SEL) exercises, it is important to continue the conversation so students can learn what to do if they are not feeling well. _____

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 classrooms for grades 4-6, 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 overall good mental health, identifying feelings, and knowing when to ask for help.

This standalone version of the program consists of an engaging and interactive lesson designed to be taught to provide students with increased knowledge of:

- key concepts related to good mental health
- the difference between everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings

- self-advocacy and peer-to-peer intervention to promote help-seeking
- awareness of how they can support their own mental health and well-being and contribute to a positive mental health culture _____

CLASS NORMS/GROUP AGREEMENTS

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

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."

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/>

Teachers can go a long way towards helping a child who might be facing a mental health challenge 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.

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. All resources are available on the [Resource Portal](#).
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 that stand out from any worksheets, feel free to share with Erika's Lighthouse!

988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline
(Text or Call 988 or Chat 988lifeline.org)

PLEASE CONTACT US AT ANY TIME AT
info@erikaslighthouse.org

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Slide 1: Recap

Facilitator says: What is mental health? What do you remember from last session?

Facilitator says: “Everyone deserves good mental health. Everyone deserves the opportunity to live a healthy, happy, and meaningful life. Our mental health deserves the same amount of attention as our bodies. Mental health is balance, the ability to manage certain things, such as stress and emotions, and achieve one’s potential.

Slide 2: Lesson Objectives:

Facilitator says: “In this lesson, you will learn:

- The difference between everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings
- What is stress
- Ways to keep your mind healthy”

Slide 3: Everyday Feelings & Overwhelming Feelings

Facilitator says: Everyday feelings come and go and are a normal reaction to what is happening in our lives. They are always changing and don't usually hang around for too long. Overwhelming feelings hang around for a long time, change the way we feel and behave and may stop us from doing what we want to in life. You have heard people call them a mental health problem, mental illness or mental disorder.

Slide 4: Everyday Feelings & Overwhelming Feelings

Facilitator says: As we just learned in the activity, examples of everyday feelings are happiness, joy, and disappointment. Some examples of overwhelming feelings might include grief, despair, and loss. All feelings are valid and important.

Slide 5: Feeling Thermometer

Facilitator says: “The feeling thermometer is a tool that helps us measure the intensity of our feelings or emotions. As we climb up in temperature, from green to yellow to red on the thermometer, our feelings become more uncomfortable.

Facilitator asks: “How can we explain everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings using this thermometer?

Facilitator invites students to identify and share where they are on the feelings thermometer.

Connect to icebreaker: "How might identifying something good today/right now influence someone's spot on the thermometer?"

Consider connecting to other influences. This is a great opportunity to explain how music, movies, other media, etc. influence feelings. If we know a song makes us sad/angry, we can be aware of that when we may be having an overwhelming feeling vs. a song that makes us feel peaceful/calm.

Slide 6: Show video.

Facilitator prompts students to be on the lookout for everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings in the characters, Sasha and Andre.

Slides 7-10: Discussion questions (expected responses italicized)

- How are the feelings that Sasha and Andre are feeling different?
 - *Sasha has everyday feelings; Andre has overwhelming feelings.*
- What does Sasha do to cope when she is feeling really stressed?
 - *She talks to her mom and takes a break*
- Who does Andre talk to about his overwhelming feelings? Who is Andre's Trusted Adult?
 - *He talked to his teacher*
- Overwhelming feelings can be difficult to admit or talk about. What made it difficult and stressful for Andre to talk about his mental health or to ask for help?
 - *He didn't think his friends would understand.*

Slides 11-12: What stands in the way of good mental health?

Facilitator says: "What stands in the way of good mental health?" *Expected response: Students will likely offer many ideas; facilitator should guide students to "unmanaged stress" as one thing that can get in the way of good mental health.* "What might too much stress do to our bodies?" *Expected response: stomach aches, headaches, sweaty, shaking, heart beating fast, sickness* "When do you know that you are stressed? What does it feel like in your body? *Teacher can share their stress response (i.e. stomach aches, tight shoulders) to prompt student responses.*

Slide 13: Too much stress can lead to overwhelming feelings

Facilitator says: "Stress is a normal part of life, it helps motivate us to get things done and do our best. BUT too much stress can cause problems for our bodies and our minds. Too much stress can lead to overwhelming feelings and so we need to be able to recognize when we are feeling stressed and we need to respond to that in healthy ways.

Slide 14: Low Battery

Facilitator says: "Like a phone or other electronic device, people need to recharge, too. Just like a phone, if we don't charge up (or take care of ourselves), we don't work as well. Sometimes that charge is just enough to get us through (like plugging in your phone to finish a game) and sometimes that charging is a total reboot (like charging your phone all night long). When people use coping strategies, it's just like charging a phone! It's best to keep yourself (and your phone) in the green, we sometimes dip to yellow and even sometimes to red. We want to be in the green and we should use coping strategies to keep us there. As you work today, see if you can figure out what "coping strategies" are!"

Slide 15: Coping Skills

Facilitator says: "Coping means to face and deal with responsibilities, problems, or difficulties in a calm, appropriate and successful manner. We use coping strategies sometimes without paying attention. It is what we do to make ourselves feel better when we are upset. Coping helps us tackle our problems and find solutions like asking for help or processing strong feelings for difficult situations we cannot change.

Facilitator says: "Remember Sasha and Andre? What did they do to cope with their feelings?" *(Expected response: talk to a trusted adult, take a break, hang out with friends, do something that you enjoy, exercise, talk to a friend)* Why did what worked for Sasha not work as well for Andre? *(Expected response: because Andre's feelings were overwhelming/more severe; what works for one person may not work for another person).*

Slide 16: Remember what we learned today

Facilitator says: “Mental health is balance: the ability to manage stress and lead a balanced life. Our mental health is just as important as our physical health, and just like we have PE to strengthen our bodies, we can keep our minds healthy, too. Remember that everyday feelings come and go and we can handle them easily. Overwhelming feelings are also normal and may require more support like talking to someone or asking for help. If anything shared today prompts a feeling that you need to talk to someone, make sure you go to a trusted adult. Here at school, you can talk to _____. You can always come and talk to me, too.

Slide 17: 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline

Facilitator says: “Remember, if anything shared today prompted a feeling that you need to talk to someone, make sure to go to a trusted adult. You can also call or text 988 to speak or text with someone at the suicide and Crisis Lifeline if you are ever concerned about yourself or a friend.

Slide 18: Thank you

Thank you for your thoughtful participation in this lesson. We hope you enjoyed learning about mental health. Remember, we all have mental health and you are not alone.

For additional resources and support materials, check out the Additional Program Options and School Policy & Staff Development sections of our [Resource Portal](#).