



Level I:

We All Have Mental Health

A One-Day Program Designed for Grades 4-6

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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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This program was written for educators, professionals and other adults working with young people to educate them regarding the issues surrounding depression and mental health. 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 One-Day Lesson Plan for Grades 4-6

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

- knowledge 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
 - 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

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/>

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.
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!

Crisis Text Line
(text HELP to 741741)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
(dial 988)

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

We All Have Mental Health:

A One-Day Program for Grades 4-6

Slide 1: Introduction

"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. We are going to be learning about the difference between everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings. This information may help you or someone you know.

KEEP IN MIND: If anything shared today prompts a feeling that you need to talk to someone, make sure to talk to me or a trusted adult in your life. 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."

Icebreaker: Ask everyone to share one good thing about today.

Slide 2: What is mental health?

Teacher says: "Mental health is about our feelings, thoughts, and moods and is important for a happy, healthy, productive, and balanced life. Just as we brush our teeth everyday to take care of our teeth, we need to make sure our brains get taken care of, too. Just like taking care of our bodies, there are ways for us to take care of our minds, too. Looking after our mental health is just as important as looking after our physical health."

Physical health = taking care of body

Slide 3: What is mental health?

"In this lesson, you will learn:

More about mental health

Ways to keep your mind healthy

The difference between everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings."

Slide 4: How do we care for our mental health?

Teacher says: "There are many ways that we can care for our mental health. We are going to play charades to demonstrate some of these ways. I will ask for volunteers to act out a mentally healthy behavior just using their bodies - no words, sounds, or props. I will show the volunteer the mentally healthy behavior listed on a card without anyone else seeing and then they will act it out. Everyone else will watch and guess."

Teacher asks for a volunteer and shows one mentally healthy behavior card. Teacher should be prepared to prompt and provide assistance with each behavior in case the student volunteer gets stuck.

Save the "showing feelings" card for last to flow into the next activity.

Teacher says: "As we just learned, it's healthy to feel and show the feelings we feel. When you're sad, it's OK to show that you're sad; when you're happy, it's OK to show that; even when you're mad,

there are healthy ways to show that you are mad. Feelings can be big or small and everything in between. They can be everyday feelings or overwhelming feelings.”

Teacher reads definitions from slides.

Before showing slide 5, engage students in the following movement activity:

Teacher says: “Posted on this side of the room is a sign that says “Everyday Feeling” and on the other side “Overwhelming Feeling”. I am going to name a feeling out loud. You need to determine if that feeling is an everyday feeling or an overwhelming one. Once you do, go over (or point) to the area in the room where that sign is.”

Teacher shares the below feelings one at a time, in mixed up order, allowing students to decide. Teacher asks students to explain their thoughts, using the definitions of everyday feelings and overwhelming feelings that are posted on slide 4.

Everyday feelings: Happiness, joy, sad, disappointed, frustrated
Overwhelming feelings: loss, grief, despair, rage, anger, lonely

Slides 5-6: Everyday Feelings & Overwhelming Feelings

Slide 7: Feeling Thermometer

Teacher 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.

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

Teacher 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 8: Show video.

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

Optional: Consider providing students a copy of notice/wonder chart (available on the Resource Portal) to jot down notes as they watch & consider pausing halfway to allow students to jot down notes without missing anything.

Slides 9-12: 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, 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 13-14: What stands in the way of good mental health?

Teacher says: "What stands in the way of good mental health?" *Expected response: Students will likely offer many ideas; teacher 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 15: Too much stress can lead to overwhelming feelings

Teacher 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 16: Low Battery

Teacher 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 17: Coping Skills

Teacher 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.

Teacher says: "Remember Sasha and Andre? What did they do to cope with their feelings?"
(Expected response: *talk to 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*).

Optional Extension Activity: Have students complete [*"A Coping Diary"*](#) at home

Optional Extension Activity: [*Coping Stations Activity*](#)

Slides 18-20: Trusted Adults

Introduce/reinforce the idea of a trusted adult by defining the term (an adult who is reliable, dependable, and trustworthy and who can help you) and engage students in identifying potential titles of trusted adults at home, school, and in the community, using the adults from the video as a starting point. *In the video, Sasha and Andre connected with a parent, school administrator, counselor.* Expected additional responses from students: *parents, teachers, social workers, counselors, religious leaders, coaches, grandparents, aunts/uncles, doctor, mental health professional etc.*

Note: It is OK for everyone to have different adults they might turn to. For some students it may be a teacher in the school, and for other students it may be a coach or friend's parent. Also, while it is good to note that mental health professionals are a good source, these young students wouldn't necessarily have access to those professionals without a parent or guardian first.

Teacher says "We all have people in our lives who can support us. If you are concerned about your own mental health or a friend's mental health, talk to a Trusted Adult - someone who is reliable, dependable, and trustworthy. How do you know a person is reliable? *They do what they say they'll do, they are available/around when you need them (and when you don't).* How do you know a person is dependable? *You can count on them, they listen to you.* What does trustworthy look like? *You can count on the person, they keep information confidential, they act the same in different situations.*

When you need a trusted adult, you can talk to them in person, call them, or even email/text them (*note: suggest texting/email only if students have access to these forms of communication*) that you're feeling overwhelmed or concerned about something. There are even people whose job it is to help people with their mental health -- these are mental health professionals, like counselors, social workers, psychologists."

This is a great time to ask students if they have any questions about today's activities or information learned.

Slide 21: Exit Ticket: Self-Referral Card. Teacher directs students to independently complete the exit ticket. Consider reposting the definitions of everyday and overwhelming feelings.

*Note to School Staff: It can be helpful to explain to students what occurs/happens when they choose "I would like to talk to a trusted adult within the next 24 hours" or "I would like to talk to a trusted adult in the next week." For example, who will I talk to? Does the school notify a parent or guardian? Will this be a private conversation? Giving the students this

information ahead of time may ease uncomfortable or anxious thoughts and feelings when filling out the Self-Referral Card. Check out [THIS](#) available resource you can use.

Slides 22-23: Closure

Review slide 22.

Teacher 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.

Exit Ticket: Self-Referral Card

- Exit Ticket:

Lesson 3 Exit Ticket:

Name: _____

Teacher: _____

After learning about mental health,

☐ I would like to talk to a mental health worker very soon.

☐ I would like to talk to a mental health worker sometime this week.

☐ I do not need to talk to a mental health worker now, but if/when I do, I will reach out to _____ (write name)

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