**Lesson 4: Reaching Out to Support ME Health**

**Overview:** Students will continue to practice reaching out to resources to support the mental and emotional (ME) health of themselves and others. In the activities, they will practice showing empathy and support as well as using stigma-reducing language. Students will also practice communicating with resources to access the help needed.

National Health Education Standards

**Standard 1:** Students comprehend functional health knowledge to enhance health.

**Standard 3:** Students demonstrate health literacy by accessing valid and reliable health information, products, and services to enhance health.

**Standard 4:** Students demonstrate effective interpersonal communication skills to enhance health.

Healthy Behavior Outcome (HBO):

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| **HBO 7** | Show tolerance and acceptance of differences in others. |

**Lesson Objectives –** Students will be able to:

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| **Objective** | **Assessments** |
| 1. Apply the steps to recognize, reach out, and use resources to support ME health. | Attachment 4.1 – Reach Out Guided Notes |
| 1. Identify trusted adults and resources that support mental and emotional health. | Attachment 4.1 – Reach Out Guided Notes |
| 1. Demonstrate how to reach out for help for self and others. | Attachment 4.2 – How Can I Help? |
| 1. Describe barriers to reaching out and accessing resources and identify possible solutions to overcome the barriers. | Attachment 4.2 – How Can I Help? |
| 1. Demonstrate empathy and support by using terminology that reduces stigma and barriers to reaching out to ME health resources. | Attachment 4.2 – How Can I Help? |

Lesson Prerequisites or Assumptions:

* This lesson assumes that Lessons 3 has been completed to recognize, reach out, and use resources; they also need to be able to recognize urgent mental health concerns. Reinforce expectations and classroom norms to ensure a safe and supportive classroom environment. Refer to Lesson 3 and the teacher guide for additional information to support your students’ mental health.

Introduction

* We’ve practiced the “recognize, reach out, and use resources” model for supporting mental and emotional health. Today’s lesson focuses on reaching out and asking for help or being helpful to someone when you recognize a need.

Activity 1: Reminders: Recognize and Reach Out

* Recognize
  + Everyday feelings come and go and are a normal reaction to what happens in our daily lives.
  + **Big emotions** (Level 3) or feelings are when we have difficulty controlling or regulating the emotion. When we have small feelings (Level 1), we still feel in control of our thoughts and actions.
  + Overwhelming feelings hang around for a long time, change the way we feel and behave, and may stop us from doing what we enjoy.
  + **URGENT warning signs** are observable changes, behaviors, or statements that directly or indirectly signal that an individual is contemplating suicide or violence ([Wisconsin, Lesson 2](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/spcurriculumgrades7-12.pdf)). If you notice, see, hear, or recognize **URGENT warning signs,** talk with a trusted adult right away, call 911, and seek immediate help from a mental health provider. Some examples of urgent warning signs:
    - Someone is threatening to hurt or kill themselves.
    - Someone is looking for ways to kill themselves, such as seeking access to pills, weapons, or other means.
    - Someone is talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide in a way that is not “typical” for them.
    - **Reach out to a trusted adult or a mental health resource when you recognize overwhelming feelings in yourself or others or if you become aware of threats or actions that could hurt or injure someone.**
    - You should also reach out to a trusted adult if you need help or support for your everyday feelings or big emotions.
* **Resources:** There are three categories of people who could help support ME. trusted adults, health professionals, and resources. The resource you use depends on your needs and the availability of resources.
  + Trusted adults include parents, teachers, school counselors.
  + Health professionals include physicians, behavioral health counselors, and psychologists.
* **Resources**
  + Resources can include text/call lines; strategies to enhance ME health; and reliable information.
  + Resources also include tools you can use:
    - Calm yourself and relax – take a breath or find a calming space.
    - Think and be positive – take on the challenge.
    - Distract – doodle, fidget, color.
    - Move – stand up and move around.
  + Complete Attachment 4.1 to identify resources and trusted adults.

Activity 2: Reaching Out

* Students will practice reaching out to ask for help for themselves and reaching out to show empathy and support for another person.
* Once you recognize a concern, it is important to ACT.
  + **A** = Acknowledge there is a concern and that the situation is serious.
  + **C** = Caring communication: Use a caring message and offer to reach out for help.
  + **T** = Tell a trusted adult.
* When we reach out, we’ll use our communication skills to seek help for ourselves or another person. Here’s how to ask for help or to demonstrate self-advocacy:
  + **Share how you feel:** I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
  + **Ask for help**: Say, “Can you help me?” Share specifics about what they could do to help or what you need the resource to do.
  + **Thank** the person who helped you.
* When seeking help for yourself:
  + Share
    - I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    - Example: “I’ve been feeling really down lately.”
  + What you’ve tried.
    - Example: “I’ve tried hanging out with my friends and even tried yoga. I’m still feeling sad.”
  + Ask for help
    - Example: “I think I may need to speak with someone. Could you help me find a mental health professional?”
  + Thank the person who helped you.
* Discuss: How do you think it feels to ask for help for yourself?
  + Sometimes asking for help can be hard. Maybe you haven’t determined a trusted adult yet; you don’t know what to say; or you’re afraid of how they’ll react to the thoughts and feelings you’re having. It is important for you to feel safe to ask for help. Identify a trusted adult now so that whenever you need to ask for help, you have someone in mind. Practice what to say. Be confident in this trusted adult that they won’t judge you for the thoughts and feelings that you’re having.
  + Let’s practice helping someone when we recognize a concern.

Activity 3: How Can I Help? Empathy and Support

* The message of reaching out to help another person is very similar to reaching out for help for yourself. You will share what you recognize; communicate clearly and in a caring manner; and, after you ask to help, seek help from a resource. (Source: Erika’s Lighthouse)
  + Here are the steps for helping someone:
    - **Acknowledge** there is a concernand **ask** to help
    - Show you **care** and share what you recognized.
    - **Tell** a trusted adult.
  + Example: “Hi McKenzie. I noticed you look a little upset. Can I help you?”
  + If they agree that you can help, your role is to be helpful, but stay within your scope of care. Reach out to a resource that can help. You are not a mental health professional. Your job is to reach out to a resource.
* Seeking Help for a Friend (Attachment 4.2ab)
* Students will work in groups to complete ONE scenario. Groups will read the scenario, then respond to the following questions:
  + *WHO* should you contact?
  + *WHEN* should you contact them?
  + *WHAT* should you say?
  + *HOW* should you follow up?
* Have groups share their scenario and their responses with the class, then ask the class for feedback.
* Discuss: “How do you think it feels to ask for help for someone else?”
* Exit ticket: Students will respond to the two following prompts:
  + A trusted adult I can talk to is: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
  + What I can say to my trusted adult: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
    - Prompt students to say how they FEEL, what they’ve TRIED, and how a trusted adult can HELP.
  + If you recognize that someone is having a mental health concern, you should ACT.
    - A = Acknowledge there is a concern and that the situation is serious.
    - C = Caring communication: Use a caring message and offer to reach out for help.
    - T = Tell a trusted adult.
  + If I notice or recognize any concerns about ME health, I can reach out to:
    - Trusted adults
    - Friends
    - Resources
    - Tools to strengthen ME health

Closure:

* To support ME health, we can use our three R’s – recognize, reach out, and use resources. ME health is important, so if you notice a concern, ACT.

Attachment 4.1: Reach Out Guided Notes

1. If you \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ signs or indicators of a mental health concern, you should \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ out.
2. Provide an example of who could help from each category:

Trusted Adults

Health Professionals

Resources

1. List the three steps to ACT.

A

C

T

1. Reaching out: Write what you would say to ask for help from a resource or trusted adult.

*Your message should share how you are feeling; ask for help; and thank the person for their support. You can use the Feelings Index to select a feeling to use in this scenario.*

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Attachment 4.2a: How Can I Help a Friend?

*Part I. Asking for Help.* Directions - Use the scenarios from Attachment 4.2b to complete the templates.

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| **Part I. Recognize, Reach Out, Use Resources** | | | |
| **Describe what you recognized.** |  | | |
| **What do I recognize?** | Big/strong feelings | Overwhelming feelings | Urgent warning signs |
| **Do I reach out to help?** | Yes – call 911 or contact a mental health professional. | Yes – reach out for help. | No or not yet. |
| **What resource or person will I reach out or talk to?** |  | | |
| **What will I say to reach out?** |  | | |
| **When is the right time and place to reach out?** |  | | |

*Part II. Reaching Out to a Friend.*

Directions. Answer the following questions for the scenario to reach out to a friend to support mental health.

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| --- | --- |
| **Part II. Reach out to a friend** | |
| **What will I say to start the conversation?** |  |
| **What will I say to reach out?** |  |
| **Reflect: What are next steps?**  **How will I support myself and others?** |  |

Attachment 4.2b: Recognize and Reach Out to Resources to Help a Friend

*This exercise is designed to help you decide if can recognize everyday feelings, overwhelming feelings, and urgent warning signs. You are going to read a conversation between two friends. Place a rectangle around the words if you recognize a sign that requires your support. When you recognize an urgent sign that requires immediate attention, circle it.*

**Scenario 1: Recognizing Signs of Distress**

* *Teen 1:* Hey, have you noticed Sarah acting different lately?
* Teen 2: Yeah, she seems really down. I saw her crying in the restroom yesterday.
* *Teen 1*: That's not like her. Maybe she's just having a bad day.
* Teen 2: I don’t know; it feels different. She’s been skipping lunch too.
* *Teen 1:* You’re right; that’s not normal. Maybe we should talk to her or tell a teacher.
* Teen 2: Definitely. And her social media posts have been pretty dark lately too. It might be serious.

**Scenario 2: Recognizing Withdrawal**

* *Teen 1:* Mark hasn’t been hanging out with us lately. I tried texting him, but he barely responds.
* Teen 2: Yeah, I noticed that too. He used to be so active in our group chats.
* *Teen 1:* I asked him if he’s OK, and he just brushed it off, saying he’s busy. But something feels off.
* Teen 2: Yeah, let’s not ignore this. If he’s pulling away, he might need our support more than ever.

**Scenario 3: Changes in Behavior**

* *Teen 1:* Did you see Lisa when we were hanging out last night? They were using a vape, but I thought that they would never do that.
* Teen 2: Yeah, and they have been talking about feeling worthless. It really worried me.
* *Teen 1:* I’ve noticed her grades dropping too, and she used to be an A student. Something is definitely wrong.
* Teen 2: We should talk to her and maybe encourage her to talk to a counselor. It seems like she’s going through a lot.

**Scenario 4: Expressing Concern**

* *Teen 1:* I overheard Jason talking about feeling hopeless and not wanting to go on anymore. I’m really scared for him.
* Teen 2: That’s so concerning. We can’t just ignore that. We should tell someone – a teacher, the school counselor, or even his parents.
* *Teen 1:* I’m worried that he might be in immediate danger. Should we call a help line or the emergency services?

**Remember, if you or someone you know is struggling with their mental health, it’s important to reach out to a trusted adult, teacher, school counselor, or mental health professional for help.**