**Lesson 9: How Can I Help?**

**Overview:** This lesson will develop skills to recognize, reach out, and use resources to support behavioral health. Students will learn to recognize when support is needed and reach out to school, community, and health resources. Lesson activities will practice becoming an effective communicator by practicing listening skills and using “I” messages and nonjudgmental statements to support others.

National Health Education Standards

**Standard 1.** Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.

**Standard 3**. Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.

**Standard 4.** Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Healthy Behavior Outcomes (HBOs):

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| --- | --- |
| **Alcohol and other drugs** | HBO 7. Quit using alcohol and other drugs if already using. |
| HBO 8. Support others to be alcohol- and other drug-free. |
| **Tobacco** | HBO 5: Quit using tobacco if already using. |

Lesson Objectives – Students will be able to:

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| **Objective** | **Assessments** |
| 1. Describe the steps of How Can I Help? | Attachment 9.1 – How Can I Help? Guide |
| 1. Describe stigma and how it might impact behavioral health. | Attachment 9.1 – How Can I Help? Guide |
| 1. Recall how to recognize that a person might need help or support. | Attachment 9.2a – Recognize, Reach Out, Resources Practice |
| 1. Write a supportive and caring statement to reach out to someone who might need help or support. | Attachment 9.2a – Recognize, Reach Out, Resources Practice |
| 1. Demonstrate how to effectively ask for assistance. | Attachment 9.2a – Recognize, Reach Out, Resources Practice |
| 1. Recognize signs and situations that call for professional resources for substance use prevention and treatment at home, at school, and in the community. | Attachment 9.2a – Recognize, Reach Out, Resources Practice |
| 1. Identify resources at home, in school, or in the community that could support substance use prevention or cessation of substance use. | Attachment 9.2a – Recognize, Reach Out, Resources Practice |

Lesson Prerequisites or Assumptions

* Establish a safe and supportive environment for you and your students. Reach out to your school resources to make them aware of your lesson/unit topic. This will help confirm the referral and reach out process, as well as create opportunities to coordinate the support system in your school. Review the Behavioral HELPs Teacher Guide for additional information to create a safe, supportive environment.

Introduction:

* *How Can I Help?* Today we will be recognizing the signs someone might need our support or care to help them with a situation or challenge involving behavioral health or substance use. We’re going to learn how to recognize, reach out, and use resources to support others. We’ll also identify resources at home, at school, and in the community that could provide additional support to you and those you care about.

Teaching Steps:

Activity 1a – How Can I Help? (Attachment 9.1a and 9.1b)

* How could I help to prevent substance use, support healthy choices, or provide help for a mental health condition?
* We will apply recognize, reach out and use resources to make healthy choices and support the health of others. I can make healthy choices and be an advocate for substance use prevention. I can also recognize situations that require a thoughtful decision that could be supported by a trusted adult or resource.
  + I can recognize the signs, reach out, and use resources.
    - You can recognize these signs in yourself and others. The steps are the same, but the reach out message is slightly different when you’re helping someone else.
    - **Recognize** = Recognize someone who is experiencing big emotions, overwhelming feelings, or urgent signs of a mental health concern. I can also recognize the signs of substance use.
  + **Reach out** = Ask to help and support.
  + Use **resources** = Trusted adults and school, health, and community resources
* Remember the three steps: recognize, reach out, and use resources
* Let’s apply recognize, reach out and resources to make healthy choices to prevent substance use and support others who might be experiencing substance use disorder.
* **Recognize:** What are the signs that someone needs help or support?
  + Substance use is sometimes difficult to recognize. Many times, substance use is non-specific, meaning it looks like any health concern. Substance use disorder is also connected with another health concern, in particular mental health.
* *Step 1:* Recognize any signs that might indicate help is needed immediately.
  + (Review from HELPs mental health lessons if needed). We use the following terms to recognize when someone needs support or assistance from a behavioral health resource. We’ll talk more about the specific resources that can help.
* **URGENT warning signs** are observable changes, behaviors, or statements that directly or indirectly signal that an individual is contemplating suicide or violence toward others ([Wisconsin, Lesson 2](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/spcurriculumgrades7-12.pdf)). If you notice, see, hear, or recognize these URGENT warning signs, talk with a trusted adult right away; call 911; and seek immediate help from a mental health provider. Situations could include:
  + 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.
* **Overwhelming feelings** hang around for a long time, change the way we feel and behave, and may stop us from doing what we enjoy.
* **Always** reach out to a trusted adult when you recognize overwhelming feelings in yourself or others or if you recognize threats or actions that could hurt someone. You should also reach out to a trusted adult if your everyday feelings or big emotions need help or support.
* **Big emotions** (Level 3), or feelings, are when we have difficulty controlling or regulating the emotion. Small feelings (Level 1) are still important feelings, but we still feel in control of our thoughts and actions.
* Recognize the signs of substance use:
  + Signs might include appearance, behavior, or paraphernalia. (See Attachment 9.1a and 9.1b for signals to recognize.)
  + Signs of a drug overdose.
  + [Ohio Board of Pharmacy](https://www.pharmacy.ohio.gov/Documents/Pubs/Naloxone/Pharmacist/Patient%20Counseling%20Brochure.pdf)
  + [Illinois Department of Public Health](https://dph.illinois.gov/topics-services/opioids/overdose.html)

Activity 1b – Recognize Practice

* Select at least two of the eight case studies (Attachment 9.2b) to practice recognizing signs of a teen who may need support for a behavioral health need (substance use, mental and emotional health, etc.).
* How to use the case study characters
* Skill practice: Use Attachment 9.2a as a worksheet and select case(s) from 9.2b.
* Select case study characters that align with your students’ needs and curriculum context. Use school, local, and state data to determine which scenarios are meaningful and relevant to your students.
* *Remind students that our goal here is to only recognize, reach out, and suggest a resource. It is the role of behavioral health professionals to diagnose and treat*.

Activity 2 - Reach Out

* Reaching out is asking for help. The message sounds simple, but it can be a challenge to reach out to ask for help or show you care.

Activity 2a. Reaching out the basics:

* Before you ask for help, be sure the helper is ready to listen and able to help. For example, if a teacher is in the middle of the lesson, you can try to wait until the end of the lesson.
* You should also ask for help in a private manner if it is a sensitive issue.
* The best way to reach out is to share and ask. Share the two examples.
* If you need help with a decision to prevent substance use or to follow the medication safety principles.
* Can you help me? I recognized I need help making this important decision.
* Can you help me? “I need help taking my medicine.” “I need help because there is something I don’t know what it is on the counter.”
* If you need support for substance use disorder or a mental health concern, you can reach out to a behavioral health concern by sharing:
* Share how you are feeling - Can you help me? I recognized I feel \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.
* You can also use recognize, reach out and resources to support another person. You follow the same steps (recognize, reach out and use resources).

Activity 2b. Asking for help for someone else:

* Start with a conversation starter.
* Share what you recognized in a nonjudgmental way.
  + “I am concerned because I noticed \_\_\_\_\_.”
  + “I noticed you were really tired and angry this morning. Are you feeling OK? Would you like to talk about it?”
* Communicate that you care in a nonjudgmental way
  + Model this example: “I am worried about you because I noticed \_(signs)\_\_. Would you like some help?” Then offer a resource such as a trusted adult.
* Reach out practice:
  + Using one of the case study characters, write a statement to reach out and support.
  + Model the skill first for one of the case study characters. Have students use the checklist to evaluate the teacher’s statement, then use the checklist to create their statement for a case study scenario.
  + Example – “I am worried about you because \_(signs)\_\_. Would you like some help?” Then offer a resource such as a trusted adult.

Activity 3 – Resources

* EXPLAIN: “Now, we’ll look at ways for how you can ask for help for yourself or someone else or to make a healthy choice to prevent substance use.”
* Substance use or a mental health concern requires the help of a trusted adult. There are trusted adults at home, at school, and in the community.
* Generate a list of trusted adults at home, at school, and in the community to support healthy decisions and wellness:
  + Home – parents and trusted adults
  + School – trusted adults such as teachers, a school counselor, a school nurse, and other school personnel
  + Community – Link to your local community resources and support.
* Practice opportunities: Have students identify a minimum of three trusted adults and/or resources they can go to if they need to seek out help. Then, students will write a script to ask for help. Finally, have students role-play and practice asking for help with a classmate.
* Behavioral health resources
  + You can call 988 for resources to support you and those you care about.
  + Treatment is available for substance use and mental health conditions. Examples include:
    - National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Hotline 800-662-HELP (4357)
      * <https://findtreatment.gov/>
    - Support groups for those who have loved ones with substance use disorders
      * [Al-Anon/Alateen Family Groups](https://al-anon.org/)
      * [Nar-Anon](https://www.nar-anon.org/)
      * <https://www.samhsa.gov/families>
      * <https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/family-friend-portal/support-groups-for-families/>
* Behavioral Health Professionals - *Teacher Note - Psychiatrists, psychologists, counselors, and social workers can provide behavioral health services. They use talk therapy to treat people for emotional problems and mental illnesses. Let’s take a closer look at the differences between these mental and emotional (ME) health professionals and how they support various ME health situations.*
  + Pediatrician: A doctor who can provide support for any children’s or youth health condition.
  + Psychiatrist: A medical doctor with special training in the diagnosis and treatment of mental and emotional illnesses. Like other doctors, psychiatrists are qualified to prescribe medication.
  + Child/adolescent psychiatrist: A medical doctor specially trained in the diagnosis and treatment of emotional and behavioral problems in children.
  + Psychologist: A professional with a doctoral degree in psychology and two years of supervised professional experience including a yearlong internship; a psychologist is trained to make diagnoses and provide individual and group therapy.
  + Clinical social worker: A counselor with a master’s degree in social work trained to make diagnoses and provide individual and group counseling.
  + Licensed professional clinical counselor: A counselor with a master’s degree in psychology, counseling, or a related field, trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.
  + Mental health counselor: A counselor with a master’s degree and several years of supervised clinical work experience trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.
  + Certified alcohol and substance use counselor: A counselor with specific clinical training in alcohol and substance use trained to diagnose and provide individual and group counseling.

Activity 4: Barriers to Getting Help

* What would prevent or stop a person from reaching out for help or reaching out to help someone?
  + Examples include barriers such as being embarrassed, the problem does not feel important, worried about getting into trouble, concern about being a burden, not knowing if you can help or get access to the resources.
* Let’s talk about one barrier: stigma.
  + Explain: Stigma means labeling, stereotyping, and discrimination. An example of this is using disparaging or judgmental terms to refer to addiction or mental health; people with substance use disorder; people living with mental health challenge; or treatments for diseases associated with substance use or mental health. Individuals who have SUD or mental health conditions need a supportive individuals and environments.
  + Some societal attitudes are negative toward those struggling with substance use disorder or mental health challenges. This could impact the individual’s health care, employment, income, housing, compassion received from others, confidence in self, personal development, and other essential aspects of life.
* Besides reducing stigma, how can we help support others’ behavioral health including substance use disorder and mental health?
  + Words matter when we think about ways to reduce stigma. Let’s talk about how our words can reduce stigma and support others.
  + Use person-first language. “A person with a mental health condition …”
  + Avoid using terms that are hurtful (see Attachment 9.3). If you’re unsure about what words to use, you can always use person-first language.
  + The term “addict” perpetuates negative perceptions; this term can make a person feel shameful and make them less likely to seek treatment.
  + Review terminology with students: substance use, substance use disorder, addiction, and unintentional overdose.
  + It is important to remember that substance use disorder is health condition that is similar to other health conditions that can be treated.
* Another barrier to remove is how we stigmatize treatment for substance use or mental health. Behavioral health (substance use prevention and mental health) is just like other health care. A person who receives support, treatment, or services for substance use disorder or a mental health condition is similar to someone receiving treatment for an injury or illness. It is ok to talk about how we’re feeling or reach out for help and support for our feelings and our health.

Activity 6: Recognize, Reach Out, and Use Resources

* Use Attachment 9.2a to explain and model the skill cues for asking for help:
  + Identify a trusted adult or a valid and reliable resource (e.g., 988)
  + Get their attention.
  + State your challenge/obstacle/problem.
  + The challenge/obstacle/problem I’m having is \_\_\_\_\_.
  + Ask for help.
  + Can you please \_\_\_\_\_ for me?
  + I want/need \_\_\_\_\_.
* MODEL: Use skill cues, class effort to work through one of the scenarios and how that character can ask for help.
* When someone recognizes they need help or a friend or family member needs help, an important step to take is asking for help. This is called advocacy for self. The goal is to identify a challenge, obstacle, and/or problem you’re facing, then seek out appropriate support. You must state your challenge/obstacle/problem, then ask for help. It takes time and practice. The more you practice, the better you’ll become at advocating for yourself.
* By having a trusted adult or a resource to go to when help is needed, one is more likely to get help for a substance use disorder or to stay alcohol-, tobacco-, and drug-free.

Closure:

* Today we focused on how you can help yourself or others using valid and reliable resources. What are signs help is needed? Who can serve as a resource to help? What resources can I seek out if I need support in addressing my substance use?

Attachment 9.1a: Recognize, Reach Out, Use Resources Guide

* Recognize
* **Step 1: Recognize** any signs that might indicate help is needed immediately.
  + Big emotions (Level 5), or feelings, are when we have difficulty controlling or regulating the emotion. Small feelings (Level 1) are still important feelings, but 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 toward others ([Wisconsin, Lesson 2](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/spcurriculumgrades7-12.pdf)). If you notice, see, hear, or recognize these URGENT warning signs, talk with a trusted adult right away; call 911; and seek immediate help from a mental health provider. Situations could include:
    1. Someone is threatening to hurt or kill themselves.
    2. Someone is looking for ways to kill themselves such as seeking access to pills, weapons, or other means.
    3. Someone is talking or writing about death, dying, or suicide in a way that is not “typical” for them.
  + Always reach out to a trusted adult when you recognize overwhelming feelings or urgent signs in yourself or others or if you recognize threats or actions that could hurt or injure someone.
  + Reach out to a trusted adult if your everyday feelings or big emotions need help or support.
* **Step 2: Reach Out** 
  + Start with a conversation starter.
  + Share what you recognized in a nonjudgmental way.
    - “I am concerned because I noticed \_\_\_\_\_.”
    - “I noticed you were really tired and angry this morning. Are you feeling OK? Would you like to talk about it?”
  + Communicate that you care in a nonjudgmental way.
    - Ask for help: “Can you help? I need help with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.”
* **Step 3: Use Resources**
  + Trusted adults
  + Behavioral health professionals
  + Community resources

Attachment 9.1a: How Can I Help? Guide

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| **R\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** | **R\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Out** | **R\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_** |
| * **Big emotions** (Level 5), or feelings, are when we have difficulty controlling or regulating the emotion. Small feelings (Level 1) are still important, but we still feel in control of our thoughts and actions. | 1. Start with a conversation starter 2. Share what you recognized in a non-judgmental way.   “I am concerned because I noticed \_\_\_\_\_.”  “I noticed you were really tired and angry this morning. Are you feeling OK? Would you like to talk about it?”  Communicate that you care in a nonjudgmental way. | * Trusted adult   + Home   + School   + Community * Health professional * Behavioral health resources * Text or call 988 |
| * **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 toward others ([Wisconsin, Lesson 2](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/sspw/pdf/spcurriculumgrades7-12.pdf) * Someone is threatening to hurt or kill themselves. * Someone is looking for ways to kill themselves, e.g., 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. | **Reaching out for Urgent Warning Signs**  *\*If you notice, see, hear, or recognize these URGENT warning signs, talk with a trusted adult right away; call 911; and seek immediate help from a mental health provider.* | * Resources for Urgent Warning Signs. Immediately….   1. Call 911   2. Trusted adult   3. Behavioral health professional |
| **How to ask for help:**  Can you help? I need help with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. | | |
| **How would stigma impact behavioral health?** | | |

Attachment 9.1b: How Can I Help? Substance Use

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| **Recognize** | | **Reach Out** |
| **Physical** | * Bloodshot eyes, pupils larger or smaller than usual * Changes in appetite or sleep patterns * Deterioration of physical appearance, personal grooming habits * Runny nose or sniffling * Sudden weight loss or weight gain * Tremors, slurred speech, or impaired coordination * Unusual odors on breath, body, or clothing | Ask a trusted adult for help:   * Can you help? I need help with \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.   Reach out to offer support:   1. Start with a conversation starter. 2. Share what you recognized in a nonjudgmental way.    * + “I am concerned because I noticed \_\_\_\_\_.”      + “I noticed you were really tired and angry this morning. Are you feeling OK? Would you like to talk about it?” 3. Tell them you care in a nonjudgmental way.   **Resources**  \*If the person is in danger of hurting themselves or someone else:   * Call 911 * Seek help from a trusted adult or behavioral health professional. |
| **Behavioral** | * Difficulties in relationships * Engaging in secretive or suspicious behaviors * Frequently getting into legal trouble, including fights, accidents, illegal activities, and driving under the influence * Neglecting responsibilities at work, school, or home, including neglecting one’s children * Sudden change in friends, favorite hangouts, and hobbies * Unexplained need for money or financial problems; may borrow or steal money * Using drugs under dangerous conditions (driving while using drugs, using dirty needles) * Increased drug tolerance (the need to use more of the drug to experience the same effects one used to achieve with smaller amounts) * Misusing drugs to avoid or relieve withdrawal symptoms (nausea, restlessness, insomnia, depression, sweating, shaking, anxiety) * Loss of control over drug misuse (using more than intended, unable to stop) * Life revolves around drug use (always thinking of using, figuring how to get more, or recovering from use) * Abandoning enjoyable activities (hobbies, sports, and socializing) to use drugs * Continuing to use regardless of negative consequences (blackouts, infections, mood swings, depression, paranoia) |
| **Psychological** | * Appearing fearful, anxious, or paranoid, with no reason * Lack of motivation; appearing tired or "spaced out" * Periods of unusual increased energy, nervousness, or instability * Sudden mood swings, increased irritability, or angry outbursts * Unexplained change in personality or attitude |

Attachment 9.2a: Recognize, Reach Out, Use Resources Practice

Complete the table using the information from the scenario.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Recognize:** What signs do you recognize? | **Reach out:** What will you say to reach out and show support? | **Resources:** List a resource that could help: |
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| --- | --- |
| **Reach out checklist** | * Use an “I” statement to: * State that you care. * State what you observed. * Offer support if the person would like. * State that you care in a nonjudgmental way. |
| **Write a reach out statement to help or support the person in the scenario** |  |

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| **Reach Out** |
| **Write a statement if YOU needed to reach out for help with a health concern.** |

Attachment 9.2b: Scenarios for Recognize, Reach Out, and Resources Practice

Teacher directions — Copy and paste the scenario(s) relevant to your students to Attachment 9.2a.

**Scenario 1: Kai** —Age: 14 (vaping)

Kai is being pressured by their friends and peers to try vaping.

**Scenario 2: Maya** — Age: 17 (pain killers)

Maya’s substance use disorder started when she was prescribed a painkiller after a sports injury in middle school. Over time, she developed a dependency and began seeking more painkillers illegally. Maya’s parents divorced recently, and she struggles with her new family dynamics. She misuses painkillers to cope with her emotional pain and escape from her problems.

**Scenario 3: Alex** — Age: 16 (tobacco)

Alex’s substance use disorder began when he started vaping at 14 years old to fit in with his older sister’s friends. His parents are absent from his life, and his sister works long hours, leaving him feeling lonely. He vapes to fit in with his peers, to escape his loneliness, and to cope with his feelings of abandonment.

**Scenario 4: Aisha** — Age: 18 (prescription medication)

Aisha’s substance use disorder started during eighth grade, when she began taking a prescribed Adderall. The pressure to excel and the fear of disappointing her parents became overwhelming. She would take more of the medication than prescribed to stay focused and cope with the constant stress.

**Scenario 5: Liam** — Age: 16 (alcohol)

Liam’s substance use disorder began after his father left the family, causing financial strain and emotional turmoil. Feeling overwhelmed by responsibility and unable to express his emotions, he started misusing alcohol to numb his pain and temporarily forget about his troubles.

**Scenario 6: Sofia** — Age: 16 (marijuana and heroin)

Sofia’s substance use disorder started after a traumatic event in middle school where she was sexually assaulted at a party. Struggling with intense emotions, nightmares, and a lack of parental support, she turned to marijuana and later heroin to numb her pain and attempt to address the resulting anxiety and depression.

**Scenario 7: EJ** — Age: 17 (performance-enhancing drugs)

Ethan’s substance use disorder began at the end of ninth grade, when he started misusing performance-enhancing substances after not making the varsity soccer team. He felt immense pressure to excel both academically and athletically. The fear of disappointing his family and the constant comparisons with his successful older sister contributed to his reliance on performance-enhancing substances.

**Jasmine** — Age: 14 (over-the-counter drugs)

Jasmine’s substance use disorder started after experiencing bullying at school due to her outspoken nature and activism. Feeling isolated and helpless, she turned to over-the-counter (OTC) drugs to numb her emotional pain and cope with the trauma. She believed that OTC drugs helped her escape the harsh reality and allowed her to forget the constant discrimination she faced.

**Dylan** — Age: 17 (caffeine-based stimulants)

Dylan’s substance use disorder began at age 14 after being constantly compared to his high-achieving older sister. Struggling with low self-esteem and feeling like a disappointment, he started misusing caffeine-based stimulants to enhance his academic performance. Dylan believed that this stimulant was the only way to prove his worth and gain recognition.

Attachment 9.3 Stigma-Reducing language

What is stigma?

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| --- | --- |
| **Instead of these stigmatizing  words and phrases ...** | **Try these preferred alternatives** |
| * Addict * Alcoholic * Drunk * Abuser | * *A person with a substance  use disorder* |
| * Crazy person | * *A person with a mental health condition* |
| * Abuser * Substance abuser * Drug abuser * Junkie * User | * *A person with substance use disorder* |
| * Clean (person) | * *In recovery* |

1. \_\_\_\_\_He/She has been clean for 4 months.
   1. Stigma
   2. Stigma-reducing
2. \_\_\_\_\_He/She is a junkie and an addict.
   1. Stigma
   2. Stigma-reducing
3. \_\_\_\_\_He/She is a person with a substance use disorder.
   1. Stigma
   2. Stigma-reducing