



Mental Health

matters



Discover... Your Strengths!

By remaining open to continuous learning,
finding your talents, and
asking questions and solving problems.

Use your personal gifts and strengths to achieve your goals.

The best way to become comfortable about mental health is to talk about it. Start the conversation today!

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Mental Health Matters

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Activity

Poster: DISCOVER

Level: 10-12

Find the Complete Mental Health Toolkit at:

<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/ps-7344-mhk-elem-manual-low.pdf>

Activity:

Discover Strengths – My “TOP 10 LISTS”!

Outcomes Career and Life Management (High School):

Poster: DISCOVER

General Outcomes	<p>General Outcome 1: Personal Choices Students will apply an understanding of the emotional/psychological, intellectual, social, spiritual and physical dimensions of health—and the dynamic interplay of these factors—in managing personal well-being.</p> <p>General Outcome 2: Resource Choices Students will make responsible decisions in the use of finances and other resources that reflect personal values and goals and demonstrate commitment to self and others.</p> <p>General Outcome 3: Career and Life Choices Students will develop and apply processes for managing personal, lifelong career development.</p>
Discover	<p>P5. apply a variety of strategies for lifelong learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> identify characteristics of effective learners<input type="checkbox"/> apply skills for learning, studying and being assessed<input type="checkbox"/> practise skills and strategies for managing time and dealing with procrastination<input type="checkbox"/> distinguish among learning styles, and develop strategies to adapt to various learning situations<input type="checkbox"/> apply relevant brain-based learning research to develop effective learning strategies<input type="checkbox"/> describe the relationship between continual personal change and growth in the thinking and learning process—lifelong learning <p>C2. update and expand a personal profile related to potential career choices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> assess personal assets, such as interests, competencies—including skills, abilities, aptitudes and talents—personality traits, limitations and strengths, to expand a personal profile<input type="checkbox"/> assess employability skills and personal, transferable and knowledge-based skills to expand the personal profile<input type="checkbox"/> examine other influential factors, including aspirations, attitudes, values, goals and the expectations of others, or lack thereof, to include in the personal profile <p>C1. examine the components of effective career development as a lifelong process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> explain the importance of ongoing self-assessment and self-appraisal <p>C11. design a plan for turning life goals and aspirations into reality</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> consider aspects of enterprise and innovation as possibilities<input type="checkbox"/> examine various entrepreneurs and their success<input type="checkbox"/> generate a list of ways to deal with the challenges of “going out on one’s own”

Teacher Background:

Discovering personal strengths is an important development in the process of knowing oneself, identifying and building on emotional skill-sets necessary to be successful in life, and creating a curiosity that helps develop the character of a life-long self-improvement learner.

Helping a young person discover their emotional strengths is essential because otherwise they are at risk of becoming emotionally, mentally and physically paralyzed, and unable to achieve the kind of success they deserve.

Some children are emotionally stronger than others. Some even have an inherent resilience. The emotionally strong young person can handle enormous challenges. Even though the pressures of life may be overwhelming and they may become fragmented, the emotionally strong person is resilient, gaining knowledge from their struggles, and developing emotional skills to recover and move forward. The emotionally strong person will stop at nothing to find solutions for whatever difficulties arise while maintaining a forward struggle. A less emotionally strong child will also become fragmented when faced with the pressures and challenges of life but they are not as resilient. Some may become depressed, others may utilize drugs, alcohol and other negative strategies to cope, while others may become overwhelmed and give up.

Sometimes we are tempted to protect children from emotionally difficult experiences and feelings. This does not help the young person develop as much as helping them discover who they are and what they can do within themselves when faced with difficult life situations. By helping them discover who they are and what they can do for themselves, when life problems emerge, a stronger and more resilient individual develops.

Key concepts to be reinforced through this activity are for students to believe that:

- Everyone has special qualities and strengths, even people experiencing problems and challenges.
- I am one of a kind. There's no one in the world exactly like me.
- It is okay to feel good about myself.
- It is important to celebrate the unique beauty and worth of each and every person.
- If I can't discover the strengths I need to cope, I will know a safe person I can talk to.

Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand how discovering their strengths will benefit their whole being (physical, mental, spiritual, and social) by identifying strengths they already have and describing how they impact their mind, body and relationships.
- Students will be able to describe barriers to discovering their strengths as well as strategies to overcome them.
- Students will discover and experience new strengths that they didn't realize they possessed and learn how to practice and build on them at school, home and in the community.
- Students will have opportunities to be reminded to practice regular strength self-discovery and will be able to report progress over time.

Create an Environment to Learn and Grow:

- Place the **DISCOVER Poster** in a prominent place in the classroom.
- Put a daily **“Discover strengths”** message, affirmation or quotation on the board. Ask students to help create these. Begin the day referencing the quotation and having some students reflect on what the words mean to them in order to help set the tone.

- Affirmations:

“I can discover great new things about myself”

“I have special qualities. I can share them with the world”

“It is important to learn what strengths I have, use them, and build on them”

- Quotations:

“Knowing others is intelligence, knowing yourself is true wisdom” – Tao Ti Ching

“Why fit in when you were born to stand out?” – Dr. Seuss

“Success is achieved by developing our strengths, not by eliminating our weaknesses” – Marilyn vos Savant

“Teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength” – Maya Angelou

- Decorate the walls with supporting posters, advertising, graphic images and artwork created by the students or collected from local mental health professionals.
- Have students choose a photo, drawing or other image of their own choosing or creation that represents the concept of **“Discover strengths”** and have them place them somewhere they will see it regularly during their day (binder, computer, mirror, phone, etc.).
- Have students create a public record recording their group and individual activities, accomplishments and achievements in relationship to the concept of **“Discover”**.

Activity:

My **“TOP 10 LISTS”!**

Description:

This is a personal and challenging activity that helps students explore their positive strengths, skills, coping strategies, value to others, and sense of self-awareness and self-worth.

The teacher introduces the class to positive affirmations by displaying a variety of them colourfully written on the board or on posters. A discussion follows about the role of affirmations in discovering and reminding them to take good care of themselves and celebrate their special qualities and gifts. With the teachers assistance the group collectively brainstorms several affirmations, strengths, positive qualities and so on which can be recorded on the board.

The teacher then hands out just one of the sets of top 10 lists: **“TOP 10 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT ME”**. Each student then is asked to write down 10 things that they genuinely like about themselves. They are given time to be thoughtful about this.

The teacher then hands out one more set of top 10 lists entitled: **“TOP 10 THINGS I AM GOOD AT”**. Each student is then asked to write down 10 things that they feel they have an ability to do. They are given time to be thoughtful about this. If some students are struggling, general suggestions for the room can be provided from the teacher or drawn from other students, with guidance towards unique personal qualities such as: coping, persevering, finding humour in situations, caring for others, enjoying life, relaxing, singing in the shower, dreaming, being creative, loving animals, working hard, being helpful, and so on.

The teacher then hands out one more set of Top Ten lists entitled: **“ANOTHER TOP 10 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT ME”**. This challenges deeper thinking on the student’s part about their sense of self value and positive qualities. Some students will need more time and more suggestions to complete this list for themselves. Be prepared to provide ideas or draw from the class such general qualities as: I am kind, I have survived challenging things, I care deeply about people, I am unique, I try to help others, I love my dog, I am funny, I can be creative, I stand up for others, I don’t discriminate against others, and so on.

This process can be continued and expanded to include other specific areas of self-reflection that the teacher feels is relevant to the class such as:

- **“TOP 10 THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY”**
- **“TOP 10 THINGS THAT HELP ME RELAX”**
- **“TOP 10 THINGS I CAN DO TO COPE WITH STRESS”**
- **“TOP 10 THINGS I CAN DO TO MAKE MY BODY HEALTHY”**
- **“TOP 10 THINGS I HAVE DONE THAT I AM PROUD OF”**
- **“TOP 10 PEOPLE AND PLACES I CAN GO TO FOR HELP!”** (utilize the **Additional Resources** Section below for ideas)

The more times a list is provided for students to fill out, there is necessity to think deeper beyond superficial qualities or habits, and look deeper into what is core to the person in terms of their self-value and coping skills. This activity can also be used in safe, trusting groups where each person puts their

name on their list: **“TOP 10 THINGS OTHER PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT ME”** to be passed around and filled out by others in the room in a respectful and supportive manner.

These lists are not to be handed in, but kept in a place where the student can see them often. Teachers can ask if students would be comfortable and willing to share them with them. If they do, it provides fascinating and helpful insight that would be helpful in supporting and referring the youth to their own skill set when they are struggling. It also helps identify students who truly struggle with identifying their personal strengths and coping strategies and offering further assistance to them in that self-discovery. The lists become tools for the students to reflect on when they need to remember who they are, what value they have and what skills they have to cope.

Materials:

- Copy of a sheet of paper headlined **“TOP 10 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT ME”** (attached) for each student.
- Copy of a sheet of paper headlined **“TOP 10 THINGS I AM GOOD AT”** (attached) for each student.
- Copy of a sheet of paper headlined **“Another TOP 10 GREAT THINGS ABOUT ME”** (attached) for each student.
- Further Copies of sheets with topics for **“TOP 10 LISTS”** (examples attached) that are relevant to the class:
 - **“TOP 10 THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY”**
 - **“TOP 10 THINGS THAT HELP ME RELAX”**
 - **“TOP 10 THINGS I CAN DO TO COPE WITH STRESS”**
 - **“TOP 10 THINGS I CAN DO TO MAKE MY BODY HEALTHY”**
 - **“TOP 10 THINGS I HAVE DONE THAT I AM PROUD OF”**
 - **“TOP 10 PEOPLE AND PLACES I CAN GO TO FOR HELP!”**
 - **“TOP 10 THINGS OTHER PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT ME”**

Discussion:

- How does it feel to be asked what you like about yourself?
- Have you realized that you know more things you like about yourself than you thought before?
- Did you have to work hard at thinking of positive things you do to cope? Did it help to give you ideas of what you could do when you heard what other people do?
- How do you think you could use these lists to help you when you are feeling stressed or down?
- What are some ways you can positively add items to these lists of affirmations and strengths?
- If you find it very difficult to think positively about yourself or your strengths who can you share these feelings with?

Conclusion:

Today, we've explored how we feel about ourselves, our positive qualities, our strengths, and our coping strategies. We now have documents we should keep in a safe but visible place for us to reflect on when we need to remember what is best, brightest, and most beautiful about ourselves. We also learned how important it is to know strategies, tools and activities that help us cope and feel better when we need to. We can not only remind ourselves of these things when we need to, we can also remind people we care about to try some of the same things when they look like they need some help caring for themselves. We also know who is safe to talk to if we, or our friends or family members, are having trouble feeling good about ourselves. We can use what we learned today to celebrate ourselves, help ourselves, and offer support to others.

Take Home Activity:

Have students place their lists in their binders, lockers, walls at home or other visible locations so that they can be reinforced daily by their messages.

Other Ideas:

- **Create a "TOP 10 LIST" Binder:** Have the students reflect periodically with other topics you provide and add the new lists to their collection of self-discovery "TOP 10's".

Collaborate with your Fellow Teachers:

- Discuss ways to incorporate elements of these activities and concepts with colleagues working in physical education and sports teams, food sciences, art classes, cafeteria management, and student council.
- Share your activities and discussion ideas with fellow teachers within your school and community
- Present mini-presentations of successful activities at staff meetings, school professional development opportunities and community events.

Involve the School, Parents and Community:

- Develop ways to expand the activities to school-wide campaigns, contests, and events in order to reach a larger portion of the school population. Utilizing school announcements, newspapers, social media, websites, street advertising for related mental health messages and highlighting related events can be effective.
- Present mini-presentations of successful activities school open houses, parent/teacher nights, and community events for parents and community partners to help increase awareness, knowledge and skills in the area of children's mental health. This can be done in collaboration with local mental health and addiction staff, and health promotion and education professionals.

- Utilize Parent Groups as a means to share information and activities that can be used at home to reinforce the concepts of positive mental health for the child, siblings, parents and guardians.
- Approach local physical recreation, arts, businesses and volunteer organizations to find ways to amplify your work and increase messaging to a community-wide basis.

Assessment Strategy:

- Students participate in the related activity, discussion, and continued “TOP 10 LISTS” binder creation.
- Students identify three ways that they can use their lists and how they will benefit them.

Follow up and Review:

- Note in your calendar periodic follow up periods when you will briefly revisit the concepts and healthy practices experienced in these activities.
- Have students identify two items they can add to each list and identify how the lists have had positive benefits for them or others.

Additional Resources:

- Alberta Education Mental Health Matters:
<http://www.education.alberta.ca/admin/supportingstudent/safeschools/mhm.aspx>
- Alberta Health Services Addiction and Mental Health, Information for Teachers:
<http://www.albertahealthservices.ca/2674.asp>
- Canadian Mental Health Association: www.cmha.ca
- Crisis Supports:

Child Abuse Hotline	1-800-387-KIDS (5437)
Kids Help Phone	1-800-668-6868
Suicide Crisis Hotline	1-800-448-3000
Eating Disorder Hotline	1-800-931-2237
STD AIDS INFO Line	1-800-772-2437

- Local Resources:

Parent Associations

Libraries, Arts, Recreation, Sports, Volunteer, and Business partners



TOP 10 LIST

TOP 10 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT ME!



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

TOP 10 THINGS I AM GOOD AT!



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

ANOTHER 10 THINGS I LIKE ABOUT ME!



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

10 THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY!



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

10 THINGS THAT HELP ME RELAX!



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

10 THINGS I CAN DO TO COPE WITH STRESS!



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

10 THINGS I CAN DO TO MAKE MY BODY HEALTHY!



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

10 THINGS I HAVE DONE THAT I AM PROUD OF!



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

10 PEOPLE AND PLACES I CAN GO TO FOR HELP!



- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____
- 4. _____
- 5. _____
- 6. _____
- 7. _____
- 8. _____
- 9. _____
- 10. _____

TOP 10 LIST

10 THINGS OTHER PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT ME, _____!



1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Outcomes Career and Life Management (High School)

<p>General Outcomes</p>	<p>General Outcome 1: Personal Choices Students will apply an understanding of the emotional/psychological, intellectual, social, spiritual and physical dimensions of health—and the dynamic interplay of these factors—in managing personal well-being.</p> <p>General Outcome 2: Resource Choices Students will make responsible decisions in the use of finances and other resources that reflect personal values and goals and demonstrate commitment to self and others.</p> <p>General Outcome 3: Career and Life Choices Students will develop and apply processes for managing personal, lifelong career development.</p>
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