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Learning Material



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TITLE: STRONGERYOU(th): PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH THROUGH THE DEVELOPMENT OF A PREVENTION AND INTERVENTION PROGRAMME THAT WILL ENHANCE YOUTH WORKERS KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS ON MENTAL HEALTH AND SELF CARE, FOSTER YOUTH RESILIENCE AND PROMOTE WELLBEING

ACTION TYPE: KA220-YOU - Cooperation partnerships in youth (KA220-YOU)

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STRONGER YOU(TH)

Emotional Life Skills for Taking Care and Maintaining our Mental Health

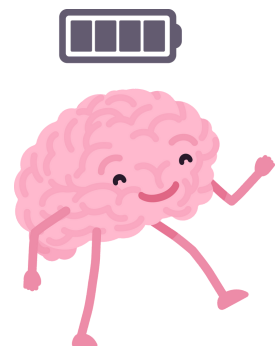
Partner Organisation Name	CONNECTING DOTS
Country	CYPRUS

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MODULE DESCRIPTION & LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This MODULE explores the essential emotional life skills that support overall mental well-being. It emphasizes the importance of understanding and managing emotions, building resilience, and maintaining healthy relationships as key components of mental health. Learners will gain practical tools to recognize and regulate their emotions, cope with stress, communicate effectively, and create personal self-care routines. By developing these skills, individuals can strengthen their ability to handle life's challenges, reduce the risk of mental health struggles, and nurture a balanced, positive mindset. The topic also highlights the connection between lifestyle choices, emotional regulation, and long-term psychological well-being.





Module Topics & Structure

1. Understanding Mental Health and Emotions
2. Self-Awareness & Self-Regulation
3. Building Resilience
4. Healthy Relationships & Communication
5. Stress and Anxiety Management
6. Lifestyle Practices for Mental Well-Being





LEARNING OUTCOMES

Learners will be able to:

- Define mental health and explain the role of emotions in overall well-being.
- Identify and label emotions with greater accuracy and self-awareness.
- Apply strategies for managing and regulating emotions in daily life.
- Demonstrate skills in active listening, empathy, and assertive communication.
- Develop healthy coping mechanisms for stress, anxiety, and setbacks.
- Design a personal self-care plan to support ongoing mental health.
- Evaluate situations where professional or peer support may be necessary.
- Commit to sustainable practices that build resilience and emotional balance.





1. Understanding Mental Health and Emotions

This topic introduces learners to the foundations of mental health and the role emotions play in daily life. It emphasizes that mental health is not just the absence of illness but a state of well-being where individuals can manage stress, work productively, build relationships, and contribute to their communities. Learners will also explore how emotions influence thoughts, behaviors, and decision-making.

What is Mental Health?

- WHO definition: a state of well-being in which a person realizes their potential, can cope with normal stresses of life, can work productively, and contribute to the community.

Why Mental Health Matters:

- Mental health is just as important as physical health. It influences how we think, feel, and behave every day. Good mental health helps us cope with stress, build strong relationships, make good decisions, and achieve our goals



1. Understanding Mental Health and Emotions

What Are Emotions?

Emotions are natural responses to our experiences, thoughts, and surroundings. They act like signals that tell us how we feel about a situation and guide our decisions and behaviors. Everyone experiences emotions — they are neither “good” nor “bad,” but they can be comfortable (joy, love, excitement) or uncomfortable (anger, sadness, fear).

Why Emotions Matter

- **Guide Decisions:** Emotions help us decide what feels safe, important, or meaningful.
- **Connect Us to Others:** They allow us to empathize, build relationships, and communicate without words.
- **Motivate Action:** For example, fear can protect us from danger, and joy can motivate us to repeat positive experiences.
- **Signal Needs:** Sadness may signal the need for comfort; anger may signal that a boundary was crossed.

Types of Emotions

- **Primary Emotions:** Basic and universal feelings such as happiness, sadness, anger, fear, surprise, and disgust.
- **Secondary/Complex Emotions:** Mixed emotions shaped by experiences and culture, such as guilt, pride, jealousy, or shame.

Emotions are closely linked to how we think and act:

- **Thoughts:** “I failed my test.”
- **Emotion:** Sadness or frustration.
- **Behavior:** Avoiding studying, or trying harder next time.

Healthy Expression of Emotions

- Naming emotions instead of suppressing them (“I feel nervous” vs. “I’m fine”).
- Sharing feelings with trusted people.
- Using coping strategies like journaling, art, exercise, or mindfulness.



Activities

Discussion Starter:

- “What does mental health mean to you?” (Group brainstorm).

Activity: Emotion Wheel Exploration

- Learners use an Emotion Wheel to identify and label emotions they felt in the past week.
- Reflection: How did these emotions affect their actions and decisions?

Case Study Reflection:

- Present a short scenario (e.g., a student overwhelmed with exams).
- Learners identify the emotions, thoughts, and behaviors involved.

Reflection Questions

- When was the last time you felt strong emotions (positive or negative)?
- How did those emotions influence your choices or actions?
- Why do you think people sometimes hide their emotions or avoid talking about mental health?



2. Self-Awareness & Self-Regulation

This unit helps learners develop the ability to recognize their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors (self-awareness) and to manage them in healthy and constructive ways (self-regulation). These two skills are the foundation of emotional intelligence and play a vital role in maintaining mental health, improving relationships, and achieving personal goals.

1. Self-Awareness

- Definition: The ability to notice and understand your emotions, thoughts, and behaviors.
- Importance: Helps in making conscious choices rather than acting on impulse.
- Tools for developing self-awareness: Journaling, Reflection questions, Mind-body check-in (noticing physical signs of stress or calm), Seeking feedback from trusted peers or mentors.

2. Self-Regulation

- Definition: The ability to manage emotions, behaviors, and impulses in healthy ways.
- Importance: Builds resilience, reduces stress, and strengthens relationships.
- Techniques for self-regulation - Mindfulness & Breathing: Staying present and calm. Grounding Techniques: Using the five senses to reduce overwhelming feelings. Positive Self-Talk: Replacing negative thoughts with constructive ones. Delay-Pause-Respond: Taking a moment before reacting.



Activities

Reflection Exercise: Emotional Triggers

- Learners list situations that make them feel stressed, angry, or anxious.
- Discuss how recognizing triggers can prevent emotional outbursts.

Mindfulness Practice: 3-Minute Breathing Space

- Guide learners through slow breathing to notice thoughts, emotions, and bodily sensations.

Role-Play: React vs. Respond

- Learners act out scenarios (e.g., receiving criticism from a teacher or friend).
- Practice an impulsive reaction vs. a thoughtful, regulated response.

Positive Self-Talk Exercise

- Provide examples of negative thoughts ("I can't do this") and reframe into positive alternatives ("This is hard, but I can try my best").

Reflection Questions

- What are my top three emotional triggers?
- How do I usually react when I feel strong emotions?
- What self-regulation strategy works best for me?
- How would my relationships improve if I practiced more self-awareness and self-regulation?



3. Building Resilience

Resilience is the ability to adapt, recover, and grow stronger in the face of challenges, setbacks, or stress. This unit helps learners understand what resilience is, why it is essential for mental health, and how to develop it through practical strategies, positive mindset, and supportive habits.

1. What is Resilience?

- The capacity to bounce back from difficulties. Resilient people don't avoid challenges; they face them with adaptability and a growth mindset.

2. Why Resilience Matters

- Helps manage stress and reduces the impact of setbacks.
- Improves problem-solving and decision-making.
- Supports long-term mental well-being and healthy relationships.

3. Components of Resilience

- Emotional Awareness, Belief in your ability to handle situations, Optimism, Support Systems, Adaptability.

4. Strategies to Build Resilience

- Growth Mindset, Goal Setting, Positive Thinking & Gratitude, Healthy Coping Skills, Social Support.



Activities

1. Resilience Reflection Exercise

- Learners write about a time they faced a challenge and how they overcame it.
- Discuss lessons learned and personal strengths discovered.

2. Gratitude Journal

- List three things each day that went well or made them feel supported.

3. Growth Mindset Scenario

- Present a scenario (e.g., failing a test or losing a game).
- Learners brainstorm positive responses and actions to learn from the situation.

4. Support Network Mapping

- Learners create a visual map of people they can rely on during challenging times.

Reflection Questions

- What is one challenge I recently faced, and how did I handle it?
- Which personal strengths helped me recover or cope?
- How can I apply resilience strategies in my daily life?
- Who can I turn to for support when I feel overwhelmed?



4. Healthy Relationships & Communication

Healthy relationships and effective communication are essential for emotional well-being and mental health. This topic helps learners understand how to build and maintain positive relationships, practice empathy, listen actively, communicate assertively, and set healthy boundaries. Strong interpersonal skills reduce conflicts, improve social support, and enhance resilience.

1. Healthy Relationships

- Characteristics of healthy relationships: trust, respect, support, honesty, and equality. The role of social support in mental health. Differences between healthy and unhealthy relationships.

2. Effective Communication

- Active Listening, Empathy, Assertiveness, Non-Verbal Communication.

3. Conflict Resolution

- Recognizing common sources of conflict. Steps for constructive conflict resolution: Stay calm and breathe, Listen to the other person, Express your own feelings clearly, Find common ground and compromise. Avoiding harmful responses.

4. Setting Healthy Boundaries

- Types of boundaries: physical, emotional, digital, and social.
- Communicating boundaries clearly and respectfully.



Activities

Role-Play: Active Listening

Pair learners to practice listening fully, summarizing what the other said, and responding empathetically.

Assertiveness Practice

Learners practice saying “no” or expressing a need politely but firmly in different scenarios.

Conflict Resolution Exercise

Present a common conflict scenario (e.g., disagreement with a friend).

Learners work in groups to find a solution using the steps above.

Reflection Questions

- What makes a relationship healthy or unhealthy?
- How do I currently communicate with friends or family, and how can I improve?
- When have I struggled to set boundaries, and what would I do differently now?
- How can empathy and active listening change the way I connect with others?



5. Stress and Anxiety Management

Stress and anxiety are natural responses to life's challenges, but when unmanaged, they can negatively affect mental health, relationships, and daily functioning. This unit equips learners with knowledge and practical strategies to identify, manage, and reduce stress and anxiety, fostering emotional balance and resilience.

1. Understanding Stress and Anxiety

- Stress: A physical or emotional reaction to challenging situations. Anxiety: Persistent worry or fear that may be disproportionate to the situation. Signs and Symptoms: Physical, Emotional, Behavioral.

2. Common Stressors for Young People

- Academic pressure, exams, and deadlines. Peer pressure and social challenges. Family conflicts or expectations. Uncertainty about the future.

3. Stress and Anxiety Management Strategies

A. Immediate Coping Techniques: Deep breathing exercises. Grounding techniques. Short mindfulness or meditation breaks.

B. Long-Term Habits: Regular physical activity. Balanced nutrition and adequate sleep. Time management and prioritization skills. Journaling or creative expression.

C. Social and Emotional Support: Talking with trusted friends, family, or mentors. Joining support groups or clubs.

D. Professional Help: When stress or anxiety becomes persistent or overwhelming, seek counselors, psychologists, or helplines.



Activities

1. Stress Mapping

- Learners list their main stressors and rank them by intensity.
- Identify patterns and discuss possible coping strategies.

2. Breathing and Grounding Practice

- Guide learners through a 5-minute deep breathing or 5-4-3-2-1 grounding exercise.

3. Time Management Exercise

- Learners create a simple weekly schedule to balance study, rest, and recreation.

4. Reflection Journal

- Record daily stressors, emotional reactions, and coping strategies used.

Reflection Questions

- What situations usually trigger my stress or anxiety?
- Which coping strategies help me feel calmer and more focused?
- How can I plan my day to reduce unnecessary stress?
- Who can I turn to for support when feeling overwhelmed?



6. Lifestyle Practices for Mental Well-being

Mental health is closely connected to lifestyle habits. This unit guides learners on how daily routines, nutrition, physical activity, sleep, and digital habits influence emotional well-being. By adopting healthy lifestyle practices, young people can strengthen resilience, reduce stress, and maintain overall mental health.

1. Sleep and Rest

- Importance of 7–9 hours of sleep for mood, focus, and stress management. Effects of sleep deprivation: irritability, poor concentration, weakened immunity. Tips for healthy sleep: regular schedule, limiting screen time before bed, relaxing bedtime routines.

2. Nutrition

- Foods that boost energy and mental clarity. Limiting processed foods, sugary drinks, and excessive caffeine.

3. Physical Activity

- Exercise as a natural stress reliever and mood booster. Activities: walking, dancing, sports, yoga, or any enjoyable movement. Benefits for both physical and mental health.

4. Digital Balance

- Strategies: digital detox, setting limits, mindful social media use, prioritizing face-to-face interactions.

5. Personal Self-Care Practices

- Regular relaxation activities. Emotional check-ins. Planning balanced routines that include work, rest, and play.



Activities

1. Self-Care Planning Workshop

- Learners create a weekly plan including sleep, meals, exercise, study, relaxation, and social time.

2. Mindful Technology Use Exercise

- Track screen time for a day and identify patterns of overuse.
- Plan strategies to reduce unnecessary digital stress.

3. Physical Activity Challenge

- Encourage learners to engage in at least 20–30 minutes of enjoyable movement daily for a week.

4. Nutrition Reflection

- Keep a food and mood diary to see how eating habits affect emotions and energy levels.

Reflection Questions

- Which daily habits currently help or harm my mental well-being?
- How can I adjust my routines to include more self-care?
- What activities make me feel relaxed, happy, or energized?
- How can I use technology in a way that supports rather than harms my mental health?



KEY LEARNINGS

1. **Understanding Mental Health and Emotions:** Mental health is a vital part of overall well-being, and emotions are natural signals that guide our decisions and relationships. By learning to understand and label emotions, we take the first step in building emotional life skills that strengthen mental health.
2. **Self-Awareness & Self-Regulation:** Self-awareness is the first step to understanding ourselves, while self-regulation is the next step that allows us to manage our emotions and actions wisely. Together, they help us stay calm, make better choices, and maintain stronger mental health.
3. **Building Resilience:** Resilience is not about avoiding difficulties but learning how to navigate them with strength, flexibility, and optimism. By developing resilience, young people can face life's challenges with confidence, maintain mental health, and grow stronger through adversity.
4. **Healthy Relationships & Communication:** Healthy relationships and communication skills are critical for mental health. By listening actively, practicing empathy, expressing yourself assertively, and setting boundaries, young people can build stronger, more supportive, and balanced connections.
5. **Stress and Anxiety Management:** Stress and anxiety are natural, but they do not have to control our lives. By understanding triggers, practicing coping strategies, maintaining healthy habits, and seeking support when needed, young people can manage stress effectively and maintain emotional balance.
6. **Lifestyle Practices for Mental Well-being:** Small lifestyle changes can have a big impact on mental health. By prioritizing sleep, nutrition, exercise, and mindful routines, young people can enhance emotional well-being, build resilience, and maintain balance in their daily lives.



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