

**Multnomah Education Service District  
School Health Services  
Mental Health Curriculum Manual**

**Title: The Mental Health Curriculum for School Age Children, Ages 10 to 12**

**Module 1: WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH and MENTAL ILLNESS?**

**Module 1 Overview:** This module is an introductory session to help students develop a foundation of knowledge and understanding to support learning about mental health and mental illness. Students are introduced to a vocabulary that they can use to talk about mental health and mental illness. The school nurse begins to discuss the issue of stigma and why it is that people have difficulty talking about mental illness. The history of how the mentally ill were treated is described briefly to help students recognize why some people are still afraid of the topic of mental illness. Students learn that many famous people have a mental illness but it doesn't prevent them from doing very exciting and important things and having responsible jobs. Mental illness is described as a continuum and everyone moves up and down on this continuum from day to day as they experience normal life stresses and temporary emotional upsets, for example: feeling anxious on the day of a test, feeling tense on the first day you go to a new school, or feeling sad and depressed after a family pet dies. The focus of this first session is to begin to dispel the myths about mental illness, to make mental illness a "discussable" topic that is safe to talk about and ask questions about, and to incite curiosity in the students to learn more.

**Module 1 Objectives:** After completing this module, students will be able to:

**Knowledge Domain:**

1. State a definition of mental health.
2. Define vocabulary related to emotions, mental health, and mental illness.
3. Recognize the difference between mental illness and mental retardation.
4. Learn that mental illness can happen in any family.
5. Recognize that mental health and mental illness is on a continuum.
6. Discover that there are many famous and historical people who have had mental illness.
7. Discover that you cannot tell if a person has mental illness just by looking at him or her.
8. Give definitions of stigma and stereotypes.

**Affective Domain:**

1. Appreciate that mental illness is experienced by many people.
2. Appreciate that no one is to blame for mental illness.
3. Understand that it is okay to talk about mental illness.
4. Experience greater acceptance for people with mental illness.
5. Recognize and accept their own emotional states and upsets as "blips" on their mental health curriculum.
6. Experience curiosity to learn more about mental illness.
7. Question some of the myths and stereotypes of mental illness seen on TV or in the movies.

### **Talking Points/ Outline for Module 1:**

- What this class is about: What do you think of when you hear the words Mental Health?
- Guidelines for class discussions and simple rules to make talking safe
- Physical illness and Mental illness: How are they alike and different?
- Mental retardation and Mental illness: How are they different?
- What do you see and hear about Mental Illness on the news or on TV?
- Who has mental illness? How can you tell? Can it happen in any family?
- Continuum of Mental Health and Symptoms of Mental Illness (Introduce this, more covered in Module 3, “Packing Your Mental Health Bag”)
- Stigma and Stereotypes: Who has them? Where do we get them?
- Stigma Words: Brainstorm everyday words used to describe people with different behaviors
- History of being afraid of people with mental illness and how the mentally ill were treated in history
- The Real Story: We all have Mental Health

### **Parent Letter: (Example attached)**

### **Teacher Letter: (Example attached)**

### **In-Class Overheads (OH):**

- OH#1: Therapy Dog Cartoon (Talking Point: What this class is about)  
Source: Mike Twohy (2002). Washington Post Writers Group, [M2Ecomics@aol.com](mailto:M2Ecomics@aol.com)
- OH#2: Guidelines for Class Discussions
- OH#3: What is Mental Health? (with TP: We all have mental health)  
Source: SAMHSA publication # SMA 95-3073, Printed 1995, Reprinted 1996
- OH#4: The Range of Mental Health (with TP: Continuum of MH-MI)  
Source: Stember, L., Schrinky, J., 7 Barnett, K., 2000. MESD SHS
- OH#5: News Headlines (with TP: What do you See & Hear about MI)  
Source: The Oregonian, 2000-2002
- OH#6 – #10: Famous People with Mental Illness (TP: How can you tell who has Mental illness? (several overheads as options to illustrate)  
Source: Photographs from Alamy images (<http://www.alamy.com>) and Classroom Clip Art (<http://classroomclipart.com>).
- OH#11: Cartoon: “Just Plain Nuts”  
Source: Illustration from Microsoft Clipart

OH#12: Ziggy: “He doesn’t need therapy - Most dogs don’t like cats”  
 (a good overhead to end the class on a positive note)  
 Source: Ziggy & Friends, Inc. (2001). Universal Press.  
[www.ziggyzone.com](http://www.ziggyzone.com)

### **Module Teaching Aides (Teaching Aides = TA):**

- TA #1: Mental Health Vocabulary List with Definitions  
 Source: Schrinky, J. (2005). Using Worksheet Generator at  
[www.DiscoverySchool.com](http://www.DiscoverySchool.com).
- TA #2: Word Search of Famous People with Mental Illness  
 Source: Breaking the Silence for Middle School, National Alliance for the Mentally Ill (1999), 1983 Marcus Avenue, C103, Lake Success, NY, 11042, [www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)
- TA #3: Emotion Collage – have students cut pictures out of magazines  
 (See Emotion Notion, Source: Chudler, E.H. Retrieved from the World Wide Web, March 2005,  
[www.faculty.washington.edu/Chudler/chmodel.html](http://www.faculty.washington.edu/Chudler/chmodel.html))
- TA #4: Mental Health Questions Box - ask students to write their questions about mental health/ mental illness and put them in box  
 Source: Stember, L., Schrinky, J., & Barnett, K. (2000)

### **Pre and Post Test Questions for Module 1:**

- T or F: 1. Mental illness and mental retardation are the same thing.  
 T or F: 2. Most people with mental illness are dangerous.  
 T or F: 3. Serious mental illness can happen in any family.  
 T or F: 4. Mental illness is contagious: You can catch it from someone like you catch a cold.  
 T or F: 5. You can tell if someone has mental illness just by looking at them.

### **Extending Learning Activities Outside of Class:**

The Mental Health Detective Game: Give students little notepads and pencils and asking them to write down things they observe this week about mental health; it could be things they see on TV or hear people talking about or see in a magazine. Ask them to bring their detective notes to the next class.

**Module 1 Resource List:**

National Alliance of the Mentally Ill: Breaking the Silence (1999, reprinted 2004)  
[www.nami.org](http://www.nami.org)

National Mental Health Services Knowledge Exchange Network:  
[www.mentalhealth.org](http://www.mentalhealth.org)

American Psychiatric Association website: [www.psych.org](http://www.psych.org)

Nemours Foundation website: [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org)

American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry website: [www.aacap.org](http://www.aacap.org)

National Mental Health Association website: [www.nmha.org](http://www.nmha.org)

Surgeon General's Report, US Public Health Service (1999). Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General, Children's Mental Health. Retrieved from the World Wide Web, March 2005 at  
<http://www.surgeongeneral.gov/library/mentalhealth/home.html>

Hyde, Margaret O., and Elizabeth H. Forsyth. *Know About Mental Illness*. New York: Walker and Company, 1996. (Ages 8-12)