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Promoting
young
people's
mental
wellbeing
through the
coronavirus
pandemic.

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The IMPACT of the coronavirus pandemic on young people's mental wellbeing.

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The pandemic has turned the lives of millions of children and young people upside down. Many are finding it hard to cope with isolation, a loss of routine, anxiety about the future, a disruption to their education, and in some cases difficult or traumatic experiences at home.

Early research (Young Minds, May 2020) indicates that more than **80%** of young people with a history of mental ill health have found their conditions have worsened since the coronavirus crisis began. But the impact of the pandemic is much wider than that – it is affecting the mental well-being of almost all students in some way. There is growing

consensus that supporting positive mental health will be a key issue to address when schools return for the new term.

Compulsory mental health education, originally due for implementation in September, would have required students of all ages to be taught about mental well-being – with an emphasis on promoting the positive link between physical and mental health. The focus of that new curriculum, put in place before the pandemic, will now be more important than ever. Schools will need to find ways to support students as they return to school following the COVID-19 lockdown.

Introducing this resource.

These materials are specially developed curriculum resources for students returning to school following the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic, lockdown and an extended time of doing schoolwork at home.

They are designed to be **flexible** to allow delivery in a single lesson, across several sessions or through tutor times. You can find suggested outlines for all of these options in the appendix.

The material has been developed through the summer of 2020 with input from psychologists, educational psychologists, youth workers and community representatives. Funding for the project has generously been provided by The Connolly Foundation.

“We’re really committed in Luton to supporting children’s mental health and wellbeing, particularly at this challenging time. These Youthscape mental health resources will help schools to support their students as they return to school in Autumn”.

Caroline Dawes, Senior School Improvement Adviser, Luton Council

Government guidance for teaching about mental wellbeing.

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The Government has published updated guidance (July 2020) outlining schools' responsibility in teaching about mental wellbeing. Schools have flexibility to design and plan age-appropriate subject content, but this guidance sets out core areas for health and wellbeing that are appropriate for primary and secondary aged pupils.

Secondary aged pupils should know:

- how to talk about their emotions accurately and sensitively, using appropriate vocabulary
- that happiness is linked to being connected to others
- how to recognise the early signs of mental wellbeing concerns
- common types of mental ill health (e.g. anxiety and depression)
- how to critically evaluate when something they do or are involved in has a positive or negative effect on their own or others' mental health
- the benefits and importance of physical exercise, time outdoors, community participation and voluntary and service-based activities on mental wellbeing and happiness

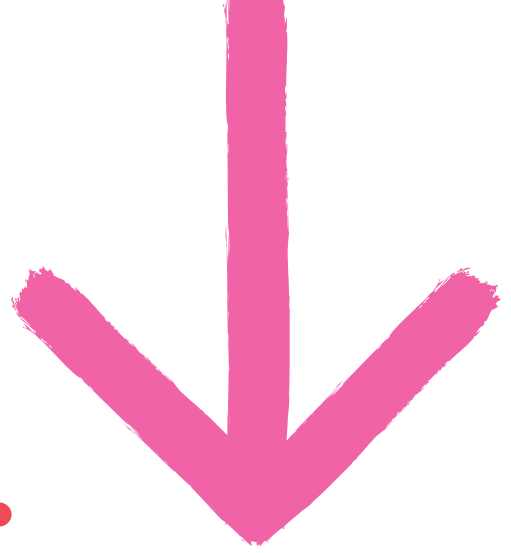
In addition, the guidance states:

“The aim of teaching pupils about physical health and mental wellbeing is to give them the information that they need to make good decisions about their own health and wellbeing. It should enable them to recognise what is normal and what is an issue in themselves and others and, when issues arise, know how to seek support as early as possible from appropriate sources.”

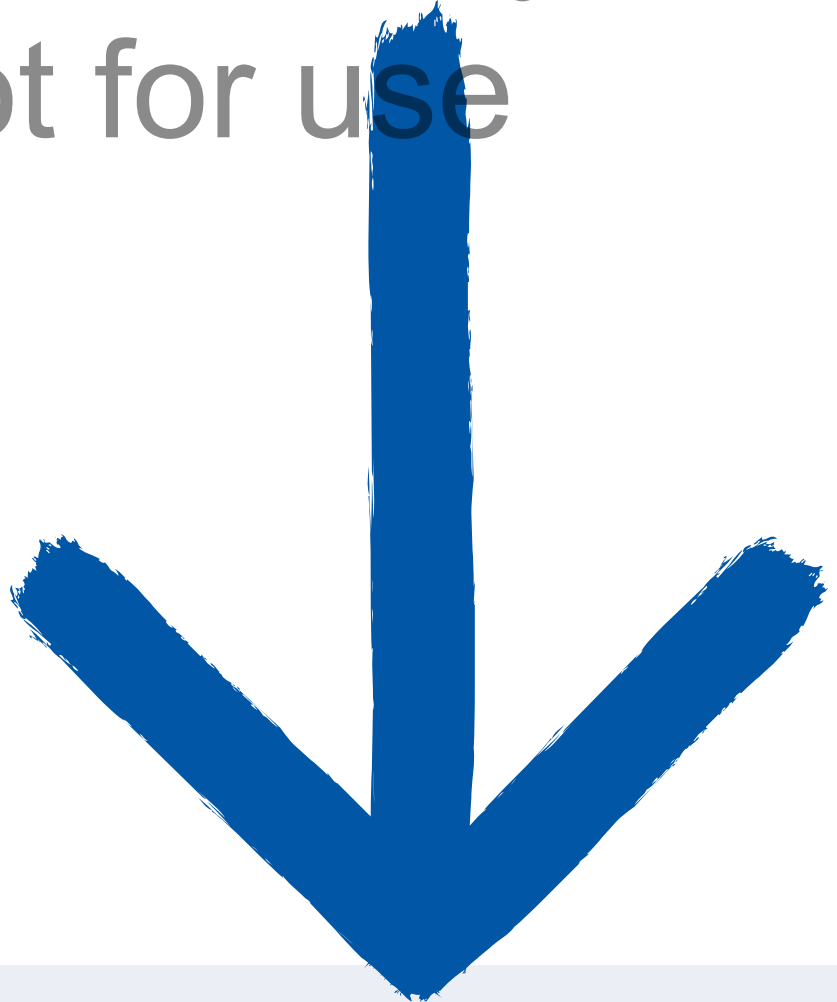
The material in this resource has been written with these guidelines in mind and to meet these learning outcomes.

SOURCE: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/relationships-education-relationships-and-sex-education-rse-and-health-education/physical-health-and-mental-wellbeing-primary-and-secondary>

Learning themes & outcomes:



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Theme 1

Stress



Zainab shares her experience of life during the coronavirus pandemic in this powerful short film.

As a GCSE student, Zainab like many others, was unable to sit her exams this summer. She then discovered that her mum had been diagnosed with a very rare and serious respiratory disease, and was therefore far more vulnerable to the coronavirus. Zainab and her family shielded in order to protect her mum, however, a few weeks later Zainab was rushed to hospital to have surgery herself. The cumulation of these experiences caused Zainab to experience significantly heightened stress levels, and she had to find new ways of coping during this time.

Dr Kate Middleton then shares how stress can impact our emotions, anxiety levels, and our ability to make positive and healthy decisions. She later explores how we might recognise whether we are experiencing heightened stress levels, and how we might be able to lower our stress levels as a response.

Learning outcomes

Young people will be able to:

- Identify causes of stress in their own lives, both directly related to the coronavirus pandemic as well as more generally.
- Understand that people are different and may therefore find different things stressful
- Identify key moments in their personal experience of the pandemic that were important and/or highly stressful
- Identify and become self aware of ways that they show they are stressed.
- Consider what actions from others help them to manage or lower their stress levels.

Activities related to theme 1

- Activity 1: What stresses me out!
- Activity 2: Samara's lockdown story
- Activity 3: How do I show I'm stressed?
- Activity 4: Different ways we can show we are anxious

Theme 2

Anxiety & emotions



Ashleigh shares her experience of life during the coronavirus pandemic in this powerful short film.

When Ashleigh found out that school would be closing to the majority of students, she was initially excited. Like many others, she saw it as an opportunity to have an extended Easter holiday. However, things changed dramatically for Ashleigh when she discovered her Dad, who she rarely saw, was seriously ill after testing positive for the virus, and had been put into an induced coma in order to save his life.

Ashleigh powerfully shares about the 'emotional whirlwind' she experienced during this time, and how she was able to cope with the numerous different emotions and anxieties she experienced as a result.

Learning outcomes

Young people will be able to:

- Learn how anxiety affects the body and mind
- Reflect on the different emotions many young people may have experienced as a result of the coronavirus pandemic
- Consider what emotions they have experienced themselves through the crisis, and now they are returning to school
- Identify appropriate characteristics of someone who is trustworthy and safe to talk to about their feelings

Activities related to theme 2

- Activity 5: When someone says to me...
- Activity 6: Hassan's story
- Activity 7: Safe places to talk about emotions

Theme 3

Ways to stay well



Louise shares her experience of life during the coronavirus pandemic in this powerful short film.

Like many other young people, Louise found herself struggling to maintain healthy routines and rhythms once the lockdown began.

Louise reflects on the different activities, groups, hobbies and events that she intentionally incorporated into her daily rhythms and routines, in order to stay mentally and emotionally healthy during this time. She describes the value of finding opportunities to connect with others, get exercise and do something meaningful and important for others.

Learning outcomes

Young people will be able to:

- Explore simple practises that contribute to positive mental wellbeing
- Identify which practises they find most helpful consider what they could do to ensure those practises are included in their daily lives
- Identify positive and negative habits and activities related to their mental health
- Consider what helps people improve their mental wellbeing

Activities related to theme 3

- Activity 8: What helps my mental wellbeing
- Activity 9: What helps and what doesn't?
- Activity 10: Taylor's Story

Meet Dr Kate Middleton



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The video content in Thrive features advice and input from **Dr Kate Middleton**, a psychologist with extensive experience of supporting people through difficult experiences and emotions.

As a parent of a teenager, and a governor of a secondary school, Kate has a particular interest in supporting young people through adolescence. She has published many books including “First Steps out of Anxiety”, “Eating Disorders: The Path to Recovery” and “Stress: How to De-Stress Without Doing Less” Kate also lectures and speaks widely to education, faith groups and medical practitioners.

In addressing the challenges and impact of the coronavirus pandemic, Kate is particularly focused on helping young people manage anxiety and stress, and well as other difficult emotions, and also to find helpful ways to build positive mental wellbeing.

In each of the Thrive videos, Dr Kate Middleton addresses these issues as they are raised by the stories of the young people featured. Her friendly and relatable approach helps students reflect on their own experiences and learn about their emotions and mental wellbeing.

Lesson outline: summary.

		KEYSTAGE DIFFERENTIATION	TIME (MINS)
INTRODUCTION	INTRODUCING THE LESSON AND ESTABLISHING THE GROUND RULES		5
▶ INTRODUCTORY VIDEO 1	A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE CONTENT OF THE LESSON		3
BASELINE ASSESSMENT ACTIVITY	A SHORT INITIAL ACTIVITY TO FOCUS STUDENTS		5
▶ VIDEO 2	STRESS & ANXIETY		7
ACTIVITY	CHOOSE 1 OF 4 ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS: ACTIVITY 1. WHAT STRESSES ME OUT! ACTIVITY 2. SAMARA'S LOCKDOWN STORY ACTIVITY 3. HOW DO I SHOW I'M STRESSED OR ANXIOUS? ACTIVITY 4. DIFFERENT WAYS WE CAN SHOW WE ARE ANXIOUS	KEYSTAGE 3 & 4 KEYSTAGE 4 KEYSTAGE 3 & 4 KEYSTAGE 4	7
▶ VIDEO 3	EMOTIONS RELATED TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC		7
ACTIVITY	CHOOSE 1 OF 3 ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS: ACTIVITY 5. WHEN SOMEONE SAYS TO ME... ACTIVITY 6. HASSAN'S STORY ACTIVITY 7. SAFE PLACES TO TALK ABOUT EMOTIONS	KEYSTAGE 3 & 4 KEYSTAGE 4 KEYSTAGE 3 & 4	7
▶ VIDEO 4	PROMOTING POSITIVE MENTAL WELLBEING		7
ACTIVITY	CHOOSE 1 OF 3 ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS: ACTIVITY 8. WHAT HELPS MY MENTAL WELLBEING? ACTIVITY 9. WHAT HELPS AND WHAT DOESN'T ACTIVITY 10. A DAY IN THE LIFE OF TAYLOR	KEYSTAGE 3 & 4 KEYSTAGE 4 KEYSTAGE 3 & 4	7
SUMMING UP	CONCLUDING THE LESSON AND PLACES TO GET FURTHER SUPPORT		5

TOTAL:
60

Appendix 2.

Student materials.

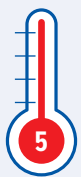
Reproducible
activities
for students
accompanied
by instructions
for facilitators.

Activity 1

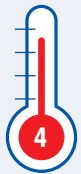
WHAT STRESSES ME OUT!

Take a look at the different things listed that might make you stressed and decide where you'd put them on the grid. You can't have more than **FOUR** per stress-level so think carefully and move them around to see if you can fit them all in. Write them in the boxes.

- BEING LATE FOR SCHOOL
- FAMILY – PARENTS, CARERS, BROTHERS, SISTERS
- WHAT TO WEAR
- MEETING NEW PEOPLE
- BEING ALONE
- LACK OF SLEEP
- NOT HAVING YOUR PHONE WITH YOU
- CLIMATE CHANGE
- WEARING A FACE MASK
- PRESSURE TO DO WELL AT SCHOOL
- HAVING TOO MUCH TO DO
- SOCIAL MEDIA
- CORONAVIRUS
- GOING OUT TO CROWDED PLACES
- SPENDING LOTS OF TIME AT HOME WITH THOSE I LIVE WITH



TOTALLY STRESSES ME OUT!



MAKES ME VERY STRESSED



I GET KIND OF STRESSED



MAYBE A LITTLE BIT OF STRESS



DOESN'T REALLY STRESS ME AT ALL

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WHAT NOW



- Share your results with another student
- Not everything stresses people in the same way – how are you similar or different?
- What things stress you out that aren't on the list?
- Are you more or less stressed about some things on the grid now compared to earlier during lockdown?

Activity 2

SAMARA'S LOCKDOWN STORY

“Looking back, I had lots of highs and lows during lockdown and the summer. Here are some of them...”

- Read Samara's diary entries about how she felt and how much stress she experienced.
- Did you have similar or different experiences?

23 MARCH

LOCKDOWN HAS STARTED. YES! NO SCHOOL. THIS IS THE BEST DAY OF MY LIFE!



STRESS-O-METER

10 APRIL

THIS IS GETTING SERIOUS. I'M WORRIED ABOUT MY GRANDPARENTS BEING OK.



STRESS-O-METER

28 APRIL

BEING TRAPPED AT HOME WITH MY FAMILY IS STRESSING ME OUT!



STRESS-O-METER

15 MAY

I'M BORED! I CAN'T BELIEVE I'M ACTUALLY MISSING BEING AT SCHOOL!



STRESS-O-METER

25 JUNE

AT LAST I CAN SEE MY FRIENDS AGAIN – WILL WE STILL GET ON?



STRESS-O-METER

9 JULY

WILL MISSING SO MUCH SCHOOL MEAN I DO WORSE WHEN IT COMES TO EXAMS?



STRESS-O-METER

1 SEPTEMBER

I'M EXCITED ABOUT GOING BACK TO SCHOOL – AND A BIT NERVOUS.

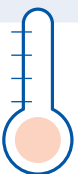
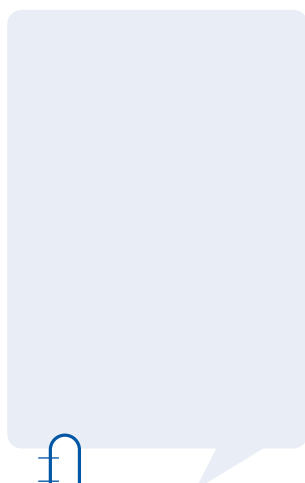


STRESS-O-METER

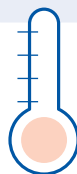
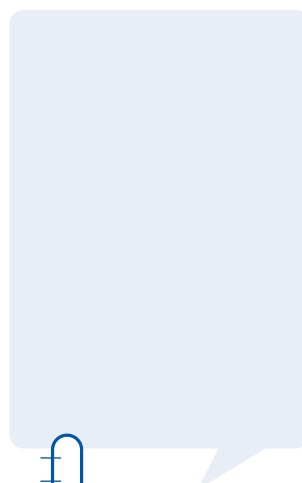
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YOUR LOCKDOWN STORY

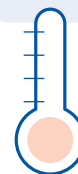
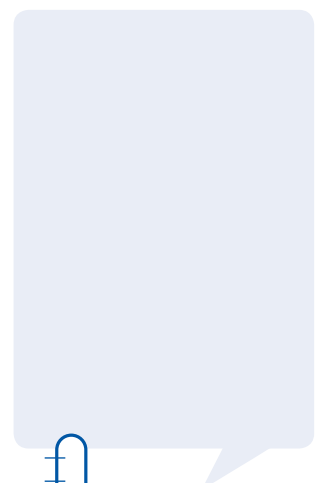
Create your own lockdown story. Looking back, what were the greatest moments of stress or the most significant events? What was your stress level at the time?



STRESS-O-METER



STRESS-O-METER



STRESS-O-METER

Activity 3

How do I show I'm stressed or anxious?

This activity is designed to take a minimum of **7 minutes**, but up to **15 minutes** if there is time available and depending on how much discussion is generated. Each student will need a copy of the activity sheet and a pen or pencil to write in their answers.

The aim of the activity is for students to:

- identify and become self-aware of ways that they show they are stressed
- consider what actions from others helps them manage or lower their stress

Introduce the activity. The main idea behind an iceberg as metaphor is that the greater part of the iceberg is hidden under the water so the part that you see is much smaller than the part that you don't see. If applied to a situation where someone is anxious or stressed, the idea would be that the behaviour you see is only a small part of what is going on – others may not even know you are stressed and only see your behaviour.

The three sections of this activity are designed to be completed individually, but it is also possible for students to discuss their answers in pairs after each section, or at the end.

The first section is marked '1' in the middle of the sheet. It asks students to consider up to four things that have made them stressed or anxious during the last few months. You may want to

make some suggestions if students need some additional help. Possible examples collected from other students during the development of this resource include: missing school work or exams, worries about the impact of the virus on family members and friends, family finances, not being able to go out, being in close confinement with siblings, a resurgence of coronavirus cases, another lockdown or returning to school.

The second section asks students to consider how they show they are stressed or anxious – in other words, what would others see. Again, you may want to make some suggestions like: becoming withdrawn, wanting to be alone, irritable, tearful, short tempered or needing to talk.

For some students, thinking about how they display anxiety will be a challenging exercise, as they may not be used to thinking about it in such a direct way. The purpose of the activity is not to make a definitive list, but simply to start the process of self-reflection and awareness.

The third and final section is an opportunity for student to think about what they think helps them the most when they are stressed or anxious. Some students may say 'leaving me alone' or 'finding something to distract me' or 'sitting down and talking about it'. Again the purpose of the activity is to begin to think about this important subject rather than come up with a conclusive answer.

Activity 3

HOW DO I SHOW I'M STRESSED?

Write in the **bottom section** of the iceberg, some of the different feelings you've had through the coronavirus pandemic. Write in the **top section** of the iceberg, what others would see?

2 What others see when I'm stressed.

Write in the boxes some of the way people would know you were stressed. Think about things like how it might change your mood, how you respond to others at school or at home, whether you are louder or quieter...

1

2

3

4

5

1 What's made me stressed?

Make a quick list of some of the things that have been stressful during the last few months:

1

2

3

4

3 How would you want others to treat you when you're stressed? What helps you?

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Activity 7

Safe places to talk about emotions.

This activity is designed to take a minimum of **7 minutes**, but up to **15 minutes** if there is time available and depending on how much discussion is generated. Each student will need a copy of the activity sheet and a pen or pencil to write in their answers.

The aim of the activity is for students to:

- identify the appropriate characteristics of someone who is trustworthy and safe to talk to.
- identify on the most and least important characteristics for each student
- reflect on who might be an appropriate person for each student

Introduce the activity by looking together at the activity sheet. This activity is about finding someone who you can talk to about how you are feeling, especially where it's related to the impact of the coronavirus pandemic. Note the important point made at the top of the activity sheet – you should always talk to someone you trust and feel safe with. It may help to run through the list of characteristics and check that students understand each of them.

Ask students to work individually to decide which of the three categories they would put each of the characteristics. They should write them in one of the three sections: 'essential', 'helpful' or 'don't mind or don't want'. In doing so they are beginning to explore what is important to them. For example, some may only want to talk to a family member, other may decide that they would only want to talk to someone who is not a family member.

When they have completed this first part of the activity, you may want to ask students or share their answers in pairs or have a class discussion asking students to share their answers if they wish to do so.

The second part of the activity asks students to think about what are the most essential characteristics on their list? Ask students to choose their top three from the 'essential' list and underline them. Again they discuss in pairs, or as a whole class, why they have made those choices.

The part of the activity is to ask students to think about whether they know someone who fits the description of their essential characteristics. Encourage them to consider the possibility of talking to that person about their feelings and experiences related to the pandemic.

Activity 7

SAFE PLACES TO TALK ABOUT EMOTIONS

Talking about how you're feeling is an important way to improve your mental health. But it should be someone you trust and feel safe with. Talking with someone may mean they can give you new ideas about how to cope, or help you change things in your life that worry you. Once you tell someone, they can be there for you in the future too.

But what makes someone trustworthy and safe to talk to – especially about the stresses created by the coronavirus pandemic? Take a look at the list of the characteristics people might have that are listed below. Decide and **TICK** whether it's something that is **ESSENTIAL**, something that is **HELPFUL** or something that you **DON'T MIND OR DON'T WANT**.

Someone...

Essential

Helpful

Don't mind or don't want

who is a good listener

who has had a similar experience to you

professionally qualified to help

who respects your privacy

with plenty of time to talk to you

you have spoken to before and can trust

the same age as you

who is older than you

who is a member of family

who is not a member of your family

who shares your faith or religious beliefs

who won't gossip about what you say

who is relaxed and laid back

who isn't easily shocked

who is not judgemental

who will be honest with you

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<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
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What are the most essential characteristics on your list? Choose your top three from the **ESSENTIAL** list. Why have you chosen these ones?

Activity 9

What helps and what doesn't?

This activity is designed to take a minimum of **7 minutes**, but up to **15 minutes** if there is time available and depending on how much discussion is generated. Each student will need a copy of the activity sheet and a pen or pencil to write in their answers.

The aim of the activity is for students to:

- **identify positive and negative habits and activities related to their mental wellbeing**

Start by explaining that our mental wellbeing is linked to our physical health, our habits and how we spend our time. This activity is designed to help students think about the different activities that positively or negatively contribute to their mental wellbeing.

Look together at the activity sheet. Notice that there are three people who each make two statements about their mental wellbeing. These are examples to get students thinking about their own experiences. Do they agree with the statements? Do any of the statements apply to them?

The next stage of the activity is for students to write in some statements about themselves.

There is space for two positive and two negative statements. You may want to ask students to work individually to complete this task or to work in pairs and discuss it with someone sitting next to them.

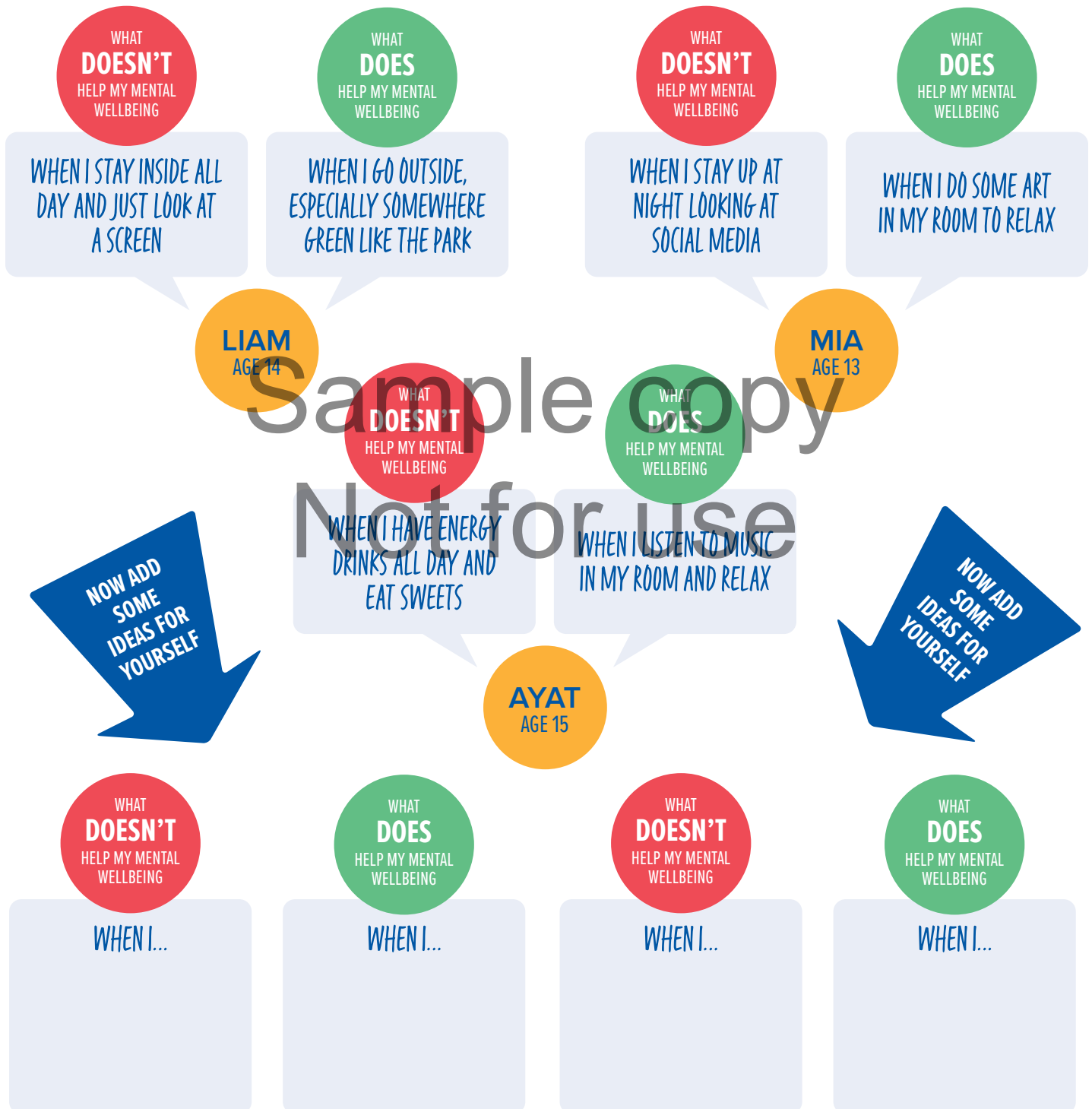
When they have completed this part of the activity, draw the class together and ask students to volunteer to share their statements and explain why they have chosen them.

Finally, if there is time available, ask students to discuss in pairs how they would answer the questions “what one thing should I do more of to help my mental wellbeing?” and “what one thing should I do less of to help my mental wellbeing?”

Activity 9

WHAT HELPS AND WHAT DOESN'T?

Our mental wellbeing is linked to our physical health, our habits and how we spend our time. If you make good decisions about these, it will help you have good mental wellbeing. Poor decisions can decrease your mental wellbeing. Take a look at the advice from three local students.



1. What one thing should I do more of to help my mental wellbeing?

2. What one thing should I do less of to help my mental wellbeing?

Activity 10

Taylor's story

This activity is designed to take a minimum of **7 minutes**, but up to **15 minutes** if there is time available and depending on how much discussion is generated. Each student will need a copy of the activity sheet and a pen or pencil to write in their answers.

The aim of the activity is for students to:

- **consider what helps people improve their mental wellbeing**

Start the activity by looking together at the activity sheet. Notice that Taylor's story of a typical day is laid out for them to read. Students must follow the story and make four suggestions to Taylor that could help improve his mental wellbeing. Each suggestion should be written in one of the boxes.

Helpful answers might include Taylor getting a better night's sleep and putting his phone away, eating healthily, or spending more time with others and less on his own playing the computer.

This activity could be carried out by students individually or working in pairs. It is also possible to make it a shared class discussion. If students complete the task individually, allow some time to share answers with the class and discuss them together. It may be helpful to acknowledge that students are all different and that some activities will be helpful to some and not helpful to others. But there are also common principles, like eating healthily and getting enough sleep.

Finally students must turn their focus on themselves. Instead of giving advice to Taylor, they must now imagine someone who knows them well is giving them advice about how to improve their mental wellbeing. What suggestions might they have? This could be shared together in pairs or again as a class discussion.

Activity 10

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF TAYLOR

Taylor wakes up and realises he is late for school. He spends some time checking social media sites before getting ready and leaving. He doesn't have time for breakfast so he buys some crisps at the shop on his way.

He doesn't understand everything the teacher says in maths, but he keeps quiet because he doesn't want anyone to know. He feels embarrassed about putting his hand up and asking questions.

He spends lunchtime talking with his friends but he doesn't have lunch because he can't be bothered to wait in the queue. Instead he buys some sweets from the shop near the school. At the end of school, his friends invite him to the park to play football, but he has a new game and decides to go home and play that instead. He goes up to his bedroom and spends the next four hours playing it.

He keeps his phone on with him at night because he doesn't want to miss any posts on social media and ends up staying up late looking at them.

Although Taylor doesn't talk about it with anyone, he often feels like he can't cope and stressed out. Sometimes he feels like 'something is missing'.

Read about Taylor. Imagine you're asked to help Taylor think how to feel more positive and less stressed out?

1. Can you make **FOUR** suggestions to Taylor that could help improve his mental wellbeing?



2. If someone was advising you about how to improve your mental wellbeing, what suggestions might they have?

