

Discussion Questions: Mental Health and Wellness

Use the questions to guide in-class discussion, or post them to the Collaboration Corner.

Unit 1: Upgrade Yourself

Anger Management

Defining Anger Management

1. In what ways can you take a step back and see the bigger picture when you're feeling angry? What would managing your anger look like in your life?
2. Sometimes our anger feels like it is all-consuming. In what ways could you manage your anger so that it doesn't define you?
3. What does it mean to manage anger? Why do you think anger is something that needs managing at all?

Angry Outcomes

1. Think about a time that you were angry and hurt someone, even if they were wrong. What would happen if you apologized to the person for being angry and chose to forgive them?
2. How do you think being calm instead of angry can change a situation? Do you think the outcome is different if you manage your anger differently? How?
3. Why do you think it is important to control your anger?

Types of Anger

1. What are some ways that you can express your feelings of anger?
2. Is there someone that you are angry at or something you are angry about that you are holding onto? How can you make that better?
3. What does anger look like for you? Do you find that you internalize your anger, or do you display it more outwardly?

Handling Anger

1. What are some strategies you can think of to work through your anger in a way that is meaningful to you?
2. Do you have someone, particularly an adult, in your life you talk to about your emotions? If so, who? If not, what teacher or other adult can you identify that you could connect with?
3. Why do you think it's important to have someone to talk to about your emotions? How would it help you if you could talk openly about how you feel?

Overcoming Anger

1. How is anger a barrier to success in your education?
2. What are five things that have made you angry? What is it about these things that make you angry? How can you address these issues in a healthy way?
3. How is anger a barrier to success in your personal life?

Communication Skills

Connecting with Your Parents

1. How can you connect with your parents or guardians for a couple of minutes each day? What would that look like to get to know who they were when they were your age?
2. How do you think you are you similar to your parents? Imagine your parents at your age, doing similar things and trying to figure out life. How does that mental exercise change how you look at them?
3. How do you feel about your relationship with your parents or guardians? Do you connect well with them? Why or why not?

Communicating with Your Teachers

1. What advantages are there to connecting with a teacher that are unique compared to your relationships with other adults in your life?

2. Who is a teacher in your life you would like to connect with? How can you get to know him or her better? What are some questions you would like to ask him or her?
3. Why do you think teachers are a good resource?

Relating with Other Adults

1. Who are some adults you'd like to connect with better? What are ways you can build a relationship with them over time?
2. Why do you think building relationships with adults other than your parents and teachers is important?
3. How can you improve your communication with other adults?

Communication with Your Friends

1. Think about a relationship or two that you want to continue and grow. How can you show that intentionality with your words and actions? How can you be a good friend to them?
2. How can you foster a friendship that is meaningful? How can you show you care with your body language? How can you show you care with your words?
3. Have you ever met anyone you just "clicked with"? Why do you think that is? Did you continue that relationship?

Your Internal Dialogue

1. How can you upgrade your internal dialogue to reflect who you are and who you want to be in a more positive way?
2. What are five positive things about yourself that you can remind yourself of when your internal dialogue is sounding negative?
3. What is your internal dialogue like? Is it more positive or negative?

Thoughts and Acceptance

Changing Our Thought Patterns

1. How can you shift your thought patterns from negative to neutral? How might you use neutral thought patterns to have perspective on situations in your life?
2. What are some thought patterns you've noticed in your life? What kinds of situations trigger those thought patterns?
3. What does it mean to have a thought pattern? What kinds of thought patterns do you think are positive, negative, or neutral?

Overcoming Sad Feelings

1. How can you stop and examine your feelings in the moment so you can deal with them in a healthy way?
2. When you feel sad or upset, do you tend to let yourself feel it, or do you try to avoid it or "stuff it down"? Why do you think it's hard to allow yourself to feel sad or angry sometimes?
3. Do you think it is important to examine your feelings? Why would it be helpful to allow yourself to feel sad?

Motivated by Positive Feelings

1. Do you celebrate when you get a "win"? Why is acknowledging your improvement or successes important?
2. How does experiencing setbacks impact your process? How can you learn from setbacks to improve your process?
3. What is your personal process for getting a positive outcome for something you want? Why is the process as important as the outcome?

The Feeling of Hopelessness

1. How does choosing to focus on things outside of yourself help give perspective when you feel hopeless?
2. Is there someone you can be honest with if you feel hopeless? Why is important to talk to people who are positive when you feel down?

3. Why is hope important? Have you ever felt hopeless about something?

How Choices Affect Our Thinking

1. What can you do to stop and make a conscious choice rather than reacting to a situation?
2. How are your choices a reflection of your thinking? How can you change the way you think to affect your choices?
3. What is the difference between acting and reacting to a situation? When is it necessary to react quickly versus stopping to think through a situation?

Know Yourself, Love Yourself

Self-Worth

1. What kinds of things can you do to remember who you are when others try to bring you down?
2. How do other people's opinions of you affect who you think you are? Have you ever been told who you are by others that didn't line up with who you know you are or who you want to be?
3. In what ways does your environment have a positive and negative impact on your self-worth?

Self-Esteem in Tough Situations

1. Are there labels that others have given you because of things you've said or done? What things can you do to remember who you are and live above the labels?
2. Is there something you've said or done that eats away at you? How can forgiving yourself help you move on so that you make a better decision the next time?
3. It is important to forgive yourself when you've made a bad decision? Why?

Limits and Abilities

1. How does identifying your limits and abilities help you make decisions?
2. What are some of your abilities and strengths? What are some of your limitations?
3. Why is it important to know your abilities and strengths? Why is it important to know your limitations?

Loved, Valued, and Accepted

1. Why is it important to see how valuable you are? How does knowing your worth affect your decisions?
2. How can you choose to love yourself, even if you don't feel loved in the moment?
3. How do other people's opinions of you affect how you feel about yourself? Do you think you feel valued and accepted?

Positive Reinforcement

1. In what ways do the people you hang out with affect your self-image?
2. "You are the company you keep." In other words, you end up being like the people with whom you surround yourself. Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?
3. Who is someone positive in your life that you can reach out to when you feel down?

Unit 2: Transform Bullying

Understanding Bullying

Bullying: Hurt People... Hurt People

1. What does “hurt people, hurt people” mean? Have you ever hurt someone because you were hurt?
2. Why is it important to recognize that someone who bullies is hurting?
3. Why do people bully? In what ways does bullying create more bullying?

Trauma and Insecurity

1. How does bullying affect a person's relationships and their willingness to connect with others?
2. How does being bullied cause insecurity in a person's life? How does feeling insecure stunt your ability to grow?
3. How does insecurity play into bullying? Do you think that someone who bullies feels insecure? Why or why not?

Bullying and Being Different

1. Do you think being proud of who you are and how you are different has an impact on others? In what ways?
2. In what ways do you see yourself as different? What are some of the positive things about being different? How can you embrace the things that make you different?
3. How does being different play a role in bullying? Why do you think someone who bullies might pick on someone who is different?

Bullying: A Tragedy on Both Sides

1. Does knowing that most people who bully have been bullied themselves change how you view bullying? If so, how?
2. How does trauma play into bullying? Do you think that someone who bullies has experienced some trauma of his or her own? Why or why not?
3. How might someone who bullies also be a victim?

Solutions to Bullying

1. Why is it important to handle bullying with the help of others and not just on your own?
2. When you see bullying happen, what do you do? What do you observe other students doing?
3. Is bullying a problem in your school? How does that play out?

Effects of Bullying

Bullying: Dehumanizing the Victim

1. How does looking at the world through other people's eyes affect how you perceive others?
2. In what ways does someone bullying treat a person like an object rather than a human?
3. Why do you think that we generally like what we know? How would being open to trying a different perspective help you know more?

Bullying: Effects on the Bullied

1. How does connecting with others help you feel safer and take more risks?
2. How does being with others and connecting with people keep us emotionally safer than disengaging?
3. What impact does bullying have on a victim?

Bullying: Effects on the Bully

1. How does bullying steal from others? How can you be a more powerful version of yourself by being a giver and not a taker?
2. How does bullying others keep you from being the best version of yourself?
3. Why do you think bullying rarely stops with just a few instances?

Bullying: Effects on the Bystanders

1. How do you think diffusing one bullying situation at your school may impact others' ability to do the same? What is the long-term effect of diffusing bullying?
2. How does escalating a situation let bullying continue rather than stopping it? How does being confident and agreeable disarm bullying?
3. What impact does bullying have on people watching it happen? Have you ever been afraid to interfere with bullying because you were afraid you would become a target also?

Bullying: Effects on Culture

1. How can you help shift your culture to value others and diffuse bullying?
2. What is your culture like at your school? Is it more positive or negative?
3. What impact does bullying have on our culture?

Being a ChampionDiffuse the Situation

1. Who is someone in your life that is stronger emotionally than you or the person bullying that you can reach out to?
2. What are some strategies you can come up with that would help you be still and act from a position of strength rather than anger?
3. Why is being calm in a bullying situation important? How can you be calm when bullying is happening?

Knowing Your Worth and Everyone Else's

1. What does self-worth have to do with bullying?
2. How does remembering that every person deserves love and support affect how you view someone who is bullying? How does it affect how you view the person being bullied?
3. You are worthy of love and support to grow and be successful. How do you react to this statement? Does how you feel about your worth affect how you view bullying?

What's at Stake

1. How does one bullying situation impact an entire culture? How does diffusing a bullying situation impact an entire culture?
2. Does knowing the impact of bullying change how you want to react to a bullying situation? How?
3. How does bullying effect a person's entire life and their future?

Being Observant

1. How does being observant affect how you handle your relationships and how you react to bullying?
2. How does discussing bullying make you more aware of bullying around you?
3. What bullying do you observe at school, online, at home, and in other places in your life?

Creating Real Change

1. In what ways can you help bring change to your school, family or friends' lives?
2. What are ways that you can purposely be an advocate for others?
3. What do you think it means to be a champion of others?

Overcoming Bullying: Real StoriesTricks & Tips to Overcome

1. How does your confidence reduce the power of the person bullying you?
2. How can you be more emotionally strong in the face of bullying?
3. What does it mean to be resilient?

Standing Up the Right Way

1. How can you choose not to play the emotional game of bullying?
2. In what ways can you diffuse a bullying situation with your words?

3. In what ways can your physical posture and body language escalate or diffuse a bullying situation?

Forgiveness

1. How does forgiving someone who has bullied you diffuse the bullying?
2. How does forgiving someone who has bullied you enable you to move on?
3. Is forgiving someone who has bullied you important to you? Why or why not?

Techniques to Overcome Bullying

1. Who are some mentors or people you see as potential mentors who you can connect with to further develop yourself?
2. What are ways that you can develop yourself in areas that you are not as strong?
3. Have you ever bullied someone else? Can you think back to that time and identify why you were bullying? What were your driving motivations and feelings?

Finding Your Tribe

1. How do you think knowing who you are would affect how you handle bullying? How would knowing you have a group of people who believe in you affect how you handle bullying?
2. What characteristics are you looking for in a group of people that you can relate to and find strength in?
3. Why is it important to find a "tribe"? How does having good friends give emotional strength to each individual?
Is it important to you to find a "tribe"? Why or why not? How does having good friends give emotional strength to each individual?

Unit 3: Social Impact

Citizenship

Defining Citizenship

1. What are some examples of putting others first?
2. What are some ideas for improving our American culture by being a good citizen and neighbor?
3. What does it mean to be a citizen? How can you be a good citizen?

The Power of Your Vote

1. How will you do your research to determine your personal views and how you will vote, independent of the views of those around you?
2. Why is it important to be informed and stay up-to-date on our voting process and political practices before you are even old enough to vote?
3. Why is voting important?

Your Country

1. What would happen if your generation didn't get involved in politics?
2. Why is it important to defend the United States and the Constitution?
3. What do you like best about the United States? What positive aspects of living here most affect your life?

Reasons for the Law

1. What are some consequences for breaking the law? How does breaking the law affect you long-term?
2. What are some ways in which laws affect you personally?
3. Why are laws in place?

Being a Part of Your Community

1. What types of volunteer activities interest you? Who can you partner with to accomplish these goals?
2. In what ways is giving back to others also rewarding for yourself?
3. What do the words "giving back" mean to you? What do you think it means to "give back" to your community?

Diversity

Defining Diversity

1. How can you keep an open mind and appreciate the uniqueness of others?
2. Why is embracing diversity important?
3. What is diversity like in your classes? Do you think that you and your classmates embrace diversity well? Why or why not?

Why We Need Diversity

1. Are there ways that you try to blend in or hide who you are because of differences with others?
2. How do you think fear plays into diversity?
3. How does diversity increase value in your environment?

Embracing Diversity

1. Who are some people that are different from you that you can take time to listen to? How do you think that would change your perspective?
2. How do you think being authentic changes how people perceive each other? How can authenticity change the way you and your classmates embrace diversity?
3. Why is listening important in embracing diversity?

Broadening Our Perspective

1. Trying food from other cultures is one way to become more familiarized with different lifestyles and civilizations. What foods have you tried from cultures different than your own?

2. How can you be more adventurous in trying new cultural experiences to gain a new perspective?
3. Why do you think food is an important part of some cultures? What does that look like in your own life?

Diversity and My Life

1. How can you be more aware of different perspectives and have appreciation for them while being your authentic self?
2. How does the way you filter the world impact how you perceive others that are different from you?
3. Why do you think it is important to set aside your personal biases when thinking about and interacting with others? Would you want others to view you as unbiased? What are some examples of biases you've had about others in the past?

Peace Officers

Who Are Peace Officers?

1. What are some ways that you can be respectful and courteous towards law enforcement?
2. What are ways that you can keep yourself and others safe during an interaction with a peace officer?
3. Why is it so important to “say something when you see something”?

Staying Safe in an Interaction

1. How can you show common courtesy to a peace officer?
2. Why do you think it is important to cooperate during an interaction with a peace officer?
3. Why is it important for a peace officer to be able to see your hands during an interaction?

Peace Officer Interactions

1. What does truancy mean?
2. Do your actions today affect your future tomorrow? How?
3. Do you feel that you have a good support system? Why is having one important for your future?

Best Practices When Questioned

1. Do you have to understand or agree with a peace officer in order to comply?
2. What are some ways that you can keep your energy calm during a peace officer interaction?
3. What should you do if you are questioned or even detained by a peace officer?

Protecting All Rights

1. What is an appropriate way of letting authorities know that you feel your rights have been violated?
2. Why is it important to be courteous and maintain safe practices while interacting with a peace officer?
3. Why is it important to know and protect your individual rights? What would you do if an officer were to violate them?

Fighting for Justice

Defining Social Justice

1. What are ways that you can bring about social justice for others?
2. What is social justice?
3. Why is social justice important and what are a few areas of social justice that you are or could be passionate about?

Your Rights as a Minor

1. What is the best course of action to take if your rights are violated?
2. What are your rights as a minor?
3. What can you do to help a friend whose rights are being violated?

Discrimination

1. How can you speak up and speak out towards injustice and discrimination?

2. Have you ever been a victim of discrimination? Explain the situation and how you reacted?
3. What is discrimination, and why is it harmful?

Racism

1. What is racism and have you ever suffered from racism? Can you share your experience?
2. How can you fight for justice in regards to racism? How can you help others who have suffered from racism?
3. What does reconciliation mean to you? Is there someone in your life that you can make whole again through reconciliation?

Environmental Justice

1. What are ways that you can be an advocate for our environment?
2. How does one person's decision to reuse or recycle affect the impact of pollution throughout the rest of the world?
3. How do the environmental decisions we make today impact future generations?

Unit 4: Overcoming Adversity

It's Not Your Fault

Divorce & Separation

1. How can you connect with your parents/guardians even when it might be difficult logistically because of a divorce?
2. How can you let divorce make you better instead of bitter? What decisions will you make in your life having experienced or watched someone experience divorce?
3. Are your parents separated or divorced, or do you have a friend who has experienced divorce? How has it affected your life or your friend's life?

Abuse

1. Is physical abuse of any form or level ever acceptable?
2. Think about a process for getting help for you or someone else. Who can you talk to that you trust to get help if physical abuse is occurring? How can you help it stop?
3. Have you ever experienced physical abuse or witnessed physical abuse? What did you do about it? If it is still going on, what can you do about it?

Emotional Abuse

1. How can you make sure to not make others feel emotionally abused by you?
2. What should you do if someone has emotionally abused you or someone you know?
3. Have you ever experienced emotional abuse or witnessed emotional abuse? What did you do about it? If it is still going on, what can you do about it?

Physical and Emotional Neglect

1. If someone physically or emotionally neglects you, whom can you go to for help?
2. What are ways you can get help if you or a friend are experiencing emotional or physical neglect?
3. Have you ever experienced emotional or physical neglect or witnessed emotional or physical neglect? What did you do about it? If it is still going on, what can you do about it?

Sexual Abuse

1. How can speaking up against sexual harassment or abuse help you or someone who has been a victim of abuse?
2. Who can you go to for help for you or anyone you know who may have been sexually harassed or abuse?
3. Have you ever experienced sexual abuse or witnessed sexual abuse? What did you do about it? If it is still going on, what can you do about it?

Family Challenges

Death of a Loved One

1. How can you be there for someone who is experiencing loss?
2. Do you think there is a right way to grieve? Why or why not?
3. Have you lost anyone in your life? How have you grieved this person?

Incarceration

1. Has a friend or relative of yours ever been incarcerated? How did you feel about that?
2. How might you be a good friend to someone whose loved one is incarcerated?
3. Do you think there is a stigma around having an incarcerated relative? Why or why not?

Suicide

1. How can you allow yourself to go through the different stages of grief when you lose someone?
2. How can you let others in while you're going through the loss of someone through suicide?
3. Has anyone in your life ever committed suicide or talked about committing suicide? What can you do to help them or process through the emotions you feel?
4. Do you think that suicide is connected to a loss of hope? Why or why not?

Depression & Anxiety

1. What can you do if you notice a friend or someone close to you is depressed or anxious? How can you help?
2. What is your definition of depression and how can you redirect yourself if you are feeling this way?
3. Have you or anyone in your life ever struggled with a mental illness of any kind? How has that impacted you and the people around you?

Substance Abuse

1. Has anyone in your family ever struggled with substance abuse? If so, what has that been like for you?
2. What are some of the challenges faced by families who struggle with substance abuse?
3. How can you get help for yourself or a loved one struggling with substance abuse?

ResiliencyDefining Resiliency

1. In what ways can you bounce back from setbacks?
2. How can you be a good friend to someone who has experienced a setback in life?
3. Have you ever had a big setback in life? What did you do after?

Elasticity

1. Why do you think being elastic, or flexible, is important for handling stress? How can you be more elastic in stressful situations so that they don't break you?
2. Who do you have for a trusted "dream team" or who do you want to be on your "dream team" who challenges you to be a better version of yourself? If you don't have one, whom can you seek out to develop a mentoring relationship with?
3. How can you respond to stress instead of reacting to it?

The End Isn't the End

1. What would choosing to learn from difficult situations look like in your life?
2. Looking back on your experiences, what difficult situations have actually made you stronger because you chose to learn from them?
3. How can you see a future for yourself when you encounter difficulties?

Coping Skills

1. How will you intentionally tackle problems in the future?
2. How do you envision tackling problems? Do you like to write things down, use a white board, talk to a friend, etc.?
3. How do you de-stress? If you don't have a way you de-stress, how will you decide to help yourself cope in stress?

Creating Your Team

1. What does it mean to be intentional with your relationships? How can you be more intentional with your relationships?
2. What are some of your strengths? What are some of your weaknesses?
3. Based on your strengths and weaknesses, what kind of team would you build that enhances each other?

Mental WellnessAnxiety

1. What can you do when you feel anxious to help calm you down?
2. What causes anxiety? What is the opposite of anxiety?
3. What is anxiety? What does it feel like?

Depression

1. What are some ways you can help yourself and get help if you feel depressed? How can you help a friend who is struggling with depression?
2. If you or someone you know struggles with depression, who can you talk to about it?
3. Have you ever felt depressed? What was that like?

Mindfulness

1. How can you use principles of meditation to be more mindful?
2. What would being more mindful look like in your life? In which area(s) of your life should you be more mindful?
3. Do you take time to be mindful? If you feel you don't have a lot of time, how might you take just a few moments at a time to calm yourself and be present?

Learning How to Say "No"

1. Have you ever made up in your mind "who you are" and "who you are not"? How can this help you to say "no" to hurtful things and "yes" to helpful things?
2. What are things you should say "no" to in your life and why should you say "no"?
3. Have you ever had to stand up and say "no," and how did it protect you?

Being Present

1. How can you choose to "be here now" and be present?
2. How do you think the idea of multitasking has affected our culture's view of being present? Which do you think is better: multitasking or being present with one thing at a time? Why?
3. In what ways have you chosen to be present in the moment? In what ways have you not been present at times with others?