**Lesson 1: The right to the best possible mental health**

**Lesson objectives:**

* **To find out about the UN convention on the rights of the child and how this relates to well-being.**
* **To think about how ‘identity’ relates to well-being.**
* **To discuss the root causes of low levels of well-being and high levels of anxiety and depression among young people.**

**Resources required:**

* **Flip chart paper and pens.**
* **Computer/internet.**
* **Handout 1 – A simplified version of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).**

**Introduction (10 minutes)**

You may wish to start by asking the group to draw up some **ground rules**. The four lessons in this series involve a lot of group discussion and you will need to create a ‘safe space’ where people feel comfortable sharing their views even about some things that can be quite personal to them.

Ask the group what they think the term **‘well-being’** means?

Explain that well-being is a measure of how happy people feel with themselves and their lives in general. Rather than the short term ‘happiness’ you might feel when receiving a present or doing something fun, it is about a longer term more general feeling of contentment. For the last 10 years, [The Children’s Society](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/) has been conducting research to find out the levels of well-being amongst young people. In 2018, the research included 65,000 young people who were asked how happy they feel with different aspects of their lives – for example, family and friends, schoolwork and appearance. The results are outlined in the [Good Childhood Report](https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/good-childhood-report-2018-youth-summary.pdf) 2018. The good news is that 9 out of 10 young people feel happy with their lives overall, but the bad news is that that means 1 in 10 young people feel unhappy with their lives. The overall level of well-being amongst young people is also at its lowest level since 2010 – this is leading to an increasing number of young people who are struggling with low mood, depression and anxiety.

Explain to the group that this is the challenge they are going to be addressing over the next four lessons.

**Slide 1 and 2:**

In 1989 all the countries in the United Nations agreed on the fundamental things that all children and young people should have in order to survive and develop to their full potential. Explain that for the next four lessons you will be focussing on four of the resulting 54 Rights contained in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and using these rights to help us think about the growing problem of low levels of well-being and poor mental health facing many young people today.

**Find the rights (5 mins)**

**Slides 3 – 7**

**Handout 1: The Convention on the Rights of the Child – Summary version**

*Show the pictures on Slides 3 – 7.*

Whilst viewing each slide, ask the students in small groups to refer to the Convention and see if they can see which right the picture is referring to. Reveal the answer after each picture. Refer back to **The Right to Health** and explain that health means physical health but also mental health – which includes well-being, anxiety and depression – and that is what you are going to focus on today.

**The problem/solution tree (5 mins)**

**Slide 8**

Show the template tree and ask the students in small groups to create their own tree diagram on a large piece of flip chart paper.

Explain that the trunk of the tree indicates the problem that you are going to discuss – in this case the problem is low levels of well-being.

**The right to identity and the pressure to ‘fit in’ (10 mins)**

**Slide 9**

The CRC states that all children and young people have a right to an identity and, at a basic level, this means that we all have a right to a name and a nationality. But ‘identity’ is much more complicated than that – it is what makes you, you! It might be about how you look, but it’s also what you like doing, where you come from, your religion/culture, your family background etc. Growing numbers of young people feel unhappy with their identity and, according to the Good Childhood Report, this is one of the ‘root causes’ which can explain low levels of well-being among some young people.

**Pressure to ‘be’ a certain way**

The Good Childhood Report indicates that many young people feel pressure to look a certain way, the report indicated that both boys and girls feel there is pressure to be ‘good looking’.

Show this short film: Light in your Eyes

<https://vimeo.com/282840220>

Ask the students for some feedback:

Do you recognise this?

Do you sometimes feel a pressure to ‘be’ or ‘look’ a certain way?

Where does this pressure come from?

Are pressures different for different genders?

On the problem/solution tree, ask the groups to write ‘identity’ on the roots of the tree. Explain that next lesson, all of the students will be given a chance to think of their own identity and how they can feel positive about it.

**What other root causes can you think of? (20 mins)**

Thinking again about the problem with some young people’s mental health and well-being, ask the students to form groups and spend 5 or 10 minutes thinking about any other causes of the problem they can think of, and indicate these on the roots of their problem tree.

Ask each group to feedback their ideas and add to their trees as they hear other people’s ideas. Once they have done this, add in some other points from the Good Childhood Report. Then go through the animation on Slide 10 (the tree with root causes):

1. Comments and jokes about appearance are toxic for body image (particularly for girls), yet these are non-stop at school for a quarter of children.
2. Almost 2 in 5 teenagers are afraid of suffering two or more types of crime.
3. More than a third of teenagers are in families struggling to pay the bills.
4. Lack of emotional support from family is less common, but has a powerful negative effect.
5. One million teenagers are facing **seven or more** serious problems such as those mentioned previously. These young people are **10 times** more likely to be unhappy than those with none.
6. The Government has made major cuts to funding since 2010, leaving crucial local services unable to give young people help early, before their problems get worse or reach crisis point.

Make sure each group has all the main points indicated on the roots of their tree. Collect the trees together and keep them for the next lesson.

Explain that in the following lessons, you will be looking in more detail at identity and that they will be thinking about solutions to the problem of poor mental health and well-being, and developing a campaign to address it.