# Lesson 1 – Introduction to mental health, well-being and resilience:

## Lesson Aim:

To introduce students to what mental health, well-being and resilience mean and to begin to explore how these concepts interact with their daily lives.

## Slide One

**Say:** Introduce self and project. E.g. Hi, I’m X from Cambridge United Community Trust, CUCT is the charitable arm of CUFC - we go into a variety of different schools and deliver a range of projects. The project we will be speaking to you about for the next 6 weeks, is our Mind your Head programme. We will firstly introduce mental health, well-being and resilience, we will then learn to spot some signs of poor mental health, and go onto look at social media and the impact of stress in later lessons.

**Say:** If you would like to ask a question at any point, during these lessons, please put your hand up and I will be happy to answer.

**Say:** Keep yourself safe – think carefully about what you share.

Today we are talking about mental health and as one in four people experience mental health difficulties each year, it is likely you know someone who is or has done so.

For this reason, please think carefully about what you may want to share and whether this is the right space to do so.

*2 minutes*

## Slide Two - SURVEYS

Before we start, we want to understand where you all are at with your understanding of mental health. It is anonymous so no need to write your name and we won’t make any judgements based on this but it just helps us monitor and evaluate the programme. Please complete the surveys in silence, there are no right or wrong answers and if you have any questions please raise your hand.

*8 minutes*

## Slide Three

Everyone has mental health just like physical health, myself, your teachers, families and friends.

Mental health is different to being mentally unwell, so be clear that mental illness is an illness that affects the way people think, feel, behave and interact. Make it clear that mental health is generally not a disability but it can be, not at all necessarily linked. Everyone is on a physical and mental health continuum, which changes every day, moment to moment.

*1 minute*

## Slide Four

**Activity:** Decide with your neighbour which definitions belong to which heading?

**Activity Response:** Were you right?

*2 minutes*

## Slide Five

**Ask:** What do we mean by “mental health”? Answer was from 3rd slide.

**Answer – “a person’s condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being”**

**Activity:** Hand out flip chart paper and pens. Put students into small groups and ask them to put the words ‘mental health’ Into the middle of a mind-map. What do we know about mental health? Ask them to write ideas about what mental health is and what it means to them. *(5 minutes)*

* Some help might be: ‘what does public opinion say about mental health’…

(Keep the flip chart notes for lesson 6 to compare with their posters at the end of the lesson.)

*5 minutes*

## Slide Six

**Ask:** Are there any similarities with physical health?

**Ask:** Does one influence the other?

Make sure reinforced that physical health can help with mental health. Make sure it is understood that you can train your mental health.

*2 minutes*

## Slide Seven

Mental Health Continuum: At any one moment in time we are somewhere on the continuum from positive mental health at one end, to mental ill-health at the other. Most people will sit somewhere in the middle in the yellow area - but we can go up and down depending on life events and how we deal with certain things. Like our physical health can be impacted from time to time, through illness or injury – our mental health is the same, it can go up and down too.

*2 minutes*

## Slide Eight

Neuroplasticity: Explain that Neuro simply means the mind, and plasticity implies that it isn’t fixed. Give the example of an overgrown field, if you walk through the field once and leave the field the grass will go back to exactly how it was before. If you walk through the field on the same path 1000 times you will start to see tracks. This is what happens within our minds when we learn new things. Our brains do change, depending on what we do.

*3 minutes*

## Slide Nine

**Ask:** which of these famous people have experienced mental health challenges?

*1 minute*

## Slide Ten

**Say:** Have a read of the board; briefly explain a couple of the personal stories from the screen.

*2 minutes*

## Slide Eleven

**Ask:** for definition of wellbeing from 3rd slide

**Answer - “the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy”**

**Explain:** Mental wellbeing describes your mental state - how you are feeling and how well you can cope with day-to-day life.

It can change from moment to moment, day to day, month to month or year to year.

If you have good mental wellbeing you are able to:

* feel relatively **confident** in yourself and have **positive** self esteem
* feel and express a range of **emotions**
* build and maintain **good relationships** with others
* feel **engaged** with the world around you
* **adapt** and manage in times of change and uncertainty
* live and work **productively**

**Ask:** How are wellbeing and mental health problems connected?

If you experience **low** **mental wellbeing** over a long period of time, you are more likely to develop a **mental health condition**.

If you already have a **mental health problem**, you're more likely to experience periods of **low mental wellbeing** than someone who hasn't. But that doesn't mean you won't have periods of good wellbeing.

Think about what is affecting your wellbeing

We're all different. What affects someone's mental wellbeing won't necessarily affect others in the same way.

But we all have times when we have low mental wellbeing, where we feel stressed, upset or find it difficult to cope.

Common life events can affect your mental wellbeing too.

*3 minutes.*

## Slide Twelve

Introduce video

*3 minutes.*

## Slide Thirteen

**Ask:** How can we improve our wellbeing?

**Explain:** Connecting with others and the world around us can help us to feel a greater sense of belonging and can help to improve our wellbeing, particularly if we challenge ourselves in our choice of connection.

**Task:** Draw picture of a person and in groups think how they could improve their wellbeing.

* Give something back – volunteer. – go and see a grandparent.
* Relate to others - make time for the people you love, talk about the way you feel, use peer support, join a group.
* Exercise – walk or bike to school, join a team, go for a run, horse ride, trampoline
* Appreciate your world – what do you enjoy about your life, your environment, TV programmes, family, friends, pets, social media.
* Try something new – is there something you’d like to do but haven’t got around to yet? Get on & do it!

**Ask:** students to think about what they could do to improve their sense of wellbeing for a few moments.

*2 minutes*

## Slide Fourteen

**Ask**: students to remind you of definition of resilience from 3rd slide

**Answer – “the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties; toughness”**

**Explain:** This flower is resilient because it is growing in very challenging circumstances – no soil and little water because of the tree stump.

Resilience is the **‘rubber ball’ factor**: the ability to bounce back after a challenge, problems and set-backs you meet in the course of your life and to successfully cope with, **adapt to or deal with adversity** that may affect our wellbeing. Resilience relies on different skills and draws on **various sources** **of help**, including rational thinking skills, physical and mental health and your relationships with those around you.

Resilience is not necessarily about overcoming huge challenges; each of us faces plenty of challenges on a daily basis for which we must draw on our reserves of resilience.

We can often **feel angry** at a predicament or angry at someone who we believe is victimizing us. There are ways in which we can move through any ordeal that life hands us to make the suffering more bearable, even in the midst of the painful experience. When we do this successfully we become more resilient, more able to cope and stronger when we face challenge.

3 minutes

## Slide Fifteen

Player Video

2 minutes

## Slide Sixteen

Example – read slide

**Explain:** A crucial aspect of gathering more information is to think about **alternative explanations** for the situation.

Your brain, based on your experience and your belief system, will present you with what it considers to be the most obvious explanation.

*But it may not be correct!*

Thinking about alternatives, and then checking those against reality, perhaps by asking questions of others or looking something up, will help to ensure that you react appropriately to the situation.

A crucial aspect of gathering more information is to think about alternative explanations for the situation. Your brain, based on your experience and your belief system, will present you with what it considers to be the most obvious explanation.

Alternative Scenarios - we’re all prone to imagining the worst which is also called *catastrophising*, and it is surprisingly common. There is a very easy way to deal with it, which involves generating alternative scenarios in your head: Imagine the worst – let your imagination run riot. What could have gone wrong? What might have happened? Now think about the best possible outcomes. How good could it get?

Finally, think about the most likely outcomes – probably somewhere between the two. Make a planfor how you will respond to that.

*3 minutes*

## Slide Seventeen, Eighteen, Nineteen, Twenty.

**Explain:** These two strategies, gathering more information and looking for alternative scenarios, will help you to develop your resilience

You will become more aware of what is going on around you, and inside your head (awareness). They will also help you to **apply rational thinking** to the situation, climbing out of any thinking traps

into which you have fallen, and understanding and rationalising your emotional response to a situation.

It is also important to recognise that certain thoughts lead to certain emotions.

Examples shown in box include: I've lost something, Sadness, Someone has done something to harm me, Anger, I've hurt somebody, Shame, I feel threatened by something, Fear. (Refer back to snake story)

The benefit of understanding that these thoughts lead to these particular emotions is that by identifying the emotion we feel, we can understand what our subconscious thought processes may be. This may not be obvious otherwise, and it will help us to take the right action to address the problem.

Thinking Traps:So-called ‘*thinking traps*’ are traps into which we can fall in our thinking, usually at the ‘B’ stage of the A-B-C model above. Thinking traps are effectively assumptions about ourselves or the situation, made without examining the evidence, and are usually unhelpful.

The signs that you are falling into one of the thinking traps include the use of phrases like ‘never’, ‘always’, and ‘I…they…’, for example:

*“I just can’t do maths”, I’ve never been able to do things like that”, “They’ve taken it away from me”*

You need to be alert to falling into one or more of these thinking traps when you are developing your beliefs about a situation because it could prevent you from acting effectively: in other words, thinking traps can prevent you from acting with resilience. Once you are aware of this you can practise responding to situations in a way that improves your resilience, helps you feel stronger and more able to cope

Another example of not being invited to a party and how the individual deals with it

*4 minutes*

## Slide Twenty-One

**Ask:** question on board

(Have the mind map from the beginning to refer to or use a prompt if necessary.)

Cue card to take away with something they have learnt from the lesson (decide on group)

**Ask:** to hear their thoughts about what they have learnt. Any other questions. *2 minutes*