



Adult Educator Session Plan

Promoting Positive Mental Health

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Promoting Positive Mental Health

Introduction

When it comes to health and wellness, the first thing that pops into most people's heads is physical health. They talk about exercising, jogging, going to the gym, etc. But they never really talk about their mental health.

Mental health includes our psychological, social and emotional well-being. It affects the way we think, feel and act in our daily lives. Your ability to handle emotions, stress, the way you socialize with others, is largely determined by your psychological state.

Emotional and mental health is important because it is a vital part of your life and impacts your thoughts, behaviours, and emotions. Being emotionally healthy can promote productivity and effectiveness in activities such as work, school, or care. It plays an important role in the health of your relationships and enables you to adapt to changes in your life and cope with adversity.

There are steps you can take to improve your mental health every day. Little things like exercising, eating a balanced and healthy meal, opening up to other people in your life, taking a break when you need it, remembering something you're thankful for, and getting a good night's sleep can all help improve your emotional health.

Key Messages

- Mental health is as important as physical health, even though we often tend not to pay enough attention to it until it's too late.
- One way to start taking care of our mental health is through meditation and relaxation.
- Learning about our emotional intelligence and how to communicate our desires is of paramount importance to keep ourselves balanced.

Warm-up Activity

Activity	Check-in Questions
Suggested time	10-15 Minutes
Materials	
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The session can start with a quite simple activity just to break the ice and make the group more comfortable. Each member can check in, provide any progress updates, or share something interesting about their week. If you are working with participants who don't take the opportunity to speak in

	front of the group, it can be helpful to have a specific set of questions to guide the introduction.
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Activity 1: Karate Breathing Relaxation

Activity	Karate Breathing Relaxation
Suggested time	20-30 Minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Karate Breathing Relaxation sheet A1.
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ask all participants to sit comfortably and close their eyes. Use the Karate Breathing Relaxation sheet. A1 and follow the steps. Repeat these steps for as long as you want until everybody has reached an adequate level of calmness.

Activity 2: The Emotion Meter

Activity	The Emotion Meter
Suggested time	40 Minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emotion chart. A2
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> This activity will help us improve our emotional intelligence and building a framework of language and labels that can help us express ourselves. The first step is to identify the emotion, but before this, it's useful to create a baseline. We need to take a moment to connect with our current emotional state. That's why the best way to do this is doing it after some relaxation or meditation. Ask participants to close their eyes again and tune into their emotions – what's happening? How are they feeling? Excited, sad, happy, agitated? Let them take a moment to observe. Ask them to rate the emotion they're feeling between 1 (very unpleasant) and 10 (very pleasant). Ask them now to rate how energetic they're feeling between 1 (very low amount of energy) and 10 (very high amount of energy). Now, take both scores and plot them against the emotion chart to see how they match up (see Emotion chart A2). Finally, ask them why they might be feeling this way. Are they tired or hungry? Has something happened earlier in the day? Did they interact with someone and it changed their

	mood? This activity will help them build their understanding of how, when and why they experience specific emotions.
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Activity 3: Recognising Stress Symptoms

Activity	Recognising Stress Symptoms
Suggested time	25 Minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human body template A3a • Effects of stress in your body. A3b • Stress symptoms. A3c
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In this activity, we will focus on learning to recognise those stress symptoms you can easily miss on your day to day routine but that can actually be very dangerous on the long run. 2. Participants can work in groups or individually. 3. Each group or participant will have a large image representing a human body (see Human body template A3a). 4. Ask participants to point out those stress symptoms they know of using post-it notes and sticking them to each part of the body. 5. In case they need some help, you can tell them the four categories in which each symptom can be categorized: physical, emotional, cognitive and behavioural. 6. You can find a list of all stress symptoms (see Stress symptoms. A3c) and which part of the body they affect (see Effects of stress in your body. A3b) in case they need some inspiration.

Activity 4: Writing a Stress Journal

Activity	Writing a Stress Journal
Suggested time	35-40 Minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stress Journal A4
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A stress journal is a very useful tool that can help people identify the regular stressors in their lives and how to deal with them.

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Ask participants to think about a time where they felt really stressed out. They can fill all the boxes in the journal (see Stress journal A4). If they are not sure about what caused their stress, they can make a guess. After they have thought about this particular situation, start a conversation about their stress management, focusing on how they dealt with that particular issue. Encourage them to keep filling out this log for at least a week so they can identify patterns and common themes.
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Activity 5: About Assertiveness

Activity	About Assertiveness
Suggested time	30 Minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training assertiveness sheet A5
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Give participants a copy of the sheet with the different situations we are going to work on (see Training assertiveness sheet A5.) Take 30 seconds after each situation so that each participant can write down what they would say in this particular situation. Go one by one or in small groups and read them all loud. Note down their difficulties and how their answers can be improved. If there is enough time, you can make them write down additional responses with a rather passive or aggressive approach so they learn to understand the difference. This activity can also be done in pairs as a role play, with one participant acting out the situations and the other trying to give an assertive response.

Intergenerational Activity: Just Breathe

Activity	Just Breathe
Suggested time	15 Minutes
Materials	
Instructions	<p>Just like adults, children can suffer the effects of stress and anxiety in their day to day life. However, we can help them learn how to calm themselves by focusing on their breathing. Even better, it will help you as a parent, too! Explore breathing activities for children online and practise together.</p>

	<p>For example, Save The Children, a children’s rights organisation, wrote this article on relaxation activities to be done at home. Why not give it a go as a family and see if it works for you? Access the exercises via their website: https://www.savethechildren.org/us/charity-stories/easy-at-home-relaxation-activities-to-help-calm-kids</p>
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Reflections and Conclusion

Activity	Reflections and Conclusion
Suggested time	20 Minutes
Materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health@Home Parent Manual
Instructions	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Ask each learner to identify one thing they have learnt during this session. Can they identify one action point/thing they will take away/do in terms of social media use in their family. Ask them to begin filling in the sections in the parent manual.

Additional Resources

Here you can find a video for the Karate breathing relaxation:

- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GIWq2Vpj_fI

Attachments

- A1. Karate Breathing Relaxation Sheet
- A2. Emotion Chart
- A3.a Human Body Template
- A3.b Effects of Stress in your Body
- A3.c Stress Symptoms
- A4. Stress Journal
- A5. Training Assertiveness Sheet

A1. Karate Breathing Relaxation Sheet

1. Sit in a comfortable position. Most martial arts use the 'seiza' position, with legs beneath the buttocks and knees directly in front, but many people find this position uncomfortable. If this is your case, you may also sit cross-legged or in whatever position you feel more comfortable.



2. Close your eyes, keep your back straight, your shoulders relaxed, head up and your eyes (behind your eyelids) focused ahead.

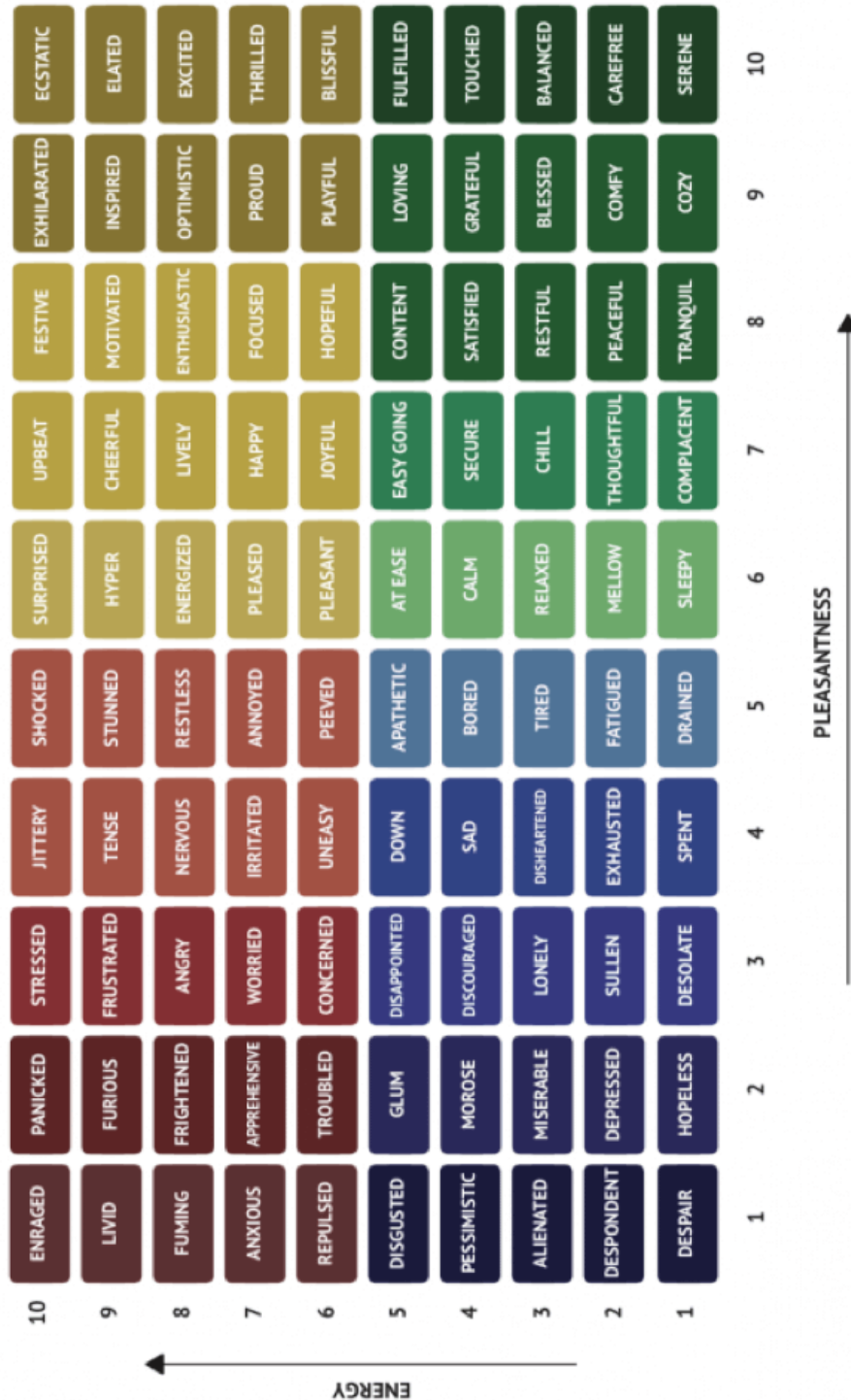
3. Take a deep, cleansing breath, expanding your belly and keeping your shoulders relaxed. Hold it in for the count of six.

4. Exhale, and repeat twice. Then breathe normally and focus your attention on your breathing.

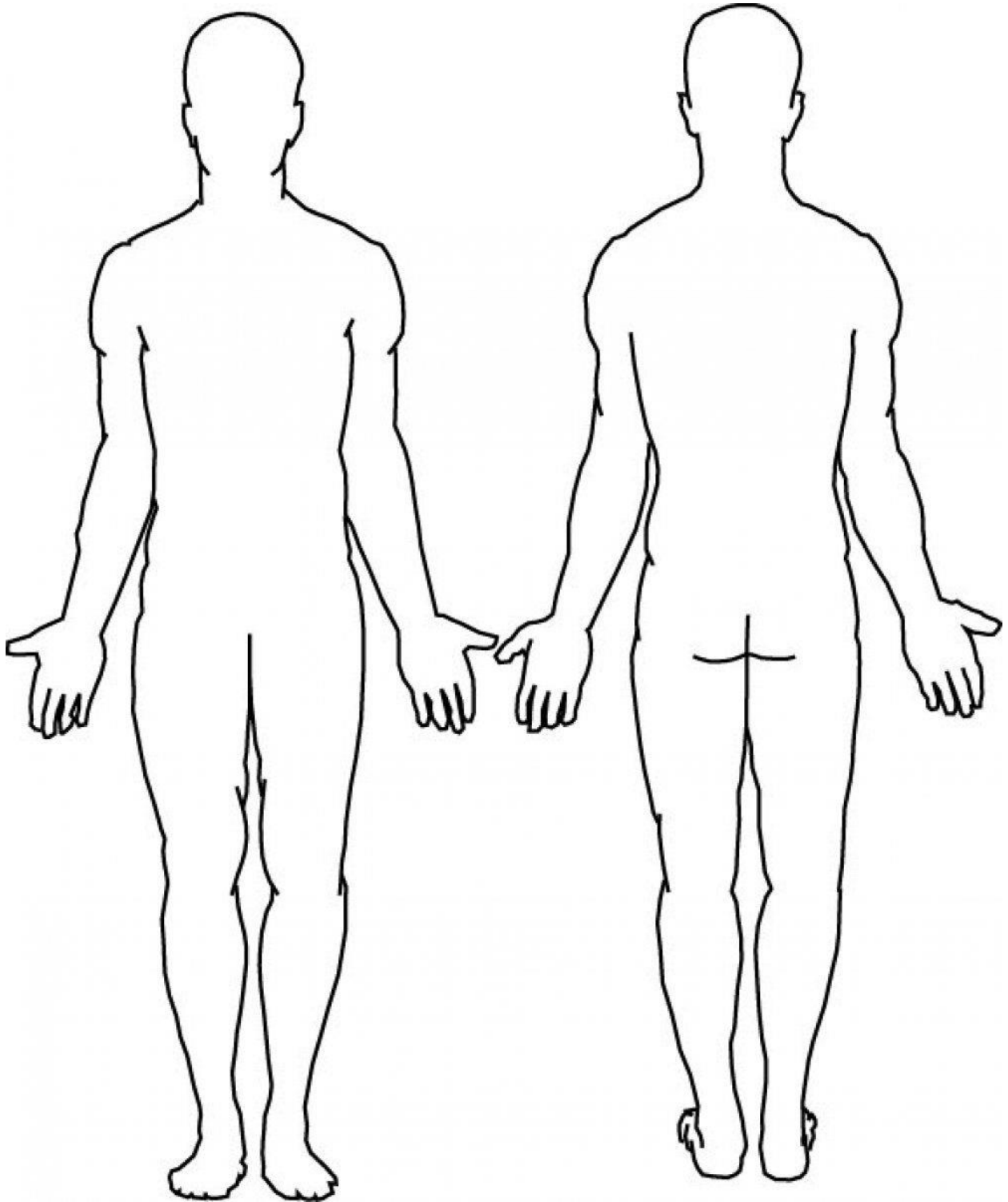
5. As you breathe, inhale through your nose and exhale through your mouth, still expanding your belly rather than moving your shoulders up and down.

6. If your thoughts drift toward the stresses of the day ahead or the day behind you, gently focus on your breathing and remain in the present moment. Don't worry that you are doing anything wrong. Just feel the air move in, and feel the air move out. That's it.

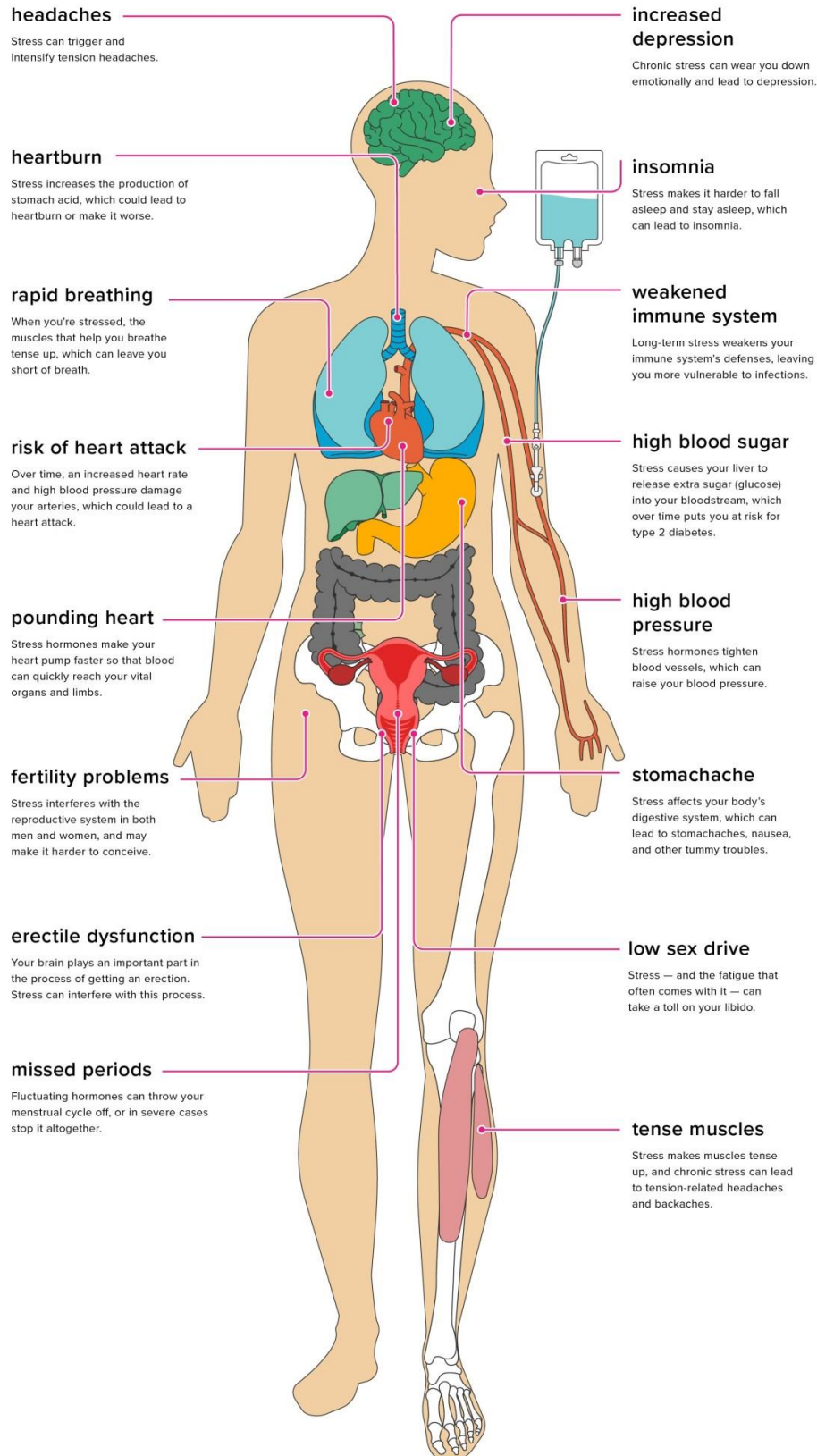
A2. Emotion Chart



A3.a Human Body Template



A3.b Effects of Stress on your Body



A3c. Stress Symptoms

Physical symptoms

- Insomnia and sleep problems
- Digestive problems such as nausea or vomiting, constipation, diarrhea, etc.
- Headaches, aches, pains and tense muscles
- Chronic pain
- Fatigue
- Chest pain and rapid heartbeat
- Clenched jaw and grinding teeth

Emotional symptoms

- Becoming easily agitated, frustrated and moody
- Feeling overwhelmed, as if you were constantly losing control

Cognitive symptoms

- Difficulty concentrating and making decisions
- Mental fatigue; having difficulty relaxing and quieting your mind
- Constant worrying
- Racing thoughts
- Forgetfulness and disorganization

Behavioural symptoms

- Eating irregularities (eating too much or too little)
- Low sex drive
- Being pessimistic or seeing only the negative side of things
- Procrastinating and avoiding responsibilities
- Increased use of alcohol, drugs or cigarettes

A4. Stress Journal

What caused your stress: Brief description of the situation	How you felt, both physically and emotionally	How you acted in response	What you did to make yourself feel better

A5. Training Assertiveness

- A friend asks you to look out after their child so they can go to the movies.
- A neighbour asks you to go grocery shopping for them since you are already going for your own groceries.
- Someone asks you to give them a ride.
- A family member needs money and they ask you.
- Your partner doesn't want to say something to their parents and they ask you to tell them.
- Your manager asks you to stay afterhours to finish some work that could be done the next day.
- A friend is asking you to borrow something you really do not want to lend.
- Someone is yelling at you while you two are arguing, but you would prefer not to raise your voice and not to be yelled at.
- A friend is trying to convince you to go out tonight, but you would rather stay at home and rest.
- A colleague continues to interrupt you while you are talking and you would very much like to finish without interruptions.
- Your parents want to come visit, but it is really not a good time.

