



SESSION 1: Thinking about mental health.

1. Mental.

- * Start by putting the word 'mental' in front of students and ask them to respond to it: what does it make them think and feel?
- * How do we tend to use the word 'mental' in our society?
- * What stereotypes and prejudices do some in our society hold about mental illness? Why do those prejudices exist: what is it about mental illness that makes it difficult for some to avoid prejudice?
- * Perhaps use The Sun newspaper 2013 front page, entitled '1200 killed by mental patients', to stimulate discussion about the lack of skill with which mental illness is treated in some parts of our culture.

2. Breaking down stereotypes and prejudices.

- * Look at examples of attempts to remove the stigma surrounding mental ill health. Ask students to think critically about whether or not these approaches are working. Some examples are listed below.

- * The Channel 4 documentary series 'Bedlam', which looked at the work of the Bethlem Royal Hospital in London (where the word bedlam comes from). There are good clips on YouTube of the programmes: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjvVm7A-pq8> [available 02/15].
- * The 2013 controversy surrounding Asda and Tesco's 'mental patient' Halloween outfits, which they withdrew from sale: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-24278768> [available 02/15].
- * Celebrities who have talked about their battles with mental illness: http://www.youngminds.org.uk/news/blog/1654_celebrities_and_mental_health_problems [available 02/15].

3. Connecting back to virtue.

- * As the aspirant virtuous, what do students think that a virtuous outlook on mental health and mental illness would look like? Are some virtues more important in responding to mental illness than others?

SESSION 2: Moral virtues: mental health and duty of care.

1. Moral awareness.

- * Ask students to remind themselves how they identify an issue with a moral element to it.
- * Ask students to identify any elements of the topic of mental health that are moral in nature.

2. Discerning moral responsibility.

- * How do we become aware that we have a moral duty? Ask students to discuss what the effect on us is if we recognise a moral issue. What might we think? What might we feel?
- * Which thoughts and feelings would move us towards a feeling of responsibility and acting, and

what thoughts and feelings would move us away from a feeling of responsibility and acting?

- * How do we work out (discern) what our duty is? Suggest to students that we might use three basic techniques:
 1. To follow the rules of our community;
 2. To try to work out the consequences of acting or failing to act;
 3. To think about how our action would make us into a better or worse person if we kept acting in that way.
- * What is the effect of proximity and relationships on our feeling of moral responsibility? Is it right





to be more inclined to act to help those we know and who are nearby? What arguments can students come up with?

3. Moral responsibility and mental illness.

- * How do we generally become aware of people who are suffering from mental illness? What might our thoughts and feelings be in that moment? Are those thoughts and feelings likely to move us closer to caring, or further away from caring?

SESSION 3: Performance virtues: habits of a healthy mind.

1. A picture of mental health.

- * Ask students to come up with a description of mental health: what does mental health (as opposed to mental illness) look like? What is a healthy mind able to do? How does a healthy mind work?
- * Suggest that bodily/physical health is maintained by good habits and that it doesn't happen by accident. Do students agree with this? Ask students if they think that the same is true of mental health. Ask them to identify how much of our mental health is within our control and how much is outside our control.

2. Mind Apples: 5 a day for your mind.

- * In Britain, we are told to consume 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day to keep healthy. The organisation Mindapples asks people to think about the things they do each day to keep mentally healthy: <http://mindapples.org/> [available 02/15].
- * Ask students to try to identify the things they do each day that keep them mentally healthy (whether they realise it or not). A good list of strategies for mental health has been produced by the Mental Health Foundation <http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/help-information/10-ways-to-look-after-your-mental-health/> [available 02/15].

- * Do we have a moral duty of care for those who suffer from mental illness? What reasons can students develop to argue that we do and that perhaps we don't?
- * Thinking about the virtues, (Courage, Justice, Honesty, Compassion, Self-discipline, Gratitude, Humility) how could they move us towards a good action when we encounter mental illness? How would a person who is trying to develop these virtues respond to mental illness? In what ways are the students virtuous when it comes to responding to mental illness?

- * Collate the strategies the students use. Mindapples use a large tree and give people pieces of card shaped like apples to help people see what others do to develop their mental health: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7x8gXSCA4Ww> [available 02/15].
- * Ask students to work in small groups and pick a handful of strategies. Ask them to try to find the reasons why these strategies maintain or develop mental health.

3. The Mind Diet: going beyond avoiding mental ill health.

- * Ask students to work in groups and discuss human minds that they admire and whose activity they aspire to emulate. Perhaps they could contrast this with minds that they have little or no admiration for.
- * Ask students to speculate on what it is that created the fine human mind of the individuals that they aspire to be like.
- * Minds that suffer poor thinking diets and lack of exercise get flabby. The organisation Lifesquared has come up with some excellent (free) resources on what a healthy mind diet might include: <http://lifesquared.org.uk/content/mind-diet> [available 02/15].
- * Ask students to try to come up with a mind-diet that would help them to develop the kind of mind they would ideally like to have.





SESSION 4: Performance virtue 2: Meditate Mindfully.

Resources

Mindfulness by Mark Williams and Danny Penman.

www.headspace.com (mindfulness app for smartphones).

www.mindfulnessinschools.org (mindfulness programme for young people) [both available 02/15].

Mindfulness is a simple (but difficult) practice of paying deliberate, non-judgmental attention to whatever is unfolding in the present moment. We can choose anything to pay attention to: in this session we will pay attention to the breath, to eating and, if there is time, to walking.

1. Monkey mind.

Mindfulness depends on the mind. The human mind is a magnificent instrument, but it is not always good at doing what is needed for mindfulness: in short, being still and paying attention without making any judgments. The mind spends a lot of its time jumping from past to present: thinking about things that we have done, or that others have done, or thinking about what we have got to do. Some people call this ‘monkey mind’: the mind is like a monkey that jumps around all over the place and occasionally throws something unpleasant at us (e.g. something to worry about or being excessively judgemental). It might be helpful to think of two different modes of mind: doing/planning and sensing. The ‘doing’ mind makes things happen whereas the ‘sensing’ mind allows what is there to be there without passing judgment.

- * **Activity:** ask students to sit still and in silence for one minute and notice all the different thoughts that pass through their minds during that time. Give them a piece of paper and they should put a mark on the paper (circle, dot, dash, whatever) every time a new thought comes in.

2. Mindfulness of the breath.

The purpose of the exercise is to pay attention to each moment of breathing and to take time. Ask students to sit in a ‘dignified’ manner (straight back, hands in lap) and to bring their attention to their breathing and just notice the movement of the breath in and out of the body. They might like to focus on the part of the body where the breath is most vivid to them, perhaps the nostrils or the chest. If they find that their mind wanders, distracted by thoughts or senses, they should notice that the mind has wandered and bring it gently back to awareness of the breath. Take 5 – 10 minutes over this.

- * You could play students a guided mindfulness of the breath: there are many available on YouTube.
- * **Discuss.** Discuss the experience with the students: what was good, were there any immediate benefits, what could they use day to day?

3. Mindful eating.

The purpose of the exercise is to pay attention to each moment of eating and to take time. Distribute jelly babies to students. Ask them to hold the jelly baby in the palm of their hand and explore the different sense information coming in. Notice the colour of the jelly baby. Notice how it contrasts with the colour of your skin. Notice the weight of the jelly baby in your hand. How does it feel against your skin? Roll it between your thumb and forefinger and notice its shape, weight and contours. Examine the lines, contours and shapes on the surface of the jelly baby. Notice how there is light and shadow. Now bring the jelly baby to your nose. Does it smell of anything? Now take a small bite. Take your time to notice every aspect of the taste in your mouth. Notice where the taste comes from. Notice other sensations in your mouth, from your gums and inside your cheeks. Take another small bite and do the same. Notice any sensations present as you consume the jelly baby.





- * **Discuss.** Discuss the experience with the students: what was good, were there any immediate benefits, what could they use day to day?

4. One-minute mindfulness.

Ask students to sit as they were for mindfulness of breathing and to again become aware of the breath. Time a minute and ask students in that time to count the number of breaths that they take (breathe in, breathe out, count 1; breathe in, breathe out, count 2, and so on). It doesn't matter how many breaths they take, but they will now know how many breaths to take for one minute of mindfulness. They can use it as a nice punctuation point between the many different activities they engage in during the day, to ensure they are present for each.

SESSION 5: Civic virtues: protecting the vulnerable.

1. The lunatic asylum.

- * Ask students to consider the archetypal image of the lunatic asylum in our culture. Provide them with images of famous ones such as Broadmoor in Berkshire, Whittingham Asylum (now demolished, beloved of urban explorers) or the fictional Arkham Asylum from the recent Batman films. The emphasis should be on the archetype/stereotype. What feelings and thoughts do the images of these asylums conjure up?
- * Perhaps there is a mental hospital in your area: how do students tend to talk about it and the people who go there?
- * Start by exploring some of the history of the treatment of mental illness. There was an exhibition at the Science Museum in 2014 looking at this topic:
<http://www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/broughttolife/themes/mentalhealthandillness.aspx> and there is some helpful information from the Heath Service Journal here:
<http://www.hsj.co.uk/resource-centre/mental-health-history-taking-over-the-asylum/1136349.article#.U06GX2BOUpA>

5. Mindful walking.

The purpose of the exercise is to pay attention to each moment of walking and to take time. Ask them to pay the kind of attention they just paid to breathing, to walking. Notice every aspect of each step they take, from the moment their foot leaves the ground to when it reconnects. What are the muscles, bones, joints doing? What sensations can they feel? What sensations of touch and pressure are present from moment to moment? How do those sensations change?

- * **Discuss.** Discuss the experience with the students: what was good, were there any immediate benefits, what could they use day to day?

and there are some good documentaries on the history of the treatment of mental illness for example the 1981 documentary, *Silent Minority*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=az2fTYud0us> [all available 02/15].

- * Ask students to consider whether a society that treats some of its citizens in this way can be considered a virtuous society.

2. Is it any different now?

- * Although many of the former mental hospitals have been closed, the situation for many who live in the community and who suffer from mental illness is very poor: <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-17182626> and <http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/how-hateful-is-britain-insulted-bullied-and-murdered-for-being-disabled-8929765.html> [both available 02/15].
- * Ask students to consider, in the light of stories such as these, whether or not contemporary society can be considered virtuous in its treatment of those with mental illness.





3. Envisioning a virtuous society for mental illness.

- * Ask students to re-visit their emotional reaction to

SESSION 5: Reflection.

1. How have things changed?

- * Go back to the word 'mental.' Ask the class what they think about this word now, what their reasons are for thinking this and what (if anything) has changed. You could do this by means of a value line and ask students to stand where they were at the start of the 5 lessons and move to where they are now.

2. Making changes.

- * Ask students to think carefully about how they would like to improve their mental health and their attitude towards those with mental illness, what would they like to do better?
- * Ask students to plan how they are going to do this. They might consider buddying up with another pupil and coming to an agreement about what they are going to change, how and when.

mental illness. What do they feel about those who suffer from it?

- * If we could envision a society that was virtuous in its treatment of those with mental ill health, what would it look like?

3. Using virtue to make changes.

- * For each of the virtues (Courage, Justice, Honesty, Compassion, Self-discipline, Gratitude, Humility) ask students to imagine what that virtue looks like when enacted, in terms of developing mental health and responding to mental illness (e.g. the compassion required to notice mental illness; self-discipline to do things each day for one's own mental health; humility to accept that we might need some help; gratitude for those who help us).
- * Ask students to think of icons of mental health (e.g. those with a good mind diet, those who help others suffering with mental illness) and also to think of which virtues they employ to develop it.

