



Off-field curriculum guide

**Mental
Health**

Years 3 - 4

Session Overview

The purpose of these lesson plans is to provide educators with a vehicle to explore and discuss stereotypes and perceptions around three main societal strands, using AFL/AFLW as a lens.

All lesson plans are linked to the Australian Curriculum and address the following key themes and general capabilities

- Cultural and Ethical understanding
- Identity and Belonging
- Health and Physical Wellbeing
- Adversity

Curriculum/General Capabilities

- Literacy
- Media Studies
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Capability
- Critical and Creative Thinking Personal and Social Capability
- Ethical Understanding
- Intercultural Understanding
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

Resource

This education resource comprises of three complete units of work, each broken into three one-hour sessions, linked to the Australian Curriculum, including methods for assessment.

Considerations

Consider any personal sensitivity amongst students. You could inform students that you will be exploring some controversial subject matter and it is not your intention to upset anyone but if anyone is affected during the class they should feel free to raise their hand and ask to speak with you about how they are feeling.

Be aware that some students may express negative attitudes. It is important to allow them to voice their views and they should be explored, but this should be followed by clearly stating that as a community of learners, you don't tolerate offensive and harmful attitudes and promote the importance of respect towards difference.

Years 3 – 4

Mental Health

Unit One

Mental Health

There is a multitude of misinformation and misconception about mental health in today's society. Stigmatism and stereotypes regarding mental health issues abound, despite there being multiple initiatives to challenge, address and overcome these stigmas and stereotypes.

Mental health issues in sportspeople are particularly misunderstood. There is a general perception that a healthy body must equal a healthy mind. Elite athletes are seen as untouchable in many regards. They have achieved amazing feats of human endurance to play at the top of their sport, they are often paid well and perceived to have a lifestyle not unlike that of revered celebrities. How then, could they possibly feel sad, anxious, depressed, alone? How could they be vulnerable?

This unit is designed to open discussion with students about their perceptions of mental health and who might be vulnerable to it. This unit will hopefully not only facilitate discussion, and overcome stereotypical perceptions, but also arm students with new knowledge and strategies to reach out for themselves or others, who may be affected by mental health issues.

Session One

Introduction to Mental Health Stereotypes

LEARNING INTENTION

We are learning to:

- Discuss, observe and recognise stereotypes
- Challenge stereotypes that exist around mental health

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I can:

- Identify where stereotypes exist in my life
- Challenge and discuss stereotypes around mental health and provide examples to support this

Begin by asking the class if they know what the word stereotype means.

Explain that today we are going to learn about mental health and mental illness. Explain that just like being physically ill, people with a mental illness have symptoms, can seek help, may take medicine, and can recover.

Begin by asking students if they believe physically healthy people can suffer from a mental illness. (Show of hands for yes or no)

Ask students to share some of the factors they believe might contribute to or affect mental health. (Possible answers include eating well, regular exercise, sleeping well) Write these answers on the board.

Pre Assessment

The questions on the activity sheet are designed to get students thinking about mental health stereotypes in sport.

Should AFL players be happy?

Write down 5 reasons AFL players should be happy.



Do you think it is okay for AFL players to feel sad?

Write down 5 reasons AFL players might feel sad.

Tuning in

As a class discuss their answers to the questions. Compare and take note of common reasons students have shared for players to be happy or sad.

Session One

Introduction to Mental Health Stereotypes

Stereotypes are...

Begin by asking the class if they know what the word stereotype means.

Suggested teacher script

You have probably heard about stereotypes. These are commonly held ideas about specific groups. They can be ability, gender, race or culturally specific.

We most often hear about negative stereotypes, but some are positive — the stereotype that tall people are good at basketball, for example.

One of many problems with any stereotype is that even if it's true in some cases, it's certainly not true in all cases. A stereotype is a preconceived notion, especially about a group of people. Many stereotypes are rooted in prejudice — so you should be wary of them.

What Are Mental Health Stereotypes?

There are many negative stereotypes and attitudes surrounding mental illness. These often result in stigma, discrimination, and isolation of people with mental illness, and in some cases, the isolation of their families and carers.

Mental Health stereotypes are commonly recognised yet oversimplified ideas about what it means to have a mental illness. These stereotypes assume that all mental illnesses share the same characteristics. They are uninformed judgements based on superficial information rather than facts.

Class Activity

Ask students to share their beliefs and perceptions about what it means to have a mental illness. Write 4 or 5 examples on the board to address later.

Questions to Guide Discussion

- What are some of the negative things you have heard about people with mental illness?
- What are some of the positive things you have heard about mental illness? (Responses may include things like a link to creativity.)

- Why do you think people with mental illness are stereotyped? (Possible answers include “They are seen as being different” and “People don’t really understand mental illness.”)
- What might help to change public attitudes about mental health issues? (Possible answers include education and talking openly about mental health)
- What do you think influences our perceptions about mental illness? (Possible answers include the media, films, news, newspaper headlines)
- How do you think stigma affects the lives of people with mental illness? (Possible answers include people deciding not to get help and treatment, unhappiness, inability to find a job, losing their friends, stress on the whole family.)
- Do you think physically healthy people can suffer from a mental illness?

Refer back to the student response in the pre assessment task. As a class, identify any stereotypes you see in the answers.

Common Stereotypes About Mental Illness

- People with mental health issues are dangerous.
- People with mental health issues are weak.
- People with mental health issues are unreliable.
- People with mental health issues were born with something wrong with their brain.
- People with mental health issues are suffering from a traumatic event.
- People with a mental illness cannot work normal jobs.
- People with a mental illness are pessimistic
- People with a mental illness need medication.
- People with a mental illness are disabled.
- Mental illness cannot be cured.

Activity

Positivity exercise. As a class, address each stereotype listed above and turn it into a positive statement.

For example – People with mental illness are strong, because they find the energy they need to keep going about their daily life.

Write student responses on the board to refer to later as a class.

Session Two

Student content creation response

LEARNING INTENTION

We are learning to:

- Understand that a person's exterior is not always reflective of their interior feelings
- Understand mental health and the challenges it presents
- Breakdown our own stigma associated with mental health and identify ways to help

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I can:

- Identify examples of times when a person appears fine but may have mental health issues
- Identify what challenges mental health presents and how this differs between individuals
- Identify ways to address mental health concerns in my own and my friends' lives

Assessment activity sheet

- 1 Share 5 words on how you think the person or people in the image might be feeling.



- 2 Write a speech bubble on what you think the person/people in the image might be thinking.

- 3 Write a paragraph on what you think might have happened before/after this image was taken.

Michael Wilson's Lens on the AFL



Using a projector, have the Michael Wilson Lens on the AFL Exhibition ready to share with the class.

A picture is worth a 1000 words

Ask students to look closely at the images in the Michael Willson Exhibition. Choose one picture to reflect on or ask students to write a short analysis on each picture and their imagining of the story behind it.

Session Two

Student content creation response



4 Write a short story about this picture.

A large, empty white rectangular area is framed by a light green border, intended for the student to write their response.

Session Two

Student content creation response

AFLW Players Are...

Ask students to create a word cloud using words they think are most often used to describe AFL players. (Some suggested words are - strong, tough, fast, tall, healthy etc.) This can be done on a poster, on post it notes stuck to the board, or written as points on a sheet of paper.

Body Language

As a class, discuss the concept of body language.

Explain that we communicate on two levels; in verbal and non- verbal ways. Emotions are often communicated through body language, like facial expressions, eye contact, posture and spatial distance. Explain that body language can give important clues about how someone might be feeling.

Activity

In pairs, choose 3 emotions to demonstrate using your face, hands and other body movements but without using words. Take turns guessing what emotion is being expressed.

Discuss

- How can you work out how someone else feels by looking at their body language?
- Why might it be important to try to understand someone's body language?
- What can happen when we get it wrong? (People might feel ignored or misunderstood, this might make people feel sad or hurt)
- What can happen when we get it right? (People might feel acknowledged, seen and or heard, this might make people feel better)

Assessment Journaling/Digital Scrapbook

- What things might affect your mental health? Keep a journal of positive and negative things you experience, think about or hope for, over one week. After a week share with a partner or the class how your journal made you feel.
- What are ways that you keep yourself healthy? Spend a few minutes writing down your ideas on post- it notes.
- Stick your post- it notes together on a board or wall in the classroom.
- Who would you speak to or where would you go if you thought you needed help for a mental health issue? Create a mind map of all the support places/ people/organisations you can think of that are available to help young people going through a tough time.

Session Two

Student content creation response

Assessment Activity Sheet



Being healthy includes:

- a. having a body that feels good and works well
- b. having a healthy mind and body
- c. not being sick
- d. all of the above

Only adults get mental illnesses:

- a. true
- b. false

Having a mental illness can affect the way that a person

- a. behaves
- b. thinks
- c. feels
- d. all of the above

What causes mental illness?

- a. diet
- b. catching it from someone else
- c. being violent
- d. no-one knows

Another way to talk about mental illness is to say

- a. mental health challenge
- b. mental wellness
- c. mental malfunction
- d. disordered mentality

What is the least effective way of dealing with a mental health challenge or mental illness?

- a. keeping feelings bottled up inside
- b. telling a trusted adult how you feel
- c. staying at a hospital for a brief period of time
- d. meeting with a mental health professional

Session Three

Reflection – self/peer identity/social responsibility

LEARNING INTENTION

We are learning to:

- Challenge stereotypes that exist around mental health
- Identify ways to ensure mental health is openly discussed and addressed in my life
- Create a code of conduct that will help to minimize mental health issues

SUCCESS CRITERIA

I can:

- Identify stereotypes that exist around mental health and challenge these on various levels
- Discuss realistic ways that mental health can be a top priority in my life
- Identify a code of conduct which my classmates and I can adhere to which helps our mental health

This session is about taking the time to reflect as a class on what students have learned and discovered and share their content creation pieces.

Begin by reviewing the original comments and answers written on the board in Session 1. What answers have changed?

Suggested teacher script:

Who can tell me one thing they learned about mental illness that they did not know before this class began?

Write down what students are sharing to inform your class strategy document.

Explore with students how they might act in the following situations, helping them see how they might apply the knowledge from the previous lessons:

- What would you do if you found out your friend had been diagnosed with a mental illness?
- What would you do if you witnessed someone at school making fun of a person with a mental illness?

Use these answers to inform your class strategy document.

Questions could include:

- How might they combat these stereotypes in everyday life and or sport?
- Why is this important to combat mental health stereotypes?
- What does being an ally look like?

Group activity suggestions:

- As a class, create a strategy document to prevent/ combat the continuation of stereotypes surrounding mental illnesses.
- Include suggested responses to negative comments and strategies for supporting one another in a positive way.
- Create a code of conduct for your class/school/club that includes a protocol for calling out/addressing those who do not abide by the code of conduct respectfully.

Session Three

Reflection – self/peer identity/social responsibility

Further resources and suggestions for teaching and learning

- › [Beyond Blue – Mental Health in Sport](#)
- › [Tackle Your Feelings](#)
- › [Dept. of Health – Mental Health Myths](#)
- › [Reach Out – Mental Fitness](#)
- › [Behind the News – Resilience](#)
- › [Kids Helpline – Anxiety](#)
- › [Kids Helpline – Being Resilient](#)
- › [Resilient Kids - Feelings](#)
- › [Developing Minds – How teachers can help kids deal with negative emotions in the classroom](#)
- › [Kids Bite Back – Mental Fitness](#)



Victorian and Australian Curriculum Links

SESSION ONE

Health and PE

Personal, social and community health

Describe and apply strategies that can be used in situations that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe ([VCHPEP090](#)), ([ACPPS035](#))

Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing

Investigate how emotional responses vary in family situations and in friendship groups ([VCHPEP093](#)), ([ACPPS038](#))

Personal and Social Capability

Self-Awareness and Management

Identify and explore the expression of emotions in social situations and the impact on self and others ([VCPSCSE016](#))

Relationships and diversity

Examine the similarities and differences between individuals and groups based on factors such as sex, age, ability, language, culture and religion ([VCPSCSO020](#))

SESSION TWO

Health and PE

Personal, social and community health

Describe and apply strategies that can be used in situations that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe ([VCHPEP090](#)), ([ACPPS035](#))

Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing

Investigate how emotional responses vary in family situations and in friendship groups ([VCHPEP093](#)), ([ACPPS038](#))

Personal and Social Capability

Self-Awareness and Management

Identify and explore the expression of emotions in social situations and the impact on self and others ([VCPSCSE016](#))

Relationships and diversity

Examine the similarities and differences between individuals and groups based on factors such as sex, age, ability, language, culture and religion ([VCPSCSO020](#))

SESSION THREE

Health and PE

Contributing to healthy and active communities

- Describe and apply strategies that can be used in situations that make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe ([VCHPEP090](#)), ([ACPPS035](#))

- Communicating and interacting for health and wellbeing

Investigate how emotional responses vary in family situations and in friendship groups ([VCHPEP093](#)), ([ACPPS038](#))

Personal and Social Capability

Self-Awareness and Management

- Identify and explore the expression of emotions in social situations and the impact on self and others ([VCPSCSE016](#))

Relationships and diversity

- Examine the similarities and differences between individuals and groups based on factors such as sex, age, ability, language, culture and religion ([VCPSCSO020](#))

HANDY TIP

Click on the content codes to be directed to the corresponding curriculum pages on their respective websites.



