

laws require companies to state that an image has been airbrushed or photoshopped.

- Talk about the unhealthy ways in which people alter their bodies (e.g., steroid use, eating disorders) and the potential consequences associated with them.
- Have students select and analyze an advertisement (e.g., magazine, TV, Internet) and then write a reflection on the advertisement, responding to questions that you have provided. Here are some examples:
 - What catches your eye about this advertisement?
 - What is being advertised?
 - Who is the target audience for this advertisement?
 - Who is being represented in the advertisement?
 - What feelings are you left with after seeing this advertisement? Do you feel that you need to change anything about yourself?
- Discuss healthy and unhealthy ways to change aspects of appearance. For example:
 - Healthy: diet, exercise, changing hair colour
 - Unhealthy: starving yourself, taking diet pills, using steroids

Topic: Stress

Considerations

- It's important for both teachers and students to remember that being in good mental health can include experiencing stress.
- Experiencing momentary stress is a natural response to day-to-day challenges, and overcoming it helps students grow.
 - For example, it is totally normal to experience stress before a job interview or because you forgot to do something you promised your friend you would do.
 - These types of stress can be identified and managed with a variety of coping strategies.
- While day-to-day stress can often be predicted and overcome with a variety of strategies, students may also experience stress from more serious and long-term sources, such as parents going through a divorce or the death of a loved one.
 - When experiencing serious, long-term stress, students may need additional support.
 - Unlike many day-to-day sources of stress, these more serious, long-term stressors are usually out of the student's control.
 - Experiencing stress during a difficult time is natural, and students often just need time (e.g., taking time to grieve a relative who has died).

- While stress is a normal response to challenging situations, experiencing chronic stress can lead to serious health problems. It is important for students to seek medical help if they are experiencing high levels of stress for long periods of time, particularly if the stress isn't related to a difficult situation in their lives.

Instructional strategies

Strategies to support you in exploring this topic with your students could include the following:

- Make a class list of stressors. Sometimes students are relieved to see that others are dealing with the same stressors.
 - As a class, rank the stressors. (This will definitely lead to debate and conversation.)
 - Have students follow up by writing an “exit slip” in which they personally reflect on the list of stressors and their ranking.
 - Students may also use this opportunity to identify sources of stress they were not comfortable discussing with the group.
- Have students create posters featuring tips for reducing stress, to put around the school.
- Have the students create vision boards and present them to each other in small groups.
 - Setting short-term and long-term SMART (specific, measurable, action-oriented, realistic, timely) goals can be a good stress-management technique.
- Discuss the importance of being there for a friend who needs support.
 - People experiencing stress may be sad or angry and may even say or do things that are hurtful, but often just listening and showing you care can help someone during a difficult time.
 - While helping your friend through a difficult time is important, make sure you are also getting support from friends and family.
 - If a friend ever talks about harming themselves or others, or talks about suicide, tell a trusted adult as soon as possible. Even if you promised not to tell anyone, your friend needs help immediately.

Responding to the unexpected in your classroom

When introduced to sensitive topics in your classroom, students may occasionally disclose sensitive information or ask unexpected questions. Here are some suggestions for responding to difficult questions or situations.

- If, during a lesson on mental health, a student shares that a family member is depressed:
 - Show empathy.
 - Remind students that this is one of the reasons why we talk about mental health, so that we can ask for help when we need it, and support our friends and family when they need it.

- Remind students that mental illness is very common, but not something that a lot of people talk about.
- Remind students that we should also respect the privacy of people who have mental illnesses.
- Students can express themselves in many different ways. Be aware of your responsibilities around disclosure in relation to student self-harm. If you have concerns about a student, speak to your school counsellor.

Topic: Stigma

Considerations

- Stigma around mental health can prevent people from seeking help, so this should be your starting point *before* discussing specific issues.
- Many students don't know what the word "stigma" means, so it needs to be explicitly defined.
 - Stigma is when someone views another person in a negative way based on their circumstances, characteristics, or traits.
 - Stigma is a negative stereotype.
- The lives of people with mental health issues are often plagued by stigma (both social stigma and self-stigma), discrimination, and shame.
- Mental illness is the same as physical illness. If someone breaks their leg, they don't hesitate to see a doctor. However, someone with a mental illness might avoid seeing a doctor because they worry that they'll be judged.
 - There is a mistaken belief that you should be able to control your mental health. An example of this is when people say "Just stop worrying so much" to someone who has an anxiety disorder or is experiencing stress.
- Media portrayals of mental illnesses are often highly inaccurate.
 - People with mental health conditions are often depicted as dangerous, violent, and unpredictable.
 - Depression can be portrayed as a choice or a sign of weakness.
- Stigma-Free Society is a B.C. organization that can provide guest speakers who will visit your class in person or remotely to discuss mental health topics.

Instructional strategies

Strategies to support you in exploring this topic with your students could include the following:

- Many famous celebrities have overcome mental health challenges and talk publicly to help break down stigmas and inspire others to get help or overcome similar challenges.