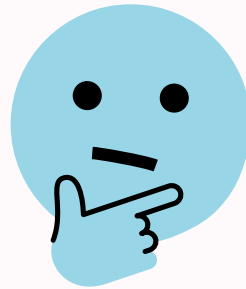




Peer  
Education  
Project



Mental Health  
Foundation



# Why do mental health problems happen?



Lesson

## Lesson plan:

- **Welcome**  
Slides 1 & 2 ..... 7
- **Being in the moment**  
Slide 3 ..... 9
- **Building connections**  
Slide 4 ..... 10
- **Introducing the topic**  
Slides 5-8 ..... 12
- **Learning through activity**  
Slides 9-12 ..... 17
- **Reflecting on the learning**  
Slides 13-17 ..... 21
- **Being in the moment**  
Slide 18 ..... 24

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## A L T E R N A T I V E   A C T I V I T I E S

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- **Taking action**  
Slides 20-23 ..... 26
- **Challenging thinking**  
Slide 24-38 ..... 31
- **Resources**  
The risk and protective factors to mental health worksheet ..... 35  
Reflection worksheet ..... 36

## Overview (continued)



This lesson has been developed from the Mental Health Foundation's Peer Education Project (PEP) - a secondary school-based, educational programme that aims to give young people the skills and knowledge they need to safeguard their mental health and that of their peers. PEP is a carefully researched, effective approach to mental health education whereby older pupils within school or college deliver mental health lessons to younger pupils.

For more information about PEP and how your school can get involved, [click here](#).



## Lesson aims:

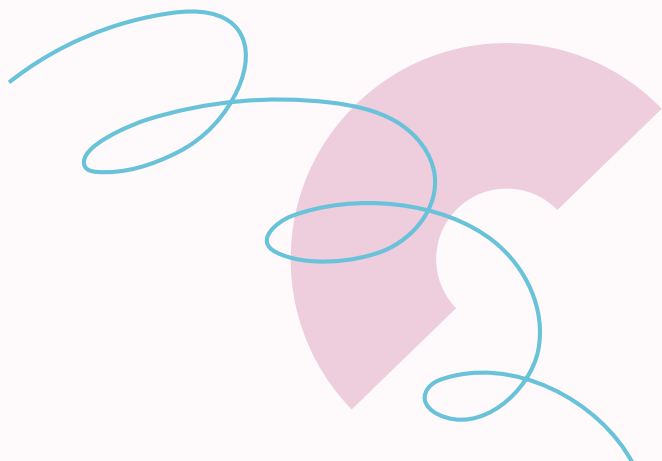
- To understand that mental health is unique to each person and will be affected by a range of factors.
- To identify the things that make mental health problems more or less likely e.g. living circumstances, life experiences, thoughts and feelings.

## Resources checklist:

- PowerPoint slides
- OPTIONAL: The risk and protective factors to mental health worksheet
- OPTIONAL: Reflection worksheet
- OPTIONAL: Pens and paper

## Preparation checklist:

- Plan two 'Being in the moment' activities, referring to the [Mindfulness Activities Pack](#).
- Plan a 'Building connections' activity, referring to the [Ice Breaker Activities Pack](#).



## How to use the lesson plan:

This lesson plan is designed to be delivered by pupils aged 15 and upwards (known as Peer Educators) to pupils aged 11 to 14 (known as Peer Learners).

The recommended lesson plan is primarily suited for pupils aged 11 or 12 and can be delivered as a 50-minute lesson or two 30-minute lessons.

The revised lesson plan offers alternative activities related to taking social action or challenging mental health information. The revised lesson plan provides pupils, particularly those who are older or who already have basic mental health awareness, an opportunity to explore the topics in more depth.

Recommended lesson plan 50 Minutes	Recommended lesson structure 2x 30 Minutes		Revised lesson plan 50 Minutes
	Lesson 1	Lesson 2	
Welcome 5 Minutes	Welcome 5 Minutes		Welcome 5 Minutes
Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes
Building connections 5 Minutes	Building connections 5 Minutes		<b>Select either:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the 'Taking action' section; or</li> <li>• the 'Challenging thinking' section.</li> </ul> 25 Minutes
Introducing the topic 10 Minutes	Introducing the topic 10 Minutes		
Learning through activity 10 Minutes		Learning through activity 10 Minutes	<b>Reflecting on the learning</b> 10 Minutes
Reflecting on the learning 10 Minutes		Reflecting on the learning 10 Minutes	
Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes	Being in the moment 5 Minutes

If the lesson is being delivered by Peer Educators, as per the Peer Education Project model, each activity is recommended to be delivered either by Peer Educators or School Staff.

## How to do it:

The instructions for each activity are split into these steps:



Actions required such as presenting slides or handing resources out.

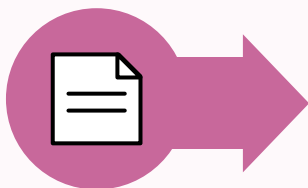


Key messages and activity instructions to be said.



Questions to be asked to extend the discussion or gauge understanding.

## Notes and troubleshooting:



There is additional information to support lesson delivery such as activity adaptations, considerations for classroom management, and key preparations for the lesson.

## It's not a script:

The lesson plan is not a word-for-word script. Prior to delivery, preparation time should be allocated to make key notes and plan how each activity will run.

# Welcome 5 mins

Resources needed: • Slides 1 & 2



## Slide 1

A slide with a light blue background. On the left, there is a large blue question mark and a small blue circle with a thinking face. To the right of the question mark, the text "Why do mental health problems happen?" is written in a large, bold, dark blue font. There are some decorative elements: a light blue starburst in the top right, some orange cloud-like shapes, and a grey rectangular shape with a blue line in the top left. At the bottom left is the Peer Education Project logo (two speech bubbles with 'P' and 'P'). At the bottom center is a dark blue button with the word "Lesson" in white. At the bottom right is the Mental Health Foundation logo (a green ribbon with 'MHF' inside a circle).



### Present Slide 1.

Welcome the class and the Peer Educators to the lesson. Explain that the Peer Educators will be leading some of the activities during the lesson – an opportunity for Peer Learners to get to know them and learn from those who are similar in age.



**"In this lesson, we are going to explore what factors, both helpful and unhelpful, can affect our mental health."**

#### Ways of working



SLIDE 2

#### We will:

1. Respect and listen to each other, giving space for everyone to be heard.
2. Value everyone's opinion, even if it's different to yours.
3. Ask questions, especially if you are unsure about the information or activities.
4. Be kind to yourself and others, reaching out for support if you need it.

Any others? \_\_\_\_\_

Click to add text



Do:

Present Slide 2.



Say:

**"It is important for us all to feel safe and confident to share our thoughts, ideas and questions in this lesson."**



Do:

Read out the slide and ask the Peer Learners and the Peer Educators for any other points they would like to add. Write them directly on the slide.



#### Notes and troubleshooting

**Variations:** It may be useful to have the 'Ways of Working' list visible throughout the lesson. You could write these on a board or poster paper to display in each lesson.





# Being in the moment 5 mins



Resources needed: • Slide 3  
• A mindfulness activity

## Slide 3

### Being in the moment



SLIDE 3



Do:

Present Slide 3.



Say:

"We're going to start with a short exercise to bring our focus to this lesson."



Do:

Read out the mindfulness activity you have chosen.



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** Select a mindfulness exercise from the [Mindfulness Activities Pack](#). You may want to explain what mindfulness is to the pupils.



# Building connections 5 mins



Resources needed: • Slide 4 • An ice breaker activity

## Slide 4

### Building connections

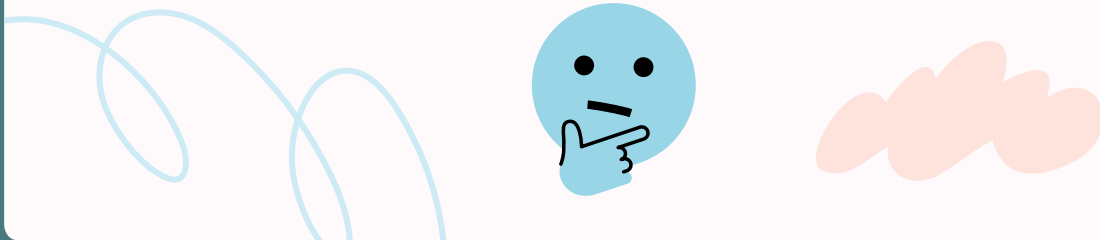


SLIDE 4

**Statement 1**

**Statement 2**

**Statement 3**



## Recommended ice breaker



**Say:**

"Today's welcome exercise is designed to get us thinking about how it's not always easy to recognise what someone else might be experiencing, particularly around mental health."



**Do:**

**Present Slide 4.**

Each of the Peer Educators should think of three statements about themselves – two truths and one lie. Try to make some of the lies obviously untrue (e.g. I have been to the moon) and others more subtle.

*Continued...*



## Building connections (continued)



Label three corners of the room with: Statement 1; Statement 2; Statement 3. Explain to the Peer Learners that once you have read out your statements, they should stand in the corner that matches the statement they think is untrue. E.g. If they think Statement 3 is untrue, they should stand in the corner labelled Statement 3.

Take it in turns to read out your three statements and encourage Peer Learners to move around the room accordingly.



- “Which of the lies were the hardest to figure out, and why?”
- Which statements were you most surprised to find out that they were true, and why?”



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** This recommended ice breaker activity is directly relevant to the lesson content. However, you can select an alternative activity from the [Ice Breaker Activities Pack](#).

**Variations:** If you have time, invite the Peer Learners to play a round of this in small groups, coming up with their own two truths and a lie.

# Introducing the topic 10 mins



Resources needed:

- Slides 5-8
- Pens and paper (optional)
- The risk and protective factors to mental health worksheet (optional)

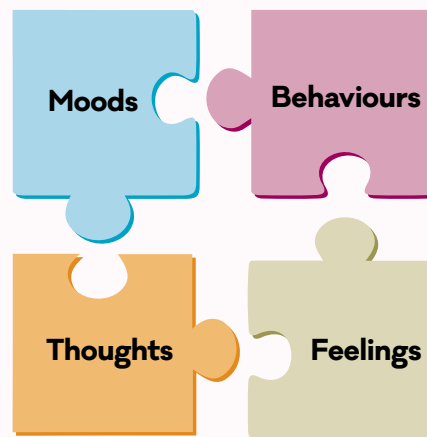
## Slide 5

### Introducing the topic



**Mental health is made up of our thoughts, feelings, moods, and behaviours.**

Mental health is something we all have and need to look after.



SLIDE 5



Do:

Present Slide 5.



Say:

"Mental health is something we all have. It consists of our thoughts, feelings, moods, and behaviours – the ability to interact with others and cope with challenges in life."



## Introducing the topic (continued)

### Slide 6

#### Introducing the topic



Do: Present Slide 6.



Say: "Many things in our lives can affect our mental health, such as our family life, where we live, our experiences with friends, and our physical health.

These things can be either helpful or unhelpful for our mental health. We can call these helpful and unhelpful factors 'risk' and 'protective' factors. Some factors will be helpful and unhelpful at different points in life."



#### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** If using the worksheet, print copies ahead of the lesson and hand out to Peer Learners for this activity.

**Classroom management:** If using the worksheet, ask pupils to write down the definitions of risk and protective factors.



## Introducing the topic (continued)

### Slide 7

#### Introducing the topic



SLIDE 7

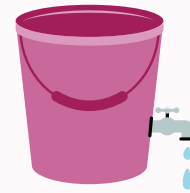
We can think of our mental health like a bucket filling up with water:



Unhelpful, stressful things are like droplets filling up the bucket.



If too many unhelpful things build up, the bucket can overflow.



Putting helpful, positive things in place can let some "water" out, and prevent it building up again.



Do:

Present Slide 7.



Say:

"When too many unhelpful things build up, this can put a strain on our mental health – we can think of this like a bucket filling up gradually and overflowing.

It is important for us to understand what risk and protective factors look like and how to manage them."



## Introducing the topic (continued)

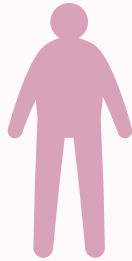
Slide 8

### Introducing the topic

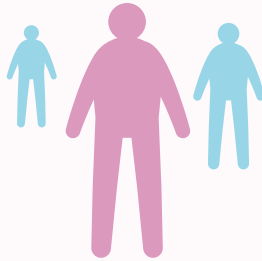


SLIDE 8

Risk and protective factors can be categorised into:



Individual factors



Social factors



Environmental factors



Do:

Present Slide 8.



Say:

"As well as being divided into helpful and unhelpful, factors can also be described as individual, social, and environmental factors."



Do:

Explain the three categories as follows:

- **Individual factors:** These are things we think, feel and do ourselves, like our daily habits and our personality. These are mostly things we can control (though not always!).

*Continued...*



## Introducing the topic (continued)



- **Social factors:** These are our relationships with family and friends, and others in our lives. We have some control in these factors, but we can't control how others behave.
- **Environmental factors:** These reflect where we are and the world around us, like our community and school. These things are mostly out of our control.



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** If using the worksheet, print copies ahead of the lesson and hand out to Peer Learners for this activity.

**Classroom management:** If using the worksheet, ask pupils to write down the definitions of individual, social, and environmental factors.





# Learning through activity 10 mins



Resources needed: • Slides 9-12 • The risk and protective factors to mental health worksheet (optional)  
• Pens and paper (optional)

## Slide 9

### Learning through activity



SLIDE 9

#### Factors to discuss:

- Experiences of bullying
- Living in overcrowded accommodation
- Feeling lonely
- Healthy relationships with friends
- Opportunities to engage in enjoyable hobbies
- Being able to express feelings and emotions in healthy ways
- Good body image
- Access to green spaces
- Being treated unfairly based on our characteristics such as race, sex, age or disability
- Poor sleep hygiene
- Living in an area with a high crime rate
- A bereavement of a family member or friend
- Positive role models at home and in school



Say:

**"We're going to think a bit more about the helpful and unhelpful factors in people's lives."**



Do:

**Present Slide 9.**



Ask:

Ask the class to work in pairs to answer the following questions for each factor listed:

- **"Is it a risk or protective factor?"**
- **"Is it an individual, social, or environmental factor?"**
- **"Is it a factor usually in our control or not?"**



## Learning through activity (continued)

### Slides 10 & 11

#### Learning through activity



SLIDE 10

#### Helpful Factors:



##### INDIVIDUAL

- Being able to express feelings and emotions in healthy ways
- Good body image



##### SOCIAL

- Healthy relationships with friends
- Positive role models at home and school

#### Learning through activity



SLIDE 11

#### Unhelpful Factors:



##### INDIVIDUAL

- Feeling lonely
- Poor sleep hygiene



##### SOCIAL

- Experiences of bullying
- Being treated unfairly based on our characteristics such as race, sex, age or disability
- A bereavement of a family member or friend



##### ENVIRONMENTAL

- Living in overcrowded accommodation
- Living in an area with a high crime rate



Do:

### Present Slides 10 & 11.

Invite pupils to share key points from their discussions, especially if they had any factors in different positions from the slides.

*Time to discuss: 5 minutes.*



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** For Slides 10 & 11, prepare explanations as to why each factor fits into each category.

If using the worksheet, print copies ahead of the lesson and hand out to Peer Learners for this activity.

**Classroom management:** If using the worksheet, ask pupils to write down examples of the different types of factors in the relevant boxes.



## Learning through activity (continued)

### Slide 12

#### Learning through activity



#### INDIVIDUAL FACTOR

Select a factor to discuss and add notes here



#### SOCIAL FACTOR

Select a factor to discuss and add notes here



#### ENVIRONMENTAL FACTOR

Select a factor to discuss and add notes here

SLIDE 12



Do:

Present Slide 12.



Say:

**"Whether an unhelpful factor is within or outside of our control, there are some things we can do to support ourselves."**



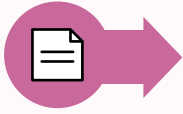
Do:

Invite the class to share ideas of things a person can do for each factor on the slide, and write them on the slide.

*Time to discuss: 5 minutes.*



## Learning through activity (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** For Slide 12, select an unhelpful factor for each category to discuss and prepare ideas of what a person could do to support themselves for each unhelpful factor selected.



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# Reflecting on the learning 10 mins



- Resources needed:
- Slides 13-17
  - Reflection worksheet (optional)
  - Pens and paper (optional)

## Slide 13

### Reflecting on the learning



SLIDE 13

One thing I have learned.

One thing I will do differently.

One question I would like an answer to.



Do:

Present Slide 13.



Say:

"Spend two minutes thinking about these reflection statements:

- One thing I have learned.
- One thing I will do differently.
- One question I would like an answer to."

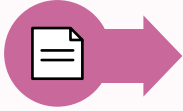


Do:

Invite pupils to share their reflection with the class for each statement. Write their responses on Slides 14-16.



## Learning through activity (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Prepare:** If using the worksheet, print copies ahead of the lesson and hand out to Peer Learners for this activity.

**Classroom management:** Their comment, question or thought doesn't have to be about mental health – it can be about the lesson itself, the activities, how it went, etc.

If using the worksheet, ask pupils to write down their responses to the reflection statements.

**Follow-up:** Collate any questions that weren't answered, and share follow-up responses with the pupils.



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## Reflecting on the learning (continued)

### Slide 17

#### Lesson summary



SLIDE 17

Many things in our lives can affect our mental health, known as risk and protective factors.

Factors can be categorised as individual, social and environmental.



INDIVIDUAL



SOCIAL



ENVIRONMENTAL



Do:

**Present Slide 17.**

Read out the lesson summary.



# Being in the moment 5 mins



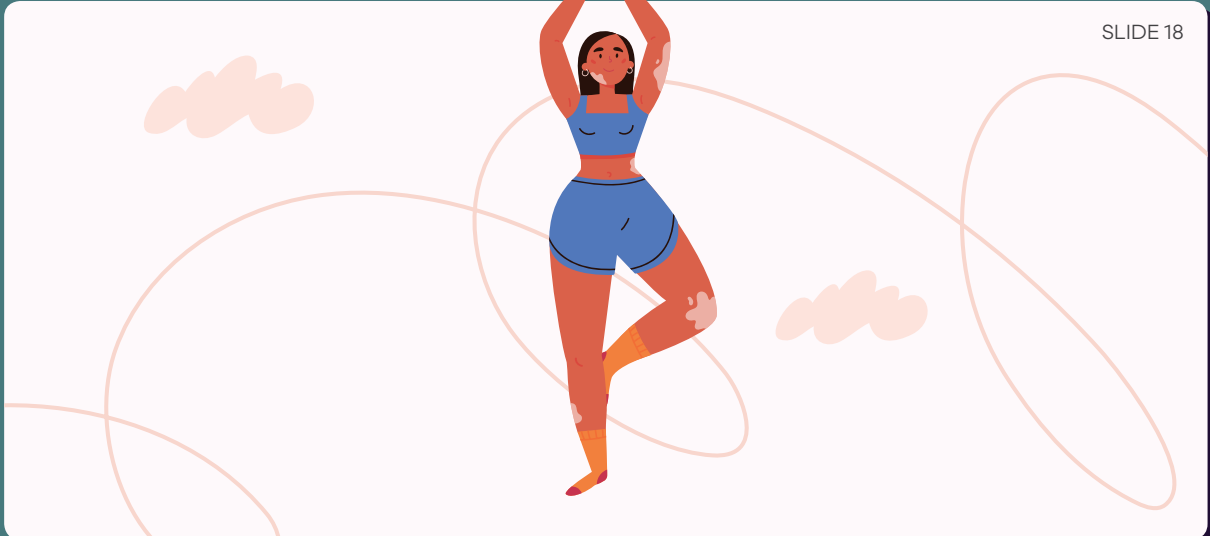
Resources needed: • Slide 18  
• A mindfulness activity

## Slide 18

### Being in the moment



SLIDE 18



Do:

Present Slide 18.



Say:

"We'll finish the lesson with another short mindfulness exercise."



Do:

Read out the mindfulness activity you have chosen.



Say:

"That's the end of the lesson. Thank you everyone for your contributions."



### Notes and troubleshooting:

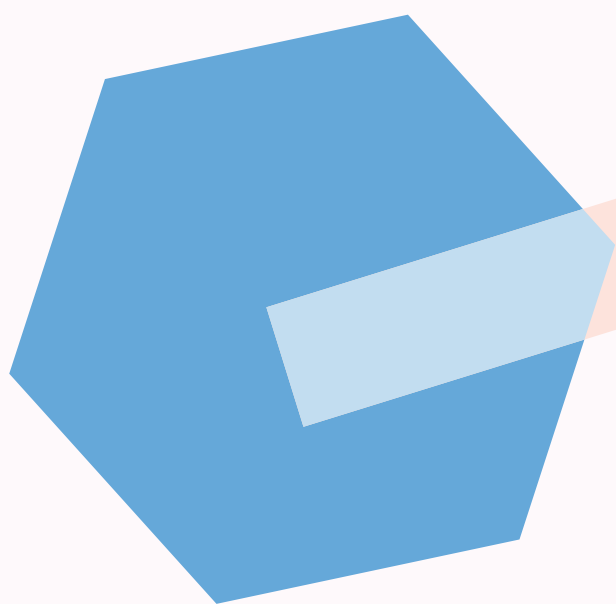
**Prepare:** Select a mindfulness exercise from the [Mindfulness Activities Pack](#).







# Alternative activities



# Taking action 25 mins

Resources needed: • Slides 20-23



## Slide 20

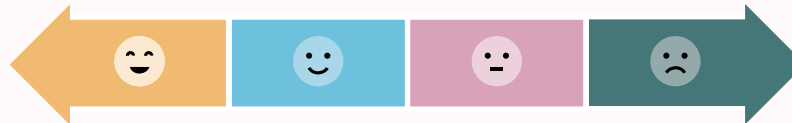
### Taking action



SLIDE 20

## MENTAL HEALTH

Good mental health / coping well



Mental health problems / not coping well



**Do:** Present Slide 20.



**Say:** "Many things in our lives can affect our mental health, such as our family life, where we live, our experiences with friends, and our physical health.

These things can be either helpful or unhelpful for our mental health. We can call these helpful and unhelpful factors 'risk' and 'protective' factors. Some factors will be helpful and unhelpful at different points in life."



## Taking action (continued)

Slide 21

### Taking action



SLIDE 21

Risk factors to  
poor mental  
health

Click to add text



Do:

Present Slide 21.



Say:

**"We are going to think about factors that may be experienced at school, or during adolescence, that may be risk factors to poor mental health."**



Do:

Invite pupils to share their ideas and why they think it is a risk factor to poor mental health. Write their ideas on the slide.

*Time to discuss: 5 minutes*



Notes and troubleshooting:

**Prepare:** Prepare a list of school-based risk factors to use as prompts if Peer Learners are unable to think of many themselves e.g. bullying, exam stress and moving schools.





SLIDE 22

### Transitioning to secondary school

HELPFUL

Click to add text

UNHELPFUL

Click to add text

CHALLENGING

Click to add text



Do:

Present Slide 22.



Say:

**“Transitioning to a new school is an example of a risk factor to mental health. We are going to spend some time to reflect on our transition to secondary school and discuss what you found helpful, unhelpful and challenging.”**



Ask:

Invite pupils to share their ideas on things that were helpful, unhelpful, and challenging during their transition to secondary school. Write their ideas on the slide.

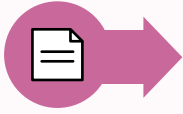
Remind pupils that, although it is something we have all been through, the experience of starting secondary school will be unique to each of them.

*Time to discuss: 10 minutes.*

*Continued...*



## Taking action (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting:

**Classroom management:** It may be useful to share helpful and unhelpful things from your own experience of the transition to secondary school, to build a connection with the pupils and remind them you have been through it to.



#### Taking action



SLIDE 23

What could the school do to improve the transition to secondary school?

Click to add text



Do:

#### Present Slide 23.

Put the pupils in small groups to discuss what the school could do to reduce or remove the unhelpful and challenging things during the transition period. For example, could all staff wear a name badge for the first two weeks of school to help pupils remember their names.

*Time to discuss: 5 minutes.*



Do:

Bring the class back together and ask pupils to share their ideas. Write down their suggestions on the slide.

*Time to discuss: 5 minutes.*



#### Notes and troubleshooting:

**Follow-up:** Share the slides from this section with the Head of Year, so they can read the experiences of the pupils and what changes could be made to improve the transition experience for future pupils.



# Challenging thinking 25 mins



Resources needed: • Slides 24-38

## Slide 24

### Challenging thinking



SLIDE 24



**Do:** Present Slide 24.



**Say:** “Many things in our lives can affect our mental health, such as our family life, where we live, our experiences with friends, and our physical health.

These things can be either helpful or unhelpful for our mental health. We can call these helpful and unhelpful factors ‘risk’ and ‘protective’ factors. Some factors will be helpful and unhelpful at different points in life.”



## Challenging thinking (continued)

Slide 25

### Challenging thinking



SLIDE 25



#### Stigma:

Negative beliefs and attitudes about a feature of a person or group of people, based on social, institutional, or self-perceived stereotypes.



#### Discrimination:

Giving some people less favourable treatment because of a characteristic that they have, which might include being less able to access opportunities and resources.



Do:

Present Slide 25.



Say:

**"Sometimes people can experience mental health discrimination and stigma based on the risk and protective factors they have, but also misinformation about mental health that is shared widely.**

**We are going to discuss different myths and facts about mental health problems and why they happen."**







**TRUE**  **FALSE**  
 **OR** 



Do:

**Present Slides 26-38.**

For each statement, ask the class to vote:

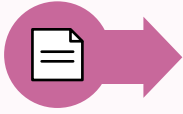
- Hands up for true, and then
- Hands up for false.

Invite pupils to share with the class why they chose their answer.

Present the answer and explanation for each statement on the next slide. Invite pupils to share their thoughts, especially if it was opposite to their original answer.



## Challenging thinking (continued)



### Notes and troubleshooting

**Questions:** Managing a discussion amongst the class can be tricky. If someone mentions a statement that they find surprising, you could ask:

- “Will you do anything differently now you know this is true/false?”
- “Why do you think it’s so important that we know the right information about this?”
- “Does anyone else feel the same/differently?”

When you want to wrap up the discussion, try saying something like: “There were some really interesting thoughts in that discussion, let’s move on to our next activity.”



# The risk and protective factors to mental health worksheet

## MENTAL HEALTH

Good mental  
health /  
coping well



Mental health  
problems / not  
coping well

### INDIVIDUAL FACTORS



Definition:

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Examples:

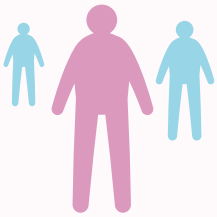
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### SOCIAL FACTORS



Definition:

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Examples:

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### ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS



Definition:

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Examples:

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# Reflection worksheet



One thing I have learned:

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One thing I would do differently:

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One question I would like an answer to:

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**Many thanks to the pupils and staff who have delivered the Peer Education Project since 2015, and have provided feedback on the resources.**