



Lesson Plan

Grade 9, 10

60–75 min

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# Jack Talk On Demand: Mental Health Essentials

This On Demand Jack Talk uses peer-to-peer learning to teach young people across Canada that we all have mental health and we all need to care for it. Jack Talks aim to reduce barriers to help-seeking through the goals of all Jack.org programs: increasing mental health awareness, knowledge, and literacy; reducing negative attitudes like shame, stigma, and silence; and advocating for more appropriate and accessible services.

## Mental Health

[Social Determinants](#)
[Coping Skills](#)
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[Barriers](#)
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# Before You Teach

Before you teach, we recommend you review our supporting resources:

🔍 [Mental health 101 | Teaching Guide](#) →

🔍 [Classroom Discussion Guide | Teaching Guide](#) →

🔍 [Safer Language | Teaching Guide](#) →

## *Considerations*

Talking about mental health can sometimes be difficult for young people — especially those who are struggling or have experienced a difficult situation. While we have done everything we can to ensure our messages are well evaluated, safe, and as non-triggering as possible — in accordance with multiple academic and school boards' best practices — there are also some considerations that schools/organizations can work through to make sure your Jack Talk is a safe and positive experience for everyone. Please consider the following questions:

1. Is this an appropriate time to have a Jack Talk? For example, has there been a recent loss or trauma in the community (i.e. in the last 6 months) that has affected the youth you work with? If so, we recommend consulting with your administration and internal mental health support team (or equivalent) to determine whether a Jack Talk is appropriate.
2. Is this Jack Talk part of a larger plan for mental health promotion/awareness in my school, complete with additional initiatives, curricula, events, and/or campaigns?
3. Have I accounted for any cultural, religious, or social backgrounds within my student population that should be considered in shaping a relevant and appropriate presentation?
4. Have I accounted for any particularly vulnerable students who may need special arrangements or additional support?
5. Are mental health supports available for consultation afterwards?
6. Am I able to notify families and other community members that a Jack Talk is occurring and equip them with resources to talk about mental health at home? Note: we can provide these!

**If you answered no to any of these questions, this may be cause for concern. Please reach out to [talks@jack.org](mailto:talks@jack.org) to discuss. We will be happy to explore any safety concerns you may have, and help you move forward in a way that's appropriate to your particular environment.**

# Lesson Summary

In this lesson, your students will learn about the foundations of mental health via **Jack Talk On Demand: Mental Health Essentials**, a mental health presentation delivered by young people to young people. They are able to check their understanding and consolidate their learning via a series of quizzes and activities. The run-time of the recorded Talk is **30 minutes**. We recommend that you set aside additional time for the optional engagement activities, which we suggest you do throughout the Talk.

This Talk is delivered by two trained youth speakers aged 18-24 so there is an authentic peer-to-peer connection between the speakers and the audience. The speakers share their own mental health story in accordance with our Safe Storytelling guidelines which ensure that audiences receive the story in a way that is non-triggering and positive.

**Jack Talk On Demand: Mental Health Essentials** features two of our brilliant speakers, Gurjeet and Dennis, both of whom have been trained in the Jack Talks curriculum and have each delivered many Talks. This Talk will help young audiences understand:

- Basic mental health knowledge (mental health spectrum, mental illness spectrum, signs of struggle and signs of crisis)
- How to be there for yourself (the importance of self-care and self-awareness)
- Community supports and how to find local resources
- How to be there for others (5 Golden Rules on supporting others)
- How to get involved in youth mental health

*This lesson is designed to be followed by the [Jack Talk On Demand: Mental Health Essentials Post-Talk Discussion and Activities lesson](#), where your students can consolidate their learning through discussion, reflection, and application of knowledge. Students are provided with further opportunities to consider the mental health needs of their community and themselves.*

**Live** versions of our Jack Talks, where two youth speakers present to your students virtually or in-person, are also available! Find out more about all of our offerings here: [Talks](#).

## Learning Goals

Your students will be able to:

- Distinguish between mental health and mental illness;
- Understand the dual spectrum of mental health and mental illness;
- Understand the difference between struggle and crisis;
- Recognize 2-3 common signs and symptoms of a struggle and crisis;
- Understand the importance of self-care and self-awareness, identifying cues of when they might be struggling as well as coping strategies.

# Materials for Lesson 1 of 2

## ■ Video


 [Jack Talk On Demand: Mental Health Essentials](#) →


## ■ Slide Deck


 [Jack Talk On Demand: Mental Health Essentials](#) →

## ■ Handouts

 [Jack Talk Handout 1: Self-Esteem Brainstorm](#) →

 [Jack Talk Handout 2: Being There for Others](#) →

 [Jack Talk Handout 3: Finding Resources](#) →

 [Jack Talk Handout 4: Post Talk Handout](#) →

## ■ Additional Materials

- *Teacher computer, projector, and speakers*
- *[Parent/Guardian Letter](#)*

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# Learning Overview

- Part 1: **Minds On** (5-10 minutes)
- Part 2: **Action Tasks** (45-60 minutes)
- Part 3: **Consolidation** (3-5 minutes)

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# Lesson Procedure

**Note:** All parts of the lesson procedure can be found in the slide deck provided.

Land Acknowledgement (Slide 2)

In the slide deck, we have included Jack.org's land acknowledgement. We encourage you to write your own, acknowledging the Nations, communities, territories and treaties upon which you live and work, and your calls to action for reconciliation / Self Pledge.

Here are some resources to support you:

- [Why Acknowledge?](#)
- [Territory Acknowledgement - Native-Land.ca.](#)

## Part 1: Minds On (5-10 minutes)

### 1. “What Would You Do?” Quick Scenarios (Slides 3-4)

Read aloud the following scenarios with your students. You can invite short written responses, a pair-share, or a few popcorn-style answers aloud

#### *Scenario 1: Self-Awareness & Coping*

**Prompt:** You’ve been feeling overwhelmed for a few weeks — your sleep is off, you’ve lost interest in things you normally enjoy, and you’re snapping at people more than usual. You’re not sure if this is just stress or something more.

**What would you do to take care of yourself or get support?**

#### *Possible Student Responses:*

- “I’d try to get more sleep or take a break from social media.”
- “Talk to a friend I trust — just vent a little.”
- “Write in a journal or listen to music to calm down.”
- “Tell a parent or other adult how I’ve been feeling.”
- “Go for a walk or play sports to burn some negative energy.”

Misconceptions students might express:

- “I’d just wait for it to pass — I don’t want to bother anyone.”
- “I’d hide it — people might think I’m being dramatic.”

If your students express misconceptions, gently challenge these in the debrief to reinforce the message that support is for everyone, not just “big emergencies.” The speakers in the video will also address this.

#### *Scenario 2: Supporting a Friend*

**Prompt:** A friend tells you they’re “fine”, but they’ve stopped coming to practice, haven’t been posting online like they usually do, and seem really down. You’re not sure how to bring it up or if it’s even your place to say something. What could you say or do to show you care without pressuring them?

Follow up with: *“Would your answer change if you noticed they were in crisis?”*

#### *Possible Student Responses:*

- “Just spend time with them, even if we don’t talk about it.”
- “Tell them I’m worried, hope you’re okay, but won’t push them.”
- “Offer to go with them to talk to someone if they want help.”
- “Let them know I’ve gone through tough stuff too — they’re not alone.”
- “I’d ask directly, ‘Are you really okay?’ or something like that.”

**Misconceptions students might express:**

- “It’s probably none of my business.”
- “If they wanted help, they’d ask.”
- “I wouldn’t want to say the wrong thing.”

**Follow-up options students might consider:**

- Talk to a trusted adult (teacher, parent, coach, counsellor).
- Help your friend reach out to a support line or resource.
- Stay with them if they seem unsafe, and don’t keep it a secret — safety comes first.

Remind your students that being a good friend doesn’t mean having all the answers — you don’t need to be a therapist to show someone you care. The speakers in the video will share some simple, real ways to support others and take care of yourself.

Bridge to video: “Today we are going to watch a video about being there — for ourselves and for others — and what real support can look like.”

## 2. Content Overview (Slides 5-6)

Review with your students the content that will be covered in the Talk:

- What mental health is (mental health spectrum, mental illness spectrum, signs of struggle and signs of crisis)
- How to be there for yourself (the importance of self-care and self-awareness)
- How to be there for others (5 Golden Rules on supporting others)
- How to find community supports and local resources
- How to get involved in youth mental health advocacy

Our speakers’ stories will also touch lightly on the following themes:

- Academic pressure/stress
- Mental Illness
- Self-esteem and self-image
- Suicidal Ideation

## 3. Ensuring a Positive Experience (Slide 7)

**Reminder About Mental Health Support**

Remind your students that there is support available should they need it during class.

Adapt the slide as necessary to reflect resources that are available in your specific setting. You may also wish to post this information in additional locations that students can easily view/access.

## Part 2: Action Tasks (45-60 minutes)

This Jack Talk is broken down into 4 main parts, plus a Frequently Asked Questions section at the end.

1. Introduction and Mental Health 101 Video (8 minutes)
  - *Knowledge Check (slides 10-15)*
2. Being There for Ourselves Video (8 minutes)
  - *Knowledge Check (slides 18-23)*
  - *Optional Activity 1: Self-Esteem Brainstorm*
3. Being There for Others Video (9.5 minutes)
  - *Knowledge Check (slides 27-40)*
  - *Optional Activity 2: Being There for Others*
  - *Optional Activity 3: Finding Resources*
4. Calls to Action Video (1.5 minutes)
5. FAQ Video (2.5 minutes)

We've designed the video and slide deck so that you can pause at key points to engage your students in Knowledge Checks and Activities throughout the lesson. Since you know your students best, feel free to choose the questions and activities that best support their learning, and decide when to introduce them. All activity handouts can be found under Materials.

Depending on the length of your class periods, you may also choose to have your students complete some activities in a future class or assign them as at-home reflections.

## Part 3: Consolidation (3-5 minutes)

Choose the consolidation activity that best fits your students and adapt it as needed. Depending on the time remaining, the activity can be started in class or finished at home. We've included both options in the slide deck for flexibility.

### *Option 1: "I Used to Think... Now I Think..."*

To encourage reflection and reveal mindset shifts, especially around stigma or support, have your students complete the following prompt.

#### **Prompt:**

Complete the sentence based on what you learned today about mental health: "I used to think \_\_\_\_\_, but now I think \_\_\_\_\_."

### *Option 2: "One Step, One Support, One Share"*

To help your students connect their learning to real-life action, have them complete a quick 1-2-3 list.

#### **Prompt:**

"Take a moment to think about what we learned today. You don't need to write a full paragraph – just a few words or short sentences."

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### Ask them to respond to these 3 prompts:

**1. One Step:**

What is one thing you can do this week to support your own mental health?  
(e.g., take a walk, journal, sleep earlier, unplug before bed, talk to someone)

**2. One Support:**

Who is one person or place you could go to if you ever needed support?  
(e.g., friend, teacher, parent, school counsellor, Kids Help Phone)

**3. One Share:**

What's one message or fact from today's lesson you would share with a friend?  
(e.g., "Mental health is a spectrum." or "You don't have to fix someone to help them.")

## Extension Activity

 **Jack Talk Handout 4: Post Talk Handout** →

This handout is intended to help your students reflect on their own mental health after the Talk.

Follow this lesson with our [Post Talk Discussion and Activities lesson](#).

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# Curriculum Connections

## British Columbia

### *Physical and Health Education 9*

### Learning Standards: Curricular Competency

#### *Mental well-being*

- Analyze strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others
- Assess and evaluate strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, for others

#### *Social and community health:*

- Propose strategies for developing and maintaining healthy relationships

### Learning Standards: Content

- Signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression

# Manitoba

## *Physical Education/Health Education: Senior 2*

### Learning Outcomes

#### ***K.4.S2.B.2a***

- Evaluate the benefits of effective communication skills (e.g., listen actively, paraphrase, show appreciation, criticize ideas, not people...) for getting along with family, friends, and peers in school, community, and/or the workplace.use, for others

#### ***K.4.S2.C.1a***

- Describe the behaviours necessary for providing others with support and promoting emotional health and well-being.

#### ***S.4.S2.A.3***

- Apply communication skills and strategies in case scenarios for getting along with others in a variety of contexts

#### ***S.4.S2.A.5***

- Apply stress-management strategies and communication skills for stress reduction for self and/or others in case scenarios related to stressful situations

# New Brunswick

## *Personal Wellness 9*

### Big Idea: Positive Mental Health

#### *Achievement Indicators*

- Assess how listening and empathy support the positive mental health of peers
- List resources for mental illness and suicide prevention

# Nova Scotia

## *Healthy Living 9*

### Specific Curriculum Outcomes

- 9.2 recognize the warning signs of depressive disorders and the importance of seeking help for these disorders
- 9.15 examine the negative impact of stereotyping and stigma upon help-seeking behaviour
- 9.20 identify school and community-based resources and health services available to assist themselves or a friend if help or information in the area of sexual health, mental health, alcohol, and other substance use or gambling is needed, and practise how to make initial contact with such a service/resource

## Ontario

### *Healthy Active Living Education, Grade 9 (PPL10)*

## Specific Expectations

### *C3. Making Connections for Healthy Living*

- C3.2 identify warning signs and symptoms that could be related to mental health concerns (e.g., inability to cope with stress; feelings of sadness, anxiety, hopelessness, or worthlessness; negative thoughts about oneself, others, and the future; thoughts of suicide), and describe a variety of strategies for coping with or responding to mental health concerns affecting oneself or others (e.g., stress and mood management techniques, identifying ways to seek help for oneself or a friend/classmate, supporting others who are struggling with their emotional well-being) [PS, IS]

## Prince Edward Island

### *Wellness (PED401A)*

## Outcomes and Indicators

W4. Assess the impact of mental health on overall well-being of self, family, and community.

a. Reflect on and discuss personal and community beliefs and biases about mental health.

d. Describe, with information from a variety of mental health experts, the factors that contribute to positive mental health (e.g., involvement in extracurricular activities, belonging to a team/group).

k. Investigate the relationships between personal mental health and personal wellness (e.g., feeling well, functioning well and being resilient, making positive changes, being physically fit).

m. Examine the interconnectedness and interdependence of mental health and a variety of activities (e.g., leisure activities, competitive sports, physical activities, helping someone or some cause).

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# Yukon

## *Physical and Health Education 9*

### Learning Standards: Curricular Competency

Mental well-being:

- Analyze strategies for promoting mental well-being, for self and others
- Assess and evaluate strategies for managing problems related to mental well-being and substance use, for others

Social and community health:

- Propose strategies for developing and maintaining healthy relationships

### Learning Standards: Content

- signs and symptoms of stress, anxiety, and depression

*\*Yukon schools follow the British Columbia (B.C.) curriculum, with adaptations to include: Yukon content; and Yukon First Nations' ways of knowing and doing. <https://yukon.ca/en/school-curriculum>*

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Next Lesson →