

The background is a solid blue color with a pattern of overlapping, curved, light blue lines that create a sense of movement and depth. The lines are of varying thickness and curve in different directions, some resembling the shape of leaves or petals.

Being healthy – enjoying good physical and mental health and living a healthy lifestyle

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Emotional Health

Health is defined by the World Health Organization as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity’.

Our health is linked to the way we live our lives and our opportunities for choosing health. Health and life expectancy are not shared equally across the population and there remain big differences in health between those at the top and bottom ends of the social scale. Mental health problems are more common in areas of deprivation (Department of Health website). Young people who have been excluded from schools are likely to have more physical and mental health problems than other young people.

Emotional (or mental) health refers to the capacity we have to feel good about who we are and feel confident to deal positively with present and future circumstances. The first section of this unit focuses on emotional health, rather than physical health because it is emotional resilience and resourcefulness that supports us in making healthier choices.

Someone who is emotionally healthy has, among other things, a secure sense of who they are and an ability to be themselves – though this changes over time and develops as we grow; a sense of self-worth; a belief in their own ability; and an ability to recognise, care about and take responsibility for the impact of their behaviour on others (Bird and Gerlach 2005). The term ‘emotional health’ is used in *Life Routes* although others may refer to the same as ‘positive mental health’.

Research shows that emotions can hinder or promote learning. A young person first needs to feel safe and calm to learn (Health Development Agency 2004). To do this they need to be able to recognise and describe how they are feeling, and respond appropriately. Many vulnerable young people find it hard to name the feelings they are having because they haven’t learned the right word, or because their emotions seem too complex to describe. One way to become aware of our feelings is to become more aware of physical reactions to emotional states. Paying more attention to body signals, and linking the body’s signals to feelings increases our ‘feelings’ vocabulary.

Activities 2 to 4 in this section give young people the experience of naming feelings and becoming more conscious of the impact of feelings on behaviour. Activity 5 focuses on developing simple strategies for managing emotions.

I want to be able to manage my emotions. You can't let your emotions take over.

Young woman aged 15

Learning outcomes

Young people will:

- have an increased vocabulary to describe their feelings (Activity 2)
- recognise and understand their body signals for emotional states (Activity 3)
- be able to identify their triggers (i.e. situations which provoke a strong emotional reaction) (Activity 4)
- have developed strategies to manage in difficult situations or when things go wrong (Activity 5).

You will need

- large sheets of paper
- pens for display work
- marker pens in two contrasting colours
- one copy of Worksheet 1: *Feelings wheel*
- one copy for each person of Worksheet 2: *Triggers*

Optional:

- art materials
- magazines.

Suggested icebreakers:

How I feel
(See page 21)

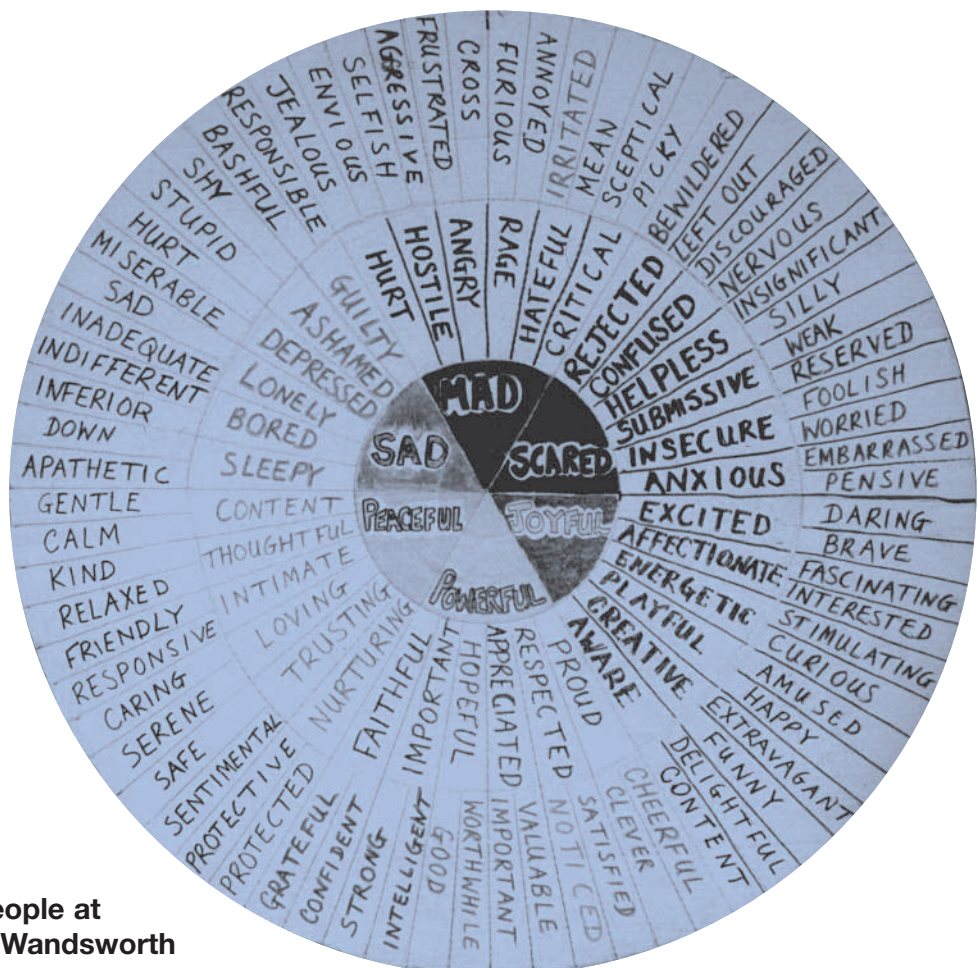


Activity 2: Developing a 'feelings vocabulary'

There are three options for this activity. Choose the one that is most appropriate for your group.

Option (a) The feelings wheel

1. Using a large piece of paper draw a circle and separate into segments, or use the example on worksheet 1 (See the photo below).
2. Either start with six words in the inner circle (for example, happy, sad, powerful, peaceful, angry, scared) or ask the group to choose and agree six words that describe different emotions and write these in the inner circle.
3. Brainstorm alternative words for the original six and develop a second/middle circle of feelings words.
4. Finally, brainstorm an outer circle of feelings words that further develop the original words in the centre of the circle.
5. The wheel can be developed over a period of time and used as an ongoing resource for the young people.



A feelings wheel developed by young people at Francis Barber PRU in Wandsworth

Option (b) An A to Z of emotions

1. Divide the young people into groups of three or four.
2. Give each group a large piece of paper with the alphabet down the left hand side.
3. Get them to write one feeling or emotion next to each letter (for example, H = happy).

Or:

4. In one large group brainstorm as many feelings words as possible for each letter.
5. Ask the group to divide the feelings into ones that make us feel good or bad, using different colours for each. There may be some feelings in both sets, and this provides an opportunity to explore when and why this might be.

An A to Z of emotions developed by young people

- A = anger, admiration, afraid, alone, amazing, alright, attractive, atrocious, attentive, anxious, apprehensive
- B = bored, beautiful, boastful, bad, bubbly
- C = calm, cranky, courageous, caring
- D = depressed, daring, delightful, dreamy
- E = encouraging, envious, empathetic, empty, energetic
- F = fragile, feminine, friendly, frightened
- G = gay, gregarious, grateful, generous, gracious
- H = happy, hysterical, horrible, horny, hungover, high
- I = ill, invisible, intellectual, inspired, intimidated, ignorant, ignored, irresistible, irritated
- J = jumpy, joyful, jolly
- K = kind, kinky, kissable
- L = lonely, lovely, luscious, low, lazy, lickable
- M = mature, mad, misunderstood, mean, manly, mental
- N = naked, nothing
- O = ostentatious, old, ok
- P = peaceful, persuasive, 'pissed', polite, pensive, precious, pleased
- Q = quiet
- R = restless, rebellious, relieved
- S = sexy, serious, scared, special, surprised, sad
- T = tense, tired, talkative
- U = unsure, undignified
- V = vexed
- W = warm, wet, wonderful
- X = xcited
- Y = youthful
- Z = zealous

Option (c) The feelings bank

1. Divide the young people into small groups of three or four.
2. Give each group a large piece of paper, pens in three different colours, and a selection of art materials and magazines.
3. With one pen write the word 'feelings' in the middle of the paper.
4. Ask the young people to fill the rest of the piece of paper with as many 'feelings' words or pictures as they can, to use as a 'feelings bank'. For example:
 - they could use art materials, for example coloured paper, felt tips or fabric
 - they could cut out pictures from magazines that illustrate different facial expressions and explain what the expressions mean to them.
 - they can use different colours to represent feelings that make them feel happy or sad. There may be some feelings that are both happy and sad, and this provides an opportunity to explore when and why this might be.
5. Leave time after the activity for the young people to present their sheet to the group and describe the feelings words and pictures they have found.
6. The 'feelings bank' can be used as a prompt during other work on understanding emotions that the group undertakes.

Reflection

How did it feel to do this activity?
How was it more difficult than you expected?
How was this exercise useful?
What did you learn?

Facilitators note

Remember to display the posters, feelings wheels and other artwork in a prominent place in the room. Young people will get used to being surrounded by the vocabulary of emotions. Regular reference to them will help them to feel more comfortable using these words. It will also boost their self-esteem and confidence to see their work displayed.



Activity 3: Triggers

Either:

1. Give each participant a copy of Worksheet 2: *Triggers* (see page 40, and ask them to write down their immediate responses to the questions. If they need examples offer some.
2. Ask each young person to share their responses with a partner.
3. Back in the whole group, invite the young people to discuss responses and identify where there are similarities and differences.
4. Identify ways to manage situations positively.

Or:

1. As a whole group brainstorm the questions on Worksheet 2. This is particularly helpful if participants have low literacy levels.

Or:

1. Explore the questions on Worksheet 2 through role-play. In pairs or small groups, ask them to select one of their 'triggers' and prepare a short role-play showing the trigger and the response to it. Those watching can try to guess the trigger.

Reflection

What was the most important thing you learned in this activity?

Which of other people's triggers were like yours?

What ways did you learn about managing difficult situations?



Activity 4: Physical reactions

1. Divide into small groups and ask each group to draw a simple outline of the human body on a sheet of paper.
2. Ask one person to act out a frozen image of an emotion.
3. Get the groups to guess which emotion is being demonstrated and to describe what they see, for example, clenched teeth, sad face.
4. Ask the groups to draw on the appropriate parts of the body what physical reaction there may be to feeling that emotion, for example, feeling hot, mind racing, heart beating, sweaty hands.
5. Discuss these physical warning signs – everyone is different and will react differently. Point out that it is helpful to recognise early warning signs as this will help them make choices about how to deal with and respond to an emotion.

Reflection

Which physical reactions did you identify with?
How can understanding physical reactions help you understand what you are feeling and manage your behaviour?



Activity 5: Developing strategies for dealing with stressful situations

1. Using some of the triggers from Activity 3, ask the young people to identify possible feelings associated with the trigger.
2. Give the young people a storyboard, either individually or in pairs, and ask them to write a story that manages the situation and triggers positively. Examples might include:
 - bringing a conversation to an end, by agreeing to differ, instead of shouting
 - walking away from the situation if you feel too angry to keep calm, to avoid possible violent outcomes
 - bringing in someone who is not involved to help calm the situation
 - checking your body language to see how you are reacting (for example, crossed arms may demonstrate defensiveness; moving hands quickly may show anger or frustration)
3. Invite young people to role-play the difficult situations, but showing positive management, including the use of effective body language.

Reflection

Can you identify one thing you can change to help you manage your emotions when you feel angry or stressed?

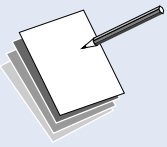
What will help you make this change?

What will stop you making this change?

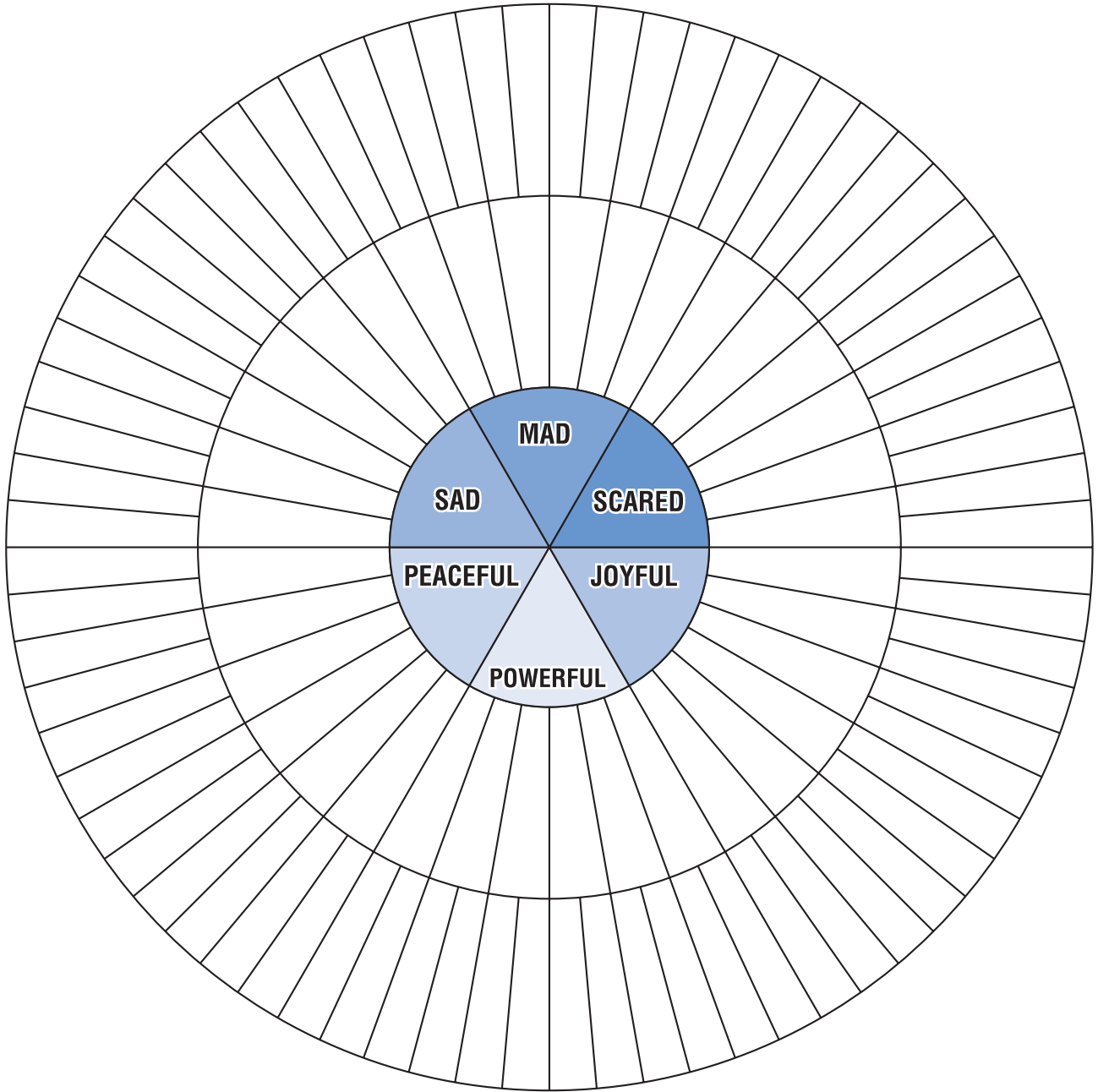
What is the most helpful thing you have learned today?

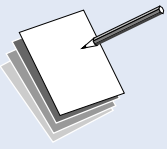
Facilitators note

Activity 5 builds on Activities 3 and 4, and provides an opportunity to try out different ways of dealing with difficult situations, such as those identified in Triggers on page 37. Use the Storyboard from *Creative assessment* (see page 26).



Worksheet 1: The feelings wheel





Worksheet 2: Triggers

What irritates you?

What excites you?

What makes you angry?

What makes you happy?

What frightens or upsets you?

What grabs your attention?

What frustrates you?

Physical health

Our self-esteem and sense of worth and well-being – our emotional health, in other words – are closely linked to our physical health and choices we make about our health. Vulnerable young people are more likely to engage in risky behaviours and have low self-esteem than other young people, as well as being less able to access the services and information that will support them in making healthy choices.

We receive messages about health from many sources – the media, our friends, our family, our doctors and other service providers. Messages are both verbal and non-verbal. Sometimes they conflict and sometimes they come from sources we do not respect or would prefer to ignore.

It is often hard to disentangle how messages impact on our attitudes, thoughts and emotional and physical feelings before we decide on actions. The first activity aims to provide a starting point for young people to feel more autonomous and in control of their health-related behaviours.

The second activity involves the young people in a health challenge, with the aim of motivating young people to take responsibility for their health and well-being.

Learning outcomes

Young people will:

- have the opportunity to identify health messages and how they impact on them and their lifestyles (Activity 6)
- understand the importance of eating healthily, living healthily and taking part in physical activity (Activity 6)
- have developed their skills in identifying choices, making decisions, communicating with peers, family and community services, goal-setting and planning (Activity 7)
- have increased confidence in their ability to instigate and maintain lifestyle changes and to access help when they need it (Activity 7)
- understand the link between emotional and physical health and how that impacts on their lifestyle (Activity 7).

You will need

- magazines
- paper
- pens
- one copy per group of Worksheet 3: *What I learned about health*
- one copy per participant of Worksheet 4: *My health challenge*
- one copy per participant of Worksheet 5: *My challenge checklist*.

Suggested icebreakers:

Now the news (Activity 6)

One thing I would change (Activity 7)

(See page 21)



Activity 6:

What health means to us

1. Explain that we receive messages about health from many sources.
2. Discuss with the young people what is meant by 'health'. Include both physical and emotional health.
3. Divide the young people into small groups. Give each group a copy of Worksheet 3. Ask them to write, draw or make a collage of where they learn or have learnt about health – both negative and positive.

Then either:

- 4a. Back in the whole group share:
 - similarities and differences between their worksheets
 - the most significant messages
 - messages they like and don't like
 - helpful/unhelpful messages
 - messages that had a positive effect
 - messages that had a negative effect
 - ideas for any messages they would like to change.

Or:

- 4b. In pairs or small groups, ask them to choose one or more of the health messages and either:
 - use art materials to design a leaflet around one or more of the health messages

Or:

- prepare a storyline and slogan for a TV advert.

Reflection

What are the different messages for boys and girls?

In what different ways are the messages put across?

What did you learn today?

How will you use what you have learned?



Activity 7: Health challenge for young people

1. Divide the group into pairs that feel happy working together and are able to support each other through the challenge.
2. Ask each pair to think about their current health and lifestyle. What elements are unhealthy or healthy? What are their motivations? Discuss what is meant by 'eating healthily' and 'physical activity'.
3. Using Worksheet 4 ask each young person what they would like to do and/or change during the challenge. Stress that their individual goals should be realistic, and that they should set no more than three. These should include eating more healthily than normal and getting more physical activity. When they are setting their goals, ask them to think carefully about how they can achieve them.
4. When they have done this, ask them to complete Worksheet 4.
5. In a group, ask the young people which friends, family or people in their community they could talk to about health and healthy lifestyles, to get ideas, inspiration, advice and support. Ask them to fill in these names on Worksheet 4.
6. Talk about some of the practical things that they could do to achieve their goals, for example:
 - go to their local shops and spend an identified amount on healthy food
 - explore different physical activities available in their community.

During the challenge the feedback process is very important.

Worksheet 5 provides a checklist of things the young people might want to think about. Encourage them to be creative in recording their feedback. You could:

- a) Spend five minutes each day recording the young people on video to get their views on how it is going. They will need space and privacy to say what they think, so you may need to set up a quiet room for this. Points to cover include:
 - how the challenge is going
 - what they have learned so far
 - what difficulties or challenges they are facing
 - what has helped
 - how they are feeling and whether their feelings have had any impact on their challenge.
- b) Give each young person a diary that they can spend five minutes on each night answering the same questions as above.
- c) Create a chart that can be completed each day using art materials or pictures from magazines to record their progress in their health challenge.
- d) Use a camera to take photos of what they are doing.

Reflection

Would you like to continue to try to lead a healthier life style? What might help you to do so? What barriers might there be?

How can you use the learning from the health challenge in future?

What did you learn about your attitude to living more healthily?

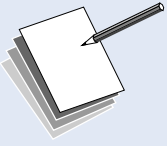
What help and support do you need to live more healthily and who will you get that help from?

How will you ask for this help?

Facilitators note

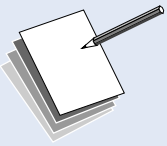
Some key points to consider in running this activity are:

- What opportunities for healthy eating or physical activity are available to support young people during the challenge.
- Choose a time period to suit the young people, for example, the challenge could run for one, two or four days. In exceptional circumstances it may be possible to maintain motivation for longer.
- The challenge is about having a go, participating, learning from whatever happens and enjoying it.
- Discuss what healthy eating and physical activity are in order to check young people's understanding, and provide the general outline of a healthy lifestyle. For example, you could talk about:
 - healthy eating: the government recommends an intake of at least five portions of fruit or vegetables per person per day
 - physical activity: young people should do at least one hour of at least moderate intensity physical activity (such as brisk walking) a day (Health Education Authority 1998), which can include play as well as sport.
- Can you invite in a nurse, dietician or fitness instructor to advise on food and physical activity?
- Young people may not get it 'right' all the time during their challenge. For example, they may buy 'unhealthy' food without realising it. This is not a problem – use it as an opportunity to explore with young people why they bought this food and what some of the health issues might be. It will also give you pointers as to what additional education young people need in relation to health.
- Try to ensure that each health challenge reflects a personal journey that the young person wants to go on.
- During the challenge, ask how they are getting on and offer help if they need it.



Worksheet 3: Where I have learnt about health

What have I learnt about health from
TV?
Family?
Magazines?
Sport?
Friends?
Youth services?
Advertising?



Worksheet 4: My health challenge

This is how I would describe my health and lifestyle at the moment:

So my challenge is to:

To achieve this I will:

1. Try and eat more healthily by:

2. Try and do more physical activity by:

3. My third goal is:

During my challenge I will speak to:

1.

2.

3.

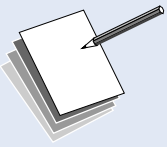
During my health challenge I will also:

1. Visit my local shops and spend £_____ on healthy food

2. Explore opportunities for physical activity in my local community

3.

4.



Worksheet 5: My challenge checklist

Things you could include in your diary:	Thursday
<p>What healthy food did you eat?</p> <p>What exercise did you do?</p> <p>What did you notice on the TV about food or exercise?</p> <p>How did you feel when you ate something healthy/unhealthy?</p>	
Monday	Friday
Tuesday	Saturday
Wednesday	Sunday