

Module 4: Physical Well-being



Subject: Psychological Well-being

Duration of Unit: 2 classes (45 min each)

Central Message: Regular aerobic exercise, exposure to sunlight, and many nutrients have recently been shown to have a powerful impact on mood and wellbeing.



LEARNING GOALS

Enduring Understandings:

- Regular, mixed exercise is strongly associated with improved mental well-being and lower depression. Incorporating activity into daily activities (i.e., walking instead of taking the bus) can have an impact as well.
- Getting out and about in the morning, as well as control of nutrition and screen time, can alleviate depression and promote psychological well-being.

Essential Questions:

- Why does exercise improve our mood?
- How does nutrition affect mood?
- What are circadian rhythms and how are they related to well-being?
- How has our modern lifestyle affected exercise, nutrition, and circadian rhythms?

LESSON PLAN

Day 1 Main Topics – Exercise / How to find science-based information

- **Assignment Debrief:** Break students into pairs. Give each member of the pair five minutes to share their experiences with the challenge assignment on kindness. (10 mins)

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- **Class Discussion:** Pick out a few students who exercise at least 3 times per week, and ask them to share with the group what kind of exercise they enjoy, why they exercise, and what benefits they experience. Key questions for those students: Did they experience an improvement in mood? Did it take a while?
(5 mins)
- **Video prep reflection:** Ask students to write notes on why they think physical well-being improves psychological well-being. (5 mins)
- **Watch the video on [Physical Well-being](#)** (15 mins)
- **Video Debrief:** Facilitate a discussion about the video using the following prompt: “What was the most memorable clip, and why?” Use the slide deck to refresh their memories. (5 mins)
- **Group Activity:** Split up students into small groups, and ask each group to read the “abstract” and “discussion” of the Cochrane Review on Exercise for Depression (10 min):
 1. <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD004366.pub6/full>
- **Group Share:** Then, have groups prepare a short presentation for their class. Key questions to explore:
 1. What is the difference between a systematic review and an individual study?
 2. How many scientific studies did they review?
 3. Why did they reject so many studies?
 4. What are some key “takeaways” that you may have discovered by carefully reading the summary as well as the abstract? (Note: For example, the discussion concludes that “There was no difference between exercise and psychological therapy or pharmacological treatment on the primary outcome.”) (10 mins)
- **Assignment prep:**

Introduce [PMC](#), the largest, free full-text archive of biomedical and life sciences in the world, and [PubMed](#), which is larger, but includes abstracts without full text.
(For example, show students how to find systematic reviews on sleep and wellbeing, by trying “sleep” and various keywords related to well-being such as happiness, subjective well-being, psychological well-being, depression etc.) (10 mins)
- **Assignment:** Find a recent study, preferably a review, in the PubMed database on the impact of physical well-being on psychological well-being. Pick a specific topic such as nutrition, sleep, screen time, or exercise. What are the biggest “takeaways?”

Day 2 Main Topic – Nutrition, circadian rhythms, and sleep

- **Assignment Debrief:** Ask students to summarize what they learned from the study they picked. What surprised them most? (5 min)
- **Group Activity:** Break students into small groups. Each group creates a poster, video, or audio announcement as part of an ad campaign for the school. Ads should focus on the benefits of exercise, nutrition, sleep hygiene / screen time for mental well-being and depression/anxiety prevention. Give students time to work in groups and create their skits or posters. (20 min)
- **Group Presentations:** Each group presents their ad campaign to the class. (20 min)
- **Assignment:** Have students spend a few minutes reflecting on how physiological factors play a role in their own well-being. Have students write down one goal in their Happiness Habit Journal mentioning how they will improve well-being over the course of the semester through: 1) increased physical activity, 2) better nutrition, or 3) increased light exposure.