



THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

MENTAL HEALTH WELL-BEING GUIDE

Online Self-Paced MHPSS Module

Welcome

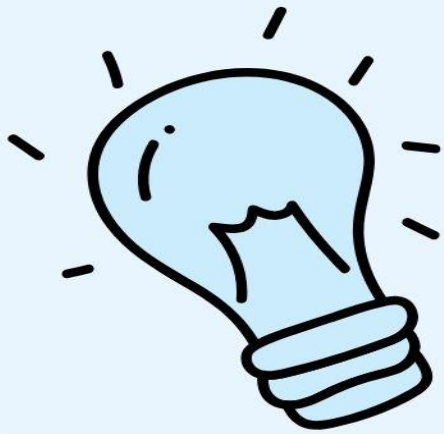
You are welcome to the self-paced Mental wellbeing information section. Mental Health and wellbeing is becoming an essential part of the Education system in Uganda as teachers are often the first point of contact for learners with mental health challenges.

Estimates indicate that almost 78% patients in Butabika psychiatric hospital are children and young people. The Online MHPSS content, has been guided by the need to:

- i) Strengthening peer to peer support;
- ii) Avoiding further harm to anyone who is emotionally challenged;
- iii) Building strong partnerships with the different actors and service providers;
- iv) Collaboration and linkages to specialized services points.

This module provides basic information needed for self help or support to other people within the Education sector. Detailed information is found in the ***National Mental health training manual for Education institutions***.

The basic information provided here should be used alongside the hardcopies of other materials : *Learners' Booklets; Teachers' handbook on Mental health and psychosocial support; and Counseling flip chart*.



Understanding mental well-being and Psychosocial Support

What do we understand by the term mental well-being in adolescents?

Mental well-being is a state of mental health which includes one's social, emotional and psychological aspects of life.



Introduction



- Mental Health (MH) is the state of being where a person thrives. Part of general health
- It results from the interplay of physical, psychological, cognitive, emotional, social, and spiritual aspects that influence actions
- MH affects how we think, feel, and behave in daily life
- MH is the most ignored component of life

What are the dimensions of mental well-being?

There are four dimensions of mental well-being which include:

- ✓ The mental dimension is how a person thinks, processes, understands and uses information.
- ✓ The social dimension is how we connect with others helping us build and maintain relationships.
- ✓ Emotional dimensions which is how we feel, manage and express our emotional
- ✓ The psychological dimension is how we act or function based on external information and personal capacity to make decisions.

How do I know I have a positive well-being?

Emotional Stability:

The ability to manage emotions, express feelings appropriately, and cope with stress and difficult situations.

Psychological Resilience:

The capacity to recover from setbacks, adapt to changes, and overcome problems.

Positive Relationships:

Healthy interpersonal connections that foster emotional support, trust, and mutual respect.

Self-Efficacy:

A healthy sense of self-worth and confidence in one's ability to achieve goals and handle challenges.

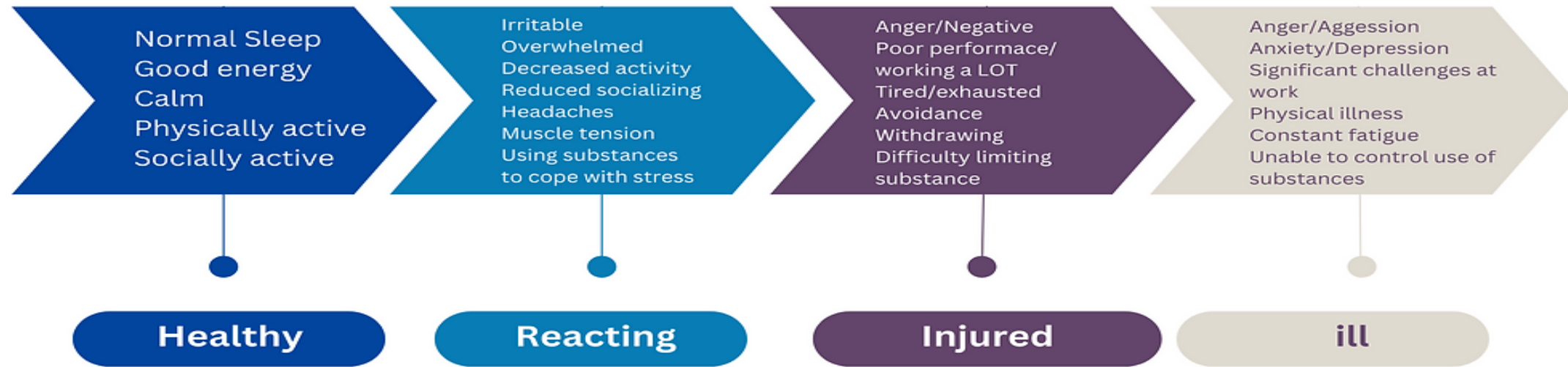
Optimism:

General positive outlook of life and belief in a hopeful future

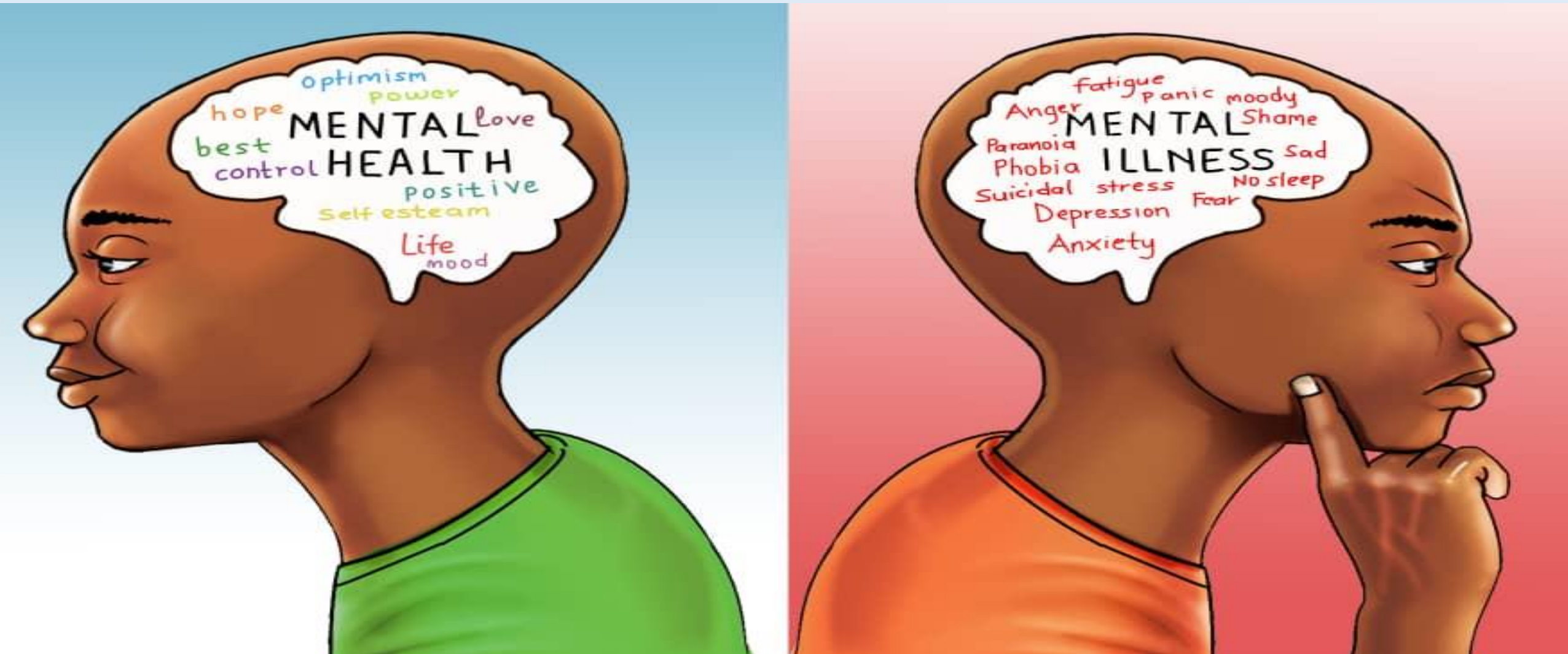


Mental health exist on a continuum

Mental Health Continuum



Mental health Vs mental illness



Although burden of Mental Health is unknown, WHO data(2022) indicate 7.4% Ugandans affected by Mental illness;

Common mental wellbeing challenges in Education sector



Understanding Anxiety

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is an emotional response to a perceived threat characterized by excessive feelings of worry, tension and nervousness.



What are some of the school-related causes of anxiety?



- Academic pressure work, exams and high expectations from parents, teachers and peers
- Social pressures: Struggling to fit into a certain social group which may cause peer pressure.
- Bullying
- Fear of being judged by others
- Family issues (conflict, tension, divorce)
- Financial challenges
- Life transitions e.g. moving to a new school; puberty and physical changes, transition to adulthood etc.
- Trauma, violence and abuse
- Overuse of technology and social media-social comparison and online bullying
- Substance use

- Perfectionism
- Genetics and family history
- Health issues-chronic illness or pain
- Poor sleep habits
- Natural disasters like Landslides, floods, droughts and fires
- Conflicts and wars
- Relationship issues



How can I know that I have, or someone is suffering from anxiety?

Common symptoms of anxiety in adolescents can manifest both emotionally and physically, and they may differ from those in adults. Some symptoms include.

Emotional Symptoms

- Excessive Worry: Constantly feeling anxious or worried about school, friendships, family, or future.
- Irritability: Easily coming frustrated or upset, often over small things.
- Restlessness: Feeling on edge or unable to relax
- Fear of Social Situations: Avoiding social events or feeling extremely nervous in group settings
- Setting high standards: unrealistically high standards and feeling distressed when unable to meet them.
- Fear to take “wrong decisions”

Physical Symptoms

- Fatigue: Feeling tired, even after sufficient rest
- Muscle tension: Experiencing headache, muscle aches, or tension, especially in the shoulders or neck.
- Sleep Problems: Difficulty falling asleep, and staying asleep. Or having restless sleep.
- Stomach issues: Nausea, upset stomach, or frequent trips to the bathroom.
- Sweating or shaking: Unexplained physical sensations like sweating and shaking.
- Increased heart rate or racing heart



How can I know that I have, or someone is suffering from anxiety?

Behavioural Symptoms

- Avoidance: Staying away from activities or situations that are associated with the perceived fear or threat.
- Difficulty Concentrating: Trouble focusing or staying attentive in class, undertaking tests or exams or other tasks.
- A decline in school performance: Poor academic performance is associated with lowered grades.
- Withdrawing: Isolating themselves from friends or family.



If these symptoms persist and interfere with daily life, it may indicate an anxiety disorder and you may need support from a trained mental health service provider.

NB. While occasional anxiety is a normal part of life among adolescents and young people, excessive or chronic anxiety which affects daily function can develop into an anxiety disorder.



How can I cope with Anxiety Disorder?

Coping with anxiety disorder involves a combination of strategies that can help manage symptoms and improve overall well-being. Here are some methods that could help to address Anxiety;

- Seek therapy and counselling services from the nearest provider such as a Senior Woman/Man Teacher/School Counsellor or NGO partner.
- Seek medical treatment from nearest health facility.
- Undertake personal lifestyle changes such as regular exercise, eating a balanced diet, avoiding alcohol and substance use, and having adequate sleep.
- Relaxation techniques e.g. Breathing exercises, mindfulness

- Social support- Connect with others or join a support group near you. This helps you share experiences with others and learn coping strategies.
- Time management and organizing- Prioritize your tasks, take breaks and set manageable goals.
- Positive thinking about self and other
- Use problem-solving strategies to address personal issues
- Limit screen time and use social media productively such as by learning
- Develop coping mechanisms e.g. journaling your thoughts and feelings, art and creatives and spending more time outdoors.

NB: Seeking professional help early and combining these strategies could help manage anxiety effectively over time





Understanding Stress

What is stress?

Stress is a feeling of emotional or physical tension. It can come from any event or thought that makes you feel frustrated, angry, or nervous. Stress is your body's reaction to a challenge or demand. Stress comes from external sources (like work, relationships, or financial issues) or internal factors (like self-expectations or anxiety).



What are the common signs and Symptoms of stress?



- Increased heart rate
- Irritability
- Fatigue
- Difficulty concentrating
- Headaches
- Low energy
- Digestive problems
- High blood pressure
- Memory problems
- Chest pain
- Trouble in sleeping
- Change in appetite



What are the different categories of stress?

- **Positive and negative stress**
- **Short and long-term (chronic) stress**
- **Acute Stress:** This is short-term stress that arises from immediate challenges or pressures. It can be exciting and motivating, like preparing for a presentation or going on a first date.
- **Chronic Stress:** This type lasts for a prolonged period and often results from ongoing situations, such as a demanding job, relationship issues, or financial difficulties. Chronic stress can lead to serious health problems if not managed.
- **Episodic Acute Stress:** This occurs when someone frequently experiences acute stress, often due to taking on too many responsibilities or facing regular challenges. It can lead to a feeling of being overwhelmed.

- **Environmental Stress:** This includes stressors from one's surroundings, such as noise, pollution, or overcrowding. These external factors can contribute to overall stress levels.
- **Physical Stress:** Stress that arises from physical strain, illness, injury, or lack of sleep can affect the body's ability to function optimally.
- **Psychological Stress:** This type stems from emotional or mental challenges, such as anxiety, depression, or trauma. It can affect one's thoughts and feelings significantly.
- **Post-Traumatic Stress:** A specific type of psychological stress that occurs after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. It can lead to symptoms like flashbacks, severe anxiety, and uncontrollable thoughts.



Stress Cont'd

What are the effects of stress on learners?

- Poor concentration
- Low attention span
- Memory issues
- Poor academic performance
- Absenteeism from school
- Low-class participation
- Violence



How can you manage stress?

- Keep a positive attitude.
- Accept that there are events that you cannot control.
- Be assertive instead of aggressive. Assert your feelings, opinions, or beliefs instead of becoming angry, defensive, or passive.
- Learn to manage your time more effectively.
- Avoid stressors
- Make time for hobbies and interests.
- Don't rely on alcohol, drugs, or compulsive behaviors to reduce stress.
- Seek out social support. Spend enough time with those you love.
- Seek help from a trusted person
- Time management



Depression

Depression is a mental health disorder characterized by persistent feelings of sadness and loss of interest for **two weeks or more**. It affects how you feel, think and behave, leading to various emotional and physical problems. Whereas depression and stress at times may have similar symptoms, depression is not the same as stress and can only be confirmed as an assessment by trained personnel.



Understanding Depression

How do I know if I have depression?

- Having persistent sadness.
- Irritability or frustration, even over seemingly small matters.
- Loss of interest or pleasure in activities once enjoyed.
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness and guilt.
- Difficulties in concentration, thinking, remembering and making the right decisions.
- Indecisiveness or forgetfulness.
- Difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep or oversleeping.
- Loss of appetite or overeating leads to abnormal weight changes.
- Withdrawing from others or social isolation
- Fatigue or lack of energy
- Suicidal thoughts or attempts.

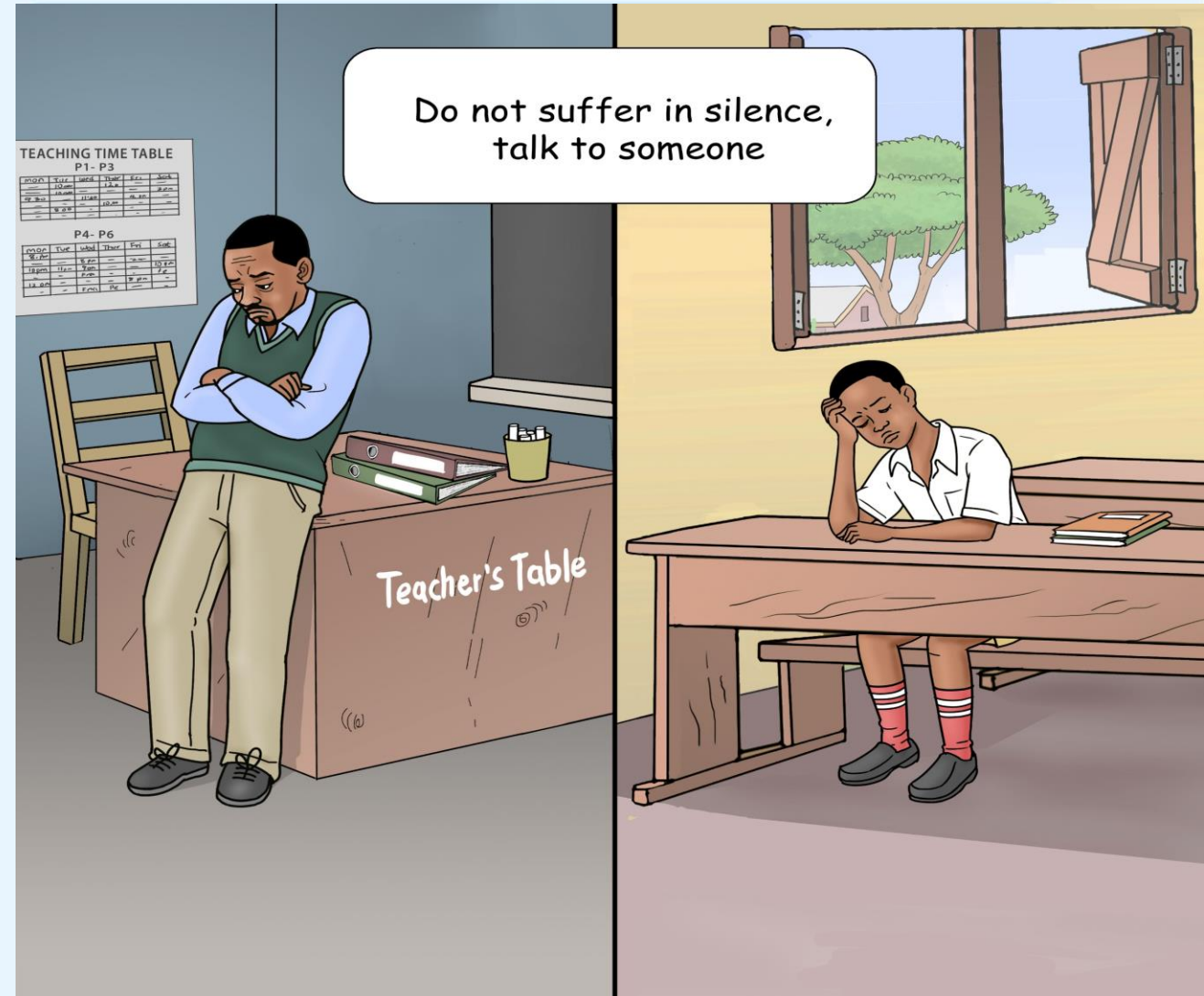
What are the common causes of depression?

- Academic pressure
- Child abuse and violence
- Hormonal Changes. Hormonal imbalances, especially in girls especially during menstruation.
- Chronic Illnesses. Conditions like heart disease, diabetes, or cancer may cause depression due to physical and emotional stress.
- Trauma or Stress. Past or ongoing trauma, such as abuse, neglect, or extreme stress.
- Negative thought patterns. Persistent negative thinking, low self-esteem.
- Life Events. Major life changes loss of a loved one can act as triggers.
- Isolation. A lack of social support or loneliness can increase the risk.
- Substance Abuse. Alcohol and drug use can worsen depression.

Understanding Depression

How can I overcome depression?

- Seek help from a trusted person
- Engage in Physical activities such as regular exercise, playing, games and sports.
- Practice proper diet
- Practice regular interaction with friends and family for comfort and understanding
- Practice spirituality
- Practice positive sleep
- Share your feelings and situation with people you trust.
- Making healthy lifestyle choices like abstinence, personal hygiene
- Avoid the abuse of drugs and alcohol which may increase feelings of anxiety and agitation.





Unpacking Suicide

What is suicide?

Suicide is the act of ending one's own life intentionally.

While suicide attempt is where an individual intentionally tries to take their own life but does not die.



Understanding Suicide...

What is considered to be Suicidal ideation?

Suicide can start as an idea/thought (ideation) and progress into action/behaviour.

- **Passive suicide ideation** is where one has a desire to die but no action or plan to engage in suicide. One might have thoughts such as “I wish I were dead; I wish I could disappear from the face of the earth” and “I wish I could sleep and never wake up” but not act on these thoughts.
- **Active suicide ideation** is when one expresses the desire to die and has the intention to take action/take their life.

How do I know that I have suicidal ideations?

- Talking a lot about death and wanting to die, such as “I would be better off dead or I wish I could disappear”
- Fantasizing about death and speaking positively about it.
- Having a strong sense of being a burden to loved ones, accompanied by guilt and shame about being in the situation they are in.
- Feeling “trapped” or helpless and experiencing intense pain (mostly emotional pain)
- Feelings of worthlessness, lack of purpose and meaning in life.
- Research a lot about death or buying items which could be used in a suicide attempt.
- Withdrawing from others and frequently saying goodbye
- Engaging in reckless behavior such as reckless driving, alcohol and substance abuse, risky sexual behaviour.
- Increased sadness, irritability or mood swings.

What are the Risk factors that expose young people to Suicide?

- Mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety
- Poor coping strategies for life challenges or problems
- Financial difficulties are associated with a lack of basic needs.
- Physical, sexual and emotional abuse/violence.
- Loss of a loved one
- Having a chronic or terminal illness
- Alcohol and substance abuse
- Excessive academic pressure
- Personality traits associated with impulsivity and perfectionism

- Parental separation, neglect and experiences of domestic violence
- Bodily changes
- Cyberbullying
- Previous suicide attempts.

Note: Suicide is an emergency which needs urgent interventions. When adolescents and young people experience active suicide thoughts, they need to seek immediate help from someone they trust. Teachers in school settings should always refer students with active suicide ideation to the nearest health facility for further management and support.

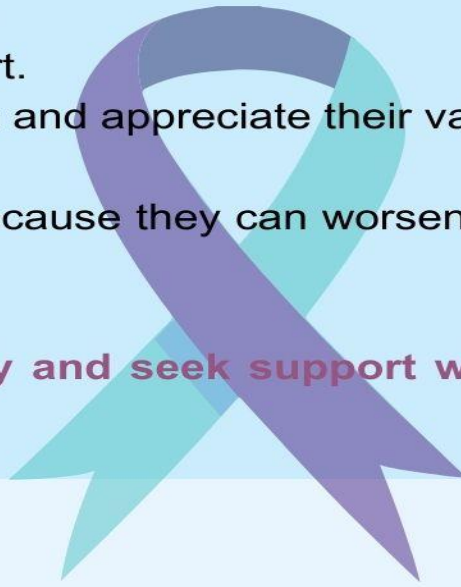


How can Adolescents and Young people cope with suicidal ideas and behaviour?

- Talk to someone you trust such as a friend, family member or teacher. Sharing your feelings could provide relief and improve access to support.
- Seek help from a trained mental health provider who could offer a safe space to explore feelings, develop coping strategies or offer medical support.
- Learn to identify and disrupt triggers for suicidal thoughts. Understanding what leads to these thoughts could help you learn how to manage them.
- Engage in activities that promote mental well-being including regular exercise, having adequate sleep.
- Seek company of your loved ones.
- Seek spiritual guidance and support.
- Reflect on the people who love you and appreciate their value in your life.

Avoid alcohol and substance abuse because they can worsen feelings of depression and anxiety which are associated with suicide ideation.

Note: It is very important to identify and seek support when you experience suicidal thoughts and behaviour.





Alcohol and Substance Abuse

What is alcohol?

Alcohol, scientifically known as ethanol (C_2H_5OH), is a psychoactive substance that acts as a central nervous system depressant. It is a clear, colourless liquid produced through the fermentation of sugars by yeast. Alcohol is the active ingredient in beverages like beer, wine, and spirits (e.g., whiskey, vodka, rum), and it is widely consumed for its intoxicating effects.



Alcohol and Substance Abuse

What are substances?

Substances, in the context of substance abuse, refer to chemical compounds that can alter an individual's physical or mental state when ingested, inhaled, injected, or absorbed into the body. These substances often have psychoactive properties, meaning they affect brain function and can lead to changes in mood, perception, cognition, and behaviour. Substances may be legal (e.g., alcohol, prescription medications) or illegal (e.g., heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine), and their misuse can result in harmful physical, psychological, and social consequences.

Substances are typically categorized into several groups based on their effects on the central nervous system:

Depressants: These slow down brain activity and include alcohol, benzodiazepines, and barbiturates. They can induce relaxation, and reduce anxiety, but can also impair motor skills and decision-making.

1. **Stimulants:** These increase brain activity and alertness, including substances like caffeine, nicotine, cocaine, amphetamines, and certain prescription drugs like Adderall or Ritalin. They can enhance focus and energy but may lead to anxiety, insomnia, and addiction.
2. **Hallucinogens:** These alter perception and cognition, leading to hallucinations and distorted reality. Examples include LSD (acid), psilocybin (magic mushrooms), and PCP.
3. **Opioids:** These are primarily used for pain relief but have a high potential for addiction. They include prescription painkillers like oxycodone, morphine, and illegal drugs like heroin. Opioids can lead to euphoria but also cause respiratory depression and overdose.
4. **Inhalants:** These are volatile substances, such as glue, paint thinners, and aerosol sprays, that are inhaled to produce short-term psychoactive effects. Inhalants are highly dangerous and can cause severe neurological damage.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

5. Cannabis: This is derived from the Cannabis plant and includes marijuana and hashish. It has both depressant and hallucinogenic properties, altering mood and perception.

Substance abuse occurs when these substances are used in a manner not prescribed, taken in excessive amounts, or used illegally, leading to dependency, health problems, and interference with daily life.

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Alcohol and substance abuse among school adolescents

Alcohol and substance abuse refers to the consumption or misuse of alcohol, drugs, or other substances by individuals within the adolescent age group, typically ranging from 12 to 18 years, while in and out of a school setting. Young people can abuse substances such as alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, narcotics, and inhalants and their recurrent abuse negatively impacts the physical, mental, emotional, and academic well-being of adolescents.

What factors drive adolescents to use alcohol and substances?

- Negative peer pressure
- Experiencing mental health challenges such as stress, depression and anxiety.
- Desire to explore/curiosity
- Attempts to cope with academic pressures or unrealistic demands.
- Negative media influence
- Negative family influence including parental drug abuse.
- Negative cultural, and religious norms and practices
- Personal challenges



Alcohol and Substance Abuse

What are the effects of using alcohol and other substances?

1. Poor or declining academic performance
2. Frequent late coming, absenteeism, and eventual dropping out of school.
3. Negative behavioral issues include fighting, theft, bad touches and disrespecting school authorities.
4. Mental health disorders/challenges such as anxiety or depression or alcohol/substance addiction.
5. Impaired cognitive and motor functions which could affect daily functioning and judgement.
6. Health problems such as liver disease (cirrhosis), lung cancer, heart disease, brain damage, and addiction (alcoholism).
7. Death

What is the relationship between mental health and “alcohol and substances”?

There is a two-way relationship between mental health, alcohol and substance abuse. Alcohol and substance abuse can lead to mental health problems such as anxiety, depression, alcohol-induced psychosis, addictions, etc. On the other hand, mental health challenges among young—if not well managed can lead them to abuse alcohol and other substances.

Note: It is therefore important that any adolescent experiencing both seek support from a trusted/professional person.

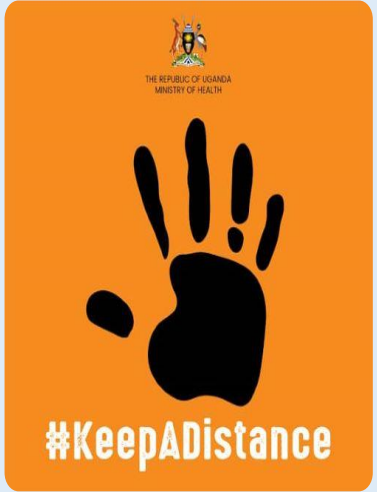
Alcohol and Substance Abuse

What can I do to avoid or overcome alcohol and substance abuse?

- Talk to someone you trust or are comfortable with regarding alcohol and substance issues.
- Seek counselling and support from a trusted person
- Report any alcohol, drug or substance abuse to a trusted person
- Maintain healthy relationships
- Practice healthy coping mechanisms such as regular exercises, games and sports, joining school clubs, and spirituality, among others
- Avoid the company of people who abuse alcohol and other substances.



Key messages



- Health is wealth
- Alcohol & Drugs affect our Mental wellbeing
- Drug use is never okay!
- Mental health determines participation & involvement in teaching learning process
- Peer to peer support is key in breaking the cycle of substance use
- Seek help from trusted individuals, teacher or Health facility



Mental Well-being and Risky Sexual Behaviors

Introduction

Mental well-being and sexual behaviour are closely connected in adolescents and young people. Mental health can influence sexual choices, and sexual experiences can affect mental health. During adolescence, young people go through many changes physically, emotionally, and socially that can impact how they feel about themselves and their decisions regarding sexuality.



How Mental Wellbeing Affects Sexual Behavior

Positive Mental Wellbeing:

When adolescents have good mental wellbeing, characterized by high self-esteem and confidence, they are more likely to engage in safe sexual practices. This can include choosing to abstain from sex, saying No to sexual advances, having self-control, avoiding bad touches and being assertive.

Action: It is important that young people engage in activities that strengthen their self-esteem and confidence such as accepting who they are, building social relationships, and regular exercise, among others.

Poor Mental Wellbeing:

Adolescents who struggle with mental health issues, such as depression or anxiety—if not helped, may engage in risky sexual behaviors. This includes unprotected sex or having multiple sexual partners, which can lead to sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and unintended pregnancies, abortions and death.

Mental health challenges can also make young people more vulnerable to sexual abuse and violence. They might feel less able to resist unwanted advances or seek help if they experience such situations.

Action: Young people with mental health challenges should seek help from a trusted individual as soon as they can.

How Mental Wellbeing Affects Sexual Behavior

Substance Use:

Some young people may use alcohol or drugs as a way to cope with their mental health challenges. Unfortunately, this can impair their judgment and lead to risky sexual behavior, increasing the likelihood of sexual abuse or regretful sexual encounters.

It's important to recognize that many young people have experienced sexual abuse including rape while under the influence of alcohol and substances. This highlights the need for young people to avoid taking alcohol and other substances which can affect their ability to make informed decisions.

Action: Young people should therefore identify activities they enjoy that don't involve substances, such as sports, art, or music, and commit to engaging in these regularly.

Emotional Challenges from Relationships:

Romantic rejection or breakups can also lead to mental health challenges, such as low self-esteem and feelings of insecurity, and negative bodily image. These emotional challenges can make it difficult for young people to address future relationships healthily.

Additionally, stigma and shame related to negative sexual experiences—such as being a victim of violence or abuse—can contribute to feelings of anxiety and depression. Young people may feel isolated or afraid to talk about their experiences, further impacting their mental health.

Action: For your people to have good mental health, they should engage in healthy relationships and habits that support their wellbeing. These relationships should have respect for boundaries and limit, support, understanding and they should be beneficial to the young people.

Relationship between mental health and learning outcomes

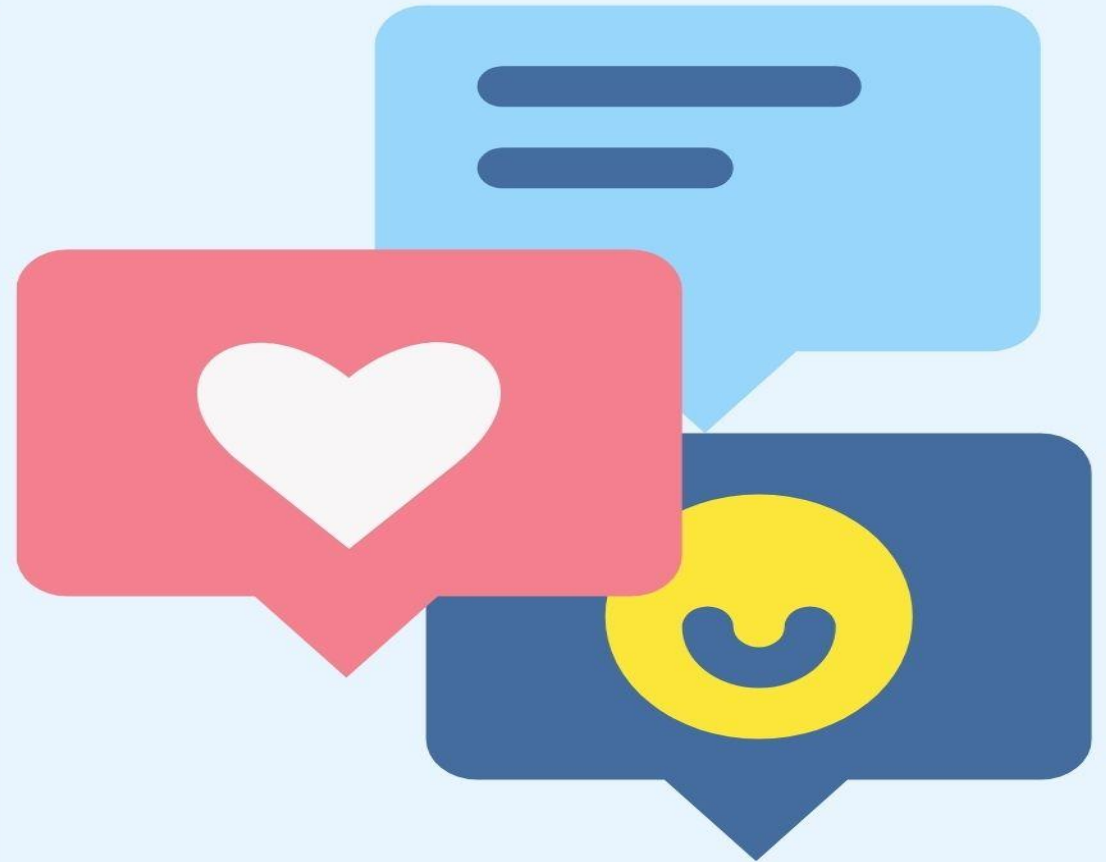
Engagement	Classroom concentration
Learners with mental health problems are often less interested in school and unwilling to engage in discussions	Learners with mental health problems often find it hard to concentrate in class
They might be unable to face the social interactions that comes with daily primary life	Even if they are physically present, their mind/thoughts might be elsewhere
They might frequently miss classes or school as a way of avoiding the “stress”	This can make it difficult for them to contribute, understand what the teacher is teaching or focus.
Sometimes, learners with mental health problems might engage in indiscipline behavior such as fights, drug abuse, escaping from school	Sometimes, sleep problems associated with poor mental health can cause students to dose/sleep in class.
Attainment	Progression
The impact of poor engagement and concentration in class will lead to poor academic performance	Apart from having poor academic performance, learners with mental health problems may seem uninterested in their long-term academic performance
They might see a decline in their results which might also cause more pressure and worsen their mental health	Students may not be able to think beyond the day or their immediate problems
	Therefore, mental health problems are associated with higher levels of school dropout among learners.



Mental Well-being and Social Media Use

Introduction

The advancement of social media has transformed how young people interact, communicate, and perceive themselves and others. While social media can offer opportunities for connection and self-expression, it also presents challenges that can negatively affect the mental wellbeing of young people. Examples of Common social media platforms include X, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, WhatsApp, telegram, etc.



How can social media Use negatively affect Mental Well-being?

How can Social Media Use Improve Mental Wellbeing among Young People?

- It provides young people with platforms for Connecting with friends, family and the world. They can join positive online groups that align with their interests, such as hobby or school alumni groups, where they can feel a sense of community.
- Provides reliable sources of information on mental health, offering self-care strategies and details about available support services.
- It encourages creative self-expression among young people
- It motivates and inspires young people.
- It facilitates open facilitates discussions about mental health issues,
- It's a tool for social mobilization and awareness around mental health and psychosocial support

How can social media Use negatively affect Mental Wellbeing?

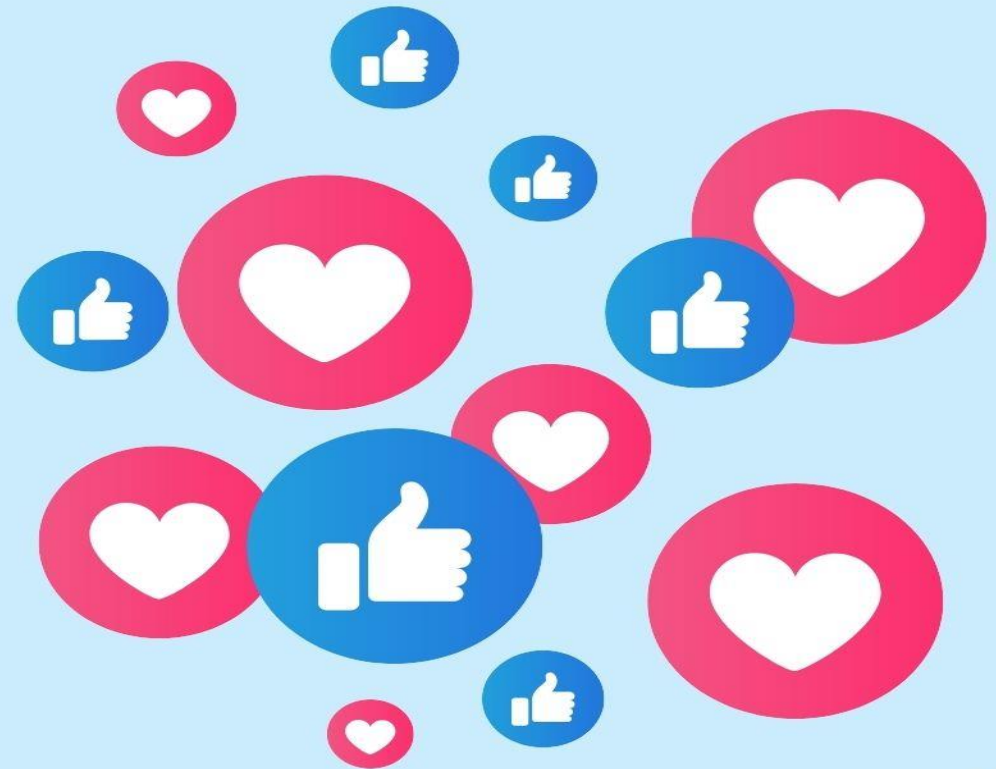
Excessive use of social media has been linked to mental health and psychosocial challenges such as anxiety, depression, loneliness and suicide

- It can promote cyberbullying, online harassment and violence.
- It can increase exposure to idealized images and lifestyles which can lead to constant unfavourable comparison to others, feelings of inadequacy/dissatisfaction and negative self-image.
- It is associated with anxiety and Fear of Missing Out (FOMO) where young people engage in activities without thinking much to feel included in the trend. FOMO can lead to compulsive media checking and worry about being perceived as uncool and unpopular.



How can social media Use negatively affect Mental Well-being?

- Frequent exposure to negative and sad media content and violence on social media can lead to increased anxiety and a pessimistic outlook on life.
- Extended use of social media leads to blue light exposure which could lead to eye problems, fatigue and difficulties in falling asleep.
- The need to show a perfect online image and presence can contribute to higher levels of stress, anxiety and depression among young people.
- Social media could hinder young people from opening up about mental health challenges they experience due to fears of online judgement which could worsen feelings of social isolation.



How can I responsibly use social media without negatively affecting my Mental Well-being?

- Limit screen time to prevent excessive use of gadgets for social media such as phones, tablets and computers. You need to balance online and offline time to ensure you remain physically active.
- Choose to follow accounts, and get friends or groups that promote positivity rather than those that share content which makes you feel sad or angry.
- Before posting anything on social media, consider how the content or text might affect others. Young people should aim for kindness and understanding rather than sharing negative media content for the benefit of likes.
- When using social media, present a genuine portrait of yourself. Do not feel compelled to present a perfect image which could force you to do things that might affect your mental health.

- Ensure that you protect your online presence by only posting personal information that you would desire the public to see.
- Be aware of the emotional impact of social media use and seek help immediately when you notice that you feel distressed about social media use.
- Read more about responsible use of social media, engage in literacy creation programs and online data protection effort





Linkage to Care and Support Systems

Introduction

This is a process of connecting individuals to service providers or support systems that address both psychological and social aspects of their well-being.



Linkage to care and support systems

Why mental health and psychosocial linkages are done?

- It helps improve access to mental health and psychosocial support.
- Reduces barriers to mental health and psychosocial support services.
- Facilitates early identification and referral of young people with mental health challenges.
- Facilitate collaboration between care providers which improves quality of care.
- It promotes integration of mental health services in service delivery
- Encourages the provision of comprehensive care especially if young people have mental health challenges and other health.



What do you need to know about mental well-being linkages, care and support?

Psychosocial support linkages and referrals can involve connecting people to

- Mental health services like counselling, therapy or psychiatric care
- Social services such as education, housing and employment assistance to vulnerable individuals such as refugees, women and children who have experienced abuse
- Community support groups, peer support or family interventions.



Where can I access mental and psychosocial support in Uganda?

Education Sector

- Peer leaders, club heads and prefects bodies
- Mental Health Coordinators
- Guidance and counselling teachers
- Senior Men and Woman teachers
- School counsellor and any trusted teacher
- Child Protection committees in Schools
- Head Teacher
- School management committee members
- Parents and Teachers associations
- Foundation bodies
- Health facility



Community-Based Structures

- Religious and Cultural leaders
- Local leaders such as women leaders, Local Councils etc.
- Community Support Networks like CBOs, NGOs and faith-based organisations

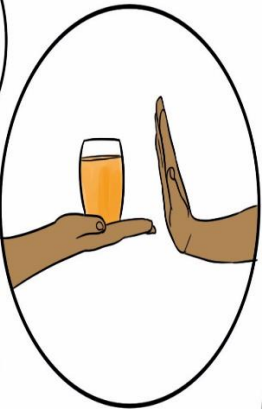
Police and legal aid services.

Victims of child abuse and gender-based violence often face trauma and are likely to develop psychosocial support challenges. After reporting the case to the police, they may be referred for legal aid to organizations that offer legal Aid like FIDA Uganda (The Uganda Association of Women Lawyers), UHRC





Talk to the person pressuring you. Let him/her know how you feel



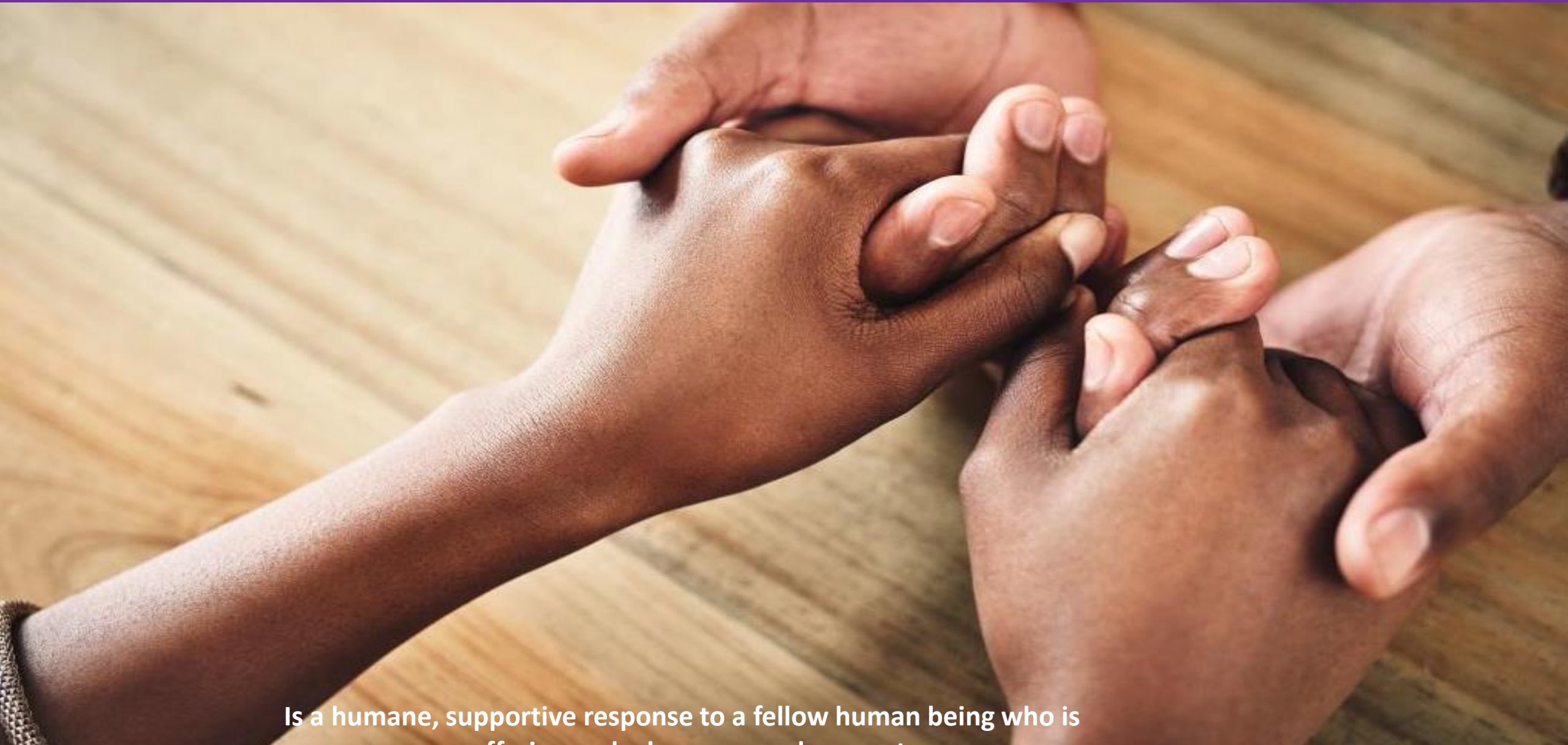
Have friends with similar values and beliefs as yours

Give an excuse to escape from the situation

Get support from a trusted adult such as parent, school counsellor or teacher



Psychosocial support



Is a humane, supportive response to a fellow human being who is

Psychosocial Support

What is Psychosocial Support?

Psychosocial support (PSS) involves providing holistic care that addresses the psychological, spiritual and social needs of individuals, especially in challenging situations. It aims to support recovery and promote resilience to enhance an individual's overall well-being.

When does one need psychosocial support?

Stressors: Long-term stressors like academic pressures, bullying, substance abuse and health complications, and financial challenges that affect mental and social well-being.

Crises or Emergencies: Natural disasters like floods, landslides and mudslides, armed conflicts, pandemics such as COVID-19, and other life-threatening events.

Trauma: Experiences such as physical, sexual and emotional violence/abuse, and loss of a loved one can disrupt mental wellbeing and require intervention.





Psychosocial Support

What are the elements of Psychosocial Support?

Emotional Support: Offering a safe space for individuals to express their emotions and feel understood.

Therapy and Counseling: Professional mental health interventions that help individuals cope with mental health challenges for example stress, depression, trauma and anxiety.



Community Support Systems: Family, friends, and community groups that provide social networks, belonging, and mutual aid.

Educational Interventions: Providing knowledge and skills to manage mental health challenges, improve coping mechanisms and build resilience.

Recreational and Cultural Activities: Engaging in activities that promote relaxation, creativity, and social bonding.



Psychosocial Support

Why is Psychosocial Support important in Mental Well-being?

Psychosocial support plays a vital role in maintaining mental well-being by addressing both immediate emotional needs and long-term social challenges. It helps individuals to:

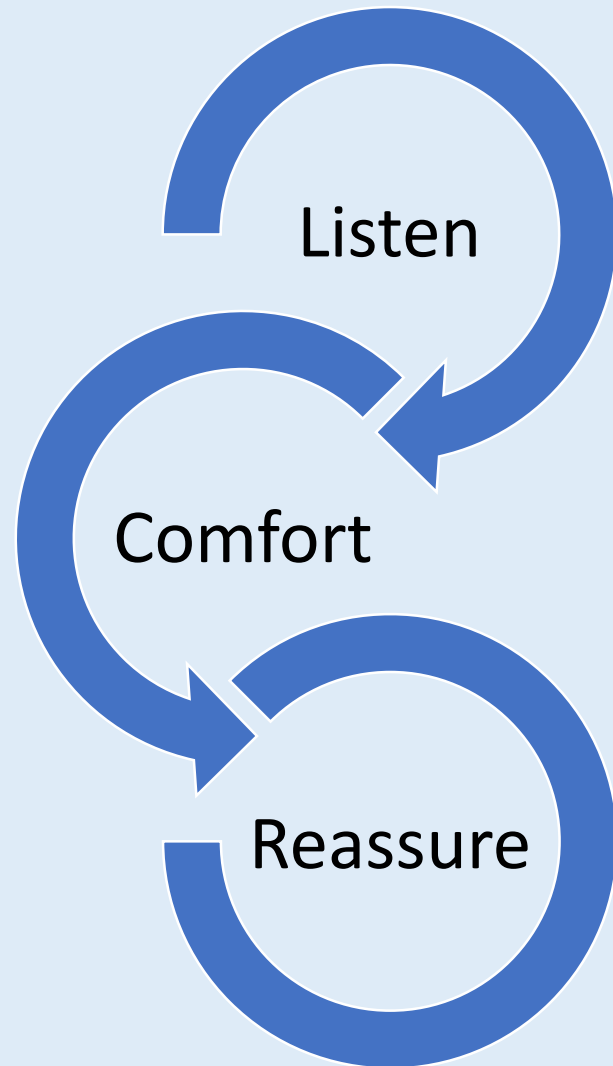
- Restore a sense of normal life and routine after experiencing a mental health challenge.
- Develop coping strategies and resilience.
- Restore and strengthen interpersonal relationships.
- Ease access to resources like health services, education, and community networks.
- Encourage self-care and foster self-esteem.



Guiding Principles in PSS

1. Do no harm
2. Promote hope
3. Promotion of calmness
4. Sense of safety
5. Connectedness
6. Calming
7. Hope/Optimism

How to offer Support



- **Listen:** Give peers opportunities to talk about what they are feeling. Encourage them to share concerns and ask questions
- **Comfort:** Use simple methods to comfort and calm depressed e.g. telling stories, Praise them for their strengths, courage, compassion and helpfulness
- **Reassure** peers that you are prepared to support them to be safe. Provide them with correct information through valid sources

Providing PSS to teachers & peers

Work

Work closely with other structures to identify those at risk.

Facilitate

Facilitate psychosocial support to the teachers and peers who are challenged

Provide

Be available via phone or in person

Identify

Identify additional adversities (e.g., economic hardships, stigma) and link to appropriate services

Keep

Keep informed and look for the best/ positive thoughts, support supervision

Other relevant materials

