

Make Space for Health – FEEL
Feel good, live well

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Foreword

It isn't easy being a young person growing up; all teenagers are pushed to their limits. From eating, drinking and getting active to the important issues of depression, mental health and teenage pregnancy, teenagers can't escape the pressure of the media, their peers and wider society. In 2007, young people told the Make Space Youth Review that they want more help to lead healthy lives. Make Space for Health is responding to that challenge.

This programme will bring organisations and people together to make young people's health a priority and will provide accessible programmes and fun activities to help make being healthy easier. And we will be making them available where young people say they want them most – in their youth centre and local community. We have the opportunity to help teenagers understand and take control of their health in a much more hands-on way. That's what Make Space for Health is all about.

Make Space for Health will provide innovative new approaches and programmes to help young people get healthier. We look forward to working with you to make a real difference for young people.

Dr Miriam Stoppard

Chair, Make Space for Health Advisory Panel

Introduction

Everything we do – our behaviour, actions, relationships, physical activity and what we put into our bodies – is affected by the way we feel. Sometimes this can be a positive thing; we leap out of bed and get everything we need to do that day done on time and really well because we've had a good night's sleep and we're excited about the day. Other times it can be a negative thing; we find that we are unable to leave the house or even finish the smallest task because we are feeling so down or worried about something.

Support from Young Minds

Mental health and psychological well-being is as important as our physical health and well-being. Unfortunately there is a lot of stigma connected to mental health, and this can prevent us from thinking and talking about how we feel and how this might have an impact on other people. Anything that helps young people develop emotionally and socially and increase their self-esteem is welcome.

Young Minds is the UK's leading charity committed to improving the emotional well-being and mental health of children and young people by ensuring these issues are placed firmly on the public and political agenda. We achieve this through providing research, lobbying, influencing policy and campaigning. Driven by the experiences of children, young people, parents and carers, we also raise awareness and provide expert knowledge through training, outreach work and publications. The Young Minds telephone helpline for parents and carers provides free and confidential support for anyone worried about the emotional problems or behaviour of a child or young person. For further information, visit www.youngminds.org.uk.

Our thanks go to Young Minds for providing clarification and support in the production of Make Space for Health: Feel.

Improving mental health and emotional well-being

Feeling good about ourselves starts with having positive self-esteem. Self-esteem, or how we feel about ourselves, can depend on many different factors – from internal factors such as body image, friendships, sex and relationships, peer pressure, and changing relationships with parents and carers, to more external factors such as substance misuse, bereavement, and divorce or separation.

As young people change and grow throughout their teenage years, many of these elements, such as friendships and changing relationships with parents and carers, will affect most young people. Some, such as bereavement and divorce or separation, may only happen to a few. What is clear though is that helping young people develop the skills needed to maintain positive emotional health and well-being can help sustain them through the rocky times.

Common elements of positive emotional health and well-being include skills of resilience, good communication, awareness of our own feelings and those of others, a high sense of self-esteem, and respecting ourselves and others.

People with good self-esteem are more likely to:

- Be happy
- Be healthy
- Enjoy and achieve
- Feel safe
- Make a positive contribution
- Take more controlled risks

What is FEEL?

FEEL is the third of three modules of the Make Space for Health programme. Each module is a resource pack designed to support youth workers in raising awareness of key health issues and support young people in developing their interest in, knowledge of and responsibility for their own health and well-being.

The modules cover the following themes:



Healthy eating



Emotional health and well-being



Physical activity

Each module contains three sections with a number of different activity cards per section. The FEEL module consists of:

- Section 1: Feeling good about me
- Section 2: Feeling good about others
- Section 3: Feelings in difficult situations

Who is FEEL for?

The FEEL module is designed for the 11-16 years age range. However, the content can be adjusted according to the needs, skills and composition of the groups.

What are the outcomes of FEEL?

The aim of all of the topics in this module is to:

- Raise awareness of the importance of emotional health and well-being
- Provide a basic understanding of issues relating to emotional health and well-being
- Encourage skill development including resilience, self-esteem and communication
- Encourage group work

All of the topics encourage a challenging, interactive and critical learning process.

How to use the activity topics

The activity cards are designed to be flexible and easy to use, with signposting to relevant agencies and information sites. Some of the activities involve group work and role plays, and others are exercises for individuals where the results can then be shared as a group.

The topics in the FEEL module focus on providing resources for those who work with young people, and where appropriate, conducting group work activities around each topic and providing more detailed information for support that young people can be signposted to if required. The module can also be used as a guide for young people in understanding their own emotional health and well-being and that of others. The exercises within encourage the improvement of mood, habits and feelings. The information and activities are designed to make them aware that:

- Their minds are complex systems that need to be taken care of in order to function properly
- Their mood and feelings affect their growth, development and health
- They are responsible for their feelings and actions
- They have the ability to increase their levels of happiness
- They can set goals and make decisions to improve their health

Before each interaction begins, remind the young people that some of the activities and exercises may cause powerful reactions, and this is okay. There is no 'right' way to react to situations. Set some ground rules, such as having a quiet space in a different room where they can go to be alone and reflect.

Some of the activities and exercises may cause a powerful reaction in you, and you may feel that some of the issues raised are beyond your range of knowledge and expertise. When planning the activities and sessions, it may be worth making contact with local health and social care providers for further advice and training.

The activity cards provide website links for various professionals and organisations relating to each topic. If you feel that a young person requires further support or advice, we would advise that you encourage them to talk to their parents/carer, contact their GP or get in touch with the appropriate organisation.

The activities can all be customised and combined, and the cards can be incorporated into an existing structured programme in the youth setting. Local helplines and further information should also be incorporated for signposting purposes. Further resources can be downloaded from the Make Space website, www.makespace.org.uk. There is also a list of useful websites at the back of this module.

Best practice tips

Make Space encourages all those who work with young people to embrace the following values that should underpin interactions in a youth setting:

- A person-centred process – place the learner at the centre of the learning process. This can be done by enabling participants whenever possible to learn through experience rather than passive learning.
- Empowerment of the learner – learners must be encouraged and enabled as much as possible in their learning, i.e. having input in the structure and methods of learning.
- Not controlled by adults – the role of the worker in leading these interactions is that of facilitator.
- Individual respect – all those who participate must be treated with respect and diversity should be valued.
- Equal opportunity – this is a fundamental part of this programme. The overall reach of the programme is one of inclusion.

Possible training techniques tips

There are a range of techniques and methods that encourage active participation:

- **Small group discussion:** Participants divide into small groups to discuss a particular question or task. The youth worker will facilitate these groups. If you are getting feedback from the groups, you may want to consider the following points: (1) Establish a firm structure for the feedback session; (2) Make it clear before small groups start what the main points of discussion are; (3) Never pressure participants to speak – appoint a spokesperson if necessary.
- **Working in pairs:** Pair work can be useful to help participants express themselves and discuss a topic in depth.
- **Brainstorm:** This technique is useful to stimulate creative thought. Ideas can be recorded on a flip chart and reviewed.
- **Rounds:** Each participant is invited to make one or two comments as part of a general discussion. This ensures that everyone gets a chance to speak and you get feedback from everyone.
- **Individual tasks:** Individual work can help participants to form their own opinions and gives space for personal reflection.
- **Role play:** Participants take on a role to enact a specified situation. The aim is for the participants to explore their own response to a particular situation and bring their own experiences to the discussion. Using role play effectively does require sensitivity. You may need to stress the beneficial learning outputs from this kind of interaction. Debriefing and post role play discussion are essential if you want to use it as a learning method.
- **Whole group discussion:** Whole group discussion involves all participants discussing new topics and feeding back into the group.
- **Handouts:** You may need to prepare additional handouts to give details of: (1) Local contacts and resources; (2) Local authority policy; (3) A local perspective.

Health and safety

- All group activities that are carried out in a youth setting must be supervised by a Health and Safety trained staff member.
- A staff member in the youth setting needs to have first aid qualifications when possible or appropriate training to deal with a medical emergency.
- It is important to regularly check the equipment and the environment/premises that you use. Check that there are no hazards, such as wet surfaces or sharp objects. Consider the space in which the activity will take place and how much room you will need.
- Activity participants should wear comfortable, practical and appropriate clothing and should remove non-essential items such as jewellery.
- Ensure that provision is made for a 'chill-out' space for quiet reflection.
- Keep medical information about any young person with a medical condition and obtain parental consent when necessary for any activity.
- Supervise young people according to their age and needs, and ensure they are in groups appropriate for the activity undertaken. There should be a sensible approach to the interactions; positivity and consideration for others should be encouraged at all times.

Inclusion

The activities in the FEEL module recognise that those who participate are at different stages of development and have different needs and skill levels. The interactions can be adapted to suit these differences by:

- Allowing young people to work at different paces.
- Providing extra support, such as verbal encouragement and physical assistance when necessary.
- Varying the group size to take into account those of differing ability levels.