Mental Health Discussion Cards **Answers**

> What is self-care?
>
> What are some ways we can practise self-care?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **Self-care is about looking after ourselves. This may include maintaining a healthy lifestyle, being kind to ourselves and seeking out help when we need it. By practising self-care, we can make sure to look after both our mental and physical health.**

- **When we think of self-care, we may think about doing things that we enjoy and that calm us, such as reading a book or taking a bath. While these activities are a good example of self-care, self-care can be varied and include a range of activities. It also may look different to different people. Some of the ways we can practise self-care include:**
  - **eating healthily**
  - **exercising regularly**
  - **getting enough sleep**
  - **doing the things we enjoy**
  - **spending time with loved ones**
  - **engaging in positive self-talk**
  - **setting healthy boundaries**
  - **asking for help when needed**

> What strategies do you use to make yourself feel better if you are experiencing poor mental health, or feeling down?

This will depend on the individual student, but may include some of the self-care strategies from the question above, engaging in a particular hobby or activity that they enjoy or talking to someone, such as a friend or a therapist.

> 'Therapy is for everyone, not just those who are experiencing poor mental health or who are diagnosed with mental health conditions.'
>
> To what extent do you agree with this statement?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **It can be an important step for those who are experiencing poor mental health to reach out and try therapy. Although it can be daunting, many people find that therapy helps them address the root of any problems they may be having, and tackle the issues that are causing their poor mental health.**

- **Although we often think of therapy as a solution for people with mental health conditions, therapy could actually benefit many or all of us, even if we are not experiencing poor mental health.**

- **Sometimes, therapy provides an ear to listen to us, and other times, helpful solutions that can benefit us and change the way we live our lives.**

What is a support system?

How can we identify people in our lives who can support us through tough times?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **Our support system includes those who support us throughout our lives, and those we can go to for help, advice or support when we are going through tough times.**
- **For many people, their support system may be made up of a mix of different people, such as family, friends, teachers, support workers and others.**
- **For others, our support network may look different, or we may struggle to work out who the best people to support us are.**
- **We can identify people in our lives who can be part of our support system by finding those who listen to us, respect us and demonstrate that they truly care about us and our mental health.**

Do you have to have had past trauma or bad experiences in your life to experience poor mental health?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **Anyone can experience poor mental health, whether they have been through past trauma or not.**
- **Most of us will experience poor mental health at some point in our lives. Although it may feel difficult, this is something many people go through and find solutions to throughout their lives.**
- **All kinds of people, whether they have diagnosed mental health conditions or not, whether they have been through severe trauma or not, deserve to feel heard and supported. Support systems are there to support all of us, and we shouldn't feel ashamed to seek out help if we need it.**
- **It does not help to compare our lives to others'. Just because someone else may have experienced hardship that we have not, it does not make our feelings any less real or valid.**

What signs can we look for that might indicate one of our friends or someone close to us is experiencing poor mental health?

We may be concerned about someone else's mental health, especially if they are displaying signs that they may not be OK. This may include trouble concentrating, worrying or stressing excessively, self-harm, drinking a lot or using drugs, a lack of sleep or just not acting like themselves.

Many people say they are fine when they are not, as a default. Why do you think some mental health organisations encourage 'asking twice'?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **[Research](#) indicates that over three quarters of us would tell friends and family we are fine, even if we are experiencing poor mental health.**
- **By asking further questions, for example 'Are you sure you're fine?', we can indicate to others who may be experiencing poor mental health that we are there to listen to them and support them.**
- **We may choose to ask specific questions, such as 'Are you getting enough sleep?' or 'Is everything OK at home?' to encourage people to open up if they want to.**
- **It is important to remember that we shouldn't push someone too much, as they may not want to talk about something with us, or may be dealing with very personal issues.**
- **If someone does open up to you, they may just want you to listen, rather than advising them. When we give other people advice, we might feel like we are helping, but that may be unwarranted, and may make the person uncomfortable and less likely to open up to us.**

What steps can we take as a society to work towards ending mental health stigma?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **Talking about mental health is key in working towards ending mental health stigma as, through talking about it, we can normalise it, show how common it is and how it isn't a bad thing. We can also spread awareness, which can inform and help others.**
- **Doing our own research and educating ourselves and others can help us understand mental health better, which can reduce any misconceptions we may have.**
- **By being conscious of the language we use, we can ensure that we don't spread misinformation.**
- **By showing compassion for others, especially those who are experiencing poor mental health, we can ensure that we are supporting those around us who may be struggling.**

BEYOND RSE

What steps should we take if someone close to us discloses that they are experiencing abuse or trauma, or having suicidal thoughts?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **If someone reveals (or if we suspect) abuse, trauma or suicidal thoughts, it is essential that we inform a trusted adult, so that the person in question can be put in contact with the support they may need.**
- **There are a number of different helplines and resources that can support someone who is experiencing this kind of thing. Many of these are specific to the type of abuse in question, however it may be a good idea to direct the person to more generic resources that could help them as well, such as [Samaritans](#), [Victim Support](#) or [Childline](#).**

'It's OK to end our relationship with someone if we think they are having a negative effect on our mental health.' Discuss this statement.

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **When you hear the word 'relationship', you might assume it means one involving romance. However, there are many different types of relationships. For example, you might have relationships with friends, family, parents, guardians, carers, neighbours, etc. A relationship is simply the way in which people are connected and behave towards each other.**
- **Relationships are an important part of life – they can be a great source of enjoyment and fun, as well as providing you with comfort, support and security.**
- **Having healthy relationships that feature respect, honesty and kindness can be beneficial to our mental health. However, if a relationship is unhealthy or abusive, it may cause a strain and/or affect our mental health and wellbeing.**
- **Generally speaking, unhealthy relationships involve behaviour that is not healthy or founded in mutual respect, whereas abusive relationships involve cruel or violent treatment, especially if this behaviour is regular or repeated.**
- **If we feel that ending a relationship is what is best for us, it is OK to do this. It may make us feel sad for a relationship to end, but it may benefit our mental health in the long run. Although it is important to be there for our friends and those close to us, we should not do this if it is to our own detriment; it is not selfish to put our own mental health first.**
- **It is a good idea to be kind and considerate if we do choose to end a relationship.**

Being LGBTQ+ does not make you more prone to poor mental health, but LGBTQ+ people are more likely to develop a mental health condition than non-LGBTQ+ people. Why do you think this is, and what actions need to be taken to combat this?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **The connection between being LGBTQ+ and experiencing poor mental health is a complex one. Often, LGBTQ+ people experience prejudice and discrimination, and face stigma as the result of being part of a marginalised group in society, which can contribute towards poor mental health.**

- **Prejudice is the judgement of someone or something without knowing enough information about that person or thing. This might include dislike or hostility based on preconceived and unfounded opinions.**

- **Discrimination is the unfair or prejudicial treatment of people and groups based on protected characteristics (for this example, this includes gender reassignment and sexual orientation).**

- **Stigma is when people have negative attitudes towards particular circumstances, qualities or people, often based on characteristics that appear to make them different from traditional societal norms.**

- **Homophobia is an umbrella term for prejudice and discrimination against people who identify as or are perceived to be LGBTQ+. It also more specifically refers to prejudice and discrimination against those who identify as or are perceived to be gay. It is typically based on irrational hatred, intolerance and fear of people who identify as LGBTQ+. Other kinds of prejudice and discrimination within the LGBTQ+ community include biphobia, lesbophobia and transphobia.**

- **Actions to combat this include both personal actions and legislation that address homophobia at the source. While it is against the law to discriminate against people based on their sexual orientation or gender reassignment status, discrimination and prejudice still exist in many walks of life.**

- **We can address internal homophobic attitudes and challenge our own beliefs, as well as calling out anyone for saying/doing something that we perceive to be homophobic.**

- **We can also ensure that we look out for the LGBTQ+ people in our lives and check in with them on their mental health.**

- **Outing is when someone shares someone else's LGBTQ+ identity without their consent, which is not OK. The person whose identity is shared is said to have been 'outed'. It is essential that we refrain from outing others, as coming out is a process every LGBTQ+ has a right to, as well as a right to choose not to. If someone chooses to come out, they should be able to do it in their own way and at their own pace. By avoiding outing LGBTQ+ people, we can ensure they are protected from the mental health repercussions that outing them may cause.**

How might social media contribute to poor mental health? What can we do to limit the negative impacts of social media?

You may wish to think about the following factors: body image, self-esteem, social comparison, friendships, cyberbullying.

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **Social media can warp our perceptions of what is real, causing us to compare ourselves against unrealistic expectations and standards that are often impossible to achieve. This is because many people choose to present what they view as the 'best' version of themselves on social media. They may do this by selecting the most flattering angle, editing their photos, and curating their captions to make their posts seem like an idealised version of reality. The problem with this is that many people see these highly edited posts and think that they are real, or that their posts are representative of their life as a whole.**

- **There are a number of factors that may cause someone to develop a negative body image, including how the people around them talk about their own bodies, exposure to images of unrealistic body standards and societal pressure to look a certain way. This can be perpetuated by social media, as photos on social media are often the result of certain angles and editing that make a body seem as if it fits impossible body standards, even if it does not in reality.**

- **Cyberbullying involves using electronic communication to hurt another person. People who are bullied are more likely to experience mental health issues such as depression or anxiety, become isolated or lonely, experience low self-esteem, find it difficult to trust people and self-harm or have suicidal thoughts.**

- **There are a number of different ways that we can limit the negative impacts of social media, including limiting the time we spend on certain websites or apps, following accounts that make us feel good about ourselves (and muting or unfollowing ones that don't), and updating our privacy settings according to who we want to be able to contact us.**

Do you think your school or learning environment does enough to support students' mental health?

How could they improve this?

Students may have varying ideas, depending on their different learning environments. Some ways schools can support mental health include:

- **resources on mental health that are available to all;**
- **teaching and support staff who are trained on mental health and know how to support students who may be struggling with poor mental health;**
- **a designated school counsellor or therapist who students can go to;**
- **displays, lesson content and assemblies that tackle mental health stigma;**
- **events that encourage connections, allow students to have fun and de-stress, or even give students the opportunity to give to others – all of these can have a positive effect on mental health and wellbeing.**

BEYOND RSE

Why is it important that we have open and honest discussions about mental health, and spread mental health awareness?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **Talking about mental health is key in working towards ending mental health stigma as, through talking about it, we can normalise it, show how common it is and how it isn't a bad thing. We can also spread awareness, which can inform and help others.**
- **By openly discussing our own mental health, we can find the support we may need, which in turn can help us feel better. Similarly, discussing mental health as a whole may help people you know who are experiencing poor mental health.**

How can we start a conversation with someone about our mental health, if we are experiencing poor mental health or feel that we would benefit from mental health support?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **Sometimes it is difficult to speak up when we are experiencing negative emotions or poor mental health, however it is often important to talk about our mental health in order to access the support we may need.**
- **There is no shame in experiencing poor mental health; most people experience poor mental health at some point in their lives and it is perfectly normal to struggle with your mental health and wellbeing from time to time.**
- **It may be useful to write down how we are feeling before talking to someone.**
- **You may wish to open up about our mental health to your GP, family, friends, therapist, charities or support groups or others. Our support network can include multiple different people, groups and resources. Sometimes, it is hardest to open up to those close to us. In these cases, it may be easier to talk to someone who isn't present in our day-to-day life, such as a support service.**
- **Only disclose what you feel comfortable with, and do not feel pressured to talk about something if you don't want to.**

How can we start a conversation with someone if we are concerned that they may be experiencing poor mental health?

Students may suggest the following ideas:

- **If we suspect that someone close to us is experiencing poor mental health, it is important not to ignore the signs, and have the conversation early.**

- **We should try to find a space where they feel comfortable to ask them if everything is OK, for example we could ask them to spend time with us after school, or message them. A simple 'What's up?' or 'Are you OK?' should help open up the conversation, but it often depends on the dynamic you have with that person.**

- **It is a good idea to make sure the other person feels comfortable and relaxed when we have a conversation about their mental health, rather than acting extremely concerned. We should listen to them, let them open up at their own speed or comfort level, and avoid offering unsolicited advice to fix their problems.**

- **We should let the person know that it is OK to feel the way they feel, and that they can rely on us to talk to if they need. This validates their feelings and lets them know we are a safe person to talk to.**

- **If you are concerned that someone you know is experiencing severe problems with their mental health, for example if they are discussing suicidal thoughts or you have seen evidence of self-harm, you should inform a trusted adult. This way, they can be directed towards the support they may need.**