



TOPIC 4

Mental well-being

Topic introduction

Background

Evidence from the 1970 cohort study¹ suggests that people with poor language, literacy and numeracy skills (Entry 2) are more likely to experience depression than those with better skills (Level 2). For example, over twice as many people at Entry 2 than at Level 2 experience depression (28% of men and 32% of women, compared with 11% and 16%, respectively).

Many health professionals and literacy, numeracy and language teachers are aware that when individuals gain confidence and their self-esteem returns, they are much more likely to care about their own health, seek out preventive services and be positive about learning.

National targets / policies

In the 2004 public health white paper *Choosing health – making healthier choices easier*, the Government described three levels of promoting mental health:²

- strengthening individuals: increasing emotional resilience through promoting self-esteem, and developing life skills such as communicating, negotiating and relationship and parenting skills
- strengthening communities: increasing social support, inclusion and participation, which helps to protect mental well-being
- reducing structural barriers to good mental health, for example increasing access to opportunities like employment that protect mental well-being.

The National Service Framework (NSF) for mental health addresses the mental health needs of working-age adults up to 65 years. It sets out national standards, local action and a series of national milestones to assure progress. The NSF sets standards covering, among others, the following areas:

- mental health promotion and the discrimination and social exclusion associated with mental health problems
- primary care and access to services for anyone who may have a mental health problem

1. Bynner J, Parsons S. *New light on literacy and numeracy: results of the Literacy and Numeracy Assessment in the age 34 follow-up of the 1970 cohort study (BCS70)*. London: National Research and Development Centre for Adult Literacy and Numeracy, 2006

2. *Choosing health – making healthier choices easier*, p 131

- effective services for people with severe mental illness
- individuals who care for people with mental health problems
- action necessary to achieve the target to reduce suicides.

This topic

This topic was developed as a result of working with a group of people with mental health problems who were ready to live independently. The themes in the topic illustrate issues such as lack of confidence, and help learners to think positively, get out of bed in the morning and ask for advice. The materials will also be useful for people who have not had a mental illness but who may struggle with these issues at certain times of their lives. The themes in this topic are:

- What are you like?
- Positive thinking
- What gets you up in the morning?
- Getting involved with things
- Managing your time
- Managing in the community
- Getting help and support
- Avoiding debt

Further information and suggestions

NHS policy guidance: *National Service Framework for mental health: modern standards and service models*

www.dh.gov.uk/assetRoot/04/01/45/01/04014501.pdf

Mapping to the core curriculum

Topic 4 Mental well-being				
Theme	Literacy	Language	Numeracy	Page references
What are you like?	SLlr/E2.5, SLlr/E3.5, SLc/E3.2, SLd/E3.2, SLc/E3.3			196–203
Positive thinking	SLc/E3.3, Wt/L1.2			204–211
What gets you up in the morning?	SLd/E3.2, SLlr/E3.5			212–218
Getting involved with things	SLc/E1.3, SLc/E2.2, SLc/E3.4, SLlr/E1.2, SLlr/E2.2, SLlr/E3.2, Rt/E3.5, Rt/E3.7		HD1/E2.1	219–233
Managing your time	Rt/E3.5, Wt/E2.1, Wt/E3.1		MSS1/E2.4, MSS1/E3.3	234–243
Managing in the community	SLlr/E3.5, SLc/E3.1, SLlr/E3.6			244–251
Getting help and support	SLlr/E3.6, SLd/E3.2, Rt/E3.5, Rt/E3.7, Wt/L1.5			252–257
Avoiding debt			MSS1/E3.1, MSS1/E3.2, MSS1/L1.1, N2/E3.4	258–274

Highlighted curriculum items [] = included in National Tests