

High School Drug Education - Lesson 4: Mental Health and Substance Use: Understanding the Connection and Building Resilience

This lesson, which is aligned with NL Health curriculum outcomes, contains necessary background information, substance snapshots, learning activities, scenarios, and discussion guides to support delivery of material.

Health Learning Curriculum Outcomes

Drug Education

1. Describe how substances can affect the five components of health and well-being (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social health).
2. Analyze the connections between mental health and substance use, including how one can influence or impact the other.
3. Identify and apply personal self-care strategies that promote resilience, well-being, and harm reduction.
4. Evaluate the role of support systems (family, friends, community) in maintaining mental health and reducing risks related to substance use.
5. Demonstrate decision-making and goal-setting skills that support mental health, well-being, and safer choices.

Emotional and Social Well-being

6. Demonstrate knowledge, skills, and behaviours related to health-related decision making.

Technology and Communications

7. Utilize information technology to access, present, and communicate information on substance use.

Environmental Health and Safety

8. Demonstrate skills and behaviours which enhance personal safety, the safety of others, and the protection of the environment.

[Link](#) to Newfoundland and Labrador (NL) Curriculum Outcomes

Lesson Snapshot:

Lesson 4: Mental Health and Substance Use: Understanding the Connection and Building Resilience

Norms & Expectations

- Learning Activity 1: The Mental Health and Substance Use Connection
- Learning Activity 2: Self-Medicating
- Learning Activity 3: Self Care and Support Systems



Lesson 1: Substance Use Policies and Regulations

Lesson 2: Be Prepared: Understanding Harm, Safety, and Emergency Response

Lesson 3: Navigating Substance Use: Understanding Choices, Stigma, and Support

Lesson 4: Mental Health and Substance Use: Understanding the Connection and Building Resilience

Background Information



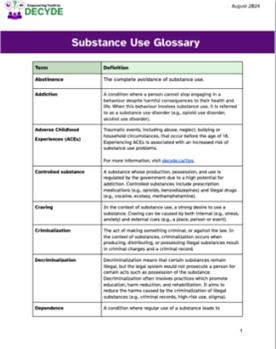
Definition of Drugs

Drugs are substances or chemicals that affect the way our bodies and minds work. Some drugs are medications that help people feel better. They can be used to prevent, cure or alleviate symptoms. Drugs can also be used in unsafe ways. They can affect how the brain works and can have negative effects on the way our body develops and functions. Drugs used unsafely can change the way people feel, think, or behave.

Examples of drugs include:

- Alcohol (e.g., beer, coolers, vodka, whisky, wine)
- Caffeine (e.g., energy drinks, coffee, tea, soft drinks)
- Cannabis or Marijuana
- Hallucinogens (e.g., LSD, Mushrooms)
- Medications (e.g., puffers, epi-pens, fever medications, anti-nausea medications, anti-anxiety medications)
- Nicotine (e.g., tobacco, cigarettes, nicotine vapes)
- Opioids (e.g., codeine, morphine, fentanyl, heroin)
- Over-the-counter medications (e.g., cough syrup, pain medications)
- Stimulants (e.g., nicotine, amphetamines [e.g., Adderall, crystal meth], methylphenidate [e.g., Ritalin], cocaine)
- Vaccinations (e.g., flu, COVID-19, tetanus)

The [DECYDE Mental Health and Substance Use Glossary](#) provides a comprehensive collection of key terms and concepts related to substance use. Designed to support educators and mentors, this glossary provides definitions to enhance understanding and communication around substance use topics that are relevant for DECYDE.



Term	Definition
Abstinence	The complete avoidance of substance use.
Addiction	A condition where a person cannot stop engaging in a behavior despite negative consequences to their health and life. Often, the individual becomes dependent on it. It is related to a substance use disorder (e.g., alcohol use disorder, opioid use disorder).
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)	Traumatic events, including abuse, neglect, bullying or household dysfunction, that occur during the span of life. Experiencing ACEs is associated with an increased risk of substance use problems.
Controlled substance	A substance whose production, possession, and use is regulated by the government due to its potential for abuse. Controlled substances include: prescription medications (e.g., painkillers, benzodiazepines) and illegal drugs (e.g., cocaine, heroin, marijuana).
Covering	In the context of substance use, a young adult is said to be covering if they are concealing their use of alcohol, tobacco, and other substances from their parents and other adults.
Criminalization	The act of making something criminal or against the law. In the context of substance use, criminalization occurs when producing, distributing, or possessing illegal substances results in criminal charges and a criminal record.
Decriminalization	Decriminalization means that certain substances remain illegal, but the legal system would not prosecute a person for certain activities. Decriminalization of the substance would mean that the person would not face criminal charges, but they would still face civil penalties, such as fines, probation, and community service. Decriminalization aims to reduce the harm caused by the criminalization of drug substances (e.g., criminal records, high-risk use, stigma).
Dependence	A condition where regular use of a substance leads to



SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

[Substance Snapshots](#) aim to provide educators with information about the various drugs that are incorporated throughout the learning activities. Each snapshot summarizes how the drug is used, its effects, when to seek emergency help, and how to stay safe. The Substance Snapshots are intended to support educators in the delivery of drug education and are not for direct student use unless deemed appropriate.

Key Considerations

An understanding of the following resources will assist educators as they implement the learning activities.



Use a Skills-Based Health Education (SBHE) Approach

SBHE is a learning approach that uses interactive learning methods. This approach is used throughout the learning activities so students can learn skills that will promote and protect their health and well-being. Refer to the [SBHE infographic](#) for more information on SBHE and examples of interactive teaching methods and evaluation.



Incorporate the FACE Decision-Making Model

Throughout all lessons the FACE decision-making model is used to guide discussions and activities. The questions associated with each step of the FACE decision-making model are intended for educator use to probe students during scenario-based learning activities. Refer to the [FACE infographics](#) for more information.



Consider Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and implement Trauma-Informed Practices (TIPs) that support harm reduction principles

ACEs are traumatic events that occur before the child reaches the age of 18. Students who experience ACEs have an increased susceptibility to try drugs. This may impact their ability to engage in learning about substances. The [ACEs infographic](#) highlights the types of ACEs that may impact youth and offers strategies for educators. Incorporating early drug education and [harm reduction](#) principles may encourage youth to make safe and informed choices and reduce potential negative consequences. Understanding the impact of trauma resulting from ACEs will better equip educators to support student learning. The [Trauma- Informed Practices \(TIPs\) infographic](#) provides information on this strengths-based approach for educators.



Support Students Emotional Wellbeing

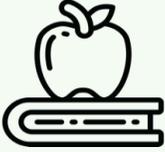
Discussion about drug or substance use may provoke a range of feelings. Building a positive rapport is vital to effectively engage youth in learning conversations. Respect for students' comments, questions, and concerns surrounding drug use is important regardless of personal opinions. If needed, encourage students to speak with the school's guidance counsellor or another trusted adult. Additional supports are located on the [DECYDE website](#).



Use First-Person Language

Using first-person language that is non-stigmatizing can create an environment that encourages students to engage in conversations or seek help. For more information about stigma and tips for educators, refer to the [infographic on Stigma](#).

Lesson 4: Navigating Substance Use: Understanding Choices, Stigma, and Support



Learning Activities and Teacher Background Resources

Learning Activity 1: The Mental Health and Substance Use Connection

Learning Activity 2: Self-Medicating

Learning Activity 3: Self Care and Support Systems

Teacher Resources:

- **Infographics:** [Stigma](#), [Health & Wellness](#), [Protective and Risk Factors for Substance Use](#), [Stress](#), [Understanding Emotions](#), [Self-Care](#), [Factors Influencing Decision-Making](#)
- **Substance Snapshots:** [Alcohol](#), [Methylphenidate](#), [Cannabis](#), [Caffeine](#), [Opioids](#)

Norms and Expectations



While abstinence from drugs is the safest choice for youth to make, discussions about harm reduction are also important. Engaging in educational discussions about substance use can be a protective factor and can positively impact the decisions made by youth. These conversations may touch on sensitive topics for some students. Educators should consider the following: reasons why youth use substances; the harms of substance use; the age and cognitive development of youth; and the context of the school, community, and/or family situations. The sensitive nature of these discussions means teachers should place utmost importance on establishing a safe, supportive, and judgment-free environment. The teacher must promote positive and effective exchanges with students by co-establishing classroom norms that are revisited often.

During these discussions, all participants agree:

- The opinions of everyone are listened to and respected.
- Discussions about the content are factual, open and honest but do not use the names of individuals' experiences. (e.g., refer to "someone I know" rather than using names)
- Boundaries of individuals are recognized and respected.
- Discussions are free of judgemental language and challenge ideas, not individuals.
- Words matter. Avoid stigmatizing language. There should be an established understanding of the term [stigma](#). Teach and model respectful language used during discussions.
 - Important examples include using person-first language. For example, "a person who uses drugs or substances"

Learning Activity 1: The Mental Health and Substance Use Connection



Learning Activity Objectives:

- Explain how the five dimensions of health are interconnected and influence overall well-being.
- Identify and discuss the short-term, long-term, and social effects of substance use on mental health.
- Analyze the connection between cannabis and mental health using real-world examples.
- Recognize risk and protective factors related to substance use and mental health.
- Collaborate respectfully with peers.
- Demonstrate understanding and empathy by engaging in respectful, stigma-free discussions and reflections about mental health and substance use.

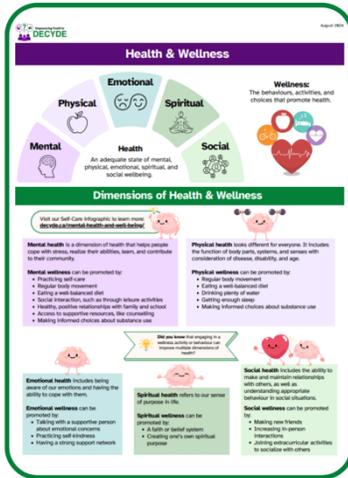
Materials:

- Introduction: The Five Dimensions of Health & Wellness
 - Discussion Prompts
 - Infographics: [Health & Wellness](#), [Stigma](#)
- Pre-Activity: How Does Substance Use Affect Mental Health and Well-Being
- Exploration Activity: Cannabis and Mental Health
 - Part 1- Podcast: [White Coat Black Art – The Toll of Cannabis-Induced Psychosis](#)
 - Part 2- YouTube Video: [Cannabis and Mental Illness](#)
 - Infographics: [Protective and Risk Factors](#)
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
- Sharing and Reflection: Cannabis Labelling
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Cannabis](#)

Introduction: Components of Health and Wellness

In Learning Activity 1, students consider how mental health relates to substance use. Begin by revisiting classroom norms. Emphasize their importance, and if necessary, adapt by changing or adding new norms.

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Show the [Health & Wellness](#) Infographic to students. Emphasize the 5 different dimensions of health and wellness, explaining that an individual is considered healthy if they have an adequate state of mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and social well-being.

Use the following discussion prompts to lead the class in a discussion about health, substance use, and self-medicating.

**Discussion Prompts:**

- What does it mean to be healthy?
- Why is it important to support all five dimensions of our health and well-being?
- What is mental health?
- What are mental health conditions?
- What is the difference between the terms “mental health” and “mental illness”?

Teacher Discussion Guide:

To have an adequate state of mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and social wellbeing.

It's important to support all five dimensions of health because they are all interconnected. When one dimension is struggling, it can negatively affect the others. For example, poor mental health can lead to physical symptoms, and lack of social support can impact emotional well-being. Supporting each dimension helps a person feel balanced, cope with challenges, maintain healthy relationships, and overall improve their quality of life.

This is a dimension of health that helps people cope with stress, realize their abilities, learn and contribute to their community.

Someone with poor mental health cannot cope with everyday stressors, and may experience disorders such as depression, anxiety, neurodivergence (e.g., ADHD, autism), psychosis, substance use disorder.

Mental health and mental illness are related but distinct concepts. Mental health is a state of well-being where individuals can cope with life's stresses, realize their abilities, learn, work, and contribute to their community. Mental illness, on the other hand, refers to diagnosable health conditions that affect thinking, feeling, mood, or behavior. While someone can have a mental illness and still have good mental health, and vice versa, they are not the same thing.

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- Is having a mental health condition a choice?

No. Mental health develops in an individual because of life circumstances. It can be related to genetics, brain structure, everyday stress, poor coping skills, trauma and substance use disorder.
- What is stigma?

A set of negative attitudes and beliefs directed toward a person or group, which can contribute to exclusion and discrimination. Stigma toward substance use can deter treatment-seeking behaviours.
- What are some of the reasons individuals experiencing mental health challenges might use substances?

The relationship between mental health and substance use is complex. There are many reasons why individuals experiencing mental health difficulties might turn to substances, and it's rarely a simple, single cause.
- Can using substances in teenage years cause mental health conditions?

Yes. The teenage brain is still growing until mid-twenties. Any drug can change the developmental process of the brain. For example, if a teen decides to drink alcohol, the brain increases in dopamine. With repeated use, the brain stops the natural production of this chemical. If the teen decides to stop drinking, the natural production is so low, it could lead to depression.
- What is meant by the term self-medicating?

Self-medicating refers to people using medications not prescribed to them, or illegal substances to reduce the symptoms of mental health challenges.
- Why do people self-medicate?

 - To cope when they feel misunderstood or lack support.
 - To manage stress, emotions, or mental health symptoms
 - To cope with sensory overload or focus challenges (e.g., ADHD, autism)
 - Limited or no access to health care or mental health services
 - No diagnosis to explain what they're experiencing
 - Stigma, shame, or fear of judgment when seeking help
 - Unaware of available supports or their benefits

Pre-Activity: How Does Substance Use Affect Mental Health and Well-Being?

In this pre-activity, students will explore the short-term, long-term, and social effects of substance use on mental health through a collaborative class activity that encourages participation and discussion.



Materials & Set-Up:

Option 1 – In-Person:

- 3 large sheets of chart paper or poster board
- Sticky notes (3 per student)
- Markers

Option 2 – Online / Digital:

- Word cloud generator
- OR collaborative whiteboard with three labeled sections

Instructions

1. Prepare the Space: Label three areas (physical or virtual):
 - a. Short-Term Mental Effects on Mental Health
 - b. Long-Term Mental Effects on Mental Health
 - c. Social / Relationship Effects

2. Student Contributions
 - a. Each student receives three sticky notes (or three online entries).
 - b. They write one idea per note about how substance use might affect mental health or relationships.
 - c. Students then place or post each note in the category they think fits best.
 - d. Encourage everyone to contribute something to each section.

3. Group Review & Discussion (5–10 minutes)
 - a. Read through the notes or word cloud results together.
 - b. Group similar ideas and highlight repeated responses.

4. Guiding Discussion Questions (with Teacher Guide)
 - Which effects were mentioned most often?
 - *Potential answers:*
 - *Anxiety, stress, or depression*
 - *Mood swings or irritability*
 - *Trouble focusing or memory problems*
 - *Sleep problems*
 - *Conflict with friends or family*
 - *Isolation or withdrawal*
 - *Addiction or dependence*
 - **Note: Students often focus on short-term emotional effects because they're easier to notice or relate to.**

 - Which category was easiest or hardest to fill?
 - *Potential answers:*

- **Easiest:** Short-term effects (students can quickly name things like stress, sadness, or anger).
 - **Hardest:** Long-term effects (these are harder to recognize or imagine).
 - Some may also struggle with social/relationship effects if they haven't personally seen them yet.
 - **Note: Use this as a chance to discuss how the long-term and social effects can develop slowly but have a big impact over time.**
- What patterns do you notice across the three areas?
 - Potential answers:
 - Many effects are connected - e.g., stress (short-term) can lead to anxiety or depression (long-term).
 - Substance use often creates a cycle - people use to cope with emotions, but it ends up worsening them.
 - Both mental and social effects are interrelated - changes in mood can strain friendships or family relationships.
 - **Note: Highlight how mental health, behaviour, and relationships influence one another — substance use rarely affects just one area.**
- What does this tell us about the connection between substance use and mental health or relationships?
 - Potential answers:
 - Substance use and mental health are closely linked — one affects the other.
 - People might use substances to cope, but it can make mental health worse over time.
 - Some people may use substances to feel more confident, relaxed, or to fit in socially. These short-term effects can make it seem easier to connect with others or escape stress. However, these effects don't last — once the substance wears off, feelings of stress, anxiety, or loneliness often return, sometimes even stronger.
 - Over time, substance use can strain friendships and family relationships, leading to conflict, mistrust, or isolation.
 - The cycle of using substances to cope can make people withdraw from healthy supports or spend more time in unsafe social circles.
 - Building supportive, understanding relationships and using positive coping strategies can strengthen mental health and reduce the need to turn to substances.
 - **Note: Encourage students to see the two-way connection: poor mental health can lead to substance use, and substance use can worsen mental health — but positive relationships and coping skills can interrupt that cycle.**



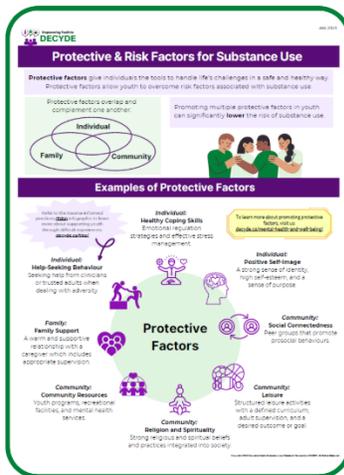
SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to the [Cannabis Substance Snapshots](#) to help inform the discussions.

Exploration Activity: Cannabis and Mental Health

For this activity, students will participate in a two-part case study on cannabis and psychosis. Students may work individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

The student worksheet for Part 1 and Part 2 is available as a [PDF](#) or [Google Doc](#).



To aid in this activity, share the [Cannabis](#) substance snapshot and the [Protective and Risk Factors](#) infographic with the students.

Student Name: _____

Part 1: Case Study - Cannabis and Psychosis
Part 2: Video - Cannabis and Mental Illness

Part 1: Case Study - Cannabis and Psychosis

Listen to the first 15 minutes of the podcast: [White Coat, Black Art: The Toll of Cannabis-Induced Psychosis](#) and respond to the following questions:

Podcast LPM: [The Toll of Cannabis-Induced Psychosis](#)

- How does Kalpit deal with his psychosis diagnosis?

- What were some stresses that Kalpit may have been experiencing before developing psychosis?

- What is an example of a protective factor that Kalpit has in his life?

Part 1: White Coat, Black Art: The Toll of Cannabis-Induced Psychosis

Students will start by listening to the first 15 minutes of the podcast: [White Coat, Black Art: The Toll of Cannabis-Induced Psychosis](#) and respond to the questions on their [student worksheet](#).

The **Teacher Discussion Guide** is available below:

- How does Kalpit deal with his psychosis diagnosis?
Stand-up comedy, the audience makes him feel supported, accepting that he has a diagnosis but not giving it too much power- still lives his life, while managing psychosis. Now wants to be a counselor who helps other people with psychosis or in crisis.
- What were some stresses that Kalpit may have been experiencing before developing psychosis?
 - Moved to Canada as an 18-year-old.*

- *Student*
 - *COVID-19*
3. What is an example of a protective factor that Kalpit has in his life?
 - *The support from his brother.*
 - *Other family members.*
 4. What were Kalpit's risk factors for psychosis? In other words, what increased the risk of Kalpit developing psychosis?
Male, young, frequent high potency cannabis use, family history
 5. How did Kalpit feel when he was diagnosed with psychosis?
Shocked, was worried about stigma, worried about his relationship with his family.

Exploration Activity (Part 2): Video – Cannabis and Mental Illness

As a class, watch the following video, [Cannabis and Mental Illness](#) (4:46), from the BC Schizophrenia Society, and then have students respond to the following questions on their [student worksheet](#).



The **Teacher Discussion Guide** is available below:

1. The brain develops until what age?
 - *Approximately age 25.*
2. What is the active ingredient in weed (cannabis)?
 - *THC*
3. What is psychosis?
 - *A group of symptoms: hallucinations, delusions, withdrawn, depressed, disorganized. Usually a mix of symptoms.*
4. Imagine you are giving a presentation to a grade 7 class on the health effects of cannabis. How would you discuss the risk of developing cannabis-induced psychosis with that age group?
 - *Most people who use cannabis are not developing psychosis or schizophrenia, however if you are genetically predisposed to these conditions, your risk of developing cannabis-induced psychosis and/or schizophrenia increases drastically. There are different factors that may influence a person's risk of developing cannabis-induced psychosis. Some factors include: the age an individual starts using*

regularly (especially under the age of 16, and 3 or more times a week), the THC content of the cannabis being used (especially if it contains over 15 % THC), and family history or genetic predisposition for schizophrenia or other psychotic disorders.

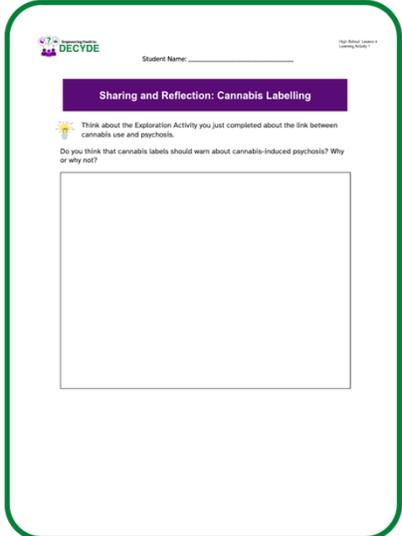
5. Why are younger males more likely to develop psychosis than younger females?
Both males and females can develop psychosis, however, female brains mature more quickly than males, therefore a female's brain might be already almost developed when they would be considered high risk users of cannabis. Male brains are still developing when they would be considered high risk users.

Sharing and Reflection: Cannabis Labelling



For this Sharing and Reflection Activity, students will reflect on the activity they just completed on cannabis-induced psychosis.

Students will consider if cannabis labels should warn about cannabis induced psychosis based on what they have learned. Students will record their reflections in their student worksheet (available as a [PDF or Google Doc](#)).



DECYDE Student Name: _____

Sharing and Reflection: Cannabis Labelling

Think about the Exploration Activity you just completed about the link between cannabis use and psychosis.

Do you think that cannabis labels should warn about cannabis-induced psychosis? Why or why not?

Learning Activity 2: Self-Medicating



Learning Activity Objectives:

- Define ‘self-medicating’ and describe how it relates to mental health.
- Discuss the short- and long-term risks of using substances to self-medicate.
- Analyze lived experiences to identify risk and protective factors that influence substance-use decisions.
- Describe how substances (e.g., alcohol) can affect the developing brain and mental health.
- Develop a peer message that promotes awareness, reduces stigma, and encourages healthy coping and help-seeking.
- Collaborate respectfully with peers.
- Demonstrate understanding and empathy by engaging in respectful, stigma-free discussions and reflections about mental health and substance use.

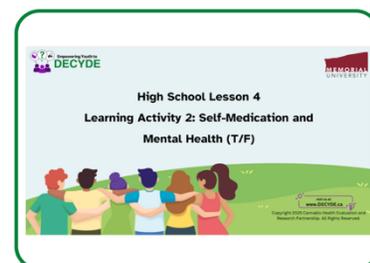
Materials:

- Introduction: True or False – Self-Medication and Mental Health
 - [Canva Presentation](#)
- Exploration: Lived Experiences Spotlight – Aria’s Experience: Using Substances to Cope
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
 - Infographics: [Stigma](#), [Protective and Risk Factors for Substance Use](#), [Stress](#)
- Sharing and Reflection: Peer Message
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Alcohol](#), [Cannabis](#), [Opioids](#), [Caffeine](#)

Introduction: True or False- Self-Medicating and Mental Health

This Learning Activity will focus on the relationship between self-medicating and mental health. Explain to students that self-medicating refers to when someone uses substances that may be unregulated or are not prescribed to them to manage mental health symptoms or other health conditions.

Begin this activity with the following [True or False activity](#), which will help teachers to gauge student’s understanding of the topic of self-medicating and how it relates to mental health.





The Teacher Discussion Guide is available below:

1. People sometimes use substances like alcohol, cannabis, or caffeine to cope with stress, anxiety, or other mental-health symptoms.
 - ▶ True - This is called self-medicating. That is, trying to manage emotional or mental pain without professional help.
2. Using unregulated or unprescribed substances to manage emotions is a healthy, long-term coping strategy.
 - ▶ False - It may give short-term relief, but it avoids the real cause of distress and increases the risk of addiction.
3. Some people with ADHD use caffeine to help with focus if they can't access medication or treatment.
 - ▶ True - Caffeine acts as a mild stimulant, but it's not a substitute for proper ADHD care and can cause sleep problems or anxiety.
4. Using substances during adolescence can change how the brain develops, especially in areas linked to reward and impulse control.
 - ▶ True - This increases the risk of future substance-use problems and mental-health challenges.
5. Building healthy coping skills and self-care habits have no impact on whether someone self-medicates.
 - ▶ False - Developing strong coping habits reduce the urge to self-medicate because they give people safe ways to manage emotions.
6. Drinking alcohol to feel more comfortable in social situations is a form of self-medicating.
 - ▶ True - Alcohol lowers inhibitions and can temporarily reduce social anxiety, but it can create dependence over time.
7. Having supportive relationships and a sense of purpose can protect against harmful substance use.
 - ▶ True - Feeling connected helps people manage stress in healthier ways.
8. The part of the brain that helps with decision-making and impulse control (the prefrontal cortex) is still developing in teens.
 - ▶ True - This makes teens more likely to take risks or act on impulses without fully thinking them through.
9. Limited access to mental health care has no effect on whether someone uses substances.



- ▶ False - When therapy, medication, or support are hard to access, people may self-medicate using alcohol or drugs instead.
10. Feeling isolated or disconnected from others can increase someone’s risk of using substances to cope.
 - ▶ True - Loneliness and lack of belonging can lead people to seek comfort or escape through substance use.
 11. Using cannabis as a teen has no link to psychosis or other mental-health effects.
 - ▶ False - Early or heavy cannabis use can increase the risk of psychosis, especially for people already at risk.
 12. Neurodivergent individuals (e.g., ADHD or autism) may be at higher risk for substance use because they are trying to manage symptoms or fit in socially.
 - ▶ True - Substances might be used to focus, calm anxiety, or feel more accepted in groups.
 13. Self-medicating can seem helpful at first but often makes mental-health symptoms worse over time.
 - ▶ True - Substances can change brain chemistry, leading to stronger anxiety, depression, or dependency.
 14. “Social prescribing” means using social and community activities—like sports, volunteering, or art—to support mental health.
 - ▶ True - It focuses on meaningful connections and positive coping strategies instead of medication alone.
 15. It’s always easy to tell the difference between trauma, chronic stress, and neurodevelopmental disorders.
 - ▶ False - These can look similar, so proper assessment is important before assuming one cause.
 16. Because the prefrontal cortex develops more slowly in some neurodivergent individuals, substance use can have a stronger and longer-lasting impact on their brains.
 - ▶ True - lower development can increase vulnerability to addiction.
 17. Mixing substances (e.g., alcohol and prescription or street drugs) can increase mental-health risks and cause unpredictable effects.
 - ▶ True - Combining substances can intensify anxiety, depression, or psychosis, and raise overdose risk.



SUBSTANCE SNAPSHOT

Teachers may refer to the [Alcohol](#), [Cannabis](#), [Caffeine](#), and [Opioids](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussions.

Exploration Activity: Lived Experience Spotlight- Aria's Experience: Using Substances to Cope

Throughout the lessons, students will engage with authentic stories shared by individuals with lived and living experience. These spotlights present real perspectives, told in the individual's own words and language, offering students meaningful insight into the realities of substance use.

Begin this exploration activity by reading through **Aria's Experience: Using Substances to Cope** together as a class and discussing the accompanying questions. The student version is available as a [Google Doc or PDF](#) so the students can follow along and record their thoughts or notes as needed.

Students may refer to the [Stress](#), [Protective and Risk Factors](#), and [Stigma](#) infographics, as well as explore the relevant [Substance Snapshots](#).



The **Teacher Discussion Guide** is available below:

Aria's Experience: Using Substances to Cope

My first experience with substance use was when I was 10. I started experimenting with alcohol first. I had been at my friend's house, where I was offered whiskey. I thought after that night I wouldn't do it again since my parents have a history with substances I don't like. But I yearned for the feeling of it, and from then on, it continued to build, leading me down a very dark path of using other substances for several years.

What influenced my decision to use substances was my lack of health care, because I was left undiagnosed for years, and I'd often self-medicate with substances to cope with my mental health and home life.

What helps me feel safer when using substances is the precautions I take before I do so. I make sure I'm with at least one person in case something happens, and that I'm always carrying a naloxone kit with me that we both know how to use.

When I first started using, nothing changed, but as I used more and more, I started to notice I was missing important things in my life. I never wanted to go to anything revolving around my family or hobbies, and would skip out on a lot of things. I was nauseous and depressed

most of the time. I never had any energy, and after a while, instead of it helping me cope with my mental health, it made it decline.

When my friends began to notice that my substance use was harming me, they spoke to me, and I decided to seek help. From the recommendation of my friend, I discovered Hope Valley Youth Centre in Grand Falls-Windsor. I am scheduled to attend the two-week withdrawal management program starting soon.

The people I feel the most comfortable asking concerns or questions to are 811, they are always there no matter the time and have several resources and solutions available for anyone.

What I wish people would understand more about substance use is that it doesn't make you a disgusting or a horrible person. It is not something that you should be ashamed of. I've had people act like I was a completely different person once they found out about my substance use and it isn't a nice feeling. Most people who struggle with substance use are going through something difficult, and it isn't fair to be treated badly for trying to find a way to cope.

Substance use, unfortunately, was something that easily fit into my life. In some strange way, I think that substances helped me when I didn't feel I had any other options. For a while, it made me feel normal. It helped me cope with everything that was happening in my life, and I thought numbing everything was the solution. But in the long term, after everything wore off, I realized I just felt worse and was suppressing everything I was feeling, which wasn't healthy and made my mental health worse.

Teacher Discussion Guide:

1. How might mental health challenges lead someone to use substances?
 - Substances may temporarily numb difficult feelings like sadness, anxiety, or stress.
 - They can give a short-term sense of relief or escape from problems.
 - People might not have healthy coping tools, so they turn to substances instead.
 - Self-medicating can seem easier than seeking professional help, especially if there's a lack of access to care.

2. Why might using alcohol or other substances to cope with stress or difficult feelings work in the short term but cause harm in the long term?
 - Initial effects can feel calming or uplifting but wear off quickly.
 - Over time, tolerance develops, meaning more is needed for the same effect.
 - Can worsen mental health symptoms, like depression or anxiety.



- Does not address the root causes of stress or trauma, leaving problems unresolved.
3. How can using alcohol at a young age affect brain development?
 - The brain is still developing until about age 25, especially areas involved in decision-making and impulse control.
 - Alcohol can interfere with the growth and connections of brain cells (neurons).
 - It can impact memory, learning, and concentration.
 - May reduce ability to make good decisions and control emotions.
 - Increases risk of developing alcohol dependence or addiction later in life.
 - Can affect coordination, reaction time, and judgment.
 - May contribute to mental health issues like anxiety or depression.
 4. Is self-medicating with alcohol or other substances a positive or negative thing? Why or why not?
 - Depending on the mental health condition, some individuals may experience short-term benefit (e.g., reduce anxiety, improve sleep, help with focus or alertness).
 - Some concerns with self-medicating
 - Does not treat the root cause of the mental health issue
 - Can worsen mental health symptoms over time.
 - May lead to dependency or addiction.
 - Can interfere with school, relationships, and physical health.
 5. In this story, what risk factors may have increased Aria’s likelihood of using substances?
 - Family history of substance use.
 - Lack of access to health care and undiagnosed mental health conditions.
 - Stressful home environment.
 - Early exposure to alcohol
 - Friends who had access to alcohol
 6. What protective factors helped Aria eventually get help and make safer choices?
 - Supportive friends who noticed changes and spoke up.
 - Willingness to accept help and attend a withdrawal program.
 - Knowledge of harm reduction strategies (carrying naloxone, not using alone).
 - Having a trusted resource to call (811).
 7. Aria mentioned taking precautions while using substances, like being with someone and carrying naloxone. How can these strategies reduce harm?
 - Someone else can call for help or give naloxone in case of overdose.
 - Naloxone can reverse an opioid overdose and save a life.
 - Increases safety and reduces risk of using alone, where no one could respond.
 - Shows awareness of harm reduction principles.

8. How did supportive friends make a difference in Aria's decision to seek help?
- Friends noticed warning signs and expressed concern.
 - They recommended a specific resource (e.g., Hope Valley Youth Centre).
 - Provided emotional support, reducing feelings of shame or isolation.
 - Helped the person feel it was safe to open up and accept help.

Sharing and Reflection: Peer Message



In this lesson, students learned about mental health and how it relates to substance use. Using what they learned as well as doing some research, students will create a message for their peers that shares information about this relationship and encourages informed, healthy choices.



DECYDE

Student Name: _____

Sharing and Reflection: Peer Message

Instructions: In this lesson we learned a lot about mental health and how it relates to substance use. Using what we have learned as well as doing some research, develop a message for your own peer group to inform them about the potential dangers of substance use and its relationship to mental health.

Some important topics to include are quality of life, stigma, barriers to getting help for mental health and substance use and how substance use (such as alcohol or cannabis) can affect the development of the teenage brain. Use one of the following methods to deliver your message.

- Slide Presentation
- Poster
- Poem
- Infographic
- Video
- Story Book
- Comic Strip
- Other creative approaches.

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Some topics to include are quality of life, stigma, barriers to getting help for mental health and substance use, and how substance use (such as alcohol or cannabis) can affect the development of the teenage brain. Students can choose to use any the following methods to deliver their message:

- Slide Presentation
- Poster
- Poem
- Infographic
- Video
- Story Book
- Comic Strip
- Other creative approach

The student instructions worksheet is available as a [Google Doc](#) or [PDF](#).

Learning Activity 3: Self-Care and Support Systems



Learning Activity Objectives:

Explain how stress, emotions, and self-care are connected to overall mental health and well-being.

- Apply the FACE decision-making model to examine responses to stress and identify effective ways to cope and seek support.
- Recognize the difference between positive and negative stress and describe self-care practices that promote balance and well-being.
- Develop a self-care or social-prescribing plan that supports individual and peer well-being.
- Create a personalized Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit that identifies coping strategies, support networks, and realistic mental-health goals.
- Use critical thinking skills to make decisions and problem-solve.
- Demonstrate positive communication skills.
- Collaborate respectfully with peers.

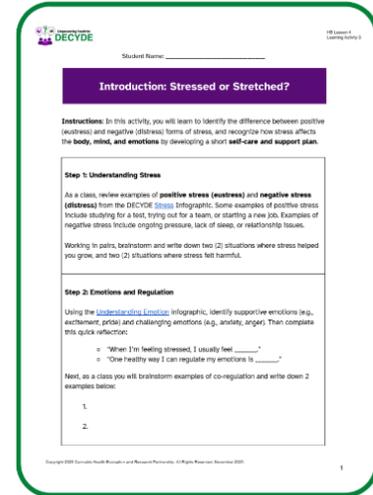
Materials:

- Introduction: Stressed or Stretched? Understanding Stress, Self-Care, and Emotional Regulation
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
 - Infographics: [Stress](#), [Understanding Emotions](#), [Self-Care](#), [DECYDE Mental Health and Substance Use Support Page](#).
- Pre-Activity: Songs of Support: Exploring Mental Health Through Music
 - [‘Leave a Light On’ by Tom Walker \(pop/rock\)](#) – YouTube Video
 - [‘I Gotcha’ by Cooper Alan \(country\)](#) – YouTube Video
 - [‘Wishing Well’ by Juice WRLD \(soft rock/rap\)](#) – YouTube Video
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
 - [Teacher Discussion Guide](#)
- Exploration Activity (Part 1): FACE – Blake’s Experience: Feeling Overwhelmed
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
 - [Teacher Discussion Guide](#)
 - Infographics: [Secondary FACE for Students](#)
- Exploration Activity (Part 2): Blake’s Next Steps: Getting Support and Building Balance
 - [Student Worksheet](#)
 - Infographics: [Factors Influencing Decision-Making](#), [Health and Wellness](#)
- Sharing and Reflection: [My Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit](#)
- Substance Snapshots: [Methylphenidate](#), [Caffeine](#)

Introduction

This lesson will focus on support systems and positive coping skills that we all have or need in our lives. Students will also learn how to identify different forms of stress and develop their understanding of how to cope with stress in their lives.

In this pre-activity, students will learn to identify the difference between positive (eustress) and negative (distress) forms of stress, and recognize how stress affects the body, mind, and emotions by developing a short **self-care and support plan**. The student worksheet is available as a [PDF or Google Doc](#).



Teacher Discussion Guide:

Step 1 – Understanding Stress

As a class, review examples of positive stress (eustress) and negative stress (distress) from the DECYDE [Stress](#) Infographic. Some examples of positive stress include studying for a test, trying out for a team, or starting a new job. Examples of negative stress include ongoing pressure, lack of sleep, or relationship issues.

In pairs, briefly ask students to list two situations where stress helped them grow, and two situations where stress felt harmful. Students will write these down on their Student Worksheet.

Then, as a class, discuss:

- *How can stress motivate us?*
- *When does stress start to feel unhealthy?*

Step 2 – Emotions and Regulation

Next, introduce the [Understanding Emotions](#) infographic to the class to identify supportive emotions (e.g., excitement, pride) and challenging emotions (e.g., anxiety, anger). On their worksheet, ask students to complete this quick reflection:

- *"When I'm feeling stressed, I usually feel _____."*
- *"One healthy way I can regulate my emotions is _____."*

Introduce **emotion regulation** and **co-regulation**:

- Emotion regulation = managing your own emotions.
- Co-regulation = supporting each other through difficult emotions.

As a class, brainstorm examples of co-regulation (e.g., calming down a friend, taking a break, using positive self-talk). Ask students to write down their two favorite examples on their worksheet.

Step 3- Self-Care and Supports

Review the [Self-Care](#) infographic. In their worksheet, have students list 3-5 self-care actions they are already doing to help manage their stress and emotions. Then, have students identify 2 formal supports they could use should they need them.

Direct students to the [DECYDE Mental Health and Substance Use Support Page](#) for a list of formal supports.

Step 4- Student Reflection

Have students respond individually or in small groups to the following questions.

- What is one sign that you might be feeling too stressed?
- Which self-care strategy or support helps you the most?
- How does taking care of your mental health help you manage your emotions better?

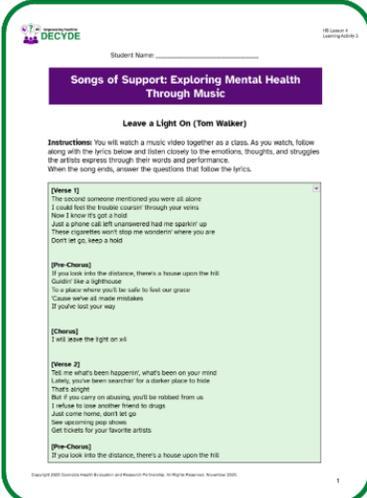
Pre-Activity: Songs of Support: Exploring Mental Health Through Music

In this activity, teachers will pick one of the following three songs that explore themes of mental health, coping, and support:

1. Leave a Light On – Tom Walker (pop/rock) – 3:28
2. I Gotcha – Cooper Alan (country) – 2:22
3. Wishing Well – Juice WRLD (soft rock/rap) – 3:22

The music for these songs are available [here](#). Through guided discussion, students will analyze the lyrics to identify emotions, struggles, and examples of support systems within the songs. Students will reflect on how music can express real-life challenges and provide messages of hope and resilience.

The student worksheets, which includes lyrics for each song and the discussion questions, are available as [Google Docs and PDFs](#).



Student Name: _____

Songs of Support: Exploring Mental Health Through Music

Leave a Light On (Tom Walker)

Instructions: You will watch a music video together as a class. As you watch, follow along with the lyrics below and listen closely to the emotions, thoughts, and struggles the artists express through their words and performance. When the song ends, answer the questions that follow the lyrics.

[Verse 1]
 The second someone mentioned you were all alone
 I could feel the trouble coursing through your veins
 Now I know it's got a hold
 Just a phone call left unanswered had me spazzin' up
 These cigarettes won't stop me viceroy where you are
 Don't let go, keep a hold

[Pre-Chorus]
 If you look into the distance, there's a house upon the hill
 Guide'll be a lighthouse
 To a place where you'll be safe to feel our grace
 Cause we're all made mistakes
 If you're lost your way

[Chorus]
 I will leave the light on all

[Verse 2]
 Tell me what's been happenin', what's been on your mind
 Later, you've been searching for a darker place to hide
 That's alright
 But if you carry on abusin', you'll be robbed from us
 I wish to love another friend to drugs
 Just come home, don't let go
 See we're coming just alone
 Get tickets for your favorite artists

[Pre-Chorus]
 If you look into the distance, there's a house upon the hill

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Activity Instructions:

1. Play the music video:

Play one of the music videos listed above to the class and share the lyrics with the students so they can follow along. Teachers may select which song they think will resonate most with the class.

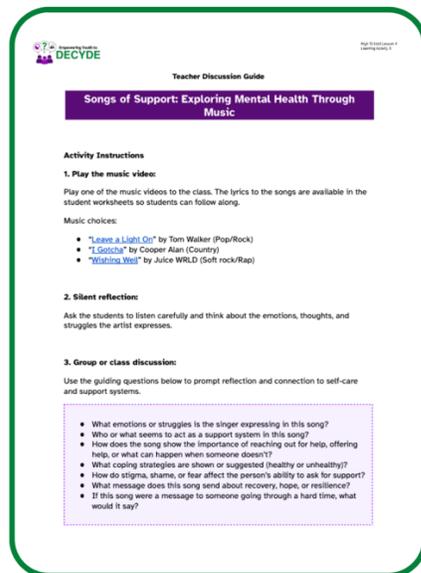
2. Silent Reflection:

Ask students to listen carefully and think about the emotions, thoughts, and struggles the artist expresses.

3. Group or Class Discussion:

Use the guiding questions below to prompt reflection and connection to self-care and support systems.

- What emotions or struggles is the singer expressing in this song?
- Who or what seems to act as a support system in this song?
- How does the song show the importance of reaching out for help, offering help, or what can happen when someone doesn't?
- What coping strategies are shown or suggested (healthy or unhealthy)?
- How do stigma, shame, or fear affect the person's ability to ask for support?
- What message does this song send about recovery, hope, or resilience?
- If this song were a message to someone going through a hard time, what would it say?



The Teacher Discussion Guide is [available as a PDF](#).

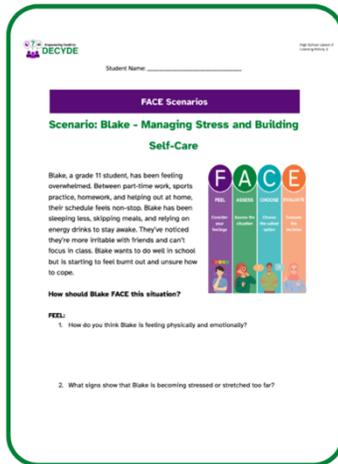
Exploration Activity (Part 1): FACE – Blake’s Experience: Feeling Overwhelmed

In the first part of this Exploration Activity, students will consider how their choices and decisions can affect their health and well-being. The goal is to highlight why thoughtful decision-making matters when it comes to substance use.



**SUBSTANCE
SNAPSHOT**

Teachers may refer to the [Caffeine](#) Substance Snapshots to help inform the discussions.



Start by reviewing the FACE Decision-Making Model to explore how youth may:

FEEL about the situation
ASSESS the situation
CHOOSE the safest option
EVALUATE the decision:

Next, provide the Student Worksheet for Part 1 of the scenario about Blake’s Experience ([available in PDF or Google Doc](#)). Students may refer to the [Stress](#) and [Health and Wellness](#) infographics to help guide their answers. Depending on class needs, students can complete the activity individually, in pairs, or in small groups.

Scenario Part 1: Blake’s Experience: Feeling Overwhelmed

Blake, a grade 11 student, has been feeling constantly overwhelmed. Between part-time work, sports practice, homework, and helping out at home, their schedule feels non-stop. Even when Blake tries to stay organized, they struggle to focus, get easily distracted, and often leave tasks unfinished. Lately, they’ve been sleeping less, skipping meals, and relying on energy drinks and coffee to stay alert.

At first, the caffeine seemed to help Blake stay focused, but now they feel anxious, restless, and tired all the time. They’re irritable with friends, falling behind in class, and starting to feel like no matter how hard they try, they can’t keep up. Blake hasn’t talked to anyone about what’s going on and isn’t sure if the problem is stress, burnout, or something else.

How should Blake FACE this situation?

FEEL

1. How do you think Blake may be feeling physically and emotionally?

- Physically tired, restless, jittery from caffeine, trouble sleeping
- Emotionally stressed, frustrated, anxious, discouraged
- Feeling like they’re failing or can’t keep up despite trying hard

2. What signs show that Blake is becoming stressed or stretched too far?

- Skipping meals, losing sleep, increased irritability
- Trouble focusing, falling behind in schoolwork
- Isolating from friends or snapping at others
- Depending on caffeine for energy instead of rest

3. Why might Blake feel pressure to keep doing everything, even when it's exhausting?

- Doesn't want to let people down (family, coaches, teachers)
- Feels expected to "handle it all" or be high-achieving
- Thinks asking for help shows weakness
- Enjoys their activities but struggles to balance them

ASSESS

4. What are some positive (eustress) and negative (distress) stressors in Blake's life?

- **Eustress:** motivation to do well in school, teamwork in sports, learning responsibility at work
- **Distress:** lack of rest, heavy workload, time pressure, self-criticism, unmanaged symptoms

5. Which dimensions of wellness seem out of balance?

- **Physical:** poor sleep, skipped meals, caffeine overuse
- **Mental:** trouble focusing, racing thoughts
- **Emotional:** irritability, anxiety, burnout
- **Social:** conflict or withdrawal from friends
- **Spiritual:** loss of sense of balance or meaning

6. What coping strategies is Blake currently using? Are they helpful or harmful?

- Using caffeine for focus – short-term energy, long-term crash (harmful)
- Avoiding help, pushing through stress (harmful)
- Staying active in sports (potentially helpful if balanced)

CHOOSE

7. What healthy self-care or coping strategies could help Blake manage stress better?

- Create a daily routine with regular sleep and meals
- Replace caffeine with water or herbal tea
- Break tasks into smaller goals; use planners or reminders
- Practice mindfulness or breathing breaks
- Ask teachers for extensions or adjustments when needed

8. Who could Blake reach out to for support?

- School guidance counsellor or teacher
- Family member or a trusted adult

- Teammates or friends
- Health-care provider or mental-health professional

9. If you were helping Blake, what advice would you give?

- You don't have to do everything at once
- Asking for help is not a sign of weakness
- Prioritize sleep, nutrition, and other self-care
- Notice when caffeine or overworking starts to make things worse
- It's okay to take breaks. That's part of staying healthy!

EVALUATE

10. How might these new strategies help Blake feel more balanced and focused?

- More energy, improved concentration
- Better mood, fewer arguments
- Healthier routines.

11. What could happen if Blake continues to ignore signs of stress?

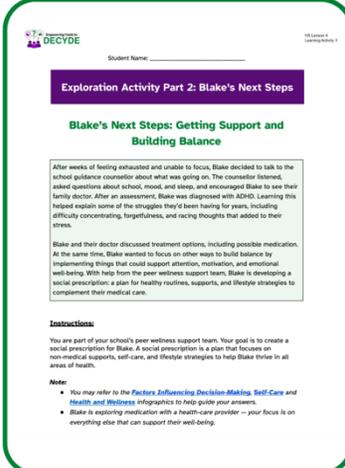
- Burnout
- Anxiety or illness
- Declining grades
- Strained relationships.

12. What can we learn from Blake's experience about caring for our own mental health?

- Everyone has limits
- Stress can be managed with balance and self-care
- Reaching out for help is a strength, not a weakness.

Exploration Activity (Part 2): Blake's Next Steps: Getting Support and Building Balance

In the second part of this Exploration Activity, students will continue exploring Blake's story, learning how **social prescribing** and **self-care** strategies can complement medical treatment and support someone's overall well-being. Students will consider the **factors influencing decision-making** and explore how the **dimensions of health and wellness** (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual, and social health) contribute to healthy choices.



Student Name: _____

Exploration Activity Part 2: Blake's Next Steps

Blake's Next Steps: Getting Support and Building Balance

After weeks of feeling exhausted and unable to focus, Blake decided to talk to the school guidance counselor about what was going on. The counselor listened, asked questions about school, mood, and sleep, and encouraged Blake to see their family doctor. After an assessment, Blake was diagnosed with ADHD. Learning this helped explain some of the struggles they'd been having for years, including difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, and racing thoughts that added to their stress.

Blake and their doctor discussed treatment options, including possible medication. At the same time, Blake wanted to focus on other ways to build balance by implementing things that could support attention, motivation, and emotional well-being. With help from the peer wellness support team, Blake is developing a social prescription: a plan for healthy routines, supports, and lifestyle strategies to complement their medical care.

Instructions:

You are part of your school's peer wellness support team. Your goal is to create a social prescription for Blake. A social prescription is a plan that focuses on non-medical supports, self-care, and lifestyle strategies to help Blake thrive in all areas of health.

Note:

- You may refer to the **Factors Influencing Decision-Making, Self-Care and Health and Wellness** infographics to help guide your answers.
- Blake is exploring medication with a health-care provider – your focus is on everything else that can support their well-being.



Provide students with the following scenario, available as a [PDF or Google Doc](#). In pairs or small groups, students will create a social prescription for Blake. A social prescription is a plan that focuses on non-medical supports, self-care, and lifestyle strategies to help Blake thrive in all areas of health.

Note: Blake is exploring medication with a health-care provider — students will focus on everything else that can support Blake’s well-being.

Students will identify the issue, analyze factors that might influence Blake’s decisions, and then develop a social description, focusing on self-care and the dimensions of health and wellness. Students will wrap up the activity by presenting their “social prescription” to the class or in small groups.

The **scenario** and **Teacher Discussion Guide** are available below:

Scenario Part 2: Blake’s Next Steps – Getting Support and Building Balance

After weeks of feeling exhausted and unable to focus, Blake decided to talk to the school guidance counsellor about what was going on. The counsellor listened, asked questions about school, mood, and sleep, and encouraged Blake to see their family doctor. After an assessment, Blake was diagnosed with **ADHD**. Learning this helped explain some of the struggles they’d been having for years, including difficulty concentrating, forgetfulness, and racing thoughts that added to their stress.

Blake and their doctor discussed treatment options, including possible medication. At the same time, Blake wanted to focus on other ways to build balance by implementing things that could support attention, motivation, and emotional well-being. With help from the **peer wellness support team**, Blake is developing a **social prescription**: a plan for healthy routines, supports, and lifestyle strategies to complement their medical care.

Step 1: Identify the Issue

1. What needs was Blake trying to meet by using caffeine?

- To improve focus, stay awake, and manage school demands
- To feel more in control or productive
- To cope with untreated ADHD symptoms and stress

2. What might still make it hard for Blake to stay balanced, even while getting medical care?

- Busy schedule and difficulty saying “no”
- Pressure to succeed
- Trouble with organization and time management
- Forgetting to use coping strategies consistently

3. Why is it important to include social and lifestyle support along with medication?



- Medication can help attention, but balance comes from lifestyle changes
- Social supports build accountability, motivation, and emotional well-being
- Healthy habits (sleep, routines, nutrition, relationships) reinforce treatment success

Step 2: Analyze Influences

In Step 2, students will think about the different **factors that might influence Blake’s decisions** and overall health. Each factor can shape how people think, feel, and act when making choices about coping, self-care, and well-being.

Factor	How It Might Influence Blake
Self-Concept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blake’s confidence and how they see themselves may affect their willingness to ask for help or try new strategies. If Blake feels judged or misunderstood, it could be harder to reach out.
Knowledge & Experiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What Blake knows about ADHD, caffeine, and mental health affects decisions. • Previous experiences, such as how caffeine made them feel may also shape future choices. • Blake’s levels of fatigue due to schedule or stress may impact their decision making
Family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Blake’s parents attitude towards their medication use and diagnosis may influence how comfortable Blake feels talking about ADHD or seeking support.
Peer Groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Friends’ opinions and behaviours may affect whether Blake uses caffeine, participates in activities, or opens up about challenges. The desire to fit in or be accepted can strongly influence choices.
School & Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teachers, counsellors, and community programs can play a big role in helping Blake succeed. A supportive environment can encourage healthier coping and belonging.
Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media, influencers, and ads may shape how Blake views productivity, energy drinks, and “quick fixes.” • Positive or negative messaging can impact self-image and behavior.

Step 3 – Develop a Social Prescription (Focus on Self-Care and Dimensions of Wellness)

Create a plan that helps Blake strengthen each **dimension of health and wellness** through *social prescribing* and *self-care strategies*.

Choose at least one idea for each dimension below:

Dimension of Health & Wellness	Possible Self-Care / Social Prescribing Strategies
Mental Health	Use planners or digital reminders; practice mindfulness; break tasks into smaller steps; schedule breaks between commitments
Physical Health	Set a regular sleep schedule; eat balanced meals; limit caffeine; exercise for energy rather than overuse of stimulants
Emotional Health	Journal or talk with counsellor; identify stress triggers; use positive self-talk and relaxation techniques
Social Health	Spend time with supportive friends; join a study or peer-support group; communicate openly with teachers and family
Spiritual Health	Make time for quiet reflection, nature, or music; focus on purpose and gratitude; set realistic goals that align with values

Teacher Discussion Points

- Emphasize how Blake’s diagnosis helped them understand their challenges rather than seeing them as personal failure.
- Reinforce that medication is one piece of a larger wellness puzzle — social connections, habits, and coping skills matter just as much.
- Encourage students to reflect on how their own support systems and routines can protect mental health.

Step 4 – Share and Reflect

- Students will present their “social prescription” to the class or in small groups.
- Students will explain how their plan complements Blake’s medical care and supports all dimensions of wellness.

Have students reflect on the following questions to wrap up: Which of these ideas could also help you manage stress or build resilience.



Sharing and Reflection: My Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit



For this sharing and reflection activity, students will build a personal **Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit**.

Students will complete a wellness check-in across five dimensions of health, identifying their circle of supports, listing coping and self-care strategies, and setting personal mental health goals.

Students will think about what helps them feel their best and how to build a network of people and strategies that support their overall wellness.

Students may refer to the [Health and Wellness](#) and [Self-Care](#) infographic to help guide their responses. The [support resources](#) listed on the DECYDE website may also help with their responses. The student worksheet is available as a [PDF](#) or [Google Doc](#).

DECYDE Student Name: _____

Sharing and Reflection: My Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit

Create your own **Mental Health & Wellness Toolkit** by checking in on your well-being, identifying your supports, listing self-care strategies, and setting personal goals for your mental health.

Step 1: My Wellness Check In

Think about how you take care of yourself across the five (5) dimensions of wellness. Fill in something you already do and one new idea you would like to try.

Dimension of Wellness	What I Do Now	What I Could Try
Mental (focus, mindset)		
Physical (stress, movement, nutrition)		
Emotional (feelings, self-expression)		
Social (connection, belonging)		
Spiritual (meaning, reflection, purpose)		



Content Created by the Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership (CHERP) Team at Memorial University

DECYDE stands for Drug Education Centred on Youth Decision Empowerment. Through this project, our Cannabis Health Evaluation and Research Partnership (CHERP) team of pharmacists, educators, researchers, and students at Memorial University who wish to support substance use education for youth. We further collaborate with a diverse panel of youth in Newfoundland and Labrador who collaborate with the team on creating the DECYDE content.

The key goals of our project are to:

- Provide substance use education that emphasizes harm reduction principles.
- Provide youth with information and support the development of decision-making skills about substance use.
- Provide youth with the knowledge and skills to make safe and informed decisions surrounding substance use.
- Provide educators with accessible and easy-to-follow lesson plans that contain valid and reliable information.

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