

Lesson Overview

Grade Level	12
Subject	American Government
Lesson Summary	Students will explore mental health resources and create infographics to highlight key information, making it accessible to the school community by sharing via email to all students before Break.
Standards	n/a
Focus Pulitzer Center news story/stories	“D. Watkins and Nia Johnson: Not Just Surviving, but Thriving Pulitzer Center” by Corey S. Powell “Young Palestinians Face a Steep Toll on Mental Health Pulitzer Center” by Kern Hendricks “How Extreme Heat Impacts Your Brain and Mental Health Pulitzer Center- this story could also demonstrate something out of students’ control that is impacting their mental health” by Aryn Baker “A Dad and His Teenager Are Talking Openly About Suicide. And They Say Your Family Should Too Pulitzer Center” by Deepa Fernandes, Ashley Locke, Julia Corcoran, and Grace Griffin “Teacher Fellows Engage Over 1,500 Students in Projects Inspired by Global Health Reporting” by Sushmita Jaya Mukherjee and Fareed Mostoufi Webinar on Demand: “Starting the Conversation: Talking About Youth Mental Health”
Content Advisory	This lesson contains references to suicide and emotional distress, which may be triggering for some individuals.
Notes on Context	This content is essential as our school has seen a rise in mental health challenges since COVID-19. It’s crucial for students to know it’s okay to struggle and that resources are here to help.

Lesson Plan

Lesson Objective(s) or Essential Question(s)

Essential Question: How can understanding mental health help us support ourselves and others?

Objective: Students will create an evidence based resource to help peers recognize signs that someone may be struggling, offering support strategies and raising awareness of available mental health resources to foster empathy.

Focus Pulitzer Center News Story/Stories

[“D. Watkins and Nia Johnson: Not Just Surviving, but Thriving | Pulitzer Center”](#) by Corey S. Powell

[“Young Palestinians Face a Steep Toll on Mental Health | Pulitzer Center”](#) by Kern Hendricks

[“How Extreme Heat Impacts Your Brain and Mental Health | Pulitzer Center- this story could also demonstrate something out of students’ control that is impacting their mental health”](#) by Aryn Baker

[“A Dad and His Teenager Are Talking Openly About Suicide. And They Say Your Family Should Too | Pulitzer Center”](#) by Deepa Fernandes, Ashley Locke, Julia Corcoran, and Grace Griffin

[“Teacher Fellows Engage Over 1,500 Students in Projects Inspired by Global Health Reporting”](#) by Sushmita Jaya Mukherjee and Fareed Mostoufi

[Webinar on Demand: “Starting the Conversation: Talking About Youth Mental Health”](#)

Introducing the Lesson

This lesson helps students build awareness and empathy around mental health, helping them to understand various emotions and mental states in themselves and others. Since COVID-19, the rise in mental health challenges have highlighted the importance of students knowing it’s okay to face struggles and that support is available. By exploring mental health in a safe environment, they learn to recognize signs of struggle and ways to offer support. This fosters a more compassionate and connected school community.

The lesson goes beyond identifying emotions, encouraging students to feel seen and empowering them to seek help when needed. Themes like empathy, self-awareness, and support are directly relevant to their lives, helping them manage well-being and assist others. The pedagogical vision emphasizes collaborative,

inquiry-based learning, inviting students to create social media posts on mental health. This approach blends practical mental health education with creative expression, helping students become advocates for mental well-being.

Warm-up/Opening

Warm Up: Feelings Collage

Students will begin class by selecting an emoji that represents how they are feeling today. Students (volunteers, preferably) will identify why they chose that emoji and how that communicates how they are feeling today.

Opening: Discussion and Prompt

The teacher should now begin the transition from the feelings collage to a brief discussion on mental health to transition to the jigsaw

Prompt for teacher: Now that some of you have shared, let's have a brief discussion on why mental health matters.

Discussion Question: Why do you think it is important to understand our emotions and those of others?

Prompt for teacher: Today, before we begin our lesson, I want you to consider this:

Discussion Question: Why do you think learning about mental health from different perspectives can help us create better resources that will support others?

Prompt for teacher: Keep these questions and your peers' responses in mind as we dive into the stories today. This will lead into a further discussion about mindsets and set the stage for the lesson.

Preparing to Engage with the Focus Resource(s)

Students, by this time, are hopefully familiar with the fixed vs growth mindset. In addition, there is some level of familiarity with a variety of mental health disorders.

- This video will work as a guide if you are not familiar with fixed vs growth mindset
 -  Growth Mindset vs. Fixed Mindset

Exploring the Resource(s)

Resources to be used

- [“D. Watkins and Nia Johnson: Not Just Surviving, but Thriving | Pulitzer Center”](#) by Corey S. Powell
- [“Young Palestinians Face a Steep Toll on Mental Health | Pulitzer Center”](#) by Kern Hendricks
- [“How Extreme Heat Impacts Your Brain and Mental Health | Pulitzer Center- this story could also demonstrate something out of students’ control that is impacting their mental health”](#) by Aryn Baker
- [“A Dad and His Teenager Are Talking Openly About Suicide. And They Say Your Family Should Too | Pulitzer Center”](#) by Deepa Fernandes, Ashley Locke, Julia Corcoran, and Grace Griffin
 - This series does include discussions of suicide and self-harm, but it also presents a father and child investigating together why there is so much stigma around mental health and outlines some resources young people can access: (episodes are also pretty short)
- This webinar with the journalists and two clinicians also provides some summaries of the reporting: [Webinar on Demand: Talking About Youth Mental Health](#)

Using the Jigsaw Technique, students will collaborate in groups of four, with each member assigned one of four articles. First, they join "expert" groups with peers studying the same resource to discuss definitions, symptoms, warning signs, and ways to seek help, aiming to master their material. Each student then returns to their "home" group to teach their peers about their resource, ensuring the entire group understands the key points.

Here are some guiding questions as the student review the articles

1. What are the main points made in this article? What were the most interesting parts of the article?
2. What mental health challenges are described in the article?
3. What potential solutions do the articles describe?
4. Where do you see the challenges and solutions presented in the article in your community?

Processing the Resource(s)

After the jigsaw, students will assess their learning by answering the following questions:

1. What connections did you hear between the articles?
2. How do these articles connect to issues we see in our school and community?
3. What do the stories share about ways that people are navigating mental health challenges? What supports do they highlight?
4. What is something from your reading and discussion that you think others at our school should be aware of?

Additionally, I will seek support from a local reporter, who is also a licensed social worker, who writes a blog in

one of our local newspapers to talk to the students about mental health.
Performance Task(s)
The culminating activity is the creation of an infographic that highlights key information from each mental health resource. After collaborating in groups to synthesize the main points, students will design an infographic that is visually engaging and easy to understand, emphasizing critical elements like definitions, symptoms, warning signs, and ways to seek help. This infographic will not only serve as a classroom resource but will also be shared on a dedicated social media platform, making the information accessible beyond the classroom.
Assessment
Checklist for Infographic • Does the graphic summarize key information from your assigned resource? • Does it include definitions, symptoms, warning signs, and/or ways to seek help? • Did you ensure all information is accurate and clearly represents the resource? • Did you clearly cite the source of your information (title, author, or website as appropriate)? • Did you use graphics, icons, and colors that enhance understanding and engagement? • Is the layout optimized for sharing on social media (e.g., clear visuals, easy to read on a phone)?