

# MENTAL HEALTH MYTHS AND FACTS

Use this discussion activity in tutor time or a PSHE lesson to help students explore some of the myths that exist about mental health.

## YOU WILL NEED:

- Copies of the student activity sheet 'Mental Health Myths and Facts' (one for each pair of students in the class).

## INSTRUCTIONS

1. Working in pairs, give students a copy of the activity sheet 'Mental Health Myths and Facts' on the following page of this PDF.
2. Give students time to read and discuss the different facts on the sheet.
3. As a class, discuss each myth in turn. Use the information below to support the students' discussion.
4. This discussion activity is a great starting point for moving on to the other Sport Relief/Time to Change activities available for secondary students.

## KEY MESSAGES

### **Myth: Mental health problems are very rare.**

Mental health problems affect around one in four adults. Mental health problems are extremely wide ranging, including anxiety and panic attacks, bipolar disorder, depression, eating disorders, obsessive-compulsive disorder, schizophrenia, self-harm and suicidal feelings.

### **Myth: Mental health problems don't affect children.**

One in eight young people aged 5 to 19 experiences mental health problems. Even for younger children aged 5 to 11, the figure stands at one in ten. This means that there are likely to be around three people in your class who are experiencing a mental health problem.

### **Myth: Mental health problems usually start when you're older.**

Three-quarters of adults with a mental health problem experience the first symptoms by the age of 24.

### **Myth: You can't recover from mental health problems.**

Mental health problems may not always go away forever, but lots of people with mental health problems still work, have families and lead full lives.

### **Myth: People with mental health problems are usually violent and unpredictable.**

Most people with mental health problems, even those with severe ones like schizophrenia, are not violent. Someone with a mental illness is more likely to be a victim of violence than inflict it. The majority of violent crimes and homicides are committed by people who do not have mental health problems.

### **Myth: It's easy for young people to talk to friends about their feelings.**

Nearly three out of four young people fear the reactions of friends when they talk about their mental health problems. The shame and silence can be as bad as the mental health problem itself. If your friend is acting differently, ask twice! There are lots of things you can do to support someone with a mental health problem: check in, listen and don't judge, and treat them in the same way.

# MENTAL HEALTH MYTHS AND FACTS

There's lots of confusion about mental health. In pairs, take it in turns to read and discuss the myths and facts below. Do any surprise you and make you think again?

## MYTH

Mental health problems are very rare.

## FACT

Mental health problems affect around one in four adults.

## MYTH

Mental health problems don't affect children.

## FACT

One in eight young people aged 5-19 in the UK experiences mental health problems.

## MYTH

Mental health problems usually start when you're older.

## FACT

Three-quarters of adults with a mental health problem experience the first symptoms by the age of 24.

## MYTH

You can't recover from mental health problems

## FACT

Lots of people with mental health problems still work, have families and lead full lives.

## MYTH

It's easy for young people to talk to friends about their feelings.

## FACT

Nearly three out of four young people fear the reactions of friends when they talk about their mental health problems.

## MYTH

People with mental health problems are usually violent and unpredictable.

## FACT

People with a mental health problem are more likely to be a victim of violence.

If you've been affected by any of these issues, visit [sportrelief.com/support](https://sportrelief.com/support) for more information

Don't be afraid to talk about mental health