

Changing Places

KS4

20mins

An activity to develop empathy and normalise mental health issues.

What you need

Students arranged in a circle, seated or standing
Flipchart or white board to record ground rules

Method

Agree or provide ground rules inviting suggestions if time allows,

Explain that we all get stressed and down from time to time. Usually these feelings pass and things start looking brighter after a few days. But sometimes we get stuck and these feelings can develop into a more serious problem. This could happen to any one of us.

Sometimes it just happens, for no clear reason, but challenges we face in life such as bullying, bereavement, divorce and illness can also leave us more susceptible to mental health problems, including depression and anxiety. It's normal to experience a range of uncomfortable emotions when we face difficulties in life but if these feelings carry on and start to interfere with our lives then we may need to get some help and support.

Invite students to **CHANGE PLACES**

4. Try and put yourself in the position of someone having mental health difficulties.
CHANGE PLACES if you think it is hard to admit you're struggling.
 - **Invite suggestions as to why it's difficult?**
 - **We know that many young people try and sort things out themselves - many wait until things are intolerable before seeking professional help**
5. Imagine you are feeling depressed.
CHANGE PLACES if you think you'd probably tell your friends before speaking to a teacher or a doctor
 - **Invite students who moved or didn't move to explain their reasons.**
 - **Young people told us if they can't sort things themselves they often turn to friends ahead of family and before seeking help from other adults. This is why it is so important that we know how to look after our friend as well as ourselves.**
6. This time you have a friend who seems to be having difficulties - maybe they seem very down, perhaps they've been self-harming.
CHANGE PLACES if you would be worried about how best to support your friend
 - **Ask students to say why?**
 - **It can be really scary but often just listening, being supportive and understanding makes a huge difference.**

- Try and put yourself in their shoes and think about what you'd want. And don't be afraid to ask for help for yourself if you're struggling or need advice or support

Read Stephen Fry quote:

“If you know someone who's depressed please resolve never to ask them why. Depression isn't a straightforward response to a bad situation; depression just is, like the weather.

Try to understand the blackness, lethargy, hopelessness and loneliness they're going through. Be there for them when they come through the other side. It's hard to be a friend to someone who's depressed, but it is one of the kindest, noblest and best things you will ever do.”

Remind students that there is no shame in admitting they are struggling or asking for help. None of us should suffer in silence. Asking for help is a brave thing to do and the first step to getting better. (You can remind students about support available in school

