**Mental Illness Unit Plan for a Ninth Grade English Classroom**

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| Week | Day | Outline Summary of Content (w/ labeled WHERETO elements) | Differentiation Used: |
| 1 | 1 | Warm Up: Mindfulness activity: adult coloring pages—lights dimmed, soft classical music playing (15 minutes)Introduce unit on mental health awareness and explain objective: “To raise awareness to mental health wellness and to develop coping mechanisms to help both self and friends” (20 minutes)Introduce *Turtles All the Way Down* by John Green with trigger warnings. (15 minutes)Give students discussion questions to take notes on during reading for the night (5 minutes)Homework: Read the first five chapters of the bookAny extra time will be spent reading |  Soft music in the background and noise canceling headphones for students who need silence while they work |
| 2 | Warm Up: Mindfulness Activity: Journaling—Write about a time you were worried and what helped you while you were worrying (15 minutes)Introduce what OCD is and the common signs of OCDStart discussion of the reading using the questions students were assigned to take notes on (30 minutes)Students asked to journal a little on the bottom of the sheet of their discussion notes about how they feel about Aza’s problems. Are her worries valid? Do you think she should reach out for help? (15 minutes)Discussion question answers/notes on discussion turned in at the end of class. Any extra time will be spent by students working on homework by reading. New discussion questions handed out to guide student notesHomework: students assigned to read the next five chapters | Moving desks into a circle format after journaling activity for discussionMaking sure students are participating but not forcing students to participate if they are uncomfortable |
| 3 | Warm Up: Guided meditation. Students will find a comfortable spot in the classroom to listen to the guided meditation. Lights are dimmed. After the meditation they will spend another fifteen minutes journaling about the experience, what they liked, what they didn’t like. (30 minutes)Discussion: fishbowl discussion format. Four desks in the center of a circle. Students are encouraged to step forward to talk about the questions they found the most intriguing but not everyone is allowed to speak at once (20 minutes)Discussion questions and reflections on discussion collected and new discussion questions handed out with homework assigned (10 minutes)Homework: Read the next five chapters |  Allowing students to find their own spots in the classroom, lights are dimmed. Students are given time to come back to themselves and focus on the lesson |
| 4 |  Warm Up: mindfulness activity: knot tying. Lights are dimmed and music is playing. Students are given an instruction sheet and a piece of string to practice tying knots. (15 minutes)Reflection: Was learning to tie knots helpful in relaxing or stressful. Why? (5 minutes)Discussion: small group discussion and then class discussion. Students are split into 5 groups based on the discussion questions assigned. They are told to come up with a theme statement for their reading this far as well as to consider how her disorder affects the people Aza cares about (15 minutes) Full class discussion on the themes and characters in the novel (10 minutes)Journaling: students are asked to self-reflect how they would choose to help Aza if they were in Daisy or Davis’ position. Students are also asked to self-reflect on coping mechanisms that would help Aza more than continuously opening the cut on her finger for an exit ticket. (15 minutes)Homework: students assigned to read the next 5 chapters (I will also include a trigger warning since this portion of the book has some in depth description that could cause students issues) |  Knot tying as a tool for relaxation with lights and soft musicSmall group discussions to let those who are not comfortable talking in a larger group have a voiceJournaling so that students who are not comfortable at all participating have a voice that I can better assessTrigger warning given for the more sensitive students. I will also tell them to try to read the novel but if they cannot get through it, I will have a summary that’s more objective so they can still participate in the class discussion without issue |
| 5 |  Mindfulness Activity: Gratitude journaling—students are required to write down three items they are grateful for and why with time to share (10 minutes)Think, Pair, Share: this is the moment in the novel that tends to be the most difficult for those who struggle with anxiety. They will be asked to journal a bit about their initial reactions to Aza’s struggles and then if they’re comfortable to share with a partner. The share will happen in a group discussion (20 minutes)Group discussion: students will not have had discussion questions to fill out so I will be asking them some out loud. Students will be asked if they think Aza is overreacting and why they think that. They will also be asked what could be causing her to have these reactions and whether it’s related to Davis’ dad’s death. (20 minutes)Students will be given the last 10 minutes of class to start the reading which is to finish the novel over the weekend with discussion questions on the ending of the novel. |  Gratitude journaling and the option to share or not to shareThink pair share with the option to talk to neighbors about their reading or whether to just continue to journalGroup discussion allows a safe space to talk about their thoughts on OCDTime at the end of class to read in case they have a busy weekend |
| 2 | 1 | Mindfulness Activity: write or type about what’s on your mind. It can be anything from what you have to get done today to something you’re struggling with, to just the random thoughts going through your head (15 minutes)Full group discussion based on the questions handed out at the end of class on FridayMain focus of discussion is what students think of the ending of the novel, is it satisfying? (40 minutes)Last five minutes of class students are assigned to google different celebrities that struggle with mental illness and answer questions about them. (5 minutes) |  N/A |
| 2 |  Mindfulness Activity: Another Guided Meditation on awareness of the physical body (15 minutes) and journaling about the experience (5 minutes)Think, Pair, Share: Start with showing students the John Green YouTube video where he talks about his mental health and why he wrote the novel. They think for 5 minutes about the YouTube. Students pull out their notes about the different celebrities they’ve researched and discuss with each other the similarities and differences with a partner, then the large group discussion follows (20 minutes)Large group discussion: on the different celebrities and the John Green YouTube video (20 minutes) |  Students have the opportunity to choose who they want to researchIn addition, they are watching a YouTube rather than reading an article |
| 3 |  Mindfulness Activity: Journaling—think about someone in your life who may be struggling with mental illness. What are some ways to help them that you know of? (15 minutes)Workshop class: switching gears to talk about schizophrenia. Students are to use technology to research the stigmas surrounding schizophrenia and contrast that with facts from reliable resources (25 minutes)Group Discussion: Teacher led lecture on the different stigmas and facts about schizophrenia that students have found. Comprehensive notes will be taken and emailed to students or printed out for students without technology (15 minutes)Introduce Homework: students are to do a quick preview of the film A Beautiful Mind and the play Next to Normal. In their research, they must choose one to study. (5 minutes) |  Walking around the classroom to help students who are struggling to do their work with guided outlines for specific students |
| 4 | Mindfulness Activity: Modified adult coloring pages. Students use scented markers to color flowers and on finishing one flower, breath in the scent of the flower before moving to the next flower (15 minutes)Class discussion: Mostly teacher led. The notes that students got from A Beautiful Mind and Next to Normal are listed on the board in a compare contrast Venn diagram. At the end of the discussion, students vote for which they would like to study (25 minutes)Those studying Next to Normal are given packets that discuss the values of live theater and how the literature of the play changes according to the actors performingThose studying A Beautiful Mind are given a permission slip to take home to their parents explaining the movie and why we will be watching it. They will also receive a packet explaining film studies and how the angles of the camera impact the meaning of the script. (20 minutes)Homework: students must bring back permission slips by Monday. Students must also create vocabulary cards around the words they don’t know within their packets as well as the highlighted words in the packet. | Venn diagram is a differentiated form of note taking. Students get a choice between two options for studying schizophrenia  |
| 5 | Mindfulness Exercise: Guided meditation again focusing on breathing with a student reflection (20 minutes)Teacher led lecture on Schizophrenia and the different types that exist as well as both film and theater terms within the readings (10 minutes)Guest speaker—school counselor giving a talk about general mental health and wellness and the different types of resources available within the school for students (25 minutes)Exit Ticket: Quick check that students were paying attention during the guest speaker and teacher lecture—mostly vocabulary questions |  N/A |
| 3 | 1 |  Mindfulness Exercise: Journal Prompt—Talk about your weekend. Was it stressful or relaxing? Did you have time to get the things you wanted to get done completed? (15 minutes)Split classroom: Some students move to the back of the classroom to watch clips from the play Next to Normal on school provided technology with headphones. The rest of the class watches A Beautiful Mind (45 minutes)Homework is to research the different types of medicines available for someone with schizophrenia. What are the side effects? Why might someone choose not to medicate?  | Student choice in the literature they study  |
| 2 | Mindfulness Exercise: Guided yoga stretches. Students follow a YouTube video for some yoga stretching practices (15 minutes)Split Classroom: Students finish up the different videos they’re watching. If they finish before class ends, they are to write about the different ways the literature was improved through visual means whether that’s theatrical terms or film terminology  | Students will be offered the choice to do the traditional yoga or to do a different mindfulness exercise if they wish |
| 3 | Mindfulness Exercise: Adult coloring pages (15 minutes)Group Discussion: students compare their viewings of the film and the theater performance. They discuss the different ways that schizophrenia is portrayed in the film in a modified fishbowl discussion format. There must always be at least two people from each group in the four desks in the center of the circle (45 minutes)Homework: write a reflection about what you’ve learned about schizophrenia since seeing the popular literature on the subject and learning about the other facts. Also, you need to draw connections between the OCD that Aza experiences and the symptoms of schizophrenia. What are the similarities and what are the differences? Can be informal, can be a bullet point list, can be a Venn diagram but must contain a personal opinion at some point and things that can help those suffering from these conditions.  | N/A |
| 4 | Mindfulness Exercise: 5 4 3 2 1. Name 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, and 1 thing you can taste. Students write down these things and focus on the classroom. Dimmed lights. Reflection on the experience after (15 minutes)Introduction into unit on depression teacher guided lecture. Student contribution encouraged. Starting with the celebrities opening up about their depression and then moving into the facts, what it looks like, feels like, sounds like. Furthermore, what depression leads to and suicide prevention. Introduce the book *Darius the Great is Not Okay* by Adib Khorram and the different sections students will be reading. (45 minutes)Homework: students are to research the question why people with depression have higher suicide rates after they’ve received help both in counseling and medication, the different side effects of the medication, and why depression and anxiety sometimes are linked.  |   |
| 5 | Mindfulness Exercise: students are allowed to pick one of the different options we’ve explored thus far of mindfulness exercises. After spending 15 minutes with them, they are to journal why they picked the exercise and why it helped them. (20 minutes)Reading workshop: students are given time in class to read excerpts from Khorram’s book and excerpts from Rainbow Rowell’s book *Fangirl* filling out an outline about how depression and anxiety go hand in hand. Their research is due at the start of class (30 minutes)Group discussion: Students share their thoughts on the research and the connection between depression and anxiety and how authors portray these things in literary characters (10 minutes) |  Student choice in mindfulness activity. Reading workshop allows for students to read at their own pace and both electronic and paper copies will be available as well as audiobooks. |
| 4 | 1 |  Mindfulness Exercise: students journal about their learning thus far into the unit. They reflect on the main objective “To raise awareness to mental health wellness and to develop coping mechanisms to help both self and friends” and whether or not they think they’re close to achieving that objective. (20 minutes)Introduce final unit project: Students will be creating posters based on their research and learning about mental health to post around the school and in the classroom. They are required to make at least two: one about a mental illness of their choice (could be one that we haven’t studied) and one about a mindfulness activity of their choice. They are welcome to work in groups or individually, but each poster must be backed by five sources conveyed in a written proposal that must be submitted to the teacher before they are allowed to begin their work on the posters. Proposals must be submitted no later than Wednesday and posters are due on Friday with a self-reflection on both the process of the assignment (what they liked and didn’t like) and a self-evaluation of the work they put into the project. (~20 minutes)Group Discussion/Guided Lecture: highlighting common symptoms and differences of all the mental illnesses studied so far. (10 minutes)Individual work: have students do a quick research of bipolar disorder and personality disorder and whatever isn’t finished in class is due for homework. Open-ended assignment. They can do a reflection of at least a paragraph per illness, a bullet pointed list, a collage, etc. (10 minutes) |  Guided lecture involves students as well as the teacher since students normally fill out a note template during the lecture. Teacher will also model this by taking notes with students on the projector.Allowing students to work in groups or individually and groups of their own choosing.Open ended homework assignment allowing students to convey information in their own way. |
| 2 | Mindfulness Exercise: Journaling Affirmations—students must come up with at least 10 different things that they like about themselves and then discuss them with others after 15 minutes of brainstorming (20 minutes)Workshop Classroom: Students can start writing their proposals for their projects, but noise must be kept at a minimum. (40 minutes) |  Workshop classroom allows students the time they need for their projects and the ability to work in a group without worrying about outside factors like extracurriculars. Also, the teacher is there for reference and can help with any research questions |
| 3 | Mindfulness Exercise: drawing or adult coloring pages. (10 minutes)Workshop Classroom: proposals for projects are due at the end of the hour either electronically or printed. Students are welcome to start working on posters with provided poster board and coloring utensils. (50 minutes) |  Student choice for mindfulness exerciseTime in class to work on project to work around student schedules. |
| 4 | Mindfulness Exercise: Guided Meditation focusing on reducing stress in the body again (15 minutes)Workshop Classroom: students continue work on posters. If they finish, they are to start the self-reflection portion of the assignment. If working in groups, they can also begin a peer assessment that will be submitted to the teacher and kept anonymous (45 minutes)  |  Student work time in class. Same differentiation as mentioned both for day two and day three |
| 5 | Final Mindfulness Exercise: Breathing exercise. Students will follow a voice calling them to breath at certain intervals similar to yoga. Final quick reflection on whether or not they found the mindfulness exercises helpful or hindering and why. (15 minutes)Posters, self-reflections, and group evaluations are due at the end of the hour. If everything is finished, students are encouraged to work on a final self-reflection that will be homework otherwise. Have they achieved the objective posted on the board at the beginning of the unit? Why or why not? Where do you think there are gaps in your knowledge? What can you do to fill in those gaps? Do you find you know more about mental illness than before the beginning of the unit? In what ways do you think the resources we’ve found throughout this unit will help you in the future? The whole self-reflection will be about three paragraphs at the most. |  Same differentiation as days two, three, and four due to student freedom in workshop.  |