

MENTAL HEALTH

CONVERSATIONS IN SCHOOL



At The Diana Award, we are passionate about creating a culture of positive wellbeing and mental health. Working together with schools, we are committed to helping to drive positive change, encourage conversation and create an environment that fosters positive wellbeing for pupils as well as staff.

As Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, it is important to create a culture in school where everyone knows how to access support, and everyone is looking out for each other's wellbeing. We hope this guide provides some useful tips for talking to your peers about mental wellbeing.

MAKE MENTAL HEALTH DISCUSSIONS PART OF THE NORM_

Sadly, mental health is still seen as a bit of a taboo subject and something that those of us who experience mental illness may feel embarrassed to talk about. Many also feel judged if they explain their problems. As a result, you should make mental health a focus in your school and aim to break taboos related to poor mental health. Discuss it in PSHE lessons, address it in assemblies, and celebrate awareness days (see section below for some ideas), to let everyone in school know they are not alone.

You could also invite a speaker from a charity into school to give talks about their work and address the topic of mental wellbeing.

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH_

What does it mean to have a "whole school approach" when it comes to talking about mental wellbeing? At The Diana Award, a whole school approach is about everyone in the school community working together to create an environment which promotes positive wellbeing and encourages conversations about mental health. It needs partnership working between students, senior leaders, teachers and all school staff, as well as parents, carers and the wider community. What needs to be put in place to ensure a school community meets the needs of each individual? The objective of a whole school approach is to have everyone in your school feeling safe, knowledgeable and supported to talk about mental wellbeing.

CREATE SAFE SPACES_

As an Anti-Bullying Ambassador, it's essential that your peers know they can come and talk to you about any issues or concerns they have. Communicate this to your whole school in assemblies or on posters so everyone knows you're always there to listen. By creating a safe space, for example an open lunchtime drop-in session, you can help to provide a place for everyone in the school to access extra support. Work with your Anti-Bullying Ambassador team to create a rota to ensure that there is always someone available for a chat. The sense of community will help your peers feel included and safe to talk about mental wellbeing in school.

AWARENESS DAYS_

Whilst mental health problems can affect anyone at any time, awareness days are positive for enabling a conversation and coming together to show support for those who may be struggling. It is important to make the school community aware of the different mental health struggles people have and the

issues that may be affecting them. Of course, this can happen at any time of year, but some key awareness days you may want to consider are:

- Time to Talk Day
- Children's Mental Health Week
- Stress Awareness Month
- Mental Health Awareness Week
- World Suicide Prevention Day
- World Mental Health Day
- Anti-Bullying Week

Do your research! Search the internet for the specific dates of these awareness days and look to see if there's any others you want to use to spread awareness about mental wellbeing.

ORGANISE A WELLNESS WEEK_

To really put wellbeing at the heart of your school, organise a Wellness Week for everyone to get involved in. Run activities to promote a positive school environment that will benefit both staff and students alike. For your Wellness Week you could:

- Encourage connections – get your peers to talk to each other and interact with people they wouldn't usually talk to. You could even run the Compliments Activity you took part in on your Anti-Bullying Ambassador Training day to get the connections flowing! Just give everyone some post-it notes in form time and encourage them to write compliments for other people on them and pass them on.
- Host a Feel Good Friday – organise an activity where the sole aim is to make people feel good. Who doesn't love a 'Feel Good Friday'? You can keep it simple: put on a fun playlist during assembly, get everyone to pay each other compliments (you can hand out white t-shirts and get everyone to write compliments on each other's), or just encourage people to smile at someone new that day. Don't forget to include your teachers!

IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER_

Always go to a staff member if you are concerned about someone's mental health or aren't sure how to help.

Remember, you don't have to immediately solve everyone's problems – you are not a trained counsellor but by providing a listening ear, this can help the person feel less alone and more supported. Your staff member can help if you don't know what to say or do.

If you are struggling with your mental health at the moment, know that there is support available and the people in your life will want to know and be there for you. If you feel comfortable to, reach out to a teacher, parent, guardian, or friend to talk about how you're feeling and the next steps towards feeling better. Here are a few organisations you can speak to any time, any day:

Childline – 0800 1111 www.childline.org.uk

The Diana Award Crisis Messenger – Text 'DA' to 85258. Trained volunteers will listen to how you're feeling and help you plan the next steps towards feeling better.

Check out **The Diana Award Support Centre** for a list of further organisations who can help.

We're proud to be the only charity set up in memory of Diana, Princess of Wales, and her belief that young people have the power to change the world. It's a big mission but there are two things within it that we focus our charity's efforts on – young people and change.

Throughout all of our programmes and initiatives, 'change' for and by young people is central, including our anti-bullying work which encourages change in attitudes and behaviours.

We hope you found this resource useful and wish you all the best in your anti-bullying journey. If you would like to help us create more resources and train even more Anti-Bullying Ambassadors, you can make a £5 donation by texting CHANGE 5 to 70470 or visit diana-award.org.uk/donate

Give us feedback on this resource:
<https://tinyurl.com/ab-feedback>



[/antibullyingpro](https://www.facebook.com/antibullyingpro)



[@antibullyingpro](https://www.instagram.com/antibullyingpro)



[@antibullyingpro](https://twitter.com/antibullyingpro)



[/antibullyingpro](https://www.youtube.com/antibullyingpro)

The Diana Award is a registered charity (1117288 / SC041916) and a company limited by guarantee, registered in England and Wales number 5739137. The Diana Award's Office, 1 Mark Square, London EC2A 4EG.

All images and text within this resource © The Diana Award and cannot be reproduced without permission.

www.diana-award.org.uk