

Case study: Peer mentoring transition day

Summary

This case study is based on the experience of one MHST Educational Mental Health Practitioner (EMHP) Trainee when delivering a workshop over the summer called 'Healthy Body, Healthy Mind'.

Pupils were selected for this workshop on the basis of previously using the MHST Peer Mentoring Service and having been identified as possibly needing some support with the transition from primary to secondary school.

The workshop was offered to 50+ students across a several days. However, just one workshop is focused on in this case study, at which there were five participants aged 10 and 11 attending to engage in activities that demonstrated the link between having a healthy body and a healthy mind. Reflections were encouraged throughout.

Aims and objectives

Within the Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) framework, the group discussed how sometimes our emotions, thoughts, feelings and behaviours are intrinsically linked, the bidirectional nature of the mind and body, concepts surrounding self-care, and how changes to one can positively influence the other. The EMHP encouraged the young people to think about their responses to different situations, within which a lot of the activities were tailored to foster a greater awareness of their automatic responses, so they could reflect upon healthier ways of coping in the future.

Approach

Utilising a series of group activities, the team was able to demonstrate the many ways in which people can gain a sense of autonomy and control over their emotional wellbeing. When practicing mindfulness techniques and discussing self-care, the EMHPs tackled important topics such as empathy, identifying emotions in others, problem solving and emotional regulatory skills.

Successes and outcomes

The self-care activity provided the opportunity for the practitioners to explore the theory beneath why certain activities make us feel better. It also encouraged the children to reflect upon the different ways they look after themselves. For example, "I teach myself new skills because it encourages my mind to grow and develop" lead to

a child sharing that they are teaching themselves Polish, which they had not reflected upon as being potentially beneficial for the mind. The team was then able to discuss the benefits of teaching ourselves new skills for cognitive growth, development and health.

The structure of the activities worked well and provided the children with the appropriate scaffolding to conceptualise more complex ideas throughout the workshop. The children responded well to the activities and reflected on what they had learned and gained from them. They were able to apply what they had learned to different activities, indicating that they had retained ideas and concepts.