

# MODULE 4

## Preparation



It may be a good idea to invite the school counselor to sit in with your class when you show the video. If that's not possible, you should inform them about the nature and content of the video (or make a copy available to them) in case students approach them afterward.

### Experiences of mental illness

#### Overview:

In this module students will hear directly from other young people about their personal experiences with mental illness. In their own words, a number of young people describe their symptoms, the difficulties they went through as a result of their illness, and how the illness affected their lives at school, within their families, and in their friendships.

Students will work together in small groups to explore the impact of mental illnesses on the lives of the young people in the video.

#### Learning objectives:

- To recognize, on a more personal level, the way mental illnesses can impact on a person's life
- To appreciate the importance of getting help and proper treatment

#### Major concepts addressed:

- Mental illnesses are diseases that affect many aspects of a person's life
- While they are usually lifelong, mental illnesses are often episodic and with effective treatment, most people can function well in everyday life

#### Teacher background and preparation

Teachers should preview Part 2 of *Courageous not crazy: Experiences of mental illness*, either the DVD or online video, before showing it to the class.

Reviewing the video in advance will help you become familiar with the content so that you can then help students identify and keep track of the individual they are to focus on while watching the video.

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Remind the students that the video they are about to watch was created by youth at Laing House, a peer support centre for young people with mental illness in Halifax, NS. The youth were in charge of every aspect of the video, from planning and production to editing and sound mixing.

### In advance:

- Decide whether you will show the video to the class as a whole using the DVD, or whether you want smaller groups to view the video through the web-based format. Set up computer work stations or DVD equipment.
- Photocopy Activity 1 Video discussion sheet (1 copy of each per student).

### Activities

**Activity 1: Experiences of mental illness video and activity sheet (40 mins.)**

### Materials required:

- DVD or web-based video of Courageous not Crazy Part 2: Experiences of mental illness
- Handout: Activity 1 Video discussion sheet.

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Discussion of the video may raise the issue of youth suicide. While this discussion is appropriate within the broader context of mental illness, it is important that the discussion not become focused on suicide. Any discussion of suicide should:

- avoid portraying suicide as romantic, heroic or tragic;
- avoid increasing knowledge about methods of suicide;
- emphasize the importance of seeking help and of everyone's responsibility to tell a trusted adult if a friend mentions thoughts of suicide, even if that person asks for it to be kept a secret.

## Activity 1:

(40 mins.)

### Experiences of mental illness video and discussion sheet

#### Purpose:

- to explore the impact of mental illnesses on a group of young people
- to look specifically at the experience of each character in the video through small group work

#### How to:

- 1) Inform the class that the video they are about to see was created by young people who have experienced mental illness, and is about their experiences.

Before showing the video, divide the class into 5 groups and distribute the video activity sheet. Allocate each group one of the characters in the video (Chris, Tim, Sheila, Tyrone or Aaron).

Give the students a few minutes to read through the questions on the video discussion sheet. Explain that each group will focus specifically on one character and their particular diagnosis and experience, but that they will watch the complete video and hear the stories of all of the individuals.

- 2) Play *Courageous not Crazy Part 2: Experiences of mental illness*. Remind each group about which individual they should be focusing on while watching.
- 3) After viewing the video, ask students to get together in their smaller groups and complete the group questions. Ask one member of the group to record the answers so that they can be shared with the whole class afterwards. Help students understand that the video may not include direct answers by each individual for each of the questions, but that they can make inferences from what the individuals said. Circulate among the teams to listen as they discuss their answers, and provide guidance if teams are confused about how to answer the questions.
- 4) Bring the groups back together and ask a member of each group to summarize the discussion from each of the small groups for the class.

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The most important concept for students to grasp through the class discussion is that although the individuals in the video had different mental illnesses and different experiences, there are some common themes and concerns for each character. Prompt students to think about the similarities among the individuals that are brought up.

## How to (cont.)

- 5) Using the questions below, facilitate a discussion with the whole class:
  - a) What specific illnesses were mentioned in the video?
  - b) Describe how some of the characters appear to have lost touch with reality.
  - c) What help or treatment did the characters receive?
  - d) Did the characters recover? What do you mean by “recover”?
  - e) Are there other mental illnesses you have heard about? What mental illnesses are you aware of that were not mentioned in the video?
- 6) Conclude the activity by addressing any questions that students may have after watching the video. Can students see any similarities among the individuals in the video, even though they have different mental illnesses?





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# Activity 1

## DISCUSSION SHEET

### Video Discussion Sheet

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Name of your character:

What mental illness does the person have?

When did it start?

How did the illness affect the person's thoughts, feelings and behaviours?

Did the illness cause the person difficulty in his or her life? In what ways?

What kind of treatment did the individual get?

How has the individual's life changed since getting treatment?

What kinds of things have helped the person recover and stay well?

What other questions would you like to ask your character in order to better understand their illness?