

## Mental Health and Community Resources Lesson

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**Intention:** To introduce students to some of the most common mental health issues and some of the community resources available to those struggling with those issues.

**Intended Population:** Advanced beginners (ESOL)

### Materials:

- Four “portraits” of people struggling with mental health issues (anxiety, depression, alcohol abuse, domestic violence). See below.
- Chart to be completed by students (the vertical axis lists names of those portrayed in the synopses; the horizontal axis lists questions to be answered about each person. See below.
- Materials about mental health resources in community.

### Preparation:

- Review vocabulary for good health.

### Implementation:

1. Begin by writing the term “mental health” on the board. Contrast it with “physical health.” Give examples of physical health issues, then examples of mental health issues. Explain that mental health issues can lead to problems with physical health.
2. This is a “jigsaw” activity.\* Depending on how many students are present divide the class into four or two groups. If there are four groups then give one of the portraits to each group; if there are two then give two portraits to each group. Also distribute the information about resources.
3. Ask each group to first read and discuss their portraits (see attached) and then answer the questions on the chart for their person/people. Explain that for the last questions they will need to study the materials about resources. Note: These portraits were written to reflect the population in this class and can be adapted to suit classrooms with different populations.
4. Circulate from group to group to help with comprehension and offer information about the various mental health issues and resources.
5. When the groups have completed their tasks reconfigure the class so that there is at least one member from each of the original (home) groups in each of the new groups. In

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\* Jigsaw is a group structure that can be used across all content areas. Students start with a home group. That group is responsible for learning an assigned portion of a task that is prescribed by the teacher. Then the teacher separates students into new groups -- jigsaw groups -- by assigning one member from each home group to a new group. If an activity begins with groups A, B, C, and D, the jigsaw groups have a member from A, B, C, and D. In the jigsaw groups, students share information and complete some sort of project or product.

the new groups, therefore, there will be at least one expert on each of the four people portrayed.

6. The experts share with each other what they know and have learned about their people. By the time everyone has shared, everyone should have a completed chart about the four people, their mental health issues, and the resources available to help them.
7. Facilitate a whole class discussion on what students have learned (what they did not know before but know now), as well as questions or concerns they might have.

### **Classroom Snapshot:**

I was fortunate to have present a mental health professional from a local Community Health Center, who helped tremendously in the small group discussions about each of the mental health issues. She also was knowledgeable about the various resources available and described how to access them. If I do this lesson again with another group, I will be much more competent in presenting this information.

My students worked hard on this! The language was challenging for many of them but I gave them plenty of time and support and at the end they expressed appreciation for the learning experience. They said that they now had new information that would be very valuable. One student reported that she has a friend who is extremely depressed and she has not known how to help. She said that the lesson had been helpful and that she now had some resources to which she could try to connect her friend.

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### **Portraits:**

#### **Alberto**

Your friend, Alberto, is thirty-five years old. He is from Colombia. He has lived in the United States for five years. For three years he worked all the time to earn enough money to bring his wife and two children here. They arrived eighteen months ago but there were many problems. He and his wife had many fights. Last month his wife took the children and returned to Colombia.

Alberto misses his family. He is very lonely. In the evening he goes to the bar near his apartment and drinks. Every night he stays at the bar a little longer. In the morning he has started to arrive late to work. He looks terrible and he always says he has a bad headache. You are worried that he is drinking too much alcohol.

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#### **Yvonne**

Yvonne is your friend at work. Yvonne's husband lost his job six months ago and he can't find another. Yvonne tells you that her husband is very frustrated. One day Yvonne comes to work with a swollen lip. You ask her what happened. She says she fell down. A few days later Yvonne has a black eye. Again she says that she fell down.

The next week Yvonne misses two days of work. This is very unusual. When she comes back her face has many bruises, and she walks slowly. She looks like she is in pain. During your lunch break you ask Yvonne what happened. She begins to cry. She tells you that her husband hits her. She is afraid to go home. You are worried about Yvonne.

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### **Vo**

Your neighbor's name is Vo. She is sixty-six years old. She has lived in the United States for many years. She is very kind. She and her husband helped you a lot when you moved into the apartment next door. She loved her husband. They were always together. They often walked around the neighborhood, hand in hand.

Six months ago Vo's husband suddenly got very sick and died. At first Vo was in shock. Now she stays in her apartment all the time. You never see her outside. Sometimes you knock on her door to ask how she is. She opens the door a little and says "okay" in a quiet voice. She never invites you inside like she did before. She does not comb her hair and she is often in her pajamas in the middle of the afternoon. You are worried about Vo.

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### **Carlos**

Carlos is your friend. He is twenty-two. He came to the United States two years ago on a tourist visa and stayed. He does not have a green card. He is worried that immigration officials will find him and send him back to his country. It is hard for Carlos to find work, especially in the winter.

You saw him last week. He said that he is very tired because he can't sleep. He is always worried about money and immigration. He thinks he is going crazy. He walks around the city in the middle of the night. During the day he stays in his small room because he is afraid to go out in daylight. You are worried about Carlos.

See chart below

|                | <b>What is the situation?</b> | <b>Why are you worried?</b> | <b>Mental Health Issue</b> | <b>Where to find help?</b> |
|----------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| <b>Alberto</b> |                               |                             |                            |                            |
| <b>Yvonne</b>  |                               |                             |                            |                            |
| <b>Vo</b>      |                               |                             |                            |                            |
| <b>Carlos</b>  |                               |                             |                            |                            |