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SPOTTING MENTAL HEALTH MISINFORMATION ONLINE

SUBJECT	Digital well-being and critical thinking
TOPIC	Misinformation about mental health online
DURATION	45 min
AGE	13+

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

At the end of the lesson, students are expected to:

- Recognise facts and myths about mental health.
- Think critically about the information found online and evaluate the reliability of online mental health information.
- Know how to check the information in case of doubt and identify trustworthy sources for mental health information.
- Explain why misinformation can be harmful.
- Apply critical thinking skills before believing or sharing online content.

MATERIALS

- Interactive quiz (below are the questions used in the quiz)
- Computer with a projector
- Internet connection

METHODS

- Whole-class quiz
- Guided discussion
- Critical evaluation of online information
- Individual reflection

PREPARATION/OPENING

Before the lesson, the teacher should research the topic, prepare the interactive quiz (see our example), and ensure the projector and internet connection work.

To introduce the lesson, the teacher can ask students:

- "Where do young people usually look for advice about stress, anxiety or mental health?"
- "If you found mental health advice online (e.g. TikTok or Instagram), how would you know if it was trustworthy?"

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LESSON STRUCTURE/DEVELOPMENT

INTRODUCTION (15 min):

The teacher introduces the topic of **misinformation around mental health**. They recognise that while the internet can be a tool for education and finding reliable information, it also makes it easy to spread bad advice and misinformation.
They present the basic rules of preventing misinformation:

- Check several independent sources;
- Prioritise information from recognised health organisations, qualified professionals and scientific or academic sources, while still checking the evidence provided;
- In case of serious issues, contact a specialist or a helpline.

TIPS: Before believing a mental health claim, ask yourself:

- Who created this content?
- Is the source trustworthy?
- Is scientific evidence provided?
- Does it promise a quick or guaranteed solution?
- Can the information be confirmed by other reliable sources?

The teacher emphasises that reliable mental health information usually comes from recognised organisations, healthcare professionals or scientific institutions.

IMPLEMENTATION (15 min):

The teacher launches the interactive quiz and shares the screen with the class, using a projector.
Students go through the quiz together and answer all the true-or-false questions. Before revealing the correct answer, the teacher asks volunteers to explain why they chose True or False.
After the quiz, the students share their reflections in an open discussion. The teacher adds explanations to the right answers, in case of doubt or questions. Students are reminded that the goal is not simply to guess correctly, but to practise evaluating information critically.

Discussion (15 min):

The teacher leads a discussion with the following questions:

- Do you know any other myths about mental health?
- Is there anything you heard of about mental health that you aren't sure is true and you would like to verify it right now?
- Why do you think mental health myths spread so easily online?

If needed, the teacher provides the students with the information they need. They can also verify the information together, using the internet, as a practical example of how to do it.

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INTERACTIVE ACTIVITY

- Interactive quiz - “Spotting Mental Health Misinformation Online”: link

REFERENCES

- UNICEF - Busted: 7 myths about mental health
- APA - Myths and Facts About Mental Health
- Abrams, Z. - “Addressing misinformation about mental health with patients”, in American Psychological Association

CONCLUSION/ASSESSMENT

The teacher reflects on the level of knowledge of the class, shown in the quiz. They think critically about the lesson and decide which topics need to be mentioned in the future to deepen students’ understanding of mental health and well-being.

The teacher also assesses students through:

- participation in class discussions;
- responses during the quiz;
- ability to justify their answers using evidence;
- contributions during the final reflection.

HOMEWORK

Ask students to identify one mental health myth, verify it using at least two reliable sources, and prepare a short presentation explaining the truth.

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INTERACTIVE QUIZ QUESTIONS (FOR THE TEACHER)

Below is the set of questions that have been included in the interactive quiz “Spotting Mental Health Misinformation Online”: https://canva.link/2m6rns13yb7gjkj

Question 1

Therapy is only for people with serious mental illness. → FALSE

Explanation: Therapy can be beneficial for anyone, not just those with mental illness. Therapy can help anyone experiencing stress, anxiety, emotional difficulties or life challenges. It is not only for severe mental health conditions.

- Why do you think some people still believe this myth?

Question 2

Healthy habits like exercise and good sleep can support mental well-being, but they are not always enough on their own. → TRUE

- Can you think of a situation where professional support might also be needed?

Question 3

Poor mental health is normal for teenagers. It is something you will just grow out of. → FALSE

Explanation: While adolescence is a complicated time, it doesn’t mean we should ignore the signs of depression and mental health struggles. Mental health problems do not go away when ignored. On the contrary, without getting help, they can lead to more serious trouble in the future.

If you’ve been feeling sad and overwhelmed, talk to a trusted adult and consider contacting a school psychologist.

Question 4

If a mental health post has millions of likes, it must be accurate. → FALSE

Explanation: Popularity does not guarantee accuracy. Always check whether the information comes from reliable and qualified sources.

- What makes a source trustworthy, even if it isn't very popular?

Question 5

Personal experiences shared online can be helpful, but they are not the same as scientific evidence. → TRUE

- Why is it useful to read both personal experiences and reliable scientific information?

Question 6

It is a good idea to compare information from several reliable sources before believing it. → TRUE

- Where could you check whether a mental health claim is reliable?

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INTERACTIVE QUIZ QUESTIONS (FOR THE TEACHER)

Question 7

Artificial intelligence always provides accurate mental health advice because it uses a lot of information. → FALSE

Explanation: AI can generate helpful information, but it can also produce inaccurate or misleading content. Important health information should always be verified using trusted sources.

- What should you do before trusting advice generated by AI?

Question 8

Trusted organisations and qualified healthcare professionals are generally more reliable sources than influencers when discussing mental health. → TRUE

- Can an influencer still share useful information? What should you check first?

Question 9

If you are worried about your own or someone else's mental health, it is better to keep it private rather than tell an adult. → FALSE

Explanation: Talking to a trusted adult or qualified professional is an important first step.

- Who are the trusted adults you could turn to at school or at home?

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