



RIDERS MINDS

Achievement Badge

Learning Objectives:

Understanding mental health; what it means to be okay; recognising if you or those around you might not be feeling ok; and how to get support.

1. What does feeling mentally okay look like?

Be able to explain what feeling and being happy feels like to them including emotions, body language, and talk about what makes them happy.

Suggestions might include feeling happy, healthy, taking care of themselves, motivated, full of energy, looking forward to planned events, enjoying time with their pony and friends etc.

2. How might you recognise if you are not okay?

Be able to explain what feeling unhappy might feel like to them, including different behaviours, emotions and body language.

Suggestions might include feeling down/sad, low energy, struggling to make and keep plans, a negative outlook on life, wanting to withdraw, heightened emotions etc.

3. What things might make you feel unhappy and what can you do to help make yourself feel okay again?

Be able to explain what factors might influence feelings of unhappiness and recognise some basic self-help tools to support this, i.e spending time with their horse, talking to someone, taking a break from social media.

4. How might you recognise if someone else is not feeling okay?

Change of mood, closed body language, withdrawn, emotional, physical changes, changes in their relationships etc.

5. How can your mental health affect others?

Be able to recognise and understand how they are feeling impacts on friends, family, as well as their pony and their riding.

6. Can you describe a situation where someone may feel pressured?

Be able to recognise a situation where either they, or someone else, has felt pressured. Answers might include at a competition, before an exam, pressure from peers etc.

7. If you, or someone you know needed support with their mental health what would you do to help?

Listen, reassure them, tell an adult, their coach, or Safeguarding Officer. Sign-post them to Riders Minds, or similar mental health charity.

Suggested Teaching Ideas and Resources

1. How to know when you are okay?

a. What does being mentally healthy/ OK look like?

Glue, stick or draw images of people who look like they're OK on a paper plate*

OR group collectively find & stick images on wall/notice board. (eg Images from magazines, books, photos)

OR Coach holds up various images of different people and asks group if they look ok or not ok.*

OR Coach could play act/role model various postures as an alternative – can be fun!

For all options, ask group to explain "what makes them think "what's OK"?".

What's their decision based on? ie What are they seeing (eg. facial expressions, body posture etc)

- Invite group to draw a picture of themselves when they're OK on a paper plate*

* perhaps display somewhere to create an 'OK wall' or 'OK Mood board'.

- Play a game where you ask group member(s) to take turns to pretend or demonstrate [their] being OK. Ask the rest of the group what THEY see and, do they agree!? Do they see OK too? Can be done with other emotions too.

b. What are you thinking, feeling, doing, [experiencing], and your behaviours?

-Draw a big circle on paper. Divide into four sections titled thinking, feeling, doing, behaviour. Either per section or per child, invite each child to think about when they're ok, then step forward and write their response(s) to each in each section.

-Draw or create a big circle on floor/arena. Divide into four sections, using poles for example, and label each quarter thinking, feeling, doing, behaviour. Either per section or per child, invite each child to think about when they're ok, then step into the section and say out loud their response(s) to each.

-In a group, invite each child to think about when they're OK. Then invite them to write, or draw, a list for each of the following: what are they thinking, feeling, doing, their behaviours, environment (where are they), who they're with (if anyone). Then share with group.

c. What makes you happy?

-In a circle, round one: everyone to share what makes them happy. (Coach could prompt such as people, environments, weather, activities, tasks)
round two: everyone to share what makes them happy about horse riding; being with horses and ponies.

-In a circle, start with one person – perhaps the coach starts? -holding a soft, small ball/object. They share one thing that makes them happy*. They then throw the object to another in the group who shares theirs. Repeat the process until all have shared.

*Could make it riding/pony related, or have that as a second round.

-Create a 'Happy Ball'. In a circle, start with one person – perhaps the coach starts? -holding a football/netball/ basketball size ball. They share one thing* that makes them happy and write it on the ball. They then throw the ball to another in the group who shares and writes theirs. Repeat the process until all have shared. The ball creates a central, visible reminder.

-Create Happy Bunting. In a group, each member to cut the shape of a heart from a piece of paper. Colour in, and write on the heart their best thing about horse riding, horses and ponies. When complete, each member shares with the group, then pins their heart to an unravelled bandage(s). Hang the bandage(s) up somewhere = Happy Bunting.

2. How to know when you are not okay?

a. What does not being okay look like?

What might you be feeling, thinking doing, experiencing, and your behaviours?

-Repeat ideas from point 1 (a) and (b). NB No creation of wall though. A good 'contrast' exercise to raise awareness of the difference.

-Change the playing a group game in 1 (a) to asking group member(s) to pretend or demonstrate when they're not ok. Or, a 'negative' emotion eg sadness, unhappy, fed up, frustrated, stressed etc etc . Ask the group to describe what [emotion(s)] THEY see. Do they agree?

b. What makes you unhappy?

Group to brainstorm common scenarios.

-Invite group to share. (Coach could prompt such as learning environments, people's meanness, struggling with instructions, results, achievements, social media etc)
Then share what they do next.

Pass the Mood Parcel.

Coach writes various scenarios (examples below) on separate pieces of paper, folds each and puts in a [riding] hat, cone, bucket.

Passes hat around the group to music. When music stops, the holder picks out one piece of paper. They read out and then describe how they would feel or their mood if that happened to them, AND (the focus area) what they'd do next. Could be done whilst ridden too = a pony club game, scenarios pinned to flags.

Aim: to experience how things can impact us and next steps.

Examples.

Your pony didn't [#]

Another rider made fun of you/your pony.

You couldn't get your pony to [#]

Someone yelled at you/was mean to you.

You received an unkind social media post.

You struggled with an instruction.

c. What can you/do you do you to make you feel okay again?

- In a circle, round one: everyone to share what they do if/when they're not OK. (Could use 2 x ball exercises and Bunting exercise from 1c)

Round two: Each member shares one thing they could do differently/take from each other.

- Create a '5 a day' card. Give each child a horsey postcard or similar. Each child writes on the card 5 things they could do every day to help them be OK. Card becomes a simple, personal support reminder.

- Coach to share and group to practice self-help ideas eg. The Inside Smile, breathing techniques, see <https://ridersminds.org/self-help/>

For Syllabus 1 and 2 :(And for coach insights)

-Happiness Rating:

Using green, amber/yellow and red pony-club games flags, each child touches the flag that indicates how they are at day's start, and day's end.

-Journal writing.

Children keep a simple journal of each day whilst at camp. Coach could provide small notepads, notebook.

They:

- Rate or score their day eg R.A.G (Red Amber Green) or score out of 5

- write three things that went well.

- write one thing they could improve.

3. How to look after and look out for others

a. How to recognise when others aren't okay

Be observant.

-Horse observation exercises. During an activity eg grooming, tacking up, leading, or using images, watching a video, watching others ride.

Group to share what they see. Are horses/ponies Ok or not? and what do they base that on?

-Observation Skill Transfer! Transfer the skill of spotting when your pony isn't OK, to humans!

Exercise: Role plays/game play.

Child (or coach) thinks of a 'negative' emotion or mood eg. unhappy, sad, frustrated, annoyed, grumpy etc etc. Keeps it to themselves. Then acts it out -walking, standing, sitting- in front of the group.

Then invite others to say what emotion(s)/mood they saw. What 'body language' told them that. What impression did they get?

Person(s) acting out then shares whether group got it or not! I.e. can we read body language and body messaging?

-'Walking in another's shoes'. Similar to above but children pair up. One acts the feeling/emotion, the other mimics it. After a few minutes, return to group and followers share what they felt. How was it for them? Can they identify with the actor?

b. What you can do to help.

Practice in a group, asking once, if someone is OK. Then asking twice if someone is OK. What's the difference?

Try out different ways of asking (different voice tone, body language, eye contact; with concern and kindness then with irritation, boredom etc) . Get asker and asked to share how they feel.

- ask group to practice daily:

Asking how others are to get into this kindness habit as we cannot always 'spot' when someone's not OK.

letting others know, signposting, to who they can talk to. E.g. Coach, adult, safeguarding officer, Riders Minds etc

(if applicable) noting down in daily Journal how they feel when asked.

- Split group into 2 equal groups. First group forms circle facing inwards. Second group forms inner circle, each person facing someone from outer circle. Inner circle person asks opposite person 'Are you OK?'. Possibly ask twice. Each to share their experience. Then inner circle people step one person to the right and repeat questioning. Repeat until inner circle back to original position. Then outer circle's turn to ask.

Group share. What worked and why? What body language, voice tone etc worked, what didn't. Did the voice tone match the body language?

- Create a Kindness/Support Wall/Action Plan or an A.C.T Wall (Action Changes Things)

Group to share their help ideas, then write on post-its, strips of paper, then glue/stick to noticeboard. Acts as a reminder during camp.

OR create Support Chain – same as above but make a paper chain instead to be hung up as a reminder.

-Coach reads a story where someone's struggling. At appropriate points, ask the group what [#] should do/ what advice would they give to [#]? How and what would they say?

Draw out educating/signposting children who to speak to if they think someone's not ok. E.g. Coach, adult, parent, friend, Safeguarding Officer, Riders Minds. Etc

-Listening exercises such as:

Chinese Whispers/Broken Telephone. Use equestrian related phrases. Drawing From Listening - Step by step, coach instructs group what to draw. Be precise. Can be random instructions (put a square in the top corner of the page, then colour it in blue), or instructions that build on previous to create an image. Following oral directions to draw a picture is a great way to build listening skills. Also demonstrates how we often listen differently.

What Do You Hear? - Coach says simple phrase(s) to the group in different ways. Ask group what emotion, mood etc they hear ie listening is more than the spoken word.

c. How to speak or talk to someone who is struggling

-Group to practice talking to each other using 'I' rather than 'you' . See 'what can I do' section on <https://ridersminds.org/my-mental-health/courageous-conversations/>

In pairs, take in turn for one to speak to the other using 'You'

E.g. What you did was.....

You seem to be....

You are.....

Then take in turn for one to speak to the other using 'I' e.g. What I've noticed about you is...

What I observe about your riding is...

I am wondering whether.....

Pairs to discuss the difference, then pairs to share with group.

-Group to practice how they talk with each other.

In pairs, take in turn for one to speak to the other using hard/mean/unkind voice tone.

Then take in turn to use soft/concerned/kind voice tone.

Pairs to discuss the difference, then pairs to share with group.

4. Understand how being OK can, and does, affect others.

a. How your mental health can affect your friends and family.

-Group discussion : Perhaps coach to start?

When I'm OK, my family and friends are [#].

When I'm not OK, my family and friends are [#].

b. How your mental health can affect your pony and your riding. . Group discussion. Perhaps coach to start?

When I'm OK, my riding and my pony is [#].

When I'm not OK, my riding and my pony is [#].

Could also be done as a ridden exercise eg asking children to share how think their pony is going. Does this reflect them?
OR ask the group to observe/notice any changes in their ponies and explore why the change?

-Play a mounted game on foot! A.K.A What's it like to be a pony?!
Choose an appropriate game eg flags. In pairs, one is the pony who is silent; the other is the rider who can speak, shout etc. Each holds one end of a riding crop. Only the 'pony' can let go at any time.
Game over, ask each 'pony' what that was like for them. How was their 'rider'?! Draw out the effect on them particularly if their rider became frustrated, stressed, annoyed etc, and how was the contact on the crop during the game? Ok, loose, felt pulled? Did the 'pony' have to drop the crop at any time, and why?

-The Leading Game. In pairs, one child blindfolded (use bandage) and holds the arm/elbow/hand of their leader. The leader guides the blindfolded one around an obstacle course without speaking. When complete, ask each how that was; how they felt, what they experienced, sensed, and how that affected each other.

- Group discussion after above. So, imagine being the pony:
Q. How would you feel when your rider was nice/kind to you?
Q. And how would you then behave?
Q. How would you feel if your rider was mean/unkind to you?
Q. And how would you then behave?

c. How your mental health affects your relationship with others.

Group discussion.

Round 1: When I'm OK, others are [#] to me.

When I'm not OK, others are [#] to me.

Round 2: Nice to be Nice exercise:

If someone's nice/kind to you – how do you feel?

If someone is mean/unkind to you – how do you feel?

5. Understanding the impact of pressure and how to manage it

a. How to recognise pressure and understand where it might come from

Group brainstorming.

What happens to you when you're under pressure? How can you tell?

What do you feel/think? How do you respond?

What happens to your riding, your pony, your relationship with others?
(positive AND negative)

Can you identify what triggers [your] pressure? (Coach may prompt e.g. environment, task, activity, competition, social media)

-Pass the Pressure Parcel! Similar exercise to 2 (b) above. Use pressure inducing scenarios. Each child RAG or 1 to 5 rates the scenario, and why. Also raises awareness what's pressure for some is not for others.

-During ridden exercises, could ask children to RAG or 1 to 5 rate their pressure.

b. Create a Top Tips for Managing Pressure or create Pressure Busting Bunting.

In group, each to share things they do to combat and/or manage pressure. Write on a card/post-it or similar and stick on wall or create paper chain as in 3(b) above.

Coach to make suggestions too such as breathing, imagery, visualisation, finding your inner Tigger (re resilience) and draw out how to avoid, adjust, adapt environments.

Use resources

<https://ridersminds.org/self-help/>

<https://ridersminds.org/my-mental-health/>

<https://ridersminds.org/what-is-stress/>

6. Be able to explain why being mentally healthy / OK is important

Know where to get support and how to signpost others to the support available

In a circle, ask members to share:

What they have learned about being OK.

Why our behaviour matters to our horses and ponies.

What would they do if they were not OK or needed help?

Who would they talk to?

What one think could they do differently/improve?