

Mental Health Movie Activity: Inside Out

This activity is designed for students in 4th-8th grades, to increase students' mental health awareness and empower them to seek help if needed. A link to the film, the film's synopsis and a short, 60-second public service announcement (PSA) created by youth through the Directing Change film contest, are provided to drive discussion. Accompanying facilitation guide and discussion questions have been provided to help facilitate the activity and dialogue about mental health. After the discussion concludes, students can self-evaluate to see how this activity has helped them better understand mental health.

Inside Out:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=azZJ29kQ1cY>

Length: 95 min. (PG)

Riley is an 11-year-old who has felt a lot of Joy in her life until her family moves away from their hometown. Riley's emotions are characters who reveal the Sadness, Anger, Fear, and Disgust that she sometimes feels as she grieves the life she knew before and struggles to adapt to the new life she must come to know.

Directing Change PSA: Not Alone

https://youtu.be/R8G_FxZOWLM

With the help of his basketball team, an African American youth is reminded of his own strength, that he is not alone, and that there is help.

FACILITATION GUIDE

Introduce the Activity:

1. Introduce that this activity is about learning to accept life changes and to cope with all the emotions and challenges that change can bring.
2. Review your classroom's norms to ensure that students feel respected and safe.
3. Help students focus during the film with these prompts. If setting allows, write Feelings, Self-Talk, and Coping Strategies on the board or a poster and encourage talking notes.
 - To keep the storyline manageable, *Inside Out* represents the complex range of human emotions as a combination of five main characters. As you watch the film, write down other emotions you see Riley experience. Create feeling clusters by grouping other feelings you observe with each of the five main characters.
 - Write down examples of messages Joy and Sadness say to themselves (self-talk) when something difficult happens, e.g. Sadness tells herself, "I only make everything worse," and Joy repeats, "It's all great" or "Think of something funny."
 - Write down coping strategies that you see Riley use throughout the film. Mark which strategies you think are effective in helping Riley to cope better with her situation and which strategies create more difficulties or cause her to feel worse.

Watch the Film:

1. ***Riley's Dream World features a clown nightmare that may upset some students. Check in before the film begins to see if anyone has a fear of clowns, then signal those students just before the 55-minute mark (when Joy and Sadness descend into Riley's darkest fears) to look away or step outside for about 5 minutes. The clown scene is just a plot device and is not needed for meaningful participation in this lesson.***
2. If students need a body break or you wish to pause to begin discussing any of the questions, a good time to do so would be right when Joy and Sadness get sucked into Long Term Memory, about 25 minutes into the film. Another natural stopping point is after Sadness comforts Bing Bong, and he gets up to lead them to the train, around the 50-minute mark.

Discuss:

Choose questions from this list below to guide a discussion. Modify, as needed, for your group.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. From the time Riley is born, Joy is uncomfortable with Sadness. She literally tries to contain Sadness inside the chalk circle, and late in the film, Joy tells Sadness, "You're hurting Riley." Do you think people tend to embrace or reject their Sadness? Why do you believe it can be difficult for people to accept feelings other than Joy? Is there more stigma around Sadness or depression, in particular?
2. Joy understands that Fear, Disgust, and Anger all function to protect Riley in some way, but she isn't sure what Sadness does. What does Joy learn about the value of Sadness from watching her talk with Bing Bong or when Riley lost her hockey game?
3. Joy tends to be optimistic no matter what and wants Riley to be happy all the time. She thinks a perfect day is one with mostly joyful memories, and when the memory wall shifts more toward Sadness, Fear, Disgust, and Anger, Joy is clearly upset. Is it a realistic expectation to feel Joy more than any other emotions? Why or why not? Are there ways that being positive all the time can negatively affect our emotional well-being?
4. After they move, Riley's mom tells her:

I really want to say... thank you... Through all this confusion, you've stayed... our happy girl. Your dad's under a lot of pressure, but if you and I can keep smiling, it would be a big help. We can do that for him. Right?

What effect do her mom's words have on Riley's ability to express and cope with her feelings? Is it healthy to ask Riley to stay happy and keep smiling for someone else?

5. *Inside Out* explores how Sadness can help us become more whole, complex emotional beings. At what point does Sadness cross over into depression and require help? What are some signs to look for in yourself or others that support might be needed?
6. One of the most important scenes in the film is when Joy hands the core memories to Sadness, and Riley finally breaks down and confesses how she feels to her parents:



I know you don't want me to, but... I miss home... You need me to be happy, but... I want my old friends, and my hockey team. I want to go home. Please don't be mad.



How do her parents respond to what she shares? What does it mean that she produces her first multicolored memory ball? What does the film say about accepting our own feelings and having our feelings accepted by our families?

**Mental Health Movie Activity
EVALUATION**

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements using a scale of 1 to 5 with "1" being strongly disagree and "5" being strongly agree.

	Strongly disagree 	Disagree	Neutral/ Unsure	Agree	Strongly agree 
1. This activity made me more aware of my own attitudes about mental health and people who experience mental health challenges.	1	2	3	4	5
2. I am more informed about where to seek help and support for a mental health problem if I need it.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I am more likely to reach out and help someone else who is struggling with a mental health problem after doing this activity.	1	2	3	4	5
4. I plan on changing the way I talk about mental health and mental illness after participating in this activity.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I learned something that I'll share with a friend in the future.	1	2	3	4	5

6. Do you have other comments you'd like to share?
