

Length: 45-50 minutes | Age range: Designed for 5th and 6th grade

Summary

The *Ask, Listen, Learn* video series and supplemental lesson plans have been designed to teach kids about the negative impact that alcohol and marijuana have on their developing brains, the consequences of underage drinking and underage marijuana use, and how to make healthy decisions. In this 9th installment, the curriculum focuses on adolescent mental health, positive and negative strategies for coping with mental health challenges, and how alcohol and marijuana can negatively impact the developing brain and mental health. Although this lesson is designed to be part of the existing series, educators may choose to use it as a stand-alone unit. Before getting started, be sure to read the *Ask, Listen, Learn Mental Health Educator Guide* and view the *Ask, Listen, Learn Facilitator Guide*.

Materials:

- [Mental Health Comprehension Questions \(Handout\)](#)
- [Mental Health Vocabulary Cards \(Handout\)](#)
- [Mental Health Vocabulary Sheet \(Handout\)](#)
- [Your Healthy Coping Strategy Toolbox \(Handout\)](#)

Objectives

1. Describe what mental health is and how it relates to adolescent brain development by answering and discussing comprehension questions after watching a video.
2. Explain how alcohol and marijuana can negatively impact the developing brain and adolescent mental health by participating in a classroom discussion.
3. Identify and evaluate strategies for coping with mental health challenges. Create a personalized guide to use during stressful situations.
4. Understand when to seek help from a trusted adult when dealing with mental health challenges by creating a list of situations that might be overwhelming.



Comprehension Questions:

- What is mental health and how does it impact your daily life and interactions with others?
- What is the limbic system, and what does it do?
- What happens to your brain and body when it is stressed?
- What are some positive ways to cope with stress and why are they important to learn?
- How can alcohol and marijuana negatively impact your mental health?

Vocabulary:

- | | |
|--------------------------|-----------------|
| • Amygdala | • Hypothalamus |
| • Anxiety | • Limbic system |
| • Dependence | • Marijuana |
| • Endocannabinoid system | • Mental health |
| • Hippocampus | • Paranoia |
| | • Psychological |

For more resources on the negative impacts of underage drinking and underage marijuana use, go to AskListenLearn.org.

[See all lessons](#)



For more info head to AskListenLearn.org

1 Warm Up

5 minutes

Anonymous Poll: Use sticky notes or an online tool (like Mentimeter or Google Forms) to ask:

- i. What words come to mind when you hear “mental health?”
- ii. What are some things that cause you to be stressed or overwhelmed?
- iii. What are some things you do when you feel stressed or overwhelmed?

Review student answers and note the stressors that are common among students (i.e. schoolwork, peer pressure, etc.).

2 Introduce the unit by playing, “Video 9: The Impact of Alcohol and Marijuana on Your Mental Health.”

Ensure every student has a paper or virtual copy of the Comprehension Questions.

5 minutes

3 When the video is over, have students get into groups to discuss the **Comprehension Questions**.

Discuss the answers as a class and address any misconceptions from the Warm Up.

Remind the class of the healthy ways to cope with mental health challenges mentioned in the video and let them know that the class will be practicing one of these strategies together.

5 minutes

4 **Activity 1:** 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise (Additional instructions included below)

10 minutes

After modeling the grounding exercise, transition to the next activity by letting students know that the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise is just one method they can add to their “mental health toolbox” and they will be brainstorming others that they can use.

5 **Activity 2:** **Your Healthy Coping Strategy Toolbox**

(Additional instructions included below)

15 minutes

6 Optional: Pass out or send link to the Vocabulary Cards. For homework, ask the students to rewrite definitions for the vocabulary in their own words, draw pictures representing each terms or create a story using these terms.

7 Optional: Use the **Kahoot!** game for this lesson to have students reinforce what they have learned.

8 Conclude the lesson by reemphasizing the difference between healthy and unhealthy coping strategies, like underage drinking and underage marijuana use and providing students information about school and community resources for those who might need additional help.

2 minutes

9 Exit Ticket: Before leaving, have students submit an answer to the following question.

3 minutes

- Why is it important to have positive ways to handle mental health challenges?
- How can underage drinking and underage marijuana use negatively impact your mental health?

Watch the Video

“The Impact of Alcohol and Marijuana on Your Mental Health”

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After discussing the healthy ways to manage stress mentioned in the video, provide students a simple way to calm stress by modeling this coping strategy. Talk through and model this exercise before having students practice it on their own. The purpose of this is for students to use their five senses to help them be more present and interrupt negative and overwhelming thoughts.

Begin by asking students to sit comfortably and close their eyes. Have students use a breathing technique to begin centering themselves.

- Inhale for 5 seconds
- Hold for 5 seconds
- Exhale for 5 seconds

Repeat the breathing technique 2-3 times for students to feel calmer and more centered before moving on to each of their 5 senses.

5 Things They Can See

Encourage students to open their eyes and only focus on the details of five things they see around them. These can include anything from something on the floor to their notebook on their desk. They should take their time to look and acknowledge what they see.

4 Things They Can Touch

Have students close their eyes and only focus on four things they can physically feel and notice the sensations and textures of the things around them. These things can be something simple like the feeling of their toes in their shoes, their fingers rubbing together, or the texture of their shirt.

3 Things They Can Hear

Tell students to listen intently and concentrate on three things they can hear. They should pick out three distinct sounds to concentrate on. Sounds might include the clicking of a pen, cars driving by, voices in the hallway, or anything around them.

2 Things They Can Smell

Students should concentrate on two scents that they can smell. An example might be the fragrance of soap or laundry or the smell of food in another room.

1 Thing They Can Taste

Have students focus on something they can taste. This might be the lingering taste of toothpaste from when they brushed their teeth or the residual flavor of something they ate earlier. Encourage them to concentrate on what that taste is.

After you complete the exercise, have the class discuss the following questions:

- What was it like to focus on only one sense at a time?
- What sense was the hardest/easiest to observe?
- When your mind is so focused on these observations, are you able to think about other things stressing you out?
- After doing this exercise, do you feel more in control over what you are thinking about?

Explain how using the 5-4-3-2-1 Grounding Exercise is a tool they can use to practice mindfulness when they feel overwhelmed.



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Have students use the prompts in the “Your Healthy Coping Strategy Toolbox” handout to develop a personalized resource that they can use when they are dealing with stress.

Before having students complete the activity, model this by providing positive examples of ways you manage your stress and mental health. Let students know these examples are tools you rely on to stay healthy. Read the first question on the handout and let students think and write down any tools they might use. Remind students that they likely already have strategies that they use and this activity is meant to help identify what works for them so they can be more intentional about managing stress. Encourage students to work independently and emphasize that this resource is for them to use and will not be shared with others.

Provide school or community resources that might be helpful, as well as resources such as the [988 Lifeline](https://www.988lifeline.org/) and the [SAMHSA National Helpline](https://www.samhsa.gov/national-helpline).

Upon completion, review the concepts of healthy and unhealthy coping strategies while emphasizing the risks of underage drinking and underage marijuana on mental health.



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