

Activities

Tune In when you Switch On

Activity details: ⌚ 45minutes

£ Free

📍 Online/
Socially distanced indoors

Before you begin...

- Let everyone know that you're going to be talking about mental health in this session and remind them that they can take a step back from conversations at any time. If you know anyone in the group has experience of mental health problems, talk to them (and their parents or carers) before the activity to make sure they're happy to take part and find out if you need to make any changes.
- Make sure everyone knows where they can go for support if they or someone they know needs it.
- In this activity, everyone will play a game called Destination unknown to polish their listening skills. They'll then talk about active listening, learn how to listen online, and pledge to make a difference by tuning in (and asking twice) when chatting to friends online.

Destination Unknown

- Everyone should split into small groups. Once the person leading the activity's explained what to do, each group should go into their own breakout room.
- Everyone should think of a destination they'd like to visit on holiday in the future. They should keep it a secret and think about things like the climate, the terrain, the food, and the activities they'd to do there.
- Everyone should take it in turns to talk about the destination they'd like to visit, without telling anyone where it is or the name of any attractions or landmarks. For example, if someone was thinking of Australia they could say they'd like to go somewhere that's warm during the UK's winter months, that has lots of beaches, where people speak English and where they could try surfing.

- The rest of the team should work together to really tune in to what's being said. Once they've listened carefully to everything, they should decide on a suitable place the person could visit. They should explain where they've chosen, backing up their decision with reasons they heard from the person speaking.
- After everyone has had their turn, teams should discuss how it felt to really listen in and think about what the person was saying. Was it easy? What made it difficult?

What is Active Listening?

- The person leading the activity should ask everyone what they think 'active listening' means in the context of mental health.
- Everyone should chat about how to be a good active listener. What do they think active listening involves?
- The person leading the activity should introduce the five steps to good active listening. Did people manage to think of them all? Did they come up with anything extra that's not listed?

5 steps to good active listening

1. Always listen closely.
2. Show interest.
3. Be positive about the future.
4. Show you're on their side.
5. Get back in touch if you can.

Tune in when you switch on

- Everyone should think about how they chat to their friends online. How could they practise active listening when they're chatting in this way?
- Everyone should make a pledge to practise active listening when they switch on. They should write their pledge down and plan to update the group on their progress in four weeks.
- The person leading the activity should remind everyone that they don't have to be an expert to talk about mental health. They don't have to have all of the answers: sometimes the most important thing to do is listen and share places people could go for further support.
- The person leading the activity should remind everyone that they should never try to 'diagnose' anyone. They should make sure everyone knows what to do in an emergency and what to do if someone says something that makes them feel uncomfortable.

Example of pledges

- I chat to my friends over video calls. I'm pledging to really listen to what people say and how they say it, and I'm going to pay attention to their body language too. If anything seems off, I'm going to follow up with my friends afterwards.
- I chat to my friends by typing on social media like Twitter and Facebook. I'm going to ask if people are OK twice and really think through what they're saying. I'm going to check in with my friends more, including using other ways to stay in contact like giving them a call.
- I chat to my friends when we play video games together. I'm going to really listen to what people are saying and notice if people are unusually quiet. If something worries me, or if I'm not sure if someone's joking or being serious, I'm going to check in and ask twice whether they're OK.