**SQA Mental Health**

**Award**

UNIT 1: Understanding Mental Health Issues ​

Mental Health and the Media – Booklet 4

**Pupil Name/Class:**

**Teacher:**

**Outcome 1:**

**Describe what is meant by the terms “mental health” and “wellbeing” for individuals and wider society.** ​

**Performance criteria**​

* Describe how mental health and wellbeing is portrayed in the media​.

**Starter Activity – What do you know about the following terms?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Prejudice |  |
| Stereotyping |  |
| Discrimination |  |
| Stigma |  |

**To meet the standard for this outcome you need to be able to show an understanding of both the positive and negative impacts of how the media presents mental health.**

Use this notes page in your booklet to add relevant points as you work through the slides.

You must be able to provide a specific example or fact to back up your points.

**Read the following information and fill in the grid identifying positive and negative impacts of how mental health is presented in the media.**

Statistics show that within a year, 1 in 4 people in the UK will be affected by a Mental Health issue, and mental illness is frequently and increasingly being portrayed in the Media, through television episodes, movies, newspaper reports, and social media. The media can be used as a powerful tool, in raising awareness of these issues, but can this also create unfair stigmas, surrounding mental illness?

Mental Health Charity, Mind, conducted a report into the impact of Media coverage on the lives of people diagnosed with mental health disorders, and found that 73 % of those asked, felt that they had been treated in a negative way, as a result of Media Coverage.

According to the same report, the impact of newspaper articles and news reports containing mental health content, can have a negative impact on mental health sufferers, with a quarter stating that their neighbours had behaved in a negative way towards them, as a result of newspaper and television reports. Only 12% felt that the response to them had been positive. Regional newspapers and TV news were felt to be fairer than national media. This may be due to the fact that the national newspaper’s tend to go for headlines, rather than raising awareness, so can often be seen to paint a picture of somebody suffering for a mental health diagnosis in a negative light, in order to increase profits, and create a more interesting story.

There has been an increase in recent months and years, of the portrayal of mental health through the use of television characters in popular TV shows, such as Emmerdale, raising the issue of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, and documentary series such as Channel 4’s ‘Being Bipolar’ following three individuals who suffer from Bipolar Disorder.

The Bipolar documentary has faced criticism for showing unbalanced views on the illness and not fairly representing the condition, and how to heal with it. These shows have brought some of the obstacles that people suffering a mental health diagnosis face to the masses, but there is a risk that the mental health issues are not portrayed accurately on television shows, and this can result in misrepresentation on a national scale, which can ultimately lead to stigma and discrimination.

On a more positive note, the increase of attention on mental health disorders, creates an opportunity for individuals suffering from mental health, to recognise their symptoms and seek help. In turn this creates a society, particularly amongst the younger generations, which allows people to talk about their experiences of mental health and change the attitudes towards it.

Social Media can play a dangerous role, in the rise of mental health issues amongst young people. According to Charity ‘Young Minds’ and findings from ONS Child and Adolescent Mental Health Survey, nearly 80,000 children and young people suffer from severe depression, and rates of mental health problems increase as children reach adolescents. Social Media sites such as Facebook results in us all comparing our lives to those of our peers and creates an unrealistic expectation of what our reality should be. It provides an open platform for Cyber bullies, can create a feeling or isolation, insecurity, and increased depression, and has unfortunately resulted in numerous suicide related deaths.

The Media is so important to bringing Mental Health issues to the public, but it is vitally important that it is portrayed in a way that does not cause discrimination, or stigmas towards those affected. There is a responsibility to ensure that these subject matters are presented in a balanced way, with information on how to approach and deal with Mental Health Illnesses, when reporting about them. Perhaps with a change or approach, fair reporting and greater attention to increasing awareness, the media can help to change the attitudes surrounding Mental Health (Young Minds, 2019)

**What Are Common Misrepresentations of Mental Illness in the Media?**

Don Diefenbach, a professor at the University of North Carolina, analyzed how mental illness is portrayed on TV. He found that characters with mental illness were ten times more likely to commit a violent crime than other characters and ten to twenty times more likely to commit a violent crime than someone with mental illness would in real life. Here are common media misrepresentations of mental illness most of us will recognize:

· They are violent: Mental illness is commonly the focus in the news as the primary cause for violent acts instead of considering other factors. The truth is, people with mental health problems are more likely to be victims of violent crime and less likely to commit them. In the film world, characters with mental health issues are often portrayed as unpredictably violent.

· They look different: You know the characters with crazy eyes or messy hair. They somehow look different or separate from “normal” people. In reality, people with mental health disorders look like ordinary people, not the stereotypes portrayed in the media.

· Mental health disorders are all the same, and they are all extreme: The media often generalizes mental illness and clumps all disorders in the same category. Also, severe mental illness is usually depicted in the media, but the majority of those who experience mental health issues do not experience extreme symptoms. For example, according to Diefenbach’s research, only seven percent of psychiatric disorders shown on TV was depression, and 12 percent was some form of psychosis. In reality, anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the United States, and major depressive disorder is the leading cause of disability. Anxiety and depression are often experienced together.

· They never recover: Characters with mental illness in films and TV shows rarely recover, and if they do, it is only temporary. This creates the belief that there is no hope for those who experience mental illness. In reality, therapy, medication and support from loved ones can greatly help with recovery from mental illness. Many people recover completely and can live productive, happy and healthy lives.

· Mental hospitals are evil: Although mental hospitals in the 18th century used physical treatments to “cure” mental illness, such as ice baths, the use of restraints and isolation, modern mental health facilities are not the dim, damp institutions controlled by malevolent doctors as often portrayed in books and films. Most people voluntarily choose to go to mental hospitals for help.

· People who have mental health problems are not weak. They have real issues which require care and support.

Some might see mental illness as a weakness of character, which may prevent someone from getting the help they need because they feel ashamed. However, mental illness is not something someone chooses or suffers from because they are weak. Many factors affect mental health, such as:

· Biology

· Physical illness

· History of abuse or trauma

· Family history

It’s important for the public to realize that mental health problems are not a sign of laziness or weakness but are real issues which require care and support.

**You must give a specific piece of evidence to back up your points!**

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| **Positive** | **Negative** |
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