



# Mental Health Activity Guide

PROGRAM ACHIEVE SECONDARY (years 7-10)

A PREVENTATIVE MENTAL HEALTH  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING CURRICULUM  
(5th Edition)

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# A Preventative Mental Health Social-Emotional Learning Curriculum for Secondary

This guide presents specific sequenced mental health activities included in all four parts of the current online Program Achieve Secondary curriculum.

Teachers can access the selected mental health activities listed on pages 5 and 6 of this guide by logging into their school's You Can Do It! Education account and locating the corresponding Part and Activity number in Program Achieve Secondary using the Part and Activity number provided in this guide.

## Rationale

Research strongly supports teaching young people the fundamentals of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) and Rational Emotive Behavior Therapy (REBT) as effective preventative mental health measures. At their core, both CBT and REBT focus on teaching the relationship between thoughts, emotions, and behaviours.

By teaching students to identify and challenge unhelpful thinking patterns, these approaches empower young people with lifelong skills for emotional regulation and psychological resilience. Teaching students rational beliefs (e.g., self-acceptance) and how to change the way they think is seen as strengthening their brain's prefrontal cortex, leading not only to a greater ability to emotionally regulate and experience more positive emotions while reducing the intensity of negative ones, but also to the capacity to delay gratification, control impulses, form a positive self-image, make good decisions, and solve problems.

Developed by Michael E. Bernard, PhD, the You Can Do It! Education's Program Achieve represents one of the most well-established preventative mental health programs in the world. This online curriculum features a variety of classroom activities that are directly based on CBT and REBT principles.

Program Achieve is based on Michael's many years of experience as a counsellor, which included one-on-one counselling using REBT and REE with school-age children who were referred for mental health challenges such as anxiety, low self-esteem, anger, and procrastination.

## Design

Program Achieve Secondary activities aimed at preventing and reducing mental health challenges are organised in two parts.

Part 1, 'Foundation Activities' should be taught first in sequence (1 – 5). These activities provide students with a basic understanding of

- their emotions,
- how their thinking (irrational vs. rational) impacts how they feel,
- how changing their thinking helps them remain calm, and
- how they can call on different coping skills to help them destress.

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Part 2. 'Mental Health Challenges' are groups of activities that centre around common issues (anxiety, feeling down, anger, procrastination) and can be presented to students as a self-contained unit.

Each Activity in the Lesson Plan starts with *Background Information for Teacher*, which offers practical context and supporting details before presenting the activity.

### **Implementation Best Practice.**

- Activities should be scheduled at a specific time each week, with 20 to 30 minutes allocated for them.
- Activities can be presented once a week or biweekly.
- It is strongly recommended that the activities be presented as they are laid out in the Activity Plan with specific reference to the Present Learning task section.
- Sharing Learning Intentions and Success Criteria helps you monitor how well students process the concepts in the activity.
- Be sure to complete each Activity with the Real Life Application section. At the start of the next session, review students' applications.

## **PART 1. FOUNDATION ACTIVITIES**

Provide students with:

1. An Emotional Vocabulary including three common negative emotions: anxiety, feeling down, and anger.
2. An Emotional Thermometer helps them understand their emotions as existing on a continuum of intensity, ranging from very strong to very weak. It shows them that they have choices in how anxious, down, or angry they become when something negative occurs or is about to occur.
3. Understanding that the intensity of their feelings about negative events depends on their thinking; irrational thinking (not true, not sensible, not helpful) leads to high emotional temperatures, while rational thinking (true, sensible, helpful) results in less intense, calmer emotional temperatures.
4. A Catastrophe Scale that helps students avoid exaggerating the severity of bad events, which can elevate their emotional responses and enable them to assess how bad something truly is.
5. Coping Skills they can use to stay calm and emotionally regulate, such as mindfulness, talking to someone, exercising, or engaging in fun activities

## Years 7 & 8

The sequence of activities below provides easier access to this guide's specific mental health activities. The required activity can be found in the online Program Achieve Secondary using the provided Part and Activity numbers.

### **PART 1. MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION ACTIVITIES**

#### **1. Emotional Vocabulary**

PART 3. ACTIVITY 17: Emotions and Their Temperatures

#### **2. Emotional Temperature**

PART 3. ACTIVITY 17: Emotions and Their Temperatures

#### **3. Rational vs Irrational Thinking**

PART 3. ACTIVITY 21. Rational Thinking in Action

#### **4. Catastrophising**

PART 3. ACTIVITY 19. Catastrophising

#### **5. Coping Skills**

PART 3. ACTIVITY 20: Coping Skills

PART 3. ACTIVITY 18: The Key of Resilience

### **PART 2. MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES ACTIVITIES**

Mental health, CBT/REBT activities are grouped according to which mental health challenge you want to focus on: Anxiety, Feeling Down, Anger and Procrastination.

#### **Anxiety (social, performance)**

PART 4. ACTIVITY 27: The Blocker of Anxiety

PART 3. ACTIVITY 22: Mindfulness Exercise

PART 4. ACTIVITY 28: Overcoming Public Speaking Anxiety

PART 1. ACTIVITY 4: Work Confidence

PART 2. ACTIVITY 11: Conversation Crackers

PART 2. ACTIVITY 12: Handling Peer Pressure

#### **Feeling Down**

PART 4. ACTIVITY 25: Feeling Down

PART 4. ACTIVITY 26: Feeling Down? Don't Take Things Personally

#### **Anger**

PART 4. ACTIVITY 29: Anger. Paying the Price

PART 4. ACTIVITY 30: Anger Management

PART 2. ACTIVITY 13: Dealing with Difficult People

PART 2. ACTIVITY 15: Assertiveness - A Tool for Dealing with Conflicts

#### **Procrastination**

PART 4. ACTIVITY 31: Procrastination Pays Poorly

PART 4. ACTIVITY 32: Procrastination Bypass Techniques

PART 1. ACTIVITY 2: Growth Mindset

PART 1. ACTIVITY 5: Persistence Pays Off

PART 1. ACTIVITY 7: Time Management

## Years 9 & 10

The sequence of activities below provides easier access to this guide's specific mental health activities. The required activity can be found in the online Program Achieve Secondary using the provided Part and Activity numbers.

### PART 1. MENTAL HEALTH FOUNDATION ACTIVITIES

#### 1. Emotional Vocabulary

PART 3. ACTIVITY 17. Emotion Meter

#### 2. Emotional Temperature

PART 3. ACTIVITY 17. Emotion Meter

#### 3. Rational vs Irrational Thinking

PART 3. ACTIVITY 21: Rational Resilience

#### 4. Catastrophising

PART 3. ACTIVITY 19: Recalibrating Badness

#### 5. Coping Skills

PART 3. ACTIVITY 18: Brilliant Resilience

PART 3. ACTIVITY 20: Stress Management Skills

### PART 2. MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES ACTIVITIES

Mental health, CBT/REBT activities are grouped according to which mental health challenge you want to focus on: Anxiety, Feeling Down, Anger and Procrastination.

#### Anxiety (social, performance)

PART 4. ACTIVITY 28: Taming Test Anxiety

PART 4. ACTIVITY 27: Social Anxiety and Shyness

PART 3. ACTIVITY 22: Mindfulness and Stress Management

PART 4. ACTIVITY 4: Confidence At Work

PART 2. ACTIVITY 10: Social Character Strengths

PART 2. ACTIVITY 14: Steps to Friendship

#### Feeling Down

PART 3. ACTIVITY 25: Feeling Down? Be Proud of You

PART 3. ACTIVITY 26: Getting Up When Feeling Down

PART 2. ACTIVITY 16: Coping with Anti-Social, Mean and Bullying Behaviour

#### Anger

PART 4. ACTIVITY 29: Anger. The Misunderstood Emotion

PART 4. ACTIVITY 30: Living With and Without Anger

PART 2. ACTIVITY 13: Accepting Everyone

PART 2. ACTIVITY 15: Solving Conflicts

#### Procrastination

PART 4. ACTIVITY 31: Why Procrastinate?

PART 4. ACTIVITY 32: Procrastinate Later!

PART 1. ACTIVITY 3: Growth Mindset Pep-Talk

PART 1. ACTIVITY 5: Persistence Means Working Tough