



Use of Mental Health Literacy Courses in the Classroom

Falon Little, BSN Student

Irene Ransom Bradley School of Nursing, Pittsburg State University

Barb McClaskey, Ph.D. – Faculty



Introduction

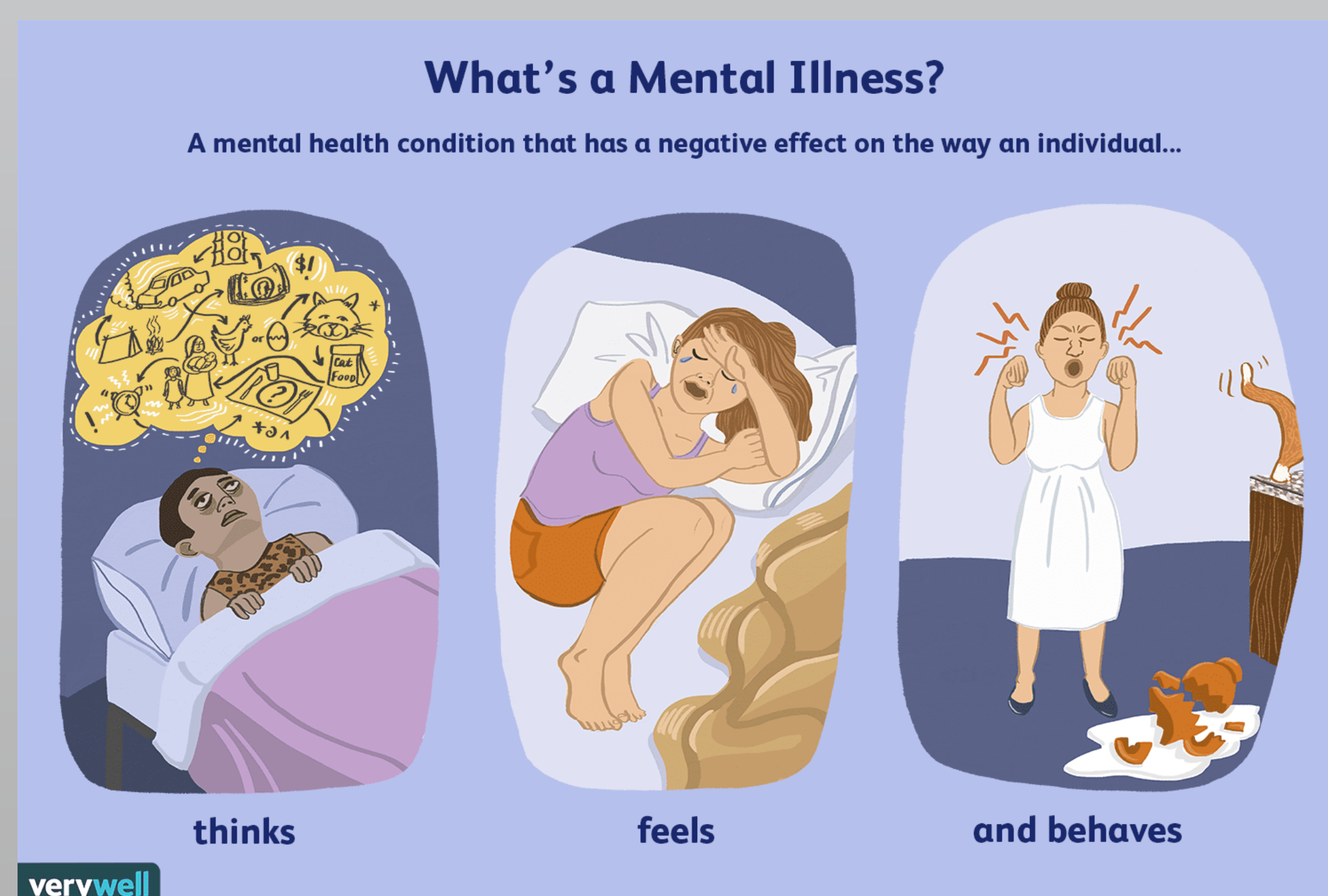
- Mental illness and psychological distress are and have been experienced across the globe, regardless of gender, race, or class. Research has shown that implementing mental health literacy (MHL) courses into secondary schooling may increase MHL in populations that struggle with mental health. If this intervention were implemented nation-wide it could show significant improvement in mental health of all people, but it could especially benefit heavily affected populations.

Purpose

- The purpose of this research was to find an efficient way to improve mental health literacy in all populations.

Background Information

- Mental health is defined as a person's condition regarding their psychological and emotional well-being.
- Mental illness is defined as a health condition involving changes in emotion, thinking or behavior (or a combination of these).
- Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities.



Methods

- Inclusion of mental health literacy course in secondary schooling curriculums
- Teachers are trained to teach students MHL courses based on their country's MHL guide; if there is no guide, they may adopt one from a different country. A course in Tanzania focused on:
 - Recognition of mental illnesses: the ability to recognize mental illnesses and different types of mental distress
 - Knowledge about mental illnesses: Knowledge of causes and risk factors, symptoms, treatments, and prognoses of mental illnesses
 - Knowledge of prevention and promotion of mental health: Knowledge of how to obtain, maintain, and promote positive mental health including self-help interventions
 - Knowledge about help-seeking: Knowledge of how, when, and where to seek mental health information and informal and professional health
 - Mental illness stigma: Attitudes and beliefs, emotional reactions, behavioral intentions and actual discriminatory behavior in relation to mental illness and individuals with lived experience
 - Help-seeking beliefs: Confidence and self-perceived help-seeking knowledge, perceived helpfulness of referrals, help-sources and treatments, help-seeking intentions, stigma towards help-seeking barriers and actual help-seeking behaviors

Outcomes

- Independent tests comparing the paired sample to the unpaired sample showed:
 - Decreased teachers' and students' stigma
 - Higher rates (over 75% of the sample of teachers) of positive help-seeking efficacy for themselves as well as their students, peers, family, and friends
 - Increased ability of teachers to identify at-risk students

Summary

- The trial conducted in Tanzania (where more than two-thirds of the population live beneath the international poverty line) replicated results from the same intervention previously used in Malawi. This intervention has also been implemented in at least 15 other schools in the US, according to a meta-analysis reported by NCBI, with similar results. In every trial conducted, the results showed significant increase in mental health literacy. Both Malawi and Tanzania are among the most impoverished countries in the world—this just goes to show that if they can do it, so can developed countries such as the US.

References

- Mansfield, R., Patalay, P., & Humphrey, N. (2020). A systematic literature review of existing conceptualisation and measurement of mental health literacy in adolescent research: current challenges and inconsistencies. BMC Public Health, 20(1), 0. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-08734-1>
- Kutcher, S., Wei, Y., Gilberds, H., Ubuguyu, O., Njau, T., Brown, A., Sabuni, N., Magimba, A., & Perkins, K. (2016). A school mental health literacy curriculum resource training approach: effects on Tanzanian teachers' mental health knowledge, stigma and help-seeking efficacy. International Journal of Mental Health Systems, 10(1), 0–1. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s13033-016-0082-6>
- Salerno, J. P. (2016). Effectiveness of Universal School-Based Mental Health Awareness Programs Among Youth in the United States: A Systematic Review. Journal of School Health, 86(12), 922–931. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josh.12461>
- Davis, J. (2020, October 15). Prevalence of Single and Multiple Leading Causes of Death by Race/Ethnicity Among People Aged 60 to 70 Years. Cdc.Gov. https://www.cdc.gov/pcd/issues/2017/16_0241.htm
- Number and percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, by state: Selected years, 2000–01 through 2017–18. (2018). Nces.Ed.Gov. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_204.10.asp

