



Be Kind to Your Mind Patch Program

Written in partnership with Girl Scout Victoria Bee M.

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Daisies/Brownies complete 1 Science, 2 Mental Health Conditions, and 2 Coping Strategies

Juniors/Cadettes complete 2 Science, 2 Mental Health Conditions, and 3 Coping Strategies

Seniors/Ambassadors complete 2 Science, 3 Mental Health Conditions, and 3 Coping Strategies

Science of Mental Health

Activity 1 – The Brain and Neurons

Time: 20-30 minutes

Supplies: Brain and neuron printout or picture (see appendix), ball of yarn

1. Sit in a circle.
2. Tell the Girl Scouts: The brain is made up of millions of tiny cells called neurons. We are going to learn a little bit about how the brain works. The first thing we need to know is that the brain has different parts.
3. Pass around the brain map printout or hold it up. Ask the Girl Scouts what they notice about it.
4. Tell the Girl Scouts: In this map, we can see different parts of the brain, like the lobes, and smaller parts like the pituitary gland. Each of these parts is connected to the other, like a giant web.
5. Take the ball of yarn. Hold on to the end and roll the ball to a Girl Scout, somewhere across the circle. They should hold on to a piece of the yarn and roll it to the next Girl Scout, somewhere across the circle. Continue until every Girl Scout is holding on to a piece of the yarn and it looks like a big web.
6. Tell the Girl Scouts: In our brains, different parts have different jobs, like the frontal lobe helps us to think and make decisions and the occipital lobe processes things we see. But they all work together and are all connected.
7. Have the Girl Scouts stand in a line with their arms out to the sides, almost touching.
8. Tell the Girl Scouts: In the brain, there are small cells called neurons. They are long with a head and have the following parts: dendrite, soma, axon, and terminal. The head of the cell is covered in receptors, called dendrites, surrounding the main part of the cell, called the soma. Information in the form of electricity and chemicals comes in through the dendrites and then goes through the soma and into the axon, which is a long filament that comes out of the soma. At the end of the axon is the terminal, which releases information to the next neuron in the form of electricity and/or chemicals.
9. Have the Girl Scouts do the wave with their arms outreached. As each Girl Scout moves their arms, have them say “dendrite, soma, axon, terminal.”
10. Tell the Girl Scouts: this is how information is carried in the nervous system.

Science of Mental Health

Activity 2 – Neurotransmitters

Time: 15-20 minutes

Supplies: 10-20 ping-pong balls, a hula hoop

1. Explain: In our brains and bodies, our nerves communicate using both electricity and chemicals. These chemicals are called neurotransmitters. They travel between neurons to send signals through nerves and the brain.
2. If you did activity 1, ask your Girl Scouts what parts of the neuron they think are involved in this movement of chemicals.
3. Explain: In the neurons, neurotransmitters are released from the terminal and go to the dendrites on the next cell over. This gap between neurons is called a synapse and there are lots of them in between different neurons.
4. Explain: Now we are going to simulate the neurotransmitters in the brain.
5. Have one Girl Scout hold the hula hoop in the air and have another Girl Scout stand behind it. This Girl Scout is the neuron's dendrite receptors (the proteins on the surface of the neuron that the neurotransmitter affects) and the hula hoop is the cell's surface, the dendrite.
6. The rest of the Girl Scouts should line up on the other side of the hula hoop, a few feet away. Give each Girl Scout a ping-pong ball. These Girl Scouts are the neuron's terminal, and the ball is the neurotransmitter.
7. Explain: The neurotransmitter doesn't just go from one to the other, it comes back to the terminal. This is called reuptake.
8. Have the Girl Scouts in line take a turn throwing the ping-pong ball through the hula hoop to the "receptor" and then they throw the ball back. Continue until everyone who wants to has a turn.
9. Explain: Some people have difficulty with their mental health, and we think that some of this is due to neurotransmitters and problems with this movement. So, they might take medications that change how it works. Different kinds of medications work on different neurotransmitters, but many of them change reuptake, or when the neurotransmitters return to the terminal.
10. Pull one more Girl Scout out of the line of "terminals." This Girl Scout is a medication. They will stand between the terminal and the hula hoop. They will allow the terminal to throw the ball through the hula hoop and to the dendrite, but when the dendrite goes to return the ball, the medication should catch the ball instead. Allow the Girl Scouts to play this version for a while.
11. Explain: This change helps people with mental health conditions feel better. Neurotransmitters help us do many things, including feeling our best.
12. Ask the Girl Scouts what they learned from this activity.

Science of Mental Health

Activity 3 – Genetics vs. Environment

Time: 30 minutes

Supplies: just yourself

1. Sit in a circle. Ask the Girl Scouts: “What are genetics or genes?”
2. Explain: Genetics talks about one of the building blocks of our bodies: DNA. This small part of our cell contains almost all our genes, the information that our body uses to live and grow. Sometimes genes are the only thing controlling something about our bodies, like the genes for sickle cell anemia or cystic fibrosis. Other times, our genes work with our environment to control things like height, mental health, and how we think.
3. Ask the Girl Scouts: “What is our environment?”
4. Explain: Our environment is everything around us, from the space where we live to the people we learn and play with. Our bodies and minds are very complicated, and both our genes and the environment play a role in who we are.
5. Have the Girl Scouts stand up and explain the following game:
 - a. One Girl Scout will start by doing an action. It could be clapping, snapping, bending their knees, patting their head, or something else they come up with. This is our “gene” or the building block of our life.
 - b. Another Girl Scout is going to come up to the first Girl Scout and be the “environment.” The environment is going to do a different action, then tap the first Girl Scout’s shoulder and then they will both do the environment’s action.
 - c. Continue adding Girl Scouts until everyone has had a chance to be the environment and you have a long line of Girl Scouts doing the action of the last environment.
6. Play this game 2-3 times.
7. Explain: The environment interacts with our genetics to influence our actions, thoughts, and feelings. How does this game show that?

Mental Health Conditions, Awareness, and Stigma

Activity 1 - Learn about Mood Disorders

Time: 20 minutes

Supplies: “Looks Like, Feels Like,” Chart and the Activity Guide (see appendix), pens/pencils

1. Ask the Girl Scouts: What is depression?”
2. Tell the Girl Scouts: Depression affects people’s moods, thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and physical health. Sometimes depression can be triggered by a specific life event like a loved one passing away, or sometimes there’s no specific cause at all. Depression can affect anyone no matter age, race, gender, or nationality.
3. Ask the Girl Scouts: What do you think some of the signs that someone is struggling with depression are?
4. Explain to the Girl Scouts: Some of the signs like sleeping too much or not sleeping enough, eating too much or not eating enough, and avoiding friends and family we can see and take note of. There are other signs like hopelessness and inability to concentrate that we cannot.
5. Hand out the “Looks Like, Feels Like,” chart, one per Girl Scout, or you can write Looks Like and Feels Like as two columns on a large piece of paper.
6. Ask: What do you think the difference between “Looks Like” and “Feels Like” is? What do those categories mean?
7. Explain: Great! Looks like is how we see the person who has depression and feels like is how they are feeling inside. Now I am going to read out some traits and you are going to write which column you think they belong in, looks like, or feel like.
8. Using the list in the supplemental materials, read off the traits one by one and have the Girl Scouts categorize them.
9. Go through their answers together.
10. Ask the Girl Scouts: What should you do if you think a friend or family member is experiencing depression?
11. Explain: Even though you can help friends who might be experiencing these feelings, the best option is to always tell a trusted adult who can help them as well. It’s important to be a trustworthy friend or sibling, but it’s more important to keep your friend safe and get them the help that they need. Some trusted adults might be your caregiver, your troop leader, a teacher, or a school counselor or social worker.
12. Explain: Depression is just one of many mood disorders. Another mood disorder that can start when you are a teenager is bipolar disorder and related disorders. Bipolar disorder means that someone has both depression and mania, which means the person feels good feelings so much that it causes problems.
13. Explain: If you start to feel like you are struggling, it’s important to ask an adult for help, like your parent or guardian, your troop leader, or your teacher.

Mental Health Conditions, Awareness, and Stigma

Activity 2 - Learn about Anxiety Disorders

Time: 15-20 minutes

Supplies: Box (one per girl or one large one), scissors (optional), paper, markers, pens

1. Explain: Anxiety and stress are normal feelings, but for some people, anxiety can become a serious problem. We all feel stressed and that's ok. I know that I sometimes feel stressed. What makes you stressed?
2. Explain: Today we're going to learn about anxiety. Let's start with what anxiety feels like. Sometimes anxious feelings are there to protect us, like our "uh oh" feeling when something doesn't feel right. What are some things that you feel when you are stressed, worried, or anxious?
3. Explain: That's great. Being anxious can feel like your heart or your mind is racing, feeling sweaty, or feeling scared. Now we're going to make a worry box.
4. Hand each Girl Scout a piece of paper. Have them draw or write on the paper the things that they worry about. It doesn't have to be deep or scary, maybe it's getting a bad grade or losing their glasses. Be there to support your Girl Scouts as they are writing down their worries.
5. Cut or tear the worries apart onto separate slips of paper.
6. Place the papers into the box, either one box per Girl Scout, which they can take home, or one big box.
7. Explain: Those are all valid reasons to feel stressed or worried. Worry can be helpful, but sometimes it turns into an anxiety disorder. Anxiety becomes a disorder when it becomes overwhelming or starts affecting your daily life. If you start feeling overwhelmed by anxiety, be sure to tell a trusted grown-up in your life so that they can help you.
8. Explain: Now, what do you do when you feel stressed that makes you feel better?
9. Explain: Those are all great ideas! Some ideas that can be helpful include journaling, mindfulness, and exercise. Later in the patch program, we'll learn some coping skills.

Mental Health Conditions, Awareness, and Stigma

Activity 3 – Learn about Neurodevelopmental Disabilities

Time: 20 minutes

Supplies: Cornstarch, hair conditioner, a bowl, measuring spoons, a popsicle stick

1. Explain: Sometimes, some of the things we think of as mental health conditions and/or mental illnesses aren't mental health conditions. One example is conditions like ADHD and autism, which are neurodevelopmental disabilities, like dyslexia and many learning disabilities. These conditions affect the brain in ways that are different than mental illnesses.
2. Explain: Does anybody know someone with autism or ADHD? Are they a part of your class, friends, or family?
3. Explain: Neurodevelopmental disabilities cause many differences in how people experience the world. One difference is sensory, meaning how their senses take in the world around them. Who knows what a sense is?
4. Explain: Senses are how we take in information from the world. Senses include hearing, touch, vision, taste, and smell. People with neurodevelopmental disorders, like autistic people, often make different kinds of movements, called stimming. Stimming uses one of their senses to help calm them down and stay regulated or feel well. It can be a movement, a toy, or tool, or something else. Stimming can be done by everybody too.
5. Explain: One popular way to stim is to use a slime or putty, so we are going to make a simple slime out of two common ingredients.
6. Give each Girl Scout a bowl.
7. Put 2 tablespoons of conditioner in the bowl.
8. Add $\frac{1}{4}$ cup of cornstarch.
9. Mix well with the popsicle stick or spoon, and then your hands.
10. Explain: Sensory differences aren't the only thing that might be different for someone with a neurodevelopmental disability. Some other ways people might be different include focus and concentration, keeping track of time, social skills like friendships, and managing schoolwork.
11. Explain: Neurodevelopmental disabilities aren't illnesses, they're just a different way of being. In our world, this is called neurodiversity. Just like how we need people of all genders, races, ethnicities, and backgrounds to make the world great, we need neurodiversity.
12. A note on language: disability is not a bad word and is the preferred term by the disabled community. Identity first language (autistic person) is preferred by the autistic community, as well as much of the disabled community, but it is best to ask individual people their preferences.

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Activity 4 – Spreading Awareness

Time: 20-30 minutes

Supplies: Poster paper or poster board, markers, and drawing supplies

1. First, read through the information in this section and other sections of the patch program to gain a better understanding of mental health. You can also go online to learn more from trusted sources, such as NAMI or the CDC.
2. Now, answer the following questions/statements with true/false:
 - a. You can catch a mental illness from someone else.
 - b. Mental illness is a medical illness like asthma or the flu.
 - c. People with mental illnesses are not good people.
 - d. Fifty percent of mental illnesses start showing symptoms by age 14.
 - e. People with mental illnesses don't/can't have jobs.
 - f. One-quarter of people will be diagnosed with a mental illness during their lifetime.
 - g. People with mental illnesses can “snap out of it.”
 - h. All people with mental illnesses get treatment for their illnesses.
3. See the appendix for the answer key.
4. Now, create an awareness poster. Use your creativity to explain mental health conditions, coping skills, or stigma. You can make a poster on a posterboard or a computer.
5. Hang your poster up. You could ask your school or local community center, or other organizations near you.

Activity 5 – Stigma and Inclusive Language

Time: 20 minutes

Supplies: Paper, markers, a group of people

1. Explain: Using inclusive language is one of the ways we can address mental health stigma. Mental health stigma is the thinking that mental health and mental illnesses are shameful or wrong. This stigma might tell us that talking about mental health is bad, that people with mental illnesses are broken or bad people, or that mental illnesses and mental health conditions aren't real.
2. On your paper, draw what stigma means to you.
3. Have a show and tell with your stigma drawings. Discuss what stigma means to everyone and how it shows up in your life.
4. Now go over the basics of using inclusive language:
 - a. Person-first language means that you say, “person with depression,” or “person

Mental Health Conditions, Awareness, and Stigma

who experiences psychosis” when talking about mental health conditions, putting the person before the illness. Identity-first language means that you would say “bipolar person,” or “depressed person.” Many people with mental illnesses prefer person-first terms, but some people, especially autistic people, prefer identity first. When in doubt, it’s best to ask the person you are talking to what they prefer.

- b. Avoid terms like, “suffers from,” or “is afflicted by.” Use terms like, “experiences,” instead.
 - c. Don’t make assumptions about a person’s experience with mental health conditions, or what they can and can’t do.
 - d. When talking about suicide, avoid phrases that sound like it is a crime, such as “committed suicide.” A better term is “died by suicide.”
 - e. Use language that focuses on recovery and moving forward when possible.
 - f. Avoid stigmatizing language around mental health (words that have a negative meaning), such as, “crazy,” “psycho,” and “high/low functioning.” These terms contribute to the stigma around mental health conditions.
 - g. Allow people with mental illnesses to describe their own experiences, rather than emphasizing “correct” word choices.
5. Take the pledge to be stigma free with NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness): www.nami.org/Get-Involved/Pledge-to-Be-StigmaFree.

Coping Strategies and Skills

Activities 1-4 – Mindfulness

Mindfulness comes in many forms. Below are four different kinds of mindfulness: visualization, breathing, movement, and senses. There are four choices for each activity. To complete the activity, try two of the options.

The mindfulness exercises below may fit into more than one category, such as breathing exercises that also require visualization or tuning into your senses. Mindfulness is a broad group of activities that takes many forms and isn't as neatly sorted into types. This selection of mindfulness activities may give you a starting point for developing coping skills, but please consult a mental health professional for more guidance.

A special thanks to Victoria Bee Moore and “Calm Mindfulness for Kids” by Wynne Kinder for the mindfulness activities.

Activity 1 – Visualization

Time: 5 minutes per exercise

Supplies: Clear jar with a tight-fitting lid, school glue, glitter or glitter glue, water

Visualization mindfulness is when you imagine becoming calm or putting kindness into the world. It can help energize you or steady your mind.

A – Rainbow Breath

1. Bring your arms up above your head. Keep your arms straight or slightly bent. This exercise works best standing but can be done sitting.
2. Breathe in. While you breathe in, bring your arms down to your side. Visualize the movement of your arms making a rainbow.
3. Breathe out. While you breathe out, bring your arms back up above your head, visualizing the rainbow again.
4. Repeat until calm.

B – Glitter Jar

1. Start by making your glitter jar. Fill your clear jar almost entirely with water. Mix 4 tablespoons of the glue and enough glitter so that you can clearly see it. Seal the jar and shake to mix.
2. For the mindfulness activity, shake the jar and watch the glitter fall while visualizing your feelings settling like glitter.

C – Visualization Meditation

1. Start by sitting in a comfortable position. Close your eyes.
2. Begin breathing evenly. Focus on your breath, in and out.

Coping Strategies and Skills

3. Once you find your breathing has found a natural rhythm, begin to picture a nature scene in your head. It could be a pond, a river, a forest, a mountain, or some other place in nature.
4. Explore this place in your mind. Go into as much detail in imagining your scene. Keep your breathing even as you picture this scene.

D – Windy Day

1. Take several deep breaths through your nose.
2. Blow out your mouth like you are blowing trees on a windy day.

Activity 2 – Breathing

Time: Varies by activity

Supplies: Bubbles and a wand

Breathing mindfulness is a very simple form of mindfulness. It just uses you and your breath, so you can do it anywhere. It can help you focus on your body and thoughts.

A – Bubbles of Kindness

1. Think of a kind thought to another person. It could be a friend, a family member, your troop leader, or anyone in your life.
2. Dip your bubble wand into the bubble solution.
3. Breathe in and out slowly into your bubble wand until bubbles form.
4. Watch your bubbles of kindness float into the world.

B – Deep Breaths

1. Breathe in and hold for 3 seconds.
2. Breathe out slowly and hold for 3 seconds.
3. Repeat until calm.

C – Elevator Breathing

1. Make a “sandwich” with your hands by pressing your palms together parallel to the ground.
2. Bring your top hand up as you breathe in.
3. Breathe out while bringing your hand back down.
4. Repeat until calm.

D – 15 Breaths

1. In this exercise, we will practice noticing our bodies and the things around us.
2. Take 5 breaths and ask yourself what you see. Pay attention to what you see in the world around you.
3. Take 5 more breaths and ask yourself what you hear.
4. Take 5 more breaths and ask yourself what you feel.
5. Make sure that you can think of what you saw, heard, and felt.

Coping Strategies and Skills

E – Bunny Hop Breathing

1. Take 3 quick breaths in, like a bunny hopping.
2. Then take in one deep, long breath.

Activity 3 – Movement

Time: Varies by activity

Supplies: Yoga mat (optional), yoga video or book, music (optional)

Mindfulness involving movement is a great way to make your body feel good while making your mind in tune with your body. All you need is yourself and to be ready to move while focusing you your body and how it reacts. It helps you center yourself and refocus.

A – Yoga

1. Find some yoga videos to try out, whether you rent them from the library or find them on the internet. You can also try a book!
2. Try yoga for as long as you'd like: just once or every day.

B – Wiggle Freeze Tag

1. Find a big open space and spread out.
2. If you would like, you can use music to accompany this activity.
3. Have the Girl Scouts dance and wiggle until someone says stop and/or turns off the music. Repeat a few times.
4. Have the Girl Scouts pay attention to how their body feels when they are wiggling and when they are still.

C – Finger Breathing

1. Hold your hand out and stretch out your fingers.
2. Start at the base of one finger, touching it with the other hand.
3. As you take a deep breath in, move your finger up to the tip. As you breathe out, move back down your finger. Make sure you are taking deep, slow breaths.
4. Repeat. You can also use other fingers.

D – Open and Hug

1. Stretch your arms out wide as you breathe out.
2. Bring your arms back in as you breathe in.
3. Continue until calm.

Coping Strategies and Skills

Activity 4 – Senses

Time: Varies by activity

Supplies: Assorted objects, sack or bag, fidget toys (optional)

Mindfulness using your five senses can use any or all of your senses. We are going to focus on your sense of touch. Touch mindfulness is a type of senses meditation where you use your sense of touch to help you focus on your body and mind. It helps you stay attuned to your five senses and calm down.

A – What’s in the Sack?

1. Have someone put an object in a sack or bag.
2. Stick your hand into the bag and try to feel for what it is.
3. Concentrate on your sensations.

B – Clap

1. Clap three times.
2. Pay attention to how your fingers feel after clapping.
3. Focus on the feeling of your hands and fingers.

C – Fidgeting

1. Find an object that you enjoy touching or holding in your hands, such as a fidget toy, pop-it, or stress ball.
2. Spend some time squishing, stretching, or fidgeting with the item, such as squishing a stress ball or stretching slime.
3. Pay special attention to the feelings and sounds of the item and these actions.

D – Mindful Eating

1. At your next meal or snack, take some time to observe and think about what you are doing. Think about what your food tastes like, feels like, smells like, and any other way you experience eating.
2. Take it a step further and narrate your eating in your head, with statements like, “The broccoli feels crunchy,” or “This pasta smells like butter.”

Coping Strategies and Skills

Activity 5 – Self-care

Time: Varies by activity

Supplies: Paper and writing utensils.

Self-care is a crucial part of maintaining one's mental health. There are many activities you can do daily that help preserve or maintain your mental health. By exploring self-care activities, you can help find what works best for you and act on it.

A – Journaling

1. Find a piece of paper or a journal/notebook you can write in.
2. Write about some of the feelings and thoughts you had today. These can be both negative and positive experiences, feelings, and events that happened throughout your day.
3. Write down a goal that you have for yourself. This could be an activity you want to accomplish or even an attitude you want to have throughout the day.
4. After doing this for a couple of days, then think about how this self-care activity made you feel.

B – Connect with nature

1. Go outside and look at your surroundings.
2. Use your senses to experience the world around you. What do you see, hear, smell, touch, and taste?
 - a. Be sure to put all electronic devices away to make sure you maximize your experience out in nature.
3. Let your thoughts wander as you experience the world around you.

C – Take time for something fun

1. Think of something that you enjoy and haven't done in a while. Examples of this could be reading, spending time with a pet, creating something, doing a puzzle, or anything that you find fun.
2. Plan some time in your day when you are specifically set to work on this activity.
3. After participating in your activity, think about how you feel.

D – Take time to practice gratitude

1. Find a journal or a piece of paper to write on.
2. Write down as many things as you can think of that you are grateful for.
3. After brainstorming for about three minutes, pick one of the things on your list and write it a letter. It could be a letter to a parent thanking them for dinner, a letter to the universe for making sunsets, whatever you choose.
4. Evaluate how you feel after noticing some of the things you are grateful for.

References

Learn More

The Science of Mental Health

- Neurons

<https://mhanational.org/neurons-how-brain-communicates>

- Brains (NIH)

<https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/patient-caregiver-education/brain-basics-know-your-brain>

- Antidepressants

<https://www.ocduk.org/overcoming-ocd/medication/how-ssri-work/>

- Genes and the environment

<https://learn.genetics.utah.edu/content/genetics/environmental/>

Mental Health Conditions, Awareness, and Stigma

- Mental Health Conditions (NAMI)

<https://www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Mental-Health-Conditions>

- Mental Health Conditions (Mental Health Gov)

<https://www.mentalhealth.gov/what-to-look-for>

- Depression (NIH)

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression>

- Stigma-free Pledge - <https://www.nami.org/Get-Involved/>

Pledge-to-Be-StigmaFree

- Coping Skills (University of Toledo) -

<https://www.utoledo.edu/studentaffairs/counseling/selfhelp/copingskills/>

- Mindfulness Exercises (Veterans Affairs)

<https://www.va.gov/salt-lake-city-health-care/programs/mindfulness-meditation-exercises/>

- Kid's Mindfulness Exercises

<https://positivepsychology.com/mindfulness-for-kids/>

Brain Diagram

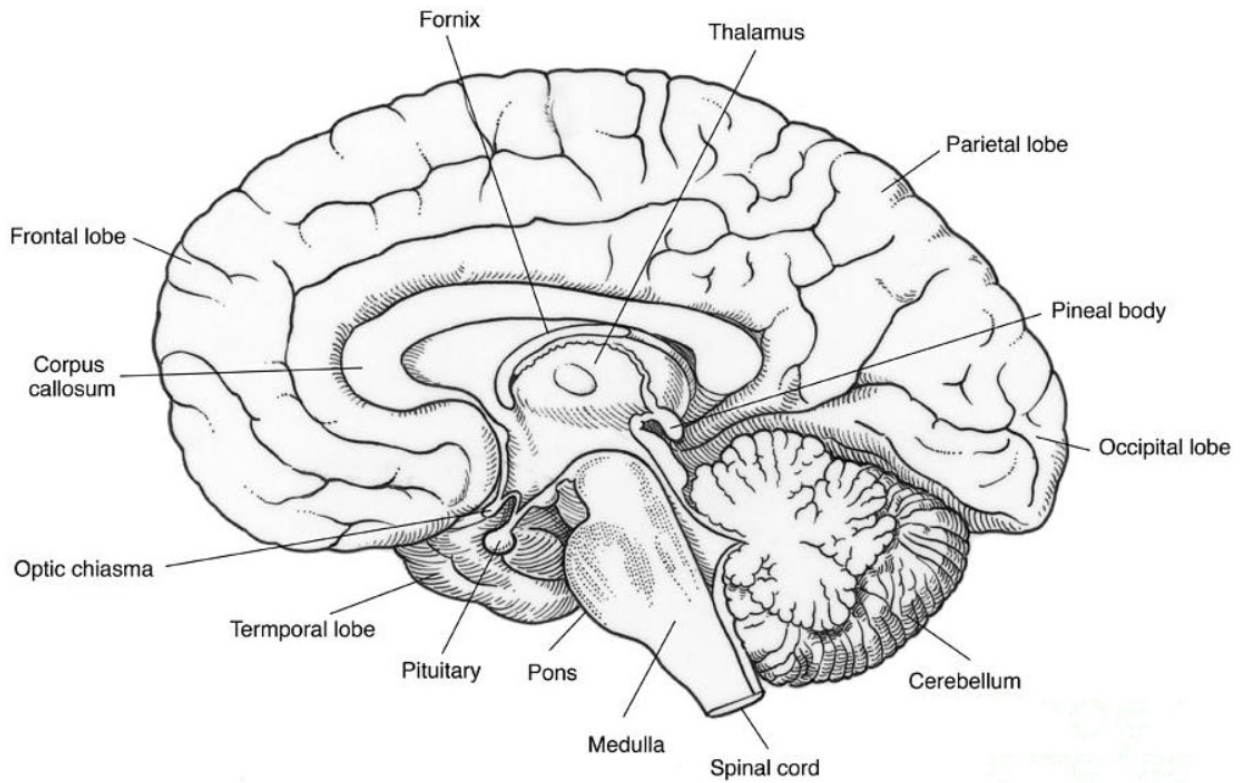
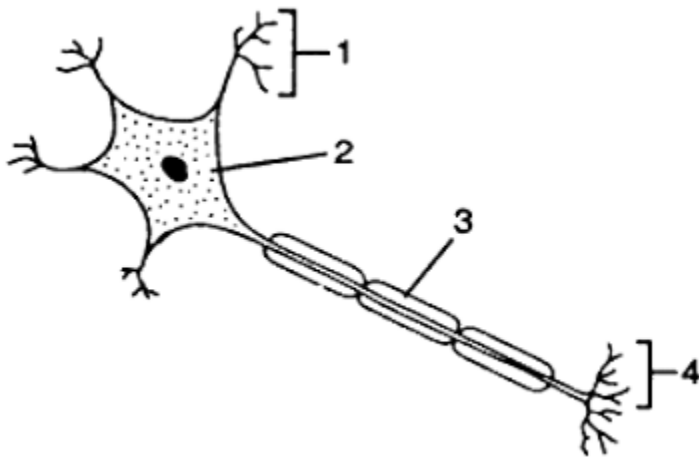


Image from Science Source

Neuron Diagram



1. Dendrite
2. Cell body/Soma
3. Axon
4. Terminal

From IBPF Mental Health Patch Program

Stigma Quiz

1. You can catch a mental illness from someone else. **False**
2. Mental illness is a medical illness, just like asthma or the flu. **True**
3. People with mental illnesses are not good people. **False**
4. Fifty percent of mental illnesses start showing symptoms by age 14. **True**
5. People with mental illnesses don't/can't have jobs. **False**
6. One-quarter of people will be diagnosed with a mental illness during their lifetime. **True**
7. People with mental illnesses can "snap out of it." **False**
8. All people with mental illnesses get treatment for their illnesses. **False**

Depression Looks Like...	Depression Feels Like...

Depression Looks Like Feels Like Activity Guide:

Read to the Girl Scouts the following emotions/actions and have them write under the column that it best represents.

- Overwhelming sadness (feels like)
- Avoiding friends and family members (looks like)
- Not eating enough or overeating (looks like)
- Upset stomach or stomach aches (feels like)
- Hopelessness (feels like)
- Not sleeping regularly (looks like)
- Low self-esteem (feels like)
- Aches and pains with no cause (feels like)
- Changes in weight (looks like)
- Low energy (feels like)
- Low interest in hobbies or doing things (feels like)
- Irritability (either)
- Lots of worry or fear (either)