

Do Now

The importance of community & support networks to mental health



Dana is usually a happy girl and has spent all afternoon chatting to friends on social media in her bedroom - so she doesn't understand why she feels so miserable and lonely.

Her mum keeps bugging her to come outside and help with a neighbourhood bring and buy sale.

No chance! Thinks Dana.

Discuss: Why would Dana feel miserable and lonely if she's chatted online to friends all afternoon?



Why do you think Dana's mum wants her to come outside and help with a community activity?

I think Dana's mum wants her to help because....

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Learning outcomes:

Describe the importance of support networks and real-life communities (as opposed to online communities) and how participation in community activity can aid positive mental health.

Community - a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic in common. A community can be online or off-line.

Support Network - a group of individuals who provide emotional, practical, and/or informational support to an individual.

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Why are we focusing on mental health, community and support networks today anyway? Well, there are many good reasons for this. Read the statements below and vote to see if you think they are true or false as a class.

We'll reveal the answers on the next slide.

1 in 5 children and young people aged 8 to 25 had a probable mental health disorder in 2023.

Only 38% of young people with mental health issues felt they could talk to a trusted adult about how they felt

Nearly 1 in 3 teenagers said they had not received any mental health support even though they had asked for it.

28% of 13–19-year-olds said they felt lonely "often" or "always"

Teenagers who feel a sense of belonging at school are 50% less likely to report symptoms of depression.

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Unfortunately, all of these statistics today are true.

This highlights the importance of us learning about and recognising the link between having support networks, talking about our feelings and fostering community relationships.

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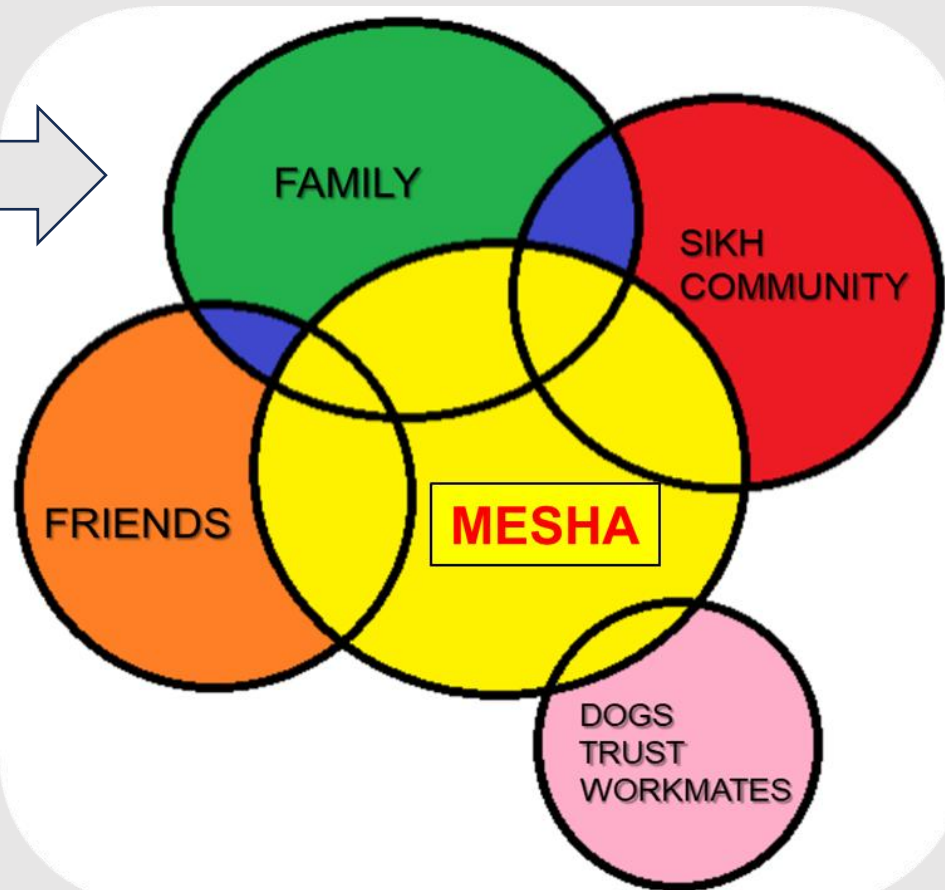
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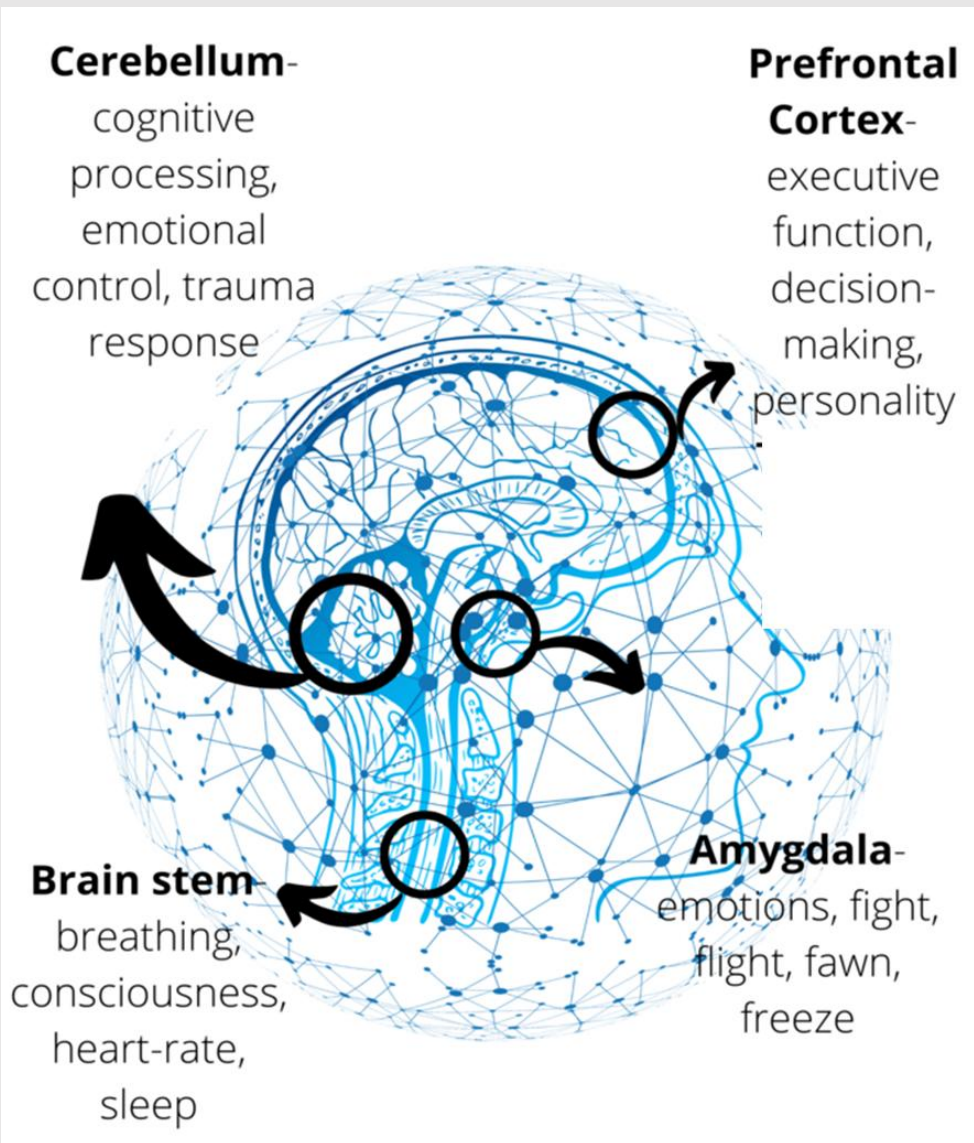
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When we talk about **community**, we just mean a group with something in common which we can be a part of. In today's starter, Dana's mum thought it might be helpful to her mental health to come outside and be part of a neighbourhood community event.

We are all part of at least one community. Some of our communities may overlap, as we see from the example below. Some of our communities may also act as **support networks**. (as seen in this clip - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rGXWr6dQHgs>)

Here is a Venn diagram of how a teenager called Mesha is a part of many communities. Some of Mesha's communities overlap (seen in blue). This is because some of the people in them belong in two of Mesha's community groups.





When we take a closer look at our marvellous brains, we can see how different areas influence emotions and behaviour. The mind can even influence our physical symptoms.

For example - if we are constantly stressed, it can affect our resting heart rate, our sleep , and even heightening our fight or flight response. So, if something startles you, your reaction may be more pronounced.

When it comes to health, the mind and body are connected. This is also why eating poorly can contribute to mental health symptoms too.

As we know, our brains are very complicated organs – and sometimes we don't recognise when our behaviours or our environment influences our feelings until it's too late. For example, if you eat junk food for lunch, you might feel great at first but then later feel tired and grumpy – but because you ate a couple of hours ago, you might not make the connection between what you ate and how you feel.

The same with exercise or socialising – the positive effects may be felt a little while after the event.

But what if you could feel the effects immediately?

DISCUSS: Would it change how you behave?



In today's next task we'll be visualising how our actions cause our minds to climb up towards positivity or slump down towards low mood



It's funny looking at that old photo of me you saw in the starter. That basically summed up my life though – if I wasn't at school, I was just sitting around indoors on my phone most of the time. I had no clue why I always felt so down – but it's pretty obvious to me now, I barely ever spent any time outside or socialising with people in real life!

The thing is, you don't realise what a huge difference getting outside, meeting new people and doing something purposeful actually makes until you try it. Did I join in with the neighbourhood bring and buy sale? I did in the end – in fact I help run them now, with the friends I made.

Discuss: Why do you think so many of us find it harder to go out, socialise and make real connections with people, rather than spending time on our phone, even though studies show it's making us miserable?

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Useful helplines and charities:

[Young Minds](#). Child and adolescent mental health charity for teens struggling with any subject. Call: 0808 802 5544

[Teen Line | Teens Support hotline - Connect, talk, get help!](#) Teen Line's highly trained teen listeners provide support, resources and hope to any teen who is struggling.

[SANE](#). National out-of hours mental health charity offering emotional support, guidance and information. Call: 0300 304 7000 (4.30pm to 10.30pm)

[Mental Health Foundation](#). Information and support for anyone with mental health problems or learning disabilities.



Need Support? You're Not Alone

If anything in today's lesson has affected you, or you want to talk to someone, there is help available.



Mental Health & Low Mood

YoungMinds – <https://www.youngminds.org.uk>

Kooth – <https://www.kooth.com>

Mind – <https://www.mind.org.uk>

Talk to Someone

Your Tutor or Head of Year – We're here to help.

Wellbeing Team and School Nurse

Report a Concern on Satchel

Safeguarding Team with the Purple lanyards

Healthy Lifestyle

NHS Every Mind Matters – <https://www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters>

Change4Life – <https://www.nhs.uk/change4life>

Apps That Can Help

Calm – For mindfulness and sleep.

Headspace – Meditation and stress relief.

Clear Fear – Manage anxiety (designed for young people)

MeeTwo – Anonymously talk to other teens, moderated by experts.

Eating Concerns

Beat Eating Disorders –

<https://www.beateatingdisorders.org.uk>

NHS Live Well – Eating Disorders –

<https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/conditions/eating-disorders/>