

Lesson Four: Overview and Background

Lesson Overview:

Now that students have a basic understanding of what mental illness is in its medical, popular, and historical contexts, they will begin to connect the idea of mental illness to their own lives. In this session, students will have a better understanding of the challenges of living with a mental illness through exposure to first-person accounts. We will also identify well-known people who have struggled with mental illness. We will begin to connect the idea of mental illness to students' lives by investigating the ways in which their lives have been affected by it. We will again revisit the idea of stigma by moving from seeing mental illness in the "other" to identifying it in the "us."

At the end of this lesson, students should...

- Gain understanding in to the struggles of people with mental illness, including fostering empathy.
- Be familiar with examples of well-known people with mental illness and think of examples of people with mental illness in their own lives.
- Recognize that mental illness occurs in all contexts and begin to revise preconceptions by identifying people with mental illness as "ordinary," "regular," "familiar," and successful."

Before you begin...

If you have decided to invite a guest speaker, you will need to contact your local mental health advocacy or service organization well in advance. You might ask them if they can bring material that is interactive.

What you need:

- Copies of any of the guest speaker's materials
- Copies of the first person account of psychosis
- Copies of the list of famous people with mental illness