

Opinion barometer exercise: Statements about mental wellbeing

Description

This exercise works as an orientation for the theme of mental wellbeing. The exercise introduces statements leading us to consider factors affecting young people's mental health, personal opinions and ways of making a difference.

Duration: 15 min. You can use more time for the exercise as well as the debrief.

Group size: Suitable for all group sizes.

Age recommendation: Secondary and upper secondary level.

How Are You Doing? is Taksvärkki's campaign in 2025–2026: www.taksvarkki.fi/kampanja2025/en/

Goal

- Orientating towards discussing mental wellbeing and related ways of making a difference.
- Perceiving the wide scope of the theme, including social and societal aspects.
- Forming and sharing opinions with the Opinion Barometer as well as in pairs, and participating in discussion if one so wishes.

Equipment

- Powerpoint-slideshow: [ppt-file](#), you can also find the file at www.taksvarkki.fi/kampanja2025/en/for-teachers/
- List of statements (below on pages 2–3)
- Ensure that the students have enough space to move across the room.
- If you wish, you can put up on the walls two papers saying “agree” and “disagree”

Instructions

Print out a list of statements if you want to read them from paper or choose extra statements.

Open the slideshow. Show and read out loud the instructions for the exercise. Ask the students to stand up. Show with your hand the direction of an imaginary line in the classroom. Standing right next to the wall means “completely agree” and standing by the opposite wall means “completely disagree”. You can stand wherever you want on the line based on whether you agree, disagree or something in between.

When the students have found their place, debrief the statements one at a time by discussing with the whole group. You can first ask the students to talk with the person next to them. Then anyone can raise their hand and say their opinion. Finally, thank everyone for sharing their perspectives. If you wish, you can ask how the students felt doing the exercise.

You can support the discussion in several ways according to the situation. You can thank the students for commenting and sharing. You can tell them if you think some perspective is good or new for you. You can listen to the answers and try to restate them in your own words. You can also refer to earlier statements if a good point of view came up afterwards.

Alternatives for facilitation:

- In case of a big group or lack of space, the exercise can be performed while standing in place and moving hands (hands up for agreement, hands down to the floor for disagreement) or by voting with thumbs.
- Facilities and weather permitting, the exercise can be performed in a hallway or outdoors.
- At the end of the exercise you and the students can also come up with statements that are not on the list.
- Remotely, the exercise can be performed on free platforms such as Flinga or Mentimeter.

List of statements

In 15 minutes, you have time to go through approximately four statements. The first four statements on the list have been chosen to ensure the exercise includes various perspectives: some deal with individual experiences and inequalities, some deal with society and services, and some with school and ways of making an impact.

- Strengthening your mental wellbeing is easy.
- Mental wellbeing is influenced by hardships in everyday life, such as living in poverty or

experiencing discrimination.

- I have an idea of how mental wellbeing could be promoted in my school.
- Every young person in my own circles can get help with mental wellbeing challenges.

More statements:

- Mental wellbeing is discussed enough.
- I know a reliable adult who I can talk to about mental wellbeing and feelings.
- Things happening on the other side of the world cause challenges for mental wellbeing.
- Politics is the most important way to promote mental wellbeing.
- I can think of an example of how I myself have contributed to mental wellbeing (for example with my own friends and family, in my municipality or on social media)
- In my municipality, decision-makers listen to young people when making decisions about matters related to mental wellbeing.

Exercise instructions for students (same as in the presentation)

Opinion barometer exercise: Statements about mental wellbeing

In this exercise you get to talk about your own perspectives. The exercise introduces statements about mental wellbeing. Some of them have been tested and developed together with Malawian youth groups.

- Soon you will hear some statements about mental wellbeing.
- There is an imaginary line across the room. Consider the statement on your own for a while. Then move on the line according to your opinion: agree, disagree or something in between.
- After the statement we will discuss.

Ideas for debriefing

I would rather be a shark than a worm.

- Practice exercise: Start with a light, funny statement and practise how to answer

Strengthening your mental wellbeing is easy.

- This statement is quite sharp. What makes strengthening your mental wellbeing easy or difficult?

- Experiences and feelings can be very different with different people. Strengthening your mental wellbeing is often not only about things such as positive thinking or wellbeing tips. Some people don't have support networks or easy access to healthcare services.

Mental wellbeing is influenced by hardships in everyday life, such as living in poverty or experiencing discrimination.

- There are various causes for poverty and discrimination. Hardships cause inequality and various negative impacts on wellbeing.
- In Malawi, for example, approximately half of the population lives below the poverty line. In this situation it is difficult to fulfill basic needs in life (such as sufficient nourishment, clothing and education). Wealth, however, does not directly indicate whether a person is happy or unhappy.

- For upper secondary level students, you can give more concrete examples, such as

- Poverty can be measured in absolute or relative terms.
- Globally, the poverty line is defined as living under three dollars (USD) per day.
- Many countries measure the percentage of people living under the national poverty line. A person is poor if their income is below 50 or 60 % of the median income of all households in the country.

I have an idea of how mental wellbeing could be promoted in my school.

- You can think: What can you promote by yourself? What can the school promote (curricula, action groups, teachers, other development)?
- Question: Would someone like to share their idea?

- If someone shares a good idea and voting seems like a safe idea, you can make an additional question:

- Do you think this idea would be good? If yes, raise your thumb up!

- When debriefing this and other statements, it is important to recognize that young people's mental wellbeing can be considered from two perspectives: concerns can be heard and recognized, and on the other hand problems can be solved with impactful actions. Interfering "only" with the concern of course does not solve problems, but it is often an important first step in terms of executive function and wellbeing. Young people need support on different levels: dealing with difficult emotions, understanding wellbeing, and making a difference (including peer support,

improving emotional skills, offering factual information, campaigns, impactful actions by individuals and the school...)

Every young person in my own circles can get help with mental wellbeing challenges.

- This statement is quite sharp and difficult. What kind of help does each person need and how much? Do you think that everyone can really ask for help and get it?
- Perhaps you noticed that the statements showed different kinds of perspectives: some dealt with individual experiences and inequality, some with society and services, and some with school and ways of making an impact.

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