

Animation script

Sasha: You can't tell how someone feels just by looking at them or what they share online.

To the outside world, our lives may look perfect even if in reality, they aren't....

I'm always worrying about doing well at school, and with end of year tests coming up, I'm not sure how much longer I can cope. My thoughts swarm around my brain, sometimes keeping me up all night.

Some days it's just all too much... and I feel like I'm lost in space.

When I did badly on one of my tests, I just about kept it together until I got home. Then I broke down crying in front of Mum.

She listened for a bit then she told me that just like physical health, we all have mental health. It's our feelings, our thinking, our emotions and our moods.

She then said that feeling down, angry and stressed is a normal part of life just like it's normal to feel happy, confident and carefree other times.

We all have positive and negative emotions that come and go based on what's happening around us. These are everyday feelings.

Good mental health means experiencing negative emotions - it's not about always being happy. Mum can relate to feeling stressed...

So...when mum suggested I take a break from everything and do something I enjoy, I actually took her advice...

So I made myself a hot chocolate, snuggled up in a duvet and watched a film.

And you know what? Afterwards I felt so much better. Mum should take her own advice!

André: Most of us only ever share the good things. – we don't like to share how we really feel.

Every morning when I wake up, negative thoughts stream through my head. Getting out of bed and pretending I'm ok takes all the energy I have.

As the day goes on, the negative thoughts turn from a stream into a river.

The water rushes through my head so loudly it's hard to concentrate in lessons and some days it's so bad it feels like a waterfall that's trying to pull me over the edge.

Everything is so overwhelming.

I didn't think my friends would understand if I told them how down I was feeling.

But when Sasha opened up to me about how stressed she was feeling... I told her.

I wasn't sure how to bring up how I'd been feeling, so I started by saying that I didn't feel like myself. Just her listening made me feel like she understood.

André: She told me some things that had helped her. So I tried them too but it didn't make much of a difference.

Even when I tried to be around my friends I felt alone. The things I used to enjoy weren't fun anymore.

Sasha: I was really worried about André and not sure what to do. He was quiet and wasn't hanging out with us like he used to.

So I asked our Head of Year for some advice. He suggested I get André to speak to him since his negative feelings weren't going away.

André: I didn't want to speak to our Head of Year, but I also didn't want to keep feeling so down...so I went.

He said that sometimes we have overwhelming feelings that can be more intense than our everyday feelings. These feelings hang around for a long time and change the way we feel, think, and behave.

They can stop us doing what we want to in life. That was what I was going through.

He also said that if we're physically unwell, we let people know, we ask for help.

It should be no different with mental health.

Sometimes our overwhelming feelings are brought on because of things in our life...sometimes they happen for no reason at all.

After hearing this, I felt much less alone and it felt good to talk.

Scientists have found exercise can help when you're feeling low. So our Head of Year encouraged me to sign up to the school football club, which Sasha was already in.

I still have days when the river is there but now I'm beginning to understand my mental health, I'm learning how to cope.

Our Head of Year reminded me that my friends, family, teachers and lots of others at school are there to help just as much as he is.

I had no idea the people around me could be so understanding. And while it's not always easy to talk about my mental health, the person I'm talking to might be able to help.

If you don't feel like talking, that's fine. You could try writing, sports, reading, art, music, playing with your pet – whatever makes you feel better.

Sasha: If you're the person someone talks to when they're struggling, just listen with no pressure or judgements. You don't have to have the answers. If you feel unsure about anything you can speak to a trusted adult.

Talking about mental health doesn't have to be difficult. After all, it's something we all have!