

Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM): Information for Parents and Carers

What is Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM)?

YAM is a mental health promotion programme that seeks to enhance young people's knowledge on mental health issues by providing a safe and non-judgmental space to explore topics such as stress, crisis and depression, self-help and sources of support. The curriculum is not fixed but is guided by the situations and experiences that are most relevant and interesting to the pupils. Young people are encouraged to engage in reflection, dialogue and role-play about everyday situations or difficulties they face, how their actions affect themselves and others, and how they can support their peers. Your child's class will participate in five YAM sessions over the course of five consecutive weeks.

How will YAM help my child?

YAM invites young people to reflect on their emotions and to consider different approaches when faced with life challenges or mental health concerns. Emphasis is placed on supporting peers who aren't doing well.

After taking part in YAM, young people can feel more confident in supporting a friend in need as well as using strategies they learned in YAM for difficult real-life situations. They learn to recognise the need for support as they encounter life challenges.

What will my child do in YAM?

Young people taking part are invited to role-play and discuss everyday challenging situations and topics that matter to them. Topics can range from relationships with peers and adults, changes in mood, to feeling sad or facing a stressful situation. As a group, pupils reflect on how they might feel if faced by such events and discuss how to handle challenging real-life situations. The focus is not on finding one-size-fits-all solutions; instead, everyone present works to understand different perspectives, the possible reasons for different actions, and what kinds of support might be needed in each situation.

Who is delivering YAM?

The Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families is an evidence-based children's mental health charity with over 60 years' experience of caring for young minds. The Centre has been commissioned by the Department for Education (DfE) to deliver and evaluate YAM in selected schools across England. Your school has been randomly selected to receive the YAM programme for groups of year 9 pupils.

YAM sessions are delivered by pairs of facilitators employed by the Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families. All professionals are fully DBS checked and have background training in mental health, psychology, youth work, education, therapy or counselling. What is discussed during YAM sessions will remain confidential unless our facilitators need to share information in order to keep a pupil safe from risk of serious harm.

Further information

If you have any concerns or questions about the programme, please speak to your child's teacher or a member of the school's senior leadership team.