VCE Psychology: Sample teaching plan

Sample Course Outline – VCE Psychology Unit 4: How is wellbeing developed and maintained?

**Note:** This is a sample guide only and indicates one way to present the content from the *VCE Psychology Study Design* over the weeks in each school term. Teachers are advised to consider their own contexts in developing learning activities: Which local fieldwork sites would support learning in the topic area? Which local issues lend themselves to debate and investigation? Which experiments can students complete within the resource limitations of their learning environments?

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| **Week** | **Area** | **Topics** | **Learning activities**  |
| 1 | **How do levels of consciousness affect mental processes and behaviour?** | **Nature of consciousness** (consciousness continuum; measurement of physiological responses; changes in psychological state; and levels of alertness; effects of sleep deprivation) | * role-play in groups to explain the differences between normal waking consciousness and altered states of consciousness
* visit a sleep laboratory to learn about how an EOG, an EMG and an EEG are used to measure states of consciousness
* discuss the appropriateness of different research designs that could be used to investigate the effects of stimulants and depressants on altered states of consciousness
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| 4 | **Importance of sleep** (sleep as an altered state of consciousness; circadian and ultradian rhythms; purpose and function of sleep; differences in sleep across the lifespan)  | * use an online program to show natural sleeping and waking pattern over 24 hours
* conduct an investigation into sleep patterns over the lifespan
* access and analyse global research data to compare sleep patterns
* undertake the Epworth sleepiness scale to consider improvements to quality and/or quantity of sleep
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| 6 | **Effects of sleep disturbances and possible treatments** (changes in sleep-wake cycles; effects of partial sleep deprivation; dyssomnias and parasomnias; sleep disorder interventions) | * interview a shift worker to identify coping mechanisms and strategies
* design and test a regime to improve sleep health
* report on a selected sleep disorder
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| 9 | **What influences mental wellbeing?** | **Defining mental health** (mental health continuum; characteristics of a mentally healthy person; ethical implications of mental health study and research) | * discuss whether nature is more, less or equally important as nurture in the development of mental health in terms of a mental health continuum
* design and conduct a survey to determine whether people from larger families or a wider/closer circle of friends are more likely to classify themselves as ‘mentally healthy’
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| 11 | **Factors that contribute to the development and progression of mental health disorders** (precipitating, predisposing and perpetuating risk factors; protective factors; influence of biological, psychological and social risk factors; cumulative risk) | * design and undertake an investigation to determine whether owning a pet can be a protective factor in alleviating stress or improving mood
* create a ‘mental wellness’ poster
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| 14 | **Application of a biopsychosocial approach, as a scientific model, to explain phobia** (distinction between stress, phobia and anxiety; contributing factors to the development of specific phobia; evidence-based interventions for the treatment of specific phobia) | * analyse a case study of specific phobia
* design and conduct an investigation using a survey to determine whether males or females are more prone to anxieties and/or phobias
* invent a phobia; suggest possible contributing biological, psychological and social factors in the development and perpetration of the phobia; propose possible interventions for the management of the phobia
* develop a set of ‘handy hints’ for mothers planning to take children who have a fear of Santa Claus to visit a Santa Claus at a local shopping centre or community function
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| 16 | **Maintenance of mental health** (resilience; transtheoretical model of behaviour change) | * formulate a hypothesis and design an experiment to test whether chewing gum decreases stress
* evaluate and discuss examples of school behavioural expectations or workplace mental health management principles in terms of protective factors and resilience
* apply the transtheoretical model of behaviour change to a personal scenario such as exercise or study habits
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| 18 | **Unit revision** |
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