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# Teacher's Guide

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to the Magnificent Mei  
and Friends Comic Series



The *Magnificent Mei and Friends Comic Series* and accompanying *Teacher's Guide* were developed as part of the Helping Adolescents Thrive package, initiated by the WHO Departments of Mental Health and Substance Use and of Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Aging, and the Maternal Newborn Adolescent Health Unit, Health Section, UNICEF.

**Development Team:**

Joanna Lai, Health Section, UNICEF; Sarah Watts, Australia; Tanvi Jain, Health Section, UNICEF; Batool Fatima, WHO Department of Mental Health and Substance Use; Chiara Servili, WHO Department of Mental Health and Substance Use; Tarun Dua, WHO Department of Mental Health and Substance Use.

**Comic Illustrator:** Aizat Zhunusova

**Collaborators:**

Bhawana Shrestha, My Emotions Matter, Nepal; Gunjan Dhonju, Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Unit, Kanti Children's Hospital, Nepal; Jackie Stewart, Stellenbosch University, South Africa; Mohammed Amin Zurak, University of Ghana Medical Centre; Sagar Satyal, My Emotions Matter, Nepal; Sagun Ballav Pant, Department of Psychiatry and Mental Health, Institute of Medicine, Tribhuvan University, Nepal; Sarah Skeen, Stellenbosch University, South Africa.

**Reviewers:**

Aiysha Malik, WHO; Alejandra Trossero, UNICEF LACRO; Aigul Kadirova, UNICEF Kazakhstan; Andria Spyridou UNICEF LACRO, Emilia Numer, UNICEF LACRO; Ghanshyam Kandel, UNICEF Nepal; Kendra Gregson, UNICEF LACRO; Marcy Levy, UNICEF HQ; Kenneth Russell, UNICEF HQ; Bassem Nasir, UNICEF HQ; Patricia Landinez, UNICEF HQ; Matias Irarrazaval, Director of Mental Health, Ministry of Health Chile; Vania Alves, UNICEF Indonesia.

The document was edited by Jacquelyn Lazo and designed by Paolo Ciampagna.

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**Contact**

Joanna Lai — [jlai@unicef.org](mailto:jlai@unicef.org)

Chiara Servili — [servilic@who.int](mailto:servilic@who.int)

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# Note to teachers

Teachers are among the most influential people in adolescents' lives, with enormous potential to make a positive contribution to promoting and protecting adolescent mental health. Mental health conditions are among the leading causes of illness and disability for this age group, with suicide the fourth-top cause of death in people aged 15-19 years old. Given that half of all mental health conditions start before the age of 14 years, early adolescence represents a crucial time to intervene and prevent the onset of mental health conditions and promote positive mental health.

Teachers are uniquely placed to help students strengthen their social and emotional skills, and to assist them in learning about and caring for their mental health and well-being. These skills, combined with academic knowledge, will help adolescents more effectively navigate school, their relationships, their communities, and other occupations throughout their lives.

As the transition between childhood and adulthood, the adolescent years represent a window of opportunity for helping young people to recognize and manage difficult feelings, solve problems effectively, maintain healthy relationships, communicate needs and desires and make decisions that contribute to their well-being.

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) are committed to partnering with teachers to ensure that adolescents have the skills and support they need to thrive in all areas of their lives. The ***Magnificent Me and Friends Comic Series*** and accompanying ***Teacher's Guide*** are components of the materials developed under the ***WHO-UNICEF Helping Adolescents Thrive Initiative***, aimed at promoting and protecting adolescent mental health.

Both of us aspire to a world where all adolescents have a sense of well-being, believe in their abilities and are able to reach their full potential. We thank you for your support in helping make this a reality.



**Henrietta Fore**  
Executive Director of UNICEF



**Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**  
Director-General of the World Health Organization

# Overview

## Purpose

UNICEF and the WHO created the Magnificent Mei comic series and the accompanying Teacher's Guide to support social and emotional learning among adolescents. By promoting social and emotional learning and skills practice, the comic series and guide (which contains classroom activities) aim to help promote psychosocial well-being, prevent mental health conditions, and reduce risky behaviours in adolescents.

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**“Social and emotional learning is the process through which all people acquire and apply the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to manage emotions, develop healthy identities, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain supportive relationships, and make healthy decisions.”<sup>1</sup>**

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**Social and emotional learning is especially critical for the positive development, well-being, and educational outcomes of adolescents.**



Under the WHO-UNICEF Helping Adolescents Thrive (HAT) initiative, we tailored these open-access resources for use among adolescents aged 10–14 years to strengthen mental health promotive and prevention interventions.

**For more information about the HAT guidelines, visit the website or click on the QR code below.<sup>2</sup>**



- 1 Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 'SEL is...'; Chicago, Illinois, <<https://casel.org/what-is-sel>>, accessed 16 March 2021.
- 2 Guidelines on mental health promotive and preventive interventions for adolescents: helping adolescents thrive. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2020 <<https://apps.who.int/iris/handle/10665/336864>>, accessed 16 March 2021.

## About this resource

We developed the **Teacher's Guide** for use by professionals in educational settings who work with adolescents aged 10-14 years, including teachers, school counsellors, and mental health professionals, such as psychologists, occupational therapists, and social workers. We designed the guide to be reviewed independently or in a small group setting with other educational professionals.

### Part 1

#### Key concepts (sections 1-3)

This section includes background information on mental health and well-being related to the general population and more specifically to adolescents.

### Part 2

#### Essentials for teachers (sections 4-7)

This section reviews essential information on how to talk about and support adolescent mental health. We cover many topics, including communicating with adolescents, the teacher-adolescent relationship, teacher well-being, and how to help students who need additional mental health support.

### Part 3

#### Lesson plans (sections 8-10)

This section includes short lesson plans and classroom activities for teachers to use with the comic series.

There is self-guided reading and reflection exercises in the first two parts of the guide. This is provided to help you to prepare to effectively guide your students through the short lesson plans, including classroom activities accompanying the **Magnificent Mei and Friends series**. In part 3, you will find content you can use to engage your students.

We created the **Magnificent Mei and Friends series** for young adolescents aged 10-14 years. Through a combination of images and text, comics can engage and shape students' attitudes by promoting empathy and critical thinking.<sup>3</sup> As a form of storytelling, these comics present real-life scenarios and situations young adolescents may face in their everyday lives, making the content relatable and relevant. Seeing comparable experiences through fictional characters' eyes can help validate their experiences and let them know they are not alone.<sup>4</sup> Combined with classroom-based activities and lessons,

### **What the Teacher's Guide is not:**

This resource is not a form of psychological care or treatment for a mental health condition. If you become aware of any of the following needs or circumstances, please consult a specialist promptly and ensure that the adolescent is referred to appropriate mental health and/or social care services:

- An adolescent who has a plan to end their life soon
- An adolescent who is struggling with an existing mental health or substance use condition
- If any protection needs arise – including sexual harassment, abuse, maltreatment, or exploitation

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