

SUPPORTING CHILDREN'S MENTAL WELLNESS: TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

Educators can encourage mental wellness and promote social, emotional, and academic success. Good mental health is not simply the absence of illness, but also includes skills necessary to cope with life's challenges.

RECOGNIZE AND RESPOND TO CONCERNS:

ENSURE ACCESS TO SCHOOL-BASED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

School psychologists, counselors, and social workers can provide a continuum of mental health services for students that includes universal mental wellness promotion, behavior supports for staff, identification, assessment and intervention, crisis intervention, and referral for community services.



KNOW RISK FACTORS AND SYMPTOMS

- Know the signs of severe mental health issues and how to get help. Symptoms of serious problems such as depression or suicide risk can include: a change in habits, withdrawal, decreased social and academic functioning, unusual or changed behavior, increased physical complaints.
- Contact a counselor or school psychologist if symptoms become more intense or frequent, do not improve with interventions, are beyond the student's control, interfere with the student's learning or social functioning, or present a danger to the student or others.



ESTABLISH A CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM

Being prepared to respond to a crisis is important to safeguarding students' physical and mental well-being.

- School crisis teams should include administrators, security personnel, and mental health professionals who collaborate with community members and professionals.
- In addition to safety, the team can provide mental health prevention, intervention, and postvention services.



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ENCOURAGE MENTAL WELLNESS:



CREATE A SENSE OF BELONGING

Feeling Connected and Welcomed

- Include activities that build strong, positive relationships among students and staff.
- Build positive relationships with caregivers through frequent communication.



PROMOTE RESILIENCE

The Ability to Bounce Back From Adversity

- Encourage children to see the big picture and try again with a new strategy.
- Help them to adapt to change by keeping them informed and involved in planning.



DEVELOP SKILLS

Accomplishment Comes From Our Own Actions

- Help children set goals, identify strategies, and evaluate the results.
- Teach them coping strategies in both academics and social functioning.



ENSURE A POSITIVE, SAFE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

Feeling Physically and Emotionally Safe

- Promote respect, inclusion, tolerance, and kindness for all; prevent negative behaviors such as bullying and harassment.
- Ensure students are connected to at least one trusted adult; teach them to work with peers to support each other and celebrate acts of kindness.



RECOGNIZE POSITIVE BEHAVIORS AND DECISION-MAKING

Recognition Through Positive Feedback

- Recognize good decision making, problem solving, self-control, and conflict resolution.
- Notice them being successful and acknowledge their efforts daily.



ENCOURAGE HELPING OTHERS

Children Can Make a Difference

- Assist children to help others and build self-esteem.
- Help children get involved so they can make a difference in their communities.



FOSTER GOOD PHYSICAL HEALTH

Good Physical Health Supports Good Mental Health

- Healthy eating and adequate sleep can protect against stress.
- Regular exercise can decrease anxiety, anger, and depression.