CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY | Attallah College of Educational Studies

FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Mental Health Toolkit

WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

Mental health includes our emotions, mind, and relationships with others. It's displayed in how **WE THINK, FEEL, AND ACT.**

It helps us determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important in every stage of life; from child, to teen, all the way through becoming an adult [1]. Mental health problems are common, but not everyone is diagnosed with a mental illness [2].

YOU CAN EXPERIENCE CHALLENGES IN UNIQUE WAYS.

Some have trouble doing things they like or need to do because of how they feel--like going to school, work or hanging out with friends; some may be feeling down or upset for long periods of time [3].

Remember that everyone goes through tough times, and no matter how long it's been occupying your mind, it's important to talk to someone about it like your parents/guardian, counselors, or family doctor.

Click here for video!

Resources to Improve Mental Health:

- Video on how we can **Break the Stigma** on mental health.
- Manage your thoughts! Watch "**You are not your thoughts**".
- Let go of Stress. Watch **Mindfulness Exercise by Headspace**.
- The **Buddy Project** is Non-profit aiming to prevent suicide.
- **Follow on Instagram, Facebook, & Twitter:** @letstalkeaboutmentalhealth, @project1in4, @buddyproject, @breakyostigma.

If you or someone you know has a mental illness or has concerns about their mental health, there are ways to find help and guidance[4]. **For immediate help in a crisis you can contact:**

- Call 911 if you or someone you know is in immediate danger or go to the nearest emergency room.

- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
- Crisis Text Line
- Disaster Distress Helpline

[1] Mental Health. (2020). What is mental Health. Retrieved from https://www.mentalhealth.gov/basics/what-is-mental-health
[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2018). Learn About Mental Health. Retrieved from https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/learn/index.htm
[3] Mental Health. (2020). Talk About Mental Health. Retrieved from https://www.mentalhealth.gov/talk
[4] National Institution of Mental Health. (2020). Help for Mental Health. Retrieved from https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/find-help/index.shtml

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

Positive psychology is the scientific study of what makes life most worth living [1]. Simply put, positive psychology is the study of happiness. This relatively new branch of psychology studies human thoughts, feelings, and behavior, with a focus on strengths instead of weaknesses, and building the good in life instead of repairing the bad [1].

You may have an idea of what a traditional psychologist does in a therapy session. A traditional therapy session most likely consists of you being asked personal questions by a therapist, the therapist provides his advice on what is wrong with you, and the therapist works with you and your family to fix the problem. This is where positive psychology differs from traditional psychology. Positive psychology tends to focus on what is right in your life rather than try to fix what is wrong. There are also many positive psychology exercises you can practice at home, by yourself or with an adult.
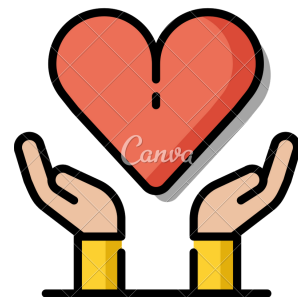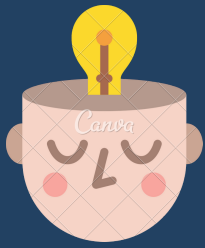
LET'S PRACTICE SOME POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY EXERCISES!

Gratitude Journal:
Write down three things that you are grateful for a couple times a week. At the end of the week review with an adult and reflect on the positive things that are present in your life.

Random Acts of Kindness:
Perform one act of kindness for someone else on a given day and write these actions down in a journal. At the end of the week, reflect on how others reacted to your act of kindness and how it made you feel. You can also talk about this with a trusted adult such as a parent, teacher, or a coach.

[1] Peterson, C. (2008, May 16). What Is Positive Psychology, and What Is It Not? Retrieved November 20, 2020, from https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/the-good-life/200805/what-is-positive-psychology-and-what-is-it-not

The Strengths List:
We all have our own unique and personal strengths! Create a list that highlights your strengths. Your strengths can start with phrases like: "I think I am really good at...", "Others think I am great at...", "I really admire myself for..."

The Goal Chart:
Create a chart that lists your short-term and long-term goals. These goals don't have to be difficult to obtain but they can be. Keeping track of your goals and providing an opportunity to check off goals when they are met can lead to satisfaction and can contribute to overall happiness.

WELLNESS

When we hear the term wellness, our minds may automatically jump to thoughts of exercise and nutrition, but wellness includes more than just those aspects of a person's health. Wellness includes our overall state of well-being and although this includes nutrition and physical activity, this also includes other dimensions of health. In fact, Wellness is a multidimensional topic that can include the following dimensions of health [2]:

Physical Health
Includes previously mentioned topics such as moving our bodies (exercise) every day and eating well-balanced meals (nutrition) as often as possible. Maintaining a healthy amount of sleep every night and understanding how to manage stress are also equally important. Parents and other caregivers can help us maintain our physical health by ensuring that we receive medical and dental care when needed [2].
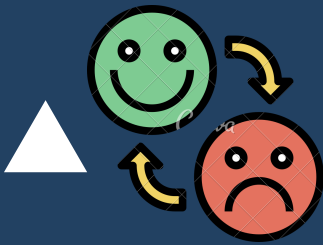
Mental Health
This involves how we think, feel, and act. It includes our psychological, social, and emotional well-being. This dimensions of health is equally important for children, adolescents, and adults. This health is especially important because it helps us respond to stress, relate to others, and live healthier and happier lives [2].

Spiritual Health
While this will look different from person to person, typically this refers to a person's sense of overall purpose in life. Some people find their purpose through a belief or faith system and others create their own sense of purpose. Regardless of where this purpose comes from, many people find having a sense of purpose helps them to overcome life's adversity and provides them a unique perspective on life [2].

[2] What is Wellness? (2019, May 14). Retrieved November 20, 2020, from https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/

Emotional Health

This is highly interconnected with other dimensions of health such as mental health and social health, but it simply refers to one's ability to be aware of and accepting of their own emotional state. Beside having this awareness of one's own feelings, this health also includes one's ability to express and communicate their emotions in a healthy and respectful way [2].

Environmental Health

Our environment (community, school, home, etc) can greatly influence all the other dimensions of health such as one's physical health and mental health. A healthy environment means that it is free of anything that may present itself as a danger to our well-being [2].
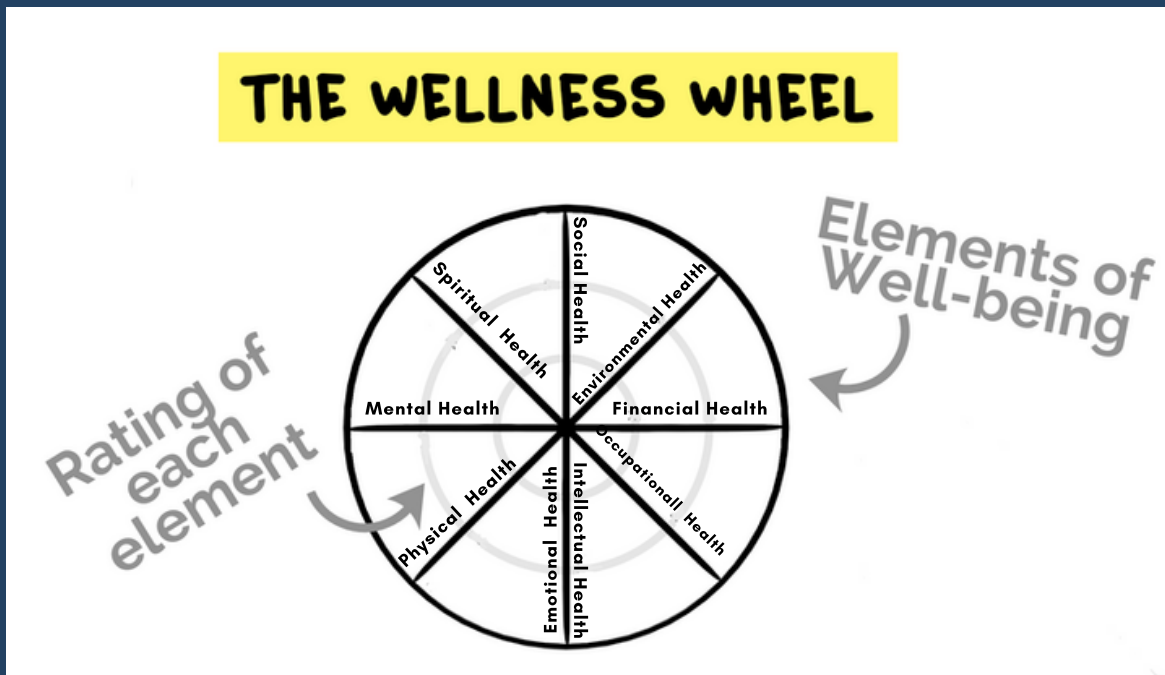
Social Health

Refers to our ability to make and maintain meaningful relationships with others. Having this strong social network with friends, family, school staff, and others serves as an important system of support when we are faced with adversity in life. This social network can include friends, family, school staff, coaches, and many other supportive people in our lives [2].

As you can see, there are many dimensions of health that are included in one's overall state of well-being. Each dimension of health is connected to each other in a unique way. For us to be as healthy, happy, and successful students as possible, we have to regularly be aware of our overall state of wellness. This awareness is important because all these dimensions of well-being affect one another and in turn affect how we feel, think, and act [2].

Find out where your state of wellness is by creating your own wellness wheel [3].

THE WELLNESS WHEEL

Elements of Well-being

Rating of each element

Social Health · Spiritual Health · Environmental Health · Mental Health · Financial Health · Occupational Health · Physical Health · Emotional Health · Intellectual Health

[2] What is Wellness? (2019, May 14). Retrieved November 20, 2020, from https://globalwellnessinstitute.org/what-is-wellness/
[3] J. (2018, October). My Wellness Wheel Activity. Retrieved 2020, from https://www.projectschoolwellness.com/wellness-basics-the-wellness-wheel/

The Wellness Wheel Model represents our overall state of well-being. Within this wheel, there are separate slices and each slice represents a different dimension of health. The more balanced we are in each area of health, the easier it is for the wheel to roll (thriving). If the wheel is unbalanced, then the wheel becomes dysfunctional (surviving) [3].

Thriving

Surviving

Try to identify your overall state of well-being by rating each dimension of health. To do this, shade in each slice to the appropriate line that best matches your current level of health.

- The small ring represents a low level of health

- The medium ring represents a medium level of health

- The outer ring represents a high level of health

This activity helps us take a pause in our lives and take a closer look at where we might need support from trusted adults in our lives to improve these areas of health. Some of us may find that we may need a lot of help in certain areas or all areas. And some of us may find that we may not need as much help as others and that is perfectly okay, but remember that wellness is an ongoing process and practice for all of us. You may also find that there may be times in your life where you especially need extra help and support from trusted adults and that is also okay.

[3] J. (2018, October). My Wellness Wheel Activity. Retrieved 2020, from https://www.projectschoolwellness.com/wellness-basics-the-wellness-wheel/

COMMON DIAGNOSES

Once in a while, you may experience feelings like fear or worry. It's normal to have these feelings sometimes. If you notice that these kinds of feelings are interfering with your ability to function at school or home, or that they make it difficult for you to take part in your regular activities, then it's important to talk to an adult that you trust about it. Let's take a closer look at some common mental health conditions and concerns that commonly affect children and adolescents. These conditions can affect how students learn, behave, or handle their emotions [1]. They can make it difficult for students to get through the day.

Anxiety [2,3]

Everyone feels worried or afraid sometimes. But, when those worries and fears become constant and get in the way of activities at home, school, or with friends, it might mean you have anxiety. There are many different types of anxiety disorders, and anxiety can look different in children and adults. Anxiety can look like:

- Being worried about the future or about bad things happening
- Having trouble focusing or answering questions in class
- Not turning in homework or worrying about tests, presentations, or group work
- Going to the nurse a lot because of problems like stomach aches, headaches, dizziness, or feeling like you can't breathe
- Wanting to stay home from school
- Feeling irritable or angry
- Being worried when you're away from parents or caregivers

Check-In: What does worry look like for you?

Circle your worries in the lists below:

| Family	Friends	School	Other
Arguments or fights	Fitting in	Grades	Getting hurt
Upsetting family	Making friends	Presentations	Money
Family's safety	Being teased	Homework or tests	Appearance
Getting in trouble	What to talk about	Following the rules	

COMMON DIAGNOSES

Depression [2]

It's normal to feel sad sometimes. However, if you start to find that you no longer take pleasure in many of the activities that you used to enjoy, or that you are filled with feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, then you may be suffering from depression. The following are also signs that you may be depressed:

- Sleeping a lot more or a lot less than usual
- Often feeling very tired, sluggish, or restless
- Having difficulty focusing
- Experiencing feelings of worthlessness or guilt
- Engaging in self-injurious behavior
- Thoughts of suicide
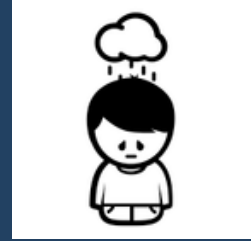
How Are You Coping?

When we struggle with conditions like anxiety and depression we naturally look for ways to cope with these challenges. Sometimes we lean towards unhealthy coping strategies such as alcohol or drug use in an attempt to manage our negative thoughts [4]. These coping mechanisms feel good in the moment, but can lead to addiction problems, as well as a host of other negative long-term consequences [5]. Developing healthy coping mechanisms can be an important part of sustained recovery from any mental health condition. Healthy coping strategies include exercise, relaxation techniques, and seeking social support [4]. Your school mental health expert can provide you with more guidance on how to cultivate health coping strategies.

IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING SUICIDAL THOUGHTS OR EMOTIONAL DISTRESS HELP IS AVAILABLE. CALL THE NATIONAL SUICIDE PREVENTION LIFELINE AT 800-273-TALK (8255).
SUBSTANCE ABUSE TREATMENT SUPPORT IS AVAILABLE AT 1-877-SAMHSA7 (1-877-726-4727).

COMMON DIAGNOSES

Eating Disorders [6]

It is normal to worry about your appearance sometimes. But, when that worry is constant and leads to unhealthy and secret eating habits, it might mean you have an eating disorder. There are different types of eating disorders. Here are some of the signs:

- Counting calories
- Skipping meals
- Not wanting to eat around friends or family
- Spending many hours exercising
- Going to the bathroom after meals or spending a lot of time in the bathroom
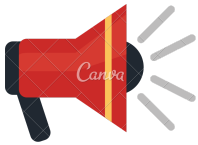
If you or a loved one are struggling with an eating disorder, CALL or TEXT the National Eating Disorders Association (NEDA) hotline: (800) 931-2237

Post-traumatic Stress Disorder [7]

You may see or hear about a traumatic or stressful event that happened to you or a close family member or friend. These kinds of events include car accidents, natural disasters, acts of violence, or the death of a family member. While many children recover from these events, if you are still struggling after one month you may have PTSD. You may notice:

- Flashbacks, or re-experiencing the event
- Trying to avoid things that remind you of the trauma
- Having nightmares
- Difficulty sleeping
- Having changes in mood, like being more irritable than usual
- Being easily startled

Grounding techniques can be used during a traumatic flashback to help you focus on your present surroundings and help you feel safer and calmer. The 5, 4, 3, 2, 1 technique is one you can use anywhere!

| Name 5 things you can see around you | Name 4 things you can touch around you | Name 3 things you can hear around you | Name 2 things you can smell around you | Name 1 thing you can taste |

COMMON DIAGNOSES

Behavioral Disorders

From time to time we all disagree and get into arguments with the people in our lives. It's a healthy part of development. However, if you find that anger and irritability have become the norm for you, then you may be suffering from a behavioral disorder [8]. Other signs of this type of disorder include easily losing your temper and having a hard time following rules put in place by the adults in your life.

Do you have a hard time staying focused and paying attention in class? Do you find yourself becoming easily distracted while working on an assignment? If so, you may be suffering from **Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)** [9]. ADHD can make it very challenging for students to finish assignments and stay organized.

Some youth have unwanted thoughts and urges to perform certain actions over and over again. These thoughts and actions may occur often, consume a lot of time and interfere with daily activities. This condition is known as **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)** [10]. An example of an obsessive or compulsive behavior is checking the same thing over and over again, such as making sure that a door is locked. Having to think or say the same words repeatedly is another example of OCD. If you are suffering from OCD, you probably find it hard to ignore your obsessive thoughts and compulsive urges, which can be very upsetting and frustrating.

If you are struggling with any of these conditions, your school mental health provider can support you to build skills that will allow you to manage these challenges.

If you think that you may be suffering from any of these conditions, know that you're not alone. Up to 1 in 5 children and adolescents experience a mental health disorder [1]. It's not your fault and it can develop as a result of a lot of complicated reasons that we're just beginning to understand [11]. Talking to a trusted adult or friend is the first step to getting the help that you need to treat a mental health condition. The sooner you reach out for help the sooner you can begin working towards mental wellness and recovery.

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020, March 30). *What are Childhood Mental Disorders?*. https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/basics.html

[2] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020, March 30). *Anxiety and Depression in Children.* https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/depression.html#depression

[3] Child Mind Institute. (n.d.). *School Anxiety in the Classroom.* https://childmind.org/article/classroom-anxiety-in-children/

[4] Therapist Aid. (2018). Healthy vs. Unhealthy Coping Strategies. https://www.therapistaid.com/worksheets/healthy-unhealthy-coping-strategies.pdf

[5] Child Mind Institute. (n.d.). Mental Health Disorders and Substance Use. https://childmind.org/article/mental-health-disorders-and-substance-use/

[6] Child Mind Institute. (n.d.). When to Worry about an Eating Disorder. https://childmind.org/article/when-to-worry-about-an-eating-disorder/

[7] Child Mind Institute. (n.d.). *What is PTSD?.* https://childmind.org/article/what-is-ptsd/

[8] Child Mind Institute. (n.d.). What is Oppositional Defiant Disorder?. https://childmind.org/article/what-is-odd-oppositional-defiant-disorder/

National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH). (2018, March). *Autism Spectrum Disorder.* https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/autism-spectrum-disorders-asd/index.shtml

[9] Association for Children's Mental Health. (n.d.). Common Mental Health Diagnosis in Children and Youth. http://www.acmh-mi.org/get-information/childrens-mental-health-101/common-diagnosis/

[10] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). (2020, March 30). Obsessive Compulsive Disorders in Children. https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/ocd.html

[11] National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI). (n.d.). *Teens and Young Adults.* https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Teens-Young-Adults

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Importance of Understanding Cultural Diversity

Your cultural background and upbringing can have wide ranging impacts on your worldviews, and can also affect the way you think about your mental health and possible symptoms. Cultural differences can influence what types of treatments, supports, and coping mechanisms work for you. Awareness of these differences is crucial to provide appropriate mental health care to each individual [1].

Cultural Barriers to Mental Health Care [2]

You may experience some cultural barriers that make it more difficult for you to receive mental health care such as:

- Distrust and fear of treatment
- Different perceptions of illness and health
- Language barriers and ineffective communication
- Access barriers (e.g., poor insurance coverage)
- Lack of diversity in the mental health staff

Don't worry there are some steps you and your school can take!

Mental Health Differences Across Cultures [2]

Some Asian groups have demonstrated a preference to avoid expressing personal distress

Minorities tend to have more chronic physical illnesses

Racial and ethnic minorities are less likely than whites to seek treatment

Some African American groups have demonstrated a preference for dealing with their personal problems and distresses on their own

Minorities may often feel distrust towards the mental health system

[1] National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI). Identity and Cultural Dimensions.https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Identity-and-Cultural-Dimensions
[2] The Public Health Advocate, Berkeley Public Health. (2017, April 16). Cultural Influence on Mental Health.https://pha.berkeley.edu/2017/04/16/cultural-influences-on-mental-health/

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

How Can Your Culture Influence Your Mental Health? [3]

Shame and stigma around mental illness
How you seek help
How you view and cope with mental illness
Communication and language
Experience of symptoms

Stop and Think...

In what way(s) has your culture had an impact on how you handle your mental health?

Help Your Mental Health Professional Understand Your Culture [3]

You can talk to them about:

The language you speak at home and school

Your cultural values and religious beliefs

Ways your parents reward and discipline you

Obstacles that limit access to mental health care

Ask Yourself...

What do I know about my family and what have my experiences been?

What Can Your Mental Health Professional Do? [3]

Provide translation and interpretation services

Hire diverse staff that represent you

Recognize unfair thoughts they may have about your culture

Provide support and information to school staff and your parents

[3] American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2020). Diversity and Culture in Child Mental Health Care. Retrieved from https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Diversity_and_Culture_in_Child_Mental_Health_Care-118.aspx

How a person's body feels can provide them with a lot of insight and clues into their overall state of well-being. When a person's body experiences physical symptoms like a runny nose or a cough, these symptoms act like a huge red flag that something is wrong. These physical symptoms are the body's way of telling that person that something is wrong and that they may have a flu or another physical illness. Typically, whenever a person experiences any of these physical symptoms, it is a reminder that they should go to a doctor who can give them medicine for their illness.

Just as the body creates these physical symptoms that act as red flags to let that person know their physical health needs help, our mental health works in a similar way! Sometimes we may feel, think, or behave a certain way and this can act as a red flag that our mental health needs some help.

Although there are many red flags that a person may notice, here are some red flags that can let a person know that it may be time to get help from a trusted adult, counselor, or other mental health professionals [1]:
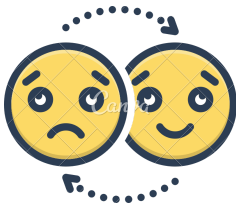
Excessive fear or worrying

Feeling excessively sad or low

Experiencing trouble concentrating, thinking, or learning

Extreme mood changes

Feeling irritable or angry for longer than usual

Dramatic changes in eating habits (ex: increased hunger, lack of appetite)

Dramatic changes in sleeping habits

Having thoughts of suicide or self-harm

Feeling excessive tired or low energy

[1] "Warning Signs and Symptoms." NAMI, www.nami.org/About-Mental-Illness/Warning-Signs-and-Symptoms.

School life, family life, and one's own social life can all be very rewarding but challenging aspects of a student's life. Some students may look at this list of red flags and be able to easily identify several of these red flags occurring in their lives. For some students, there are certain aspects of their life that can make it easier to experience these issues. These certain life aspects are called risk factors. Risk factors increase the chance of mental health issues. It is important to know that risk factors don't guarantee mental illness, but they do increase the likelihood of experiencing mental health problems.
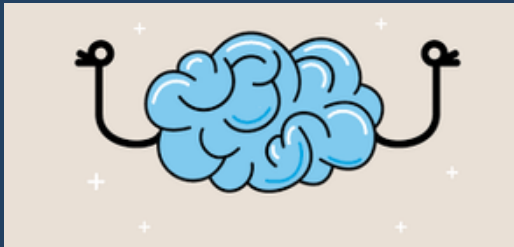
RISK FACTORS

There are lots of factors that determine the outcomes of mental health. Some of the risk factors include:
- **Genetics** – It is important to know your family's history of mental illness. A family history of mental illness may increase your risk for developing a mental illness.
- **Stress** – Factors that can contribute to stress during adolescence include peer pressure, exploring sexual identity, and increased access to and use of technology [2].
- **Trauma** – Traumatic events such as physical, emotional or sexual abuse, neglect, witnessing or being the victim of violence, or surviving a natural disaster can all negatively impact your mental health [3].
- **Identity issues** – Adolescents who are questioning their gender identity or sexual orientation may be at a higher risk for anxiety and depression, especially if they don't have their family's support or support in the community [3].
- **Socioeconomic status (SES)** – Socioeconomic problems are recognized risks to mental health. Some adolescents are at greater risk of mental health conditions due to their living conditions or lack of access to quality support and services [2].

It is possible for a person to experience more than one of these risk factors at a time. Experiencing multiple risk factors increases the chances of mental health issues.

 Many of these risk factors are circumstances that you cannot control, such as genetics and SES, but prioritizing your mental health and seeking help from trusted adults at school (school counselors, school psychologists, teachers, etc.) are things that YOU CAN control.

[2] https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/adolescent-mental-health
[3]https://centerforliving.org/blog/adolescent-mental-health-treatment-risk-factors/
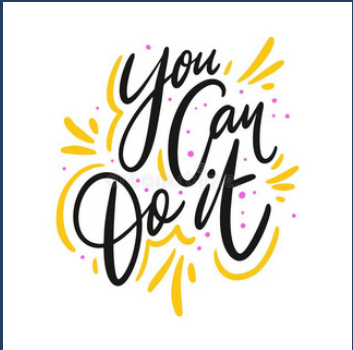
STATISTICS

Why it is important to address mental health early?

Research shows that mental illnesses are very common in the United States, affecting tens of millions of people each year. Estimates suggest that only half of people with mental illnesses receive treatment.

Y O U   A R E   N O T   A L O N E

CLICK HERE
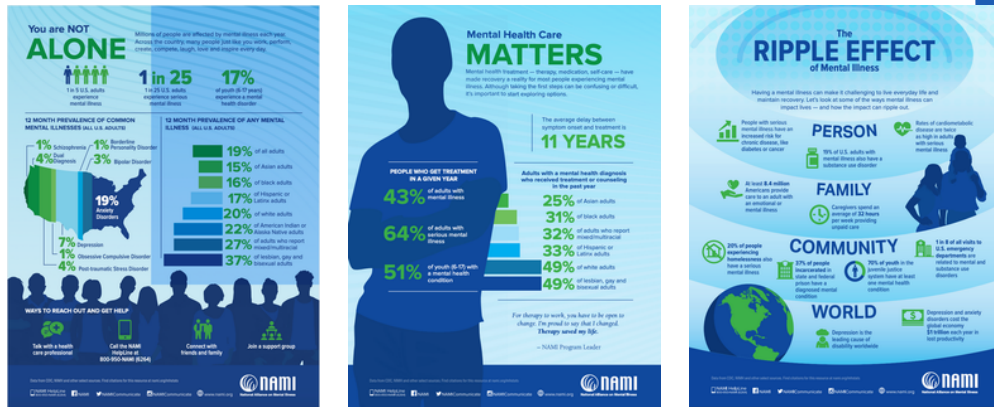
National Alliance on Mental Illness: Mental Health by Numbers

Why are statistics important for mental health?

Statistics show how mental illness can become far more serious to your health if not treated. Some effects may appear later in life when looking for work, going to school, and/or facing the judicial system. Remember, you are not alone and there are services available to help you address any mental health needs or concerns; no matter how mild or severe.

When looking at statistics, common terms like "prevalence" or "comorbidity" is used to describe the information reserchers find: So what do they mean...?

- "**Prevalence**" refers to the number of cases of a disease that are present in a particular population at a given time.

- "**Comorbidity**" means more than one illness or disease occurring in one person at the same time

Statistics: Specific mental health disorders

Knowledge is power! Take a look at other mental health disorders and see who it affects, what the current findings are, and how best to improve those numbers by getting help & support you need.

Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)
Bipolar Disorder	Eating Disorder
Major Depression	Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)
Anxiety Disorder	

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2019). Mental Health By The Numbers. Retrieved from https://www.nami.org/mhstats

MORE STATISTICS

It's Okay to Talk About Suicide

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death among people aged 10-34 in the U.S.
- Suicide is the 10th leading cause of death in the U.S.
- The overall suicide rate in the U.S. has increased by 31% since 2001
- 46% of people who die by suicide had a diagnosed mental health conditionLesbian, gay and bisexual youth are 4x more likely to attempt suicide than straight youth
- Annual prevalence of serious thoughts of suicide, by U.S. demographic group:
  - 4.3% of all adults
  - 11.0% of young adults aged 18-25
  - 17.2% of high school students
  - 47.7% of lesbian, gay, and bisexual high school students

If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
at 800-273-TALK (8255) or call 911 immediately.

"Can I talk to you? **I have a lot on my mind.**"

Talk to:
- Parents/ Guardian
- Teacher
- Counselor
- School Staff

National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2019). Mental Health By The Numbers. Retrieved from https://www.nami.org/mhstats

A SYSTEMS APPROACH TO MENTAL HEALTH [1]

The systems approach to mental health looks at how the world around you affects your mental health and psychological development. There are several different "layers" to consider.
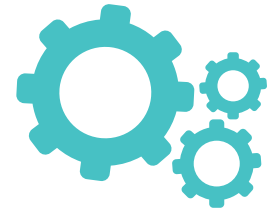
Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Child Development
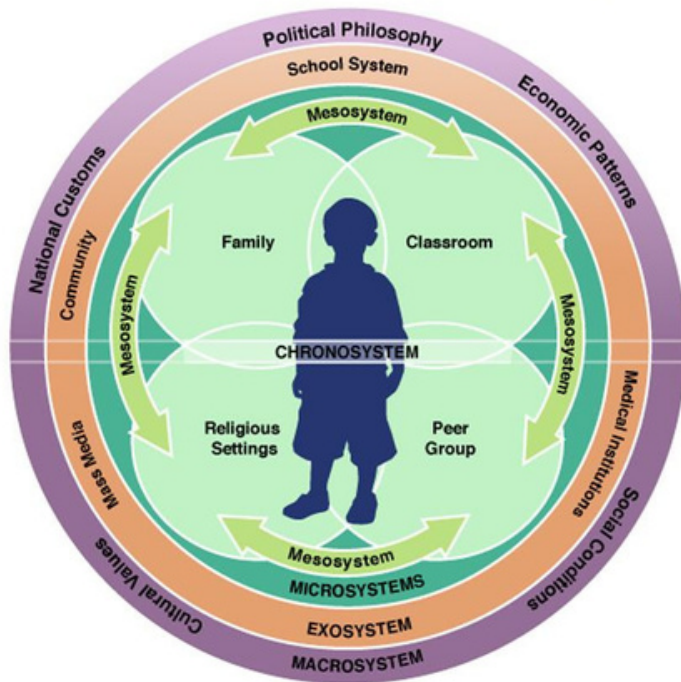
Individual

This is you! We look at the unique characteristics that make you, *you*!

For example: How old are you? What is your race/ethnicity? Your culture?

Microsystem

This microsystem is the system that is closest to you. It includes the places and people you have direct contact with such as your parents, teachers, school, and home.

Mesosystem

The mesosystem looks at how your different microsystems interact with each other. You may have seen this in action if you have attended back to-school-night with your parents. Your teachers (one microsystem) communicate with your parents (another microsystem) about what the new school year will entail.

Ecosystem

The mesosystem looks at how your different microsystems interact with each other. You may have seen this in action if you have attended back to-school-night with your parents. Your teachers (one microsystem) communicate with your parents (another microsystem) about what the new school year will entail.

Exosystem

The exosystem refers to the different settings and people that do not actively involve you but still affect you. Some examples include your parent's workplace, the media, extended family, and your neighborhood.

Macrosystem

The macrosystem is the system that is furthest away from you. It includes cultural values, attitudes, customs, and laws.

What systems do you see in your life?

Why do we use the systems approach, anyway?

When considering a person's mental health, it is important to look at ALL aspects of a person's life. As the systems level approach illustrates, there are many factors that play a role in contributing to a person's life and world.These varying factors can greatly affect one's mental health and their perceptions of themselves and the environments surrounding them. When one aspect of the system is failing, or is experiencing turbulence, it can negatively impact other systems, or the person's health/mental health as a whole. This type of approach is important in considering a person's mental health because it takes into account the "whole person," thus ensuring all aspects of one's life is considered.

[1] Paquette, D. & Ryan, J. (n. d.) Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory. National-Louis University. Retrieved from https://professorcarlson.net/c4dcourse/module_2/m2_unit3/m2_u3_oldreadings/ecological_systems_theory2.pdf

SCHOOLS & MENTAL HEALTH

Why Should Schools Support Mental Health? [1]

Take a minute to think about how many hours a day do you spend at school? Many students spend at least 6 hours a day at school. If you are part of a club or team, that number might be even higher! Schools are a great place to support mental health because almost everyone attends and spends a lot of time at school.

What are some things you learn at school? You might be thinking about math, reading, and writing skills. But 'education' is so much more than academics! Schools can (and should) teach you how to problem solve, set and achieve goals, and build strong relationships with friends and adults [2]. Schools should support mental health because mental health is an important part of education.

School Climate

Your school plays an important role in promoting mental wellness in all students. This includes identifying and helping students who are struggling with mental health challenges, and also supporting all students to help prevent those problems from developing in the first place. Your school can contribute to your mental wellness by promoting a positive school climate and school culture. School climate refers to how you feel when you're at school, and how that affects both your academic success and mental wellness [3]. School culture describes what is important to a school community, and how people treat each other. Ask yourself these questions to determine if your school has a positive school climate and culture [3]:

- *Do you like coming to school?*
- *When you're at school, does it feel like a welcoming place where the adults care about you as an individual?*
- *Do you feel respected and included at school?*
- *Do you feel connected to others?*
- *Do you feel safe at school? Safety refers to being both physically and emotionally safe. Being safe means having the freedom to express yourself without worrying that you will be harassed or bullied. It also means feeling confident that you can go to school without fear of being hurt in any way.*

SCHOOLS & MENTAL HEALTH

Schools that support mental wellness also make sure that every student knows who they can talk to at school when they are struggling with a problem, including a mental health challenge [3]. They also have the resources to support students experiencing these challenges.

Your everyday actions and choices can contribute to cultivating a positive school climate!

Embrace diversity and practice inclusion [4]- approach students and staff from other races, cultures, language backgrounds, and sexual orientations with empathy, openness and curiosity. When new students join your class, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, find ways to welcome and include them in school activities.

Be an Upstander [5] - If you witness or know a fellow student who is being bullied, become an ally to that student. Speak out and take action to help stop bullying.

Speak up - If you are concerned about safety, inclusion, or respect at your school then talk to a trusted adult about it.

[1] NASP. (2016). *School-Based Mental Health Services: Improving Student Learning and Well-Being.* https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources-and-podcasts/mental-health/school-psychology-and-mental-health/school-based-mental-health-services
[2] CASEL. (2020). *What is SEL?.* https://casel.org/what-is-sel/
[3] Fertman, C. I., Delgado, M. M., & Tarasevich, S. L. (2014). *Promoting child and adolescent mental health.* Jones & Bartlett Publishers.
[4] IDRA. (2016). *Positive School Climates and Diverse Populations.* https://www.idra.org/resource-center/positive-school-climates-diverse-populations/
[5] Together Against Bullying. (2020). *Becoming an Upstander.* https://www.togetheragainstbullying.org/tab/changing-behavior/becoming-an-upstander/

YOUR SUPPORT SYSTEM AT SCHOOL!

At your school, there are several school staff who work hard together to ensure that every student feels supported, safe, and welcomed in the school.

Each school staff has their own set of knowledge and skills that allows them to provide students with special method of support at school. Whether that individual is a principal, school counselor, teacher, school psychologist, or a coach, they can all help provide a unique type of student support.

Therefore, it can be very helpful to learn exactly what these staff do and how they can support your overall well-being and student development.

Below is an in-depth look at the roles of various school staff.

Principals

- Establish a school leadership team that includes school staff such as (vice principals, teachers, school resource safety officers ,etc.) [1].
- Implement a school-wide approach that emphasizes mental health services along with academic instruction and learning [1].
- Support student mental health through the implementation of social-emotional learning programs which help you recognize and manage your emotions, develop care and concern for others, make responsible decisions, and create positive relationships [2].
- Work with district leadership to explore resources that are currently available.
- Connect with community mental health partners to create a stronger network of support [2].
- Ensure school staff and community partners have the appropriate training, education, and resources to address mental health concerns (crisis prevention, preparedness, and response) [1].

- act as a primary resource in mental health awareness and support for students and other staff.
- support the overall academic, social-emotional, and college and career development of students through the Multi-Tiered System of Support [3].
- provide intervention services for those who need more individual and personal support (i.e., short-term counseling, crisis intervention, group counseling, etc).
- educate students, staff, and family on mental health and other relevant topics.
- connect students and families to outside resources and organizations.

School Counselors

[1] Cowan, K. C., Vaillancourt, K., Rossen, E., & Pollitt, K. (2013). A framework for safe and successful schools [Brief]. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.
[2] Harper, A. (2018, October 29). How can principals bring more attention, resources to student mental health? Retrieved from www.educationdive.com/news/how-can-principals-bring-more-attention-resources-to-student-mental-health/540813/
f[3] Orange County Department of Education. Connecting the Dots: The School Counselor Role in Student Mental Health. Retrieved from https://ocde.us/MTSS/Documents/Connecting%20the%20Dots%20-%20School%20Counselors%20and%20Mental%20Health%206-5-20%20(1).pdf
[4]Stephney, S. (2015, July 22). Roles of a Teacher in the Classroom. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from https://www.education.gov.gy/web/index.php/teachers/tips-for-teaching/item/1603-roles-of-a-teacher-in-the-classroom
[5]Landess, J. (n.d.). Who Are School Psychologists. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/who-are-school-psychologists

School Psychologists

- Serve as experts in learning, mental health, and school systems which support students' ability to succeed in school.
- Collaborate with teachers, administrators, families, and community members in order to support the overall well-being and scholastic success of students.
- Perform evaluations, assessments, and analyze student data to advocate for school-wide changes that promote student success [5].
- Connect students and their families with special resources and community service providers.

Teachers

- Teach educational content to students.
- Create a safe and welcoming classroom environment for all students.
- Serve as positive role models and mentors for their students.
- Act as trusted adults that students can turn to for support
- Understand how to identify red flags for instances of abuse, neglect, bullying, etc.
- Understand how to identify indicators (red flags) of abuse, neglect, bullying, and mental health concerns [4].

While all these school staff have different roles, responsibilities, and specialized knowledge, they all work together to ensure that all students are health, happy, and successful. All these school staff are examples of trusted adults and systems of support that are available for students in need.

Even though students may be most familiar and comfortable with teachers, they should always feel free to reach out for support or to say hello. Always remember that all these staff are here for you.

If students are ever unsure if they should talk to these other figures at school, they can always start a conversation with a teacher to find out which school staff can provide them with the proper support.

[1] Cowan, K. C., Vaillancourt, K., Rossen, E., & Pollitt, K. (2013). A framework for safe and successful schools [Brief]. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.

[2] Harper, A. (2018, October 29). How can principals bring more attention, resources to student mental health? Retrieved from www.educationdive.com/news/how-can-principals-bring-more-attention-resources-to-student-mental-health/540813/

[3] Orange County Department of Education. Connecting the Dots: The School Counselor Role in Student Mental Health. Retrieved from https://ocde.us/MTSS/Documents/Connecting%20the%20Dots%20-%20School%20Counselors%20and%20Mental%20Health%206-5-20%20(1).pdf

[4]Stephney, S. (2015, July 22). Roles of a Teacher in the Classroom. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from https://www.education.gov.gy/web/index.php/teachers/tips-for-teaching/item/1603-roles-of-a-teacher-in-the-classroom

[5]Landess, J. (n.d.). Who Are School Psychologists. Retrieved November 20, 2020, from https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/who-are-school-psychologists

LEGAL & ETHICAL ISSUES

If you are receiving mental health services, you or your parents may have questions about who has access to your educational and health records or what your counselor will share with others. There are laws and ethical codes that protect student and family rights and information.

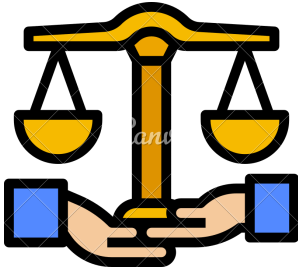## How are the law and mental health related?

Laws are sets of rules that are created to protect people [1]. Laws tell us what we *must* do and what we *can* do. What laws do you know? You may be familiar with the U.S. Constitution, which protects things like free speech and civil rights. There are laws that are different in different states. There are even laws about school! Here are some of the main laws that relate to mental health in schools:

FERPA

- FERPA stands for the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act
- FERPA protects your educational records (things like grades, attendance, suspensions, and your address and birthday)
- Your parents have the right to access your records, and they can also control who outside the school can access your records.
- When you turn 18, those rights pass over to you!
- Teachers and other school staff can access your records on a need-to-know basis

HIPAA

- HIPAA stands for the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act
- HIPAA protects your medical records (things like doctor/nurse visits and seeing an outside

How are ethics and mental health related?

Ethics are also sets of rules that are created to protect people. But ethics tell us what we *should* do. School psychologists, counselors, teachers, and even nurses have codes of ethics that guide their behavior. Here are some themes in ethical codes [1]:

Respect for students, families, and communities

Example: Staff create safe and welcoming schools

Responsible caring

Example: Mental health providers benefit others and do no harm

Honesty and trust

Example: Counselors listen without judgment and protect private information

What are some ways you can show respect, caring, honesty, and trust?

LEGAL & ETHICAL ISSUES

What is confidentiality?

Confidentiality is a promise not to reveal private information. In counseling, confidentiality means that the counselor will not tell anyone what you discuss during sessions. There are four important times when the counselor does need to share information:

> If you harm yourself
> If you harm someone else
> If someone is harming you
> If you want information to be shared with someone else

Counselors sometimes need to 'break' confidentiality to share information because they have a *duty to protect* you. They are trying to make sure that you get the support that you need. They are not trying to get you or anyone else in trouble.

"But wait! I thought my parents had access to my educational records! Does that mean they get to know what I talk about during counseling?"

Yes, your parents do have a right to access your records. Your counselor will only share general topics that you are working on and talk about progress you are making. They will not share details.
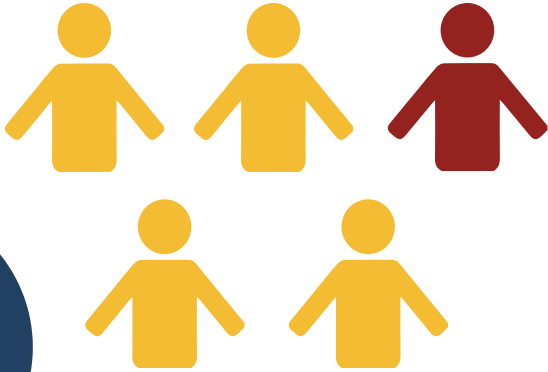
[[1] Jacob, S., Decker, D. M., & Timmerman Lugg, E. (2016). Ethics and Law for School Psychologists, Seventh Edition. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
[2] Fertman, C. I., Delgado, M. M., & Tarasevich, S. L. (2014). Promoting child and adolescent mental health. Jones & Bartlett Publishers.

MENTAL HEALTH SCHOOL POLICY

Why it matters: [1]

- 1 in 5 youth have a mental health condition, but fewer than half have their needs addressed
- The earlier a person accessess mental health care, the more effective interventions can be
- Schools are a place where children spend the majority of their time, making it the ideal location to identify mental health issues and provide supports; of which school policy can help to implement

Mental Health Services Act [2]

California voters passed the MHSA in 2004. This law functions to help schools provide mental health services to all students in your schools. It consists of 5 main ideas:

1. Student-focused mental health system
2. Cultural awareness
3. Working with local communities
4. Service integration
5. Focus on student recovery, resilience, and wellness.

In-School Policies[2]

Mental health services in CA should consist of a broad range of services. These services can vary from district to district, so if you change schools, the policies may look different at your new school. But, it is outlined by MHSA that the following services should be present:

- Academic Counseling
- Behavior Interventions
- Family Counseling
- Suicide Prevention
- Assessments
- Referrals to other systems, when necessary

[1] National Alliance on Mental Health (NAMI). The Issue: Mental Health In Schools. https://www.nami.org/Advocacy/Policy-Priorities/Intervene-Early/Mental-Health-in-Schools
[2] California Department of Education. (February 12, 2020). Mental Health Services Act. https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/cg/mh/cefmentalhealth.asp

What Should Your Mental Health School Policy Look Like? [3]

An effective mental health policy should:

1 Have a purpose and explanation of the plan

2 Include the staff involved at your school

3 Incorporate lessons and activities that will teach you about mental health

4 Identify places or people you can go to for help at school or in your community

5 Understand your and other student needs

6 Highlight actions that school staff should take when you share your concerns and problems or when the policy is violated
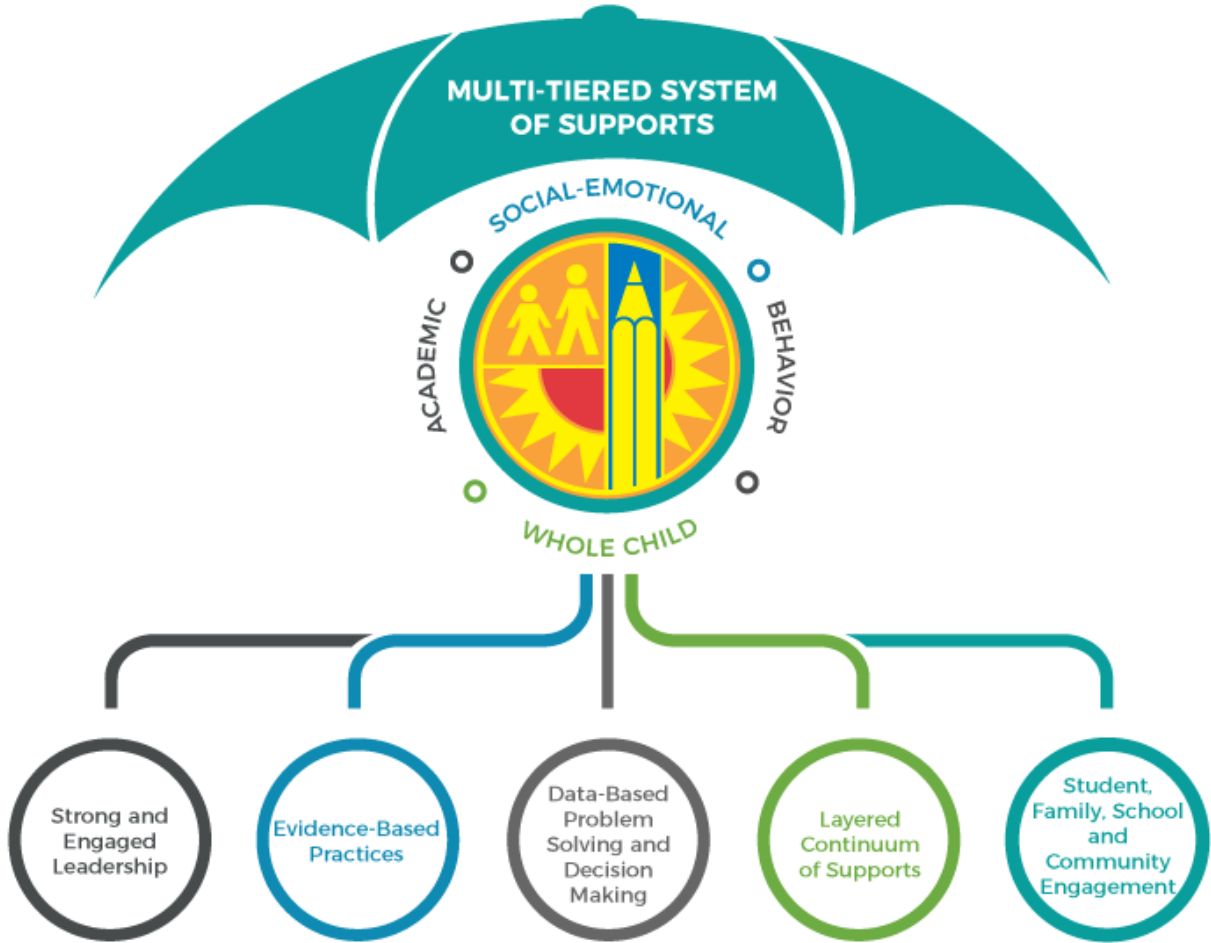
7 Engage in partnerships and communication with your parents and local agencies that may be of support to you

8 Provide mental health trainings for your teachers, principal, vice principal, and other staff

[3] Knightsmith, P. (2019). School Mental Health Policy & Guidance. Retrieved from: https://www.leicestershirehealthyschools .org.uk/uploads/mental-health-wellbeing-policies.pdf

SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT (MTSS)

It might be something you may have heard at school, or from a teacher, counselor, or parent. Terms are used interchangeably between MTSS framework, MTSS process and/or MTSS model.

MTSS provides support for important goals that are designed to help students in their academic growth and achievements; as well as behavior, social and emotional needs. These tiers of support increase in intensity from one level to the next.

Screening

Students don't always seek help when they are struggling with a mental health problem. There are lots of reasons for this [1]. Sometimes it's because they have gotten so used to how they are feeling, that they don't realize that it's possible to think and feel any differently. Other times they just don't know what mental health services are available to them or how to access them. Some students also feel embarrassed about seeking help for a mental health concern.

One way that schools can identify and reach out to students who may need extra mental wellness support is through the use of screening. Screening is a type of assessment that is used to identify students who may be at risk for a mental health concern [2]. The screening tool usually consists of a short list of questions asking students about their behavior, thoughts and feelings.

Screening is especially important to help schools identify students who are struggling with quieter more invisible concerns that may not be as obvious to the adults in their lives, such as anxiety, depression, isolation, and suicidal ideation [3].

Some screening tools may be completed by you, and some may be completed by your teacher or guardian. It is important that whoever is completing the screening tool does it as honestly as possible to make sure that schools can identify and help students who need extra mental wellness support. The screening results can't determine if you have a mental health problem, but they can indicate if the mental health experts in your school need to do more investigating [1].

Screening

The following are some questions that students often have about screening tools:

Who gets screened?"
Mental health screenings are usually given to all students in a class, grade or school. In most cases, your parents or guardians need to provide permission before you can be screened [2]. It is also important that you as the student willingly agree to participate in the screening.

"How long does the screening process take?"
It usually only takes about 5-15 minutes to complete a screening tool [2].

"What are you looking for when you screen students?"
That depends on the school, the age of students, and other factors that are specific to a school community [2]. In general, screening tools focus on identifying students with emotional and behavioral struggles. Screening also tries to identify strengths and support systems in a student's life that can be used in his or her mental wellness treatment plan [2].

"What happens afterwards? Do I get to know the results of the screening? Who else will know the results?"
If the screening results suggest that you might be suffering from a mental health problem, then a mental health professional at your school will follow-up with you and your parents or guardians. This follow-up might include interviewing you and your guardians. You may be given a more detailed assessment to help better identify your mental health needs. Your privacy is very important. Only you, your guardians, and anyone at the school who is involved in supporting your mental health treatment plan will know the results of the screening [1]. It's important that your school quickly follow up with you if a screening identifies you as needing extra support. The earlier you are treated for any mental health struggles, the better your long term success will be [2].

[1] Fertman, C. I., Delgado, M. M., & Tarasevich, S. L. (2014). Promoting child and adolescent mental health. Jones & Bartlett Publishers.
[2] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2019). Ready, Set, Go, Review: Screening for Behavioral Health Risk in Schools. https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/ready_set_go_review_mh_screening_in_schools_508.pdf
[3] Counseling Today. (2019, September 5). The case for universal mental health screening in schools. https://ct.counseling.org/2019/09/the-case-for-universal-mental-health-screening-in-schools/

Multi-Tiered Systems of Support

Tier 1--Universal

"Tier 1" or the "Universal Tier" is a term that refers to programs that are created as <u>prevention-oriented</u> systems of support. This means that these programs are aiming to provide you students with resources <u>BEFORE</u> a problem arises. You may be familiar with some of these programs like:

- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) classroom lessons
- School-wide expectations about behavior (i.e., BRAVE, ACHIEVE)
- Coordination of school-wide awareness events (i.e., Day of Silence)

- School-wide or grade-level-wide team building, leadership workshops
- Adolescent depression prevention or Sexual Education in health class

Don't worry, you're not the only one! Teachers and other school staff are specifically trained in these programs as well, but they may look a little different. For example,

- Training school staff to deliver standards-based curriculum/coordinating school-wide Social Emotional Learning (SEL) (i.e. Second Step)
- Facilitating enrichment and extracurricular opportunities

- Putting on Social/emotional workshops for families
- Coordinating school-wide responsive services to address an emergency, disaster, or other crisis situation

Progress Monitoring

Progress monitoring lets adults know which students might need help making progress. This information is used to make decisions about the student's educational plan, and ensure student growth [1].

Why do we need it?

- It helps staff to make informed decisions on how to best help our students
- Students are then able to make more progress
- Communication amongst students and staff improves

What does this mean for me?

- If a teacher, or a school, decides to implement student progress monitoring, your parent/guardian may receive a letter describing the program and how the teacher will be working with you, or it may be discussed at your IEP meeting.
- After that, your parent/guardian should receive regular feedback from the teacher on how well you are doing. This may look like a copy of the graph itself and information on instructional changes.

[1] McLane, K. (n.d.). Student Progress Monitoring: What This Means for Your Child. Washington, D.C.: The National Center on Student Progress Monitoring, American Institutes for Research.

MULTI-TIERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT (MTSS)

Tier 2--Supplemental

Small Group Interventions. Some students receive more targeted support in small groups. The scheduling of these interventions is important. The goal is to keep students from missing any core instruction or other Tier 1 activities that might make it harder to catch up [2]. Some of those activities may look like:

- Small Group (i.e., children of divorce, grief, relationships, social skills)
- DREAMer and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) support
- CBITS, Bounce Back, SPARCS
- Anger Coping, Think First
- Social Skills Peace Circles, Peer Jury, Peer Conference

- Check-in/Check-out
- Restorative Conversations
- Temporary living support
- Coordination of mentoring supports
- Step Up, Becoming A Man (BAM), ENLACE, Tee Parenting Initiative)
- School Behavioral Health Team referrals

Tier 3--Intensified

Intensive, Individualized Support. For a few students who may need a more intensive level of support continue with Tier 1 activities; break-out groups are smaller in Tier 2, and sessions last longer and are more specific to student's situation in Tier 3 [2]. Some of those activities may look like:

- 1-on-1 counseling
- Crisis Team/Screening
- Referrals (i.e. Department of Children & Family Services (DCFS), mental health services, shelters, other community services)
- Behavior Support Plans

- Intensive, short-term, solution-focused individual counseling
- Behavioral Health Team
- Wraparound Services
- Student/family behavior conferences

[1] Goodman-Scott, E., Betters-Bubon, J., Donohue, P. (2019). The School Counselor's Guide to Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. New York: Routledge
[2] https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315144467[2] https://www.understood.org/en/learning-thinking-differences/treatments-approaches/educational-strategies/mtss-what-you-need-to-know?_ul=1*cyl8jq*domain_userid*YW1wLUxWZkF0TE5IdEZDRE96ZVBxUmdBTXc.

CHECKLIST & TOOLS

**Helpful tools to use when you need it. Use what works for you!**

SELF - CARE CHECKLIST

These are some ideas of ways you can take care of yourself and nourish your mental health. You don't have to complete all of these activites everyday, but you can use them as a guide to keep yourself on track. Focus on what energizes and works for you!

GOALS	M	T	W	Th	F	Sa	Su
Got enough sleep							
Exercised							
Spent time in nature							
Connected with a friend							
Spent less then 30 min on social media							
Ate nourishing food							
Hydrated throught the day							
Meditated							
Wrote in my Gratitude Journal							
Spent time doing something I love							

MOOD TRACKER

Create a key where each color represents a different mood. Then color in each balloon with the mood that you felt that day. At the end of the month you will have a colorful bunch of balloons that track your mood patterns.
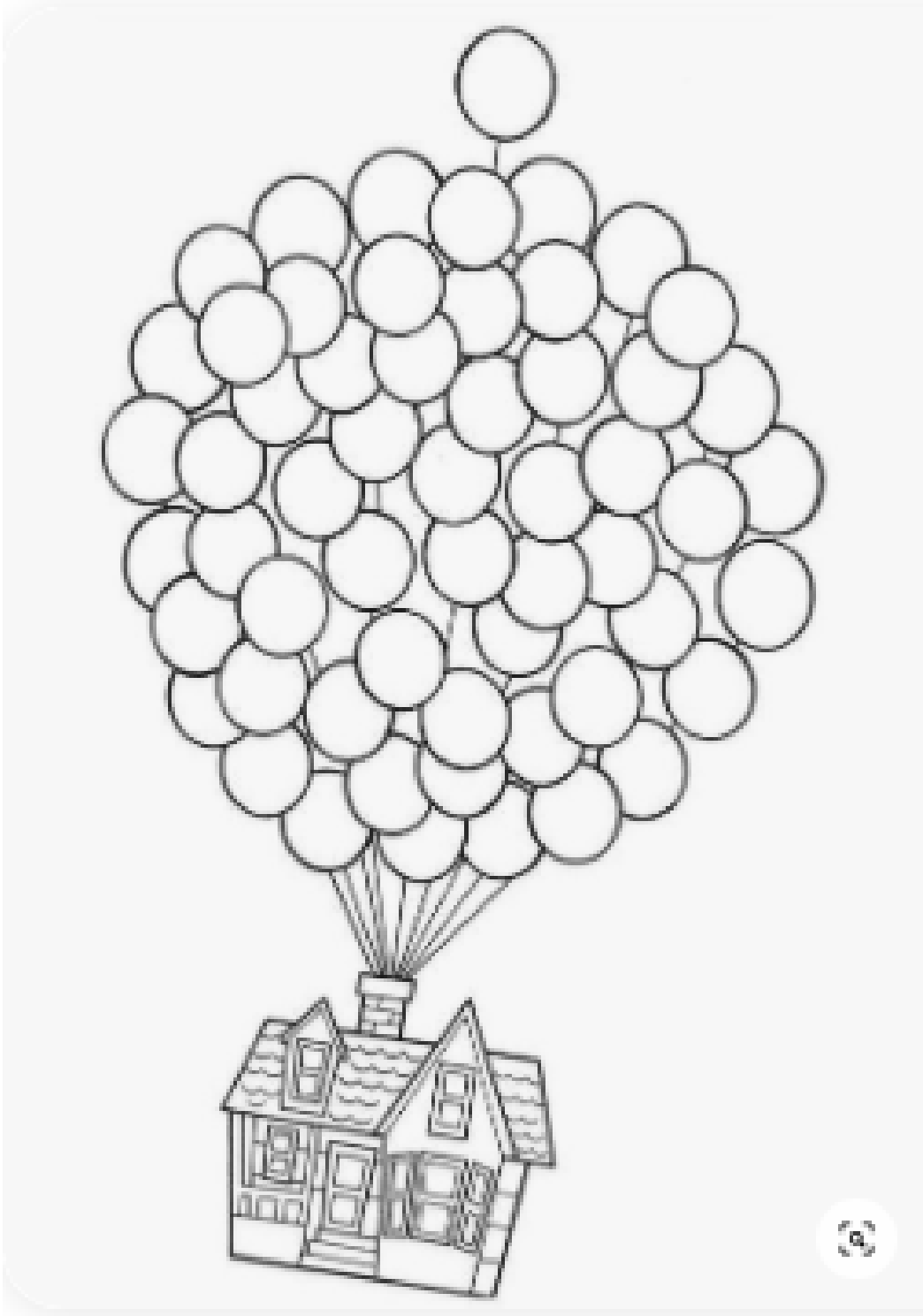
FAQ
Frequency Asked Questions

- **What is mental health?**
  - Mental health includes our emotions, mind, and relationships with others. It's displayed in how WE THINK, FEEL, AND ACT. It helps us determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. Mental health is important in every stage of life; from child, to teen, all the way through becoming an adult. Mental health problems are common, but not everyone is diagnosed with a mental illness.

- **I have a lot on my mind. Who should I talk to if I'm having a tough time?**
  - It's important to speak to someone you feel safe with. This could be your parent/guardian, your teacher, school counselor, or any staff member at your school

- **What are some signs I should look out for in myself and others when it comes to mental health?**
  - Can't eat or sleep
  - Can't perform daily tasks like going to school
  - Don't want to hang out with your friends or family
  - Don't want to do things you usually enjoy
  - Feel like you can't control your emotions and it's affecting your relationships with your family and friends
  - Have low or no energy
  - Feel hopeless, feel numb, or like nothing matters
  - Can't stop thinking about certain things or memories
  - Feel confused, forgetful, edgy, angry, upset, worried, or scared
  - Smoke, drink, or use drugs
  - Hear voices

- **What will other people think if they find out I had a mental health issue?**
  - This is a common concern for many people. There are many different views on mental health issues and concerns, however, it has become more acceptable to talk about mental health. Mental health issues should be treated like any other health concern that you might have. If you have concerns, there are laws can protect you and your privacy and where your information is not to be shared without your consent/permission, also know as confidentiality [1].

- **Who can I contact if I/someone has thoughts of harming myself/themselves?**
  - If you or someone you know is in immediate danger go to the nearest emergency room; or call The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 800-273-TALK (8255) or call 911 immediately. Other resources listed:
    - National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
    - Crisis Text Line
    - Disaster Distress Helpline
    - Support on social media

[1] https://www.kidsmentalhealthinfo.com/faq/will-people-think-find-child-mental-health-issue/

RESOURCES
Helpful Websites/Resources for you!

▶ **Mental Health Information:**

National Alliance on Mental Health (https://www.nami.org/Home)
- Infographic & Fact Sheets

▶ **Applications:**

Guided meditations (UCLA Mindful):
https://www.uclahealth.org/marc/mindful-meditations

Headspace - Mindfulness App
https://www.headspace.com/

Calm - Meditation App
https://www.calm.com/

▶ **Important Contacts:**

If you or someone you know is in an emergency, call
The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/
at 800-273-TALK (8255) or call 911 immediately.

Substance Abuse Treatment Support
https://www.samhsa.gov/find-help/national-helpline
is available at 1-877-SAMHSA7 (1-877-726-4727)

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