



## HELP! DOES MY STUDENT NEED MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT?



# LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1

Understand what mental health is and when a person's mental health is impacting their well-being.

2

Identify the signs and symptoms of a mental health concern.

3

Discover ways to respond to your student when you notice a mental health concern.

# WHAT IS MENTAL HEALTH?

- Emotional, psychological, and social well-being
- Affects how we think, feel, and act
- Important at every stage of life
- Can be impacted by a variety of different reasons

# WHAT IS A MENTAL HEALTH CONCERN?

- Emotional Crisis
- Impacts functioning
  - School
  - Home
  - Relationships
  - Sense of self
- High intensity
- Long duration

# WHAT MAKES YOUR STUDENT UNIQUE?

## TEMPERAMENT + PERSONALITY

- Temperament
  - Flexible
  - Feisty
  - Slow to warm up
- Development
  - Appropriate vs inappropriate
  - Emotionally immature vs immature

# WHAT IS DEPRESSION?

- Persistent sadness and hopelessness that lasts for about 2 weeks.
- Feeling sadness and hopeless are normal feelings children experience
- When children start to feel sad or hopeless or uninterested in things that they used to enjoy, or feel helpless or hopeless in situations they are unable to change it's a cause for concern

# SIGNS + SYMPTOMS

## DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS

- Persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness
- Persistent flatness or emotional numbness
- Persistent nightmares
- Drastic shifts in mood
- Frequent physical complaints or somatic symptoms
- Expressing thoughts, dreams, or fantasies of suicide or homicide

# WHAT IS ANXIETY?

- Experiencing many fears or worries that interfere with school, home, or play activities
- Feeling fear and worry is typical in young children
- When it begins to last for about 2 weeks and seems to disrupt the quality of the child's life it is a cause for concern
- There are different kinds of anxieties
  - Separation anxiety



# SIGNS + SYMPTOMS

## ANXIOUS SYMPTOMS

- Persistent worry, anxiety or fearfulness
- Inappropriate avoidance of people, places or things
- Bizarre beliefs, delusions or paranoia
- Obsessing over a person, place or thing
- Performing specific routines compulsively

# OTHER MENTAL HEALTH DISORDERS

- Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD)
- Conduct Disorder (CD)
- Attention-Deficit/ Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)
- Tourette Syndrome
- Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD)
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

# SIGNS + SYMPTOMS

## BEHAVIORAL SYMPTOMS

- Preoccupation with violence or engaging in any violent acts
- Revengeful speech
- Sudden and unexplained shift in behavior at school (low grades, missing or cutting school, frequent fights at school, disruptive behavior)
- Trouble concentrating
- Abusing substances
- Engaging in any kind of self-harm
- Loss of interest in activities or hobbies that were previously pleasurable
- Sudden change in eating habits (not eating at all, bingeing, purging, etc)
- Sudden change in sleeping habits (hypersomnia, hyposomnia)
- Regressing developmentally: Thumb sucking, bedwetting, fear of darkness
- Persistent withdrawal/ Sudden loss of friends

# TRAUMA

When a child feels intensely threatened by an event he or she is involved in or witnesses, we call that event a trauma. There is a range of traumatic events or trauma types to which children and adolescents can be exposed.

- Bullying
- Community Violence
- Disasters
- Early Childhood Trauma
- Intimate partner violence
- Medical trauma
- Physical abuse
- Refugee trauma
- Sexual abuse
- Terrorism and violence
- Traumatic grief

# POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS

## UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA

- Reaction is unique to the individual
- Combination of socio-emotional and behavioral signs and symptoms

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Recurrent, unwanted distressing memories of the traumatic event | Easily startled, frightened                                  |
| Flashbacks, upsetting dreams                                    | Trouble sleeping, concentrating                              |
| Avoidance of the traumatic event or reminders                   | Feeling detached from family and friends, emotional numbness |
| Negative thoughts about yourself, other people or the world     | Self-destructive behavior                                    |
| Hopelessness about the future                                   | Irritability, angry outbursts                                |
| Lack of interest in activities previously enjoyed               | Overwhelming guilt or shame                                  |
| Memory problems   | Always on guard  |

# CHILDREN UNDER 5

- Excessive clinging unto parents or an intense fear of being separated from the primary caretaker
- Showing frightened facial expressions
- Excessive crying, whimpering, trembling or screaming
- Immobility (appearing stuck or frozen often)
- Hitting, kicking, biting or any other preoccupation with violent behavior
- Re-enacting the traumatic event through play
- Frightening dreams

# WHAT CAN YOU DO?

## EMOTIONAL FIRST AID

- Take a deep breathe
- Ask yourself the four questions
  - How am I feeling right now?
  - What do I need?
  - What is my student feeling?
  - What does my student need?
- Engage in a 1:1 conversation
  - Listen
  - Observe
  - Validate
  - Empathize

# LOVE YOUR STUDENTS

## EMOTIONAL FIRST AID SKILLS

**L****ISTEN:** Using your listening skills, try to listen to what your student is saying and not saying.

**O****BERVE:** Notice any changes in your child's body language, clothing, hygiene habits, friends, responses, and anything else that is a change from your student's normal functioning.

**V****ALIDATE:** Read the different emotions they are expressing or that you are seeing, and normalize them. Acknowledge what you have observed.

**E****Mpathize:** Show that you not only recognize the different emotions but you understand or are here to understand where they might be coming from. Allow yourself to imagine what it might be like for this student to experience whatever they are experiencing.



# NO SHAME IN CONSULTING

- Consult with a Mental Health Therapist
- Consult with another teacher
- Consult with a parent

# REVIEW

OH YEAH!

Let's review:

- Mental health is our emotional, psychological and social well-being
  - When our mental health is off it affects the way we think, feel and act
- Emotional crisis happens for a number of different reasons but usually as a result of not being able to manage thoughts, feelings and behaviors which ultimately impact functioning

# REVIEW

OH YEAH!

Let's review:

- There are different signs and symptoms that signal your student may be experiencing a mental health concern
  - Ask:
    - Does it impact my student's relationships?
    - Does it impact my student's education?
    - Does it impact my student's sense of self?
    - Does it impact how my student's home life?

# REFERENCES

- **The National Child Trauma Institute**

<https://www.nctsn.org>

- **Center for Disease Control and Prevention**

<https://www.cdc.gov/childrensmentalhealth/symptoms.html>

- **Mental Health America**

<https://www.mhanational.org/recognizing-mental-health-problems-children>

- **Mayo Clinic**

[https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/mental-illness-in--c](https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/mental-illness-in-<u>-c</u>)

- **National Alliance on Mental Illness**

<https://www.nami.org/Blogs/NAMI-Blog/October-2019/Mental-Health-Conditions-Seen-in-Childhood>

- **Very Well Mind**

- <https://www.verywellmind.com/dsm-5-ptsd-criteria-for-children-2797288>

# ACTION STEPS

1

Think about a student whom you know might be struggling with a mental health concern. Write down some of the signs and symptoms you are noticing.

2

Make a plan this week to consult with someone who will be most appropriate in helping your student in a timely and compassionate manner.



**THANK YOU!**

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