



LEADING MENTALLY HEALTHY SCHOOLS

A Resource For School Administrators



SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH-ASSIST
ÉQUIPE D'APPUI POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE DANS LES ÉCOLES



Association des directions et directions adjointes des écoles franco-ontariennes

Information provided within this document was created by administrators, for administrators, as a companion to *Leading Mentally Healthy Schools: A Resource for School Administrators*.



Introduction

Research indicates there is a clear relationship between student mental health and achievement. When students are preoccupied with emotional concerns they cannot be fully available for learning. Schools play an increasingly important role in supporting the development and maintenance of well-being for children and youth. Administrators and school leaders can:

- Help school staff create mentally healthy classrooms
- Reduce stigma related to mental health
- Promote early identification of students who may be struggling with mental health issues
- Support students pathway to and from community treatment

This document provides an overview of key information and resources helpful to administrators in fostering mentally healthy school environments for students and staff.

Leading Mentally Healthy Schools requires:

- an understanding of the foundational role of mental health and well-being in supporting student achievement
- basic mental health literacy
- knowledge about how best to apply multi-tiered systems of support for mental health and well-being
- awareness of *Supporting Minds: An Educators Guide to Promoting Student Mental Health & Well-Being*
- familiarity with the board's mental health strategic plan, how to access the board Mental Health Leader, and awareness of policies and protocols related to mental health, including:
 - Suicide Protocol (Prevention, Intervention, and Postvention)
 - Traumatic Events Response
 - Violence Threat Risk Assessment

How it fits

Mental health and well-being is foundational to student learning and development and is supported by key Ontario Ministry of Education documents including:

- Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (2014)
- Ontario's Well-Being Strategy for Education (2016); Discussion Paper
- Learning For All (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
- K-12 School Effectiveness Framework (Ontario Ministry of Education, 2013)
- Ontario Leadership Framework (2012)
- Ontario College of Teachers Standards of Practice

Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario (2014), outlines the goals for education within Ontario including achieving excellence, ensuring equity, enhancing public confidence, and promoting well-being.

“Through the renewed vision, Ontario is setting its sights... it will be a system that recognizes well-being as an instrumental factor in students' academic success, and promotes greater equity that all students can be their best.”

<http://edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/excellent.html>

As outlined in **Ontario' Well-Being Strategy for Education Discussion Paper** (2016), the goal of promoting well-being “is based on the principle that our education system needs to help students build the knowledge and skills associated with positive well-being so that they can become healthy, active and engaged citizens”.



Promoting well-being is about fostering learning environments that encompass all four of these domains of well-being: physical, cognitive, emotional, and social. Educators and staff who are motivated and enthusiastic about their work are an essential part of promoting well-being and achievement.



How it fits



Common Language and Understanding

It is important that we use consistent language when discussing mental health and well-being. Adopting common terms helps to build shared understanding across Ontario schools and school districts.

Mental Health

Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community

World Health Organization

http://www.who.int/features/factfiles/mental_health/en/

Mental Illness

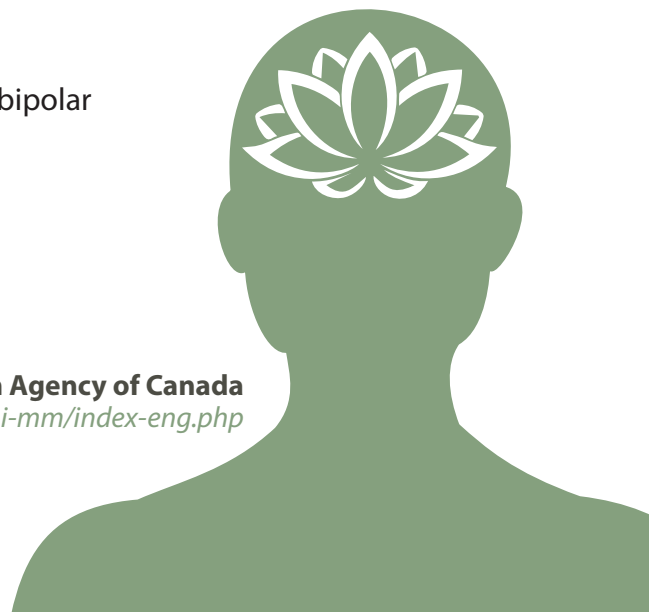
Mental illnesses are characterized by alterations in thinking, mood or behaviour associated with significant distress and impaired functioning.

Examples of specific mental illnesses include:

- Anxiety disorders
- Mood disorders e.g. major depression and bipolar disorder
- Eating disorders
- Psychotic disorders e.g. schizophrenia
- Personality disorders
- Gambling disorder
- Substance-related disorders

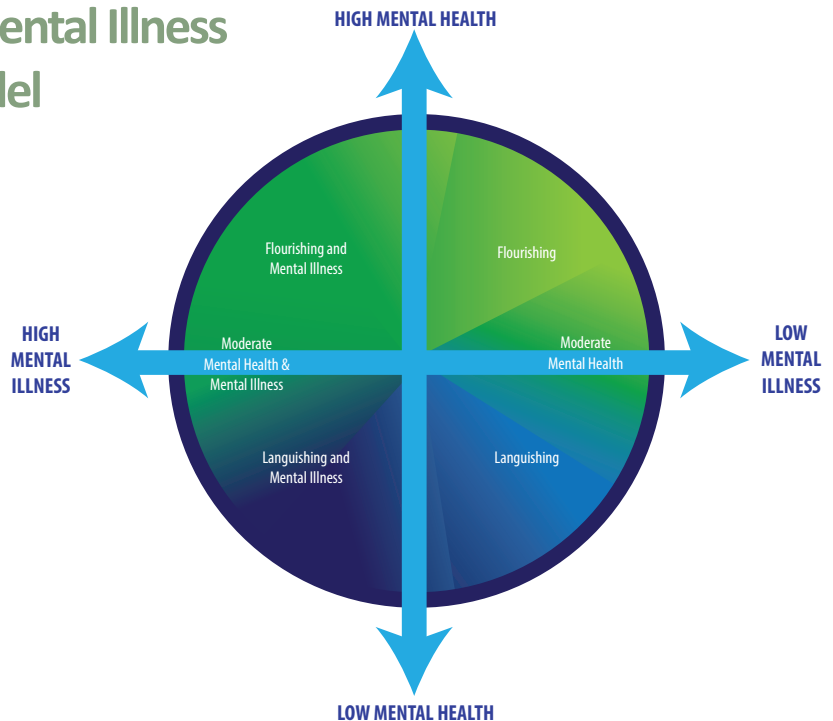
Public Health Agency of Canada

<http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/cd-mc/mi-mm/index-eng.php>



Mental Health and Mental Illness Dual Continuum Model

- You can experience a mental illness and mental well-being at the same time!
- Many mental health problems are long-standing or relapsing
- Early intervention and coping/support is key!



Adapted: Keyes, C. L. M. (2002). The mental health continuum: From languishing to flourishing in life

The Dual Continuum Model of Mental Health and Mental Illness can assist in understanding the distinction between mental health and mental illness. It is helpful to think of mental health and mental illness as two separate but interconnected concepts existing on a continuum. For example, it is possible to have a physical health condition such as diabetes, but lead a healthy balanced life, and still be considered to have optimal health. The same is true of mental illness. It is possible for an individual with a mental illness, who uses healthy strategies and maintains a balanced life to have positive mental health.

<http://wmhp.cmhaontario.ca/workplace-mental-health-core-concepts-issues/what-is-mentalhealth-and-mental-illness>

The video **Promoting Mental Health: Finding a Shared Language by CAMH** <https://vimeo.com/130580621> or https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Klswi_4yRaE can be a helpful resource to use with staff, parents, students, etc. in the development of a common language and understanding of mental health and well-being.



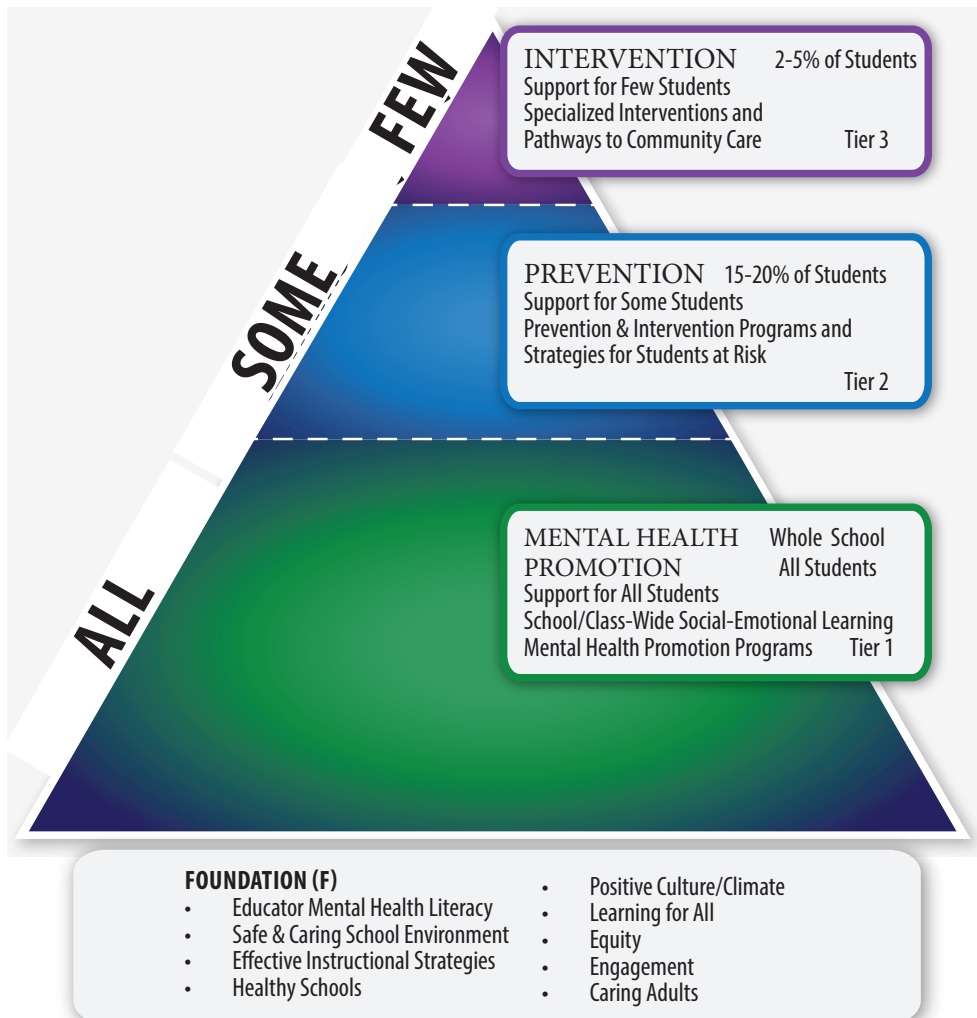
Common Language and Understanding



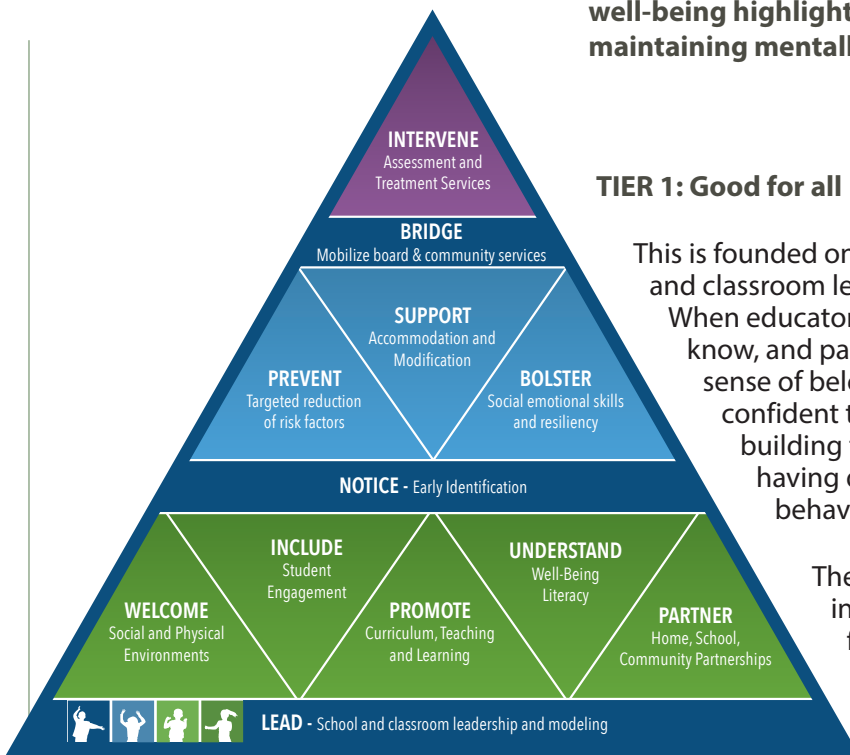
Think in Tiers

What is a tiered approach to mental health? As administrators and educators, our central role at school relates to instruction and learning, however, without healthy minds, learning and teaching is a difficult task.

Using a tiered approach as outlined in Learning For All (2013), we can promote mental health and well-being for ALL students, help to identify SOME students with, or at risk of developing, mental health problems, and access clinical support for the FEW students who require more intensive intervention.



The Tiered Support Model for school mental health and well-being highlights the core elements for creating and maintaining mentally healthy classrooms and schools:



TIER 1: Good for all

This is founded on strong leadership at the school and classroom level, at the base of the triangle. When educators welcome, include, promote, know, and partner, students have a better sense of belonging at school, and can feel confident that there are caring adults in the building that they can turn to if they are having difficulties academically, socially, behaviorally, or emotionally.

These five aspects of tier one, described in *Foundations for a Healthy School* are fundamental to creating a mentally healthy classroom.

Tier 2: Necessary for some

Some students who are vulnerable benefit from whole school, whole class approaches, however some may require increased skill building that includes, strengthening of protective factors, reducing risk factors, and providing support and accommodation.

Tier 3: Essential for a few

Students who experience significant distress and who may be more vulnerable require more targeted supports and interventions. When we offer proactive skill development and caring foundations, and identify and prevent problems early, fewer students will require intensive mental health interventions. It is important to note, however, that there will always be some students who struggle with a mental health problem, in spite of our best efforts. We need to ensure that trained mental health professionals, within school boards and in collaboration with community partners, provide strong evidence-based interventions for these students.

Having a school plan that is linked to a system vision for mental health and well-being is important. Ensuring you are aware of your board’s Mental Health Strategic Plan and who your Mental Health Lead is, can support implementation of your school improvement plan.



Think in Tiers



Mental Health in the Classroom

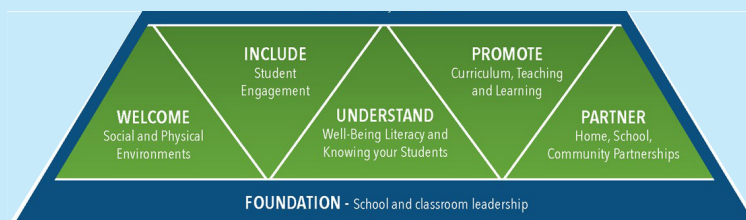
Every day, Ontario educators support students' healthy growth and development, and their mental health, by providing high-quality instruction and engaging opportunities to learn. Creating supportive and welcoming environments, where each student experiences a strong sense of belonging, also goes a long way to supporting well-being. Social and emotional skills that help students to develop and maintain good mental health can also be taught explicitly. Administrators can promote these proactive strategies, and also play an important role when students show signs of emotional difficulty by ensuring clear pathways to, from and through services.

An excellent resource for educators:

Supporting Minds: An Educators Guide to Supporting Students' Mental Health and Well-Being
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/SupportingMinds.pdf>

Tier 1 : GOOD FOR ALL STUDENTS **What does it look like?**

Systematic, explicit and intentional practice of the five Tier 1 areas:



Meaningful relationships • Knowing your students • Genuine connection with students

Welcome: **What does it look like?**

- Clear and consistent expectations for behaviour in class
- Classroom is safe, inclusive and supportive for students
- Mental well-being is explicitly linked to performance
- Diversity is celebrated and students feel safe to share and be who they are without stigma
- Students turn to teachers or other adults in the school for help if needed
- Students feel a strong sense of belonging

Include: **What does it look like?**

- Teachers plan for their students' interests, include them in decision making, and create opportunities for their involvement
- Students take an interest in mental health awareness, and lead campaigns that promote kindness and inclusion
- Students are eager to come to class and participate fully in classroom activities and assignments
- Those with lived experience are included in efforts to reduce stigma and to promote positive mental health
- There is opportunity for student voice and student leadership in the class and at school

Understand : What does it look like?

- Educators have mental health literacy, and a comfortable working knowledge of strategies for mental health promotion at school
- Educators understand they are not expected to be clinicians and know the process to access professional mental health support when needed
- Educators know the students in their classrooms - their background, strengths, needs, interests, and worries and build positive relationships individually with their students each day
- Everyday practices for mental well-being are known and used intentionally, explicitly and systematically in teaching and for learning

Promote: What does it look like?

- Social emotional learning is delivered in classrooms as part of regular instruction
- Students learn skills for self-awareness, self-management, social problem-solving, responsible decision-making
- Educators offer instruction in mental health literacy (e.g. positive mental health, help-seeking skills)
- Educators reinforce positive habits and attitudes as part of the daily fabric of the school day (e.g., mindfulness/contemplation, optimism, gratitude)
- There is a common language used among educators that is consistent strength-based and non-stigmatizing

Partner: What does it look like?

- Educators work together with families to support learning and well-being, recognizing parent/guardian expertise
- When students are struggling with learning or mental well-being, educators and families partner in developing a consistent classroom and home plan of support
- When students' mental health requires specialized support, educators and families initiate the pathway to service within the school, district, and/or community
- Students who receive specialized mental health services are supported to, from, and through care

Setting the foundation to make your efforts stick!

These few elements are key to promoting mentally healthy classrooms:

1	School administrator provides leadership and has explicit mental health and well-being goals in the School Improvement Plan	4	Administrators and staff are aware of their own beliefs, perceptions and attitudes related to well-being and mental health
2	Mental health and well-being are part of a whole school approach and aligned with the Board's vision and strategy	5	As good role models, administrator and school staff attend to their own self-care and wellness
3	In the school, there is a dedicated team or person on an existing team who supports implementation and monitoring	6	Administrators and staff support well-being intentionally, explicitly and systematically as part of every day practice



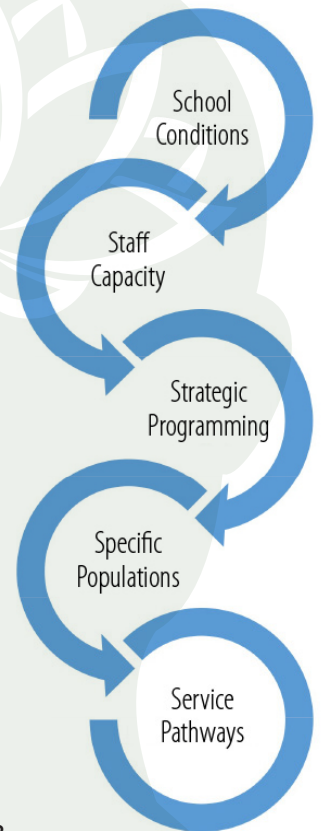
Mental Health in the Classroom



Key Starting Places Reflection Questions

Top 10 Conditions for Effective School Mental Health

1. Do we demonstrate commitment to student mental well-being?
2. Do we have a school leadership team responsible for student well-being?
3. Do we have a clear and focused vision for mental well-being in our school?
4. Do we have shared language, and a communication plan, for talking about mental well-being within our school community?
5. Have we conducted a school-level assessment of our strengths, resources, needs and priorities in the area of student mental well-being?
6. Do we have standard processes and protocols for supporting our most vulnerable students? (e.g., protocol for suicide risk management)
7. Have we offered systematic, job-embedded, professional learning to better equip staff to support student well-being?
8. Do we have a school mental health strategy and action plan?
9. Have we created respectful collaborative relationships with all who support student well-being (e.g., staff, families, community partners)
10. Do we have a method for monitoring progress towards enhanced well-being?



Strategic Programming, Specific Populations, Service Pathways

What can we weave into our daily practice to enhance mental well-being?
Which programs and services are currently in place? Have these services been evaluated?
Considering our school population, are there particular areas of support to explore?
Can all school staff describe the pathway to service for vulnerable students?

Who is our Board Mental Health Leader? Contact Information:

Strategies for Leading Mentally Healthy Schools*

*Check out the full document on-line at smh-assist.ca

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Supporting mental well-being at school is a complex and important area of work for the school leader. These 8 STRATEGIES are designed to capture some key aspects of the leader's role, and to offer related guidance.

1. Think in Tiers

Adopt a tiered approach to supporting mental well-being in your school: universal promotion for ALL students, targeted skill development for SOME students at higher risk, treatment for your FEW most vulnerable students.

2. Set the Stage

Create the conditions in your school that allow for sustainable and effective practices, like having a school team with responsibility for mental well-being and establishing in-school processes for helping vulnerable students.

3. Connect the Dots

Make the links with related initiatives in your school that support student well-being, like Safe and Accepting Schools, Healthy Schools, and Equity and Inclusive Education. Align work with your Board/School Improvement Plan!

4. Focus on the Positive

Mental health is a positive state! Keep the focus on well-being, rather than illness and disorder. Schools have a primary role in supporting mental health promotion.

5. Bring People Along

Build staff capacity for supporting student well-being at school. Help them to create mentally healthy classrooms, and to understand their role as the eyes, ears, and hearts for students who may struggle with emotional problems.

6. Follow Familiar Planning Processes

Draw on familiar planning cycles to set and achieve your school mental well-being goals. This work can become a regular part of your school improvement and school effectiveness processes.

7. Enable Implementation

Provide the needed time and coaching to bring school mental health plans to life. As in other areas of work, a clear vision and action plan, with explicit responsibilities and timelines, can help with execution.

8. Foster Collaboration

Work alongside board, community and family partners to promote seamless mental health service delivery. The school has an important role in the system of care, but must work closely with partners for treatment and transition services.

Strategies for Leading Mentally Healthy Schools



Staff Well-Being

Using a whole school approach to well-being that prioritizes positive relationships, social-emotional learning, and connectedness contributes to a mentally healthy school climate. Not only does this boost student mental health, but may also have benefits for staff wellness.

Administrators can support and promote staff mental health and well-being by fostering a stigma free culture that encouraging self-care and mutual support amongst colleagues. This can be nurtured by modelling good self-care and engaging in conversations about the promotion of mental health and well-being for both staff and students within the school community. Taking care of ourselves is important so that we can be our best. When we take care of ourselves, we are better able to extend that support to others, which ultimately creates mentally healthy school communities.

Consider embedding activities, short videos, or discussions in monthly staff meetings. Student mental health issues can be overwhelming at times and it is important to remind staff that these feelings are normal and that taking care of ourselves is essential. "When educators struggle with a mental health problem, it can interfere with their ability to be effective and compassionate with students in the classroom" (Leading Mentally Healthy Schools, p.78). "It is the role of the school administrator to support a staff member having emotional difficulties and to engage in supportive conversations designed to help the individual" (Leading Mentally Healthy Schools, p.78).

The Ontario Leadership Framework (OLF) includes only those attributes that have been clearly identified and supported in the research, and refers to these as "personal leadership resources" (PLRs) - the social, psychological, and cognitive - that leaders draw on in order to effectively carry out every act of leadership (Leithwood, 2012). Refer to Ideas into Action, Exploring the "**Social**" **Personal Leadership Resources, ONTARIO LEADERSHIP STRATEGY BULLETIN #7.**

<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/policyfunding/leadership/IdeasIntoActionBulletin7.pdf>



Tiered Support Model for Supporting Staff Well-Being

Level 1 - All

- Promote a whole-school approach to mental health & well-being.
- Be proactive.
- Create a supportive working environment.
- Create a culture that supports staff to be open about their mental health.
- Have conversations with others about their mental health.
- Model a good work/life balance.
- Be open to staff and show that their mental health matters.
- Treat mental health the same way you treat physical health.
- Support all employees to achieve success in the workplace.
- Be approachable and take steps to normalize conversations about mental health and encourage open dialogue.
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems.
- Provide comfort to a person experiencing a mental health problem.
- Align PD for staff on mental health and well-being with PD about students' mental health and well-being.
- Be aware of, and know how to access supports through the Employee Assistance Plan.
- Consider the emotional needs of staff.
- Make sure that in cases of traumatic events, structures are in place to support staff with their emotions 'after the event'

Level 2 - Some

- Be supportive of someone experiencing a mental health problem.
- Promote the recovery of good mental health.
- Tackle the causes of work-related mental health problems.
- Provide initial help and guide the person towards appropriate professional help.
- Help employees manage their workloads.
- Make reasonable accommodations for staff with mental health issues.
- Help staff with a referral pathway.
- Improve the physical environment and share available pathways (Employee Assistance Programmes & Occupational Health).
- If needed, consult with your supervisor about how to support your staff.
- Provide guidance and suicide first-aid to a person at risk in ways that meet their individual safety needs.

Level 3 - Few

- Check in & keep in contact.
- Care & concern - offer the support that is reasonable for you to provide.
- Support staff that are experiencing mental health/illness problems.
- Support staff to reach out to employee services and to establish community connections.
- Be knowledgeable about supports for staff prior to their return to work from a medical leave.

Resources



Essential Learning

Documents:

Leading Mentally Healthy Schools: A Resource for School Administrators:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B1dbQR3hKeHGRDRVVDVFTU45dWM/view>

Supporting Minds: An Educators Guide to Promoting Students' Mental Health and Well-being:
www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/reports/SupportingMinds.pdf

School Mental Health Decision Support Tool: Student Mental Health Awareness Initiatives:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bx9WOcdOIVzNYUpKaEx5TTNwamc/view>

Learning for All:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/general/elemsec/speced/LearningforAll2013.pdf>

Achieving Excellence:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/renewedVision.pdf>

Well-Being Discussion Document:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/WBDiscussionDocument.pdf>

School Effectiveness Framework:
<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/SEF2013.pdf>

Websites:

School Mental Health ASSIST:
www.smh-assist.ca

EduGAINS :
<http://edugains.ca/newsite/mentalHealth/>

Mental Health Works
<http://www.mentalhealthworks.ca/>

Digging Deeper

Websites:

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health:
www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca

Mental Health 4 Kids:
www.mentalhealth4kids.ca

CASEL Social-Emotional Learning
<http://casel.org/>

Stress lesson toolkit:
www.morethanmedication.ca/en/stress_lessons/insiders?educators

Reaching IN... Reaching OUT:
www.reachinginreachingout.ca

Canadian Mental Health Association:
www.cmha.ca

Children's Mental Health Ontario:
www.kidsmentalhealth.ca

Anxiety BC:
www.anxietybc.com

The ABC's of Mental Health:
www.hincksdellcrest.org/abc

Not Myself Today:
www.notmyselftoday.ca

Mind Your Mind:
<http://mindyourmind.ca/>

Video Links

Promoting Mental Health: Finding a Shared Language:
<https://vimeo.com/130580621>

Howie Mandel talks about life with OCD:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dSZNnz9SM4g>

Michael Landsberg testimonial (depression):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWZUe-AxHbE>

Mental Illness: What You See / What You Don't See:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=54sDdNa9vek>

Emotions and the brain:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xNY0AAUtH3g>

Howie Mandel mental health vs. dental health:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cnVZCnotBi4>

Stigma (car accident video):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ec0h1LRdcl8>

Stigma (CMHA):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8BFFc4uKmRA>

Stigma (CMHA):
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ud2jNtcwhJ8>

Clara Hughes Talks about Mental Health with Strombo:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KEvLL-u2f1w&feature=youtu.be>

My Personal Resources:

