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Mental Wellness Student
Support Program

Languages Canada Conference 2020

Vancouver, BC



What is Health?



Physical Health

How our bodies are

Having a healthy body is important

- Keeping fit
- Eating well
- Adequate sleep
- Stress management



Mental Health

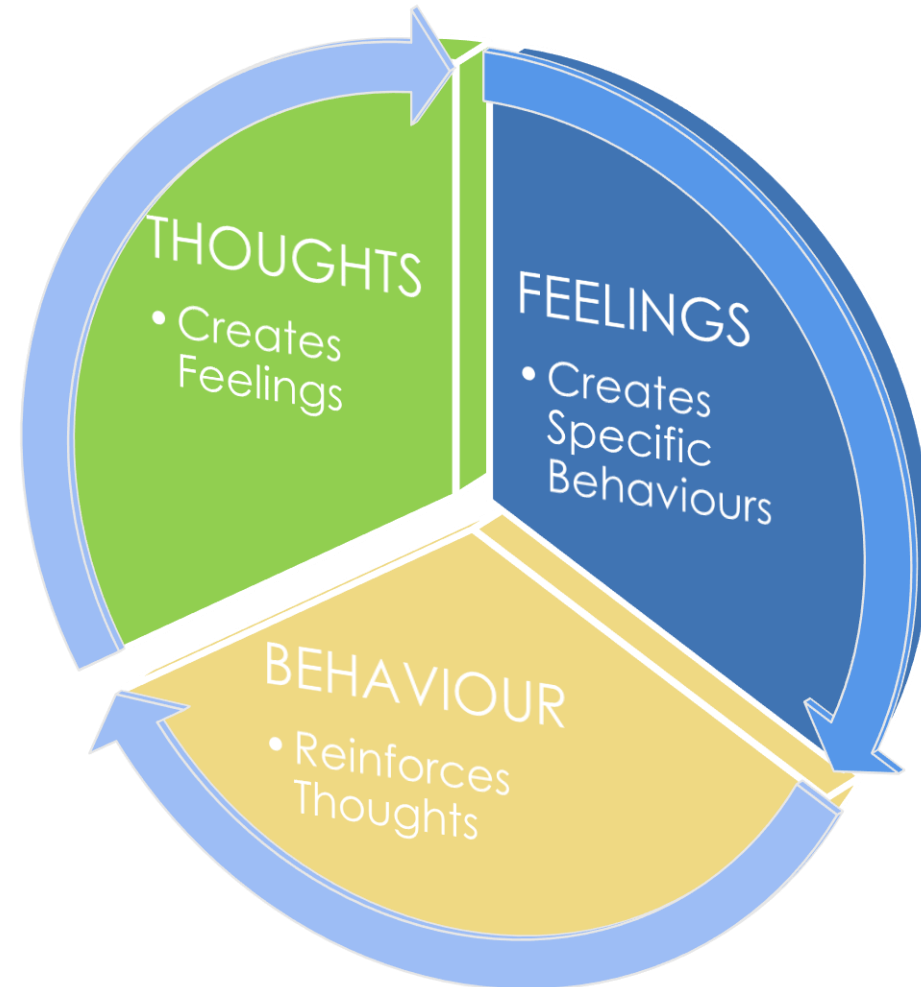
How our minds are

Thoughts, feelings, emotions and behaviours

Having a healthy mind is just as important as having a healthy body

The same things that keep our bodies healthy also keep our minds healthy

- ▶ Everyone has mental health regardless of whether or not they have a mental illness.
- ▶ A mental health concern affects our thoughts, feelings and how we see the world and decreases our ability to cope with the challenges of everyday life.
- ▶ It is the ability to cope with the day-to-day stresses of life, work productively, interact positively with others and realise our own potential.



“Same picture, **different view**”





Mental Health Continuum

IN CRISIS	STRUGGLING	UNSETTLED	THRIVING	EXCELLING
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very anxious • Very low mood • Absenteeism • Exhausted • Sickness, physical pains • Isolation • Very poor sleep • Weight loss • Psychotic break 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anxious • Depressed, sad • Low self-esteem • Tired • Poor work performance • Presenteeism • Poor concentration • Poor sleep • Poor appetite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worried, nervous • Edgy • Irritable • Frustrated • Self-doubting • Sad, gloomy • Trouble sleeping • Tired • Distracted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal mood, some variations • Positive • Calm • Functioning normally in job • Sleeping well • Focused • Eating normally • Normal social activity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cheerful, joyful • Solution focused • Energetic • High job performance • Prioritising sleep • 'Flow' - intense focus • Fully realising potential • Actively seeking growth



The Addiction Continuum



Not Addicted/Less Addicted

- ▶ Life Focused on family, relationships, hopes, goals, community, hobbies, etc.
- ▶ Higher degree of choice about use, ability to defer using
- ▶ Higher ability to cope with life struggles without urge to use

More Addicted

- ▶ Life focused on acquiring, using, dealing with consequences of using
- ▶ Lower degree of choice around if and when to use
- ▶ Life stress is often a trigger to use
- ▶ Irritability/anger connected with attempts to regulate use, or if substance is not available

What is Addiction

What is Use?

- ▶ In terms of engagement with substances or behaviour
- ▶ An individual's choice to use a substance or engage in a particular behavior for a given effect, and in a way that is not impeding their daily functioning.

What is Abuse?

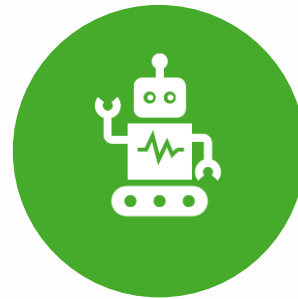
- ▶ Use of substance or over-engagement of behaviour in a way or quantity other than intended or in a way that detracts from the individual's ability to carry on with their daily functioning.



The 4 C's – When USE becomes ABUSE



Craving



Loss of **Control** of
amount or
frequency of use



Compulsion to use
or engage in
behaviour



Use despite
Consequences

Signs and Behaviours to look for include in youth, among others:

- Marked fall in school performance
- Poor grades in school despite trying very hard
- Severe worry or anxiety, as shown by regular refusal to go to school, go to sleep or take part in activities that are normal for the child's age
- Frequent physical complaints
- Marked changes in sleeping and/or eating habits
- Extreme difficulties in concentrating that get in the way at school or at home
- Sexual acting out
- Depression shown by sustained, prolonged negative mood and attitude, often accompanied by poor appetite, difficulty sleeping or thoughts of death
- Severe mood swings
- Strong worries or anxieties that get in the way of daily life, such as at school or socializing
- Repeated use of alcohol and/or drugs

Should They Get Support?

If the student's use is becoming a habit or negatively impacting their life, please consider reaching out to a campus counselor for support or encouraging the student to do so.

Things to Consider if their use is abuse:

- ▶ **harming relationships** - friends, or partner
- ▶ **impacting schoolwork** - missed classes, fall behind on assignments, forget to do things, etc.
- ▶ causing **financial problems** because most of their money goes to substances
- ▶ **making them sick** or causing physical harm
- ▶ leading to constant **physical health problems**
- ▶ leading them to put their **safety at risk** by making reckless decisions

DO:

- ▶ **Learn** as much as you can about specifically disorders
- ▶ **Be honest** and vocal about your concerns
- ▶ **Be caring and firm**
- ▶ **Suggest they seek help** from a professional
- ▶ **Be a good role model**, practice what you preach

Don't:

- ▶ **Place shame, blame, or guilt**
- ▶ **Make rules or promises** that you cannot or will not uphold
- ▶ **Give simple solutions**
- ▶ **Invalidate** their experience or try to **convince**
- ▶ **Give advice** about weight, exercise, or appearance
- ▶ **Ignore or avoid** the situation until it is severe or life-threatening

Do's And Don'ts when talking about Mental Health





What Can YOU Do?



Modeling Positive Mental Health



Choice of Language or Terms used



Listening Skills



Know the resources available within the school and in the community



Opportunities to Model Positive Mental Health

- Consider what behaviour you are modeling (what is your relationship with substances or other addictions, coping skills, emotions)
- Be consistent in your words and actions
- Attend to the imbalances in your own lives
- Be mindful of your own boundaries
- Respect the appropriate boundaries of the youth
- Get support for yourself so you become as grounded as possible
- Spend extra energy in positive aspects of your relationship with the youth
- Support positive connections in the youth's life

Opportunities to Model Positive Mental Health



- ▶ “Let’s Talk About” Events
 - Student selected topics
 - Student pre-prepare icebreaker, discussion topics, and questions
 - Student leaders facilitate small group discussions, bring back summary to larger group, and ask “experts” any outstanding questions
- ▶ Acknowledge feelings are critical to emotional development
- ▶ Allow the individual to express their needs and wants – then relay back to them what they said and ask if you have accurately identified how they feel
- ▶ Verbalize emotional expression with the individual



Support Creates Change

- Listen to understand, not to reply
- Identify your students' needs
 - First step of changing behavior is understanding what is maintaining the behavior in the first place. Asking someone to give something up without meeting that need is a different way is doomed to fail from the start.
- Identify your student's coping skills
 - When we become more present-focused in our coping, our coping styles become more short-term focused



Support Creates Change

- Identify your student's self-care Needs
 - People often think that taking time for themselves in the middle of busy times seems indulgent however looking after your well-being will help you be productive and care for others. **Self-care is not selfish.** Self-care is the act of taking care of yourself. Establishing self-care habits is an important part of living a healthy and happy life.
- Help your students identify barriers and Areas for improvement
- Help your students create a self-care plan

Self Care Strategies





Know what supports are available



On-Campus Resources

- Student Groups
- Counselling/Guidance
- Training Opportunities



Community Resources

- Counselling
- Support Groups
- Training Opportunities

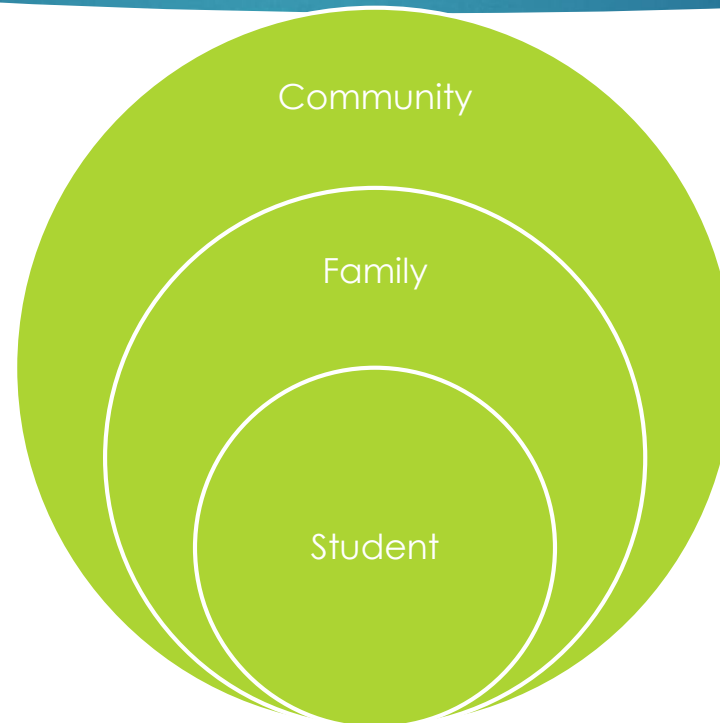


Student Support Programs

Intervention Strategies

Short Term:

Immediate needs
Crisis Intervention
Creating safety
Setting Change



Long Term:

Underlying needs
Ongoing Resources
Relationship building
Long Term Change



Evidence-Based Practices

- Assertiveness training (including feeling recognition, knowledge of rights, awareness of goals, and assertive skill-building)
- Social skills training
- Increasing individual's knowledge of consequences of use
- Increasing individual's self-regulation and refusal skills
- Providing supervised practice and feedback to enhance self-efficacy
- Expanding youth's non-using social supports
- Addressing social norms that favor alcohol and substance use
- Helping improve problem solving skills, and social problem-solving skills
- Building motivation to put problem solving strategies into use



Mental Health Matters

Your Role Matters!

When we empower students with knowledge and encourage dialogue, students will be able to get the help they need.

Front Line staff/faculty are at the heart of a student's school experience, and quite often the first point of contact for students in distress. If you are perceived to be approachable, well prepared, and sensitive to student needs, students are more willing to take your direction.

An institution should never be satisfied with how it is promoting positive mental health. As students change, institutional practices should be adjusted. The conversation around mental health and well-being must never stop! Open dialogue about mental health can help everyone.

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