Let's Talk:

Finding Reliable Mental Health Information and Resources

TEACHER TRAINING GUIDE

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About This Guide

This *Teacher Training Guide* has been created to provide Grade 7 and 8 teachers with background information and resources to use in implementing the *Let's Talk: Finding Reliable Mental Health Information and Resources* program.

Over the course of the lessons in this program, students will learn the truth about frequent misconceptions about mental illnesses and create media products aimed at educating their peers on the topic; learn media literacy skills to find, evaluate and authenticate content on the Internet in order to locate reliable information about mental health online; and recognize and locate different mental health resources available to them within their communities. The lessons also include a presentation for students about mental health where they will be introduced to holistic and universalizing concepts such as the mental health continuum, which distinguishes the spectrum of mental health to mental ill-health.

Teachers begin their preparation for these lessons by viewing the online *Teacher Training Presentation* (http://mediasmarts.ca/sites/default/files/tutorials/teacher-training-presentation/index.html), which provides an overview of the topics that are discussed in this guide and in the lessons. This guide is intended to be the second step in preparing to implement the program: it provides an expanded discussion of topics such as mental health and stigma and detailed rationales explaining the reasoning behind each of the lessons. The guide also provides detailed instructions on how to present the lessons in a way that will be emotionally safe for students, tips on how to identify and unpack stigmatizing language in the classroom as well as how to support students to access the appropriate channels to deal with any personal matters outside of the classroom setting. Also included are a bibliography of works cited and a list of additional resources available to teachers to use in a school setting.

Background Information

Talking about mental health helps to promote healthy communities. One in five people in Canada have a mental illness and the majority never seek help. Additionally, all people experience mental and emotional distress at various points in life.

We all need support, whether it is for a mental illness or an everyday life struggle. We all need people we can turn to for help. Unfortunately, many people, especially youth, do not seek help.

Talking about mental health in a positive way is important. It can help to break down the barriers to seeking help and encourage young people to seek help from the trusted people and organizations available in their communities.

What is Well-Being?

Well-being is a term associated with the *quality of life*. Social-environmental health, physical health and **mental and emotional health** all affect well-being. The concept of well-being is very subjective as it is up to individuals to determine how satisfied they are with their quality of life; what is considered 'positive well-being' can vary from person to person and culture to culture.

Nonetheless, a simple but useful definition of well-being may include:[1]

1. A positive outlook (which may change over time, even hour to hour)
2. Life satisfaction (which tends to be stable over longer periods of time)

Using finances as an example, it becomes clear how well-being is a subjective, self-defined concept. For example, some people may be satisfied with a $30,000 a year job while others may not settle for less than $100,000. It is interesting to consider 'How does someone determine how much money they should be satisfied with?'. The answer to this question may be influenced by various factors including social relationships, family, lifestyle and even mental and emotional health.

How is Mental Health Related to Well-Being?

"Mental health is a state of well-being in which the 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 own community."[2] There are individual, psychological and social factors that are known to influence each person's ability to achieve the best possible mental health and well-being. In this sense, we all have mental health, in the same sense that we all have physical health. Additionally, the term 'mental health' is similar to the term 'physical health' in that neither is inherently positive or negative.

The term 'mental health' does not simply mean the absence of a mental illness, just as 'physical health' doesn't just mean the

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[1] Helliwell, 2004.

[2] World Health Organization, 2011

absence of a physical disability or disease. An individual may never be diagnosed with a mental illness but still experience mental health challenges; as a matter of fact, it is believed everyone will experience a mental health challenge at some point or another.

On top of this, someone with a mental illness does not necessarily have 'negative mental health' (in the same sense that someone with a physical disability doesn't necessarily have 'negative physical health' or is 'unhealthy'). People with a mental illness can still enjoy mental health and have a high quality of life (just as someone with a physical disability can).

This definition demonstrates the intrinsic and symbiotic relationship between mental health, social-environmental health and physical health. As discussed above, well-being and the quality of life are important factors that can impact mental health. These factors continuously affect one another to varying degrees.

Mental Health as a Continuum

Throughout life, people experience shifts in their physical health and their social environments. This is the same for mental and emotional health. It may be helpful to think about mental health as a continuum; on one end of the continuum is mental health/wellness (e.g. content and satisfied) and on the other end are mental illnesses.[3]

At various points in our lives, everyone will experience different points on this continuum. We will all experience mental

health and mental health challenges to varying degrees; this is true for everyone, including people who have been diagnosed with a mental illness (such as depression or anxiety) and those who have not.

What is Stigma?

The Mental Health Commission of Canada defines stigma as follows[4]:

Stigma refers to beliefs and attitudes about mental health and mental illness that lead to the negative stereotyping of people and to prejudice against them and their families. These are often based on ignorance, misunderstanding and misinformation.

Stigma is made up of two parts: negative and unfavourable attitudes, and negative behaviours that result from those attitudes. People living with a mental illness often experience stigma through:

- *Loss of opportunities in employment, housing or education*

- *Loss of friends and family members (their social and support network)*

- *Self-stigma created when someone with a mental illness believes the negative messages*

Stigma can be represented in a variety of ways. Similar to racism and sexism, stigma is often 'invisible.' For instance, individuals may have difficulty securing employment or maintaining fulfilling social relationships due to stigmas surrounding mental health and/or mental illnesses.

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[3] World Health Organization, 2005, 2.

[4] Mental Health Commission, n.d.

Stigma should not be confused with discrimination. Simply put, stigma is an attitude, while discrimination is a behaviour that is influenced by that attitude.

What is Stigmatizing Language?

Perhaps one of the most common representations of stigma is stigmatizing language – words or phrases that support a negative, misinformed attitude about mental health and mental illnesses. The use of stigmatizing language may be contextual or it may be associated with derogatory words or terms. An example of contextual stigmatizing language may be: 'People with mental illnesses can't work a normal job.' Some examples of stigmatizing words or terms include 'crazy,' 'nuts,' 'retarded,' etc.. Please keep in mind that stigmatizing language is not always apparent or intentional: a seemingly innocent word may carry negative connotations.

Stigmatizing Words

People may not be aware of what language is stigmatizing, partly because popular culture often uses stigmatizing language to describe mental health. The use of stigmatizing language is not always apparent: a seemingly innocent word may carry negative connotations. Please refer to the list under 'Addressing and Unpacking Stigmatizing Language' on page 11.

Stigmatizing Phrases

In addition, the way we phrase and construct sentences can be stigmatizing. For instance, although the sentence 'Joey is schizophrenic' does not necessarily contain any stigmatizing words, the manner in which the sentence is phrased may be considered to be stigmatizing language because it suggests that schizophrenia defines who Joey is. A preferred way to phrase this sentence would be 'Joey has schizophrenia.'

Lesson Rationales

The *Let's Talk: Finding Reliable Mental Health Information and Resources* lesson series consists of three lessons: *Setting the Record Straight: Public Service Announcements on Mental Health, Setting the Record Straight: Authenticating Mental Health Information Online* and *Seeking Help.* Although these lessons are designed to complement each other, teachers may choose to do only one or some of the lessons and to do them in any order.

Setting the Record Straight: Public Service Announcements on Mental Health Lesson

The *Public Service Announcements on Mental Health* lesson is based on several key concepts of media literacy. Chief among these is the concept that media have social and political implications and convey ideological messages about values, power and authority. These messages may be the result of conscious decisions, but more often they are the result of unconscious biases and unquestioned assumptions – and they can have a significant influence on what we think and believe. As a result, media have great influence on politics and on forming social change. TV news coverage and advertising can greatly influence the election of a national leader on the basis of image; representations of world issues, both in journalism and fiction, can affect how much attention they receive; and society's views towards different groups can be directly influenced by how – and how often – they appear in media.

For many of us, media provide a lot of what we know – or think we know – about minority groups. This may be even truer of people who are experiencing a mental illness: since we are often unaware that our peers, friends and family members are dealing with mental health issues, media portrayals may be the only place we encounter them. Unfortunately, these media representations can contribute to misconceptions about mental health and negative stereotypes of people dealing with mental illnesses.

This lesson helps to correct possibly stigmatizing stereotypes by letting students be the experts. After studying commercial advertisements and public service announcements to understand how mass media can be used to persuade, inform and misinform, students put their new knowledge into practice by creating their own public service announcements that debunk common myths about mental illnesses.

Setting the Record Straight: Authenticating Mental Health Information Online Lesson

Another important aspect of how media influence young people's view on mental illnesses is that for most youth digital media are one of the main ways they seek and encounter information. Unfortunately, a tremendous amount of misinformation can be found online and it can be difficult for young people to tell good information from bad. This can be particularly true for youth who are dealing with mental illnesses, who often turn to online resources for advice or

support without knowing how to judge the credibility of what they find – often with negative consequences for their mental and physical health.

Participants in youth focus groups held by MediaSmarts in the fall of 2012 were generally aware of the problems with online sources of information, but – similar to youth surveyed in studies around the world – continued to use them anyway, without any particular confidence that they knew how to get good results. In order to be able to find and evaluate online information young people need to develop *digital literacy* skills.

Competencies for digital literacy can be classified according to three main principles: *Use*, *Understand* and *Create*.

Use represents the technical fluency that's needed to engage with computers and the Internet. Skills and competencies that fall under *use* range from basic technical know-how – using computer programs such as word processors, web browsers, email and other communication tools – to the more sophisticated abilities for accessing and using knowledge resources, such as search engines, online databases and emerging technologies like cloud computing.

Understand is that critical piece – it's the set of skills that help us comprehend, contextualize and critically evaluate digital media so that we can make informed decisions about what we do and encounter online. These are the essential skills that we need to start teaching our kids as soon as they go online. *Understand* includes recognizing how networked technology affects our behaviour and our perceptions, beliefs and feelings about the world around us. *Understand* also prepares us for a knowledge economy as we develop –

individually and collectively – information management skills for finding, evaluating and effectively using information to communicate, collaborate and solve problems.

Create is the ability to produce content and effectively communicate through a variety of digital media tools. Creation with digital media is more than knowing how to use a word processor or write an email: it includes being able to adapt what we produce for various contexts and audiences; create and communicate using rich media such as images, video and sound; and effectively and responsibly engage with Web 2.0 user-generated content.

This lesson focuses primarily on the *use* and *understand* aspects of digital literacy, as students improve their ability to find good information by developing effective search strings and then evaluate information they find. Students learn both how to recognize the markers of reliability or unreliability in an online source, and how to find the information they need using sources they already know are reliable.

Seeking Help Lesson

Adolescence is a time associated with transition, growth and discovery. It is a time when many changes are occurring physically, socially and emotionally; each of these components can have an impact on mental health. These changes often elicit a variety of emotional responses, some of which may result in mental and emotional distress. We believe that responses along the mental health continuum are developmentally appropriate and that teachers have a core role as trusted adults

to support the message that normalizes help-seeking.

With this in mind, we asked: *what is the most effective way for youth to respond to times of mental health and emotional distress?* Our key message is that all people, especially adolescents, depend upon complex social networks for mental and emotional support. Social networks often vary from person to person. Some people may depend upon a large group of friends, while others may receive greater support from their family or even just one person. Giving permission to ourselves to seek help from those around us is important at any time, but especially during times of mental and emotional distress. However, most youth will *not* seek help during times of mental and emotional distress.

Barriers to Seeking Help

Research has shown that there are several reasons why most youth do not seek help during times of mental and emotional distress. Some of the most common reasons are:

- Young people are often concerned with the stigma associated with having sought or seeking help
  - *Young people are often concerned about a lack of confidentiality when seeking help*
- Young people often believe their problems are unimportant and do not warrant help
  - *Young people (especially males) often believe problems can be managed alone*
- Young people may not be aware of the various resources available within their personal lives/communities

- *Many young people may not be comfortable talking to their family or friends*

Breaking Down the Barriers

The purpose of the *Seeking Help* lesson is to break down the barriers to seeking help. In order to accomplish this, the lesson has set forth the following learning objectives:

- Students will recognize that seeking help is universal; we all need help sometimes
- Students will recognize that there is help available to them within their communities
- Students will become more familiar with Kids Help Phone, a service available to all youth 24/7

Teachers are in a unique role to promote help-seeking among adolescents. Teachers offer tremendous mental and emotional support to youth on a daily basis and may even be the first to recognize mental and emotional challenges that may arise among their students.

Although this is true, teachers are not counsellors. During this lesson teachers will educate their students on when and where they can seek support and help. Specifically, this lesson will encourage students to consider the different people and places available to them when they are in need of support/help (specifically during times of mental and emotional distress). During the lesson teachers will facilitate discussions in which their students will share the people and places available within their community (including informal social support networks and resources that support their well-being).

The three lessons in the program are designed to ensure that discussions are safe and contained. The students will never be asked to share personal information about their informal social support networks or experiences with professional mental health resources. Rather, student discussions will be based on fictional scenarios. These fictional scenarios discuss common situations experienced by youth that oftentimes elicit mental and emotional distress.

Kids Help Phone Breaks Down the Barriers to Seeking Help

We recognize that different communities may have greater access to formal mental health services. Additionally, we also recognize that some youth may not have a diverse social support network. Nonetheless, it is important that students recognize that there is *always someone who cares, someone who wants to help.*

Kids Help Phone is a service available to *all* youth. It is a place youth can call anytime they need someone to talk to. Kids Help Phone can also provide youth with referrals to mental health services available to that youth within their town/community.

Not only is Kids Help Phone available to all youth, but it also breaks down the barriers that prevent youth from seeking help:

- All of Kids Help Phone's services (including phone and Internet) are *confidential* and *anonymous*
- All of Kids Help Phone's services are *free* and can be reached *anywhere* there is a phone or Internet connection at anytime (365 days a year, 24/7)
- Kids Help Phone's counsellors are *professionals* and are non-judgemental
- Youth may contact Kids Help Phone about *anything;* if it is a concern for the caller, it is important to them
- Kids Help Phone has a large database in which counsellors can refer callers to the services available to them within their local communities

Classroom Guidelines

It is only fairly recently that teachers and school staff have begun to discuss mental health with students. While every effort has been made to make these lessons a safe and emotionally secure experience for students, talking about mental health can nevertheless be a sensitive experience – for both students and teachers. The following section provides teachers and other school staff with advice on how to create a safe environment for students; what to do if stigmatizing language arises in the classroom; and how to handle it if a student discloses a personal mental health issue over the course of these lessons.

Creating a Safe Environment

Mental health can be a sensitive issue to talk about for many people. Sometimes people feel uncomfortable discussing mental health – perhaps because of concerns about their own mental health or concerns for someone close to them. Additionally, mental health is often misunderstood or associated with stigmas which can make it difficult for people to discuss. When talking about mental health, it is important to consider the psychological and emotional safety of all your students.

What is a Safe Environment?

A safe environment is one where all participants feel safe and secure and free from judgement and stigma. Participants should never feel coerced to engage in something that makes them feel uncomfortable. A safe environment should also promote openness and diversity. Creating a safe environment to talk about mental health depends on several factors. First, classroom materials and resources must be developed with a safe environment in mind. Second, the teaching of those materials and resources must be delivered in a safe manner.

How to Ensure a Safe Environment

To foster a safe classroom environment, teachers need to feel prepared and supported. Below is a list of steps that can be taken to successfully create a safe environment for the delivery of the *Let's Talk: Finding Reliable Mental Health Information and Resources* program.

1. **Familiarize yourself with all of the materials**

   - Familiarize yourself with all the materials that are provided, especially the background information on mental health and the resources that will be used during the lessons.

   - The more familiar you are with the materials, the more comfortable you will be when teaching the lessons.

2. **Follow the lesson plan**

   - Each lesson plan has been designed to ensure a safe environment.

   - It is important not to stray from the lesson plan or the resources provided.

3. **Prepare your students**

   - Students should know exactly what they will be learning and why they are learning it.

- Students should be made aware of the learning objectives of the lesson prior to starting the activities.

- Students should be aware that this lesson is not a forum to discuss individual mental health concerns or personal experiences with mental health or help-seeking.

- Some discussions may evoke discomfort for some students and may lead them to question their own functioning. Students need to know this is a natural reaction to the discussion.

4. **Be aware of your students' backgrounds**

- It's a good idea to be familiar with the backgrounds of the students participating in the presentation. Talk to your school's guidance counsellor or social worker to familiarize yourself with any mental health concerns amongst your students and work with the mental health professionals at your school to make any necessary modifications to the lesson or to establish a support net for the student(s) if needed.

- If any materials appear to make a student uncomfortable (e.g. if a student has recently experienced something discussed within one of the scenarios or doesn't have family support), shift the conversation to more neutral territory and follow up with the student after class to make sure he or she is all right.

5. **Be mindful of cultural diversity**

- Not all cultures view mental health and wellness in the same way.

- Although it may not be possible to know all of the different cultural perspectives regarding mental health, please maintain an open mind.

- It may be helpful to familiarize yourself with different cultural perspectives within your classroom. Consider resources such as peers, principals, guidance counsellors, parents or others for learning about different cultural perspectives.

6. **Have support on hand**

- Before conducting the *Seeking Help* lesson, make sure you have informed and consulted with your principal and a guidance counsellor.

Quick Reference

Do:

1. Familiarize yourself with all of the materials provided
2. Follow the lesson plan
3. Prepare your students
4. Be aware of your students' backgrounds
5. Be mindful of cultural diversity
6. Have support on hand

Don't:

1. Teach the lesson without reviewing all materials
2. Create different activities or host discussions that are not a part of the lesson plan
3. Expect students to know when it is an appropriate time and place to discuss their personal concerns
4. Assume students have no mental health concerns
5. Expect everyone in the class to share the same values
6. Teach the lesson without informing a principal or guidance counsellor

Addressing and Unpacking Stigmatizing Language

If stigmatizing language arises during class discussions, it is important to *address* the language and *unpack* it. By *addressing* we mean acknowledging when stigmatizing language is used and facilitating a discussion about the use of such language. By *unpacking* we mean analyzing what was said and discussing why it is considered stigmatizing.

It's important to address and unpack stigmatizing language when it happens. If the use of stigmatizing language is not addressed and unpacked immediately, it may create a negative basis for discussion within your class. With that being said, the point to unpacking is to reaffirm the appropriate foundation for discussions. It may not be necessary to address the individual who used the stigmatizing language directly, especially if these comments were unintentional or were said within a small group.

Make sure students understand that using derogatory language with the intention to hurt (e.g. "you're just psycho") is unacceptable. You can also help students to learn that the casual labels that are sometimes used and the assumptions that are sometimes made can be hurtful to people who are dealing with mental health challenges as well as contributing to the social stigma against mental illnesses.

Recognizing our Personal Attitudes and Biases

What is most important is to model and encourage a respectful attitude towards mental health. When talking about mental health issues use ordinary language, rather than clinical or diagnostic terms, and reinforce the idea of the mental health continuum. It is important to recognize that we all have personal attitudes and opinions about mental health; helping to unpack stigmatizing language or facilitating discussions includes being mindful and aware of our own beliefs and maintaining an open stance to discussion.

The following is a list of simple do's and don'ts for appropriate language when discussing mental health issues in the classroom.

Discussing Mental Health in the Classroom: Do's and Don'ts

Respectful language	Disrespectful language
person with schizophrenia	schizophrenic
person with bipolar disorder	manic depressive
person with a disability	handicapped person

Empowering language	Disempowering language
person with a mental illness	"mentally ill"
	victim, sufferer
	crazy, wacko, lunatic

Do	Don't
put the person first	refer to people by their illness
become informed about mental illnesses	be judgemental
speak up about stigma	let jokes or misinformation go
talk openly about mental illnesses	treat mental illnesses as something to be embarrassed about

Terms to avoid
challenged
special
normal, not normal
psycho, psychopath, demented

What should I do if stigmatizing language arises during class discussions?

Below are the steps to take to *unpack* stigmatizing language.

1. **Ask for clarification of what was said**

   - Sometimes young people may not realize that their language is inappropriate. It is important to give them a chance to explain what they meant.

   - It is not necessary to direct attention to the person who used stigmatizing language. Avoid pointing out specific students – nobody should get 'in trouble,' but rather everyone should be educated.

     Teacher Prompts
     - *What does it mean when someone says…?*
     - *I'm not exactly sure what… means, can someone explain it to me?*

   (Note: If the student unintentionally used stigmatizing language, move on to "Unpack the term" below. If the student intentionally used language which reinforces negative beliefs and attitudes about mental health, continue to "Validate the student's right to an opinion".)

2. **Validate the student's right to an opinion**

   - If you ignore or dismiss what a student has to say, they will most likely ignore or dismiss what you have to say.

   - It is important to highlight that you *may not agree* with their perspective,

but that you respect their right to have an opinion.

- Remind the class that no one is in trouble and that learning can occur through discussions like the one you are facilitating.

- *That is something that some people do believe*
- *You do have the right to believe that, but I don't necessarily agree*

(Note: Keep in mind that different cultures may have varying perspectives of mental health. Sometimes these views may appear to be stigmatizing to others. It is important that we respect different cultural perspectives while still sharing an alternate perspective.)

3. Unpack the term

- It is important for people to understand how and why their language may be considered to be stigmatizing language.

Teacher Prompts
- *I wonder why some people may be offended by that. Can you think of why?*
- *I know you didn't mean to say anything wrong, but do you see how that might be offensive?*
- *That may be considered disrespectful to some people because…*

4. Provide alternate perspectives

- It is important to provide the class with an alternate perspective. This can be done through:

  o actively role-modeling the perspective by stating it as something you believe in
  o citing scientific resources (such as a study)
  o asking students to suggest positive alternative language

Teacher Prompts
- *Actually, research has shown that most people with a mental illness lead successful social lives and employment.*
- *I know someone with… and they are very successful.*
- *Can anybody think of a different way to communicate that?*

5. End the discussion

- If individual students attempt to debate, invite them to discuss the issue with you later.
  o Encourage students to research the topic if they are interested.

Teacher Prompts
- *Everyone has a right to an opinion, but we should be mindful how our words or language may be interpreted by others.*
- *If anybody feels like they would like to discuss this further please come see me after class.*
- *If anybody would like to learn more about this topic please conduct some research using the research skills you've learned.*

Class Dynamics

Although it is important to address and unpack stigmatizing language in a timely manner, classroom circumstances may

affect how and when we do this. Use your best judgement to determine the most appropriate time and place to address stigmatizing language. As a general rule, if this arises during class discussions it should always be addressed immediately (with the entire class).If a small group of students use stigmatizing language it may not be suitable to address the language in front of the entire class.

Things to consider

1. **Was the stigmatizing language heard by the entire class?**

   - If the entire class heard the language it should be addressed immediately.

2. **Was the stigmatizing language offensively directed towards a student (or family member)?**

   - If stigmatizing language was directed towards a specific student that student may not want it to be addressed in front of the whole class.

   - Privately ask the student what they would like to do.

   - Dedicate time after the lesson to address and unpack the stigmatizing language with those involved (follow steps 1 to 5 above).

3. **Was the stigmatizing language used in a small group?**

   - Consider whether or not the language was heard by most of the class (and whether it would be appropriate to address the language with the entire class).

- Dedicate time after the lesson to address and unpack the stigmatizing language with those involved (follow steps 1 to 5 above.)

Quick Reference

Do:

1. Ask for clarification of the term
2. Validate the youth's right to an opinion
3. Unpack the stigmatizing language
4. Provide alternate perspectives
5. End the discussion

Don't:

1. Ignore jokes or any stigmatizing language that may arise
2. Assume someone intentionally used stigmatizing language
3. Direct attention to a specific student when addressing/unpacking stigmatizing language
4. Punish somebody for unintentionally using stigmatizing language; educate them instead
5. Dismiss other perspectives as being incorrect
6. Debate or argue with students

Student Disclosure

Some students may find that the material resonates strongly with them and want to talk more about their own personal situations. We want to ensure teachers are adequately prepared for such an occurrence. Below are some tips on how to manage student disclosure about mental health. Remember to check your policies; most provincial/territorial ministries and school boards or districts have specific procedures regarding student disclosure.

Do:

1. Select an appropriate location

Before meeting with the student, try to arrange to speak with the student in a place where they can discuss confidential information.

2. Consult

Before meeting with the student, it is a good idea to advise your principal or guidance counsellor. You may want to share with the administrator when and where you are meeting; the administrator can provide you with any additional school policies that you should be aware of. Every school district may have different policies regarding 'duty to report' concerns about mental health and your principal will know what needs to be reported and what doesn't.

3. Listen and empathize

It can be difficult for students to disclose personal information. Please remember to actively listen to the student and express a genuine interest and concern to what they are saying. An effective way to express this is to **validate** and **normalize** what the student is saying (e.g. I can understand why you are concerned, this is something many people experience and it is natural to be concerned and worried).

4. Promote help-seeking

Because it can be difficult to disclose personal information, it is supportive to praise someone for seeking help. You may ask the student if they have spoken to anyone else, such as their parents or another trusted adult, and promote help-seeking behaviour by encouraging them to think about the support network in their lives.

Don't:

1. Discuss in a public place

Sometimes it may seem out of your control where a student decides to talk to you. If the student begins telling you something in a public space, express a genuine interest in what they are saying and suggest talking in a more private location. Remember to respect the student's privacy; if the student decides not to talk it is important to respect this wish.

2. Handle it alone

Remember you are not alone. It is important to seek support from school administrators and other support staff in order to ensure you are aware of all pertinent policies and have both professional and personal support.

3. Avoid the discussion

Teachers are important allies in the development of positive well-being for their students and they can play an important role as trusted adults who can be turned to in times of need. To promote mental health and help-seeking, students need to see teachers as people they can turn to for help.

4. Try to counsel

While you do want students to see you as a source of help, you should never feel like you are a counsellor. Avoid asking leading questions or making assumptions (e.g. "That sounds like it might be depression, maybe you should talk to your doctor.")

5. Keep it to yourself

Sometimes students will ask that what has been disclosed stays between the two of you only, even though in your professional

judgement you have reservations. Students must understand that it is part of a teacher's role to try to ensure a student's safety and well-being. At times, this means that certain things they have shared, particularly those that may involve risk to themselves or others, cannot be kept confidential. Remember to never promise to keep anything secret with a student. If a student asks us to keep what they tell us a secret, candidly inform them that you cannot promise to keep anything secret because the most important thing is their safety.

Teacher's Role

We recognize that teachers are not counsellors; it is not their role to offer students solutions or insights into the root causes of their problems. Teachers are important allies in the development of positive well-being for their students and they can play an important role as trusted adults who they can turn to in times of need. However, the underlying role of teachers is to show students empathy and educate and promote positive mental health practices, while referring them to the appropriate formal mental health resources.

Always keep in mind your own personal health and well-being:

- Having a student disclose a mental health-related struggle – particularly if it leads you to fear that their physical health or life is in danger – can be very distressing.

- It is important that we *all* have support in our lives; use the resources available in your school, district and surrounding community if in distress.

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Additional Resources

The following resources can help provide information about dealing with mental health issues in a school setting. Before attempting to address any mental health issues, find out about relevant school board or district policies as well as resources available to you.

Talking about mental illness

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health [http://www.camh.ca]

"Stigma continues to be a huge problem for people living with mental illness. It undermines a person's sense of self, relationships, well-being and prospects for recovery. Communities are proving they can make a difference through education and awareness programs. The program described in **Talking about mental illness** helps to increase awareness about mental illness and the stigma that surrounds it. It is based on the experiences of three communities that participated in the program, and the steps they took to increase awareness and understanding of mental illness."

Teacher's Guide
[http://www.camh.ca/en/education/teachers_school_programs/resources_for_teachers_and_schools/talking_about_mental_illness/Pages/tami_teachersresource.aspx]

Community Guide
[http://www.camh.ca/en/education/teachers_school_programs/resources_for_teachers_and_schools/talking_about_mental_illness_a_community_guide_for_developing_an_awareness_program_for_youth/Pages/index.aspx]

Kids Help Phone

Kids Help Phone provides clinically grounded and research-informed information and resources about mental health, which is written and presented in an accessible way for youth. Teachers are encouraged to review the Kids Help Phone websites with their students.

Teens' Site
[http://kidshelpphone.ca/Teens/Home.aspx]

Kids' Site
[http://kidshelpphone.ca/Kids/Home.aspx]

Mental Health Literacy Workshop

Ontario Centre of Excellence for Child and Youth Mental Health
[http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca]

"The Centre has developed a training program in mental health literacy for educators, administrators, mental health service providers and health-care professionals. The workshop includes:

- Basic knowledge and skills required to understand common child and youth mental health issues.
- A common understanding and language for participants.
- A snapshot of local and provincial resources and how to use them."

Presentation
[http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/sites/default/files/presentation_mental_health_literacy_workshop.pdf]

Support Materials
[http://www.excellenceforchildandyouth.ca/training/mental-health-literacy?ss_token=bQ9KNFhNJyRcMWQKRFIRHCBSGAFrZSwPH2VVWEtEYA~~,WllvDk5PLB4QR2YGAXQZETIqf1QzUCwPH2ZdVUo~]

Making a Difference: An Educator's Guide to Child and Youth Mental Health Problems

Student Support Leadership Initiative, Hamilton District Team

"This guide is designed to help teachers understand more about mental health problems in children and youth, to outline the steps they can and should take to help those students, and to give them some ideas on how they can talk about mental health problems in their classroom."

Guide
[http://cymhin.offordcentre.com/downloads/Making%20a%20Difference%203-2.pdf]

Tools to Help You find Resources in Your Community

211

211's award-winning telephone help line (2-1-1) and website provide a gateway to community, social, non-clinical health and related government services. 211 helps to navigate the complex network of human services quickly and easily, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, in over 100 languages.

211 connects people to the right information and services, strengthens Canada's health and human services, and helps Canadians to become more engaged with their communities.

Kids Help Phone

Kids Help Phone Database – By Contacting a Counsellor

Kids Help Phone maintains a database of over 37,000 programs and services for young people across Canada. Kids Help Phone's professional counsellors can connect young people who contact them to a service right in their community, whether they need a place to stay for the night, a way home or a sexual health clinic.

Resources Around Me – *Database available to the public*

Resources Around Me is a teen friendly version of Kids Help Phone's national database, which is available to the public on kidshelpphone.ca (teen site) and the Always There mobile app. Users can anonymously search for resources by a location (e.g. city, postal code, intersection or street address) which will appear on an easy to read map.