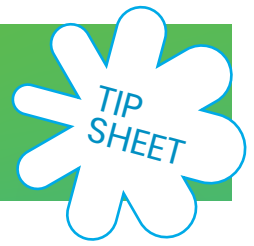


Supporting Staff Mental Health and Well-Being



Having a whole-school approach that values the importance of positive relationships and connectedness can boost mental health and well-being for both students and staff.

Administrators can support and promote staff mental health and well-being by fostering a stigma-free culture that encourages 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 self-care 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.

Starting the discussion with staff

Belonging comes from recognition of who we are as individuals, and the role we play as part of a group. We nurture belonging when we show interest in others. We need opportunity to be cared for, and to care for others (Noddings, 2012).

In order to nurture these concepts and grow them into the fabric of the school, administrators may consider:

- staffing purposefully to build teams that will work with and challenge one another, while they build relationships
- recognizing and appreciating the contributions (including efforts) made by staff members as part of every day
- incorporating 'get to know you' type activities into staff meetings
- beginning to explore mental health literacy at staff meetings



When the values of caring, and being cared for, become shared amongst a school community's members, the administration may change – but the culture is sustained.

Resources for starting well-being discussions

General:

[Promoting mental health: finding a shared language](#)

Mindfulness:

[Just breathe](#)

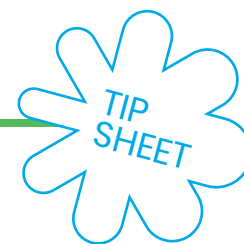
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Tiered support model for staff well-being

Tier 1 – all

- Promote a whole-school approach to mental health and well-being.
- Create a supportive working environment.
- Create a culture that supports staff to be open about their mental health.
- Model a good work/life balance.
- Treat mental health as you would physical health.
- Take steps to normalize conversations about mental health and encourage open dialogue.
- Recognize the signs and symptoms of common 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.

Tier 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 staff towards appropriate professional help (e.g., EAP).
- Help employees manage their workloads.
- Make reasonable accommodations for staff with mental health problems.
- If needed, consult with your supervisor about how best to support.

Tier 3 – few

- Check in and keep in contact with staff who are struggling with a mental health problem.
- Show care and concern – offer the support that is reasonable for you to provide.
- Support staff who are experiencing mental health problems.
- Reach out to employee services and community connections.
- Be knowledgeable about re-entry planning process and support if there is a re-entry to work.

Supporting staff mental health and well-being

When educators struggle with a mental health problem, it can interfere with their ability to be effective and compassionate with students in the classroom. 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. School administrators need to balance compassion and caring for the staff member with the needs and demands of the classroom.

Things TO DO when supporting staff

- Meet with them privately.
- Be aware of your own biases.
- Be honest, upfront, professional and caring.
- Provide a safe and comfortable environment.
- Focus on solutions.
- Be prepared that the employee may not be willing to respond.
- Focus on work performance, if resistance.

Things NOT TO DO when supporting staff

- Don't offer a pep talk.
- Don't be accusatory.
- Don't say you have been there unless you have.
- Don't gossip.
- Don't probe into personal life, diagnose or act as a counsellor.

“Positive mental health is the capacity of each and all of us to feel, think, and act in ways that enhance our ability to enjoy life and deal with the challenges we face. It is a positive sense of emotional and spiritual well-being that respects the importance of culture, equity, social justice, interconnections and personal dignity”.

– Public Health Agency of Canada

