



Overview for School Mental Health Professionals

What are the modules?

A series of three 40-minute modules per grade have been provided by the Ministry of Education to support the **existing mental health literacy expectations** within Strand D of the **Health and Physical Education** curriculum. The modules are specifically designed to be delivered by an educator (most typically the individual who provides Health and Physical Education instruction); they are not student self-directed, and educators play a crucial role in guiding and facilitating the learning.

GRADE 7	
MODULE	KEY LEARNINGS
7.1 Mental Health, Mental Illness, and the Relationship Between Them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mental health and mental illness are two separate yet connected concepts.• Mental health is something we all have. We all want good mental health for ourselves and those we care about.• There are many perspectives about mental health and mental illness. They are concepts that can vary across cultures.• Many factors may influence and support our mental health. They can be different for each of us.
7.2 Understanding Signs of a Mental Health Problem and How to Seek Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are strategies that can support our mental health. Different strategies may fit for each of us. Different strategies may fit different situations, too, so it's important to have a few options available.• Noticing changes in your mental health can help you know when to use strategies that work for you.• Getting help when you need it is also an important strategy to take care of your mental health.



GRADE 7	
MODULE	KEY LEARNINGS
<p>7.3 Mental Health, Substance Use, and the Relationship Between Them</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance use can affect each of us differently. When we are younger (age 25 or less), some substances (e.g., cannabis) can have particularly negative effects on our brains because they are still developing. • Our mental health can play a role in substance use and substance use can negatively impact our mental health. • We can seek support for substance use problems the same way we seek support for mental health problems.
GRADE 7 CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS	
<p>Substance Use, Addictions, and Related Behaviours [D1.2] demonstrate an understanding of linkages between mental health problems and problematic substance use, as well as between brain development and cannabis use, and identify school and community resources (e.g., trusted adults at school, guidance counsellors, public health services, help lines) that can provide support for mental health concerns relating to substance use, addictions, and related behaviours</p> <p>Mental Health Literacy [D1.6] demonstrate an understanding of the relationship between mental health and mental illness and identify possible signs of mental health problems</p>	

GRADE 8	
MODULE	KEY LEARNINGS
<p>8.1 Mental Health and Stigma</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is still stigma related to mental health and mental illness in our society. • This stigma can negatively impact how we talk about mental health and mental illness, how we treat people experiencing mental illness, and how comfortable people are seeking support. • Our word choices can contribute to stigma and even cause harm, or they can empower others, create openings to share experiences, and support seeking help. • The words we use not only influence how we make others feel, but they also influence how we feel, too. • There are additional actions that can help reduce stigma too, such as showing kindness, compassion, and empathy for other people's feelings and experiences; respecting what is different and unique about each of us; and educating others.



GRADE 8	
MODULE	KEY LEARNINGS
<p>8.2 Supporting Our Mental Health: Managing Stress</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We all feel stress at times. • Some stress is a good thing! It can help us in many ways. • Managing stress is a skill we can practice and get better at. There are strategies that can help. • Different strategies may work at different times, so it’s important to have a few options available and to practice them regularly. • When we don’t get a break from stress—like stress that is related to experiences of racism, bullying, or poverty—it can impact our mental and physical health. When that starts to happen, it’s time to seek more support.
<p>8.2 How to Help a Friend: Seeking Support for Others While Caring for Ourselves</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We may play an important role to play in supporting our friends. • Sometimes we need other people to play a role, too. We don’t have to manage our concern for a friend all alone. • Even if our friend asks us not to, we need to seek support from a caring adult right away if there is a risk to their safety or anyone else’s. • It’s okay to prioritize our own mental health while we are helping a friend. Our mental health matters, too.
GRADE 8 CURRICULUM EXPECTATIONS	
<p>Mental Health Literacy [D2.4] demonstrate an understanding of how incorporating healthy habits and coping strategies into daily routines can help maintain mental health and resilience in times of stress</p> <p>Mental Health Literacy [D3.4] explain how word choices and societal views about mental health and mental illness can affect people and perpetuate stigma, and identify actions that can counteract that stigma</p>	



What additional resources are available?

Several additional educator supports have been created to complement the modules, including:

- **Extension activities** within the modules to deepen the learning.
- An accompanying **Educator Guide** with bonus content designed to enhance educator confidence and offer practical support for teaching about mental health.
- Prepared notes to support communication with **parents/caregivers**.
- A **student notebook** for each grade with organizers and information to support the learning.
- A **supportive transition tip sheet** outlining activities that provide the opportunity to practice strategies to promote mental health, encourage support-seeking, and help students transition to the next part of their day in a positive way.
- **Tips** that keep educator well-being in mind.
- **Implementation supports**, including an administrator tip sheet, prepared slide decks, template communication materials, and more.

Research tells us that when mental health literacy is done in a sensitive and appropriate manner, discussing mental health can have **positive impacts** on students' well-being. It is not anticipated that teaching about mental health will be distressing for students. The modules have been **carefully designed** to support thoughtful delivery of the content.



Keeping the focus on literacy

As always, educators are not expected to be mental health experts. They already have an important role in **promoting positive mental health** and **building the mental health literacy of students** through **teaching** curriculum. The modules have been thoughtfully designed to assist them in staying within this role.

Supports in the modules:

- **The focus is on wellness.** The modules are intentionally designed to focus on mental health as a positive concept. Students are reminded that the focus is on sharing facts and reliable information rather than personal stories.
- **Guiding prompts and language** are provided for educators to draw on, including educator discussion guides and ready-made videos and slide decks.
- Students are provided with **information regarding supports** during the modules (e.g., during the supportive transition); information is also provided in the Student Notebook.

Supports in the Educator Guide:

The Educator Guide has been prepared with input from practicing educators and school mental health professionals. It is designed to provide supports and helpful information to enhance the delivery of these modules to students, including:

- **Preparation suggestions** to help bolster educator mental health literacy (e.g., the free, self-paced, online [MH LIT: Mental Health in Action](#) mental health literacy course for educators).
- Prompts for educators to share with students at the beginning of each module reminding them that it is not a forum for disclosures related to mental health or mental illness.
- **Guidance** and pre-prepared language should a student wish to speak about a personal situation (e.g., what to say if a student starts to share personal mental health information during class).
- **Encouragement** to consult with mental health professionals (e.g., if a student asks a question about mental illness and educators are unsure of the response; if they have a concern about a student's mental health).
- **Cautions** (e.g., regarding sharing their own personal mental health information with students).
- **Reminders** to be aware of school and board supports and service pathways.
- **Resources** to help support students, including help lines and tools to assist educators in connecting with students (e.g., [ONE CALL](#)).



How can mental health professionals help?

Although the modules are designed to be delivered by an educator, there are many ways you can be of support. Here are a few suggestions to support you:

- Be a **resource** for the schools you serve should any grade 7 or 8 teachers have questions about the material or the students they are supporting.
- Help the school leadership team consider how the modules **align** with other ongoing mental health and well-being initiatives and priorities.
- Support the school leadership team to **plan** the best time for delivery (e.g., should there be any recent events of concern).
- **Support** educator mental health literacy and teacher preparedness (e.g., could you be available for questions about mental health related to module content?).
- Be available to **connect** with students who may require additional debriefing and support.
- Highlight and **reinforce** module content and key messages with students served.
- Help **extend** the learning through additional mental health awareness activities and initiatives.
- Consider how to **encourage** opportunities for student leadership and involvement in mental health.

How can I...

- Support my school leadership team in creating awareness of and familiarity with the modules for school staff?
- Help grade 7 and 8 educators prepare for this learning and support the mental health literacy of all educators in my school building(s)?
- Help integrate this learning with other mental health initiatives and priorities currently underway at my school?



Foundational mental health literacy and knowledge for identity-affirming support

A crucial aspect of mentally healthy learning environments is prioritizing an inclusive and culturally responsive approach within the school culture. This includes centring and empowering students' diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives, while actively working to dismantle any systems and structures that perpetuate inequities and marginalization.

This SMH-ON [frame for reflection and action](#) is designed to support you along the path to identity-affirming school mental health. Exploring your cultural humility as a school staff member using this SMH-ON [cultural humility reflection tool](#) can help you provide identity-affirming support to each student.

