



## School Leader Tip Sheet

### What are the modules?

A series of three modules per grade provided by the Ministry of Education to support the **existing mental health literacy expectations** within Strand D of the **Health** and **Physical Education** curriculum.

GRADE 7	
<b>Mental Health, Mental Illness, and the Relationship Between Them</b>	introduces the concepts of mental health and mental illness and strategies to promote positive mental health
<b>Understanding Signs of a Mental Health Problem and How to Seek Support</b>	supports students to monitor their own mental health and know when, where, and how to seek support
<b>Mental Health, Substance Use, and the Relationship Between Them</b>	focuses on substance use; its connection to mental health; potential effects, risks, and harms; and how to reach out for support

GRADE 8	
<b>Mental Health and Stigma</b>	focuses on stigma related to mental health and mental illness and actions to counteract it
<b>Supporting Our Mental Health – Managing Stress</b>	normalizes the everyday stresses we all face and helps students build healthy coping strategies into their daily routines
<b>How to Help a Friend – Seeking Support for Others While Caring for Ourselves</b>	focuses on how to notice when friends need help and steps to support them while also caring for ourselves



The modules are specifically designed to be delivered in a three-part lesson format by an educator. They are not student self-directed as educators play a crucial role to guide and facilitate the learning experience.

Each module includes:

- **Supportive Transition/Mindful Practice:** a brief practice/activity to help students be present and ready for learning
- **Minds On:** an activity for student reflection and activating previous learning or prior knowledge
- **Action Task(s):** engagement with the core content of the module
- **Consolidation:** questions for students to reflect on the learning, as well as a short student-friendly summary of the key learnings
- **Supportive Transition:** a brief practice/activity to end in a positive way and help students transition to the rest of their day

## Why teach mental health literacy?

There are important reasons to prioritize mental health learning:

- Students **want** to learn more about mental health at school.
- Mental health literacy helps to reinforce and equip students with culturally responsive, evidence-informed knowledge, skills, and strategies to support their mental health and well-being.
- The grade 7 and 8 mental health modules are strength-based and offer an opportunity for positive communication and relationship building that can carry over to subjects beyond Health and Physical education.
- This learning can encourage important conversations that may inspire students to reach out for support when they need help with their mental health.
- Practicing and modeling strategies to enhance mental health can be helpful for educators too.
- As caring adults in the lives of young people, we want students to be well.



## Key Messages

- The modules will become mandatory in January 2024, and offer educators support to deliver the **existing** [Health and Physical Education curriculum](#).
- The modules enhance mental health literacy in grades 7 and 8 and can **help to equip** students with culturally responsive, evidence-based knowledge, skills, and strategies to support their mental health and well-being.
- Educators are **well-positioned** to guide this learning. The focus of the learning is on well-being, rather than individual mental illnesses or their management.
- The modules are **easy to use**, and **additional supports** are available in English and French (e.g., an Educator Guide that offers resources and information to support their delivery).
- It is not anticipated that teaching about mental health will be distressing for students. In fact, 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.

## Implementation tips

### Show your commitment

As an effective school leader, you already set a positive tone about mental health literacy. You can do the same with these new modules. Look for ways to signal that learning about mental health is an important use of class time, both through the use of the modules and other mental health literacy initiatives. You can also model the importance of mental health and well-being through your interactions with both staff and students.

### Build awareness

Help school staff become aware of and familiar with the modules. Many methods may be used, for example:

- board email (e.g., from principal or Mental Health Leader to show support for their use)
- presentations and walk-throughs (e.g., a 5-10 minute presentation at a staff meeting)
- teacher champions who can encourage interest, share materials, build confidence that the modules are accessible, and support others in using them
- the established and proven communication structures you already have in your school



## Consider alignment and opportunities

The mental health literacy modules are a great resource to support grade 7 and 8 student well-being. Consider how you might...

- connect the learning to other school plans and priorities and build on other mental health efforts in the past and currently underway
- engage with grade 7 and 8 student leaders to develop or reinforce mental health promotion initiatives across the school
- encourage educators and school staff to support their own mental health through the modules

## Provide support

Mental health literacy may be more familiar to some staff than others. Help educators to build comfort and confidence with the material. Some considerations are highlighted below.

HOW MIGHT I...	SUGGESTIONS YOU MIGHT CONSIDER
<p><b>Build teacher confidence to deliver the modules?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide time to become familiar with the materials and prepare.</li> <li>• Encourage early adopters/teacher champions to share their experiences with other staff.</li> <li>• Highlight the Educator Guide provided with the modules. The tips and suggestions for delivery included are designed to help reassure, prepare, and support educators in providing a positive and meaningful learning experience with students.</li> <li>• Remind staff of any additional school (e.g., student support staff and/or school mental health staff) or board staff/resources available to support delivery of the modules.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Help teachers to create supportive spaces for these conversations with students?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have a conversation at a staff meeting about stigma, mental health, thoughtful language, and setting the stage to include and value all voices and perspectives.</li> <li>• Take time as a staff to reflect on personal bias and privilege, the cultures and identities of students served, and possible gaps in teacher-student perceptions about mental health and mental illness (school/board mental health and equity staff may be able to help).</li> </ul>



HOW MIGHT I...	SUGGESTIONS YOU MIGHT CONSIDER
<p><b>Support teachers concerned about how to address student needs?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use the parent/guardian communication materials to let families know about the modules.</li> <li>• Plan ahead to provide alternative activities for any students for whom parents/guardians express concern about participation (e.g., a student with a mental health concern who is currently in crisis).</li> <li>• Ensure educators know the available school and community supports and keep phone numbers/resource lists accessible and up-to-date.</li> <li>• Share specific details about the supports available in your school and community with students and parents/guardians often. For example, post information about where to seek help on classroom/school sites, in stairwells, and on the back of bathroom stall doors.</li> </ul>

### What are your opportunities to amplify student voice and leadership? Could students...

- Help raise awareness about the modules?
- Help inform when they might be offered?
- Share what they learn about mental health with your school?
- Help with a school-wide or grade-wide mental health promotion initiative designed to reduce stigma and support wellness?
- Offer feedback about their experience that might inform use of the modules in future years?

While you are considering how to engage students, consider how to engage parents/guardians and your school council, too.

**As administrators, you play a critical role in helping this important learning reach students. Thank you!**

