



## MH 10 SUPPLEMENT

# Considerations for Students with Special Education Needs

We are all different, but we all have mental health. Mental Health resources and supports need to be tailored to the strengths and abilities of all learners.

Students with special education needs benefit from many of the same strategies that support wellness in all children:

- welcoming and inclusive school environments,
- explicit instruction in skills for coping and thriving,
- developmentally appropriate ways to learn about mental health, and
- a chance to share their opinions and preferences about belonging and wellness at school.

**Source:** [Supporting Mental Health Amongst Students with Special Education Needs](#)

The following guide provides suggestions in how to deliver the **Mental Health Literacy Modules for Career Studies (GLC20)** so that each student engages in the learning at the appropriate developmental level in a way that is differentiated for them. As educators, we often need to adapt the content and the delivery of our lessons to help every student succeed. As with other subject areas, educators should refer to a student's Individual Education Plan (IEP), if applicable, to best meet the needs of that student.

While suggestions tied to specific activities within the modules are offered many are applicable in a variety of contexts. Many tools and tips suggested for a particular activity be used throughout the modules when appropriate.





## STUDENT VOICE

It is important to provide opportunities for everyone's voice and ideas to be heard, including those using Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC).

Questions to consider:

- How can I provide multiple avenues for students to share their ideas and questions?
- How are students communicating with each other?
- How am I capturing the learning?
- How am I sharing the student learning with parents/caregivers?



MODULE 1: STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING STRESS AND NAVIGATING BALANCE	
CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS	ACCOMMODATION, ADAPTATION AND SUPPORTIVE TOOL IDEAS
<p><b>Check-In: Understanding what you're good at and what you can do</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In some of the activities, students are invited to record their thinking. There are many ways students could do this.</li> <li>The goal of this activity is for students to highlight their strengths and abilities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Students could independently, in pairs or with the help of an educator:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>answer questions orally</li> <li>draw their answers</li> <li>use augmentative and/or alternative communication aides</li> </ul> <p><b>Resource to try:</b></p> <p><a href="#">Adjectives about me – Self-awareness and sense of identity – Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource – A Daily Mental Health Resource (smho-smso.ca)</a></p>
<p><b>Minds On: Building a shared understanding of stress</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This activity lays the foundation for understanding stress and our optimal range.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things to try:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>pre-teach the concept of stress</li> <li>create a vocabulary list that includes pictorial representations, contextual supports and/or other languages that the student could add to throughout the modules</li> </ul>
<p><b>Video: Understanding stress management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In both modules videos are used to share information and prompt student thinking. There are multiple ways of making the videos more accessible for students.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things to try:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>turn on closed captioning</li> <li>slow down the video playback speed</li> <li>have the video transcripts available to students in a digital and/or printed format</li> <li>use the transcripts to pre-teach and/or review vocabulary or important concepts</li> <li>use the transcripts to create multilingual vocabulary lists</li> </ul>



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<p><b>Getting back in our optimal stress range – routines and strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The slides provided with this activity could help prompt student thinking, however we need to consider how to make the slides accessible for all students.</li> <li>• Students can identify strategies that support them in a variety of ways. They could also be invited to co-create materials and/or spaces that support their mental well-being.</li> <li>• This activity is also an opportunity to focus on the unique strengths, needs, and identities of every student. It can be a chance to discuss, collaborate and co-create practices that support all students.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things to try to make the slides more accessible:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• adding visuals to the slides to facilitate comprehension</li> <li>• reading the text aloud</li> <li>• ensure students have access to the slides in print or digital format</li> </ul> <p><b>Things to try for brainstorming strategies and routines:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A drag and drop activity where a variety of strategies have already been listed. Seeking input and strategies from students and/or parents/guardians to help create these options will help ensure they are relevant to a student. These could be written, or they could be represented using pictures.</li> <li>• Co-develop routines and work with students to determine appropriate cues to support transitions so that expectations are predictable and well understood (e.g., visual schedules, visual timers, auditory cues and reminders, transition songs, tidy-up routines).</li> <li>• Provide advanced notice when schedules and routines change.</li> <li>• Consult with parent(s)/caregiver(s) about the sensory experiences their teen seeks and avoids. Be curious about what works at home to reduce stress, avoid sensory overload, and meet sensory needs.</li> <li>• Students could be invited to create calming boxes or sensory bins to support a variety of sensory needs (tactile, visual, olfactory, vestibular) that are safe, age-appropriate, and developmentally appropriate.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resource to try:</b></p> <p><a href="#">Calming boxes – Stress management and coping – Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource – A Daily Mental Health Resource (smho-smso.ca)</a></p>



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<p><b>Consolidation: Analyzing personal stress management strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Being able to analyze stress management strategies is an important step in knowing oneself and ties into self-advocacy.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things to try:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create self-advocacy cards where they answer the following prompts:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>» How do I know when things are not going well for me? (Things that I do/ways that I feel.)</li> <li>» How could someone else tell when things are not going well for me?</li> <li>» What can I do to help myself cope in school?</li> <li>» If the coping strategies listed above are not helping, my next step is:</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p><b>Resource to try:</b></p> <p><a href="#">Self-advocacy cards – Self-awareness and sense of identity – Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource – A Daily Mental Health Resource (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p>
<p><b>Exit card</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In both modules, an exit card is used to help student self-asses their learning and identify next steps.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things to try:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>modify the card to highlight a student's individual learning goals</li> </ul>

 **BRIGHT IDEAS**

Some students with special education needs also experience feelings of anxiety that may or may not relate to academic performance, speaking in front of groups or being overwhelmed by large assignments. Our [Supporting Minds Strategies at a Glance – School Mental Health Ontario \(smho-smsso.ca\)](#) resource could provide strategies to support and bolster students with special education needs but also all students who need additional support.



MODULE 2: KNOWING WHEN, WHERE, AND HOW TO SEEK SUPPORT	
CONSIDERATIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS	ACCOMMODATION, ADAPTATION AND SUPPORTIVE TOOL IDEAS
<p><b>Check in: Thinking about what grounds you</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This video introduces connection with nature as an example of a grounding practice. Things that ground us help us feel calm, connected, and present in the current moment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things to try:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider using these social media shareables to help students identify and practice grounding techniques that work for them.</li> <li>Students could create their own images and/or videos to illustrate the technique.</li> <li>Educators could also model the use of strategies students have chosen to try or have identified as being helpful.</li> </ul> <p><b>Resource to try:</b></p> <p><a href="https://www.smho-smso.ca/grounding-techniques-social-media-bundles">Grounding Techniques Social Media Bundles – School Mental Health Ontario (smho-smso.ca)</a></p>
<p><b>Minds on: Video - Recognizing the signs stress is becoming problematic</b></p>	<p>* See recommendations for videos from module 1</p>



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<p><b>Action &amp; consolidation: Identifying and understanding possible supports</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Knowing when and how to seek support is a crucial skill for all students. Some students may benefit from more explicit, concrete practicing of these skills</li> <li>Activities or materials that help students with support seeking should be revisited often as a student's needs, abilities and strengths changes over time.</li> <li>This activity uses a slide deck and written handout that could be modified to be more accessible for all students (*see things to try to make the slides more accessible from module 1)</li> </ul>	<p><b>Things to try to practice support seeking skills:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>co-create social stories for seeking support</li> <li>role play seeking support</li> </ul> <p><b>Resources to try:</b></p> <p><a href="#">Support seeking – Stress management and coping – Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource – A Daily Mental Health Resource (smho-smsso.ca)</a></p> <p><b>Things to try to identify supports:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Help students and/or their parents/caregivers identify culturally responsive peer or family support groups where they will have opportunities to develop and strengthen friendships and support networks.</li> <li>Identify organizations or groups that provide support, resources and/or advocate for particular groups (e.g. Autism Ontario, Learning Disabilities Association of Ontario, March of Dimes, Down Syndrome Association of Ontario, Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada, CNIB, Ontario Association of the Deaf).</li> </ul>

 **BRIGHT IDEAS**

The physical environment can play a key role in making students feel welcome, included, and ready to learn. Things to consider:

- the sensory needs of the students (e.g., lighting, noise)
- accessibility of learning materials
- mobility needs (e.g., can students, educators, and visitors easily move to all areas of the learning space)
- collaboration and proximity (e.g., are all students able to easily communicate and collaborate with their peer group)



## Enhancing your learning

The educator guide that accompanies the modules can help you deepen your learning and prepare to teach about mental health. Below is an additional resource to help you address the needs of every student when delivering the modules.

[SMH-ON • Supporting Mental Wellness Amongst Students with Special Education Needs \(smho-smsso.ca\)](https://smho-smsso.ca)

