Student Mental Health Matters

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Feelings bingo:

• Pick the emotion you felt at the beginning of the session.

• How did that emotion impact the way you processed information?
“Health and success in school are interrelated. Schools cannot achieve their primary mission of education if students and staff are not healthy and fit physically, mentally, and socially.”
Why Focus on Mental Health Issues?

- They are common and can affect learning
- Stigma creates barriers to getting help
- Educators can help remove barriers
- Benefits for schools, classrooms, students:
  - Higher academic achievement
  - Lower absenteeism
  - Fewer behavioral problems
Rates of absenteeism and tardiness are much higher for students with mental health disturbance (Gall, 2000)

Research shows that increased physical, social and emotional well-being can improve academic performance. (“Health & Academics: Making the Link” Massachusetts Department of Education, 2000)
Building the case...

- Approximately 20% of children and adolescents suffer from a mental illness resulting in mild functional impairments

- An estimated 10% have moderate to severe impairments

(Duchnowski, Kutash, & Friedman, 2002; Power, Eiralkdi, Clarke, Mazzuca & Krain, 2005)
SERIOUS EMOTIONAL DISTURBANCES:

Definition

Diagnosable disorders in children and adolescents that severely disrupt their daily functioning in the home, school, or community.

These disorders include:

- Depression
  - Bi-Polar Disorder
- Reactive Attachment Disorder
- Anxiety disorders
  - Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder
  - Post-traumatic Stress Disorder
Major Depressive Disorder

- Pervasive sense of sadness
- Loss of interest/pleasure in activities
- Affects
  ◦ Thoughts
  ◦ Sense of worth
  ◦ Sleep
  ◦ Appetite
  ◦ Energy
  ◦ Concentration
Bipolar Disorder

- Recurrent episodes of depression and mania
  - Extreme changes in mood, energy and behavior
    - Irritability
    - Elevated mood
    - Inflated sense of self-importance
    - Risky behaviors
    - Distractibility
    - Decreased need for sleep
Anxiety Disorders

- Excessive fears, worries, and preoccupations that are a reaction to a perceived sign of danger

- Include obsessive-compulsive disorder and post-traumatic stress disorder
Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

- Response to a threatening event that was witnessed or experienced

- Symptoms:
  - Nightmares
  - Memory flashes
  - Startle response
  - Forgetfulness
  - Numbness
Defining Trauma (3Es)

Trauma is an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening and has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.
3 Primary Categories of Response

**Fight** (Physical Arousal)
- Aggression
- Trouble concentrating
- Hyperactivity

**Flight** (Withdrawal & Escape)
- Social isolation
- Avoidance of others
- Running away

**Freeze** (Stilling & Constricting)
- Constricted emotional expression
- Stilling behavior
- Over compliance and denial of needs
Children who experience trauma are:

- 2.5x more likely to fail a grade in school
- Score lower on standardized achievement tests
- More likely to have struggles in receptive & expressive language
- Suspended & expelled more often
- More frequently placed in special education

The National Traumatic Stress Network, 2008
What Are Risk and Protective Factors?

Risk factors make it *more* likely that a teen will develop a disorder.

Protective factors make it *less* likely that a teen will develop a disorder.
Risk Factors

- Community (e.g., drugs)
- Family (e.g., conflict)
- School (e.g., failure)
- Biology (e.g., brain chemistry)
Protective Factors

- Caring adults
- Genuine youth-adult relationships
- Recognition
- Opportunities for involvement
Overall….

Not

“What is wrong with you?”

But

“What happened to you?”
Forge Positive Relationships

- Provide secure attachments
- Stable environments
- Provide HOPE—it changes brain chemistry, which influences decisions and actions.
- Teach and model appropriate emotional responses
- Embody respect
Forge Positive Relationships

- Mitigate stress
- Empower students
- Provide positive guidance
- Foster optimism, affirmation and celebration
- Help students feel included and accepted
“No significant learning occurs without a significant relationship”

~Dr. James Comer
Confidentiality

- The purpose of confidentiality is to honor an individual’s right to privacy and to show respect for the vulnerability that underlies the process of sharing private information.

- RULE: When in doubt, treat information as if it is confidential unless the information violates the limits of confidentiality.

Limits of Confidentiality:
- The student discloses an intention to harm him/herself or others.
- The student reports neglect or physical, sexual, or psychological abuse.

SAFETY PRECEDES PRIVACY.
Take Aways

- Know your available resources (support services, policies and protocols)
- Relationships are essential (engagement)
- Get involved
- Take care of yourself
Resources

• Mental Health in Schools
  www.michigan.gov/schoolmentalhealth

• Mental Health in Schools Toolkit
  www.michigan.gov/schoolmentalhealthtoolkit

• Being Trauma Informed-Educators
  https://www.michigan.gov/mdhhs/0,5885,7-339-73971_4911_69588_80204_80359---,00.html
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