



Increasing Mental Health Literacy

A guide for promoting mental wellbeing
among high school students

By Kerry Monaghan

**BE KIND TO
YOUR MIND**



HOPE



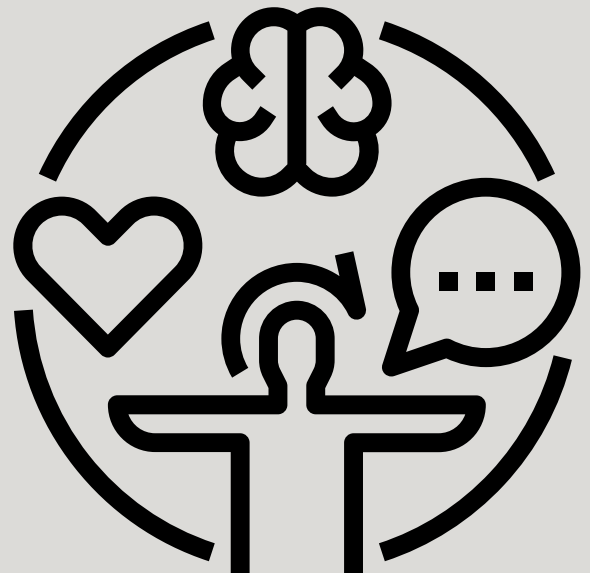
Prevalence of Mental Health Concerns

- According to the CDC, 40% of students experienced feelings of depression and 20% of students seriously considered suicide in 2023.
- Female and LGBTQ+ students were most likely to report mental health struggles in the same year.



Why is This a Problem?

- Poor youth mental health can negatively impact school attendance, grades, and decision making abilities.
- Mental health struggles affect youth's physical health and behavioral choices.
- There is an increased risk of drug use, experience of violence, and higher risk sexual behaviors that can cause diseases.
- The prevalence and effects of poor youth mental health emphasize a need for services in schools.





What is Mental Health Literacy?

Mental health literacy is knowledge of both mental health conditions and how to reach out for help. It involves increasing awareness in 4 key areas.

4 key areas of mental health literacy:

- How to develop and maintain positive mental health.
- How to reduce stigma around experiencing distress or mental illness.
- Knowing when and where to seek mental health support.
- How to identify mental health disorders and treatment options.



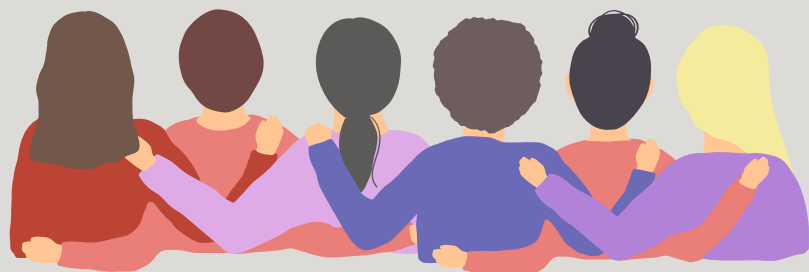


What Can Schools Do to Increase Mental Health Literacy?

2 effective ways to increase student's mental health literacy include:

- Delivering classroom-based mental health education curricula.
- Implementing peer-led modeling programs.

These approaches provide both education on mental health, as well as promote positive support.






Delivering Classroom-Based Mental Health Education Curricula

Description of approach:

- Interactive lessons that include sharing of personal experiences from young adults
- In-class group based activities
- Homework assignments designed to facilitate skill building
- Can be delivered in core classes or integrated into health education curricula





How Does this Increase Mental Health Literacy?

- Provides information about causes & symptoms of mental illness.
- Explores stigma related to mental illness & how to reduce it.
- Facilitates hope by emphasizing that mental illness is treatable.
- Encourages students to talk about their mental health and reach out for support.

End **THE** STIGMA

keep going

Implementing Peer-Led Modeling Programs

Description of approach:

- Train high school peer leaders who model positive attitudes, skills, & behaviors among students.
- Teach leaders how to promote the development of healthy coping strategies for themselves & their peers.
- Present information to peers regarding resources, reaching out for support, coping with adversity.



How Does this Increase Mental Health Literacy?

- Enhances coping attitudes.
- Increases acceptability of seeking help.
- Improves teen's perceptions of adult support.
- Serves as a source of encouragement and inspiration for peers.



ASKING
— *for* —
HELP
is OK

Benefits of Increasing Mental Health Literacy Efforts

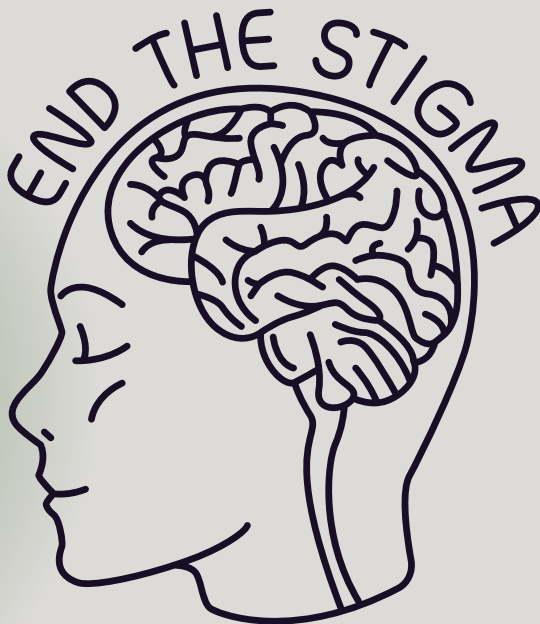


Delivery of classroom-based mental health curricula has been associated with the following outcomes:

- Improved mental health knowledge and attitudes.
- Reduced stigma related to mental health.
- Increased help-seeking behaviors.

Implementing peer-led modeling programs has been associated with the following outcomes. Youth were more likely to::

- Name a trusted adult in their lives
- Tell an adult when experiencing suicidal thoughts.
- Seek mental health support.
- Youth had improved perceptions about peer and family support.



Additional Recommendations for High Schools

- Establish effective communication & collaboration across school staff to implement effective mental health based programs
- Consider the unique responsibilities of staff & how they will work together to support implementation.
- Provide consistent administrator support, ensuring adequate school-based mental health staffing, and consistent training for staff.



Author's Note

My name is Kerry Monaghan, and I am a senior Public Health major and Psychology minor at TCNJ. I am interested in becoming a school psychologist in the future and am very passionate about enhancing mental health efforts in schools after experiencing my own personal struggles as a student. When tasked with making a toolkit for my internship, it seemed like a no-brainer to discuss mental health literacy in high schools. I hope that this toolkit can serve as a valuable resource for NAMI, as well as the community at large.

