

Tips for teachers and staff in schools as recommended by young people from the mental health participation group, Download; the Youth Cabinet, and with help from Lisa Buttery at boingboing www.boingboing.org.uk





## Raising awareness and challenging stigma:

- 1. Make sure young people know who is there to help them, including specialist staff, and how to access services publicise regular updates when staff change.
- 2. Create an environment where all health issues, both physical and mental, are treated equally.
- 3. Be creative! Mental health can be a discussion point and topic in all sorts of lessons. By casually and consistently embedding conversations about mental health across all lessons, awareness will be raised and stigma challenged.
- 4. Ensure that there is always time and space for talking about things.
- 5. Work using a whole school approach to address and challenge bullying.
- Remember that socially marginalised young people face additional pressures. Reducing stigma surrounding LGBTQ, BAME, SEND and other marginalized groups will promote positive mental health.
- 7. Normalise the idea that we all need to take care of our mental health throughout school with a range of promotional materials, outside facilitators and speakers. Ensure staff are around afterwards to notice and pick up on anyone who might want to talk.
- 8. Display posters, music and art and show videos in assemblies that are youth-friendly around the subject of mental health and emotional wellbeing.
- 9. Make sure that links to information including support, discovery college, website apps and local community groups are highly visible and accessible to all students.
- 10. Use parents' evenings, dress-down days and extended learning days to raise awareness of mental health and wellbeing.



### Promoting positive mental health

- Don't just focus on the loudest pupils: be conscious
  of the quiet pupils in the room too. Remember –
  academic achievers can have mental health issues as
  well.
- 2. Schools should offer physical and emotional health that isn't a graded lesson or a team sport and activities such as yoga, informal sports, visits to the gym, gardening, and meditation.
- 3. Include mental health in the PSHE curriculum, not just a one off assembly.
- 4. If a school has trained counsellors, make sure pupils can access them easily and confidentially, in a safe space.
- 5. Make sure all school staff have the skills and knowledge to support issues around mental health and make pupils aware of this.
- 6. Have a named and trained teacher who pupils can approach to discuss mental health concerns. This should be a nominated teacher chosen by young people. Young people should be able to choose who they speak to.
- 7. Plan in specific 1-to-1 check in times with students to ask if students are okay. This can enable staff to pick up on any changes.

- 8. Remind students how common mental health issues are. You could co-create resources like posters or videos with young people that stress the similarities and links between physical and mental health. The campaign *Time to Change* have a bank of free materials on their site: timetochange.brandstencil.com
- 9. Have and promote a safe and informal space for students to meet and be themselves lunchtime club, after school sessions, friendship benches etc.
- 10. Remember there is a huge gap in cultural understanding between adults and young people; young people are growing up in a rapidly changing digital environment and issues that impact their mental health can arise very quickly.

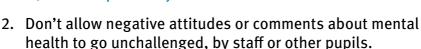
# Practical barriers can prevent students getting help

- Are services available at the right times?
- Is the location accessible?
  - Is it private?

Young people recommend having an open-door policy during specific times.

#### Ten things not to do

- 1. Avoid patronising phrases such as:
  - **x** Try to be happy
  - x But you don't look sick
  - x You could have it worse
  - **x** Stop being... sad, moody, etc
  - **x** Just think positively.



- 3. Never treat mental health issues as a weakness or someone's fault you wouldn't blame a pupil for having a physical illness!
- 4. Try not to address issues in front of whole class be subtle and sensitive.
- 5. Don't jump to conclusions about a young person's behaviour as their actions, such as disengaging in class and behaviour that seems disruptive, may be a sign of a mental health need.
- 6. Avoid public confrontation discussing the issues privately outside of the classroom will be more helpful.
- 7. Don't betray young people's trust; make young people aware of the school confidentiality policy, so they know what could be shared and what won't. Always try to get the young person's consent to share information.
- 8. Don't keep information from young people when having to break confidentiality; share the decision making with the young person regarding who will be involved and exactly what needs to be shared. Be open and honest throughout the process.
- 9. Don't avoid addressing more difficult subjects such as self-harm or suicide.
- 10. Don't feel you have to do everything alone there is help for teachers out there so find it and use it.



#### Top ten sources of support

- 1. FREE Online counselling for young people 12-18 in East Sussex www.e-motion.org.uk
- 2. Young Minds website www.youngminds.org.uk
- 3. Department for Education guidance for schools Mental Health and Behaviour: Advice for Schools pdf goo.gl/GQTb0F www.gov.uk/government/publications/mental-health-and-behaviour-in-schools--2
- 4. The National Children's Bureau toolkit A whole school framework for emotional well-being and mental health: a self-assessment and improvement tool for school leaders goo.gl/yygNtN www.ncb.org.uk/resources-publications/resources/whole-school-framework-emotional-well-being-and-mental-health
- 5. PSHE Association offers lesson plans on the subject of mental health goo.gl/8pD4Zk www.pshe-association.org.uk/curriculum-and-resources/resources/guidance-preparing-teach-about-mental-health-and
- 6. Sussex Discovery College www.sussexrecoverycollege.org.uk
- 7. 360 website: an information portal for young people in East Sussex www.c360.org.uk
- 8. BoingBoing www.boingboing.org.uk
- 9. Chat health number in East Sussex for ESCC young people 07507 332473
- 10. Anna Freud National Centre for Children and Families Schools in Mind Network – www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind You're Never Too Young to Talk Mental Health school resource www.annafreud.org/what-we-do/schools-in-mind/youre-never-tooyoung-to-talk-mental-health

https://czone.eastsussex.gov.uk

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Some members of the East Sussex Youth Cabinet







