

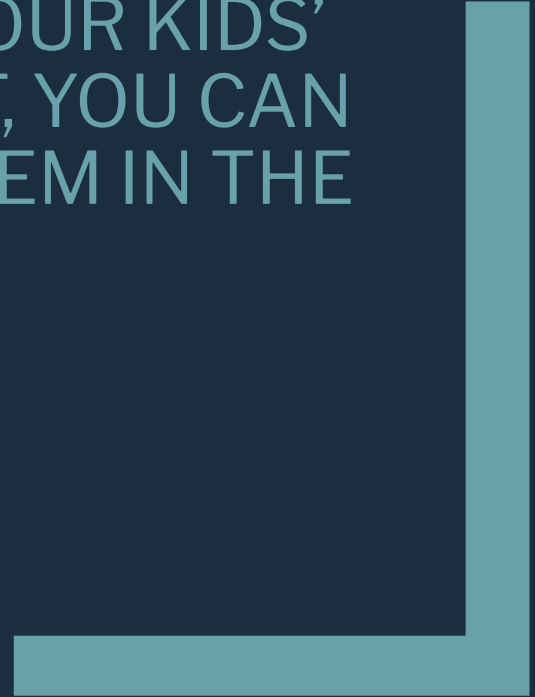
The Mental Health Informed Classroom



The Enrichment Center

"IF WE DON'T TAKE CARE OF OUR KIDS'
MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS FIRST, YOU CAN
FORGET ABOUT TEACHING THEM IN THE
CLASSROOM."

- Local TEACHER



Objectives...

- What factors can contribute to mental health issues in children and adolescents?
- What is the difference between good mental health and bad mental health?
- How can we recognize early signs of mental health struggles in a student?
- What can teachers do to get the support they need to help a struggling student?
- Why is teacher mental health a crucial factor in education?
- What can teachers do to support their own mental health?

Part 1:

ACEs, Statistics, Signs of MH Issues



Types of ACEs



ABUSE

- Emotional
- Physical
- Sexual



NEGLECT

- Emotional
- Physical



HOUSEHOLD CHALLENGES*

- Substance misuse
- Mental illness
- Suicidal thoughts and behavior
- Divorce or separation
- Incarceration
- Intimate partner violence or domestic violence

Other Adversity



- Bullying
- Community violence
- Natural disasters
- Refugee or wartime experiences
- Witnessing or experiencing acts of terrorism

* The child lives with a parent, caregiver, or other adult who experiences one or more of these challenges.

ACEs Can Accumulate and Their Effects Last Beyond Childhood

The effects of ACEs can add up over time and affect a person throughout their life.



Children who repeatedly and chronically experience adversity can suffer from **toxic stress**.



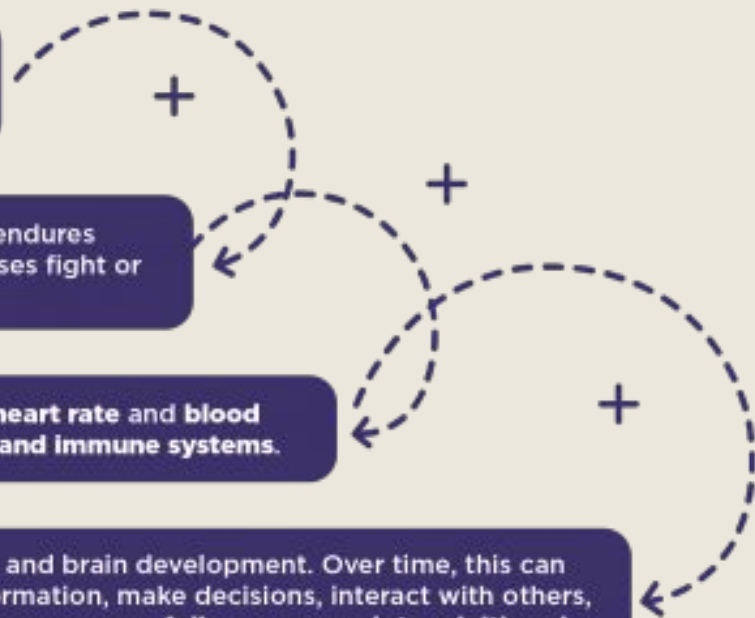
Toxic stress happens when the brain endures **repeated stress or danger**, then releases fight or flight hormones like cortisol.



This internal alarm system **increases heart rate and blood pressure** and **damages the digestive and immune systems**.



Toxic stress can disrupt organ, tissue, and brain development. Over time, this can limit a person's ability to process information, make decisions, interact with others, and regulate emotions. **These consequences may follow a person into adulthood.**



Mental Health Statistics

- 1 in 5 youth in the United States will experience a mental health disorder
- Fewer than half of young people experiencing depression will receive treatment
- Half of all mental health disorders begin by age 14 and three-quarters begin by age 24.
- Youth are 6x more likely to complete mental health treatment in schools than in community settings

Signs of Mental Health Problems in Students

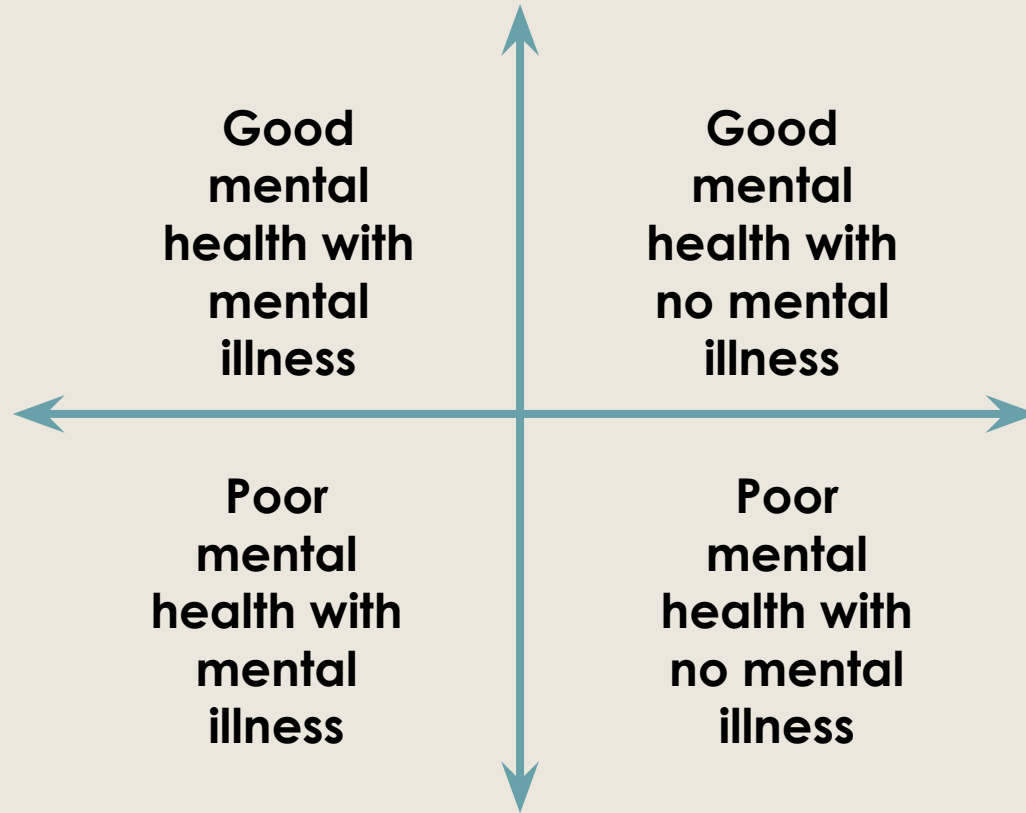
- Frequently appears angry, acts out in anger
- Disruptive behavior (home and/or school)
- Difficulty communicating feelings
- Poor social skills
- Poor decision-making skills
- Tearful, withdrawn, often appears sad
- Talks negatively about themselves
- Change in academic performance
- Difficulty staying on task/following directions
- Displays frequent anxiety, worry
- Frequent complaints of stomach aches, headaches, etc.
- Avoidance (socially, academically, etc.)
- Changes in eating habits
- Increased school absences

What are School-Based Therapists Seeing?

- Adjustment
 - COVID, Moving/Change in Schools, Divorce
- Anxiety
 - Perfectionism, Avoidance, Social Anxiety, Test Anxiety, Generalized Anxiety
- Emotional Dysregulation
 - Difficulty expressing emotions, outbursts, impulsivity, acting out in anger

What is good mental health?

- Sense of contentment
- Ability to cope with the stresses of daily life
- Ability to work productively/meet reasonable goals
- Positive self talk
- Ability to build and maintain relationships
- A sense of self worth
- Taking care of your physical health (eat, sleep, and exercise)





What's Typical for Children?

- Desire for more freedom than they can handle
- Difficulty dealing with uncomfortable emotions
- Asking questions about different behaviors, cultures, & lifestyles
- Exploring a range of interests, may appear random to others
- Trying out different words, phrases, and expressions

"What Is Typical Behavior? An Age By Age Guide" Sherri Gordon,
Aron Janssen, MD; Very Well Family

When Should I Be Concerned?

- Sleep Disturbance (difficulty falling asleep, staying asleep, nightmares)
- Frequent physical complaints (i.e. stomach aches)
- Developmental delays/regressing (i.e. bedwetting)
- Withdrawn, loss of interest in things they enjoy, increased avoidance
- Increased irritability, drastic changes in mood
- Behaviors become more defiant or aggressive

“Warning Signs of Mental Illness in Children” National Alliance on Mental Health



What Can Teachers Do?

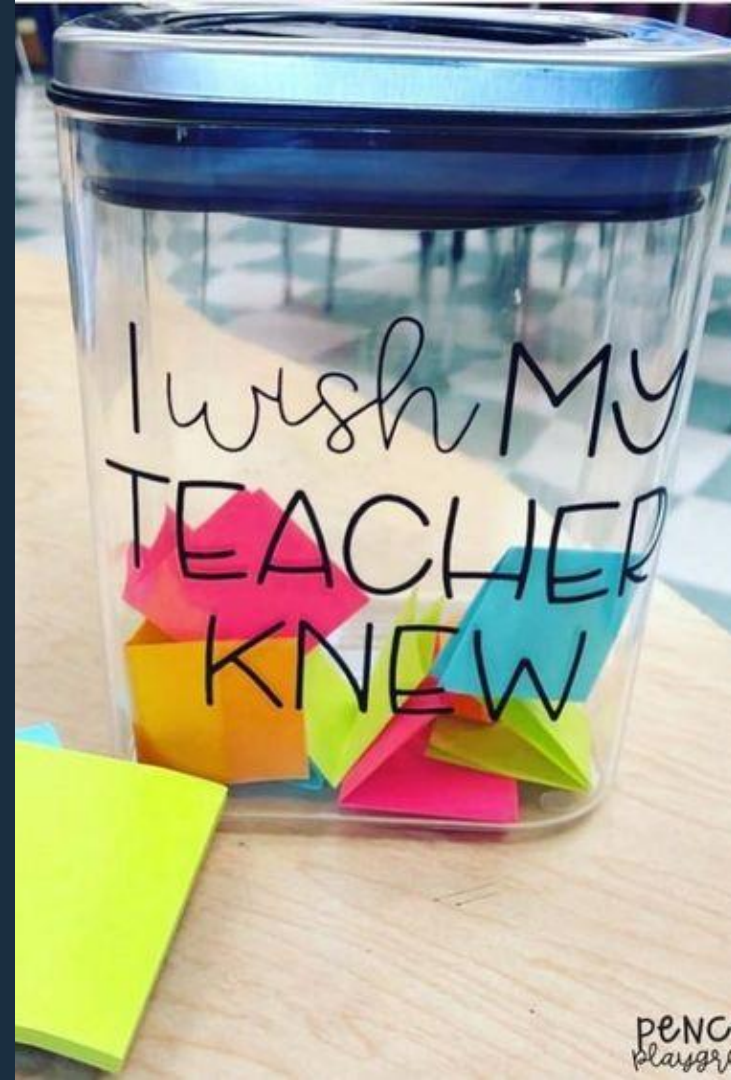
- Recognize patterns or changes that occur with student behavior
- Know the warning signs
- Collaborate with your SBT on needs of the student
 - *Ex: Work to find appropriate times for care*
- Provide information for continued care and treatment
- Be open to suggestions and support
- Make referrals to appropriate entities
- Practice co-regulation

Right Brain = Emotions

Left Brain = Logic

- When a child is dysregulated you must connect with their right brain before they are able to process information with their left brain.
- Co-regulating Moves
 - Adjust the lighting
 - Focus on tone and volume
 - Name emotions, displays that you see them
 - Offer available options

Part 2: Tools & Best Practices



Your Toolbox

1. People
2. Resources
3. Classroom Interventions
4. Self Care



Tool #1: People

Who can help you?

Who can you help?

- Peer Support System among teachers and school staff
- School-Based Therapists
- Mental Health Coaches
- Parents/Guardians
- Experts in other disciplines

Tool #2: Resources

You don't have to know everything, have everything, or do everything yourself.

- School Counselor
- Peer Groups for students
- Enrichment Center website
- Ideas from fellow teachers
- Internet resources
- Youth Mental Health First Aid

Tool #3: Classroom Interventions

What kinds of things have you implemented in your setting that worked well?

- Welcome students at the door
- Use their name
- Student Interest Inventory
- Check in and remember
- Teacher mailbox
 - I Wish My Teacher Knew
 - *Best Practices*
- Safe Space or Quiet Corner
 - *Best Practices*
- Secret Librarian Folder
- Water break
- Take What You Need Board



Tool #4: Self Care

What are you doing to manage YOUR well-being so that you can best support your students?

- Positive Self-talk
- Boundaries
- Setting achievable goals
- Asking for help AND accepting help
- Maintaining realistic expectations
- Having hobbies and interests outside of being a teacher
- Making time for personal connections with friends and family

**Real teacher self-care is rooted in self-love
and self-preservation.**



TAKE CARE OF YOU.

Keep it Simple:

- Continue the conversation around mental health.
- Implement one or two small techniques/strategies.
- Talk with your school counselors and admin. Know your SBT, and know what resources are available.

Resources

- [Classroomwise.org](https://www.classroomwise.org)
- [Mentalhealthfirstaid.org](https://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.org)

Website: [theenrichmentcenter.org](https://www.theenrichmentcenter.org)

Facebook: @theenrichmentcenterAL

Instagram: @tec.therapists

Feedback Form



Thank you

For making our schools a better place.



THE
ENRICHMENT
CENTER