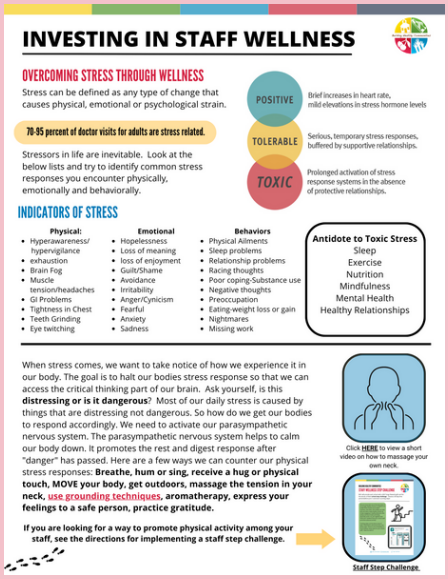
SAMPLE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT MENU

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPTIONS

- Trauma Sensitive Schools
- Social and Emotional Learning in the Classroom
- Mindfulness in the Classroom
- Inclusive Physical Education
- Best Practices for Physical Educators
- Self Care for Educators

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES



INVESTING IN STAFF WELLNESS

OVERCOMING STRESS THROUGH WELLNESS

Stress can be defined as any type of change that causes physical, emotional or psychological strain.

70-95 percent of doctor visits for adults are stress related.

Stressors in life are inevitable. Look at the below lists and try to identify common stress responses you encounter physically, emotionally and behaviorally.

POSITIVE — Brief increases in heart rate, mild elevations in stress hormone levels

TOLERABLE — Serious, temporary stress responses, buffered by supportive relationships.

TOXIC — Prolonged activation of stress response systems in the absence of protective relationships.

INDICATORS OF STRESS

Physical:
- Hyperawareness/ hypervigilance
- exhaustion
- Brain Fog
- Muscle tension/headaches
- GI Problems
- Tightness in Chest
- Teeth Grinding
- Eye twitching

Emotional
- Hopelessness
- Loss of meaning
- loss of enjoyment
- Guilt/Shame
- Avoidance
- Irritability
- Anger/Cynicism
- Fearful
- Anxiety
- Sadness

Behaviors
- Physical Ailments
- Sleep problems
- Relationship problems
- Racing thoughts
- Poor coping-Substance use
- Negative thoughts
- Preoccupation
- Eating-weight loss or gain
- Nightmares
- Missing work

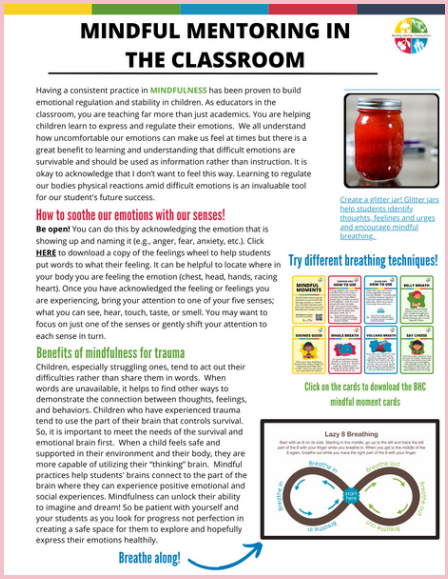
Antidote to Toxic Stress
Sleep
Exercise
Nutrition
Mindfulness
Mental Health
Healthy Relationships

When stress comes, we want to take notice of how we experience it in our body. The goal is to halt our bodies stress response so that we can access the critical thinking part of our brain. Ask yourself, is this **distressing or is it dangerous**? Most of our daily stress is caused by things that are distressing not dangerous. So how do we get our bodies to respond accordingly. We need to activate our parasympathetic nervous system. The parasympathetic nervous system helps to calm our body down. It promotes the rest and digest response after "danger" has passed. Here are a few ways we can counter our physical stress responses: **Breathe, hum or sing, receive a hug or physical touch, MOVE your body, get outdoors, massage the tension in your neck, use grounding techniques, aromatherapy, express your feelings to a safe person, practice gratitude.**

Click HERE to view a short video on how to massage your own neck.

If you are looking for a way to promote physical activity among your staff, see the directions for implementing a staff step challenge.

Staff Step Challenge



MINDFUL MENTORING IN THE CLASSROOM

Having a consistent practice in MINDFULNESS has been proven to build emotional regulation and stability in children. As educators in the classroom, you are teaching far more than just academics. You are helping children learn to express and regulate their emotions. We all understand how uncomfortable our emotions can make us feel at times but there is a great benefit to learning and understanding that difficult emotions are survivable and should be used as information rather than instruction. It is okay to acknowledge that I don't want to feel this way. Learning to regulate our bodies physical reactions amid difficult emotions is an invaluable tool for our student's future success.

How to soothe our emotions with our senses!

Be open! You can do this by acknowledging the emotion that is showing up and naming it (e.g., anger, fear, anxiety, etc.). Click **HERE** to download a copy of the feelings wheel to help students put words to what their feeling. It can be helpful to locate where in your body you are feeling the emotion (chest, head, hands, racing heart). Once you have acknowledged the feeling or feelings you are experiencing, bring your attention to one of your five senses; what you can see, hear, touch, taste, or smell. You may want to focus on just one of the senses or gently shift your attention to each sense in turn.

Benefits of mindfulness for trauma

Children, especially struggling ones, tend to act out their difficulties rather than share them in words. When words are unavailable, it helps to find other ways to demonstrate the connection between thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Children who have experienced trauma tend to use the part of their brain that controls survival. So, it is important to meet the needs of the survival and emotional brain first. When a child feels safe and supported in their environment and their body, they are more capable of utilizing their "thinking" brain. Mindful practices help students' brains connect to the part of the brain where they can experience positive emotional and social experiences. Mindfulness can unlock their ability to imagine and dream! So be patient with yourself and your students as you look for progress not perfection in creating a safe space for them to explore and hopefully express their emotions healthily.

Breathe along!

Create a glitter jar! Glitter jars help students identify thoughts, feelings and urges and encourage mindful breathing.

Try different breathing techniques!

Click on the cards to download the BHC mindful moment cards

Lazy 8 Breathing

TEACHING AFTER TRAGEDY

"Educating the mind without educating the heart is no education at all."
— Aristotle

Whether it's a school shooting, a natural disaster, or community violence, the hard reality is that your students will be exposed to tragedy in the world. As you look to come alongside and support your students it's important to create a safe environment where they can navigate and process their feelings.

Implement daily check-ins

*Daily check-ins help normalize emotions for students. Get in the habit of asking students to take a moment and identify a few feelings they have had that day. **Meditation body scans** can also help students identify where in their body they are feeling their emotions.*

The classroom space

*Creating a **safe space** in the classroom can be helpful if you are constantly finding yourself with students overwhelmed with big feelings. Getting out of the classroom and changing the environment is another strategy but not always possible when you have an entire classroom you are tending to. So, a safe space can be within your classroom and students can voluntarily move to the safe place. A safe place can be a comfortable corner, or chair, with soft pillows and blankets. Strategically place furniture so that this space is shielded from others yet still visible to the teacher. When deciding on manipulatives think of sensory items. The safe place should not be the same as a time out area. It is a choice of the child that can be made without repercussion or explanation.*

Read to them!

Reading is a great way to help students identify and explore emotions they might be feeling.

Click here for books to read with your class!

Get your students moving more!

When traumatic events happen it's important to provide space for regular or increased movement throughout your student's day. Physical activity can burn off adrenaline, release mood-enhancing endorphins, and help with sleep at night. Activities that move both the arms and legs can help rouse a students nervous system from that "stuck" feeling that often follows a traumatic experience. Outdoor time is also important for calming students bodies and vitamin D intake.

Empower your students to take action

*In tragedy we can feel powerless. Sometimes working towards a way to help others can be cathartic. **Here** are some ideas for brainstorming with your students.*

Safe space sensory items

- Calming sounds: A sound machine or portable CD player with headphones.
- Good Scents! Try a diffuser or potentially put a good-smelling bottle of hand lotion.
- Make it cozy! Different textured pillows, cuddly stuffed animals, and weighted blankets.
- A picture of the **feelings wheel**.
- Books: especially ones that have to do with emotions and feelings.
- Try having bottled water available for them to have while sitting there.
- Physical manipulatives-Rubik's cube, stress ball, motion bubbler, **breathing cards**.
- Timer-Setting a certain amount of time for a student to use the space is helpful.

1