



# Foundations of Every Moment Counts

- What is Positive Mental Health?
- Every Moment Counts Guiding Philosophy
- Public Health Framework

## ● **Tier 1 – Universal Mental Health Promotion**

- Tier 2 – Targeted Mental Health Prevention
- Tier 3 – Individualized Mental Health Intervention



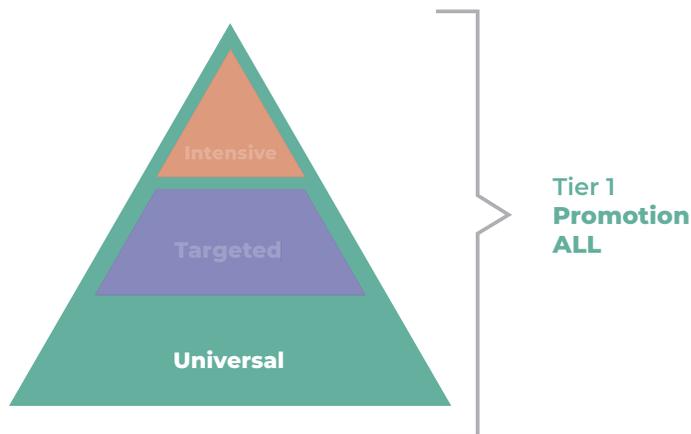
## Foundations of Every Moment Counts

# Tier 1: Mental Health Promotion

## Universal Embedded Strategies

Services at Tier 1 are geared toward the entire student body, including the majority of children/youth who do not demonstrate behavioral or mental health challenges. At this level, the emphasis is on promoting positive mental health and preventing behavioral and mental health problems.

*Research supports whole-school mental health promotion.* In a systematic review of universal approaches, positive evidence of effectiveness was found in programs that implemented year-long whole-school approaches emphasizing positive mental health as opposed to prevention of mental illness.<sup>1</sup> Although most school-based programs tend to focus on the prevention of mental disorders<sup>2</sup>, the implementation of school-wide mental health promotion initiatives over two years was found to improve social-emotional and academic performance.<sup>3</sup>



### What is Mental Health Promotion?

Mental health promotion is a multidisciplinary area of practice fostering positive mental health in the entire population – those with, at-risk of, and without mental health challenges.<sup>4</sup> Efforts emphasize competence enhancement – on building strengths and resources. Mental health promotion efforts include creating supportive school, home, and community environments, as well as reducing stigma and discrimination, and educating children on how to develop and maintain positive mental health.



*It takes a village!* This requires the development of an interdisciplinary workforce that is knowledgeable about how to be mental health promoters throughout the school day.

**“In general, happy and optimistic people are healthier, live longer, and use their positive states to facilitate and expand their problem solving abilities and learning.”<sup>2</sup>**

## Who can be a Mental Health Promoter?

All adults serving youth can be mental health promoters! Mental health is not a 'black or white' thing like a physical injury. It reflects a dynamic state of functioning that can vary throughout one's life based on situational stressors (e.g. being bullied, experiencing a natural disaster) or genetic predisposition (e.g. family history of mental disorders). This means that all adults in schools and the community need to 'make mental health their business'. This is accomplished by being knowledgeable about how to promote positive mental health and being able to identify early signs and symptoms that a young person might not be doing well emotionally.



Remember this:

**Not everyone is a licensed mental health provider...**

**But everyone can be a Mental Health promoter!**



Remember this:

**Positive Mental Health is reflected in:**

- Positive affect or emotions
- Positive psychological and social function
- Participation in meaningful and needed activities
- Coping with life stressors



## How to Promote Positive Mental Health? 6 Key Ingredients!

**'Promote' means to support and actively encourage!**

There are many strategies and school-wide programs that can promote positive mental health. Research findings from the field of positive psychology are used to inform practice in the area of mental health promotion and have provided the foundation for Every Moment Counts initiatives (model programs and embedded strategies).

Overall, Every Moment Counts initiatives emphasize 6 key ingredients for mental health promotion as described in the table on the following pages.

## 6 Key Ingredients for Mental Health Promotion

Promoting Positive Mental Health	What You Can Do
<p><b>Positive Emotions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Experiencing positive emotions (e.g. joy, satisfaction, contentment) contributes to mental health, broadens attention, reduces negative emotions, and promotes resilience in the face of challenges.</li> <li>Positive emotions can be experienced in the present (doing something fun), past (remembering a positive experience), or when thinking about the future (anticipating an enjoyable event).</li> <li>Aim for a 3 to 1 ratio of positive to negative emotions during the day for positive mental health.<sup>5</sup></li> <li>Encourage children and youth to identify and use unique character strengths (e.g. creativity, humor, kindness, persistence, curiosity, etc.).<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tune into children's affect (i.e. emotional state). Look at their face and body posture. Do they look happy or content a majority of the day?</li> <li>What activities bring about positive emotions in the children you interact with?</li> <li>Tune into times of the day or environments when you observe children to be unhappy or upset. Consider modifying interactions or the activity to promote enjoyment.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Meaningful Activities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in meaningful and healthy activities that are enjoyable promotes positive mental health.</li> <li>Enjoyment is more often experienced during active versus passive activities that offer the 'just right challenge' (i.e. are doable, allow for choice, involve concentration and challenge).<sup>5</sup> Participation in personally meaningful activities that lead to 'flow' (a state of being totally absorbed in the activity) is also associated with positive mental health.<sup>7</sup></li> <li>Activity-based interventions (e.g. arts, crafts, games) foster social interactions, friendship, skill development, and offer opportunities for developing enduring hobbies and interests.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tune into what students are doing especially during unstructured times of the day (e.g. lunch, recess). Advocate for healthy and enjoyable activity options.</li> <li>Help students explore a range of activities and advocate for those that add meaning and joy to their lives.</li> <li>Ensure that all adults recognize and value the importance of participation in meaningful activities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Supportive Environments</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create positive physical and social-emotional environments to help all students participate and enjoy their school day.</li> <li>Ensure that all adults are caring, develop positive relationships with all students, and know how to promote positive behavior.</li> <li>Teach children and youth to respect difference, include everyone, and be kind to one another.</li> <li>Create sensory-friendly environments (e.g. tune into noise levels, visual input).</li> <li>Advocate for safe and attractive physical environments.</li> <li>Do what you can to help students feel comfortable and happy in the classroom, hallway, restrooms, cafeteria and playground.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Observe areas throughout the school and evaluate whether the environment is pleasant, safe and inviting for all students. Check out the Cafeteria Environmental Scan and Recess Environmental Scan for evaluating these school contexts. Tune into the quality of adult supervision and relationships during lunch and recess.</li> <li>Observe how students are participating and enjoying what they are doing in various contexts. Look out for those who appear unhappy or stressed. What modifications in the environment might improve the outcome?</li> </ul>

## 6 Key Ingredients for Mental Health Promotion (Continued)

Promoting Positive Mental Health	What You Can Do
<p><b>Mental Health Literacy</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help all students and adults develop an understanding of positive mental health and what to do to be mentally healthy.</li> <li>• Teach students about the signs and symptoms of becoming unwell emotionally and how to seek help when needed.</li> <li>• Educate students about effective strategies for coping with challenges (e.g. mindfulness, cognitive reframing, etc.)</li> <li>• Reduce stigma associated with mental health challenges and foster understanding and respect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Talk about mental health in natural and positive ways throughout the day so that all students value the importance of mental health and view it as a safe subject to talk about.</li> <li>• Use respectful language when talking about mental health challenges.</li> <li>• Demonstrate and encourage respect and empathy for students with identified mental health challenges.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Embedded Strategies</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed evidence-based mental health promotion strategies throughout the day in natural ways during academics (classroom), lunch, recess, and extracurricular leisure activities.</li> <li>• Implement Every Moment Counts model programs focusing on mental health promotion: Comfortable Cafeteria, Refreshing Recess, Calm Moments Cards, and Making Leisure Matter</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refer to Embedded Strategies. Read about and apply the 10 Moments for Mental Health</li> <li>• Build capacity of all school personnel and families to be mental health promoters by sharing and applying the 10 Moments for Mental Health.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Building Capacity</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mental health promotion efforts are the most effective when all frontline workers are knowledgeable about tuning into and promoting positive mental health in all students.</li> <li>• Collaborate with other team members. Get everyone 'on board'. Talk about what you can do together to help students be mentally healthy. Identify and contribute to existing school-wide mental health efforts, that may include: SEL (Social &amp; Emotional Learning), PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions &amp; Supports, character education, bully prevention, etc. Find out what school-wide initiatives your school has committed to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement a variety of professional development strategies to educate all school personnel about positive mental health and how to be a mental health promoter (e.g. information sheets in teachers' lounge, inservice education, etc.).</li> <li>• Consider developing a Mental Health Promotion team to spearhead annual professional development and other events Remember, 'it takes a village!' Decide as a team how you will all learn about and promote positive mental health.</li> </ul>

## Your Turn!

Here's what you can do to promote positive mental health! **Make children's mental health YOUR business!** Tune into every student's mental health.

1. Encourage participation in meaningful and enjoyable activities. Experiences that result in positive emotions (e.g. joy, happiness, contentment) help promote mental health<sup>1,2</sup>. Engage children in activities that allow for choice and involve a just right challenge<sup>3</sup>. When a child smiles during an activity and is intently engaged, you know that it is the just right activity;
2. Help children develop individual character strengths (e.g. persistence, humor, optimism, kindness). Make a point of helping children identify what makes them unique and help them cultivate and use their strengths and interests;<sup>1</sup>
3. Help create positive environments with caring adults and peers that accept and support each other and tolerate differences;<sup>1</sup>
4. Encourage children to think optimistically, perform acts of kindness and express gratitude.<sup>4,5</sup>

Make sure to read about Embedded Strategies to learn about 10 Moments for Mental Health (10 strategies to embed based on positive psychology research) and Key School-Wide Approaches to apply within a multi-tiered framework.



Remember this:

### 6 Key Ingredients of Mental Health Promotion

- Positive emotions
- Meaningful activities
- Supportive environments
- Mental health literacy
- Embedded strategies
- Building capacity

## Suggested Citation

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## References

- <sup>1</sup> Wells, J., Barlow, J., & Stewart-Brown, S. (2003). A systematic review of universal approaches to mental health in schools. *Health Education, 103*, 197-220.
- <sup>2</sup> Enns, et al. (2016). Mapping interventions that promote mental health in the general population: A scoping review of reviews. *Preventive Medicine, 87*, 70-80.
- <sup>3</sup> Dix, K. L., Slee, P. T., Lawson, M. J., & Keeves, J. P. (2012). Implementation quality of whole-school mental health promotion and students' academic performance. *Child and Adolescent Mental Health, 17*, 45-51.
- <sup>4</sup> Barry, M. M., & Jenkins, R. (2007). *Implementing mental health promotion*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier.
- <sup>5</sup> Fredrickson, B. L. (2001). The role of positive emotions in positive psychology: The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *American Psychologist, 56*, 218-226.
- <sup>6</sup> Seligman, M. (2011). *Flourish: A visionary new understanding of happiness and well-being*. New York: Free Press.
- <sup>7</sup> Csikszentmihalyi, M. (1993). Activity and happiness: Towards a science of occupation. *Occupational Science: Australia, 1*, 38-42.
- <sup>8</sup> Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences, 359*, 1367-1377.