



Mental Health Promotion: 6 Key Ingredients

There are many strategies and school-wide programs that can promote positive mental health. *Every Moment Counts* emphasizes the following **6 key ingredients for mental health promotion**. These are reflected in all of our initiatives.

Positive emotions

- Positive emotions can be experienced in the present (doing something fun), past (remembering a positive experience), or when thinking about the future (looking forward to an event). Aim for a 3 to 1 ratio of positive to negative emotions during the day for positive mental health.
- 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? What activities bring about positive emotions in the children you interact with?

Meaningful activities

- Enjoyment is more often experienced during active versus passive activities that offer the 'just right challenge' that lead to 'flow' (a state of being totally absorbed in the activity). Shared activities foster social interactions and friendships.
- Tune into what students are doing especially during unstructured times of the day (e.g. lunch, recess). Advocate for healthy and enjoyable activity options.

Supportive environments

- Create positive physical and social-emotional environments to help all students participate and enjoy their school day.
- Ensure that all adults are caring, develop positive relationships with all students, and know how to promote positive behavior.
- Teach children and youth to respect difference, include everyone, and be kind to one another.

Mental health literacy

- Help all students and adults develop an understanding of positive mental health and what to do to be mentally healthy. Teach students about the signs and symptoms of becoming unwell emotionally and how to seek help when needed.
- 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. Reduce stigma associated with mental health challenges.

Embedded strategies

- Embed evidence-based mental health promotion strategies throughout the day in natural ways during academics (classroom), lunch, recess, and extracurricular leisure activities. Implement Every Moment Counts model programs: Comfortable Cafeteria, Refreshing Recess, Calm Moments Cards, Making Leisure Matter.
- Refer to **Embedded Strategies**. Read about and apply the **10 Moments for Mental Health**

Building capacity → Developing mental health promoters

- 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.
- Develop a Community of Practice (CoP) of diverse school personnel who will commit to shared learning and shared work over time focusing on mental health promotion.

