



# every moment counts

promoting mental health throughout the day

## What is Every Moment Counts?

**Every Moment Counts** is a mental health promotion initiative developed to help all children and youth become mentally healthy in order to succeed in school, at home and in the community. This work focuses on reframing mental health as a positive state of functioning – it is more than the absence of mental illness. Positive mental health is associated with feeling good emotionally and doing well functionally in everyday life. For children and youth, this means doing well during academic (classroom) as well as nonacademic (recess, lunch, after-school extracurricular activities) times of the day.<sup>1</sup>

**Why should everyone care about mental health?** Mental health is an integral part of overall health. Children and youth who experience positive mental health and well-being function better during academic and non-academic times of the school day and do things to take care of their health.<sup>2</sup>

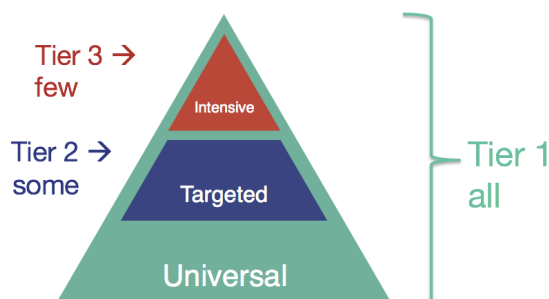
**Project Director:** Susan Bazyk, PhD, OTR/L, FAOTA (s.bazyk@csuohio.edu)

## Every Moment Counts Emphasizes:

- 1. Mental health promotion.** Model programs and embedded strategies focus on creating environments that foster participation and enjoyment for all children and are based on research in the areas of mental health promotion<sup>3</sup> and positive psychology<sup>4</sup>. Strategies that have been found to improve mental health include participation in enjoyable activities<sup>5</sup>, using personal strengths, having friends, thinking optimistically, performing acts of kindness and expressing gratitude<sup>6</sup>. Mental health promotion efforts also include creating supportive environments, reducing stigma and discrimination, and supporting the social and emotional learning (SEL) of all children and youth.
  - **Who can be a Mental Health Promoter? Everyone!** All adults can play an active role in mental health promotion using embedded strategies. Although the mental health field has traditionally been viewed as the domain of licensed mental health providers, experts are calling for a paradigm shift to better prepare all school personnel to proactively address the mental health needs of all students<sup>7</sup>.
- 2. Inclusion** of students with disabilities and mental health challenges during all aspects of the school day and extracurricular after-school activities.
- 3. Integrating services in natural contexts.** Model programs and embedded strategies have been developed to take place in natural school and community contexts (versus isolated therapy rooms). Such integrated services fosters social interaction and the development of friendships among students with and without disabilities and/or mental health challenges.
- 4. Collaboration among all school personnel and parents.** Integrated and inclusive programs require close collaboration among all relevant stakeholders. Although this work is led by occupational therapists, emphasis is placed on close collaboration with all 'indigenous resources' within schools – other related service providers (speech therapy, physical therapy), lunch and recess supervisors, special and regular education teachers, para-educators, physical and health educators, and school counselors to name a few. Integration of intervention strategies throughout the day is critical for generalization of targeted skills.

Mental health is a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with people, and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity.<sup>4</sup>

## Guiding Framework: Public Health Approach to Mental Health



Similar to RtI and PBIS, a multi-tiered public health approach is used to provide a range of services and supports geared to meet the mental health needs of children and youth with and without disabilities and/or mental health challenges. Depicted as a pyramid representing a multi-tiered system of interventions and supports, this approach is designed to meet the mental health needs of children and youth at the universal, whole-school (all); targeted (at-risk; some); and intensive individualized levels (identified with mental health challenges). This framework supports a change in thinking from the traditional, individually focused deficit-driven model of mental health intervention to a whole-population strength-based approach.

## The Every Moment Counts Website ([everymomentcounts.org](http://everymomentcounts.org))

This website provides a wealth of information that can be used to build capacity of school personnel and families to learn about positive mental health, a multi-tiered public health approach to mental health, and simple strategies for promoting positive mental health. Information describing all of the model programs is provided along with detailed instructions and downloadable resources (bookmarks, posters, handouts) for successful implementation. Information continues to be added to the website.

### Model Programs and Embedded Strategies

Model Programs and Embedded Strategies have been developed, implemented, and evaluated to foster successful and enjoyable participation, skill development, and mental and physical health. Information needed to learn about and implement the programs and strategies are free and downloadable on the Every Moment Counts website.

- **Comfortable Cafeteria** – a six week, 1 day/week program that helps build capacity of cafeteria supervisors and students to create a positive environment so that all students enjoy their lunch and socializing with peers. Weekly themes focus on friendship promotion, mealtime conversations, including everyone, and healthy eating.
- **Refreshing Recess** – a six week, 1 day/week program that helps build capacity of recess supervisors and students to create a positive environment so that all students enjoy active play and socializing with peers. Weekly themes focus on friendship promotion, including others, teamwork, active play, and conflict resolution.
- **Calm Moments Cards** – a program designed to help teachers and other school personnel recognize signs of stress in students and embed thinking, relaxation and focusing, and sensory strategies to reduce stress and enhance emotional well-being during 17 situational stressors (e.g. taking a test, completing an assignment, etc.).
- **Making Leisure Matter** – Coaching strategies are used to explore interests in youth with limited or no leisure interests, find community options for participation, and foster participation.
- **Tier 1 Embedded Strategies** – A variety of evidence-based strategies for promoting mental health based on research from positive psychology are provided on the Every Moment Counts website. Check out Moments for Mental Health and Tier 1 Strategies within the Embedded Strategies tab.

### The Every Moment Counts Commitment

Every Moment Counts is committed to building capacity of all school personnel, families, and community providers to promote children's mental health and contribute to prevention and intervention of mental health challenges through professional education, website resources, and coaching.

### OTs Foster Participation in Activities that Promote Health

Occupational therapists (OT) are skilled in analyzing the interaction between the skills needed to successfully participate in an activity (e.g. play & social interaction during recess, eating lunch) and how to modify the activity and/or environment in order to promote participation. In addition to having a sound knowledge of the sensory and motor requirements of a task, OTs are skilled in addressing the social and emotional aspects of participation.

For further information:

Visit: [everymomentcounts.org](http://everymomentcounts.org) or Contact: **Susan Bazyk** at [s.bazyk@csuohio.edu](mailto:s.bazyk@csuohio.edu)

<sup>1</sup>Bazyk, S. (ed.). (2011). *Mental health promotion, prevention, and intervention for children and youth: A guiding framework for occupational therapy*. Bethesda, MD: AOTA Press.

<sup>2</sup>Keyes, C. L. (2006). Mental health in adolescence: Is America's youth flourishing? *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 76, 395-402.

<sup>3</sup>Barry, M. M., & Jenkins, R. (2007). *Implementing mental health promotion*. Edinburgh, Scotland: Churchill Livingstone/Elsevier.

<sup>4</sup>Seligman, M. E. P., Steen, T. A., Park, N., & Peterson, C. (2005). Positive psychology progress: Empirical validation of interventions. *American Psychologist*, 60, 410-421.

<sup>5</sup>Fredrickson, B. L. (2004). The broaden-and-build theory of positive emotions. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 359, 1367-77.

<sup>6</sup>Heller, D., Watson, D., & Ilies, R. (2004). The role of person versus situation in life satisfaction: A critical examination. *Psychological Bulletin*, 130, 574-600.

<sup>7</sup>Koller, J. R., & Bertel, J. M. (2006). Responding to today's mental health needs of children, families and schools: Revisiting the preservice training and preparation of school-based personnel. *Education and Treatment of Children*, 29, 197-217.