



Wellness Today

For Teachers

Signs of Emotional Struggles

Early recognition is key to overcoming challenges. Signs someone may be struggling emotionally include:

- Loss of interest in usual activities
- Mood or behavior changes including appetite and sleep
- Withdrawing or isolating
- Taking excessive risks or behaving recklessly
- Repeated unexplained body aches and pains
- Anxiety interfering with activities
- Frequent anger, irritability, criticizing, or tantrums
- Change in academic performance
- Preoccupation with death or dying
- Talking about wanting to die or being a burden

How to Help

While teachers and school personnel are not responsible to counsel at-risk students. They can help by:

1. Knowing the warning signs.
2. Referring students immediately to the school psychologist or counselor. Escorting the student to the school's psychologist or counselor helps with safety and rapport.

Knowledge That Makes a Difference

Each quarter a newsletter will be available with valuable information on ways to help your students develop greater emotional wellness, resiliency and skills to handle challenges in life.

Helping Students After Social Rejection

Social rejection can come from others based on something one has done or because of the choices of others. It can appear in forms of being left out, teased, or others not sharing, to name a few. You can aid the young people of today in develop "grit" or emotional resiliency to keep trying after experiencing the disappointment of rejection through the following suggestions:

1. **Empathy** - Comfort and validate their experience before helping them consider alternative ways of thinking of the situation.
2. **Skills** - When social rejection has occurred help assess if a social skill is underdeveloped or being misused. By identifying what skills the student would benefit from learning the

rejection can become a developing moment. For example, if a child is rejected because they are aggressive, teach them helpful ways to handle their anger, such as taking deep breaths, getting a drink of water, asking for help, stretching or doing a yoga pose. If a child is left out because they are lacking assertiveness, nurture this skill by talking about ways to speak up, then have him or her practice these skills by pairing him or her with a younger student to mentor.

3. **Friendships** - Rather than encouraging joining a large group, help those who feel socially rejected to develop one or two relationships.

Helping Students Develop Resilience

Children and teens, like all people, will experience degrees of life difficulties, stresses, losses, tragedies, and traumas.

Resiliency, the ability to adapt to the adversities and stressors of life, is a skill that can be nurtured. The following

How To Get Help

If you or someone you know is struggling emotionally or behaviorally, support is available. Begin by talking with a medical doctor or a mental health professional.

Below are resources available in the community to help:

- **Hope4Utah** provides resources for parents on talking with children and teens about suicide and mental health, as well as offering practical guidance for accessing help. www.hope4utah.com
- **SafeUT**  app provides real-time crisis intervention through a phone call, chat, or submitting confidential tips to school administrators on bullying, threats, or violence.
- **National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)** offers information regarding mental health conditions and support groups for families. www.nami.org
- **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (English and Spanish) 24/7, free, and confidential support for people in distress. 1-800-273-8255
- **Crisis Text Line** is the free, 24/7, confidential text message service for people in crisis. Text HOME to 7417414.

tips will facilitate the development of resilience in children and youth:



Empathy

Empathy, or the ability to understand another's experience, can help build resiliency, connections and perspective when life is hard. One idea for building empathy in the classroom is through "Empathy Book Trailers." Lorena Swetnam, a Middle School Librarian, in Blythewood, South Carolina recommends, "to promote empathy through the use of the stories on our shelves, students that finish a book that they love can record a short book trailer sharing what it was like to walk in the shoes of the main character and what they learned." For more ideas on building empathy and community in the classroom visit <https://www.oakland.edu/Assets/Oakland/galileo/files-and-documents/Empathy%20in%20Your%20Classroom%20Teachers%20Guild.pdf>



Looking Beyond Self

When feeling helpless about experiences in life empowerment to persist can build as we seek to help others. Try brainstorming in class age-appropriate ways children and teens can help others



Self Care

Handling stress is best achieved when basic self care is used. This includes eating

properly, exercising and resting. Teaching children and teens about making healthy lifestyle choices can aid in the navigation of life challenges.



Goal Setting

Children and teens benefit from learning and re-learning to set reasonable goals and how to break goals into smaller, achievable steps. When a goal is not met many feel they have failed. Rather than it being a failure, it is a goal that has not been achieved yet. As children and teens are helped to understand the purpose of their goal, ways they may have achieved aspects of their goal and steps to make the goal achievable, a growth mindset, the ability to keep going even after "failure," is nurtured.



Perspective Taking

Perspective taking for children and teens can be hard based on their natural state of development, causing them to see their reality at times as permanently bad, defining and/or too long-lasting. At times other important aspects of their circumstances are not seen, similar to when a camera lens is zoomed in and only parts of the picture is seen. As children and teens are assisted in developing perspective they can learn to "zoom the camera lens out" to see a broader perspective, increasing hope that situations can be endured and/or overcome.

Disclaimer—The information in this newsletter is a starting place and might not be effective for every child or every situation. Mental health conditions are complex, as people differ widely in their conditions and responses, and interactions with other conditions. Interventions and treatments are best evaluated and adapted by a qualified clinician to meet individual needs. This newsletter is produced by Hope4Utah, a nonprofit organization providing trainings, resources and supports to prevent, intervene, and respond to suicides and to improve mental health. Articles contributed by Jessica Williamson, LCSW, who specializes in mental health treatment of children, teens and adults at her a private practice in South Jordan, Utah.