

WORKSHOP DISCUSSION GUIDE

**Emotional & Mental
Wellness** for Elementary
& Middle School and
Trauma-Informed Practices
for Elementary & Middle
School

About Kognito

Kognito is a leading provider of practice-based digital learning experiences that present strategies to improve mental health and well-being across schools, campuses, and communities. Built on an interactive platform, our products integrate several evidence-based models and techniques, game mechanics, and learning principles, allowing users to learn by engaging in role-play conversations with emotionally responsive humans. Through practice and personalized feedback, users learn and assess their competency to lead similar real-life conversations.

Kognito has been instrumental in providing training to over 1.5 million educators, administrators, students, and their communities. This innovative approach is changing lives by increasing user confidence and awareness on critical topics that impact critical thinking and decision-making.

The Kognito Model

The Kognito model combines evidence-based SEL skills, learning science, and simulated conversation practice with virtual humans to create a learning experience that leads to improved confidence and behavior change. Learners immerse in simulated real-life scenarios, engaging in virtual human conversations and receiving feedback from a virtual coach. This model ensures a reflective and transformational experience.

At Kognito we believe that:

- 01. Adults learn best when they do.** Kognito’s simulations provide key knowledge on conversation and adult SEL skills, followed by practice opportunities. The active experimentation involved in the simulations turns abstract learning concrete.
- 02. Adult learners need opportunities for critical reflection.** The conversations provide coaching and other opportunities for learners to reflect on how they are doing and what steps they can take to improve. These critical reflection points allow for more transformative-learning moments and deeper understanding of the communication strategies taught.
- 03. Adult learning that evokes an emotional response creates a powerful learning experience that is not easily forgotten.** The scenarios are designed to provide these types of “aha” moments by revealing the cause-and-effect relationship between the learners’ communication strategies and the responses they elicit. The learner is then able to relate their experience in the simulation to past experiences and impart new meaning on previous interactions.

How to Use this Guide

To help you facilitate a successful training, we've developed a comprehensive facilitator guide so that you can quickly and efficiently train educators and staff. Crafted by instructional design and learning experts, the guide features a road map for facilitating this session and offers a wealth of content and learning activities such as facilitator strategies, learning objectives, group activity and discussion ideas.

- 01.** The content found in this guide is intended to supplement or lead your experience with the Kognito product.
- 02.** This guide can be a resource to train workshop and discussion leaders.
- 03.** This guide can be used for professional development days, in-service days, individual meetings, or group meetings.



Workshop Discussion Guide

Facilitator Prep time: 2-3 hours

Workshop Run time: 3-4 hours

Preparation

- ✔ Determine how to best implement the training at your school:
 - Option 1:** Will staff complete the online programs prior to the workshop?
 - We recommend staff complete online programs on their own and then meet for a face-to-face workshop.
 - Alternatively, educators and staff can take the online programs as part of the workshop (on separate computers) and then rejoin the group for discussion. This would be a half-day training.
 - Option 2:** Will the workshop be offered face-to-face or online?
 - Tips for online workshops:
 - Online meeting software options to consider include: Zoom, Google Hangouts, WebEx, or Skype.
 - The “breakout rooms” in Zoom allow participants to partner for role plays and discussion.
 - Share your screen to show PowerPoint slides.
 - Assign a co-host to help you manage the workshop.
 - Record the online workshop and make it available for those who cannot attend.
- ✔ Review *Emotional & Mental Wellness: Elementary & Middle School; Trauma- Informed Practices for Elementary & Middle School*, and the full Workshop Facilitator’s Guide and corresponding PowerPoint. Customize the PowerPoint to include your school or district’s logo and any mission or vision-specific details. If you have less than 3 hours to complete the workshop it is recommended that you customize it to suit your time constraints.
- ✔ Discuss your school’s referral process with the school leader, counselor, and/or mental-health team. Customize the slides which outline the referral process and local resources and present this information to the group. *Include both the traditional at-school referral process as well as the process for referral and connection if students are learning from home. If you will provide mental health services via telehealth, explain that process.*

✔ Prepare the corresponding PowerPoint presentation and make sure you have adequate means to present it to your participants. If needed, you can adjust the length of time of your workshop by adding/removing discussion items or activities.

✔ Print or email the following workshop handouts.

Emotional & Mental Wellness: Elementary & Middle School

- Note-Taking Guide (if participants will use the online program during the workshop)
- One-page summary
- Check-in/de-escalation techniques
- Role-Play Scenarios
- Local Resources page from the simulation

Trauma-Informed Practices for Elementary & Middle School Note-taking guide

- Simulation summary
- Role-play scenarios
- Local Resources page from the simulation

Sample Planning Timeline

- **60 Days Prior:** Confirm training date and location
- **45 Days Prior:** Ensure account access for district/school staff
- **30 Days Prior (if staff will take simulation *prior* to workshop):** Confirm registration and that attendees have created their accounts
- **5 Days Prior:** Send reminder to staff

Workshop Flow

Welcome & Hook Activity

10 minutes

Slide 1: Welcome

- Welcome attendees and thank them for coming.

Slide 2: Your role *[customize]*

- Introduce yourself and (if necessary) your role within the school or district.
- Share contact information. Encourage attendees to reach out to you with questions or follow up after the training.

Slide 3: Workshop overview *[customize this slide if participants will not take the program during the workshop]*

- Discuss what participants will learn in the workshop.

Slide 4: Group norms *[customize as necessary]*

- Sample norms: actively participate, be respectful, do not share names or identifying information of students or staff, seek help if you would like to discuss personal mental health issues, take a break if any of the material is triggering, reach out to the presenter at the end if you are concerned about a student.

Slide 5: Hook activity (5 minutes)

- Ask attendees to use a scrap piece of paper and write a description of the image on the slide, using the acronym AEIOU. (1 minute)

A
E
I
O
U

Adjective: A word to describe the image.

Emotion: How do you feel about the image?

Interesting: What is interesting to you about the image?

OMG: What surprised you about the image?

Um?: What question do you have about the image?

- Ask participants to share their observations with a neighbor. (1 minute)
- Ask participants to share a few answers with the whole group. (2.5 minute)

- Quick Debrief: (0.5 minutes)
 - The Wave - Sometimes we see the student at the desk, but not the wave looming behind them. Acknowledging student mental health, the possibility of past or ongoing trauma and the relationship between the two helps educators understand a student's bigger picture.
 - Trauma-informed Mindset - It's important to approach classroom concerns with a trauma-informed mindset. Students may be dealing with trauma that can affect how they interact at school.
 - Identify the Signs - As educators, we should know how to identify signs of distress, to approach students confidently, and to refer students to the supports they need to succeed.

Note: If staff have taken the Kognito simulation prior to the workshop (recommended), then skip to section 5 (PPT slide 11).

Preparing for Simulation

Up to 10 minutes

Slides 6 - 9: Brief overview of Kognito and the simulation training

- Kognito's simulations are evidence-based.
- Encourage staff to choose the conversation pathway that best reflects what they would actually say in a real-life conversation.
- Let staff know we are not asking them to become counselors however, we want to capitalize on the limited time they have with students to provide the most effective support.

Practice (Emotional & Mental Wellness)

45 minutes

Slide 10

- Ensure participants are able to login to their account.
- Provide headphones to all participants.
- Distribute the **note-taking guide for Emotional & Mental Wellness** to all participants.
- Proctor the room to allow anyone needing assistance to communicate with you.
- Participants who finish early can begin their break. Write on the board what time the workshop will reconvene for discussion.

Break

15 minutes

Practice (Trauma- Informed Practices)

50 minutes - 1 hour

20 minutes

Slide 13

- Ensure participants are able to login to their account.
- Provide headphones to all participants.
- When asked to choose your setting, select elementary school, middle school, or high school. If they take only one conversation, they will likely complete the experience in 30 minutes; if they take all three, it could take 45-60 minutes.
- Distribute the **note-taking guide** for *Trauma-Informed Practices* to all participants.
- Proctor the room to allow anyone needing assistance to communicate with you.

Discussion

60 - 70 minutes

Slide 14: Program review (Emotional & Mental Wellness) (5 minutes)

- Distribute the **one-page summary** for each program and the **check-in/de-escalation techniques**.
- Remind participants about the conversations in the simulation (include more detail if the participants took the program prior to the workshop).
- Ask a few questions to get the discussion going. Sample questions:
 - How similar were these conversations to those had in real-life?
 - Did you try new things in these conversations that you haven't tried in real life?

Slide 15: Setting Up for Success (5 minutes)

- "A positive classroom environment promotes *connectedness* and *resilience*, creating a pathway to discuss concerns."
- What does that mean? *Possible answers below:*
 - *Connectedness: having strong relationships in the school and community; for example, a strong teacher-student relationship*
 - *Resilience: the ability to adapt well and bounce back quickly in times of stress*
 - *Pathway to discuss concerns: Students know where to turn when they need help.*

Slide 16: Checking In: Talking about Feelings (3 minutes)

- Possible discussion questions:
 - Has anyone done this? How did you integrate it into your class, and how long did it take? How did it help you better understand and support your students?
 - How do these check-ins create connectedness and resilience, giving students a pathway to discuss concerns?

Slide 17: Checking In: Mood Meters (2 minutes)

- Possible discussion questions:
 - **Normalize it:** Has anyone used one of these? How did it work? How did you integrate it into your class, and how long did it take? How did it help you better understand and support your students?

Slide 18: Checking In: Writing and Journaling (2 minutes)

- Possible discussion questions:
 - Has anyone done this? How did you integrate it into your class, and how long did it take? How did it help you better understand and support your students?
 - How do check-in circles, mood meters, and journaling create connectedness and resilience, giving students a pathway to discuss concerns?

Slide 19: De-Escalation Strategies (5-10 minutes)

- Discuss these methods for calming students down.
- Possible discussion questions:
 - Why is it difficult for students who've experienced trauma or who are highly distressed to calm down on their own and participate in class?
 - How does it help to be familiar with techniques like these in advance?
 - Has anyone used any of these? Which ones? How did it work?
- This is an ideal time for the presenter to demonstrate one or more of these techniques, modelling them for participants.

Slide 20: Warning Signs (8 minutes)

- “Remember the wave image we saw at the beginning of the workshop? Often we don't know that wave is there. All we see are the student's *reactions* to that wave. These are warning signs that tell you a child might be dealing with more under the surface than we realize.”
- Possible discussion questions:
 - What kinds of things do kids your students' age struggle with emotionally? (*Possible answers: managing school work, responsibilities at home, relationship stuff, parents fighting, divorced parents, mental disorders*)
 - How do young people typically cope with these kinds of struggles? (*Possible answers: they don't, they shut down, maybe they don't do their work, they talk to an adult who can help*)
 - Were there any signs on the list that surprised you, or that you hadn't thought to take note of before playing through the simulation?
 - Why is it important for teachers to notice these things, reach out to the student, and possibly refer them for support? (*Possible answers: build the student's resiliency by being another adult they know cares; educators in an ideal position to notice when a student needs help and connect them with the resources designed to help them; the earlier a child gets the help they need, the better their overall outcomes might be; students receiving needed support may take less of our time and attention in the classroom and cause less disruption*)
- This is an ideal time for the presenter to demonstrate one or more of these techniques, modelling them for participants.

Slide 21: Risk Factors (8 minutes)

- Possible discussion questions:
 - What's the difference between a warning sign and a risk factor? *(Possible answers: warning signs are worrisome things we notice about the student's behavior, academics, or appearance; risk factors are worrisome things going on in the student's life; warning signs may occur when there are no known risk factors; risk factors may be present even though the student shows no warning signs)*
 - Why is it good practice to check in with students with risk factors like these, even if they do not show warning signs? *(Possible answers: these risk factors put students at a higher likelihood for distress, even if they do not exhibit warning signs)*

Slide 22: ACEs (10 minutes)

- Read through the list of adverse childhood experiences.
- “Three in five children will experience one of these by the age of 18. One in three will experience two or more by age 18.”
- Possible discussion questions:
 - What kinds of trauma and stressors do you see most frequently? What warning signs do those students exhibit?
 - How can experiences like these take a child out of “learning mode” and put them in a state of heightened alert (“fight, flee, freeze”), even at school?
 - Why is it important for teachers to notice warning signs, reach out to the student, and possibly refer them for support? *(Possible answers: build the student's resiliency by being another adult they know cares; educators are in an ideal position to notice when a student needs help and connect them with the resources designed to help them; the earlier a child gets the help they need, the better their overall outcomes might be; students receiving needed support may take less of our time and attention in the classroom and cause less disruption)*
 - Why do some students' warning signs not lead to approach and referral by a teacher? *(Possible answers: Teachers may not realize the behavior is indicative of a deeper issue. Or the student's behavior may not be a problem in the classroom.)*
 - How might identifying an at-risk student save you time in the long run? *(Possible answers: The student could get the help they need to improve behavior in the long run; when you improve your relationship with the child, their behavior may also improve)*

Slide 23: Bringing up concerns (5 minutes)

- Review the techniques discussed in the Trauma-Informed Practices.
- Possible discussion questions:
 - How does it sound different to approach a student as an authority figure versus as a supportive adult? *(Possible answers: authority figures spend more time talking and less time listening; authority figures give unsolicited advice, discipline the student, and presume they already know the reason for the student's behavior)*

- Why might we want to sometimes approach a student as a supportive adult, instead of as an authority figure? *(Possible answers: we want to understand what the student is struggling with, we want to work with the student to evoke behavior changes, we want to encourage the student to talk with the counselor without making them defensive)*

Slide 24: Conversation Techniques (6 minutes)

- “Now we’ll discuss three techniques to use when you approach a student to check-in with them.”
- Possible discussion questions:
 - How is a check-in conversation about emotional and mental wellness different from other conversations you may have with your students, for example a disciplinary conversation? *(Possible answers: When you check-in with a student, you are approaching as a supportive adult, your goal is to get the student talking, you are listening more than talking)*
 - What words/tones do we often use when we’re approaching a student as an authority figure? *(Possible answers: giving unsolicited advice, disciplining, presuming we already know the reason the student is behaving the way they are)*
 - How do these conversation techniques help us assume the role of a supportive adult, instead of approaching as an authority figure? *(Possible answers: not acting like we already know the reasons for the behavior, bringing up concerns in a way that doesn’t blame or criticize the student and is less likely to provoke defensiveness, encouraging the student to open up)*

Slide 25: Observable Behaviors (6 minutes)

- Review this technique with participants.
- Possible discussion questions:
 - Can anyone give an example of how you might use observable behaviors to broach a conversation with a student? *(Examples should focus only on the facts and be delivered with a neutral tone of voice and neutral words.)*
 - How does mentioning only observable behaviors reduce the student’s defensiveness? *(Possible answer: Students are more likely to get defensive if they sense judgment or if you say something they don’t think is true. For example, if you misinterpret their intentions or feelings they are less likely to get defensive if you stick to indisputable facts)*
 - What are “I” statements and how do they help? *(Possible answer: “I” statements make it clear that any interpretations you’re making are only your thoughts/feelings/ideas and may not be accurate. This reduces the other person’s defensiveness.)*

Slide 26: Open-Ended Questions (3 min)

- Review this technique with participants.
- Possible discussion questions:
 - What’s an example of an open-ended question you might use in a check-in conversation?
 - How do open-ended questions help you to assess a student’s level of distress? *(Possible answer: They encourage students to talk more, sharing how they feel, rather than just answering “yes” or “no.”)*

Slide 27: Reflections (6 minutes)

- Review this technique with participants.
- Possible discussion questions:
 - What's an example of a reflection you might use in a conversation like this? *(Examples should focus only on the facts and be delivered with a neutral tone of voice and neutral words.)*
 - How do reflections encourage the other person to keep opening up? *(Possible answers: They show you're listening and interested; if you get it wrong, the student will correct you; if you get it right, the student will feel heard.)*
 - How can you use open-ended questions and reflections together in conversation? *(Possible answer: Students will answer your open-ended questions; then you can reflect the most important parts of what you're hearing. "I" statements make it clear that any interpretations you're making are only your thoughts/feelings/ideas and may not be accurate. This reduces the other person's defensiveness.)*

Slides 28-29: Referring Students (5 minutes)

- Review this technique with participants.
- Possible discussion questions:
 - Why is it important to use techniques like these, instead of just telling the student they should see the counselor? *(Possible answers: the student is less likely to push back against the idea if you use a soft approach; if you can increase the student's ownership of seeing the counselor, they are more likely to follow through with it)*
 - What do you do if the student says "no"? *(If you think the student is a danger to themselves or others, make a referral per your school's policies anyway, not letting the student out of your sight. Otherwise, you may still wish to discuss the student's situation with the counselor or other support personnel, depending on your level of concern about the student.)*

Slide 30: How do I ask about suicide? (3 minutes)

- Asking a student if they are considering suicide will not put the idea in the student's head.
- Also, the way the question is asked makes a big difference in whether or not the student will give you a truthful answer.
 - NOT EFFECTIVE: "You're not thinking about suicide, are you?"
 - NOT EFFECTIVE: "You wouldn't kill yourself. I know you're smarter than that."
 - EFFECTIVE: "Are you considering suicide?"
- Many students who are thinking about suicide will welcome the opportunity to talk about those thoughts if given a chance.
- Ask participants to pair up and take turns asking the question out loud. Asking a question like this can be intimidating at first, but it's important to be able to ask sincerely, without judgment and without leading the person to the answer you want to hear. That's the best way to get an honest answer.

Slide 31: What if a student might be suicidal? (3 minutes)

- “Suicide is often preventable. If you fear that a student is considering suicide, talk to him or her immediately and be direct. Asking about suicide will *not* put the idea into a student’s head.”
- 1) Gather as much information as the student is willing to share, such as:
 - Are they thinking about suicide?
 - Do they have a plan?
 - Do they intend to act on the plan?
 - Do they have the means to act on the plan?
- 2) Connect the student *immediately and in person* to a supportive counselor, staff member, local service provider, or crisis center.
- “If you have questions on how to handle a particular situation and you cannot reach anyone in your school administration, you can call the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

Role Play 1

30 minutes

Prepare for role play (5 minutes)

- Ask participants to break into groups of two for a set of role plays. Online-meeting systems like Zoom offer randomized break-out rooms for set periods of time and set group sizes.
- Tell participants they will role play two challenging conversations between a teacher and a student.
- Ask them to decide who will play the teacher first.

Role play (10 minutes)

- Pass out the **role-play handout** to all participants. Ask them to read Scenario A on the handout, and read **ONLY** about their character (the concerned teacher or the student). Together, they can decide a target age/grade for Tamina, based on the age of their real-life students. Begin their first role play.
- Keep up Slide 27 (conversation role-play techniques).
- Give participants a one-minute reminder before the end of the role play.

Role play discussion (15 minutes)

- If you played the role of the teacher... What did you learn about Tamina’s emotional state and home life?
- If you played the role of the student... What did your teacher do in this conversation to make you feel comfortable and respected?
- How were the techniques (bringing up specific behaviors, asking open-ended questions, and empathizing) used to approach Tamina more as a supportive adult than as a disciplinarian? Alternatively, how *could* they have been used to make the conversation even better?
- Could Tamina be helped by a referral to a school mental-health professional? (*yes, she seems to be under a lot of stress and may benefit from talking with a trained professional at school*)

- What kind of advance planning, if any, is necessary for conducting a conversation like this? (*Possible answers: checking your emotions to put aside any unhelpful thoughts or presumptions you may have about the student or parent; considering how you might bring up the things you've noticed and what kind of language you will use*)
- How else might you better support Tamina at school?

Role Play 2

25 minutes

Role play (10 minutes)

- Now participants will switch roles. Whoever played the teacher before, will now play the student.
- Ask participants to read Section B on the role-play handout and begin their second role play.
- Leave up Slide 27 (conversation role-play techniques)
- Give participants a one-minute warning before the end of the role play.

Role play discussion (15 minutes)

- If you played the role of the teacher...
 - What warning signs and risk factors did you notice about Tyler prior to the conversation? (*quieter, not participating, not turning in assignments, being absent, possible death of a family member*)
 - Raise your hand if you tried anything *new* in this conversation? What did you try and how did it work or not work?
 - What did you learn about Tyler's emotional state and home life?
- If you played the student...
 - What did your partner do in this conversation to make you feel comfortable and respected?
 - How were the techniques (bringing up observable behaviors, asking open-ended questions, and reflecting) used to approach Tyler more as a supportive adult than as an authority figure? Alternatively, how *could* they have been used to make the conversation even better?
- Could Tyler be helped by a referral to a school mental-health professional? (*yes, Tyler seems to be under a lot of stress and may benefit from talking with a trained professional at school; it would also be helpful to talk with his mom about your observations*)
- How else might you better support Tyler at school?

Our School's Processes

10 minutes

Slide 33-34: Referring at-risk students

- Ask participants to turn to the back of the **one-page summary** and take notes.
- Pass out copies of the **"Local Resources" page** from the simulation. These are resources that will have been provided by the agency sponsoring your access to the simulation.

Conclusion Activities

20 minutes

Slide 35: 3, 2, 1 Activity (8 minutes)

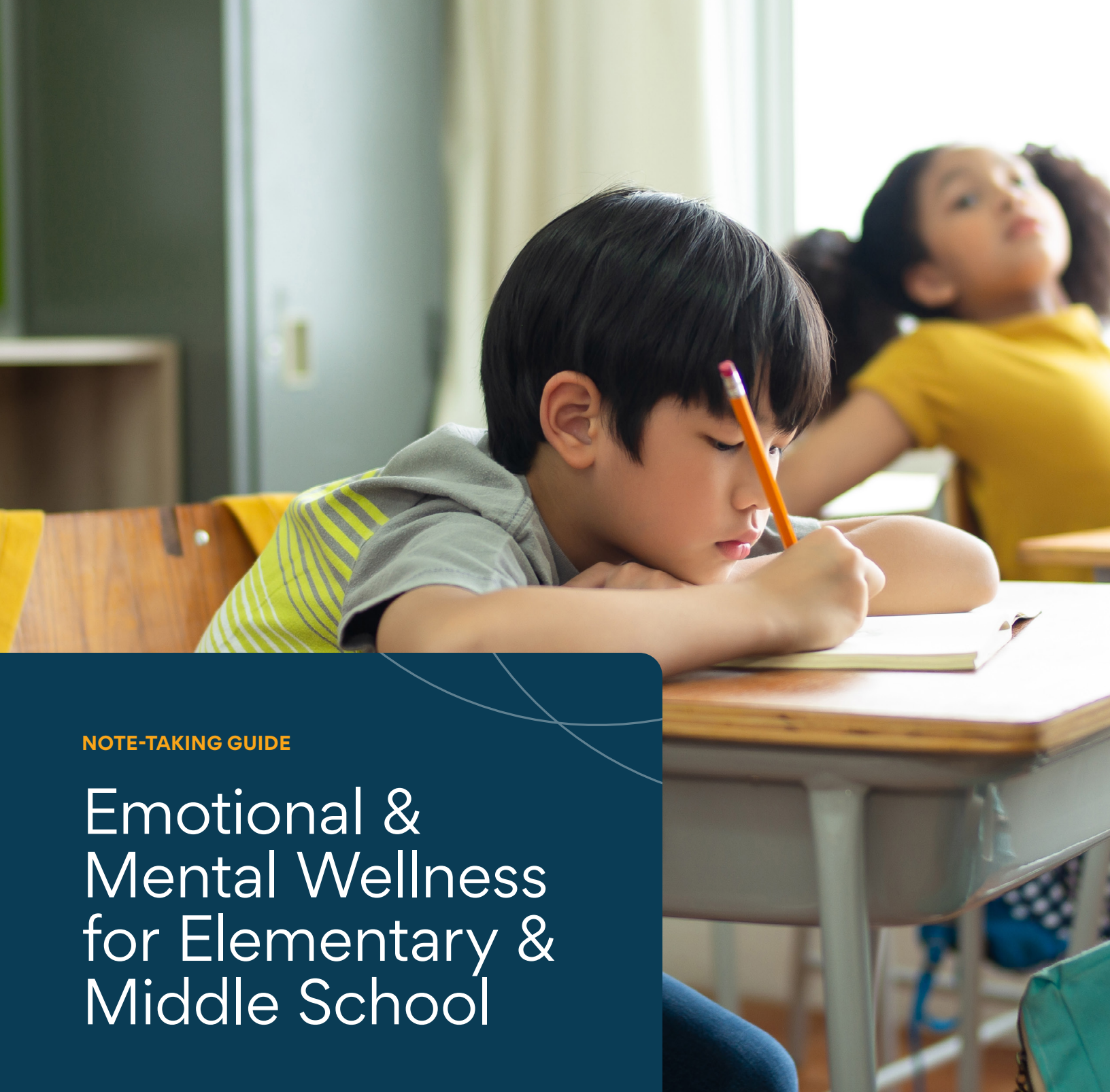
- On a new piece of paper, right down 3 things you learned today, 2 questions you have, and 1 way you're going to change your practice.
- Allow participants to share their answers.

Slide 36: Bridging the Gap Activity (12 minutes)

- "Let's do some action planning, to think about your school, and commit to some takeaways. Visualize where you are, where you'd like to be, and what it takes to get there."
- **01.** Where You Are: First, list some of your observations.
- **02.** Where You'd Like To Be: Second, list some of the qualities of your ideal school.
- **03.** What It Takes: Finally, list some ideas that might bridge the gap between where you are and where you'd like to be. What could happen to bring your school one step closer to your ideal?
- Allow participants to share their ideas.

Slide 37: Conclusion

- Thank participants for their time and remind them of why this topic is important.
- Allow for questions.



NOTE-TAKING GUIDE

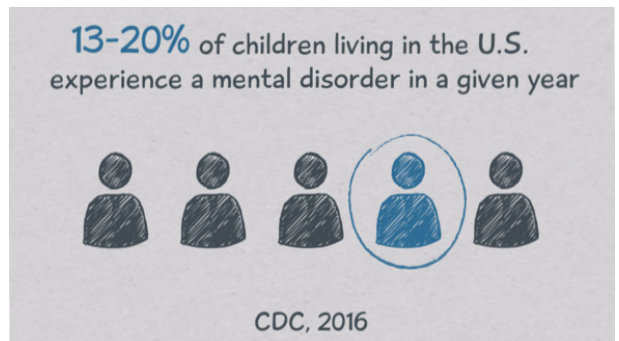
Emotional & Mental Wellness for Elementary & Middle School

Note-Taking Guide

By the end of this simulation, you will be able to:

- **Check in with students** and build resilience
- **Recognize warning signs** and risk factors
- **Have a supportive conversation** with a student who may be distressed
- **Connect students** to supportive services

Setting Up for Success



Checking In with Students

- **Sharing Feelings:** Students share their feelings with a partner, in a small group, or in a check-in circle.
- **Mood Meters:** Students identify their emotions using colors and word cues.
- **Journaling or Drawing:** Students draw or journal their feelings.
- **Prompts:** Students get a prompt at the beginning of class to write or draw about. Prompts can include music or a video.

Helping Distressed Students

- **Mindfulness:** Students sit quietly, eyes closed, and notice emotions.
- **Deep Breathing:** Students close their eyes and count slowly to 10, taking deep breaths.
- **Journaling/Drawing:** Students have a quiet place to draw, color, or journal what they're feeling.
- **Movement:** Students have the opportunity to walk, do arm circles, or jump.

Note-Taking Guide

Supporting Your Students

Warning Signs

- Quieter during class
- Not participating in activities
- Inability to emotionally regulate irritability
- Irritability
- Not completing assignments
- Getting sick more often
- Skipping class
- Being absent
- Running away
- Frequent use of substances
- Increased use of riskier drugs
- Gambling

Risk Factors

- Intense feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness, failure, or rejection
- Relationship struggles
- Family conflicts
- Questions around sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Death of a friend or family member
- Transitioning homes
- Having a caregiver incarcerated
- Letting go of future plans

Note-Taking Guide

Kira: Initial Conversation

Talking with Your Student

If worried, err on the side of referral.

- Does the student feel helpless or alone?
- Do they feel like a burden on others?
- Are they seeking revenge?
- Are they experiencing anxiety or pain?
- Do they feel like there's no reason to live?

Note-Taking Guide

Bringing Up Counseling

- Normalize it
- Discuss advantages
- Make the introduction

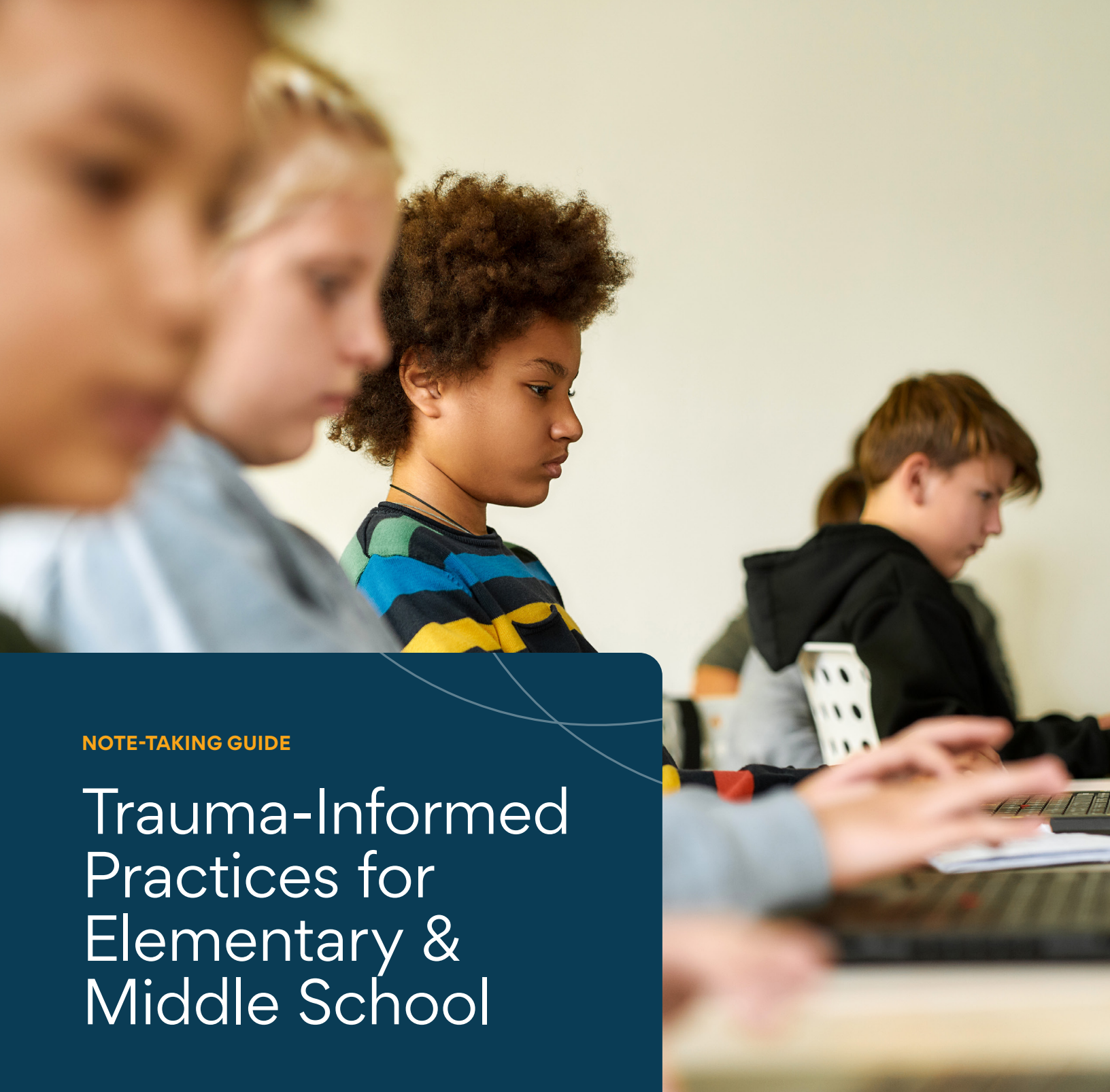
Kira: Follow-up Conversation

Note-Taking Guide

Following Up

My Reflections, Takeaways, and Possible Next Steps

The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8522)
24 hours a day,
seven days a week
3 digit dialing code 988
now available!



NOTE-TAKING GUIDE

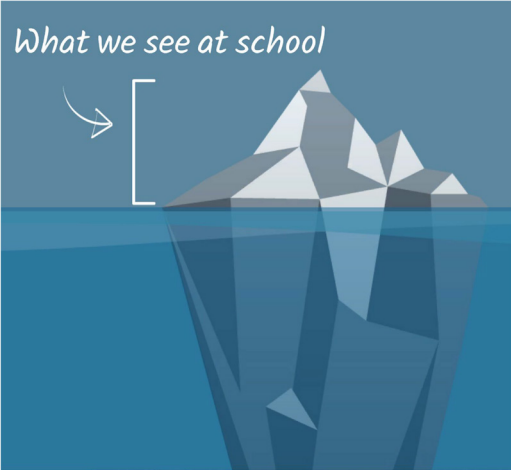
Trauma-Informed Practices for Elementary & Middle School

Note-Taking Guide

By the end of this program, you will be able to:

- **Recognize** when a student’s behavior might be the result of trauma or distress.
- **Lead conversations** with a student about how they might be feeling.
- **Probletem-solve** ways that your class can become a more comfortable place for students who have experienced trauma.
- **Assess** the need for referral, motivating students to seek help when needed.

Trauma-Informed Teaching




Warning Signs

Warning signs of distress or trauma:



- Aggression
- Angry outbursts
- Disengagement
- Headaches and stomachaches
- Inattention
- Extreme fatigue
- Social withdrawal
- Easily distracted

Trauma-Informed Teaching

Boys are more likely to externalize their emotions (act out).



Girls are more likely to internalize their emotions (withdraw).



Younger students are more likely to show their feelings.

Older students may not want to stand out or seem "weak." They may hide their feelings and cope by doing dangerous things like driving fast, using drugs, or getting into fights.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Lived with a parent/guardian who:

- Got divorced or separated
- Died
- Served time in jail/prison
- Was mentally ill, suicidal, or severely depressed
- Behaved violently
- Had a problem with drugs/alcohol

Experienced:

- Violence (or witnessed it)
- Food scarcity
- Displacement

60% of children experience **one** ACE before age 18

33% experience **two or more** ACEs



Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Are Student Behaviors Personal?

Conversation #1

- Be specific about what you've observed.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Show empathy.

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

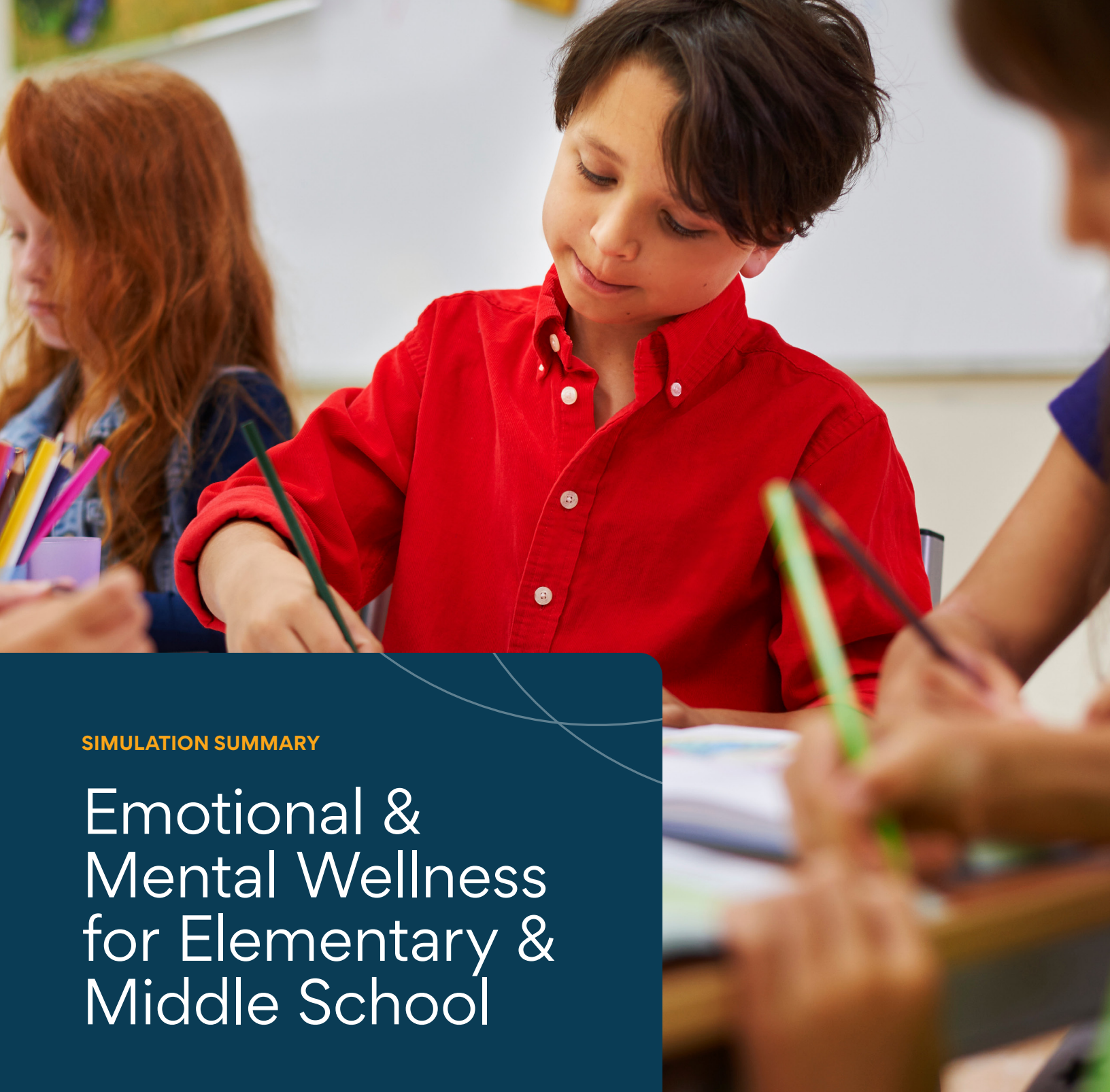
Conversation #2

Conversation #3

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Teachers Can Make a Difference

- 1. Breath.**
Take three deep breaths.
- 2. Be still.**
For the next minute, stay as still and quiet as you can. (Build to three minutes for older students.)
- 3. Take your emotional temperature.**
While you are being still, notice your thoughts (what you are thinking), sensations (how your body feels), and your feelings (try not to judge them).



SIMULATION SUMMARY

Emotional & Mental Wellness for Elementary & Middle School

Simulation Summary

Identifying At-Risk Students

Look for **worrisome behavior** and **worrisome changes** in behavior. Also, be aware of risk factors that may increase a student's likelihood of distress.

Warning Signs

- Quieter during class
- Lack of participation in activities
- Inability to emotionally regulate irritability
- Irritability
- Not completing assignments
- Getting sick more often
- Skipping class
- Being absent
- Running away
- Frequent use of substances
- Increased use of riskier drugs
- Gambling

Risk Factors

- Intense feelings
- Feelings of hopelessness, failure, or rejection
- Relationship struggles
- Family conflicts
- Questions around sexual orientation and/or gender identity
- Death of a friend or family member
- Transitioning homes
- Having a caregiver incarcerated
- Letting go of future plans

Reach out to students you're **concerned about**. Find out what's going on, so you can offer support and, if necessary, referral.

- **Bring up only observable behaviors**, without judgement or exaggeration.
- **Ask open-ended questions** that get the student talking.
- **Reflect** in your own words what you think the student is saying, thinking, or feeling.

When in doubt, err on the side of referral.

- **Normalize it.** — “The counselor has helped students with similar issues...” (don't name names!)
- **Discuss advantages.** — “It can feel good to talk about your feelings.” “The counselor can help you meet your goals.”
- **Make the introduction.** — “I can introduce you.”

If you're worried about a student, ask directly about suicide.

01. Ask directly. (“Are you thinking about suicide?”) This will not put the idea into someone's head. Gather as much information as the student is willing to share:

- Are they thinking about suicide?
- Do they have a plan?
- Do they intend to act on the plan?
- **Do they have the means to act on the plan?**

02. Connect the student *immediately and in person* to a supportive counselor, staff member, local service provider, or crisis center.

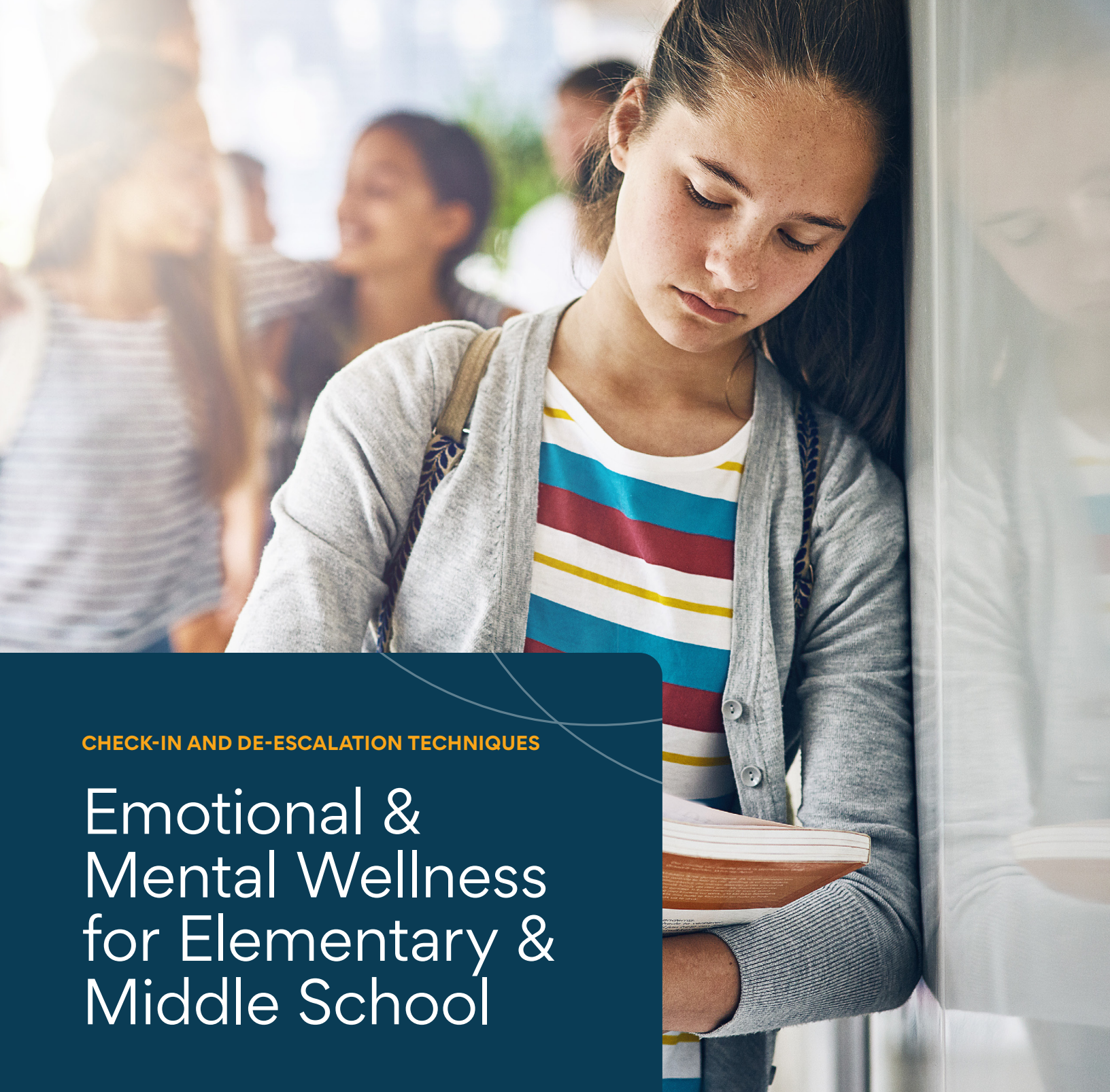
Simulation Summary

Your School's Referral Process

Q. To whom should you refer a student who may be in psychological distress?

Q. What is the referral policy in your school for students who may be a danger to themselves or others?

Q. When and how would a student's parents/guardians be notified about your concerns? Whose role is it to notify them?



CHECK-IN AND DE-ESCALATION TECHNIQUES

Emotional & Mental Wellness for Elementary & Middle School

Check-In and De-Escalation Techniques

Check-In Techniques

Regular **check-ins** can improve student connectedness and resilience, alert you to possible student distress, and improve students' abilities to communicate their feelings. Below are some popular methods for checking in with students.

Ask students to **share feelings with a partner, in a small group, or in a check-in circle. In a check-in circle**, you may use a "talking piece" like a ball to remind students that only one person speaks at a time.

Sample instructions: "The person with the ball..."

- "...compliments another person in the circle."
- "...tells what they did over the weekend."
- "...explains how they feel in the moment and why."



Mood meters help students identify how they feel in the moment, pinpointing their mix of physical energy and pleasantness. Students can sit in a circle and take turns naming their feelings, or a teacher can use these to help students communicate in times of high emotion.

Key ideas:

- We have emotions all the time, whether or not we take time to notice them. These emotions affect the ways we work and interact with others.
- All emotions are okay and accepted. Even unpleasant ones can be helpful and appropriate in certain situations.
- How can we work with our feelings to achieve our goals?



Journaling and/or **drawing** at the beginning of class is a great way for students to express their feelings.

Sample prompts: "Write or draw a picture about..."

- "...how you feel today."
- "...what you did over the holidays."
- "...someone you love."

You can also play music or show a video at the beginning of class. Then ask students to journal their feelings/reaction to it.



Check-In and De-Escalation Techniques

De-Escalation Techniques

Students who have experienced trauma or who are in intense distress may act out in the moment, requiring **de-escalation** support in the classroom. The techniques below can be used one-on-one or with an entire class, lasting 1-10 minutes. With time and repetition, students can learn to use these strategies on their own, thereby becoming more resilient.

Mindfulness:

Students sit quietly, eyes closed, phones away, lights dimmed or off. The teacher might ask them to notice their bodies, to sit tall, feet on the floor, hands on the desk, etc. The teacher then guides them in focusing—taking deep breaths in and out, listening to the sounds around them, noticing how their bodies feel from their toes to the top of their heads, and/or examining their emotions.

Movement:

Sometimes students need space to safely move their bodies: walking, doing arm circles, even jumping. This can break tension and help them regulate their emotions.

Deep breathing:

Students close their eyes and count slowly to 10 while taking deep breaths. This may be self-directed by the student or led by the teacher.

Journaling/Drawing:

A distressed student may need a quiet place to draw, color, or journal apart from the rest of the class before they return to learning. Other times, a de-stressing activity like this can benefit the whole class.



**TRAUMA-INFORMED PRACTICES
FOR ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL**

Simulation Summary

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)

Lived with a parent/guardian who:

- Got divorced or separated
- Died
- Served time in jail/prison
- Was mentally ill, suicidal, or severely depressed
- Behaved violently
- Had a problem with drugs/alcohol

Experienced:

- Violence (or witnessed it)
- Food scarcity
- Displacement

60% of children experience **one** ACE before age 18

33% experience **two or more** ACEs

Trauma and distress can take a student out of **learning mode** and put them into reactive mode (**fight, flee, or freeze**).

Warning signs of distress or trauma:

- Agression
- Angry outbursts
- Disengagement
- Headaches and stomachaches
- Inattention
- Extreme fatigue
- Social withdrawal
- Easily distracted

Younger students are more likely to show their feelings. **Older students** may hide their feelings and cope by doing dangerous things like driving fast, using drugs, or getting into fights.

Conversation Strategies

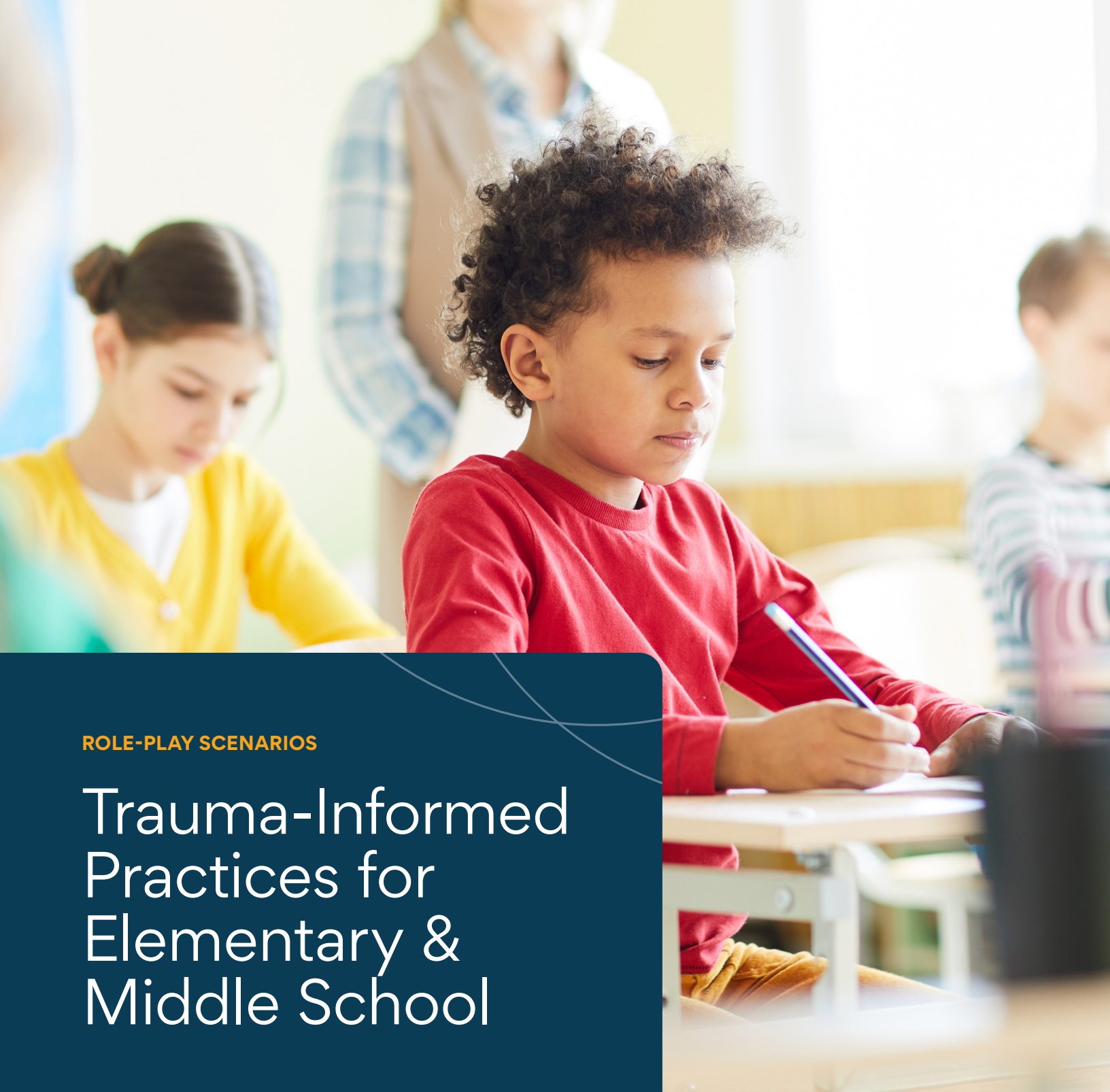
- Be specific about what you've observed.
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Show empathy.

Your School's Referral Process

Q. To whom should you refer a student who may be in distress?

Q. What is the referral policy in your school for students who may be a danger to themselves or others?

Q. When and how would a student's parents/guardians be notified about your concerns? Whose role is it to notify them?



ROLE-PLAY SCENARIOS

Trauma-Informed Practices for Elementary & Middle School

Role-Play Scenarios

Role-Play Scenario A

Concerned Teacher

(Read this if you are playing the teacher role)

During the first months of school, your student Tamina did well, making mostly Bs and Cs, and seemed happy and outgoing. She was popular and often told jokes in class that made the students (and you) laugh. Then there was a change. She often comes to school now in clothing that is stained and dirty. She sometimes smells of body odor. She seems angry and mean. Now, instead of laughing with her friends, she's more likely to say things that hurt their feelings. Two days ago, she made a girl named Jeanne cry by making fun of her answer in class. You addressed Tamina's behavior at the time, letting her know that was not acceptable. Now you want to reach out to her for a longer chat to see what's going on.

Tamina

(Read this if you are playing the student role)

You are the third of four kids at home, being raised by your mom and grandma. Even though your mom was busy with work, she always made time to do things just with you in the evenings. You would help her cook and do laundry, just to spend more time with her. She's really funny and always makes you laugh.

Then your mom lost her job and started drinking again. Sometimes she doesn't come home at night at all. When she is at home, she acts strange and angry, yelling at you for no reason. Your grandma and older sister take care of you now, but they seem angry too. Money is tight, the house is a mess, and sometimes you don't have enough dinner to get full. Plus, your sister bullies you and your little brothers, always telling you you're ugly and dumb. You love your mom and just want things to go back to the way they were.

Sometimes you get so mad you don't know what to do. Two days ago, you made fun of Jeanne in class when she was having trouble reading. You told her she was dumb, which you believe is true. The other kids laughed. Your teacher didn't like it, but so what? When the other kids laugh because of something you said, it makes you feel important again. Like a million bucks.

Role-Play Scenarios

Role-Play Scenario **B**

Concerned Teacher

(Read this if you are playing the teacher role)

Tyler was always a cool kid--funny and charming. He mostly made Cs. The last couple of months, though, you've noticed a change. He stopped turning in homework. He's failing his tests or making Ds. He is absent more often and when he's in class, he doesn't participate. Recently, he's fallen asleep at his desk twice. You've asked him a few times if he's alright, but you don't get much out of him. You've been meaning to schedule a sit-down talk with him.

Yesterday, in a journaling activity, Tyler mentioned his father's funeral. You'd never met Tyler's father and assumed he was out of the picture. It was unclear from what Tyler wrote if his dad's death was long ago or recent. Either way, you wish you'd scheduled that sit-down talk earlier. You've asked Tyler to come by your classroom today, so you can chat.

Tyler

(Read this if you are playing the student role)

Everyone always said you were just like your dad. When your *dad's* family said it, it was a compliment. They meant you were handsome, athletic, and funny. When your mom and her family said it, they were getting on your case. They meant you were lazy and no good, forever getting into trouble.

Two months ago, your dad died in a car accident. People say he was drunk and high when it happened. You loved your dad. He was fun. People liked and respected him. He made you laugh. At the same time, he wasn't perfect. When he made plans with you, half the time he didn't even show up, and you could go months without hearing from him. Your mom said he never paid child support and couldn't hold a job.

Last Christmas, after he stood you up again, you told your father off. You said for him not to call you or make any more plans with you. You said you wanted nothing to do with him. Three weeks later, he was dead. Looking back, you wonder if your words put him over the edge, if things might have been different if you hadn't said those things.

You've been drinking for the last two years. Mostly at parties or with small groups of friends. No big deal. Since your dad's death, you've been drinking more, staying out late, partying, and trying different drugs. It feels good to be high, like being at peace. It's being sober that sucks. Sometimes you're too tired or hungover to go to school. You hardly ever do your homework. Sometimes at school, you're so tired you fall asleep in class.

Your mom's worried about you. She nags all the time. When she gets *really* upset, she says those old words again: "You're just like your dad." Maybe you are. And maybe that's okay.

Stay Connected

Congratulations! You have completed ***Emotional and Mental Wellness and Trauma-Informed Practice*** training.

We invite you to be part of the Kognito community online and connect with us on social media. Share your experience using Kognito, hear from experts, stay in the know about new products and be the first to hear about conferences and online events.

Connect with us today!

-  LinkedIn www.linkedin.com/company/kognito/
-  Facebook www.facebook.com/KognitoConversations
-  YouTube www.youtube.com/@kognito3071
-  Twitter: twitter.com/Kognito

You can browse our complete library of PK-12 solutions at <https://kognito.com/pk-12/>.

For support please visit support.kognito.com or email us at support@kognito.com.