

EMOTIONAL & MENTAL WELLNESS: HIGH SCHOOL

Workshop Discussion Guide

Print the following pages and use as a guide for leading the workshop.

Workshop Discussion Guide

Facilitator Prep time: 2-3 hours

Workshop Runtime: 3-4 hours

Preparation

✓ Determine how to best implement the training at your school:

Decision 1: Will staff complete the simulation prior to coming to the workshop?

- We recommend staff complete the simulation on their own and then meet for a face-to-face workshop.
- Alternatively, staff can take the simulation as part of the workshop (on separate computers). Then they rejoin the group for discussion. This would be a half-day training.

Decision 2: Will the workshop be face-to-face or online?

Tips for online workshops:

- Possible software: 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.
- Complete a recording of the online workshop and make it available for those who cannot attend.

✓ Review *Emotional & Mental Wellness: High School* and the full Workshop Discussion Guide and corresponding PowerPoint. Customize the PowerPoint to include your school or district’s logo and any mission- or vision-specific details. If you will have less than 3 hours for your workshop, 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 referral processes and local resources slides and be ready to present this information to the group. Be sure to 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.

✓ Cue up 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 workshop handouts.

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

Sample Planning Timeline

- **60 Days Prior:** Confirm simulation 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 min

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/follow up after the training.

Slide 3: Workshop overview *[customize this slide if participants will not take the simulation 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 min)

- Ask attendees to use a scrap piece of paper to describe the image on the slide, using the acronym AEIOU. (1 min)

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 min)
- Ask participants to share a few answers with the whole group. (2.5 min)

- Quick Debrief: (0.5 min)
 - Sometimes we see the student at the desk but we don't see the wave behind them. Understanding a student's mental health helps educators see the student's bigger picture.
 - As educators, we should know how to identify signs of mental-health distress, approach students confidently, and refer students to the support they need in order 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 min

Slides 6 - 9: Brief overview of Kognito and the simulation they are about to take.

- 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... but to capitalize on the limited time they have with students to provide the most effective support.
-

Simulation

45 min

Slide 10

- Ensure participants are able to login to their account.
 - Provide headphones to all participants.
 - Distribute the **note-taking handout** 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 min

Discussion

60 - 70 min

Slide 11: Simulation review (5 min)

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

Slide 12: Setting Up for Success (5 min)

- “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 13: Checking In: Talking about Feelings (3 min)

- 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 14: Checking In: Mood Meters (2 min)

- 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 15: Checking In: Writing and Journaling (2 min)

- 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 16: De-Escalation Strategies (5-10 min)

- 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 17: Warning Signs (8 min)

- “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 18: Risk Factors (8 min)

- 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)*
 - Why do some students’ warning signs and risk factors not lead to approach and referral by a teacher? *(Possible answers: Teachers may not realize the behavior is indicative of a deeper issue or that the risk factors could be causing distress. 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 19: Conversation Techniques (6 min)

- “Now we’ll talk about 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/tone 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 20: Observable Behaviors (6 min)

- 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 21: 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 22: Reflections (6 min)

- 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 23-24: Referring Students (5 min)

- 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 25: How do I ask about suicide? (3 min)

- 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 26: What if a student might be suicidal? (3 min)

- “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 or text The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 9-8-8 (988) 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

Break

10 min

Role Play 1

30 min

Prepare for role play (5 min)

- 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 min)

- Participants should look at the **role-play handout** and read **ONLY** about their character (the concerned teacher or the student). Then they should agree on a target age for the student. Then they begin their first role play.
- Keep up Slide 27 (conversation role-play techniques).
- Give participants a one-minute warning before the end of the role play.

Role play discussion (15 min)

- If you played the role of the teacher...
 - What warning signs and risk factors did you notice about Lucy prior to the conversation? (*quiet, not participating, increased absences, seemingly intense feelings*)?
 - Raise your hand if you tried anything *new* in this conversation (anything you haven’t tried in the past in discussions with students)? What did you try and how did it work or not work?
 - What did you learn about Lucy’s emotional state and social life?

- Lucy’s statement that she wished to be invisible should be a red flag to ask about suicide. Who here asked about suicide or self harm? What happened, and how did it feel?
- If you played the role of 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 Lucy more as a supportive adult? Alternatively, how *could* they have been used to make the conversation even better?
- Could Lucy 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; it may also be helpful to talk with her parents about your observations*)
- How did this conversation build Lucy’s resilience and make her more connected? (*Resilient students know that they can ask for help when they need it, because they’re connected to a support system. By showing this student you care and introducing her to the counselor, you increase the number of caring adults in her life and the number of people she can go to when she needs help.*)
- 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; 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 Lucy at school?

Role Play 2

25 min

Role play (10 min)

- 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 min)

- 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 min

Slide 28-29: 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 min

Slide 30: 3, 2, 1 Activity (8 min)

- 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 31: Bridging the Gap Activity (12 min)

- “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 23: Conclusion

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

EMOTIONAL & MENTAL WELLNESS: HIGH SCHOOL

Note-Taking Guide

Print the following pages and distribute to workshop participants.

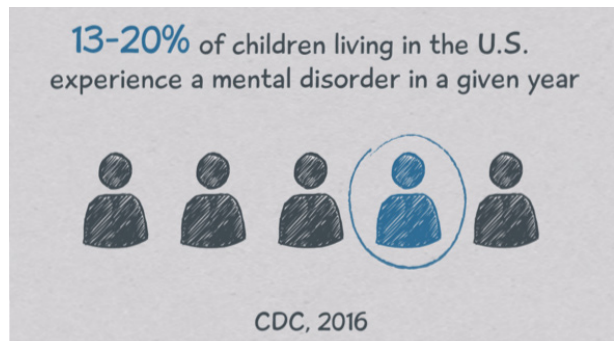
Note-Taking Guide

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

A series of horizontal lines for note-taking, consisting of two sections of ten lines each.

- Stick to the facts! (observable behaviors)
- Ask open-ended questions.
- Reflect what the student is saying, thinking, or feeling.

Note-Taking Guide

Jake: 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

Jake: Follow-up Conversation

Note-Taking Guide

Following Up

My Reflections, Takeaways, and Possible Next Steps

The National Suicide
Prevention Lifeline

9-8-8 (988)

Call or text,
24 hours a day,
seven days a week

EMOTIONAL & MENTAL WELLNESS: HIGH SCHOOL

Simulation Summary

Print the following handout and distribute to workshop participants.

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
- 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

Reach out to students you're **concerned about**. See 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?

EMOTIONAL & MENTAL WELLNESS: HIGH SCHOOL

Check-In and De- Escalation Techniques

Print the following handout and distribute to workshop participants.

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..."

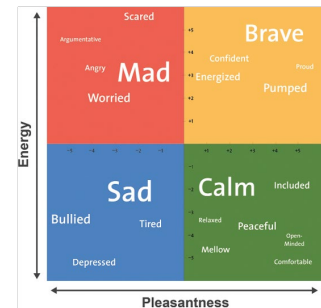
- "...compliments another person in the circle."
- "...tells what they did over the weekend."
- "...explains how they feel in the moment and why."



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.

EMOTIONAL & MENTAL WELLNESS: HIGH SCHOOL

Role-Play Scenarios

Print the following handout and distribute to workshop participants.

Role-Play Scenarios

Role-Play Scenario A

Concerned Teacher

(read this if you are playing the **teacher** role)

Lucy is a quiet student with a B average. She doesn't have many friends and doesn't say much in class. Sometimes it's hard to get her to make eye contact. She often writes poetry in her journal. She's quite good at it, though at times it seems a bit dark and sad. Lately Lucy has been even quieter than usual. You saw some girls laughing at her one day. She's been absent a few times.

Today, you did a check-in exercise with your class, and Lucy said she felt "invisible." Later you asked what she meant and she clarified she didn't feel invisible but *wished* she was invisible. This concerned you, so you've made time to sit down and talk with her...

Lucy

(read this if you are playing the **student** role)

Your whole life feels like one big screw-up. In school you do okay, not great. You have a few friends, not many. You're sure you'll never be cool or popular. You'll never fit in or wear the right clothes or know the right things to say to avoid total embarrassment. You wish you could skip high school altogether. The cliques, sports, and teasing drive you crazy. Every day is torture.

Three months ago, a new girl came to school. Tabatha was into anime and writing poetry, just like you. She loved to read fantasy and sci-fi and talk about politics. She seemed so much smarter than anyone else at your school. You couldn't believe someone like her could be into *you*, but she was.

When you and Tabatha started dating, you felt like the luckiest person in the world--confident and beautiful--like you'd finally found your soulmate. Five weeks later, though, she dumped you for someone else. Worse yet, she started making fun of you to everyone, saying she "lowered herself" to date you and that you are a "total loser" and a "hag." Tabatha got to know you better than anyone else, and what she saw seemed to disgust her.

You feel like a waste of space. What do you offer that the world really needs? Sometimes you get so stressed that your stomach hurts. You're happy to stay home on those days, rather than go to school and watch Tabatha with her new girlfriend. Or worse yet, get laughed at by her.

Today in a class activity, you described yourself as "invisible." Your teacher asked you about it. You clarified that you don't feel invisible; you *wish* you were invisible. Now you must be in trouble, because the teacher wants to talk to you one-on-one...

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.

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