

PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH IN THE CLASSROOM

by:

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Promoting mental health in the classroom is essential for creating a supportive and nurturing learning environment where students can thrive academically, emotionally, and socially. Educators play a crucial role in recognizing and addressing mental health needs, as well as promoting overall well-being among their students. There are several strategies and practices that teachers must employ to promote mental health in the classroom.

Firstly, teachers should prioritize building positive relationships with their students. A warm and supportive teacher-student relationship can help foster a sense of trust, security, and belonging. Taking the time to get to know each student as an individual, showing empathy, and providing emotional support can make a significant difference in their mental well-being. Regularly checking in with students, praising their accomplishments, and offering guidance and encouragement can all contribute to a positive and healthy classroom environment.

Creating a safe and inclusive classroom climate is crucial for promoting mental health. Teachers should create clear ground rules for appropriate behavior and take a stand against bullying and harassment. This can be achieved through classroom discussions on empathy, kindness, and acceptance, as well as by modeling these behaviors themselves. An inclusive environment ensures that every student feels valued, heard, and supported, which can have a positive impact on their mental well-being.

Teachers should also incorporate mindfulness and relaxation exercises into their daily routine. These activities can help students reduce stress, increase self-awareness,

and improve focus. Simple strategies such as deep breathing exercises, guided imagery, or short mindfulness sessions at the beginning or end of class can provide students with essential tools to manage their emotions and promote mental well-being.

Recognizing and addressing mental health issues early on is crucial. Teachers should be trained to identify signs of distress or emotional struggles in students. Regularly checking in with students, observing changes in behavior or mood, and offering a safe space to discuss their concerns can be invaluable. Teachers can provide resources and referrals to school counselors, mental health professionals, or support services when necessary.

Promoting self-care and healthy habits is another important aspect of supporting students' mental health. Teachers can educate students about the importance of physical exercise, good nutrition, and quality sleep in promoting mental well-being. Encouraging students to engage in regular physical activity, providing healthy snacks or breaks, and emphasizing the importance of self-care can instill lifelong habits that contribute to overall mental health.

Incorporating social and emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum is also essential for promoting mental health in the classroom. SEL programs provide students with vital skills to manage emotions, build healthy relationships, make responsible decisions, and develop empathy. By integrating SEL activities and discussions into lessons, teachers can help students develop resilience, emotional intelligence, and positive coping mechanisms.

Lastly, it is crucial for teachers to educate themselves about mental health and seek ongoing professional development in this area. Understanding common mental health disorders, their symptoms, and appropriate interventions can help teachers provide effective support to their students. Knowing where to access resources, such as mental

health hotlines or community services, can also be beneficial in addressing the needs of students who require additional support.

Thus, promoting mental health in the classroom is vital for the overall well-being and academic success of students. By building positive relationships, creating a safe and inclusive environment, incorporating mindfulness and relaxation exercises, recognizing and addressing mental health issues early on, promoting self-care and healthy habits, integrating SEL into the curriculum, and seeking ongoing professional development, teachers can create a supportive and nurturing classroom environment that promotes mental well-being. Taking an active role in promoting mental health not only benefits individual students but also contributes to a positive school culture where the well-being of all students is valued and prioritized.

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