

SUPPORTING THE SUPPORTERS: THE IMPORTANCE OF MENTAL HEALTH CARE FOR TEACHERS

by:

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When we talk about education, we often shine the spotlight on students – their struggles, their development, their dreams. But behind every learning success is a teacher giving their all, often while carrying silent battles of their own. Today’s classrooms demand more than lesson delivery; they require emotional resilience, endless patience, and unwavering commitment. Yet while we encourage students to speak up about their mental health, many teachers are left navigating theirs in silence (NCBI, 2023).

This article aims to bring attention to a crucial but often overlooked concern: the mental well-being of our educators. In a profession built on care, compassion, and connection, it’s time we ask—who’s caring for the carers?

Recognizing Teacher Mental Health as a Priority: Mental health support for teachers must be viewed as a foundational part of school well-being programs. When teachers are mentally healthy, they are better equipped to build meaningful connections with students, manage classroom dynamics, and engage in reflective teaching. On the other hand, when overwhelmed, teachers may struggle with motivation, patience, and productivity – directly impacting the learning experience of students (ERIC, 2020). It is crucial that school systems begin to acknowledge that supporting teacher mental health is not optional; it is essential. Creating a safe space where teachers feel heard, valued, and supported helps foster a more resilient and productive school culture (DepEd, 2020).

Building a Supportive Environment for Educators: One of the most impactful ways to support teachers is by fostering a workplace culture rooted in empathy and trust. This

involves open communication between school leadership and teaching staff, where concerns are not dismissed but genuinely addressed. Peer support groups, mental health check-ins, and regular wellness sessions are simple yet effective practices (ReachOut Schools, n.d.). Schools can also provide access to mental health professionals who are available not only to students but to teachers as well. The presence of counselors or psychologists in schools should be extended to include educators, who often bear emotional burdens silently (PMHA, n.d.).

Empowering Through Training and Resources: Empowering teachers with the knowledge and tools to manage stress and maintain emotional balance is another key step. Professional development that includes mental health literacy, self-care techniques, and stress management strategies is a worthwhile investment. These trainings not only help teachers cope better but also enable them to model healthy behaviors to their students (Education International, 2020). Moreover, providing flexible time for rest and recovery—through mental health days or manageable workloads—demonstrates institutional respect for the mental and emotional needs of teaching professionals (WHO, 2020).

Strengthening Community and Connection: Teachers thrive when they feel connected—to their colleagues, their leadership, and their community. Schools should nurture a sense of camaraderie among staff, encouraging collaboration over competition. Celebrating small wins, recognizing efforts, and promoting positive reinforcement all contribute to a work environment where teachers feel appreciated and supported. Additionally, involving families and the larger school community in recognizing the challenges teachers face can help create a more compassionate culture. When parents and stakeholders understand the pressures educators endure, they become allies in promoting the teacher's well-being (UNICEF Philippines, 2021).

A Shared Responsibility: Mental health support for teachers should not fall solely on individual efforts. It is a shared responsibility—between school leaders, government

agencies, and communities. Just as we urge teachers to be emotionally present for students, we must also ensure that someone is emotionally present for them.

Teachers are pillars of our education system. They carry not only lesson plans but also the weight of hope, discipline, and transformation for every learner. To neglect their mental health is to risk the very foundation of quality education.

The importance of mental health support for teachers cannot be overstated. By prioritizing their well-being, we not only care for the individuals who guide and nurture our learners, but we also invest in a stronger, more resilient education system. As we continue to advocate for student mental health, let us not forget the equally pressing need to stand behind our educators—supporting the supporters who give so much of themselves every single day.

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