



School-Based Mental Health



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What makes a teacher, a great teacher?

- 1 Content knowledge ✓
- 2 Quality of instruction ✓
- 3 Classroom climate ✓
- 4 Classroom management ✓
- 5 Teacher beliefs ✓
- 6 Professional behaviour ✓

✓ Strong evidence | ✓ Moderate evidence | ✓ Some evidence

Coe et al., 2014

Learning Objectives

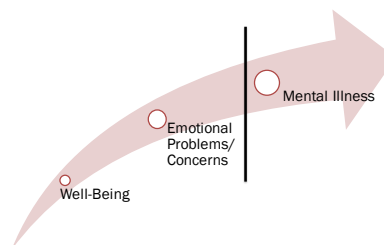
- 1 Overview of children's mental health (MH)
- 2 Role of educators in promoting MH

There is no health without mental health

DSM 5 Definition of MD

- Clinically significant behavioural or psychological syndrome or pattern that occurs in an individual
 - ✓ includes present distress or disability, or
 - ✓ increased risk of suffering death, pain, disability, or an important loss of freedom

Continuum of MH



Distress and/or disability differentiates children across continuum

- ☑ In youth...
leading cause of health-related burden

- ☑ In adults...
leading cause of disability worldwide

- 14.3% of deaths world wide are attributable to mental disorders

Copeland et al., 2015; UNICEF, 2008; Whiteford et al., 2013

Children do not 'code switch' out of a MD

- exists across a variety of contexts
- entrenched



Comorbidity

- Rule rather than the exception in MH
 - 40% of youth with one psychiatric disorder met diagnostic criteria for another psychiatric disorder

- Girls are more affected by:

- Mood disorders
- Anxiety disorders
- Eating Disorders



- Boys are more affected by:

- Behavioural disorders
- Substance use disorders
- ASD



Vaillancourt & Boylan, 2018

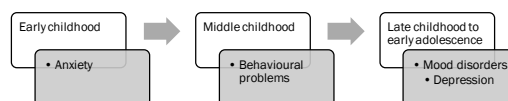
Risk is not equally shared

- Socioeconomically disadvantaged youth
 - 2 to 3 times more likely to develop MH problems
- Rural-urban differences
 - Youth living in small to medium population centres have more MH problems than youth in large urban and rural areas

Georgiades et al., 2019; Reiss, 2013

Developmental Trajectory

- Typically begins with...



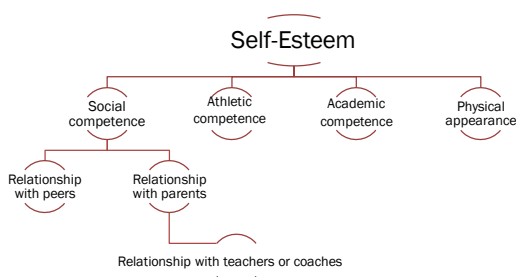
Vaillancourt & Boylan, 2018

Diagnostic Challenges



Self-Esteem

- Appraisal made about our worth and feelings that correspond with this appraisal



Consists of several hierarchically organized self-evaluations

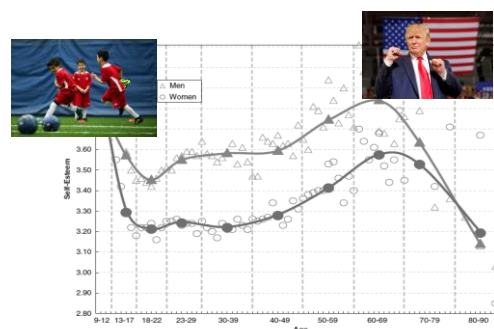


Fig. 1. Mean level of self-esteem for males and females across the lifespan. Also plotted are year-by-year means, separately for males (open triangles) and females (open circles). From "Global Self-Esteem Across the Lifespan," by R. W. Robins, K. H. Tronieski, J. L. Tracy, S. D. Gelfand, and J. Potter, 2002, *Psychology and Aging*, 17, p. 425. Copyright 2002 by the American Psychological Association. Reprinted with permission.

Greatest Structural Changes

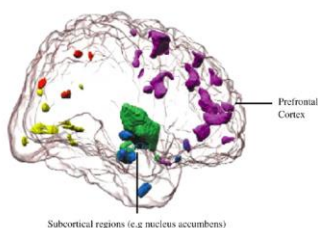


Fig. 3. Illustration of the brain regions showing the greatest structural changes over early and late adolescence (from Sowell et al., 1999).

PFC and Nucleus Accumbens

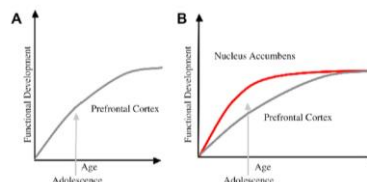


Fig. 1. The traditional explanation of adolescent behavior has been suggested to be due to the protracted development of the prefrontal cortex (A). Our model takes into consideration the development of the prefrontal cortex together with subcortical limbic regions (e.g., nucleus accumbens) that have been implicated in risky choices and actions (B).

To get teens motivated they need

- ↑ excitement or
- ↓ effort or both



Adolescence is a period of low motivation...but depression is a disorder of motivation

Heterogeneity

- Some youth will have the same diagnostic label but will look very different from each other.



- ☑ Most Canadian youth do not receive services
 - Only 20%

- ☑ Youth with severely impairing mental disorders received Tx at ↑ rate
 - ADHD and behavioural disorders

Mental Health Commission of Canada (2017); Merikangas et al., 2011

Evidence-Practice Gap

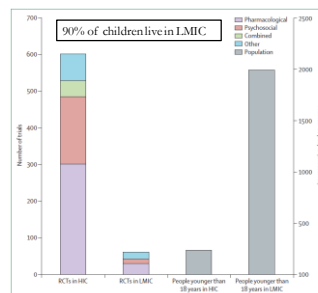


Figure 2 The 10-10% divide in research into treatment for childhood and adolescence mental health disorders: RCTs-randomized controlled trials (between 2003 and 2010). HIC=high-income countries, LMIC=low-income and middle-income countries.

Kieling et al., 2011

- Gap between MH needs of Canadian youth and specialized services available is currently too large to bridge

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- Educators are currently bridging this gap



School-Based Mental Health

- Detrimental impact of MH problems on education-related outcomes
 - ☒ lower academic achievement
 - ☒ less school engagement and participation; more likely to drop out of school
 - ☒ poorer peer relationships

Whitley, Smith, & Vaillancourt, 2018; Vaillancourt & Boylan, 2017

School-wide efforts

- ☒ improving school climate
- ☒ creating safe schools
- ☒ addressing the whole child
- ☒ character education
- ☒ social-emotional learning
- ☒ bullying prevention

Durlak et al., 2015; Kull et al., 2015; Whitley & Gooderham, 2015; Whitley, Smith, & Vaillancourt, 2017



Promoting positive MH at school

- Make curriculum connections to build capacity among students
- Use programs developed for teaching social and emotional skills and strategies that enhance resilience
- Reduce stigma ☒
- Create a positive classroom environment ☒

Ministry of Education, Supporting Minds, 2013

Reduce Stigma

- Consistently shown that boys compared to girls
 - Have less knowledge about mental health
 - Experience higher mental health stigma
 - Less willing to use mental health services

Chandra & Minkovitz, 2006; see meta-analysis by Kaushik et al., 2016

- ☒ Create a positive classroom environment



School Climate

- Quality and character of school life
 - collective beliefs, values, and attitudes that prevail at school



Cohen et al., 2009; Koth et al., 2008; Modin & Östberg, 2009

Cohen et al., 2009

Positive School Climate = Better Academic Achievement

- mathematics
- school support = \uparrow GPA
- school bonding = \uparrow academic achievement

- ★ HS intervention designed to improve SC
 - + changes in SC were related to
 - \uparrow in statewide achievement test scores
 - reading, writing, and mathematics

Bryan et al., 2012; Catalano et al., 2004; Niehaus et al., 2012

Osher & Kendziora, 2010



Poor perceptions of SC related to \downarrow GPA

- What can teachers do to improve student MH?

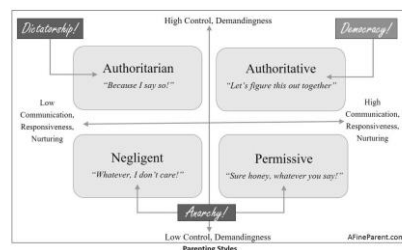
☒ Improve school climate



Assess levels of structure and support

- Do not have to choose between strict discipline and being supportive
 - ☒ Aim for high structure and high support
 - ☒ Authoritative teaching style

Contrasting groups of parenting



Baumrind, 1966

Journal of Educational Psychology
© 2014 American Psychological Association
 0022-0615/14/\$12.00 DOI: 10.1037/edu0000041

Authoritative School Discipline:
 High School Practices Associated With Lower Bullying and Victimization

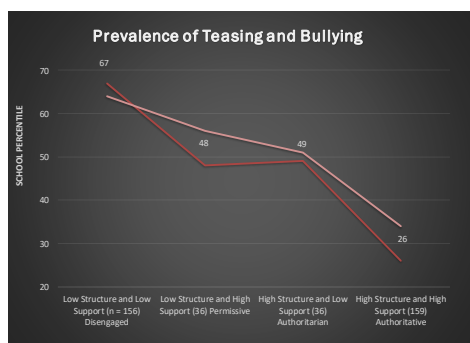
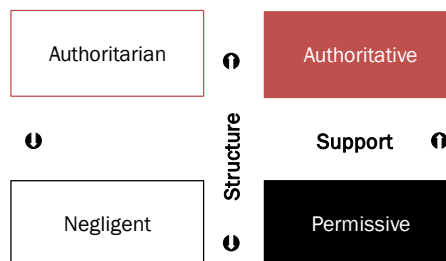
Anne Gregory, Dewey Cornell, Xitao Fan, Peter Sheras, Tuo-Hua Shih, and Francis Huang
 University of Virginia

School Psychology Quarterly
© 2014 American Psychological Association
0893-3200/14/\$12.00 DOI: 10.1037/spq0000041

Multilevel Multi-Informant Structure of the Authoritative School Climate Survey

Timothy Konold, Dewey Cornell, Francis Huang, Patrick Meyer, Anna Lacey, Erin Nekvasil, Anna Reffers, and Karan Shukla
 University of Virginia

Virginia Middle Schools



- Improving school climate improves students' behaviour and MH.



School Climate and MH

- **Strong** links between positive school climate and better mental health
 - ★ teacher-student relations associated with wellness

Suldo et al. (2012)

Longitudinal Studies

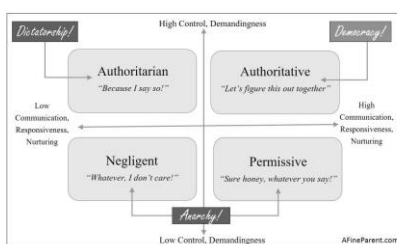
↓ classroom climate ↑ emotional and behavioural problems

↓ school connectedness →

- depressive symptoms 1 year later
- anxiety symptoms for girls
- general functioning for boys
- controlling for prior symptoms ✓

Dadds et al., 2006; Somersalo et al., 2002

What is your teaching (coaching) style?



What else can you do to help improve the MH of your students?



- Focus on your students' peer relationships
 - Is everyone included in your class?
 - Teachers should be creating the groups not the students
- Need to belong is a fundamental human motivator
- Belonging is strongly linked to MH & resilience
 - McDougall & Vaillancourt, 2015
 - Vaillancourt, 2013, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019

Relationships matter



Focus on your relationships with your students

- Get to know your students
- Show an interest in them that extends beyond the classroom
- Greet your students
- Invest in all your students

- Most consistent asset of resilient children
 - Strong bond with competent adult
 - Usually a teacher or a coach



Luthar et al., 2000; Meichenbaum, 2005; Vaillancourt et al., 2010, 2011, 2013, 2018

Strive to be socially and emotionally competent

- High self-awareness
 - recognize your emotions
- High social awareness
- Exhibit prosocial values and respect others
- Manage your emotions and behaviour
 - self-regulate

There is no health without mental
health

Jennings and Greenberg, 2009