

How to create an inclusive and safe learning environment

Examine how you create an active and inclusive learning environment, and invite all students to participate.

1. Appeal to the interests and known strengths of your students

- Have a number of special roles in the classroom that can help students feel important (e.g., taking attendance to office, setting up technology, lunch monitor).
- Provide a dynamic and interesting approach to learning each day in the classroom.
- Differentiate instruction so that it meets the unique strengths, needs and learning styles of your students.

2. Review your lesson plans for the week ahead through the lens of equity: are all voices and perspectives included?

- Include people with lived experience (related to mental illness) in efforts to reduce stigma and to promote positive mental health.

3. Offer ways for all students to get involved in initiatives related to social justice and mental health promotion.

- Support student leadership in mental health awareness and stigma reduction activities
- Consider using these tools:
 - School Mental Health ASSIST Decision Support Tool:
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/0Bx9WOcdOIVzNYUpKaEx5TTNwamc/view>
 - Mental Health Commission of Canada: Headstrong toolkit
https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2017-05/School_Based_Activity_Toolkit.pdf
- Create a buddy system to ensure everyone has a peer to watch out for them in school.



4. Lead the class in an exercise to develop classroom rules.

- To start them off, provide a few examples:
 - Always use respectful language.
 - No interruptions.
 - Include everyone in the learning activities.
- List them on the board or on paper, and post them in the classroom. Make it a living document.
- Invite all students to hold one another (as well as themselves, and you) accountable for following the rules.

5. Practice self-care, balance and mental fitness



- Pay attention to your own well-being and engage in activities to promote self-care.
- It is important that you have personal supports. If you feel in distress, use the resources available in your school, district and surrounding community.



LET'S TALK
In the Classroom

Gr.
7 & 8

A guide to preparing for the program, "Let's Talk: Finding Reliable Mental Health Information and Resources"