



# Institute of **Child Psychology**

## **CLASSROOM MENTAL HEALTH TOOLBOX**

**PURPOSE - HOPE - BELONGING - MEANING**

### **Connection**

#### **Greeting Rituals**

Say hello, goodbye, hug, high 5, wave, creating a unique handshake with each child

Greet as they get off the bus

Principal greets

Check-ins with students ( thumbs-up / thumbs down)

Hello and Goodbye songs

School culture of teachers greeting students not in their class

Let your entire body light-up when you see a student

open doors earlier

5 minutes to speak with friends every morning

#### **Getting to know each other:**

Complete a family survey in September so that you have things to talk about / ideas on how to connect with the child

Write a letter to each student before school starts

Promote sharing of family events

“All about me” bags - show and tell

Interest in child’s life outside of the classroom (ask about family / hobbies)

Kindergarten: doing a name song every class so that they can learn the names of every-one Use name association and get to know your student’s names quickly

Child / home visits

Hang up family photos / special people photos / world map ( where are your from

Celebrate your birthday

Culture day - share your culture

Connection to their family, “I saw your mom today...”

Attend school events

Recipe cards at the start of the year with teachers email address. Ask kids to write fears/ hopes and invited to have conversations

Post it notes with kindness statements that kids put on backs

Teach “I am” language ( I am unique)

Jr High retreat: welcome grade 7’s

Snowtubing field trip (fun)

**Carpet time:**

Create opportunities for proximity ( carpet time)

sunshine circle: focuses on building connection

Sharing experiences at carpet time

Daily class riddle

brain gym

Emotional bank account - specific, positive feedback from peers

storytelling

reading

Monday morning ...”what did you do on the weekend?”

Spark - morning tag games (20 minutes)

Make sure all students get a chance to talk

**Recess:**

Do check-in's after recess

Connect with 5 students from other classes when on supervision

longer recess

**Physical contact:**

Respect the child's space

Physical connection : Eye contact, touch, hug (whole body attention)

**Classroom culture:**

Soft starts in the morning

Humour

Playful 2 minute math question challenges (1-on1) with teacher

Sitting with students

helper roles

Connection as a classroom game

Read one-on-one with students

Comment and notice changes

Ask the student questions

Playing with them during play time

Get down to their level, make eye contact and be a part of their imagination

Expressions of gratitude

Personal messages "I'm going to use your project as an example for my class next year"/ "Your gift is...." / " Do you think you could help me with drawing a...."

Notes on kids desks

Jokes on notes in lunch box Star of the week

Celebrate the class as a group Special Helpers

Diversity and culture parties

Smudge

Morning song

Color wheel check-in ( green - I'm good, yellow- ok, red- mad/ not doing good)

When kids are absent, let them know that they were missed

Teach different classes

cooking

“teach the teacher” - learn from them

Bring in things that kids are interested in

focus sequence breaks

book burst breaks

Mail slot for little notes to “fill bucket” for students

Friday mail - letters posted throughout the week, discussion on fridays

Focus on child’s interests ( i.e.: messy play if messy play is now allowed at home)

Creating a calendar with all students to celebrate big moments

extra check in times throughout the day with identified students

support adults to cover a class, so teacher can focus on relationship building

follow up conversations (ask them about the things they tell you about)

follow through ( eg. if you say you love art, show it! put in on your fridge)

your own binder to keep memories/ notes on students so you can remember what they tell you

Attend their personal events ( singing, hockey etc)

Call home before school starts

cafe time ( 4 or 5 students with a teacher) or breakfast club

Playing cards...get students to teach the teacher

Thought of the day - learn new words from different languages together

watch videos

Look at sketch books and get them to talk about their sketches

Get them to tell you one thing they did the day before

set up mentorship program

T.A.s - regular check ins of students, wellness checks, strategies for success, bring "treats"

Active listening

Start of the year survey ( I like, I don't like, my feelings on school, "for your eyes only" section)

The Pyramid Model

During conference time not rushing and really talking to students

Showing excitement when engaging with a student

Intentions (Catholic) - letting students know I am praying for them

### **Between students:**

Talking buddies - pair kids up to get create connection in the classroom

Non - verbal kids : Find reading buddies / other kids in the school to find connection

Connect students into helping each-other get ready to work ( who needs encouragement, who needs a buddy etc)

### **Eating:**

Lunch with the teacher once a month

Small table lunch party

feast

### **Programs / Structured Activities:**

Tucker Turtle program Mind yeti

Go Noodle

Cosmic Kids

### **Celebrations**

Hang pictures celebrating artwork

Send video to parents of children's success

Photo board of families

VIP of the week ( big poster and lunch)

end of the year goodie bags

### **Daycare**

Know extracurricular activities

photos of each child in each centre

family events

display

## **Environment**

Classical/ soothing music

accessible fidgets

accessible teacher

Lavender oil diffusers

Lower/ dim lights when needed

Bring nature into the classroom

Make it look like home

Make materials accessible

Motivational posters

calming areas/ tent/ tipi/ big box/ pilows covered with a big leaf

book corner

seating set to optimize relationship building

Rocking chairs

Space to move

Natural light

exercise stations/ standing stations

velcro under desk



visual schedules

sensory gyms

Food

## **Emotional Health**

Mindup

Zones of Regulation

Pax tootles

Think equal

We thinkers

PATHS

Superflex

Think Equal Project

Roots of Empathy

Brain gym

How does your engine run?

calm.com ( free for teachers) - twice a day, after recess

Games- headbands with feelings “ I felt this way when....” Guess the feeling

### **Classroom culture:**

Manners - please, thank you

Celebrations and praise in the classroom

Yoga in the am

Four square breathing / Rainbow breaths Rewards equated to connection, not prizes Integration into curriculum

Reflection and conversation on who you want to be in the world Actively teach empathy

Sharing circle with a talking stick/ rock

Make real connections with students

Create safe spaces within the classroom

Stress free talk time

“Whats your baggage?” Kids write it down, put in a bag. Can share if they want to

**Toys/ bins/ posters/ other:**

Check-ins with colours or faces

Regulation charts with students picture Emotion Bins

Calm Down corners

Emoji stuffs

Mindfulness videos

Positive notes that become wordles

Valentine notes for neighbours

Quiet spaces with calming lighting

“Build your face” - for Kindergarten

Emotion faces kids can pick from

Use mirrors to show different feelings

wheel with windows to show emotions

Emotions charades

Pete the Cat

**Books:**

How full is your bucket? - Tom Rath

Big Life Journal

The Colour Monster - Anna Lienas

Napkin man

Leader in me- 7 habits of Happy, Healthy kids

Sophie gets angry

Books by David Shannon

Glad Monster, Sad monster

My many coloured days

In my heart

Todd Parr books

**Modelling and talking:**

Life talks with jr. high kids with same gender teachers Modelling "I feel..."

“I see that you are feeling...”

Talk to families about the importance of family rituals - game nights, dinners, reading at bed time

Personal touch / hand on shoulder “Do you need....”

Big deal / little deal

“You need time” - student walks over and touches a place on the wall that has been predetermined by the teacher and student. This signals that the student needs time either alone, with teacher or school counsellor

Lots of communication with parents

Use nature symbols : rock ( this is hard), stick ( stick with it), pinecone (growing area)

play, notice, acknowledge

## **Anxiety**

### **Soothing items/ spaces:**

Worry Woos Headphones

Cool down and worry kits that are individualized ( tactile, mints, essential oils, fidgets, weighted animals, slinky, worry rocks, hoberman sphere, chewlery, glitter jar, worry eaters, beans, pompoms, squat balls)

Mom to kiss a post-it with lipstick - student can use the kiss when needed/ letter from parent/ laminated photos of family

Break cards ( need a break from class) Regulation room

Visual Schedules/ checklists

Quiet spaces

Worry Trees at home with parents

Sensory tools or room: vests, lap shakers, blankets

Essential oils: lavender, Doterra on Guard

Perfect Pets

Fish

Kimojis

Calm down sandwiches - write down what helps to calm on each part

Red card - “ I need a break”

Green card - “ I need help”

Egg chairs with canopy pull overs allow children to calm and regulate

Pillow forts

### **Classroom culture:**

Time-in

Predictable routines / daily routine strips / visual routines on a lanyard

“First” and “Then” board

best/ worst/ most probable

Warnings when there is going to be a transition

More processing time for those who struggle

Give time before allowing a hands to answer a question

Mentors/ buddies

Throw worries away ( write them down and tear them up)

Practice “ask a question”

Support staff

Social stories

Talking through potential challenges or obstacles / brainstorming solutions

Give extra time to get organized

Happy music / Deep breathing when passing out quizzes

Daily yoga

Small group therapy

Focus on body cues

Tapping on hands/ face

Walk in nature

guided questions

Distraction

Safe person in the school

Poster of what anxiety looks like in the body

Talk about your own experiences with anxiety

Make “take a walk” cards for students

Flexible seating

Let the child know that I am there for them and that they are not alone

Teach power poses

water breaks (make water intake fun)

mindful minute

Fake laughter circles

Create goals with ladder approach

Blowing bubbles

Classroom discussions on the difference between worry and anxiety

Got a worry? Write it down, pop it in the box and it will be discussed anonymously.

Playground pals

## **Separation Anxiety**

Meet with parents before

Talk to parents about the structure of the drop-off f/ messages to the child prior to drop-off

See the classroom / tour the school before the big day

Visual schedule

Questionnaire for parents to get to know the child

staggered entry

home visits

Photo and small piece of flannel to soothe

Singing, dancing, painting, colouring

Find their interests- use it to anchor and connect

provide choices (a or b) to help child feel more in control

1 on 1 time: find the connection

### **Fears**

With little ones, redirect attention Modelling/ peer modelling

Ask a friend

Activity /Photo books

Successive steps to calm the fear

Scripted stories

Draw the fear- cross it out L to R (across midline)

Create your gremlin(fear), name it- externalize it- talk about it

Props like monster spray

Rituals to build safety and trust

Simplify

### **Perfectionism / Overly Compliant**

The Amazing Super-powers of YET Growth mindset

Process projects ( art, science, tech) Model making mistakes



A classroom environment that promotes do-overs Open ended tasks

Differentiated ways to show learning

Calm teacher

Celebrate making mistakes

No erasers on pencils / write in pen Direct feedback

Teaching affirmations / power of self talk

Group discussions “ what was your oops today?” Puppet shows on mistakes

Walk away and come back to it later

Watch your use of the word “perfect”

Downhill skier- 2 skiers/ 1 is a professional that never mistakes. When asked about a run, he says “ the snow was perfect./ 2. A beginner. When asked about a run, he shares all about his wobbles, falls and ability to stand back up. Who has the better story?

## **Books**

Lesson on how mistakes are ok - see books by Peter Reynold ( “The dot” and “Ish”)

The Beautiful Oops by Barney Saltzberg

## **Social anxiety**

### **Program:**

PATHS

Second Step program

## **Stories:**

Social scripting

Social skills skits

Use puppets behind a screen to tell a social story

Create a social story book and read it with them

## **Groupings / Connections:**

Small grouping ( all girls, all boys, mixed - try a variety) Help students find one great connection

Hello neighbour song: mix up seating

Use sticks to pick groups

Bring child in before the whole class comes in

Assigning "play buddies" from an older group

Change who they play with

Assigned peer chats

Walk and talk - tell someone about \_\_\_\_\_ Use music to help choose partners

Buddy benches ( you can sit here if you need a buddy / another student can come over and invite you to play) - full classroom participation

Big Brother program

Community supports

Sharing circles

respecting confidentiality ( empower the student, NOT go talk to those causing grief)

talk with the student - really see them

buddy club

**Other:**

Grounding techniques

“Be the bridge”

Don't force speaking up

Allow different ways to present work Board game club

Show and share ( to teacher)

Talk about the beauty of having a few close friends

Slow steps

Symbol to allow an “out”

Pre-teach students..so they are ready when called on

Give examples of famous people who have anxiety

Assign classroom jobs

Class kindness projects

Set up safe environments where its ok to take risks (eg singing in the lunch room) Child run (but supervised) leadership groups

**Panic Disorder**

**Props/ spaces:**

Sensory room

Tool boxes / quiet boxes

Make cards with a plan of action Weighted blankets / toys **Activities:**

Deep pressure

Teach grounding activities

### **Classroom culture:**

Plan with set parameters

Mindfulness approach

Group discussions so students realize they are not alone

Simplify

## **PTSD**

Lots of breaks

Rituals in the class to build belonging

5, 4, 3, 2, 1 grounding activities

Calm colours and smells

Listen, don't push

Different hugs

Simplify

## **Emotional Regulation**

**Programs:**

Zones of Regulation

Tucker Turtle

Incredible, Flexible you

My light shines bright - app

**Props/ Toys/ Spaces:**

Calm down spaces / sensory spaces / obstacle course spaces / cozy corners ( student involvement)

Zen garden, fidgets, slinky, tactile toys, weighted blankets and toys, mints, calming oils, sensory bottle, sensory steam roller, sensory socks, peanut balls

“I need time” button

Pictures of different feelings that they can point to

**Mindfulness:**

Teach grounding activities

Walks with an adult

Teach breathing “ smell the flower, blow out the candles” Co-regulate : Lets calm down our heart-rate

calm music / white noise

Perfect pets

**Activities:**

Stationery bike / run stairs / morning exercise

Spark

Whole body ninja

Regular doses of patterned, repetitive movement breaks

Food/ water - swallowing brings the brain back on line

Brain breaks / mandatory breaks

Brainstorm with the student “What is a manageable day for you?” “How does it look?”

“I see that you are feeling...”

provide choices

“take me back to the start and tell me what happened”

really think about what your time-in space looks like

Minimal words

Class teaching on red / green words...good/bad words.... cotton- ball / sand- paper words Come up with signals that you and the student can use when they are not coping

Lots of breaks - food breaks / water breaks

Run a lap around playground/ school as a class

Know triggers

Put work away and change activities

Connect with a sibling / another student in the school

Distract

Leave the room to do a chore

Nature/ Learning farm

yoga

Dim lighting in the room

More conversations on healthy expressions of feelings ( particularly for our boys)

When possible, honour student requests to work alone

Identify and remove triggers when possible

### **Video/ Books:**

Video - Why Do We Lose Control of our Emotions? by Kids Want to Know

Books - “ So then I....”- McBailey Mckenna

“ What if I....” - McBailey Mckenna

“ Calm, alert and ready to learn” - Stuart Shanker

## **Depression**

### **Programs:**

Tattered Teddies

ASSIST

### **Other:**

Self-esteem activities - small moments to build competency

Find 1 thing the child is interested in and use it as the first building block

Sharing activities on what makes us happy Fun activities

1:1 connection with child

Build the child up

1 person in the school they connect with who is available

Active listening

Let the students have feelings ( cry if they need to) journal / draw / clay

All staff trained in mental health first aid

Easy access to a psychologist

Make sure every child has a chance to attach to an adult

Check in times

Get outside to do work

Chart progress with student

Expressing love and care for your students

Adults actively aware of school culture

Special, safe spaces

community projects

class journalling

big life journal

Journalling achievements

Art- draw your feelings. Use music to help!

Business cards with crisis phone numbers given to all students



Conversation bubbles - draw one out- conversation starters

Conversation on how it is different from sad

Mindmaps...why do I feel this way?

Discussion balls, prompts

both doodling while you talk

school jobs

lunch clubs

strength based approach ( identify with an animal)

Don't use "how are you" as a question

Safety contract

Watch a movie to connect

## **ADHD**

Making accommodations for their work

Different seating - standing, bikes, whiteboard desks, accordion chairs, office chair

Rearranging the furniture according to the needs of the curriculum

Music/ headphones

Documenting their work

Play centres in the am and pm

Book making time ( hands on activities)

Limit workload

Movement breaks

Normalizing within classroom environment

visual planner - lots of visual guides in the classroom

individual timers

Covering a test with a blank piece of paper and focusing on one question at a time

Directly teaching executive functioning skills

Nutrition/ water breaks