



## Cheat Sheet: How to be a Mental Health Promoter

Mental health is a state of successful performance of mental function, resulting in in productive activities, fulfilling relationships with other people, and the ability to adapt to change and cope with adversity.<sup>1</sup>

**VISION:** All adults interacting with children and youth will be mental health promoters. This is done by interacting with youth in ways that foster successful and enjoyable participation in daily life, positive social interactions and a sense of well-being.

Signs of Positive Mental Health	Observe	What you can do to Promote Positive Mental Health
<p><b>Feeling good emotionally;</b> positive affect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Smiles</li> <li>• Look happy or content at least some of the day</li> <li>• Goal: want person to experience more positive emotions than negative emotions throughout the day at a 3 to 1 ratio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Observe facial emotions (affect)</li> <li>• Ask about feelings</li> <li>• Tune into the activities or interactions that the child/youth finds enjoyable</li> <li>• Warning sign – an observable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make <b>caring connections</b></li> <li>• <b>Focus on feelings.</b> Encourage children to talk about feelings... as simple as, “<i>How are you feeling today?</i>”</li> <li>• <b>Promote joy.</b> Encourage participation in enjoyable activities – find out what the young person loves to do; expose a variety of leisure interests. “<i>What do you do for fun?</i>”</li> <li>• <b>Focus on strengths.</b> Recognize and support character strengths (persistence, creativity, kindness, nurturing, etc.). “<i>I admire your persistence.</i>”</li> <li>• <b>Foster kindness.</b> Promote expression of gratitude and acts of kindness (see <a href="http://www.randomactsofkindness.org">www.randomactsofkindness.org</a>)</li> <li>• If you notice a change in mood, check it out. “<i>You seem upset. Do you want to talk about it?</i>” Listen nonjudgmentally.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Doing well functionally</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Socially</li> <li>• Academically</li> <li>• Activities of daily living (eating, hygiene, dressing)</li> <li>• Play &amp; leisure</li> <li>• Work</li> <li>• Rest &amp; sleep</li> </ul>	<p><b>Tune into:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Friendships &amp; relationships with family</li> <li>• School performance</li> <li>• Out-of-school leisure activities</li> <li>• Sleep/rest habits</li> <li>• Hygiene &amp; eating habits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Talk about mental health</b></li> <li>• Teach friendship skills</li> <li>• Promote social and emotional learning (SEL) – help children/youth identify feelings and think about how feelings impact behavior (<a href="http://www.casel.org">www.casel.org</a>)</li> <li>• <b>Move and be active.</b> Encourage enjoyable exercise</li> <li>• Encourage healthy hobbies and interests. Make sure each child has at least one enjoyable out-of-school interest</li> <li>• Promote positive sleep/rest and eating habits</li> <li>• Modify activities as needed to promote successful participation</li> </ul>
<p><b>Coping with challenges</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Small (losing a game)</li> <li>• Big (death of a loved one)</li> </ul>	<p>Observe how young person handles everyday and/or chronic challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taking a test</li> <li>• Friendship issues</li> <li>• Being teased</li> <li>• Loss of a pet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Create positive environments.</b> Modify the environmental demands to match the child’s capabilities.</li> <li>• <b>Offer calm moments.</b> Teach coping skills: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deep breathing: Have students take 3-5 minutes belly breathes</li> <li>• Have students do a yoga pose (<a href="http://www.yoga4classrooms.org">www.yoga4classrooms.org</a>)</li> <li>• Use the <i>Drive Thru Menus for Relaxation and Stress Busters Posters</i> (Teri Bowen-Irish, OTR/L) (<a href="http://www.therapro.com/Drive-Thru-Menu-Programs--P209352.aspx">http://www.therapro.com/Drive-Thru-Menu-Programs--P209352.aspx</a>)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (1999). *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General—Executive Summary*. Rockville, MD.

