



# MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

School Year 2021-22


# School Year 2021-22: A New Set of Priorities

*“Addressing instructional loss and learning disruption remains an important objective, **HOWEVER**, students will **NOT** be able and ready to engage in intensive and rigorous academic learning until they feel physically and psychologically safe. Establishing that sense of safety and a predictable routine may take weeks or even months, depending on the evolving context in individual communities and a range of factors unique to each individual.”*

*-National Association of School Psychologists*



# School Year 2021-22: A New Set of Working Assumptions

- *All students, caregivers and staff will have experienced some degree of stress as a result of the pervasive and long-lasting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as civil unrest due to systemic racism and oppression*
  - *The degree and intensity of the stress varies by student and staff member based on their individual experiences during this time, their protective factors and risk factors*
  - *Emotional reactions such as grief, fear, anxiety, depression, anger and others are normal and to be expected*
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## School Year 2021-22: A New Set of Working Expectations

- *All students, caregivers and staff have experienced diminished time spent following routines and schedules*
- *Students are likely to have some degree of diminished stamina for completing work because of reduced demands during closure*
- *Students had inequitable access to virtual learning and adults to support both learning in the home environment*



# COVID Pandemic: Trauma, Crisis, or Long Term Disruption?

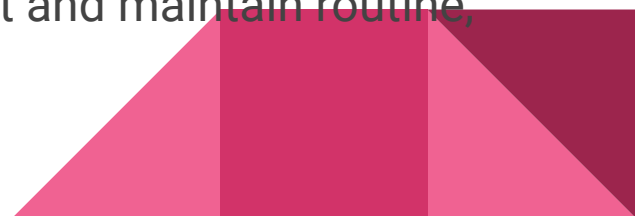
## Common Reactions to All Three

***Cognitive reactions:*** preoccupation with the crisis or inability to stop thinking about it, a loss of objectivity, an inability to make decisions, or effectively express oneself, lack of concentration and increased distractibility

***Physical reactions:*** difficulty sleeping, loss of appetite, chronic fatigue, headaches, or general sense of “not feeling well”

***Emotional reactions:*** worry or anxiety, numbing, irritability, anger, or rage, distressing thoughts or dreams, and/or severe depression.

***Behavioral or social reactions:*** withdrawal from family, friends, pets, inability to complete or engage in school work, not able to self direct and maintain routine, withdrawal from hobbies, tasks, activities,






Things to consider  
when supporting  
your students

# Connection is Key

*Help students create a sense of belonging at school:*

- *Encourage your student them to establish relationships with teachers and staff early. Actively discuss ways your student can connect with teachers **BEFORE** they are having problems. Encourage them to stay after school in a class just for the social aspects of it.*
  - *Encourage your student to join a club or sport*
  - *Encourage your student to attend of the HS sporting events, fall drama or spring musical.*
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# Promote Resilience

*Adversity is natural part of life and being resilient is important to overcoming challenges and good mental health*

- *Avoid the pitfall of “Fixing It”*
- *Prioritize balance over goals during challenging times*
- *Watch for overscheduling and allow them to drop things.*
- *Encourage FLEXIBLE goal setting both short term and long term:  
Focus on the process not the outcome*





# Feelings of Competency

## *Developing competencies takes practice*

- *Young people need to know that they can overcome challenges and accomplish goals through their actions. Avoid “fixing”*
- *Emphasize enrolling in classes that are manageable, and focus on activities that bring connection*
- *Social competency is also important. Having friends and staying connected to friends and loved ones can enhance mental wellness.*



# The Importance of Helping Others


*Young people need to know that they can make a difference.*


- *A sense of meaning and purpose can be derived from belonging to and serving something bigger than self.*
- *Helping others and getting involved in reinforces being part of the community.*



# Physical Health

*Good physical health supports good mental health.*

- *Healthy eating habits, regular exercise and adequate sleep protect young people against the stress of tough situations.*
  - *Regular exercise also decreases negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression*
  - *Use technology to help: monitor screen time, keep track of steps, limit bluelight*
  - *Teens need a recommended 8-10 hours of sleep per night*
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Knowing your child:  
Languishing,  
Anxiety, Depression,

# Languishing

“The neglected middle child of mental health can dull your motivation and focus -and it may be the dominant emotion of 2021”

*Organisational psychologist, Adam Grant, Ph.D*



# Languishing and the Antidote: *Peak Flow*

Mastery: Consider a task with small wins

Mindfulness: The task should focus your full attention

Mattering: The task should be meaningful

[https://www.ted.com/talks/adam\\_grant\\_how\\_to\\_stop\\_languishing\\_and\\_start\\_finding\\_flow/transcript](https://www.ted.com/talks/adam_grant_how_to_stop_languishing_and_start_finding_flow/transcript)



# Anxiety: Extreme, persistent worry or fear that can be generalized or specific

- Validate your student's feelings their experience is real to them
- It can be helpful for students examine their thoughts and worries and decide if the are rational or irrational
- Teach students how to engage in flexible thinking, to consider multiple possibilities and solutions
- Minimize the emphasis on competition
- Model adaptive ways of coping with anxiety, encourage deep breathing, listening to calming music, creative outlets
- Help with planning and organization
- Establish rules for communicating and avoid pushing




# Depression: Two weeks or more of depressed mood, loss of interest, irritability

- Validate
- Help your student identify negative self talk
- Help your child shift negative thinking
- Try to keep conflict at home low
- Destress together
- Help your child regulate social and extracurricular activities

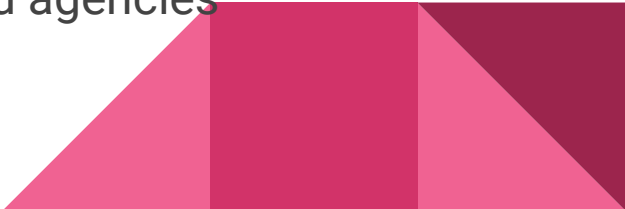






Where to turn when  
your student needs  
support?

# School Based Supports

- Tier 1: Direct communication with classroom teacher, connect student to after school support time, clubs, athletics
  - Tier 2: Student support team referral, consultation with school counselor or school psychologist, team meetings, check ins with student, brief counseling
  - Tier 3: Crisis intervention contact HS counseling office , longer term counseling, case management with community based agencies
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# Online Resources

Collaborative Solutions Network: [www.mentalhealthconnect.org](http://www.mentalhealthconnect.org)

<https://www.mentalhealthconnect.org/pdf/School%20Anxiety%20Strategies.pdf>

<https://www.mentalhealthconnect.org/pdf/School%20Attachment%20Strategies.pdf>

<https://www.mentalhealthconnect.org/pdf/School%20Depression%20Strategies.pdf>

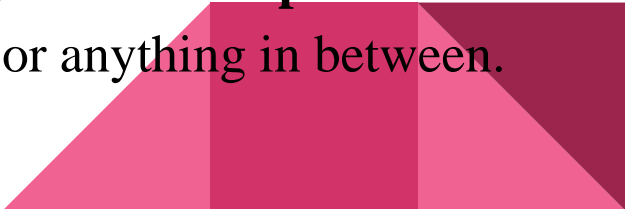
<https://www.nasponline.org/about-school-psychology/families-and-educators>



# Why Mental Health Matters: Students

What do students really need?

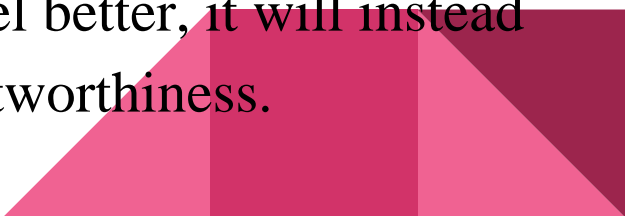
Students who are suffering with mental health issues need **validation and acceptance**. It is very important to recognize that someone who is suffering is **not looking for attention** or an excuse to be lazy. Many times it is **kindness** from adults which allows children to feel safe and open up about their struggles. Once people feel like their struggles are heard, it is easier to try and **come up with solutions** — whether that be seeing a doctor or therapist or anything in between.



# Why Mental Health Matters: Students

What do they wish adults understood?


While in a mental health crisis, it is important for adults to **understand the boundaries and capabilities of those suffering**. Severe mental health crises **interfere with the ability to function** day to day. Even in school, sometimes doing **homework can be impossible**. Although some well meaning parents may believe that pushing those in pain out of their comfort zone will force them to feel better, it will instead create more pain, resentment, and a sense of untrustworthiness.



# Why Mental Health Matters: Students

What can adults do to support the mental health needs of students?

Instead adults should **prioritize mental health over grades** and chores. **Listen** to those suffering, and **understand** that many times it can be hard for those in pain to describe what they are feeling. Be there for students, and **speak up** for them when they can't.



# Why Mental Health Matters: Parents

## What is a Family Navigator?

- ❖ Parent Peer Support
- ❖ Free and Confidential
- ❖ Available to all Lansing Families



# Why Mental Health Matters: Parents

What Does a Family Navigator Do? Lean on Me!

Listen with an open heart

Empathize

Acknowledge you and your feelings

Network

Opportunity to build HOPE

Normalize



Meet you where you are

Emphasize positive partnership

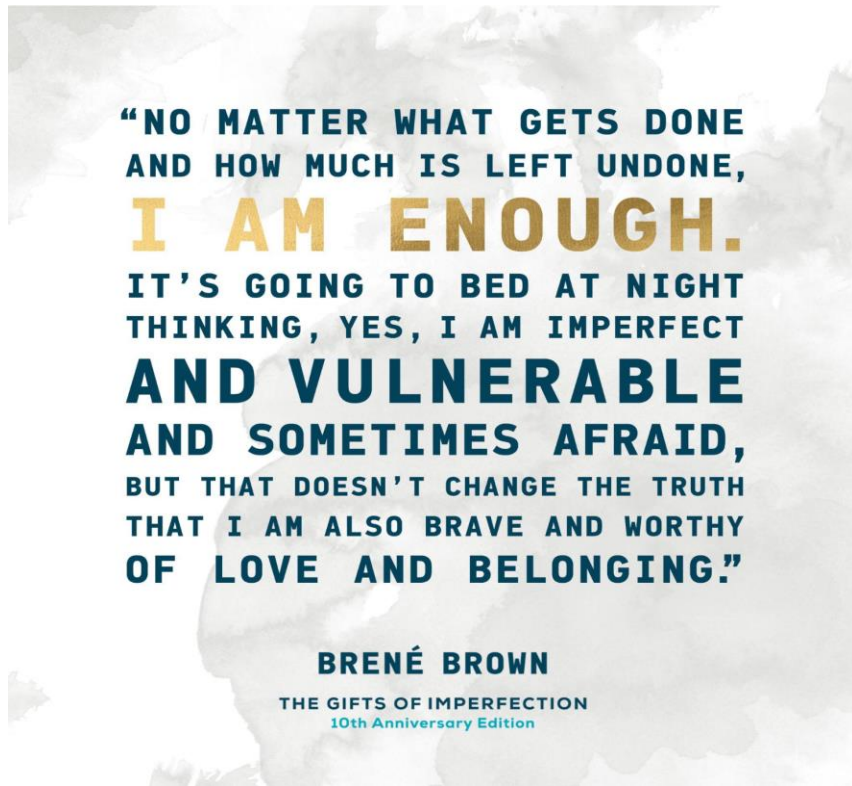


# Why Mental Health Matters: Parents

How Are You Feeling?



# Why Mental Health Matters: Parents



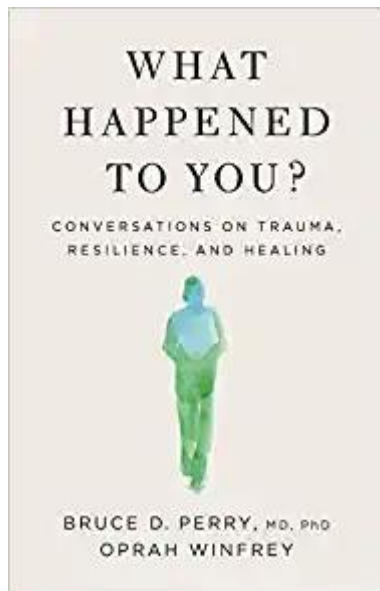
# Why Mental Health Matters: Parents

## Connection and Conversation

Virtual Book Read

FREE Books

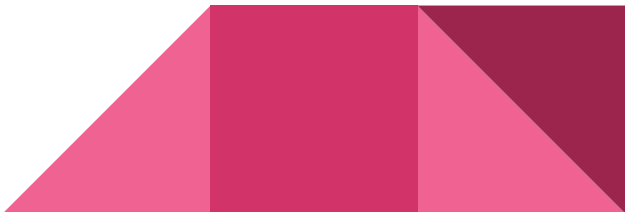
Available!



Contact Information:  
Serena Ward  
Family Navigator

Call/Text/Email  
607-592-0486  
[serenaw@racker.org](mailto:serenaw@racker.org)

# Remember:

- *It's OK to not be OK*
  - *High School is a developmental process and the beginning of adulthood it is NOT the "Endgame"*
  - *Students will develop at different rates, and it's a good time to avoid comparisons*
  - *Prioritize a school life balance*
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Questions?

# For more information contact:

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