



School Mental Health Training



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE **Eastern Mediterranean**

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“Our love for children is undiminished. Their innocence and energy, their happiness and welfare must be protected and treasured. It is their laughter that I yearned for while in prison.”

Nelson Mandela

Lecture 1

Introduction and background





Learning objectives



**structure and objectives of
school mental health training**



**the role schools play in mental
health**



Target audience

This training is primarily intended for those involved in

the educational process

teachers, school administrators, nurses, social workers, school counsellors

educational policy-making

nongovernmental organizations



Objectives of training



- The importance of MH in school settings
- Incorporating MH into healthy schools initiatives
- Promoting MH in school settings
- Child development
- Age-appropriate behavioural **management strategies**
- Disciplining & management of disruptive behaviour
- **Warning signs** of mental illness in school children and distinguishing them from emotional distress
- Appropriate **interventions** for psychiatric disorders
- **Resources** that can be accessed by educators



Overview of the training



This training consists of



lectures



group discussions
activities
role plays



reference manual
including an appendix
with additional
resources



Visual aids



indicates a **discussion/activity** slide



more applicable to children < **8** years



more applicable to adolescents > **13** years



Background

Health is

“a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”



“There is **no health without mental health**”



Background



Approximately **one in five** children display signs of poor mental health and, at any given time, meet the criteria for a mental illness
(UK Department of Health, 1995, Merikangas et al., 2010)

About **half** of all mental illnesses begin in childhood and adolescence (Kirby and Keon, 2004)






Background

Schools are vital in promoting mental health



Schools are in a position to not only **identify and support** children who are experiencing **emotional difficulties**, but more importantly, to **promote** overall emotional well-being and social and moral development



Background



There is a need for more teacher training on MH and a more proactive approach towards MH in schools



- **School experiences** are important in children's intellectual development & psychological well-being
- **Emotional health and academic achievement** are closely connected
- **Emotional and social well-being** leads to greater satisfaction with family and relationships with friends (Gutman and Feinstein, 2008)
- **Effective social and affective education** benefits academic attainment and improves teachers' effectiveness and satisfaction



Why schools should invest in mental health

↑ Academic achievement

↓ Retention and dropping out



Children's well-being is linked to their academic achievement (Gutman and Feinstein, 2008)

Student effort strongly correlates with more **positive academic outcomes** (Stewart, 2008)

Programmes that focus on social, emotional, and academic learning have been found to improve school attitudes, behaviour and academic performance (Zins et al, 2004)

Social development (incl. meaningful peer relationships) can improve academic achievement; **negative peer pressure or social disapproval of school work** might lead to drop out (Stewart, 2008; Nicholas & White 2001)



Why schools should invest in mental health

Accessibility



Students spend approximately 15 000 hours – from kindergarten to completion – at school. Schools are accessible for MH promotion, prevention & intervention

Schools provide a familiar and less stigmatizing and threatening environment for students in need of help

Risk reduction



Strengthening student protective factors and resilience reduces negative risks and outcomes for vulnerable children

Promoting school MH helps reduce violence and juvenile crime

Early identification of children with mental illness can alter their experience of school



Why schools should invest in mental health

Teacher wellness



Teaching can be both rewarding and challenging

Working with children who have mental health problems can be challenging and stressful

Learning about school mental health will help teachers, and not just be 'one more thing to do'

Enhancing students' emotional health can improve satisfaction and retention among teachers

For more information on teacher wellness please see appendix 1 of the mental health in schools manual



Why schools should invest in mental health

Social aspects



Children often establish deep and lasting relationships with teachers, school staff and peers at school: these relationships are protective and supportive

Children learn to express themselves and actively participate in social activities at school and in community projects

Schools can influence the adoption of both healthy and unhealthy behaviours



Exercise



**Please divide yourself
into groups of four**

Take 15 minutes to discuss the following topic

In your experience how does mental health impact your students?

Can you recall cases where mental illness impacted a student's learning?

Have one member of each group report back to the larger group in 15 min



Thank you

