



Schools Can Help Remove the Mental Health Stigma

May 28, 2021 by Educator Barnes

May is Mental Health Awareness Month, and now more than ever, mental health needs to be a priority. People across the world were not prepared to enter into a pandemic. As more people become vaccinated, restrictions are being dropped, and people are being pushed into life as it was before the pandemic. The problem is life has changed, and it is not reasonable or best to ignore the impact the pandemic has had on all of us.

According to the [National Institute of Mental Health](#), “nearly one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness (51.5 million in 2019).” Additionally, the [CDC](#) reports that “more than 50% will be diagnosed with a mental illness or disorder at some point in their lifetime.” During the pandemic, many people had to stay at home, had a significant decline in social contact, experienced activities being canceled, or experienced the death of a loved one or someone they know. Some people experienced more than one of these events. Then, there was remote school which impacted teachers, students, and their families.

Mental health must be monitored just like physical health. When mental health is neglected, physical health can also be impacted. The CDC states, “Mental illness, especially depression, increases the risk for many types of physical health problems, particularly long-lasting conditions like stroke, type 2 diabetes, and heart disease.” Knowing that life will not be the same as it was before the pandemic, it is important for schools to be places that are supportive of the various ranges of mental health among students and staff and not be a place that contributes negatively to their mental health.

One way schools can be a supportive place is by being transparent about mental wellness and letting students know how important it is to care for their mental health. Next, schools should leverage the SEL curriculum. SEL should not be another thing a teacher has to implement. It should be full of strategies that are implemented throughout the day to help students manage their emotions. Also, schools should connect families to therapy available through the school or through community partners. A teacher cannot be the teacher and the therapist, too.

Also, when you are on a plane and the flight attendants are going over the safety directions, they say to “put your mask on first” because people can’t help others if they haven’t taken care of themselves first. Throughout this pandemic, teachers have been suffocating and gasping for air because they have been taking care of everyone else and not prioritizing themselves.

There are so many different themed months, but this month’s focus is an important one that we should attend to immediately.