**Ontario Ministry of Education**

**Mental Health Literacy Modules for Grades 7 and 8**

School Leaders Implementation Resource –

Templates for Communication

The Ontario Ministry of Education has introduced a series of three modules per grade to support **existing** **mental health literacy expectations** within Strand D of the grades 7 and 8 **Health and Physical Education** curriculum. The modules will enhance mental health literacy and help equipstudents with culturally responsive, evidence-based knowledge, skills, and strategies to support their mental health and well-being.

These templates for communication include ready-to-use materials to communicate learning within the school and to continue to support the ongoing promotion of student mental health in the school community.

The resources include:

* A staff introduction slide deck
* School-wide promotion announcements
* A school notification system message
* A newsletter/webpage insert
* A letter for parents/caregivers

All materials can be adapted to meet the school leader’s own context within their school/board.

**Staff Introduction Slide Deck**

A brief [slide deck](https://smhosmso-my.sharepoint.com/:p:/g/personal/documents_smho-smso_ca/Ed2rkQO-KH1DqEKAWY9Zu1YB80WkBUT2whbkMxQJiV6aVw?e=USEbhU) with speaker notes that may be used to create awareness of the modules (e.g., at a staff meeting to raise awareness for the entire school team and/or in a division meeting for grade 7 and 8 educators) has been provided.

**School-Wide Promotion Announcements**

These messages are based on concepts from the Mental Health Grade 7 and 8 modules but are also helpful and appropriate to share with the entire school.

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| 1. Mental health is something we all have. What supports yours? Knowing and practicing strategies that help you feel well is important every day, not just when we face challenges. Make mental health strategies part of your daily routine!  2. We all feel stress at times. Some stress can be a good thing! It can help us in many ways. Managing stress is a skill we can practice and get better at. There are strategies that can help.  3. Did you know your brain keeps developing until you are about 25 years old? While that’s happening, it’s especially important to take care of your brain by doing things like making healthy decisions about substance use.  4. Noticing changes in your mental health can help you know when to use strategies that work for you. Seeking help when you need it is also an important mental health strategy!  5. The words we use can add to stigma related to mental health and mental illness. Thoughtful words can help others feel comfortable to share their experiences and seek help, if they need it.    6. Would you know where to go to talk about a mental health problem? The adults in this school community care about you. If you need to talk, please reach out to a trusted adult. Problems don’t have to be big to share them.  7. Sometimes we play a role in supporting our friends. Sometimes we need other people to play a role, too. We don’t have to manage a concern for a friend all alone, and it’s okay to prioritize our own mental health while we are helping a friend. Our mental health matters, too. |

**School Notification System Message**

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| At [NAME OF SCHOOL], we support student mental health and well-being. As part of the ongoing work in all school boards in Ontario, the Ministry of Education has introduced a series of three modules per grade to support the **existing** **mental health literacy expectations** within the grades 7 and 8 **Health** and **Physical Education** curriculum. This learning will help equip students with inclusive, culturally responsive, evidence-informed knowledge, skills, and strategies to support their mental health and well-being, knowing this looks different for everyone. We are excited to bring this additional learning into our classrooms!  If you have questions about this learning or mental health supports, please reach out to [ADD NAME], OUR SCHOOL’S PRINCIPAL [OR APPROPRIATE STAFF]. |

**Newsletter/Webpage Insert**

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| New Grade 7/8 Mental Health Literacy Modules Support Student Mental Health and Well-being  This fall, the Ministry of Education has introduced a series of three modules per grade to support the **existing** **mental health literacy expectations** within the grade 7 and 8 **Health** and **Physical Education** curriculum. This series of three 40-minute modules per grade will be delivered by educators to support the existing mental health literacy expectations within Strand D of the Health and Physical Education curriculum. They’re not new learning – they offer ways to enhance the delivery of the existing curriculum and focus on mental health literacy.  This learning will help equip students with inclusive, culturally responsive, evidence-informed knowledge, skills, and strategies to support their mental health and well-being.  There are important reasons to bring these modules into the classroom:   * Students [**want**](https://smho-smso.ca/online-resources/hearnowon-2021-student-voices-on-mental-health-final-report/) to learn more about mental health at school. * This learning helps students develop skills that support positive mental health. * Mental health learning supports learning in all other areas. * This learning can encourage conversations and help students in need reach support. * As caring adults in the lives of young people, we want students to be well.   Here is an [introductory video](https://vimeo.com/857720241/3877843c8c?share=copy) that provides more information  If you have questions about this learning or mental health supports, please contact (INSERT NAME) |

**Letter for Parents/Caregivers (Optional)**

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| [School Letterhead]  Dear Parents/Caregivers,  We are excited about our learning and wanted to make sure you knew about it, too! Grade 7 and 8 students are participating in a series of modules from the Ministry of Education that support the existing **Health** and **Physical Education** curriculum. These modules will help students learn about:   * Mental health and mental illness and how they are connected. * Strategies to manage stress and take care of our mental health. * Ways to make healthy decisions about substance use. * How to help reduce stigma related to mental illness. * When it might be more than a bad day and how to seek support for ourselves and our friends, should we need it.   There are important reasons to prioritize mental health learning:   * Students [**want**](https://smho-smso.ca/online-resources/hearnowon-2021-student-voices-on-mental-health-final-report/) to learn more about mental health at school. * This learning helps students develop skills that support positive mental health and well-being. * Mental health learning supports learning in all other areas. * This learning can encourage conversations and help students in need reach support.   There is also a [brief video](https://vimeo.com/857720241/3877843c8c?share=copy) that provides and overview of the modules and content.  As always, students will be made aware that there are many adults at school they can talk to, should they have additional questions about the learning, and opportunities for follow up support and will be provided. If you have questions about these modules or mental health supports, please reach out to me.  You are an important part of supporting your child’s learning about mental health and well-being.  Sincerely,  [SCHOOL PRINCIPAL NAME] |

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| **School Leader Reflection:**   * When is the best time of the school year to deliver the modules (e.g., consider the creation of a caring and supportive class community, connection to other relevant learning that is happening, and so on)? * Who would like to know about this learning? For example, will I share it with parents/caregivers to highlight one of the many ways our school is supporting student well-being? Would it be helpful for any school support staff or mental health professionals that may be part of my school to know? * How am I modelling taking care of my own wellness and encouraging my staff to do the same? |

**Who should I contact if I have questions about the modules?**

You can either connect with your mental health leader or superintendent with responsibility for mental health.

Interested in learning more?

Find additional resources for school leaders on the [School Mental Health Ontario website](https://smho-smso.ca/school-and-system-leaders/)

Consider enrolling in the free [MH LIT Course for School Leaders.](https://smho-smso.ca/school-and-system-leaders/mh-lit-online-course/)