

Differentiated Ways of Supporting Social-Emotional Wellbeing and Mental Health of Children and Youth

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Abstract : Emotional wellbeing is crucial for healthy development of children, youth, and adolescence. Lack of healthy emotional development and functioning can lead to many challenges in academic, social, and physical domains. Unfortunately, mental health problems are steadily increasing over the past several years and significantly intensified during and after the Covid 19 pandemic. Some experts warn that globally, we are entering a mental health crisis pandemic. Prior to the Covid 19 pandemic in 2020, a considerable number of youth aged 6-17 experienced a mental health disorder each year, with half of all mental health conditions beginning by age 14. The most common mental health disorders in children are Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), behavior problems, anxiety, and depression. In U.S. schools, youth with these diagnoses tend to be classified under the umbrella of Emotional Disability. Several concerning trends have been emerging about the mental health of U.S. high school students. These trends have been steadily increasing for the past decade, particularly having increasing numbers of high school students who experienced persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness, seriously considered attempting suicide, made a suicide plan, and attempted suicide. The number of students who felt persistently sad or hopeless increased across every racial and ethnic group. Parents, educators, and mental health providers are key stakeholders that are responsible for actively and effectively supporting struggling youth. A commonly faced challenge is that mental wellbeing is not supported as effectively as it should be. When effective prevention is paired with enhanced treatment developed on a multidisciplinary approach, mental health and emotional wellbeing in young people can be positively enhanced. Major health organizations including the Center for Disease Control and the National Institutes of Health encourage health professionals and other stakeholders to focus on addressing emotional wellbeing and mental health of young people.

Keywords : social emotional wellbeing, disability, learning, prevention

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