

MIND MATTERS: A TEACHER'S ROLE IN PROMOTING ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING

Behaviors and perspectives that enhance well-being are learned in the home, community and school environment. We all know that most teachers teach much more than just academics, but how do teachers foster positive mental and emotional well-being? How might you already be supporting this important part of your students' development and growth?

Here's how:

- ✓ When you **connect** with your students!
 - Research has shown that it is often a personal connection with a teacher that made the most significant difference in a young person's life.

- ✓ When you **promote** self-efficacy!
 - When you create opportunities to foster academic, personal, and social competence and independence. Feeling competent as a person can act as a buffer to the negative influences an adolescent may face.
 - When you recognize students who are exhibiting competence, you help them learn to recognize it for themselves.

- ✓ When you are a **positive** role model!
 - When you use your own values and principles to guide you as you model positive behavior.
 - When you show:
 - Kindness
 - Optimism
 - Perseverance
 - Good communication skills
 - Empathy
 - Good coping skills
 - Effective problem solving skills

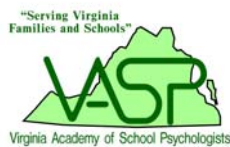
- ✓ When you create a **healthy** classroom atmosphere!
 - When you promote and celebrate cooperation.
 - When you acknowledge diversity and cultural uniqueness of students.
 - When you teach and model problem-solving skills. Walking students through these steps can help make effective problem solving a habit:
 - 1) What is going on here? What is the problem?
 - 2) What can I do? What are my options?
 - 3) What might happen if I choose that option?
 - 4) Decide which one to try.
 - 5) Try it!
 - 6) Ask yourself: Did it work? What happened?
 - 7) What should I do next?

MIND MATTERS: A TEACHER'S ROLE IN PROMOTING ADOLESCENT WELL-BEING (continued)

- ✓ When you **recognize** symptoms of stress in your students!
 - When you see and address:
 - Unrealistic expectations (the student's or others')
 - Attention-seeking behaviors
 - Mood changes
 - Isolation or withdrawal
 - School refusal or changes in the quality of work
 - Frequent physical complaints (headache, stomachache)

- ✓ When you help to **reduce** students' stress by:
 - Listening. Being a good listener assures students you are there for support, and will also help you to better understand how you can help.
 - Helping to plan and rehearse a response to a stressful situation.
 - Helping students see "irrational thinking" patterns. Then helping the student look at life, and him or herself, more realistically and positively.
 - Relaxation/visualization can be helpful in reducing stress. Talk to your school psychologist or counselor about the availability or appropriateness of relaxation training.

Adolescents thrive in school environments where positive well-being is valued and nurtured. Teachers can help shape classroom activities and daily interactions that will make a positive difference for our youth!



Provided as a public service of the Virginia Academy of School Psychologists – www.vaspweb.org