



Erika's Lighthouse Staff Training:

Part 2: Helping a Student

Facilitator's Guide

Erika's Lighthouse is a not-for-profit depression and mental health education organization that educates upper elementary, middle school and high school communities about teen depression, eliminates the stigma associated with mental health issues and empowers teens to take charge of their mental health. For more information and other programs and resources, go to www.erikaslighthouse.org.

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This program was written for educators, professionals and other adults working with adolescents to educate them regarding the issues surrounding depression. While Erika's Lighthouse consults with clinical, therapeutic, legal, and child development experts, nothing in this program should be construed as specific or general medical or psychological advice. Erika's Lighthouse assumes no responsibility for any actions taken as a result of the material or information contained in the program. Every child's and family's situation is unique, and Erika's Lighthouse urges children, adolescents, parents, and educators to seek and find competent professional advice appropriate for specific individuals and actions.

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Part 2: Erika's Lighthouse Staff Training

Helping a Student

In Part 2, staff will learn about being trauma-informed, what it means to be a trusted adult, how to have a conversation with a student if they are concerned, following protocol and proactive factors that can support student well-being.

Slide 1: Introduction

"Welcome to the Erika's Lighthouse Staff Training. This is part 2 of a 3-part series. This section of the training will cover helping a student."

Slide 2: Content Notice

"This training contains discussions of depression, self-harm and suicide. We recognize this is a heavy topic. Many people are affected in various ways by the topic of suicide and mental illness and we want you to take what you need during this time"

Slide 3: Agenda and Learning Objectives

"We will learn about being trauma-informed, what it means to be a trusted adult, how to have a conversation with a student if you are concerned, following school protocol and what proactive factors can support student well-being.

It is always important to note that it is NOT a teacher's job to diagnose a student; rather, in your role as an educator or a trusted adult, by knowing some of the signs and risk factors, you can help identify a student in need and help connect that student to the appropriate mental health professionals or school staff members."

Being Sensitive & Trauma-informed

Slide 4: Being Sensitive & Trauma-informed

"I want to talk a bit about the Prevalence of Trauma in our young people.

We know that more than 60% of children have been exposed to some form of abuse or violence (Finkelhor, Turner, Ormrod, & Hamby, 2009).

In short, it's reasonable to assume that a majority of students in school have been exposed to at least one traumatic event at some point in their lives. No matter how big or small that event is, people experience trauma when they witness or are exposed to an event that presents a real or perceived threat to well-being or safety, and the event causes the person

to feel fear or helplessness.

Traumatic events bring on strong feelings that may strain a person's coping capacity. Children who've experienced trauma may have challenges that affect their social and academic performance at school, including, for example, difficulty sustaining attention, concentration, and completing tasks;

Remember, a child's misbehavior may not be intentional at all, but rather an involuntary discharge of traumatic stress that's been stored up. (Steele & Malchiodi, 2012).

Slide 5: Being Sensitive & Trauma-informed

Play the video to expand on the importance of being trauma-informed

Slide 6: Being Sensitive & Trauma-informed

"So what does that mean?

Students:

- Come to the classroom with many different values, cultural and religious beliefs, and ideas about these topics.
- May have experienced trauma of some sort in their life, it may have an impact on their ability to thrive and be healthy.
- May have difficulty sharing ideas and discussing these issues with their peers.

Educators should:

- Infuse language and guidelines to support sensitive and personal discussions in classrooms.
- Seek opportunities to instill hope, resilience, and safety.

Find ways to foster students' resilience; be empathetic as students connect with you"

Being a Trusted Adult

Slide 7: Young People's Barriers to Reaching Out for Help

"Young people have a difficult time asking for help with something as benign as math homework, so expressing that they are concerned about their mental health is a rather daunting task. Over the years, Erika's Lighthouse has spoken with many young people. Below are some of the barriers they feel about asking for help. They say things like "I feel like a burden, I don't want to disappoint anyone, I feel ashamed or embarrassed, my problems aren't as bad as other people's, I should be able to handle it on my own. This is why it's so important to let young people know that we are available to listen and here to help."

Slide 8: Peer to Peer

"Friends are on the front lines supporting other friends every day. 66% of young people first report their suicidal thoughts to a friend. This is one reason why it's so important for young people to understand signs & symptoms and know how to identify trusted adults. We also want to teach young people that there are limitations to the type of support they can offer a friend. So, it's critical that we let young people know that we are here to support them."

Slide 9: What is a Trusted Adult?

"Erika's Lighthouse classroom programs emphasize and encourage students to identify who is their trusted adult and how to engage a trusted adult if they are worried about themselves or a friend.

When students are asked to think about a trusted adult and what comes to mind - some of their responses include being a good listener, offering advice, showing empathy, or not making you feel silly for coming to them - someone they feel a connection with. A trusted adult is reliable and dependable. It's important for students to know that a trusted adult may be found at home, in school or in the community. Your role as a trusted adult is to listen and help the student get to the appropriate person in the building to help them."

Slide 10: What if a Student Wants to Talk?

"During the course of a school year, particularly after a classroom program which discusses depression, suicide and good mental health, a student might reach out to you to express a concern or to ask a question about their own mental health. To ask for help about anything - even something as benign as not understanding an assignment - can be difficult for a teenager. This is a big step and perhaps the first time a student has verbalized that they are struggling.

It is important to stay calm and listen carefully. Acknowledging what they have said and really validating their experience.

Remember:

- We can go a long way toward helping a child simply by acknowledging what they say and treating them with respect and sensitivity.
- There are limits to the kind of support you can provide.
- Teachers are not responsible for either diagnosing or treating a student.

Please know that it is ok if this interaction is emotional for you, too; it can be difficult to have this kind of intense conversation. However, it is equally important to remember to take care of yourself."

Slide 11: What if you are concerned about a student?

"You see students frequently, often even daily over the course of a semester, so there could be times when you notice behavior changes that last two or more weeks in a student. In fact, you could notice changes before a parent does. It can be helpful to write down the behaviors you notice and consult with your building's mental health professional to discuss the changes you have observed and how to proceed. Erika's Lighthouse has a Mental Health Checklist that lists the signs & symptoms of depression that can be used as a resource to guide the discussion with your school's mental health professional. Following your building's policy and procedures, the recommendation of the mental health professional and your level of comfort, you could have a conversation with the student about what you have noticed over the past few weeks. On the next slide, we have language that you can use to help guide the conversation."

Intervention Language

Slide 12: Intervention Language

"This simple format can be helpful for tough conversations. It's not easy to have uncomfortable conversations, but this may be the first step towards helping a young person get the help they deserve.

I notice.

"Is everything okay? I've noticed you have been...."

I care.

"I'm concerned because I know this isn't normal for you."

How can I help?

"What can I do to help? Let's come up with a plan together."

Quick Tips

- Ask questions and listen
- Be prepared for the truth
- Validate the student's feelings
- Listen to your gut
- Take action and follow up

It must always end in action - even if a student says everything is fine, your action item can be "I'll check in with you at the end of the week". You want the student to know that you are there to support them and that you are leaving the door open for future conversations."

Slide 13: Responding to a Student

"This slide gives some examples of unhelpful and helpful responses. Remember, we want

to validate and encourage the conversation, not shut down the conversation.”

Slide 14: Myth or Fact

“Time for a myth or fact: So, myth or fact: talking about suicide or asking someone if they feel suicidal will give someone the idea and will encourage a suicide attempt.” (pause to let audience answer and click to show explanation) “That’s a myth. The fact is that talking about suicide provides the opportunity for communication and help-seeking and reduces stigma.”

Following School Protocol & Being a Mandated Reporter

Slide 15: Following School Protocol

“This professional development training has been to raise your awareness of the issues of adolescent depression and suicide.”

Ensure that you provide the policy and guidance set by your school during this slide

Erika’s Lighthouse recommends that every school have a protocol and that all staff be aware of it. A protocol should be used to:

- Establish a culture of mental health in the school
- Get students the help they need if they are suffering from depression or another mental illness.
- Inform every staff member to know what to do if they think a student is suffering from depression or another mental illness.

Slide 16: Being a Mandated Reporter

“It is important to keep in mind that we are mandated reporters.”

Please review your district’s policy(s) for mandated reporting

Slide 17: Myth or fact

“Let’s play myth or fact. Myth or fact: everyone has someone they feel close to at school” (pause and let the audience answer) “That’s a myth. The Fact is that only 55% of high school students report feeling close to people at school”

Protective Factors

Slide 18: School Connectedness is a Protective Factor

"In 2023, 55% of high school students agreed or strongly agreed that they felt close to people at their school, also referred to as school connectedness. We need to remember how important it is for young people to know someone cares about them. By being intentional about creating a school environment where young people feel supported and cared about, we are working to build a safety net for all students. The good news is that are resilient, and we know what works to support their mental health: feeling connected to **school** and **family**."

Slide 19: Take Care of Yourself

"We know that you go above and beyond to support students. But it's equally important to take care of yourself. Carve out time for what you need to be mentally well. We care about your well-being, so please remember to do the things you need to take care of yourself."

Slide 20: Please complete the survey

If you are only completing Parts 1 and 2 of the staff training, please have the participants fill out the evaluation survey using the QR code below. If you will be conducting part 3, please have participants complete the post-test at that time.



"If you have additional questions for the Erika's Lighthouse staff, please feel free to reach out to them. Their contact information is on the screen. We will now move on to small group work."

Part 2.5 Small Group Work

This is an opportunity for your participants to expand their learning and have a deeper conversation about the training. Below are four suggestions of resources that you can use during this time.

1. [Overcoming Barriers to Asking for Help](#)- Have participants read and discuss barriers to students asking for help.
2. Review & Practice [Intervention Language & Being a Trusted Adult](#) - This handout can be used in group discussions and is a good takeaway when the training is complete.
3. Review & Discuss [Strategies & Tools to Support a Student's Mental Health](#) - This handout can be used in group discussions and is a good takeaway when the training is complete.
4. Review & Discuss [When to Reach Out to a School Mental Health Professional](#) - This handout can be used in group discussions and is a good takeaway when the training is complete.