



**Erika's  
Lighthouse**

# **Erika's Lighthouse Staff Training: Part 2: Helping a Student**



# Content Notice

This training contains discussion of depression, self-harm and suicide.

If you or someone you know is experiencing suicidal thoughts or a crisis, please reach out to the 988 Lifeline, which provides 24/7, free, confidential support for people in distress.





# PART 2

## Helping a Student

### Agenda

- Being Sensitive & Trauma-Informed
- Being a Trusted Adult
- Intervention Language
- Following School Policy
- Protective Factors



# Being Sensitive & Trauma-Informed

Trauma-informed practice is a paradigm shift – shifting away from the deficit/blaming model to one with understanding & compassion.

“

If we don't look for or acknowledge trauma in the lives of children and adolescents, we end up chasing behaviors and limiting the possibilities for change.

Suarez, Flores & Zamarelli, 2007



# Being Sensitive & Trauma-Informed



**3. A safe classroom with routines is a great comfort.**

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Kids who have experienced trauma and instability worry about what's going to happen next.



# Being Sensitive & Trauma-Informed

## What does it 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, safety.



# Young People's Barriers to Reaching out for Help

Students may find it challenging to ask for help.

- I feel like a burden.
- I don't want to disappoint anyone.
- I'm having a tough time recognizing if there is a problem.
- I feel ashamed & embarrassed.
- There's no hope so what's the point of asking for help.
- My problems are not as bad as other people's problems.
- I should be able to handle this on my own.
- I don't deserve help or support.
- People have already told me, "You're fine. Just look at the positives."
- Maybe I'm just being dramatic.





# Peer to Peer

66% of young people first report suicidal thoughts to a friend (UCLA).

Friends are on the front lines of treatment every day.

It's important to have conversations with students about what they can and cannot do for their friends' mental health.





# What is a Trusted Adult?

## What comes to mind when you think of a trusted adult?

Students say it is someone who is a good listener, offers advice, shows empathy, or won't make you feel silly for coming to them - someone they feel a connection with. A trusted adult is reliable and dependable.

The role of a trusted adult is to:

- Listen and validate how hard it must be to confide in someone or to ask for help.
- And then, help the student get to the appropriate person to provide the help or support they need.

## Who may be a trusted adult?



Parent  
Guardian  
Grandparent  
Family Member



School Counselor  
Social Worker  
Teacher  
Coach



Religious Leader  
Coach/Instructor  
Mental Health  
Professional



# What if a student wants to talk?

A student may reveal information which makes you and them feel uncomfortable.

- Stay calm and listen
- Thank them for trusting you
- Be sure to take care of yourself

## 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.



# What if you're concerned about a student?

There will be times when you may notice a change in behavior or performance of a student that has lasted two weeks or longer.

- Document these changes using the Mental Health Checklist.
- These changes may warrant a conversation.
- Confer with your building's mental health expert.
- Schedule a private time for this conversation because a student might disclose some personal information to you.



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## Mental Health Checklist

Document changes in behavior you have observed for the past 2 or more weeks.

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Observer: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ Sad, depressed or irritable mood
- ☐ Loss of interest in favorite activities
- ☐ Significant weight loss or gain, significant change in appearance
- ☐ Restlessness, agitation or anxiety
- ☐ Fatigue or loss of energy, including sleeping in class
- ☐ Feelings of guilt, inappropriate apologies
- ☐ Low self-esteem, self deprecating comments
- ☐ Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- ☐ Repeated thoughts of death, infatuation with dark and sad things
- ☐ Frequent headaches and stomach pains
- ☐ Cutting or other self-injury
- ☐ Extreme aggressiveness
- ☐ Inattention to appearance, or inappropriate clothing for the weather
- ☐ Excessive risk-taking behavior
- ☐ Drop in school performance
- ☐ Low tolerance for frustration
- ☐ Lack of motivation or apathy
- ☐ Disrespect
- ☐ Social withdrawal
- ☐ Acting out or misbehavior
- ☐ Problems concentrating, unable to store and retrieve information
- ☐ Disorganized, forgotten materials and assignments
- ☐ Frequent absences or trips to the school nurse



# Intervention Language



## Intervention Language and Being the Trusted Adult

Take into account that this conversation could elicit a personal disclosure and should be scheduled during a protected time and location. Also understand that it is vital to the teacher/student relationship that the student is informed if there are plans to share the disclosure with someone else, who that person is and why it is important to do so (i.e. a parent or school support staff).

Keep in mind that it is normal to feel a little anxiety and discomfort when approaching a student you are concerned about. Just remember the goal is not to take on the student's problem or to have all of the right answers. Instead, focus on approaching the student with honest inquiry, concern and compassion—and connecting the student to the right kind of help.

**I notice.** State the changes you have noticed – use the mental health checklist, this will help with defensiveness.

**I care.** This is all about countering the negative thoughts.

**How can I help?** This is the action step. Give kids choices, but be firm that action will be taken. Affirm that help is available, effective and that they deserve to feel better.

### Tips on Being the Trusted Adult

- **Ask Questions and Listen** – Kids want your attention, not your advice.
- **Be Prepared for the Truth** – Remain calm, it's okay to be uncomfortable.
- **Validate the Student's Feelings** – Kids say all the time the most hurtful thing is when their feelings are minimized or not taken seriously.
- **Listen to Your Gut** – It's the best tool you already have. If you are speaking with the student, it is because you care and they know it.
- **Remember your Training** – Follow school protocols to keep everyone safe.
- **Take Action** – If a student needs to speak with someone, walk them down to a counselor or social worker. Check with your school building about who the best person is to help students.

Always wrap up with an action plan that both you and the student develop together. Make sure the student knows there is help available at school (if there is) and in the community and give the student information on how to contact these resources.

**REMINDER:** As adults working with children we should always keep in mind our responsibility as mandated reporters. If a child discloses plans to hurt themselves, someone else or if someone is hurting them—a report to the appropriate authorities in your area is required by law.

**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



# Responding to a Student

## Unhelpful Response

*Things could be worse.*



*You'll catch up if you just put in a little effort.*

*Just relax. Stop worrying so much.*

## Helpful Response

*I care about you. What do you think is causing you to feel this way?*

*Let's come up with a plan together to help you catch up with some of your assignments. What can I do to help?*

*Being your age can be hard. I remember being a teenager and all the stress that came along with it. How can I help?*





Talking about suicide or asking someone if they feel suicidal will give someone the idea and will encourage a suicide attempt.

### **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

Every school should have a protocol and all staff should 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.



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## Sample Mental Health Protocol

Teachers and schools play a key role in the identification and support of students suffering from depression. Teachers are often the first to know when a student is suffering from depression. They spend many hours with students, giving them a good sense of the norm for a particular age group.

Every school should have a protocol to establish a culture of mental health in the school and to get students the help they need if they are suffering from depression or another mental illness. Every staff member should know what to do if they think a student is suffering from depression or another mental illness.

**Every school should establish a Mental Health Task Force** whose mandate is to:

- Educate faculty and staff about depression, mental illness and mental health.
- Develop and/or strengthen procedures to assist teachers and other staff to identify students who may be suffering from depression or another mental illness.
- Help faculty and staff develop a support system for students who are suffering from depression or another mental illness.
- Develop and/or strengthen procedures to offer academic and therapeutic assistance to students who are suffering from depression or another mental illness.
- Develop and/or strengthen procedures for immediate intervention with students who are at risk of harming themselves or others.
- Develop anti-bullying policies and procedures.
- Establish a culture of mental health in the school.

**The task force should include health and/or mental health staff**, administrators, health teachers, and classroom teachers. It should:

- Train faculty and staff to recognize signs of depression. The Erika's Lighthouse Programs are a good tool for staff to become acquainted with depression from a student's point of view.
- Adopt a Student Mental Health Checklist for teachers to use to identify students who may need help.
- Communicate appropriate ways for faculty and staff to start a conversation with students of concern using a shared vocabulary and, if necessary, connect them to school support services using a common Student Intervention Language for Teachers.
- Establish a Student Assessment Protocol to address the concerns of a faculty or staff member about a student.
- Help classroom teachers develop a support system within the classroom for students suffering from depression.
- Develop a protocol for taking immediate action if a student is in danger of taking their life, self-injury or injury to others.
- Provide a "safe haven" (e.g., the school nurse or mental health office or the principal's office) for students who are experiencing emotional difficulties during the day.

if you need to speak with someone immediately, please text LISTEN to 741-741 or call 1-800-273-8255.  
if this is an emergency, please call 911.

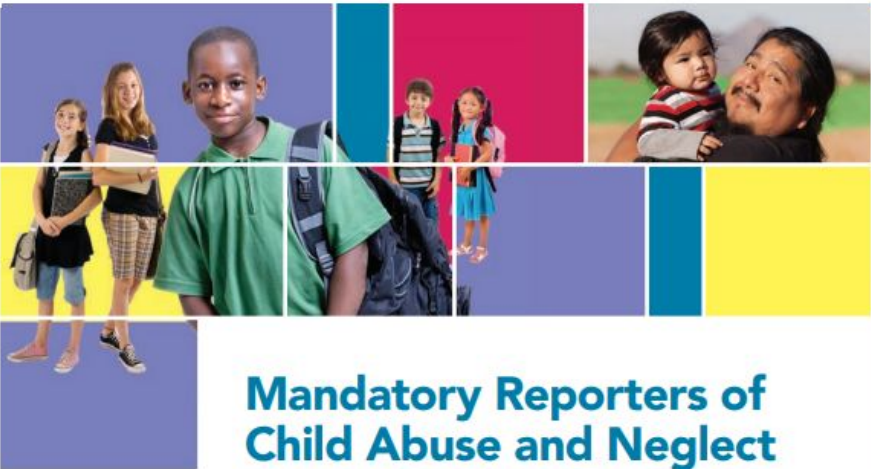




# Being A Mandated Reporter

As adults working with children we should always keep in mind our responsibility as mandated reporters.

If a child discloses plans to hurt themselves, someone else or if someone is hurting them—a report to the appropriate authorities in your area is required by law.



**STATE  
STATUTES**  
Current Through  
April 2019

**WHAT'S INSIDE**

- Professionals required to report
- Reporting by other persons

**Mandatory Reporters of  
Child Abuse and Neglect**





Everyone has someone they feel close to at school.

**That's a MYTH**

The FACT is that only 61% of high school students report feeling close to people at school.



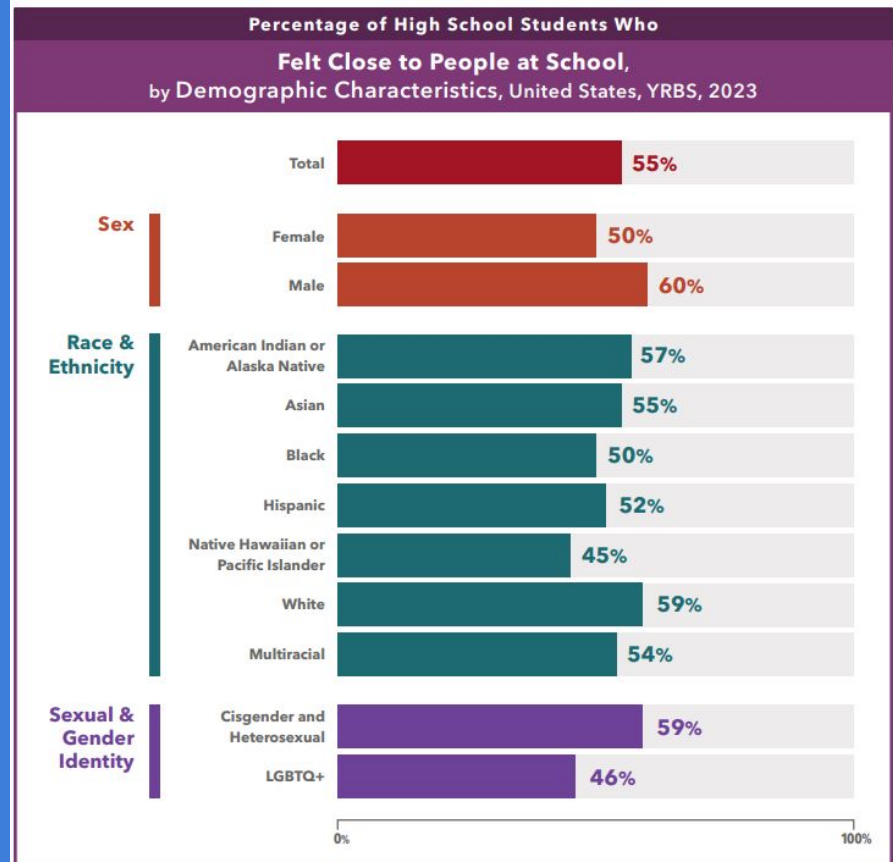
# School Connectedness is a Protective Factor

Youth need to know someone cares about them.

Building a safety net around a student.

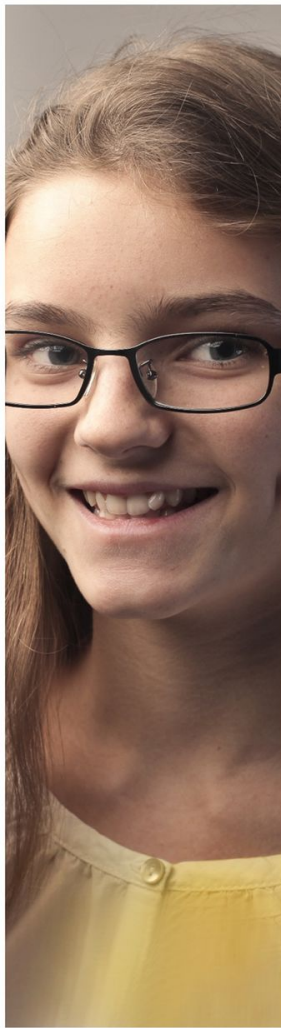


*Based on 2023 CDC YRBS Data*









# Thank you



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