



MENTAL HEALTH TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS

SECTION 1. The Mental Health Impact of Covid-19 and Management Strategies presented by Clare Chester

CHALLENGES TO LEARNERS

- Closure of Schools
- Financial stress in Families
- Potential separation from family members
- Media engagement
- Nonpharmacological interventions
- Loss of family members or loved ones
- Trauma
- Normal stressor exacerbated by Covid-19

POTENTIAL MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES IN LEARNERS

- Anxiety
- Depression
- Social Anxiety Disorder
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Separation Anxiety
- Grief
- Internet Gaming and Social Media Usage
- Loneliness and Isolation
- Special Populations

EARLY WARNING SIGNS

- Change in behavior
 - Irritability, restlessness, poor concentration, nervousness, social withdrawal, poor appetite, attention-seeking behavior, aggression and angry outbursts, lack of sleep (fatigue or sleepiness)
- Depends on the age of the child
- Early identification is key
- Liaise with parents to note if these changes also occur at home

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUPPORT

- Education around Covid-19 in an age appropriate manner
- Model behaviours
- Promotion of mental health through discussion around wellbeing
- Educating around prosocial behavior
- Encourage building social connections with peers
- Liaising with parents
- Referrals to appropriate mental health professionals as required



SECTION 2. The current Learning Environment and Challenges teachers might be facing presented by Dr Anne Govender

Learning environment refers to the diverse physical locations, contexts, and cultures in which students learn.

Since students may learn in a wide variety of settings, such as outside-of-school locations and outdoor environments, the term is often used as a more accurate or preferred alternative to classroom, which has more limited and traditional connotations - a room with rows of desks and a chalkboard, for example.

The term also encompasses the culture of a school or class - its presiding ethos and characteristics, including how individuals interact with and treat one another - as well as the ways in which teachers may organize an educational setting to facilitate learning...

The Glossary of Educational Reform, 29 August, 2014

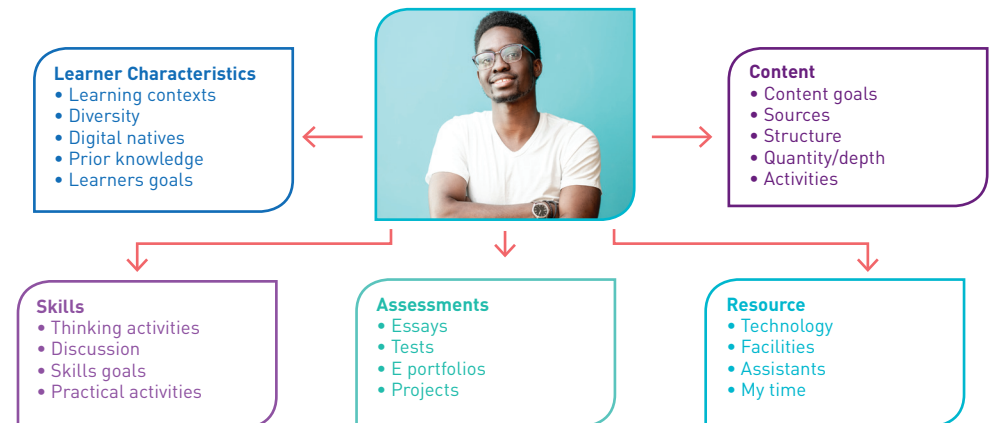
CHALLENGES TEACHERS MIGHT BE FACING

- Learners
- Subject Delivery
- School requirements & Ethos
- Outside elements

ACTIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

- Create and open dialogue in which students take on the role of the teacher and generate their own question about a topic, reading section or lesson.
- Encourage students to develop active listening skills by quizzing one another, sharing their thoughts and taking notes.
- Ask one or more students to take the opposing side of a predominant argument or point of view being discussed during a lesson.
- Deploy a range of strategies that have students instruct skills or explain concepts to classmates.
- Encourage students to actively listen to selected speakers who follow a pattern of guiding class discussion and summarizing previous points.

COMPONENTS OF AN EFFECTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



SECTION 3

A coping Toolkit for Teachers presented by Dr Diana De Sousa



SIGNS OF SECONDARY TRAUMATIC STRESS OR COMPASSION FATIGUE

Secondary traumatic stress can impact all areas of your life. The effects can range from mild to debilitating. If you think you might be at risk, be alert for any of the following symptoms:

- Emotional: feeling numb or detached; feeling overwhelmed or maybe even hopeless
- Physical: having low energy or feeling fatigued
- Behavioural: changing your routine or engaging in self-destructive coping mechanisms
- Professional: experiencing low performance of job tasks and responsibilities; feeling low job morale
- Cognitive: experiencing confusion, diminished concentration and difficulty with decision making; experiencing trauma imagery, which is seeing events over and over again
- Spiritual: questioning the meaning of life or lacking self-satisfaction
- Interpersonal: physically withdrawing or becoming emotionally unavailable to your co-workers or family

MANAGING ONGOING STRESS

Here are a few practical strategies to implement in the classroom or at home.

1. Create Boundaries

- Limit time spent on social media or talking/hearing about world events
- Maintain work-life boundaries
- Set aside specific time to spend on work tasks

2. How do I do this?

- **Space:**
"Ideal": Complete work tasks while in the school building.
"Real World": Use a dedicated space. If it is a shared space, add mental rituals to trigger mental awareness of the start and end of the day.
- **Distance**
Utilize phone features such as setting a timer
Place electronics in the other room if necessary
- **Advocacy**
Tell friends and family that you need breaks

from some topics and why
Complete a social media "inventory"

3. Managing with kids

- Plan breaks
- Cultivate independent learning
- Set realistic goals. Work in bursts.
- Create routines

4. Healthy Routines

- Some form of movement every day
- Spend time outside
- Sleep
- Identify what activities restore your energy
- Create structure

5. Connect with others

- **Schedule** activities to spend time with family and friends, even if over the phone or video
- **Search** for community or online forums for topics/activities that interest you
- **Express** gratitude – send brief messages to check in with those you value
- **Maintain** relationships with coworkers and continue small rituals from a "normal" school year

6. Control Circles

- **I can control**
 - My own family's routines
 - How I provide material to students
 - Limiting my social media/news consumption
 - Whether students complete their assignments
 - How I follow national Covid-19 recommendations
- **I can't control**
 - If others follow rules of social distancing
 - What happens in students' homes
 - Students' family situations
 - Predicting what will happen
 - How long this will last
 - My positive attitude

7. Can I widen the Circle of Control?

- **Resources**
Is there a recourse I can connect with (for myself or my family?)
- **Communication**
Speak with others about student strategies to self-care

- **Relate**
Continue or build relationships with family – create safe spaces
- **Let it go**
Focus on circle of control and strengthen what you can control

BRIEF RELAXATION STRATEGIES

1. Breathe

- Breathe in for 4 seconds
- Hold for 4 seconds
- Breathe out for 4 seconds
- Hold for 4 seconds

*There are other variations in terms of timing.

2. Grounding

- **See:** 5 things that you can see
- **Touch:** 4 things you can touch
- **Hear:** 3 things you can hear
- **Smell:** 2 things you can smell
- **Taste:** 1 thing you can taste

3. Can't think of these senses?

- This exercise can be used in a classroom setting
- **Pick a colour:** find everything in the room that is that colour
- **Pick an object:** count how many of that object you can find

- Find the alphabet: Look for an object in the room for each letter of the alphabet
- 4. The advantage of touch**
- **"Draw" your feet**
Imagine drawing a line on the ground around your feet and toes. Focus on the feeling of your seat.
- **Trace a shape**
Use your finger to trace a shape on your forearms, thigh, etc.
- 5. Count**
- Count backwards from 100
- Recite the alphabet backwards

SELF-COMPASSION

Many people will fall into the trap of believing they are a terrible person when mistakes are made. We can extend the same caring compassion as we would a friend, to ourselves.

Consider these questions:

- What would you say to a friend who is struggling or has made a mistake?
- What do you say to yourself?
- How/why are they different?
- What would you change if you would treat yourself as you would your friend?

SECTION 4

Mental Health Care Resources

- **The Counselling Hub:**
067 235 0019 info@counsellinghub.co.za
- **SADAG:** 0800 456 789 help@sadag.org
- **Lifeline:** 0861 322 322 safetalking@lifeline.org.za
- **FAMSA:** 086 641 6882
- **SACAP** blog



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