

UTICA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Students Supporting Students: Social Emotional Health and Wellness Guide

Why is it important for students to take care of themselves and others

Taking care of our emotional health will help us think more clearly, improve our relationships, boost creativity, and cope with adversity. When we take time to care for ourselves and each other, we can:

- Lower stress levels
- Improve your physical health
- Improve your sleep habits
- Have a more positive outlook
- Have the energy to understand and help others

What indicator signs students need to look for in other students

While it may be normal to experience some of these signs occasionally, you would be concerned if you noticed these behaviors are keeping someone from doing their day-to-day tasks/activities.

- Withdrawal from family/friends
- Preoccupation with death
- Obvious personality changes and serious mood changes
- Difficulties concentrating
- Difficulties in school (not wanting to attend/not turning in work)
- Change in eating habits or sleeping patterns.
- Tasks/activities.
- Loss of interest in fun activities
- Frequent complains about physical symptoms such as stomach aches, fatigue, headaches.
- Persistent boredom
- Loss of interest in things one cares about
- Frequent crying or irritability

What can you do to support another student

Share your observations with the other students

- Focus on being nonjudgmental, compassionate, and understanding.
- Use "I" instead of "you" comments to get conversation started
- I've noticed you're sleeping more. Is everything okay?
- I've noticed you have not been acting like yourself. Is something wrong?
- It makes me afraid to hear you talk like this. Let's talk to someone about it.

Help your friend build a positive, social support network

- Check-in regularly. Call or text your friend once or twice a week. Check in with them after their therapy appointments to see how things went. Let them know that you are there.
- Include your friend in your plans. Even if your friend doesn't always come, they will probably appreciate being included.
- Learn more about mental health conditions. Find out more about what your friend is going through, so you are better able to help in future situations.

Reach out to a trusted adult

- Involve others who can provide added support.
- Try to find someone who might be understanding of your friend's situation or be able to help.
- Your friend may feel cornered if you start involving others, so make sure to talk to your friend first.
- Here are some people you may consider reaching out to:
 - Friends and family
 - School teachers or counselors
 - Faith-based leaders
 - Coaches

**If it's an emergency,
call 911 and get
an authority figure.**

Offer your support

You cannot force someone to get help, so just do your best to be there with the student through their journey and be ready if and when they do finally reach out. It may be helpful to offer specific things that might be helpful such as:

- How can I best support you right now? Is there something that I can do or can we involve someone else?
- Can I help you find mental health services or support? Can I help you make an appointment?
- Can I help you with the stuff you need to get done until you feel better?
- Would you like me to go with you to a support meeting or group? Do you need a ride to any of your appointments?

Self-Care Suggestions for you and other students

- Maintain a daily routine in the morning (including breakfast) and evening (with a consistent and reasonable bedtime)
- Stay connected to others: Be creative with socially distanced activities where you can talk face-to-face with people, like Facetime, Zoom, etc. to maintain healthy relationships.
- Practice Gratitude: Write down 3-5 specific things you are grateful for each day—try to be specific.
- Engage in physical activity: Go for a walk, dance to your favorite song, practice yoga.
- Take technology breaks throughout the day: step away from your phone and/or computer.
- Be kind to yourself: Remember that nobody is perfect or happy all the time. It's okay not to be okay.
- Spread kindness: Send a kind email or text, help a neighbor, etc.

Better together

Laugh together

- During times of stress, it can feel like a struggle to find joy.
- It may even feel inappropriate or insensitive to have fun while we're also experiencing losses.
- But laughter can improve your mood, relieve stress and help your body and mind relax.
- So, try to make time for laughter every day—whether it's watching a funny video, checking out the latest memes or Facetimeing with a friend who always makes you laugh.

Practice mindfulness together

- Mindfulness practice can help you be more present and can be practiced in pairs or groups.
- It is focusing on what is happening now and taking in that moment, rather than replaying what happened in the past in your mind or worrying about something in the future.
- Mindfulness is about the now and noticing the moment you are in. It is recognizing the thoughts that come into your head without criticizing yourself for having them.

Resources

- Macomb County Community Mental Health (Mental Health Services & Resources)
<https://www.mccmh.net/> 1-855-996-2264
- Macomb County Crisis Line 24/7 (Crisis Counseling & Resources)
586-307-9100 or 1-800-442-HOPE 1-800-442-4673
- Macomb County Health Department (Health Services & Resources)
<https://health.macombgov.org/> (586) 469-5235
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline 24/7 (Talk and/or Chat Options)
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org> 1-800-273-8255
- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI)
<https://www.nami.org/home>
- The Trevor Project—LGBTQI Support
866-488-7386 or text "START" to 678678