

Mental Health Literacy - Frequently Asked Questions

For which grade level was this created?

- Middle and high school students, you may find content on the [OSPI Mental Health Literacy](#) webpage.

What do I do use to support elementary students?

- Social Emotional Learning (SEL) may be used to develop student skills. More information is found on the [OSPI Social Emotional Learning](#) webpage or the [Mental Health Instruction Library](#)

Is this content only for health education class?

- No, it may be used in more than health education classes but Mental Health Literacy has been proposed to be integrated into health education learning standards. This subject can be integrated into any classroom, advisory time or other classroom settings, the intent is to increase mental health awareness.

Are the learning units taught sequentially?

- Yes, the mental health literacy learning units are sequenced and should be taught in this order (Mental Health Competency, Mental Health Promotion, Mental Health Stigma, Mental Health Advocacy and Help Seeking). Please review **MHL Guidance** for more considerations for delivery of the topic.

Is there any guidance for delivering the lesson in class?

Yes, please review **MHL Guidance** for more considerations for delivery of the topic. There is also available professional development on the topic and more resources to explore the **webpage**.

Where do I find fact sheets?

- Each lesson includes links to the materials needed for delivering the lesson. It is encouraged to print out the materials, or make sure the students have access to the links.

Where do I find resource sheets?

- Please ask the school counseling office for any local resources that can be shared with the class.

Are there any extension activities for further learning on the topic?

- Currently, there is a list of resources on the [OSPI Mental Health Literacy](#) webpage.

What role do peer support programs or student-led initiatives play in MHL?

- Peer support programs and student-led initiatives help promote mental health literacy by making conversations feel more relatable and reduce stigma. Trained peer leaders can encourage help-seeking and model healthy coping strategies. While they don't replace professional support, these efforts create a supportive school culture where mental health is openly discussed.

Who in the school is responsible for follow-up mental health support?

- It is encouraged to ask the school counselor to participate in teaching the lesson and/or coordinate to have the school counselor be available for follow-up if necessary.

What training is available for staff on mental health literacy?

- On the [OSPI Mental Health Literacy](#) webpage, there is an introductory professional development training, with a 1-clock hour for Social Emotional Learning (SEL). You can also explore the resources for more training and guidance.

How can I encourage students to talk about mental health safely and respectfully?

- It begins by creating a classroom environment that promotes respect and empathy. Encourage open and honest conversations and self-reflection when possible for mental health check-ins. Please review **MHL Guidance** for more considerations for delivery of the topic.

What language should I use (or avoid) when discussing mental health with students?

- Language is important to appropriately setting the classroom as a supportive and non-judgmental environment. Encourage students to use "I" statements when speaking about their experiences. Use strength-based language, like focusing on how the student can manage their mental health instead of the consequences. It is important to use empathetic and person-first language instead of invalidating, labeling, overgeneralizing, or minimizing the student's experience.

Who do I contact for technical support and following questions

- Please visit [OSPI Mental Health Literacy](#) webpage for contact information and more direction on the topic. There are many resources to explore and professional development.

What if a student discloses a mental health challenge?

- Mental health literacy is not going to turn you into therapists or mental health professionals, so it is important to know your role going into this topic. Start off with validation for the student's experience and praise them for the strength they showed by sharing in a trusted space. Next, it is encouraged to assess the risk and follow school protocols as necessary. Make a referral and identify a follow-up person that can further support the student.

What should I do if a student's situation is emotionally affecting me?

- First off, it is normal to be impacted by students' mental health challenges. The best way to overcome this impact is to practice the mental health literacy content you are teaching. This content is not just for students. It is meant to also help teachers and school staff become more aware of mental health challenges and learn how to manage and seek help as needed.

How do I manage my own stress while supporting students with mental health needs?

- It is important to remember the mental health literacy content you are teaching to students. Mental health promotion and using protective factors to support your stress is most encouraged. You must care for your mental health to be supportive for others.