

The Three C's for Educators

Welcome to the 2024-2025 school year! NAMI has created the Three C's for educators to help you and your students feel supported to talk about mental health and wellness, identify how mental health impacts our emotions and behaviors, and overcome mental health challenges by connecting empathetically.

1 GET CURIOUS

There may be times in your classroom when a student is disconnected, exhibiting changes in behavior, but letting you know that “everything is fine.” You can explore a conversation with a student by getting curious about their emotions and understanding why the behavior is happening rather than focusing on it.

Students are more likely to connect with their feelings when they don't feel shame. You can overcome these feelings by:

- Avoiding yes/no questions
- Using language such as in the prompts

“I see you are putting your head down, and you've been doing that for two days. Why do you think that is happening?”

“Can you share with me how you are feeling when you (name specific behavior)“

“I've noticed you seem less interested in (name specific activity or activities). Can you share with me why you are not participating in (activity) lately?”

“It seems you are sadder on Mondays. Can you share with me why Mondays are a little harder for you? How can I help make them a little better for you?”

2 GET CONCRETE

Children can understand mental health symptoms better if they have concrete explanations and resolutions.

In the classroom, here are some actions you can take to support a student's mental health needs and encourage them to become more self-aware:

- Create a classroom mental health contract by using this guide to define what mental health means, what makes a teacher supportive, communication expectations, and where students can find support within the school and your classroom.
- Develop/incorporate a weekly wellness calendar full of activities to discuss mental health and support your classroom's mental health.

It's essential to highlight and celebrate when students act with resiliency. You can acknowledge proactive mental health habits by connecting with your students by asking the following questions.

- “I know the first semester can be really stressful getting adjusted to high school, you are under a lot of stress, and you've navigated the situation well. What are some things that are working for you?”
- I noticed you are glowing and joyous today. Would you like to share some things that are going well?”

Be mindful of potential triggers that can increase a student's stress and impact their mental health like changing/increasing academic pressures, peer pressure, major social events like dances, athletic pressures, bullying (including cyberbullying), holidays, weather/season changes, family situations, and world events.

3 STAY COMPASSIONATE

Remember to help your students feel seen, heard, and understood when talking about mental health and wellness.

Some tips to convey that you care:

- Try thanking your students for sharing with you how they feel
- Validate their feelings by saying phrases such as, “I hear you” and “we're in this together.”
- Avoid making assumptions about the experiences your student is sharing, or about the meaning the experience has for the student
- Practice active listening, without interjecting your own thoughts.
- Remain calm as students learn to understand their emotions.

