

**NAMI has created the Three C's for educators to help you and your students feel comfortable talking about mental health and wellness, identify how mental health impacts our emotions and to help 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 stating 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 trying to solve it.

Students are more likely to connect with their feelings when they don't feel shame. Therefore, avoid yes/no questions, and try the following prompts when you observe changes in behaviors and want to initiate a conversation:

- I see you have been putting your head down on the desk during class, and you've been doing that for two days. Why do you think that is?
- Tell me how it makes you feel when you (name specific behavior)?
- I've noticed you seem less interested in some of your favorite activities. Why do you think you're less interested?
- It seems you are sadder on Mondays. Let's explore, together, why that may be the case.

# 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 and what makes a teacher supportive, to articulate communication expectations and to share 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 are proactive in managing their mental health by asking the following questions.

- I know the first semester can be really stressful. You're adjusting 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?

# 3

**STAY COMPASSIONATE**

Remember to help your students feel seen, heard and understood when talking about mental health and wellness. Try thanking your students after they express how they feel and validate their feelings by saying things like, “I hear you” and “we're in this together.” Avoid making assumptions, practice active listening and remain calm as students learn to understand their emotions.

*Remember you can't pour from an empty cup. It's important to remain kind and patient with yourself as you care for your students. If you need additional tips or support NAMI's HelpLine is a great resource. Dial **1-800-950-NAMI (6264)** or text “HELPLINE” to 62640 to connect with someone Monday-Friday 10 a.m. – 10 p.m., ET.*

**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, athletic pressures, bullying (including cyberbullying), holidays, weather/season changes, family situations and world events.**