

Building a Trauma-Informed Classroom Community

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Today's Objectives

- What the data says about the youth mental health crisis facing educators
- Why prioritizing students' physical and emotional safety and well-being matters
- Techniques to empower students, manage behavior, and build a strong classroom community

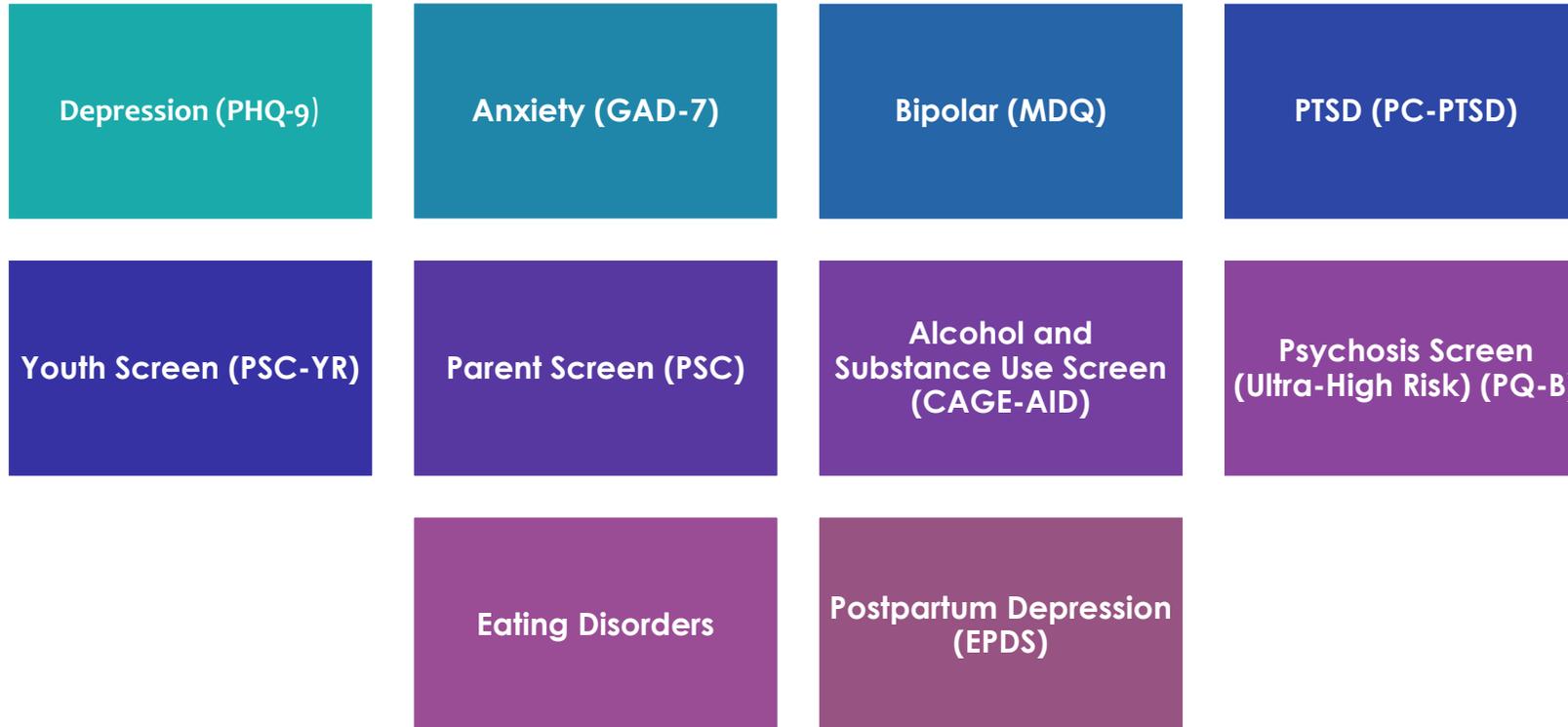
What is trauma?

- An emotional response to a distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms the individual's ability to cope
- Big 'T' trauma and little 't' trauma
- Trauma-informed classrooms lead to better outcomes for *all* students

What traumas are youth facing?

- COVID-19
 - Fear and confusion
 - Grief
 - Increased rates of abuse
 - Increased rates of substance use in the home
- Racial injustice
- School fears

MHA Screening (www.mhascreening.org): Over 10 Million Completed Screens



MHA Screening reflects the experiences of a help-seeking population that accesses mental health screening through www.mhascreening.org. We do not reach the entire population; therefore our numbers are likely to underreport the actual experiences of the population.

Throughout the pandemic, youth ages 11-17 were more likely than any other age group to score for moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety and depression.

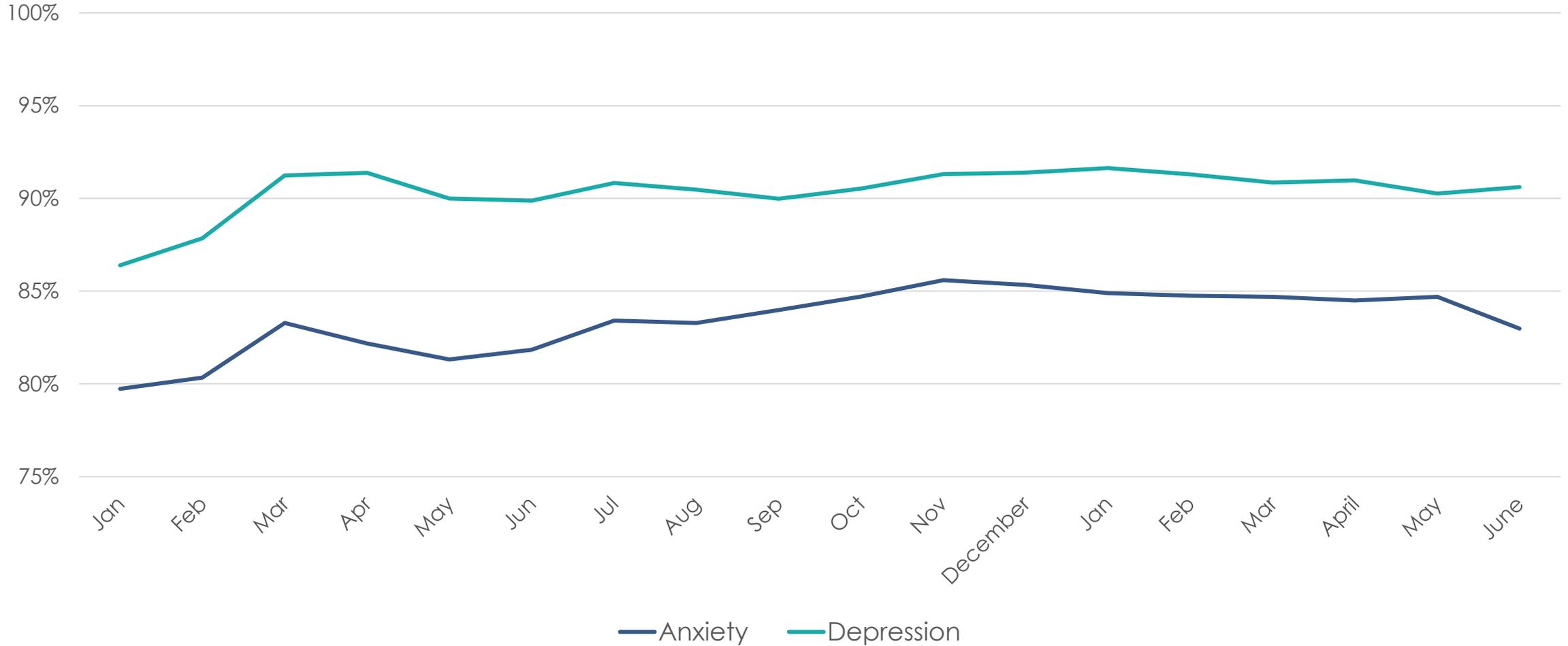


What the Data Tells Us

March 2020 – June 2021

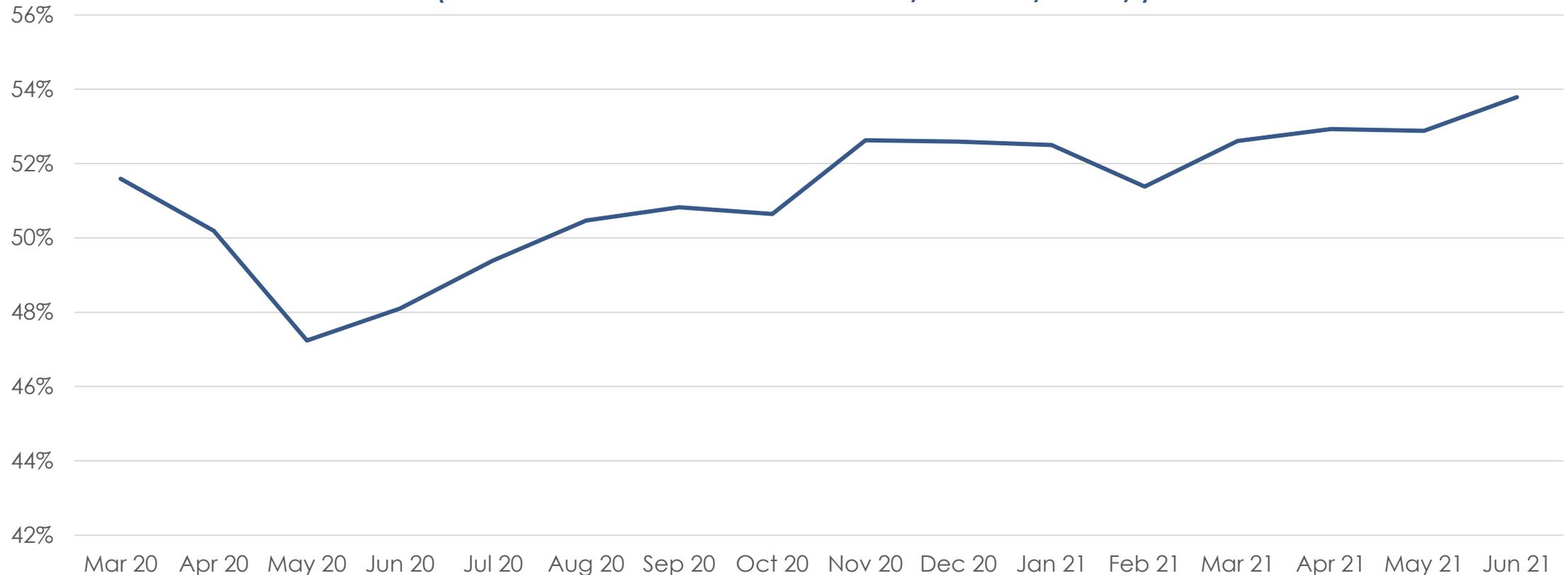
- Anxiety Screen: 83% of 11-17-year-olds scored for moderate to severe anxiety
- Depression Screen: over 90% of 11-17-year-olds scored for moderate to severe depression

Anxiety & Depression Among 11-17 Year Olds



Suicidal Ideation Among 11-17 Year Olds

Thoughts that you would be better off dead, or of hurting yourself
(more than half or nearly every day)



Conduct Measures

March 2020 – June 2021

Have trouble with teacher

41.6%
sometimes

16.6%
often

Are irritable, angry

35.9%
sometimes

60.8%
often

Do not listen to rules

50.9%
sometimes

17.6%
often

Main Factors Contributing to Youth Mental Health Challenges Right Now

Reason	Number of Respondents	Percent of Respondents
Loneliness or isolation	100,947	69.92%
Social life or relationships	88,488	61.62%
Difficulties at school (academics, learning)	62,549	43.08%
Past trauma	57,668	40.12%
Coronavirus	31,339	21.83%
Current events (news, politics, etc.)	26,946	19.31%
Grief or loss of someone or something	25,694	18.16%
Family's financial problems	18,631	13.25%
Being bullied	13,591	9.73%

N=147,461, scoring positive or moderate to severe May 2020 – June 2021,
 “Choose up to 3”

What Youth Are Saying

“academic expectations and pressure are too much”

“being trans and queer in an unsupportive household”

“I feel captive because of my toxic household. I want to escape so bad”

“days get longer, life gets more and more boring everyday... I just don't know what to do”

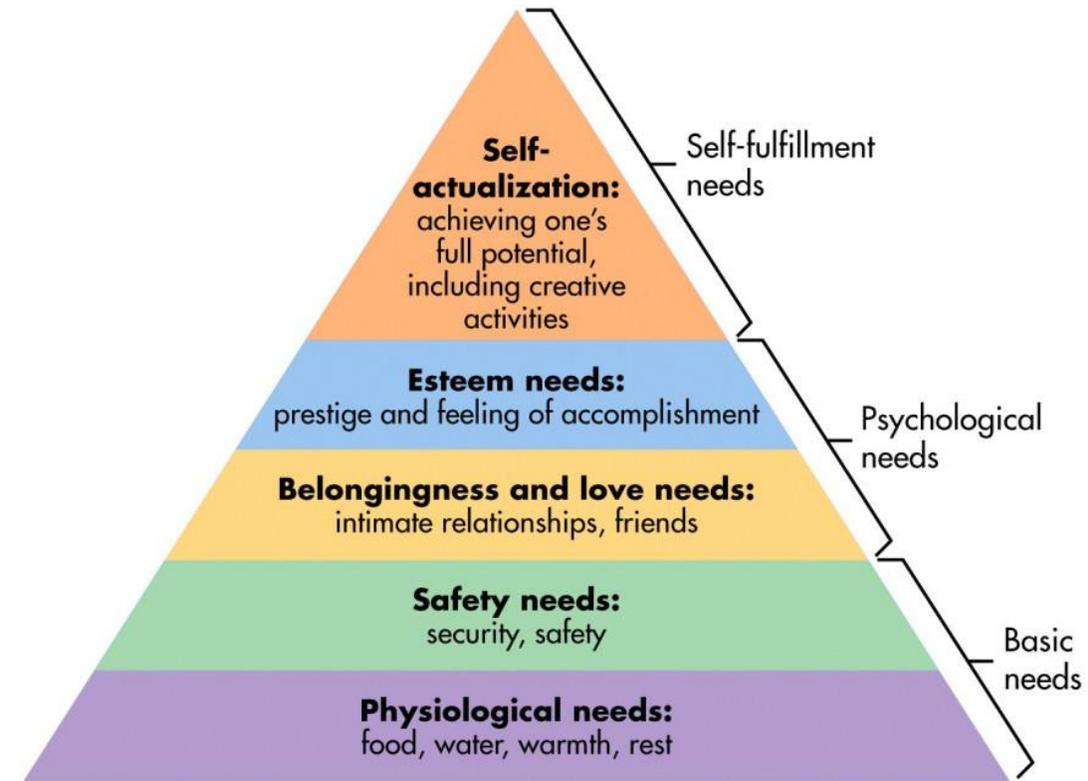
“I cause problems for no reason and do reckless things”

What We're Hearing From Parents

- 37% of parents who took the Parent Screen reported seeing conduct problems “often” in their child
- Social anxiety
- Separation anxiety
- Isolation

How does this play into the classroom?

- Basic needs *have* to be met before learning can occur
- Supportive space for healing and resiliency



Feeling Safe and Secure Matters

- Positive, stable relationships with adults can help child brain development
- For social-emotional development
- For academic performance

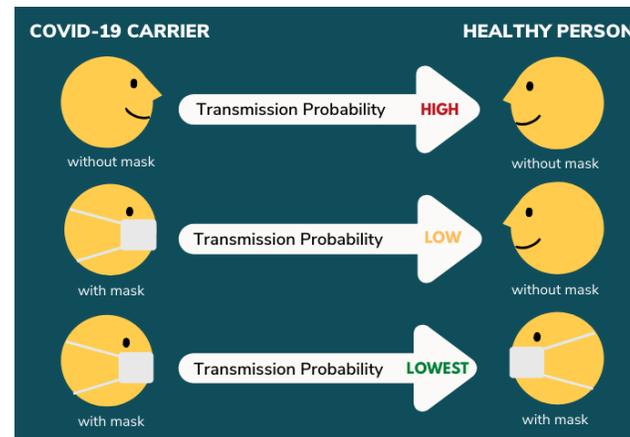
Building the Base

Show them how to be safe:

- Mask wearing
- Hand washing
- Distancing
- Bathroom procedures
- Other changes due to COVID

Help them feel safe:

- Schedule
- Consistency
- Calm
- We're in this together



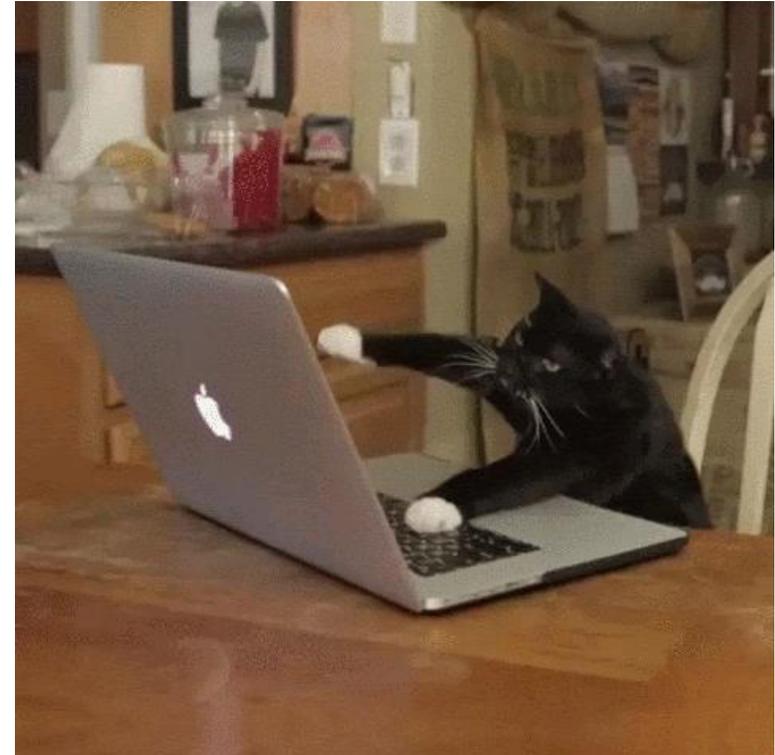
Relationships Matter



- Connect with families and students
- Developing trust
- Feeling valued
- Empowering students
- Dealing with discipline

Connecting with Students and Families

- Communicate early and often
- Positive connections
- Go out of your way



Value and Trust: Getting to Know Your Students

- Why? The more you know the better you can tailor conversations, interactions, and lessons to show you value them
- Get-to-know-you activities
- Time and space to share
- Peer support and encouragement
- Share about yourself
- Promote cultural awareness



Empower Students



- Let them make decisions
- Give them responsibility
- Give them choices
- Follow their lead

Positive Behavior

PeaceBuilders Pledge

Praise People

Give Up Put-Downs

Seek Wise People

Notice Hurts

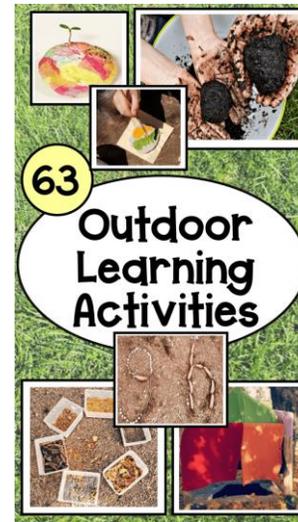
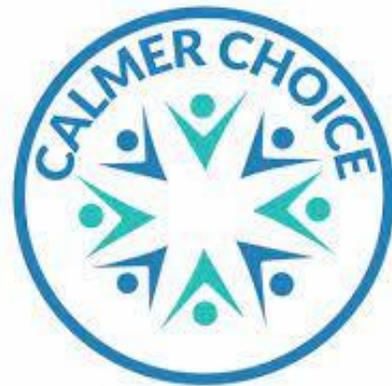
Right Wrongs

Help Others

I am a PeaceBuilder. I Pledge...

- To praise people
- To give up put-downs
- To seek wise people
- To notice and speak up about hurts I have caused
- To right wrongs
- To help others

I will build peace at home, at school, and in my community each day.

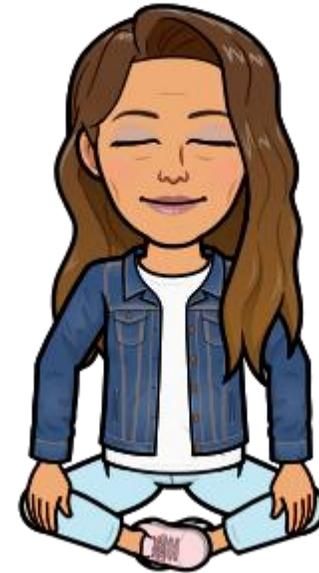


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Teachers

- Remain calm
- Have a process
- Rally your team
- Follow through



Students

- Take a break
- Talk it through
- Find a strategy/solution
- Right your wrongs



Additional Resources

2021 Back to School Toolkit: *Facing Fears, Supporting Students*

- <https://mhanational.org/backtoschool>

MHA Screening in Schools

- <https://screening.mhanational.org/mental-health-screening-in-schools>

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