

# 5 Tips for Adult Allies



## Five actionable steps for encouraging student engagement in mental health promotion and learning



### 01 Reflect on your position

#### Consider power dynamics

- Acknowledge the power differential between staff and students in your setting.
- Shift to work *alongside* students instead of *leading* them.
- Identify the unique strengths that students bring to mental health promotion and learning.



### 02 Unlearn to relearn

#### Commit to a continuous learning stance

- Seek out information to help you better work alongside diverse student populations.
- Do your best and use mistakes as an opportunity for growth.
- Be open to students' questions and ideas that may challenge your perspectives.



### 03 Create an inclusive, supportive space

#### Acknowledge and affirm the intersectional identities of all students

- Remember this is a student-centred space and they have a say in how it is constructed.
- Co-develop group norms and expectations that prioritize student safety.
- Ensure that physical spaces are accessible and welcoming.





## 04 Determine who is missing

### Representation strengthens student engagement initiatives

- Be intentional about recruiting a diverse group of students.
- Make a special effort to invite those who may be more disadvantaged and marginalized.
- Encourage students to contribute their own perspectives, not to speak for broad groups.



## 05 Set students up for success

### Resources for students should be accessible

- Ensure information/materials shared are youth-friendly and developmentally appropriate.
- Equip students with the necessary tools to effectively participate.
- Work with individual students to determine additional needed supports.

**Underpinning all of this is the responsibility you carry as an adult ally to support students' mental health while they engage in mental health promotion and learning initiatives at school.**

- Parents/guardians should be informed about their child's engagement in these activities, so they can provide needed support at home.
- It is important that you also have a good level of mental health literacy and know the pathways for mental health and cultural/faith-based support within your school, board and community.
- Helping students and their families towards needed services is part of the role of an adult ally, so it is good to have mental health service lists and helpline numbers on hand, just in case.

For more information on how to action these points, see [Your Role as an Adult Ally](#).

