

# PART 1: INTRODUCTION

## About the Guide

The Mental Health and High School Curriculum Guide (the Guide) is the only evidence based mental health curriculum resource that has been demonstrated to improve both teachers' and students' mental health literacy through usual teacher education and application in the classroom in a variety of program evaluations and research studies in Canada and elsewhere.\*

This version of the Guide has replaced the original version, has been rewritten with new materials added and has been updated to reflect Diagnostic and Statistical Manual V (DSM-5) nomenclature. The Guide is now available online with all components found in this book easily accessible using the password found on page 2. The online version of the Guide can be obtained at: <http://teenmentalhealth.org/curriculum/>.

Information about how to access training programs related to the use of the Guide can be found at: <http://teenmentalhealth.org/care/educators/school-mental-health-training-programs/>.

In addition to the online version and supporting materials for the Guide, the website <http://teenmentalhealth.org/> provides a rich repository of materials that can be used by educators and students alike in improving their understanding of mental health and mental disorders.

The Guide has been developed to help enhance the mental health literacy of students and targeted to be used in grades nine and ten (ages 13 to 15 years). This is the time of the lifespan in which the diagnoses of mental disorders begins to increase dramatically; it is thus essential that young people be able to have the knowledge, attitudes and competencies to help themselves and others if necessary. Mental health literacy is defined as having four components:

- 1) Understanding how to optimize and maintain good mental health
- 2) Understanding mental disorders and their treatments
- 3) Decreasing Stigma
- 4) Enhancing help-seeking efficacy (knowing when and where to get help and having the skills necessary to promote self-care and how to obtain good care)

The Guide helps prepare students for success in each of these domains. Educators using the Guide may wish to use additional information to supplement the resources described in the Guide or to increase their knowledge in youth mental health. While there are many mental health resources available, we recommend two that meet our standards of quality. These are: the handbook "When Something's Wrong: Strategies for Teachers" which can be found at: <http://healthymindscanada.ca/> and the classroom resource "Stop Wondering, Start Knowing" which can be found at: [www.keltymentalhealth.ca](http://www.keltymentalhealth.ca).

\*Reports of some of the program evaluations and research on the application of the Guide can be found online at: <http://teenmentalhealth.org/toolbox/>. Publications related to program evaluations and research on the application of the Guide available prior to June 2015 are listed in the section entitled Publications about the Guide (page 166).

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## Using the Guide

This section provides general information about the Guide and suggestions for its classroom application.

### Purpose:

The Guide is intended to be used by classroom teachers who have been trained in its application to enhance the mental health literacy of students in grades nine and ten (ages 13 to 15).

### Structure:

The Guide consists of both teacher preparation and classroom ready materials that can be easily accessed from the web at <http://teenmentalhealth.org/curriculum/> using the password found on page 2.

### The steps to implement the Guide are:

- Step 1)** Pre/Post-Quiz
- Step 2)** Teacher Knowledge Update
- Step 3)** Student Evaluation
- Step 4)** Modules

### Pre/Post Quiz:

The purpose of this component is to help facilitate self-study for the teacher prior to applying the Guide in the classroom. Taking the Pre-Quiz will help you identify areas in which your knowledge base needs enhancement. After taking the Pre-Quiz, keep a record of those questions that you have answered incorrectly. Then read the Teacher Knowledge Update and pay particular attention to finding the information related to the questions that you answered incorrectly. Upon reading the Teacher Knowledge Update, take the Post-Quiz. If you have answered any questions in the Post-Quiz incorrectly please return to the Teacher Knowledge Update and review the section(s) therein that relate to the questions you answered incorrectly. Once you have answered all Post-Quiz questions correctly please proceed to the Student Evaluation component.

### Teacher Knowledge Update:

The purpose of this component is to provide basic information about mental health and mental disorders that will help the teacher better apply the Guide resource in the classroom.

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## Using the Guide (cont.)

### Student Evaluation:

The purpose of this component is to provide teachers with a ready-made classroom test that can be used as part or all of their evaluation of their student's learning once the Guide (all modules) have been taught. It includes both knowledge and attitude questions which allow for teacher evaluation of both of these important dimensions of mental health literacy. It can be applied prior to the teaching of the Guide in the classroom and then repeated after the end of Module Six. This evaluation procedure will allow for a robust determination of student learning by comparing scores for each student across pre-and-post-applications. Alternatively, teachers may choose to apply the student evaluation only upon completion of the six modules and not compare pre-and-post-scores.

### Modules:

The purpose of this component is to provide teachers with classroom ready lesson plans, activities and easily accessible resources to assist them in applying the Guide. The six modules are designed to be taught in sequence. All modules have two sections: Core Materials and Supplementary Materials. The Core Materials are designed to be used for all students and are required to be taught in the classroom so as to achieve the outcomes identified in the research and evaluation of this resource. The Supplementary Materials are designed for use by students who want to spend additional time and effort to learn more about the module topic. Teachers are encouraged to use their discretion in the introduction of the Supplementary Materials in their classes. Teachers should familiarize themselves with BOTH the Core Materials and Supplementary Materials and decide if and how they will introduce the Supplementary Materials in their classrooms once the Core Materials have been taught.

Format of the modules:

As you review the modules, you will find that each one includes several key features:

- The Overview provides a summary of the module
- The Learning Objectives lists specific understandings or competencies students should derive from completing the modules
- The Major Concepts section presents the central ideas that the module is designed to address
- Teacher Background provides ideas about suggested information that should be reviewed prior to teaching the module to enhance your understanding of the content so that you can confidently facilitate class discussions, answer students' questions and provide additional examples and illustrations
- The Activities section provides details about classroom application

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- The Required Materials section provides resources needed to complete the activities in each module
- The In Advance section provides instructions for collecting and preparing materials required to complete the activities in the module
- Notes to Teachers appear as sidebars. Look here for information about issues that may need to be emphasized

## The Guide and Existing School Curriculum:

The Guide is not meant to replace existing school curriculum. It is meant to be a classroom resource applied by usual classroom teachers that can be used within existing curriculum frameworks to enhance the mental health literacy of both students and teachers. Research on various strategies in classroom application of the Guide has identified that optimal results can be obtained by: training teachers on how to apply the Guide in their classrooms, teaching the Guide as part of a curriculum component (within an appropriate subject area such as Health and Physical Education, Personal Development, Family Studies, etc.) and teaching the Guide as a block (six modules taught consecutively over a period of 8 to 12 hours). The modules were designed to each fit into 60 minutes of classroom time. Based on feedback from teachers and students however, Module Three of the Guide is the longest and most information intense module and may require more teaching time than other modules. We recommend that 1 1/2 to 2, fifty minute blocks be allocated to Module Three.

## Resources in the Guide:

The Guide provides the teacher with resources meant to engage the student in her/his learning, be interactive, experiential, to stimulate critical thinking and personal reflection and to help stimulate a search for greater knowledge. This resource includes printed materials, animated videos, PowerPoint presentations and web-downloadable materials. Interactive teaching tips and suggestions for guided discussion are also provided.

Teachers are free to use other resources that they think will be appropriate. However, some resources are more reliable and accurate than others, therefore we have created the “Chair Certified Resource” committee to suggest content valid resources for teachers to use in the classroom. These resources have undergone extensive professional review and are known to be both up-to-date and consistent with best available scientific knowledge. They are periodically updated, and posted on the website. The developers of the Guide do realize that there are other sources of information about mental health and mental disorders available and have identified some credible and trustworthy websites in the section “Further Resources and Information about the Guide”. We suggest that teachers use the Guide resources as they appear in each module and supplement these with other materials obtained from those websites that we have identified to ensure as much as possible that valid and appropriate information is used in the classroom.

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## Using the Guide (cont.)

Some of the modules lend themselves to the use of resources from outside the classroom or the school. For example, in-school student services professionals (such as psychologists or social workers) or health and human services professionals from community agencies (such as physicians, psychologists, social workers, substance abuse specialists, etc.) may be able to add invaluable input into what students are learning (for example, in Module Five addressing help-seeking). In some schools, organized speakers from credible organizations (for example, the Canadian Mental Health Organization) may be available to provide additional inputs. Teachers choosing to employ these resources should ensure that the person addressing the class belongs to a responsible and credible organization or institution and that the presenter understands what the goals and expected outcomes of their presentation are meant to be.

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## Reviewing the Guide

Module	Major Concepts
<b>Module 1:</b> The stigma of mental illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stigma acts as a barrier to people seeking help for mental health problems and mental illness.</li><li>• Learning the facts about mental illness can help dispel misconceptions and stigma.</li><li>• People's attitudes about mental illness can be positively influenced by exposure to accurate information.</li><li>• We all have a responsibility to fight the stigma associated with mental illness.</li></ul>
<b>Module 2:</b> Understanding mental health and mental illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Everyone has mental health regardless of whether or not they have mental illness.</li><li>• The brain controls our thinking, perceptions, emotions, physical activities, behaviour and provides us with cues about how to adopt our environment (signaling).</li><li>• A mental illness is a health condition arising from changes in usual brain functioning that causes that person substantial difficulty in functioning.</li><li>• Mental illnesses have complex causes that include a biological basis and are therefore not that different from other illnesses. As with all illnesses, the sooner people obtain effective treatment for mental illness, the better their outcomes.</li></ul>
<b>Module 3:</b> Information on specific mental illnesses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All mental illnesses reflect difficulties in: thinking, perception, emotions, physical activities, behaviour and signaling.</li></ul>

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Module	Major Concepts
<b>Module 3 (cont.):</b> Information on specific mental illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The exact cause of mental illnesses is not yet known, but complex interactions between a person's biology and his/her environment are involved.</li><li>• Like illnesses that affect other parts of the body, mental illnesses are treatable and the sooner people receive proper treatment and support, the better the outcomes.</li></ul>
<b>Module 4:</b> Experiences of mental illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mental illnesses are diseases that affect many aspects of a person's life.</li><li>• With appropriate support and treatment, most people with a mental illness can function effectively in everyday life.</li><li>• Getting help early increases the chances that a person will make a full recovery from mental illness.</li><li>• Mental illnesses, like physical illnesses, can be effectively treated.</li></ul>
<b>Module 5:</b> Seeking help and finding support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• There are many ways of seeking help for mental health problems and mental illnesses, and resources are available within schools and within the community.</li><li>• Knowing the signs and symptoms of mental illness helps people know how to distinguish the normal ups and downs of life from something more serious.</li><li>• Recovery from mental illness is possible, when a range of supports, beyond formal treatment, are available.</li><li>• Everyone has mental health that can be supported and promoted, regardless of whether or not they also have a mental illness.</li></ul>
<b>Module 6:</b> The importance of positive mental health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Positive coping strategies can help everyone maintain and enhance their mental health.</li><li>• There are skills and strategies that we can learn to help us obtain and maintain good mental health.</li></ul>