Featured

>*Strengthening social connections among peers*

>*TikTok as a public health tool?*

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

For discussion and interchange:
>*Strengthening social connections among peers*

Whether or not they formally emphasize social and emotional development, every school has goals for enhancing students' personal and social functioning as essential to holistic development. Peer relationships are an especially important facet of this in general and because of the role of social connections in fostering academic engagement. See the recent *study* suggesting that "...experiencing relational peer victimization during the beginning of the school year (fall) negatively predicts teacher reported academic engagement towards the end of the school year (spring)."

Tips for Promoting Positive Peer-to-Peer Relationships

1. Teach students positive social interactions daily during large group activities.
   Any group time in class usually provides good opportunities to take a few minutes to teach these skills. Selected skills are taught by
   - Explaining the skill,
   - Demonstrating the correct way to use it,
   - Demonstrating an incorrect way and letting students figure out what step was missing,
   - Letting a student practice a skill with an adult,
   - Letting a student practice a skill with another student,
   - Providing positive feedback and attention on the use of the skills, and
   - Refresh the skill (or provide "boosters") by repeating the skill in later situations.

   A few basic target social skills are
   >Getting a friend's attention, >Sharing belongings or work tasks,
   >Asking peers to share, >Providing an idea to a peer,
   >Saying something nice to a friend, and >Working things out.

2. Monitor class time for naturally occurring, positive peer social interactions. Actively move around the classroom, interact with students during activities, and look for students who are using the targeted social skills. Be ready to provide assistance, support, and direction to promote successful peer interactions among students.
   Provide cueing as needed by reminding students to
   >Work together,
   >Share with their friends, and
   >Be persistent.

3. Provide additional assistance to students, as needed, to ensure that peer social interactions are successful, for example
   - Model the appropriate behavior,
   - Give specific verbal cues (e.g., "remember to tap him on the shoulder"),
   - Provide physical assistance, and
   - Create opportunities for students to talk about how to have friendships.

4. Affirm students who are using targeted social skills with positive feedback and attention. Offer encouragement or support.

Adapted from Bovey, T., & Strain, P. (n.d.). *Promoting positive peer social interactions*

For more on this, see

A Systematic Review of Intervention Programs Promoting Peer Relationships Among Children and Adolescents

Excerpt: "...Overall, intervention developers and practitioners should be clear about realistic peer relationship goals of their intervention efforts. This review showed that preventive programs and selective interventions targeting self-beliefs or mental health factors bear the potential to decrease loneliness. Programs for a clinical population targeting social skills bear the potential to increase number of play dates, perceived acceptance and sociometric status. However, contrary to intuitive expectations of peer relationship programs, friendship quality was not a prominent outcome and hardly improved. Especially strong peer relationships such as friendships, measured by quality aspects such as support, intimacy and trust are far more complex and might take longer to develop. ...

Practitioners should be aware of the importance of family support and at-home practice to ensure transfer and sustainability of skills, as evident from high peer relationship effects related to homework and parental involvement. While parental involvement was previously identified as important intervention component for clinical and at-risk populations, this review's results suggest it is also crucial for preventive programs...

Intervention developers and practitioners need to put their target population's needs in the center of each intervention effort. For preventive efforts, peer relationships seem to improve alongside mental wellbeing and self-concepts, especially when starting at a young age. Intervention programs addressing peer problems or victimization have been shown to be most effectively addressing loneliness by focusing on metal wellbeing and self-concepts. Focusing on a clinical population, peer relationships were improved alongside social skills, emotion regulation and managing symptoms. Additionally, a close alignment of intervention methods and desired effects is essential, such as practical activities and homework to train emotion regulation and social skills or self-awareness tasks to address mental wellbeing...."

Don't you hate peer pressure?

I used to until my friends convinced me to join in.

For discussion and interchange:

>TikTok as a public health tool?

With the rapid accelerating advances in artificial intelligence, a brave new world has emerged for addressing barriers to learning and teaching and reengaging disconnected students.

>*There is much to learn and share about technological interventions.*
>*And given the controversies, there is much to discuss.*

Here's an example:

From: ***Harnessing Youth Engagement With Mental Health: TikTok and Its Potential as a Public Health Tool***

"...national news outlets have reported on the worrisome trend of self-diagnosis of mental health disorders via TikTok....what makes self-diagnosis based on TikTok different?.. the large quantity of content coupled with an adaptive algorithm that tailors videos to the individual, allowing for repeated thematic exposure, leads teens to believe that certain diagnoses are more prevalent than they are. From a developmental perspective, the condensed visual aspect of TikTok captivates teens as they develop their identity in a way that pre-existing Internet search content could not. ...

   A subset of youth accessing mental health TikTok content are suffering and embracing an easily accessible, relatable source—albeit flawed—of mental health education. These youth may be using mental health content to self-diagnose as a way of explaining distressing experiences. Social networking sites have shown promise as platforms for mental health education and intervention in youth. The sheer number of users engaging with mental health TikTok content presents an unprecedented public health opportunity, and our field needs to harness the mental health engagement that adolescents bring through TikTok. ...

   Our role as providers is to validate, diagnose, de-pathologize, and treat. As we discuss diagnoses and our assessments, we recommend praising youth for their initiative to understand their mental health through their own research and by coming to see a provider. We also recommend validating any confusion about their diagnosis, emphasizing how difficult it can be to accurately diagnose mental health disorders, and defining our role as their clinician who does just that. Importantly, we also highlight the sociocultural context of the challenges that youth are facing to normalize discomfiting aspects of the human experience that they may be over-pathologizing. The relatability of TikTok videos describing this human experience may further compound the tendency to over-pathologize. For example, it is not pathological to feel distress at the uncertainty, loss of social connection, and rapid change of societal norms experienced by many people during the pandemic.

   New technology brings unique challenges. Thankfully, the tools that we have as mental health providers will be invaluable in channeling our patients' and families' engagement with TikTok and social media into positive clinical experiences. New technology also brings unique opportunities. ...

   Local and national organizations should capitalize on TikTok's reach. Individual prominent institutions, state departments of health, and national organizations ... could partner with existing TikTok champions to produce high-quality, curated content toward anti-stigma, psychoeducation, and even intervention goals. Local branches could help tailor content to local populations and their needs. These partnerships would bolster existing psychoeducation and anti-stigma campaigns.

   Even with the guidance of professional organizations, content creators and consumers must be mindful of the limitations of public mental health education through a platform such as TikTok. Although social media content can be educational and validating, there is the potential for misinterpretation by youth that could cause confusion and distress, given the inability to discuss questions and concerns that may arise with a mental health professional in real time....

   Technological platforms evolve rapidly, and the clinical and public health lessons that we learn from TikTok will likely be applicable to new social media platforms as they arise. As providers, we can harness the power of TikTok day to day, and as a field we can use it as a tool to scale our impact exponentially."

For more on the above topic, see

>Links to a few other relevant shared resources

When Are Kids Ready for Social Media?

Back to School—Obstacles to Educating K-12 Students Persist

Improving teamwork in multidisciplinary cross-sector teams

Academic Expectations and Well-Being in School Children

Principal Attrition and Mobility

Promoting Racial/Ethnic Identity in Child and Adolescent Mental Health Treatments

The Effects of Mentoring Programs on Emotional Well-Being in Youth

Millions of kids are missing weeks of school as attendance tanks across the US

National Equity Landscape of State Exclusionary Discipline Policies Across Pre-K–12 Contexts

State(s) of Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education: Looking at Equity

A Few Upcoming Webinars

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – **https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm**
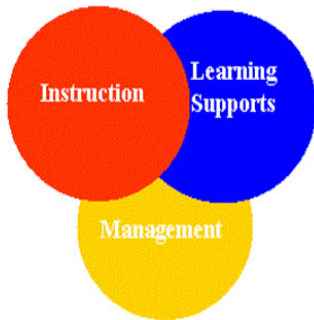
8/23 Strategies for School and District Leaders
8/24 How can schools get students back to class
8/24 Addressing tough topics
8/25 Creating professional cultures
8/25 Learning mental health through film
8/29 Elevating Professional Development
8/29 McKinney-Vento 101: Basic Requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act
8/30 Bullying and discriminatory harassment differences
8/31 Social determinants of mental health
9/5 Clinical applications of cultural elements
9/12 Starting the School Year with a Focus on Well- Being
9/12 Organizational well being in schools
9/19 Newcomer school supports

For information about the
National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports
go to https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

UPDATE ON MAUI

Displaced Maui students need touchstones – While most Maui schools will opened for the 2023-24 school year, King Kekaulike High, Princess Nahienaena Elementary, Lahaina Intermediate and Lahainaluna High schools have been damaged and are closed until "it is safe to return." These closures affect nearly 3,000 students, 300 faculty and staff. The Department of Education (DOE) has formed an "internal response team" to coordinate resources and plan for next steps. These include a dedicated phone line for questions from those affected by the Maui fires, along with both in-person and telehealth counseling/mental health services. Teachers and their union have called for keeping the Lahaina community together, perhaps by placing portable classrooms in a safe, alternative location.

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND
INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

For new sign-ups – email Ltaylor@ucla.edu

Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.

**We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange
on our website at https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm
and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/)**