

everyone will be writing something, students will feel safe to ask. If possible, keep the Question Box available so that students can ask any questions that arise later.

- Remember that you can always revisit a topic at a later date if you discover a better way to answer a question.
- Provide students with specific instructions for accessing resources and support. For example, contact local health authorities to get current phone numbers and websites for resources, or show students how to get to the closest resources on foot, by bus, and so on.

Resources to Consider

The following resource links provided below are to assist educators in accessing clinical information that is the most current, accurate, and credible. All information comes from HealthLink BC – a government funded telehealth service.

- [Safer Sex | HealthLink BC](#)
- [Sexually Transmitted Infections | HealthLink BC](#)
- [Preventing Sexually Transmitted Infections \(STIs\) | HealthLink BC](#)

For questions and/or information on the types of STIs and their prevalence in BC for certain ages of students, it is recommended educators use the [BCCDC Reportable Diseases Dashboard](#).

For information on how to access free STI testing:

- [Clinics & Testing | SmartSex Resource](#)
- [GetCheckedOnline \(bccdc.ca\)](#)

Supporting Student Health: Mental Health

Notes on language

- Introduce all aspects of health: mental, physical, social, sexual. Make the connection between *physical* health and *mental* health.
- Suggest to students that taking care of their mental health is just as important as taking care of their physical health because the two things work together.
 - Use this opportunity to discuss stigma as it relates to mental illness. For example, people aren't embarrassed to seek help from a doctor when their leg is broken; but if someone thinks



they will be judged for struggling with anxiety or depression, it's like walking on a broken leg because they are embarrassed to seek the help they need to recover.

- Remember to model the use of appropriate language in your classroom and encourage students to do the same. For example, using words and expressions like “crazy,” “just get over it,” or “don’t be so sensitive” can be hurtful and perpetuate stereotypes.
- Clarify the differences between chronic mental health issues and day-to-day stressors.
 - Discourage students from casually using expressions like “I’m so depressed – I didn’t get to see the movie I wanted” or “I was so bored – I wanted to die.” Remind students that this can be very hurtful for people who truly struggle with those feelings.
- Students can express themselves in many different ways. Be aware of your responsibilities around disclosure in relation to potential issues like student self-harm. If you have concerns about a student, speak to your school counsellor.

Daily classroom practices

- Create a safe and welcoming learning space.
- Use a Social Emotional Learning framework in your class. Try to create a sense of belonging and mutual respect among your students.
- Focus on strengths.
 - Since adolescents are striving for independence, a focus on strengths resonates with them because it inspires empowerment and agency in relation to health.
 - There is plenty of research that points to the importance of focusing on mental health, as opposed to mental illness, to enhance psychosocial strengths, competencies, and ability to access resources. A narrow focus on mental illness isn’t enough. Students need to develop strategies for coping with adversity, and to increase their awareness and use of resources
- Don’t underestimate the power of physical activity. Incorporate strategies such as various breathing techniques into your daily classroom practice. Take brain breaks. Move desks aside and do some movement, if possible. Allow students to self-regulate and get fresh air or exercise as needed.

- *Counsellors play an important role in supporting students’ mental well-being in a one-to-one setting. But collaborating with counsellors and having them do lessons with the whole class can also be hugely beneficial for students. Talk to the school counsellor about co-teaching – specifically about strategies for coping with difficulty.*
- *All students may need to use these strategies to cope in times of difficulty.*
- *When all students learn these strategies, they may be more likely to know the signs of distress, ask for support when they need it, and support one another.*

Follow-up

- If you are unsure about whether to refer a student to a school counsellor, talk to the counsellor.
- Provide students with specific instructions for accessing resources and support. For example, contact local health authorities to get current phone numbers and websites for resources, or show students how to get to the closest resources on foot, by bus, and so on.

Topic: Body Image

Considerations

- Body image is the mental picture that people have about their body. This includes both how they perceive their own body and how they think other people view their body.
- Most people have things about their own bodies that they might like to change. Not being completely happy with aspects of your body is perfectly natural and not necessarily unhealthy.
- Unhealthy body image can be caused by pressure to meet perceived societal expectations or pressure related to participation in activities. For example, people involved in sports can feel pressure to stay very thin or muscular.
 - While it may seem unhealthy to others, being involved in competitive sports may require people to commit to a strict diet and training regimen.
- Body image can be unhealthy when there is a large gap between someone's self-perception and reality.
 - For example, students may look thin to others but see themselves as overweight, potentially leading to eating disorders.
- Gender identity can also influence body image. Some people may feel pressure to conform to societal expectations related to masculine or feminine characteristics.
- While it is important to help students feel comfortable in their bodies, they also should not be discouraged from having a healthy diet and exercising.

Instructional strategies

Strategies to support you in covering this topic with your students could include the following:

- Discuss body image and have students brainstorm about what they think body image represents.
- Talk about the role that the media plays in shaping body image.
 - Remind students that many of the photos we see have been airbrushed and photoshopped. You can tie this in with the modelling industry and how new