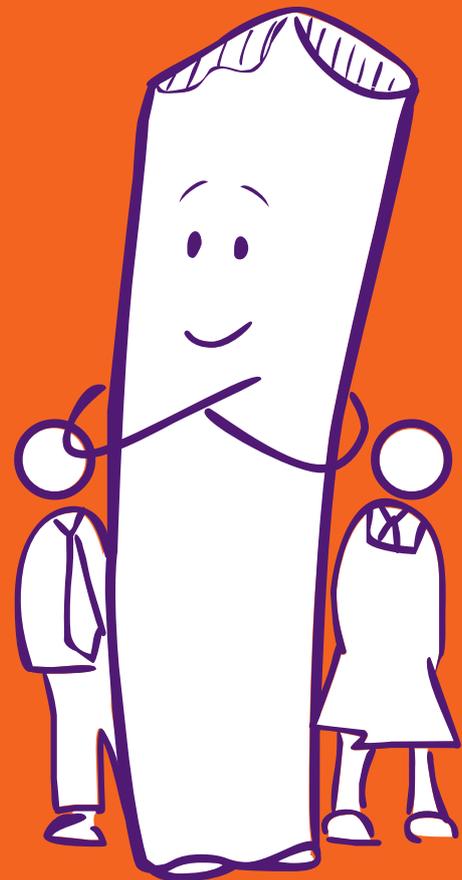
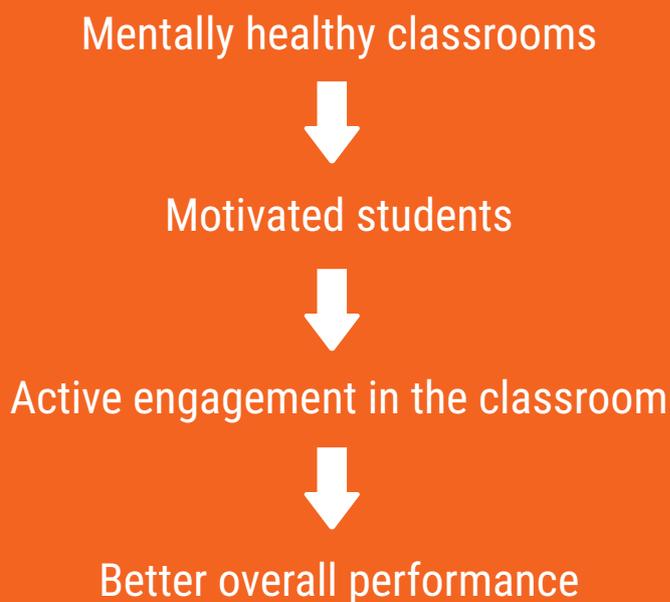




# What is a teacher's role in student mental health?

The school environment influences how students feel about themselves and how they experience stress around them. As a teacher, you spend a lot of time interacting with students. This puts you in a significant position to aid in their emotional wellbeing and help create mental health friendly classrooms.



Your interaction with students gives you the advantage of observing sudden changes or unusual behavior that is not in keeping with their usual demeanor. Being aware of these changes can help in early intervention and course correction through appropriate support and care.

# How do you start a conversation with your students?

Your students are likely to approach you when they are in need of help. It is very important to understand why the student is facing difficulty. You need to be empathetic towards them but also have set boundaries. Be sure not to label the student, especially using diagnostic terms.

## Providing emotional first aid as a teacher



Listen actively



Refer for professional help



Express empathy



Maintain confidentiality\*



Avoid judging

### Open conversations by asking general questions

Sometimes the student may be in denial or may not open up to you at all. In such situations, leave them alone and observe them for a few more weeks, before approaching them again. Remember, you cannot coerce a student into sharing their problems.

You seem a bit preoccupied these days. Is everything okay?



*\*If the student is at risk, you may break confidentiality to inform someone who is in a position to ensure their safety.*

Emotional regulation is a person's ability to recognize, understand, and respond to things happening around them. Since you spend a considerable amount of time with your students, you can also talk about emotional regulation in classrooms but first, it is a good idea to ensure you are able to emulate emotional regulation yourself. You can start by being aware of your own emotional triggers and how you express yourself to students in your classroom.

## How can you work on emotional regulation in the classroom?



In a high stress classroom situation, like the announcement of exam results, talk to the students about various emotions they may experience; do this in a positive, open, and non-judgmental manner.

It's good to ask questions to help the students express themselves. You don't need to give them advice.

### Questions you can engage students with:

- **What** are you feeling right now?
- **What** would you like to feel instead?



Don't blame students for the way they are feeling. Doing this will only add more negative feelings and will hinder their ability to manage their emotions.

# What to keep in mind?

- Establish yourself as a mental health friendly teacher – this can be done by having open conversations in your classroom, demonstrating non-judgemental behavior, and using visual aids to destigmatize mental health.
- Create a safe classroom environment, one where every student is valued for who they are. It is important that you view the student in an objective manner and without any bias, based on academic records or personality.
- In cases where students have high levels of distress, refer them to professionals for further intervention. Students can access help from a school counselor, or a service provider outside the school like a psychologist or a psychiatrist.
- Remember to focus on your self-care as well. Be aware of your stressors and actively seek help if needed. Consider professional intervention if your distresses interfere with your daily functioning.



## Helplines

### **iCall**

022 25521111

### **Parivarthan**

+91 7676602602

### **Sneha India**

044 24640050

### **AASRA**

022 27546669

### **Fortis School Mental Health Program**

+91 8376804102

You can also check if your state runs a helpline

