

Tips for Encouraging Good Mental Health while Attending High School or Middle School

It's not always easy to thrive at school, whether it's middle or high school, but remember that you can only do your best, and only you know what your personal best is. Please make sure to read these tips and watch the videos to learn how to take care of your mental health, so you can be your best self!

1. **Be Assertive:** This can be hard and it takes practice but it's the best communication style! This means being clear about what your needs are and saying what you really mean.

For example you may say;

- a. **I feel** frustrated **when you** laugh about my worries.
- b. **I need** you to listen to my fears and offer support.

(**Good tips here:** [5 Tips to Make Assertive Communication Easier and More Effective](#))

2. **Positive self-talk:** Try telling yourself positive messages in moments of stress.

For example;

- a. I can do this!
- b. I've got this!
- c. All I can do is try my best!

Be encouraging and kind to yourself.

(Check this out: [Hailey Hultberg TEDXYouth](#))

3. **Work on your negative self-talk:** A helpful acronym is A.B.R.A:

Acknowledge your negative feelings

Breathe deeply

Release what you don't want by exhaling it away

Align by creating a saying about who you are and what you are working towards.

([Jim Kwik: How to End Negative Self-Talk](#))

4. **Recognize that we all have mental health:** Educate yourself and your friends about the difference between mental health and physical health because they are both important! We all have brains **AND** bodies to take care of, so remember that when we have more overwhelming feelings, it is really important to seek help.

([Anna Freud Society: We All Have Mental Health](#))

5. **Stand up for your peers:** Don't be a bystander in a bullying situation. It only takes one person to stand up, take action and say: "Hey! Stop! The way you are talking to this person is not okay, so back off!"

If you feel safe, then you can be that person who makes a difference.

[\(Story-One by Kathryn Otoshi\)](#)

6. **Establish goals:** A good framework to do this is the acronym S.M.A.R.T:

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Relevant

Time framed

For example, sometimes it can be hard to get to school when struggling with your mental health, so why not set a goal to attend 18 out of 20 school days a month, to allow yourself a mental health day when needed? This can be helpful to increase your attendance. Talk to your parents and friends about supporting you in attaining your goals and celebrate with a reward when you have accomplished them.

[\(Quick clip to explain: S.M.A.R.T\)](#)

7. **Exercise:** Pay attention to your body and what type of exercise makes you feel good afterward. For some people, it can be sports where they can take out their aggression through boxing, kicking a ball, or hitting a home run. For others, it may be yoga, dance, gymnastics, or karate. Find what you actually like and go from there.
[\(Exercise and mental health\)](#)

8. **Advocate for your needs:** This means taking action for yourself such as talking to your school counsellor about helping you speak up about your mental health needs. Together, you can come up with a list of your 'do's and don'ts' for communication. For example, figure out the words that trigger you versus the words that you find helpful and supportive.

Your school counsellor can even share this information with your family if you think it might be helpful. They also can help you talk to your teacher about ways to help you when you are feeling anxious, angry, or upset.

[\(Tales from a teenage mental health advocate\)](#)

9. **Follow celebrities that talk about mental health:** A couple of the Stigma-Free Society's favorites are the former wrestler, movie producer and actor, Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson and pop singer Demi Lovato. Also, several NHL teams have players that have spoken about mental illness from Hockey Talks. These people are so inspiring.

[\(Tyler Motte from the Vancouver Canucks Hockey Talks\)](#)

10. **Take time for self-care & ask for help when you need it:** Take a break from school work, or overwhelming tasks by doing something you enjoy! This might be taking a bath, calling a friend, painting your nails, playing a sport, journaling, nature

walk, drawing, etc. We can't always be on the go and sometimes we just need to chill out.

[\(Self-care in middle school\)](#)

[\(Self-care in high school\)](#)

It is fairly easy to read these tips, but putting them into action will take some effort! If you choose to tackle one Tip today, then you may be encouraged to try more on another day. You are the number one person who can truly take care of you, and remember that your mental health is super important. You can do this and you are not alone.