

# 1

## INTRODUCTION TO MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT IN THE CLASSROOM



2 hours 35 minutes



Ball, paper, markers and pens, flipchart, notebooks for all participants to be used as Classroom Wellbeing Portfolios, Handout 1: Parachute Activity, Handout 2: Guiding Principles for Play-based MHPSS in the Classroom




By the end of this module, you will be able to:

- Identify the purpose of the training session on mental health and psychosocial support principles in learning environments
- Define the guiding principles of the training
- Describe the overall training agenda and timetable.





## Introduction

 30 minutes

 Ball (or papers and pens), notebooks for all participants to be used as Classroom Wellbeing Portfolios

 Standing in a circle

- ➔ Welcome participants to the training. Introduce yourself, including your name and title, and any relevant experience.
- ➔ Explain that to introduce themselves, participants will play a game of “toss ball”, where they each introduce themselves with their name, where they are (if remote), and one strategy they’ve been using to promote wellbeing in themselves or their students.
- ➔ Invite all participants to stand in a circle. First, introduce yourself, then toss the ball to another participant to introduce themselves. Continue by tossing the ball until everyone has introduced themselves. After everyone has had a turn, invite the group to toss the ball in reverse order and together say each person’s name as the ball is tossed to them.
-  Invite participants to imagine they’re tossing a ball to the next person to introduce themselves.

- ➔ Thank everyone for introducing themselves. Explain that this helps to set the foundation for the training sessions and build trust among participants. This is important with students at all levels to create a safe and trusting space.
- ➔ Display the agenda and training goals, which are:
  - to identify the impacts of the crisis on their students and themselves, and how these may manifest differently
  - to develop strategies to promote wellbeing and deal with distress in their students, their classrooms and themselves.
- ➔ Invite a participant to read the goals aloud.
- ➔ Explain the training agenda.
- ➔ Hand out notebooks to be used as Classroom Wellbeing Portfolios and markers/art supplies to all participants. Explain that the portfolios are for them to write down any strategies or ideas they think are important. At the end of each session, there will be time to reflect and write in the portfolios, but they can also write things down throughout the training sessions.
- ➔ Make sure that there are sufficient markers and art supplies for them to decorate and write inside their portfolios. Invite them to decorate the cover.
-  Ensure that participants have a dedicated notebook for their Classroom Wellbeing Portfolio or encourage them to create a dedicated electronic document for this purpose.



## Training Routines



15 minutes



Handout 1: Parachute Activity



Sitting or standing in a circle

➔ Explain that each day of the training they will follow a routine, which is one of the strategies to promote wellbeing in the classroom.

➔ Ask participants to think about the following question, and then discuss:

- Why does following the same introductory activity every day help to promote wellbeing?

Answer: It provides a sense of predictability.

➔ Explain that these activities should be routines they can also do with their students. Starting routines should provide an opportunity to check in and ending routines should provide an opportunity to reflect.

➔ Explain that they will discuss additional routines in Module 2: Mental Health and Psychosocial Wellbeing and Play.

➔ Lead the Parachute Opening Activity (see Handout 1).

**Parachute opening**

15 minutes

Whole group

- ➔ Get all the participants to stand in a circle.
- Use the explanation below. Invite participants to imagine that they're standing in a circle and creating a virtual safe space.
- ➔ Give instructions for the parachute opening activity.  
Say:
  - "In the middle of the circle there's an imaginary folded parachute. Do you know what a parachute is?" (If they don't know what a parachute is, draw one or explain that it's like a big umbrella.)
  - "The parachute is our 'safe space'. Whatever happens or whatever anyone says when the parachute is open is confidential. That means that it stays in our safe space. We don't judge or make fun of anyone here. This is a place where everyone is safe to feel and participate."

- "The parachute's folded, so we need to open it. Come into the centre, stand close together and each grab a corner. Then move back into a wide circle so that we can open up the parachute."
- Stand up and pretend that you're rolling out a parachute from the centre. Invite participants to do the same in their remote locations.
- Say: "Imagine that our parachute is made up of lots of triangles of different colours. Choose a triangle that represents how you're feeling today. Take a moment to think about your triangle and why you've chosen that colour."
- As the facilitator, share your colour first and then ask everyone to take turns to share theirs. Do not share what it represents or why, just the colour.
- Say: "The parachute will always be here in our learning space. Remember, it's a safe space, where everything's confidential and everyone's safe to feel and participate. At the end of each session, we'll close the parachute."



## Guiding Principles



20 minutes



Handout 2: Guiding Principles



Four groups

- ➔ Explain that for the duration of the training, they will adhere to four general principles that can be adapted and used in the classroom. These are:
  - (1) wellbeing at the centre
  - (2) practical
  - (3) conflict-sensitive
  - (4) play-based.
- ➔ Divide, define and discuss:
  - Divide participants into four groups. Assign each group a principle. Provide each group with a written definition of their principle (Handout 2: Guiding Principles).
  - Allow each group five minutes to prepare a 30-second mime (silently, without saying anything) defining their principle and demonstrating its importance.
  - Bring all groups back together and ask each to present their mime, one at a time. Ask other groups to guess which principle that group is acting out.
  - Lead a discussion about each principle based on the following questions:
    - Why is this principle important for this training?
    - (How) does it apply to your classroom?

## GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR PLAY-BASED MHPSS IN THE CLASSROOM

### Wellbeing at the centre

Wellbeing must be at the centre of any learning activity or classroom because, without wellbeing, we're unable to think clearly and learn. Supporting wellbeing has two components: promoting wellbeing and responding to distress.

### Practical

This training is practical. It's based on theory and evidence, but the tools and strategies learned can be applied immediately in your teaching and in your own life. They're intended to relate to what's happening in your classroom.

### Conflict-sensitive

This training, and your teaching needs to be conflict-sensitive. Conflict-sensitivity addresses the two-way interaction between education and conflict. The training is meant to help you minimize the negative and maximize the positive impacts of new, dangerous and traumatic experiences on education. It's also meant to minimize the negative and maximize the positive impacts of education on conflict.

### Play-based

Play has been shown to be an effective way of healing, coping and learning. This training employs the five-characteristics of play-based learning to help you support your own and your students' wellbeing:

- Meaningful
- Joyful
- Socially interactive
- Actively engaging
- Iterative



- ➔ After all groups have presented, review what they just discussed and correct any misunderstandings by saying, for example:
- *“**Wellbeing** must be at the centre of any learning activity or classroom because, without wellbeing, we are unable to think clearly and learn. Supporting wellbeing has two components: promoting wellbeing and responding to distress. Both will be addressed in depth in this training.”*
  - *“This training is **practical**. Although it is grounded in both theory and evidence, the tools and strategies discussed can be applied immediately in your teaching and in your own life.”*
  - *“This training, and your teaching, needs to focus on **conflict-sensitivity**. Conflict-sensitivity addresses the two-way interaction between education and conflict. As you and your students are exposed to new, dangerous and traumatic experiences, the training aims to help you to minimize the negative impacts of conflict and other crises on education and maximize the positive impacts. For example, conflict can cause children to be emotionally unwell, which makes it difficult for them to focus at school. In this training, we provide strategies aimed at improving students’ wellbeing and reducing the negative impacts of conflict. It is also meant to minimize the negative and maximize the positive impacts of education on the conflict. For example, education can be used to radicalize students and encourage them to engage in conflict. This training will provide you and your students with tools that can help them to heal and process the conflict in a way that supports their wellbeing and doesn’t exacerbate the conflict.”*
- *“This training provides tools that will help you support children’s wellbeing and learning through **play**, which has been shown to be an effective way of healing, coping and learning. Effective play-based learning is meaningful, joyful, socially interactive, actively engaging and iterative. We’ll discuss these five characteristics of play in more depth in the next session. Play-based learning can take place through games, but also through other activities that help you to support your own and your students’ wellbeing.”*



## Ground Rules



50 minutes



Flipchart, markers



Whole group, small group, whole group

➔ Explain that now the group will begin practising strategies, it's time to set some ground rules that aim to create predictability and structure. This is meant to model what they would do in their classroom at the beginning of the school year and which can be referred to throughout the school year.

### Brainstorming rules

➔ Put up a flipchart and write: "CLASSROOM VALUES".



Create a virtual board on which participants can write ideas that all can see simultaneously, or just share your screen as you write down ideas.

➔ Invite participants to share ground rules for this session and the remainder of their time together and write each of them on the flipchart.

➔ Allow participants to share ground rules aloud or by writing them down and handing them to you. If there are ground rules you would like to include that they do not brainstorm, add them.

- While selecting ground rules as a group, ask participants to prioritize those they think are most important. Explain that too many rules can be overwhelming and lead participants (and students) to not believe in or follow any of them.
- Ask how these rules are similar to or different from the rules they would use in a classroom with their students and why.

*Example answer:* The rules may be similar because actions that require trust and respect are similar across age groups. They may be different because adults can understand more nuance and may also have other work obligations compared with students.

### Brainstorming responses

➔ Explain that now they should come up with three responses that get stronger each time a rule is broken (e.g., the first time students get a warning/reminder and have to restate the rule, the second time there is a small consequence, and the third time they have to do something substantial to make up for breaking the rule).


➔ Choose one rule to brainstorm the three responses as a whole group. Write the rule and the three responses on a piece of colourful paper (or however participants may want to display them in their classroom).



➔ If participants are having trouble coming up with ideas, give examples:


Ground Rule	Response 1	Response 2	Response 3
Respect others' ideas	Reminder and give apology to the other participant	Participant writes an apology letter during the next break	Conversation facilitated by the trainer in which participant confronts what they did wrong with the other participant
Do not answer phone calls/text messages/emails in the training room	Reminder to turn phone off	Phone/laptop is put on trainers' table until end of the activity	Phone/laptop is put on trainers' table until end of the day

➔ Divide participants into small groups or pairs and assign each group one or more ground rules. For each ground rule, invite participants to share what they think are appropriate responses (or consequences). Tell them that they should come up with three different responses – for the first, second and third time a rule is broken. It is important that the responses relate directly to the consequences of breaking the rule.

 Divide groups into breakout rooms to do the same activity.

### Signing the rule contract

- ➔ Each group presents their three responses.
- ➔ All participants sign the ground rules.
- ➔ Display the rules in the training room where everyone can see them.









 Allow for virtual signing (adding a virtual signature) on the shared document, and post in a location that all participants can access and which you can refer to throughout the training.

### Reflection

- ➔ Ask participants to reflect on what they did to develop ground rules and three responses.
  - What did you notice about the way in which we developed rules?
  - Why did everyone participate in developing them?
  - Why did we agree responses to the rules – and why three instead of just one?



## Key Points

-  Co-creating rules allows students (and participants) to feel that they are in control of the space and that it is responsive to their needs, which allows them to feel safe.
-  Classroom values can promote social cohesion and serve as a contract that teachers can refer back to.
-  Co-creating a set of ground rules is more likely to prevent students acting in ways that are hurtful or disruptive, since they have agreed to the rules and can feel a sense of ownership.
-  Students may feel more comfortable sharing their ideas in writing or out loud, so provide options for how they can brainstorm.
-  Writing and sharing responses on the ground rules creates predictability – the participants know what to expect if they break a rule.
-  Providing three graduated responses rather than one allows for mistakes and the righting of previous wrongs. Students won't feel scared if they make a mistake, which could cause them additional stress and emotional harm.
-  Consistently enforcing the rules and responses helps students to feel that they are being treated fairly and may help to reinforce the rules.
-  Displaying the rules serves as a constant reminder.







## Adaptation for remote vs. in-person learning

 10 minutes

 N/A

 Whole group seated, with enough space to stand up

➔ Play “sit or stand” to see who is teaching in what circumstances. Explain that you will read statements. Participants should stand if the statement applies to them and look around at who else is facing that situation.

 Participants raise their virtual hand or type in the chat, depending on the platform being used.

➔ Read the following statements. Remind participants to stand if the statement applies to them. After a few seconds, invite them to sit back down.

- I’m teaching students in person.
- I’m teaching students online.
- I’m teaching students who are in a conflict situation.
- I’m teaching students who have fled a conflict situation.
- I’m teaching students who are internally displaced.
- I’m teaching students who may be in a bunker or other safe location.
- I don’t know who I will be teaching.

➔ Thank them for standing when the statement applied to them. Acknowledge that for all of them, their teaching circumstances might change during the school year. Throughout the training, strategies will therefore include tips on how to adapt between in-person and online teaching. If there are any activities that don’t have a clear adaptation, invite participants to brainstorm during the session and/or with their colleagues after the training.

➔ Ask how the in-person activities could be adapted to be virtual. For example, if they would normally use a flipchart or a board, they can show a slide on their screen. Show the following examples, or invite them to come up with others:

In person	Online
Divide students into groups	Put students in online breakout rooms
Display something in the classroom	Display in the virtual classroom and in the background on your screen
Build something in the classroom	Ask students to build something at home, using the materials they have, and send a photo of it (or show it using their camera)
Play a group game	Find a virtual/online game that achieves the same learning objectives, and ask students to play with one another virtually



## Conclusion



15 minutes



Classroom Wellbeing Portfolios, markers and art supplies



Seated with writing surface

- ➔ Participants should be seated with a desk or table in front of them.
- ➔ Remind them that the notebook for the Classroom Wellbeing Portfolio they received at the beginning of the training is where they can take notes and write down strategies and tips to use with their students and themselves.
- ➔ Recap what you've discussed (ask questions of the group or invite one or two participants to provide a recap):
  - Routines: to start and end each training day
  - Guiding principles: wellbeing at the centre, practical, conflict-sensitive, play-based
  - Ground rules: that create consistency and enable students to feel safe in the classroom
  - Adaptation: creative ways to adapt strategies between in-person, online and hybrid teaching.



Invite participants to take five minutes to add notes in their Classroom Wellbeing Portfolio.

- Encourage them to write the guiding principles on the first page, with ideas on how they will continue to address them in their classroom.
- If there's time, invite participants to create posters of the principles and ideas on how they might address them in the classroom. Display these throughout the rest of the training alongside the ground rules.



If there's time, invite participants to create slides on a Google slide deck – which they can refer back to, and which represent the principles and ideas on how they might address them with their students.

