All Behavior is Communication -- our "Fighters" Deserve a Champion

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Agenda

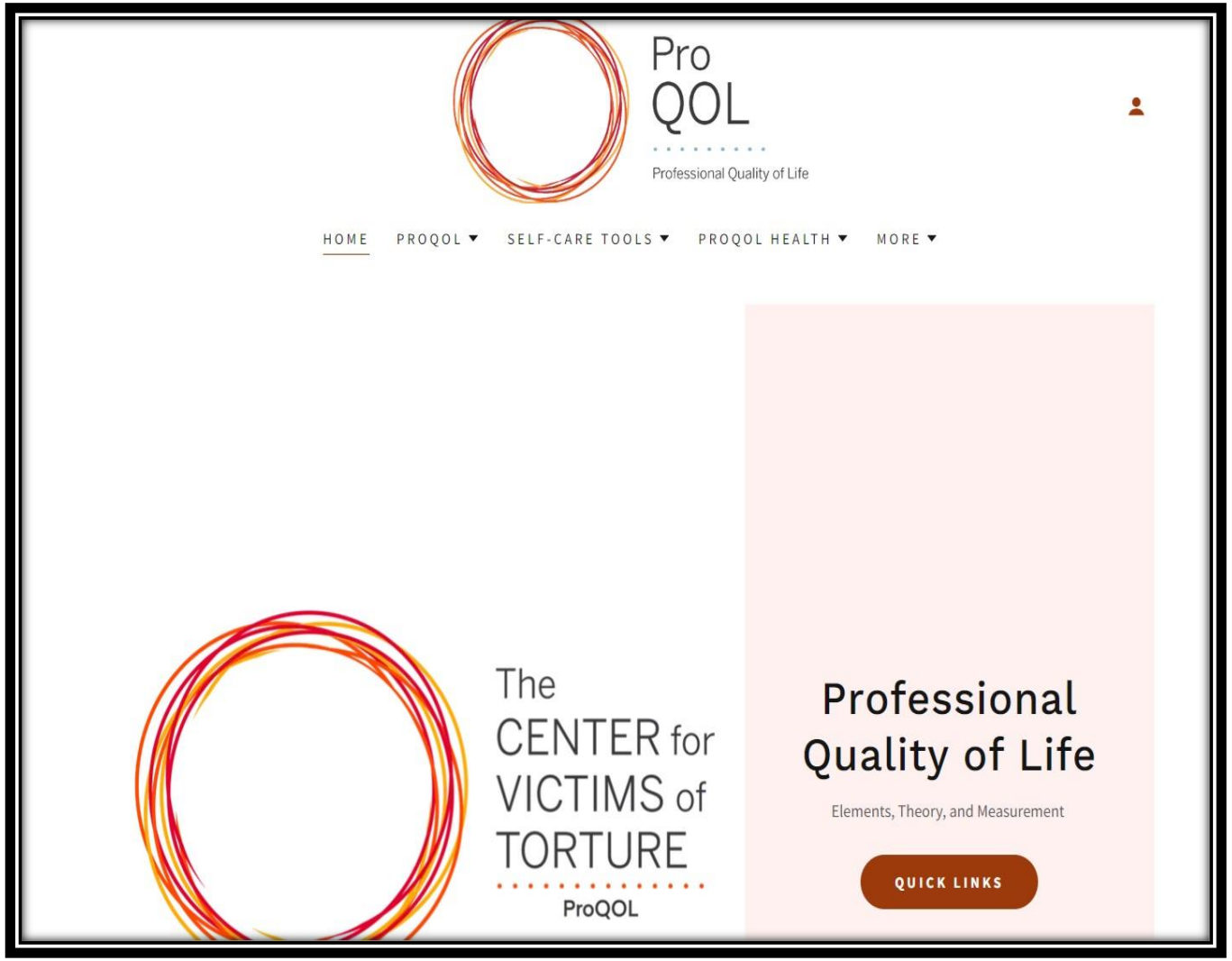
- Introduction
- Youth Mental Health and Trauma
- Strategies to Support the Fighters
- Q&A
- Final tips & takeaways

I asked about energy because…

Adult Wellness matters!

- Healthy Adult-Youth Relationships
- Effective youth management practices
- Effective teaching of social emotional learning and other skills
- Healthy school environments
- Positive youth outcomes

I can't give what I don't have….



ProQOL

ProQOL

C.A.R.E. Adults

Because I'm going to ask more of you…

C.A.R.E. Adults

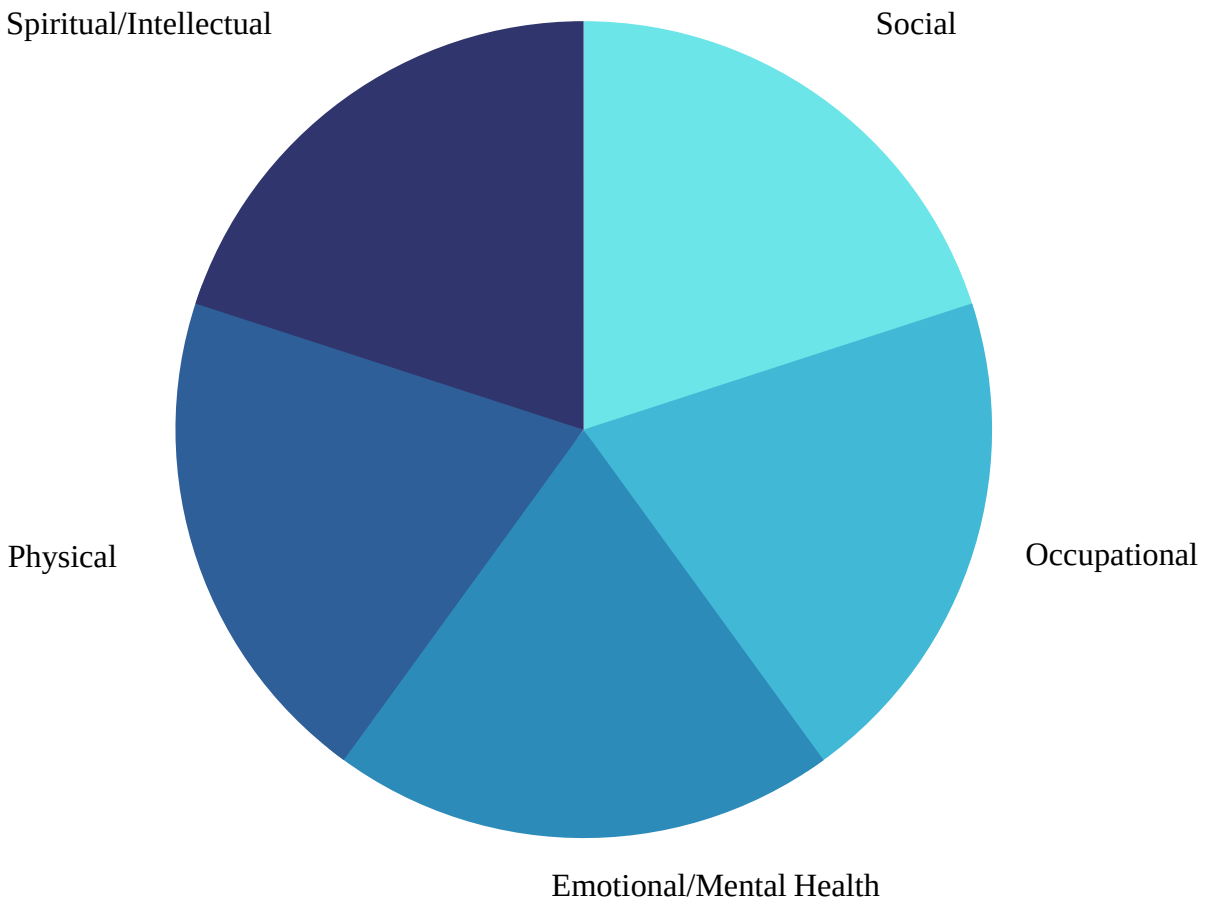
Who **CARE** for themselves:

Create time to promote personal well-being

Assess and address personal needs

Reinforce and re-prioritize well-being

Expand supports

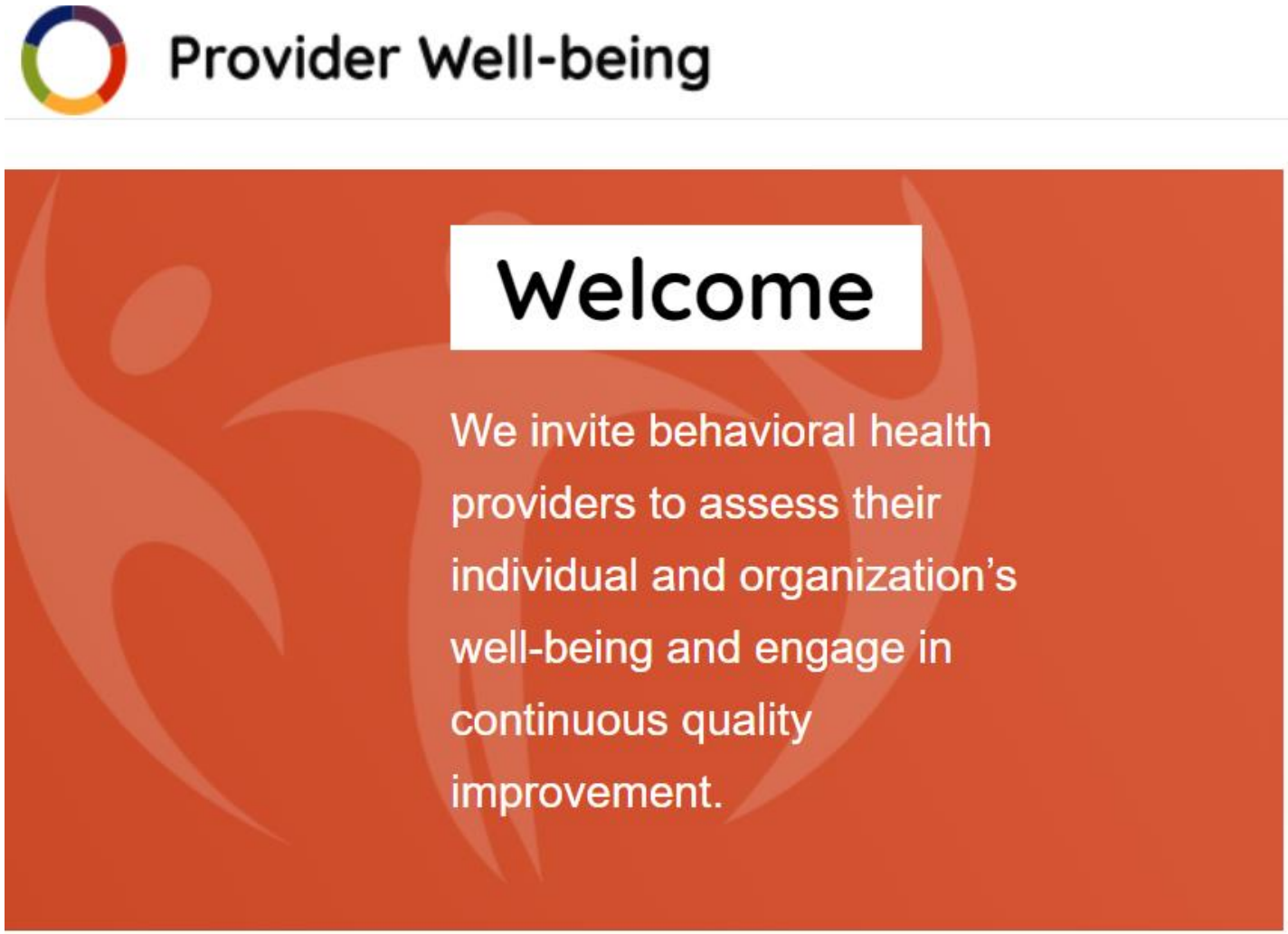


Well-being Resources

WISE and Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development **(GUCCHD)**

Mental Health Providers

Providerwellbeing.org



Restart and Renew

Strategies for school mental health clinicians to support student and staff well-being and connection

Fall 2021

Funded by the Connecticut Department of Children and Families

WHAT DOMAIN OF WELL-BEING SHOULD YOU APPLY C.A.R.E. TO?

Humble Learners

Cultural humility is “a lifelong process of self-reflection and self-critique whereby the individual not only learns about another's culture, but one starts with an examination of her/his own beliefs and cultural identities.” (NIH)

The FIGHT

The FIGHT is my book written with diverse middle school-aged youth from urban settings in mind. Inspired by the gifts and talents of students I worked with as a school-based mental health clinician.

The “fighters” are students often in trouble for behavioral or emotional needs. They can and will thrive with access to:

- Invested adults
- Dedicated time
- Ample skill building

Goal: Support fighters in shifting from “powerless fight” to the “powerful fight”

What youth experiences contribute to powerless fighting?

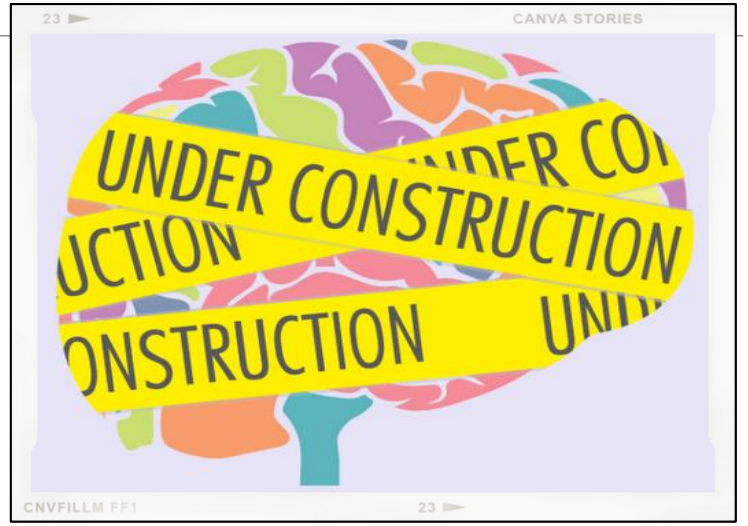
In a classroom of 30 students…

1 in 5 will experience a mental health problem of mild impairment

1 in 10 will experience a mental health problem of severe impairment

<u>Up to 60% of students who need them do not receive services</u>

What's Going on?



COVID 19

50% increase in rates of
Anxiety and Depression

Social justice, political, and
global health Issues
News, social media, school/work

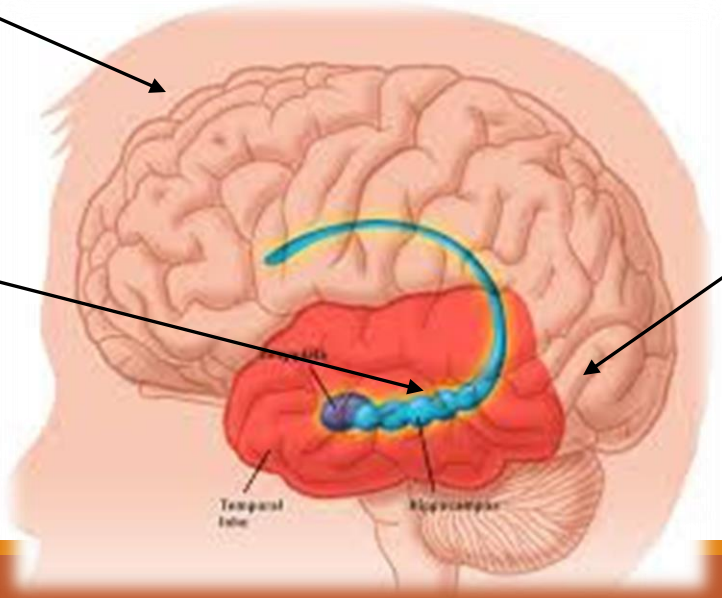
Developmentally appropriate
youth Behavior

Trauma

An **event(s)** or circumstance(s) that is **experienced** as *physically and/or emotionally* harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse **effects.**

Prefrontal Cortex
(Planning, organization)

Amygdala
(Regulates chemical reactions to fear)



Hippocampus

(memory)

How are these experiences showing up in student behavior, or as powerless fighting?

WHAT ARE TYPICAL RESPONSES TO STUDENT BEHAVIOR PROBLEMS?

"We can't discipline trauma" – PSW SAB member

Quick Humility TIPS

Self-examination:

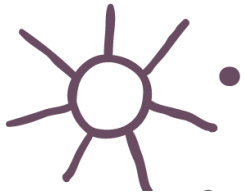
- Am I taking youth behavior personally? If yes, remember to QTIP

Compassionate curiosity:

- What has happened to influence his behavior?
- What need is the behavior communicating?
- What strengths are inherent in the behavior?
- What more can I learn to support the needs being communicated?

"Listen with curiosity. Speak with honesty. Act with integrity. The greatest problem with communication is we don't listen to understand. We listen to reply. When we listen with curiosity, we don't listen with the intent to reply. We listen for what's behind the words."
~Roy T. Bennett

Classroom WISE:
Well-Being **I**nformation and **S**trategies for **E**ducators



Developed by the MHTTC Network in partnership with the National Center for School Mental Health

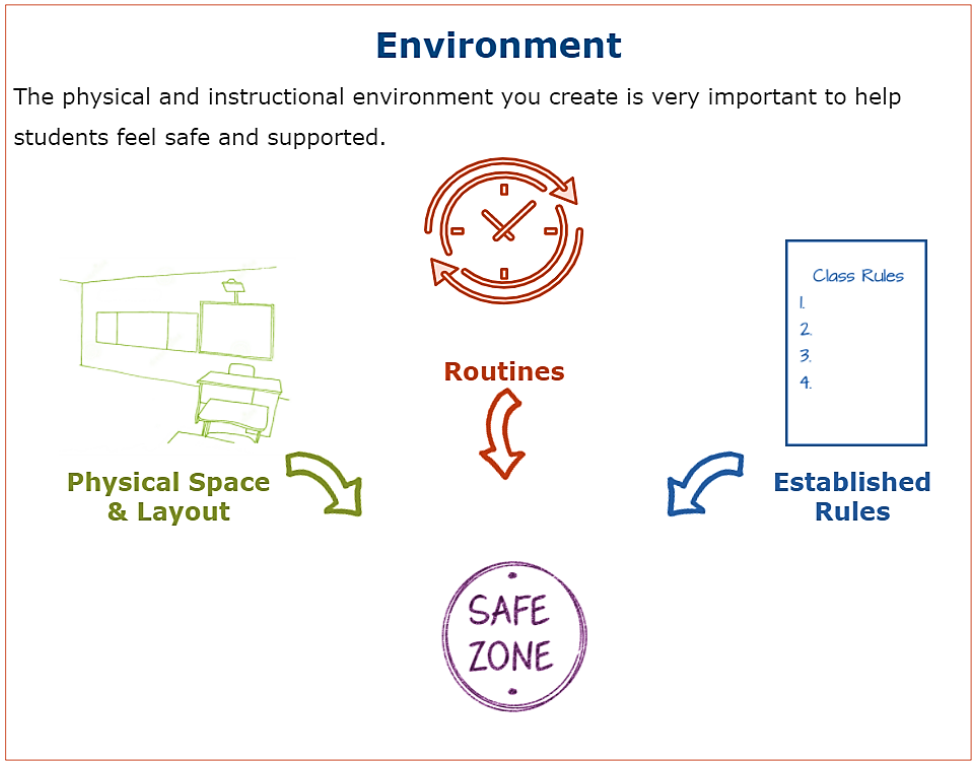
MHTTC
Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

NCSMH
NATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

Classroom WISE
Well-Being Information and Strategies for Educators

Modules 1-3:
Promoting Mental Health and Well-being of Students

- Creating safe and supportive classrooms
- Bringing mental health into the classroom and addressing stigma
- Fostering social emotional competencies



Classroom WISE
Well-Being Information and Strategies for Educators

Modules 3-6:
Understanding and Supporting Students Experiencing Adversity and Distress

- Impact of trauma/adversity on learning and behavior
- Understanding and identifying student distress and linking students to support
- Classroom strategies to support students with mental health concerns

Stress & Trauma

8. Be aware of stress or trauma reminders

It's hard for a student to feel safe when regularly reminded of past events or traumas.

Being center of attention

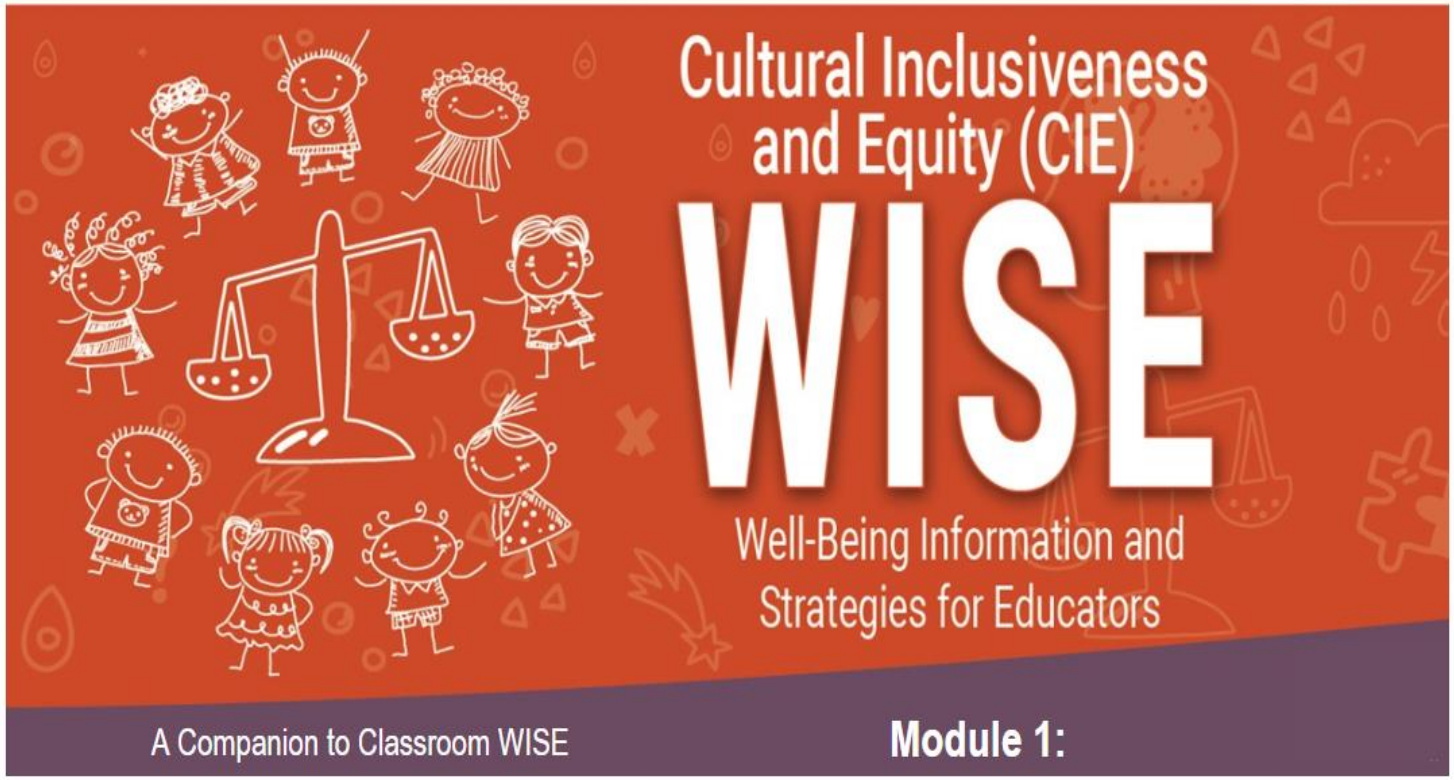
Sudden or loud noises

Fighting or yelling

Confinement

Physical touch

Unexpected changes



Understanding How Social Injustices Impact Student Mental Health

NCSMH
NATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

MHTTC Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Affirmation

GOOD RIDDANCE TO DECISIONS THAT DON’T SUPPORT SELF-CARE, SELF-VALUE, AND SELF-WORTH – OPRAH WINFREY (AMERICAN TALK SHOW HOST)

Let’s be honest – what type of feedback are our fighters most likely to receive?

Affirmation of Person

Welcome/Safe/Included

- What are their identities?
- How are they affirmed?

Acknowledged/Appreciated/Complimented (most improved, outstanding effort)

- Non-verbal
- Verbal

Understood/known

- Strengths
- Growth goals
- Interests
- Salient identities

<u>Grace and forgiveness</u>

Barry White Jr.
abc NEWS

Have students share their preferred name and pronouns and share that list with other educators/substitutes.

Use gender inclusive language. Instead of "boys/girls", say: "scientists," "readers," "athletes," "writers," "artists," "scholars,"

Avoid grouping students by gender identity. Instead, use birthdays, ice cream preferences, pet preferences, etc.

If there are all-gender bathrooms, make sure students know where they are and that they are for everyone.

Make your ally status known by hanging a LGBTQ+ Pride flag, sharing your own pronouns and/or supporting the school's LGBTQ+ groups.

Use your voice to speak up and advocate for policies and practices that foster inclusion for transgender and non-binary students in the whole school

Source: Queer Endeavor: Making Silence Unworkable: http://aqueerendeavor.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/AQE-tips-for-launching-the-new-year.pdf

LGBTQ Inclusivity in Schools:

A Self-Assessment Tool

U.S. Department of
Health and Human Services
Centers for Disease
Control and Prevention

Let’s practice affirmation of person

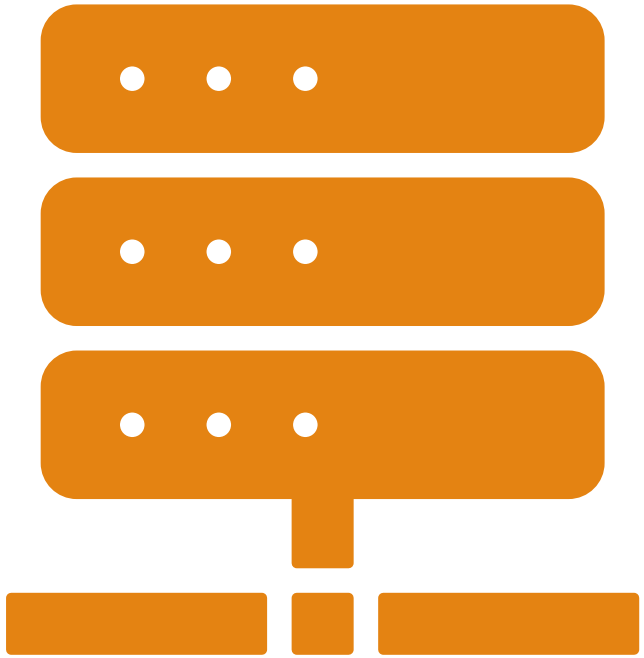
You are…
- ✓ Worthy
- ✓ Caring
- ✓ Justice-driven
- ✓ Powerful
- ✓ Determined
- ✓ Creative
- ✓ Funny
- ✓ Easy to talk to

Step 1: Think about a “fighter” you know.

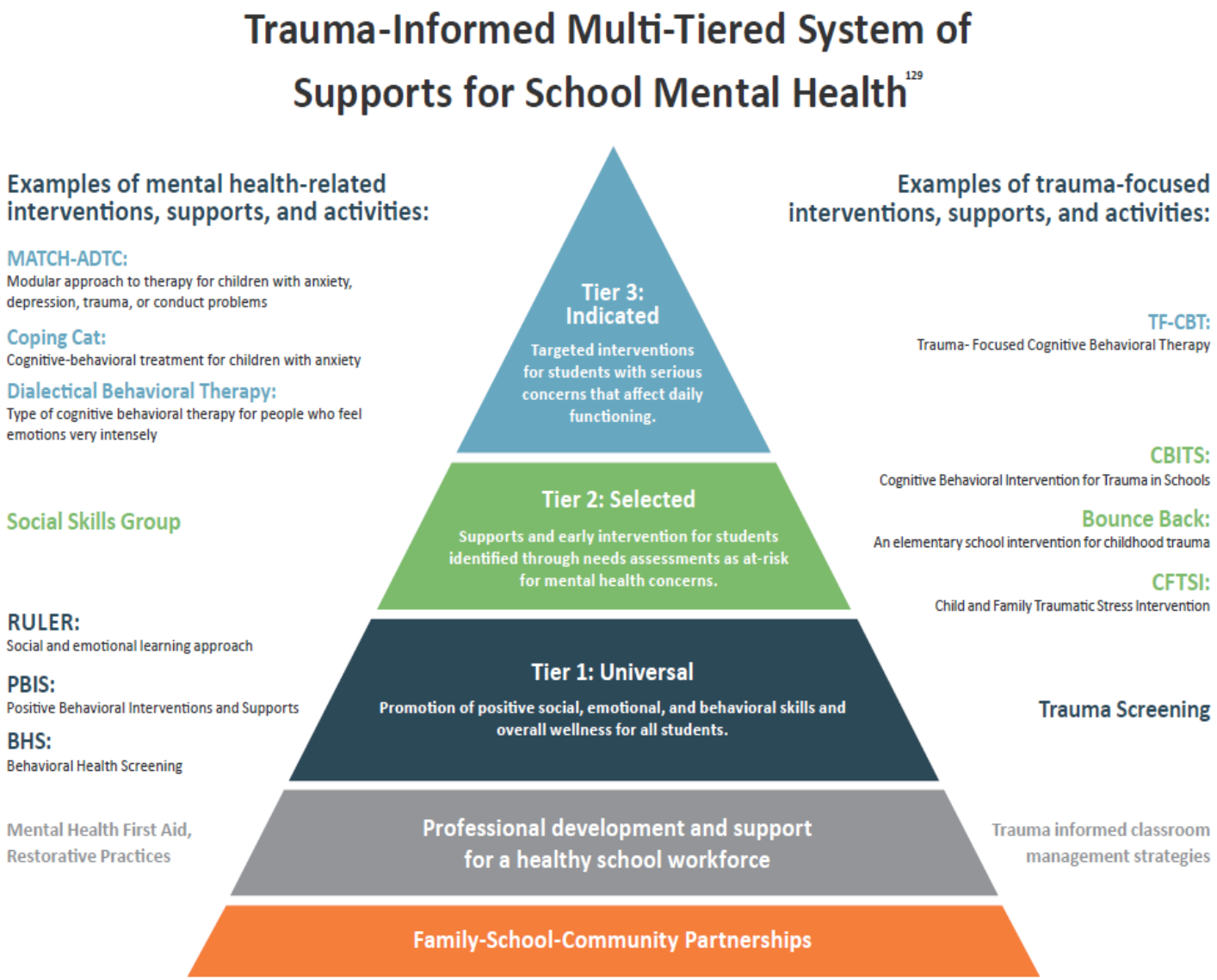
Step 2: What do you like or appreciate about who they are?

Step 3: Respond to the survey.
- What can you say to verbally affirm who they are?

Step 4: Share affirmation with your fighter (5 to 1 ☺)



Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)



Bolster Tier I: Mental Health Literacy SEL

HTTPS://WWW.BAKERCENTER.ORG/RESOURCES/LIBRARY/MENTAL-HEALTH-AND-SCHOOLS-BEST-PRACTICES-TO-SUPPORT-OUR-STUDENTS

Mental Health Literacy

What is MHL?

Common signs of distress, strategies to promote well-being, coping skills, and ways to seek help

Why is it important?

Creates common language, helps to reduce mental health stigma, and strengthens relationships

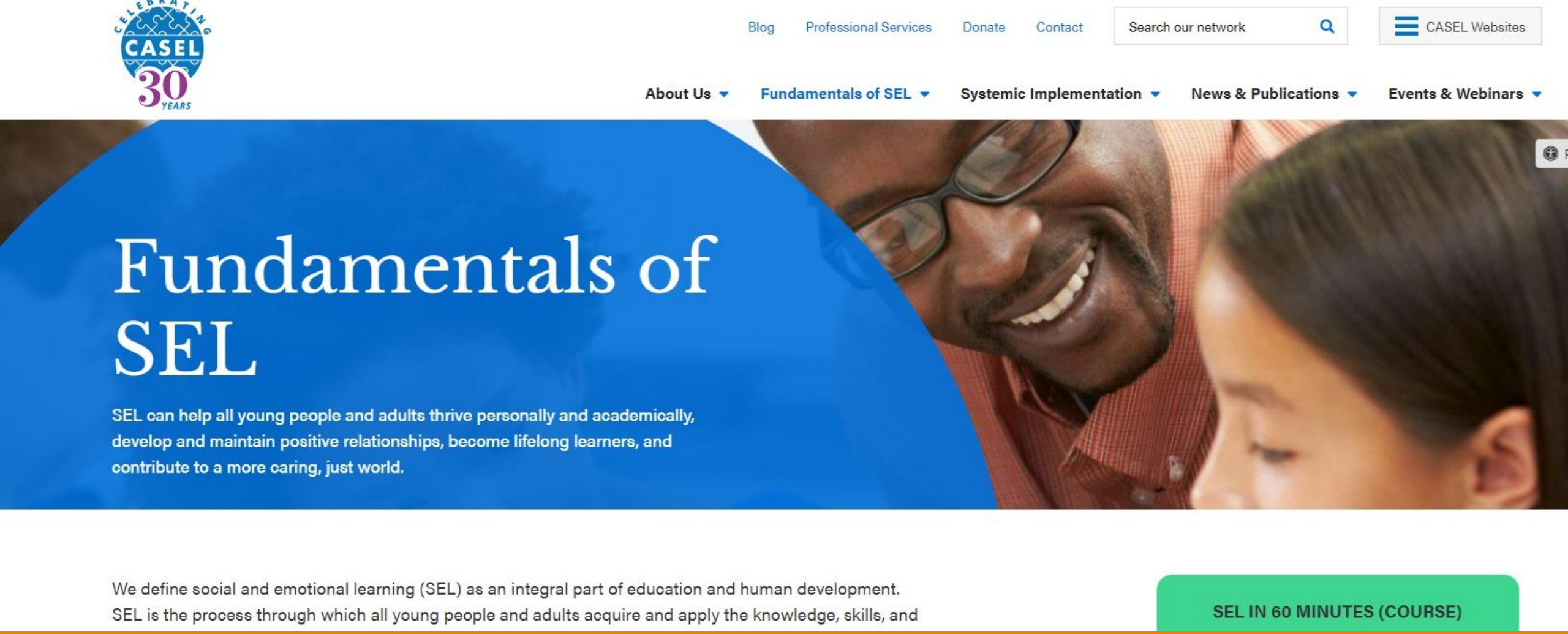
Resources

Teen Mental Health

Mental Health Literacy: Elementary School Resource

Mental Health Literacy Collaborative

Teaches coping skills and provides practice opportunities!



Social Emotional Learning

TRANSFORMATIVE SEL

Incorporate Strength-focused MTSS Resources

Teams and individual clinicians should incorporate processes to promote identification and provision of Tier I opportunities based on youth strengths:

1. What are the fighter's strengths?

2. What programs in the school are available to promote their strengths?

3. What community-based partners can help bolster school or clinician offered supports and services? Peer mentorship programs, athletic opportunities, STEM programs, art activities. Asset map, if needed.

Strengths Assessments

- Child and Adolescent Strengths Assessment (CASA)
- Child and Adolescents Needs & Strengths
- Family's Needs and Strengths: FANS-Trauma
- Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ)
- Communities Advancing Resilience Toolkit Assessment Survey

- ✓ School functioning
- ✓ Extracurriculars
- ✓ Parenting
- ✓ Family
- ✓ Psychological
- ✓ Peer
- ✓ Moral/Spiritual

Positive Adult Relationship(s)

PERSEVERING, PROTECTIVE, PURPOSEFUL ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

Positive Adult Relationship(s)

No one is born with skill. It is developed through exercise, through repetition, through a blend of learning and reflection that's both painstaking and rewarding. And it takes time (Twyla Tharp, author).

Create Time

- *Building relationships takes time, effort, energy*
- *Establish rapport early, consistently*

Ask Good Questions (open-ended)

- *Strengths, interests, capacities*
- *Motivations, challenges, and needs*

Reinforce Skill Development

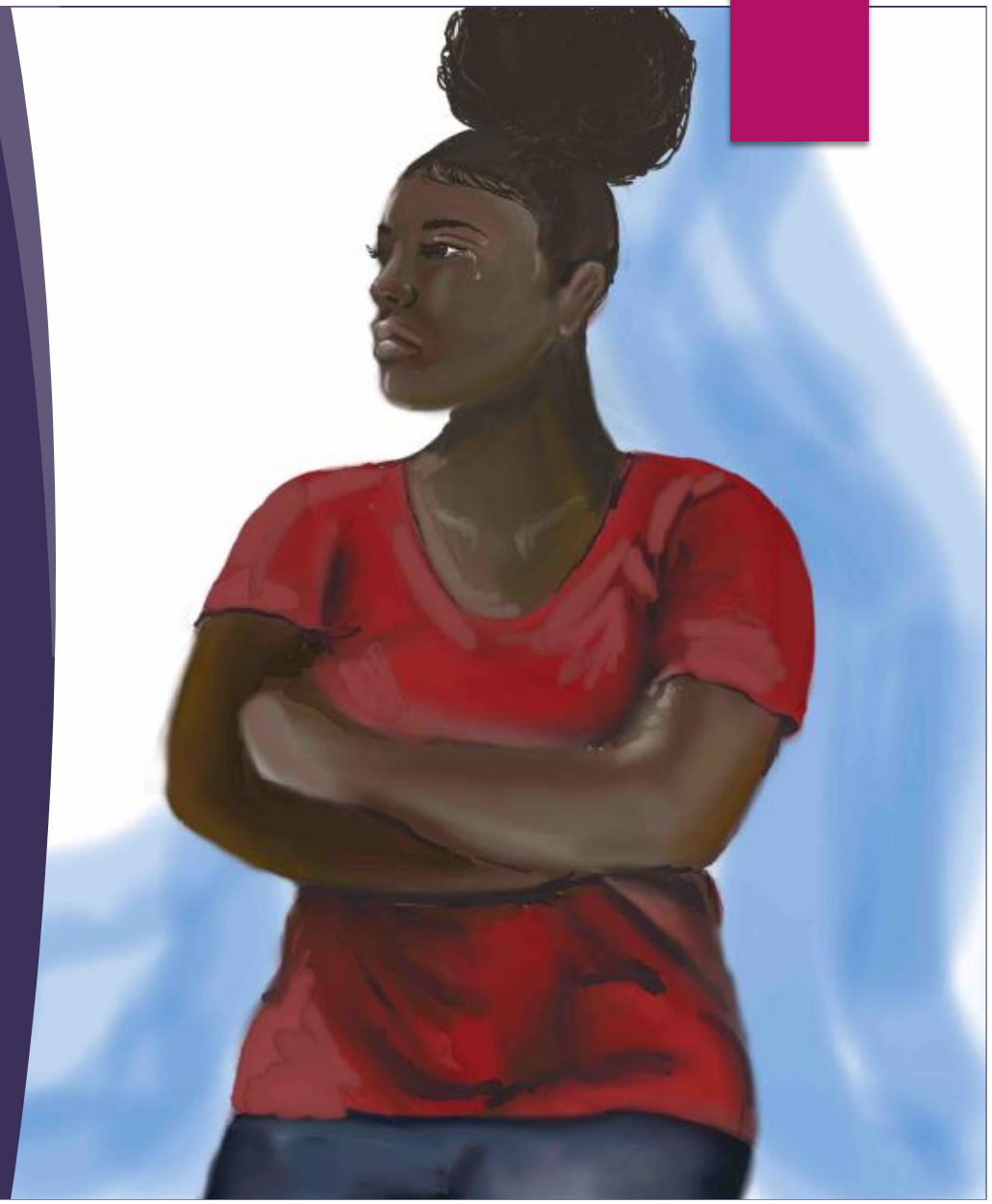
- *Teach core skills (SEL, goal-setting, affirmation, etc.)*

Expand Network

- *Facilitate connections to other meaningful supports*

Overview of *The Fight*

The Fight is a short story about a young person insulted in front of peers who must decide how to deal with the situation. Throughout the story, she is introduced to options and potential consequences of each selection. She is also shown the value of having personal goals, developing coping skills and using strengths while making decisions about challenging scenarios.



Focus on your FIGHT…

Feelings: Acknowledge and Address

Identity: Access Strengths and Resources

Goals: Set and Pursue

Healthy Coping: Helpful and Productive

Thoughts: Self-love and Confidence

…when faced with challenge, uncertainty, pain, and adversity.

Thank you for supporting the fighters, CHAMP ☺

- C.A.R.E Adult
- Humble Learner
- Affirmation
- MTSS (strength-based)
- Positive Adult Relationship

THANK YOU

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