

Mental Health Awareness Month

SPEAKERS

Speaker 1, Jennifer Baldwin, Natalie Mey

Natalie Mey 00:07

Music, welcome to teaming for well being brought to you by the Training and Technical Assistance Center at Virginia Tech, where our mission is to improve educational opportunities and contribute to the success of children and youth with disabilities. We do this by supporting and building up the educators who work with them. You. We are your hosts. Project coordinators, Natalie May

Jennifer Baldwin 00:30

and Jen Baldwin Join us as we talk about tools, tricks and tips to help positively impact the social, emotional and behavioral needs of your students, as well as keeping you healthy.

Natalie Mey 00:47

Welcome to this episode of teaming for well being. I am your host, Natalie Howard, here with my co host Jen Baldwin, Hey girl, so glad

Jennifer Baldwin 00:56

to be back. So we've missed you guys. Yeah, it's been a while. Been a hot minute

Natalie Mey 01:00

it has. But, you know, we're near the end of the school year, and I feel like it's a great time to talk about this very relevant topic, which is mental health.

Jennifer Baldwin 01:09

Yeah, may it's mental health awareness month. And so we thought, what a great time for us to come on and talk a little bit about the statistics once aren't great and have been great for a while. And then also give you guys some resources and some tool kits and some things that you can do if you want to really advocate for this in your school building or within your school division, because it's it's so important,

Natalie Mey 01:31

absolutely. You know, the statistics are staggering. You know, we have 29% of youth reporting that they've experienced at least one major depressive episode in the past year, 20% have reported seriously considering suicide, with nearly 10% attempting suicide. And if that doesn't make you understand the importance of this, I don't know what will additionally, 47% of public

middle and high school students in Virginia reported a current or past your mental health need. So I think this is something that touches everybody, regardless of race, class, ethnicity, anything. I think we can all take a moment to reflect about how mental health has impacted ourselves and the people we care about and the students that we serve

Jennifer Baldwin 02:18

absolutely and I think I think it's so important that schools talk about how they're going to address it, because I know you know, a lot of teachers being coming from the teaching world before being a school counselor and getting into the mental health work, it's so critical for teachers to be part of the team, and yet they have such little time they feel to invest in this. So it's about also about school divisions and administrators making space for it, and understanding that it is needs to be a priority in order for kids to be able to find the energy and space to really focus on academics, absolutely, because we, you know, that's part of it. You know, you can't separate that out. We're human beings. We're, you know, very complex creatures, but you can't say that if I'm unwell mentally, I'm going to be able to perform on my SOL test. It doesn't matter, you

Natalie Mey 03:16

know, it's like, we want all kids to be fed and have slept well when they come to school, so they're ready to learn. But we also need them. Need them to be at a state of regulation where their mental health is at some kind of homeostasis,

Jennifer Baldwin 03:29

absolutely. And we need to be partners. And you know, our teachers, we want to be partners with our teachers, our school counselors, high school psychologists, our social workers. You know, we need to find those people in our school divisions. We need to learn how to partner with them and understand, you know, all the roles and how this is something that needs to be a focus. And so it's so important that we thought, let's bring attention to it. Let's talk about what resources that schools could look into. And so thought, maybe starting with, how can we make sure that our adults know just the basics? I was a Youth Mental Health First Aid instructor, me too, and so I you and I both know the benefits of being having this program and from being a trainer how important and really impactful it was.

Natalie Mey 04:22

And Youth Mental Health First Aid is essentially a first aid course, but instead of focusing on physical health, it focuses on mental health. So it helps people learn and understand what is mental health? What are some of the conditions associated with it? How to respond as a bystander, because when you administer first aid to the public, it's to the public. And so when we work with youth, it's a great course that you can take. And I think a lot of school divisions sometimes provide it, and if not, their local community services board may provide it, whether at cost or free. I think often free, a lot of times free. Yeah, highly, highly recommend that course, or something similar. And if you have already taken that course, there's also just a mental health first aid course, which is more targeted to adults, because, as we know, this does not just impact children. Absolutely not.

Jennifer Baldwin 05:14

Yeah. I mean, I think any program like that, because I think the big fear when we were doing this, and I don't know if you had this experience was, you know, a lot of teachers that were in the trainings with us were like, you know, this is not my skill set, I don't know. And we're not asking you to diagnose. We're not asking you to do anything other than just like you said, be that first social space, first responder, and then knowing who to send them to. Yeah, we're

Natalie Mey 05:43

not asking in that training or in just in general. No one's asking a teacher to be a mental health professional. It's knowing how to identify the signs and symptoms and knowing when things are changing and when the needs become at a level in which you need to just talk to somebody that has that specialized knowledge, whether school counselor, school psych, whoever that you have in your life and however you work with people where you see these, yeah,

Jennifer Baldwin 06:09

and I think teachers have a lot of instincts about this anyway, and sometimes aren't really sure what direction to go in or what it means. So this, you know, can give shed a lot of light on some of those things for folks, and just give you a perspective that I think is so necessary with our youth right now. Another resource, and we're going to link all this for you, is called Classroom wise. And this is from mhTC, TTC, which is Mental Health Training and Technical Assistance Center. Lots of free resources. This is free online for K 12 educators, it's for that basic ground level mental health knowledge, so that you feel like you have a basic understanding you are literate. We call mental health literacy right for educators, just what to look for. So there's videos and lots of resources, and you can kind of go as deep as you want to. And it's also another great resource that you can do on your own time, which is also really important to a lot of educators who have, you know, very little time, but you can pace this yourself. And really, you know, get into it as much as makes sense to you. As an educator, absolutely,

Natalie Mey 07:24

and there are so many resources out there. You have Nami, the National Alliance of Mental Illness, and they have, obviously a national presence, but they also have a state presence. So there's Nami Virginia, and they put on events in Virginia and even locally, regardless of where you're at, they're going to have things for you. They have support groups, both for people experiencing mental health difficulties and people that are supporting people with mental health difficulties. So if you are willing to learn, there are plenty of resources out there for you. And again, if you don't, or do not currently have a person in your life that is experiencing mental health difficulties, you may without even realizing it, and if you don't, you will in the future, absolutely, absolutely the prevalence is just, it's, it's, it's high, it is.

Jennifer Baldwin 08:18

And so I think it is important to just know the basic resources. So, as Natalie said, Nami Nami Virginia, Youth Move Virginia, which is specific for youth, and really giving youth a voice to be

able to share their own experiences and learn from one another. So no peer to peer communication, and really talking with your peers, it makes the biggest impact. And so, you know, giving them that that opportunity, and knowing that that resource is out there is also really important. And there's another one, mental health Virginia. And

Natalie Mey 08:47

I don't think a lot of people know about mental health I didn't know about until you told me about Yes,

Jennifer Baldwin 08:52

and there's Mental Health America, but there is an arm in the in Virginia. It also has a lot of great resources. It also keeps you up to date on a lot of the actions that are being taken around mental health in your own state, like our own policies that are coming up around mental health, if you want to get involved in that, or kind of keep track of that, that's that's there also, additionally, lots and lots of other resources. And what we'll say is the mental health month action guide, if you really want to know for May, you know, some things that you could be doing that mental health month. Action Guide is on the Mental Health America website, and there's tons of ways to get involved, ways to push things out into your school, you know, just lots to choose from there, and I believe Nami also has their own resources, with their theme being in every story, their strengths, both of the campaigns really want to hear from people, right that this is not we want to we want to get rid of the stigma. We want this to be an open discussion where people. Will learn from each other, learn what the resources are. So there's also lots of resources on that website, so just lots of great information out there. We don't want to overwhelm folks with things, but we'll put those resources for you to look at, share with people in your school system that you think might benefit from these resources. And if you are a person who wants to just see what the state of school mental health is. You want to see they do a school mental health report card, yep, and the 2025, report card has come out, and they break down, really, in every state. How are school systems? Because that's still a big topic of debate, is how involved should school systems see in the mental health work? And I think the biggest thing that folks have struggled with is that the time and the resources to really impact this is hard to come by, and especially in those rural divisions, you know how that how we get them access, knowing that this impact can be huge in schools, because they are there so much of the time that it seems like that would be the the way to get services, right? But it's really looking at, what are your resources, and how are we going to make that happen? So if you're really interested in looking at what is the state of Virginia look like the we'll put the report in there so that you can see it, and you just click on Virginia, and it will break down really kind of everything they looked at in terms of what is, what makes a school system or a state really look like they're providing services,

Natalie Mey 11:45

because, what, yeah, what are the metrics like? How can the metrics be met?

Jennifer Baldwin 11:49

And so it's a good discussion. Kind of guide, like, if you are a school counselor, school psychologist, a social worker, you know, in that, in that world, looking at this and being able to see, oh, do our does our school division have these things in place?

Natalie Mey 12:05

Are your school psychologists using their full toolbox instead of just being people that do assessments? Yeah? Yeah. You know, because school psychologists are trained in many different areas and domains, including mental health and counseling, and often they're not being utilized that way. Does your school have a school social worker that does more than just social histories? For special education? Are your school counselors at the ratio that's recommended? And so those are great questions for advocacy, absolutely, creating that policy and knowing what the laws are in the Commonwealth of Virginia and what the ratios are supposed to be. And, you know, maybe what rules the school counselors are not supposed to be taken but maybe have been put on them absolutely.

Jennifer Baldwin 12:49

I think this opens up that discussion. I think so too. It's just a tool that's here. You can look at how Virginia came out in the wash with all of the metrics that were used, and then a good discussion to have is, where are we in this, and are we using our our people resources in the way that makes the most sense, because we also want to look at our own data, right? Are we? Are we using our own information in the school division to really look at, are we using these mental health professionals appropriately to impact really, what's going on? Because we have so many school absences, yes, right? And that's such a huge push. And how can we? We need to look at this big picture together. And so

Natalie Mey 13:30

it's a big thing. Jim, oh, huge. It's, it is huge.

Jennifer Baldwin 13:34

And there's no easy answer. We don't have the answers, but it is really something that should be an open dialog in your school division, and something that is part of how you look at the students. We want to look at the whole student, to really look at how we use our people resources, because they're so valuable, and we we know that access for our rural school divisions to mental health services is limited, and so that's something else to think about.

Natalie Mey 14:02

We also know that there is power in just one caring adult in a student's life, and that how exponential one adult can be to a student. If you haven't seen the videos from Josh ship, he has a great talk on that, and you know, he shares his own experience about having how one caring adult changed the trajectory of his entire life. And so whether your resources are little, none or robust, you can make a difference. And so we hope that you have a wonderful

14:37

rest of your year, rest of

Jennifer Baldwin 14:38

your year. This will be the wrap up for us for the 2425 school year, we have loved bringing you our podcast. I don't know if you can tell we have a lot of fun.

14:47

We do have a lot of fun,

Jennifer Baldwin 14:51

and we appreciate all that you do and all the hard work you do and all the things that you're doing for your students and your families. And we're just happy to be here, and hopefully you. We've learned a little bit and gotten some use out of some of the resources we've shared this year. Yep,

Natalie Mey 15:04

we hope you have a wonderful, restful summer and you can recharge and be ready to come back to the next round of students next year and absolutely

Speaker 1 15:11

carry forward. All right, everybody, until next time till next time bye. You you.

Jennifer Baldwin 15:25

Thank you so much for listening. And as always, we hope this has given you a resource tool or idea that you can easily use and share.

Natalie Mey 15:31

You can find the show notes on our website@ttac.vt.edu where all the resources discussed are linked. Don't forget to sign up for our weekly newsletter. ABC, 123,

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Natalie Mey 15:48

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