



Mental Health Factors For Students Who Miss School

Today it may feel as if many factors changed regarding student mental health. The reality is the pandemic upended what was considered norm. No matter our economic or educational status most human beings can maintain good mental health despite 20% uncertainty or life disruption. These may include minor changes in everyday routines. During the pandemic however, 80% of what was consistent or known, changed. For schools it pulled the covers and exposed what was already being held with a thin thread for students. The result was spikes in school withdrawal, school refusal, school avoidance, truancy, and increase in socio-emotional risk factors. By identifying the factors of a school withdrawal, avoidance, or refusal student, we are able to match them to tiered approaches for mental health intervention.

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Everyday Matters Summit

**Mental Health Factors
for
Students Who Miss School**

Carolyn Gentle-Genitty, PhD

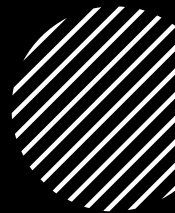
▼ Agenda

- 1) Define role of school
- 2) Define mental health basics
- 3) Mental Health Disrupted (Pandemic)
- 4) Mental Health in Schools
- 5) Mental Health factors for students missing school
- 6) Action for schools now

Tony Robbins – 3S: Change **State, Story, Strategy**



Define Role of School



Educate all citizenry to have basic set of knowledge (read, write, add, speak)



Expose citizenry to diverse ways of problem solving



To teach socializing skills

Mental health alert for 332 million children linked to COVID-19 lockdown policies: UNICEF



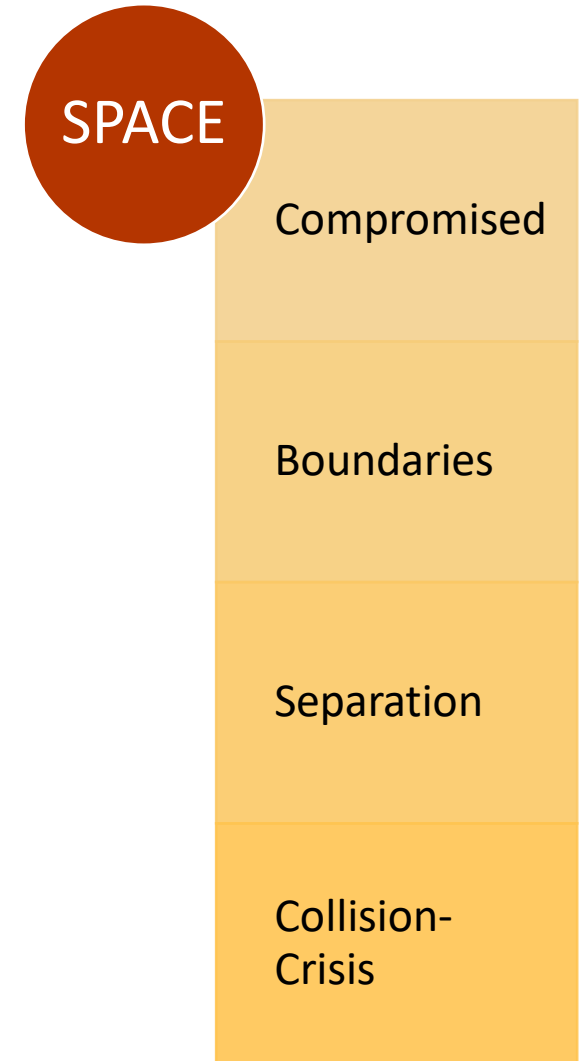
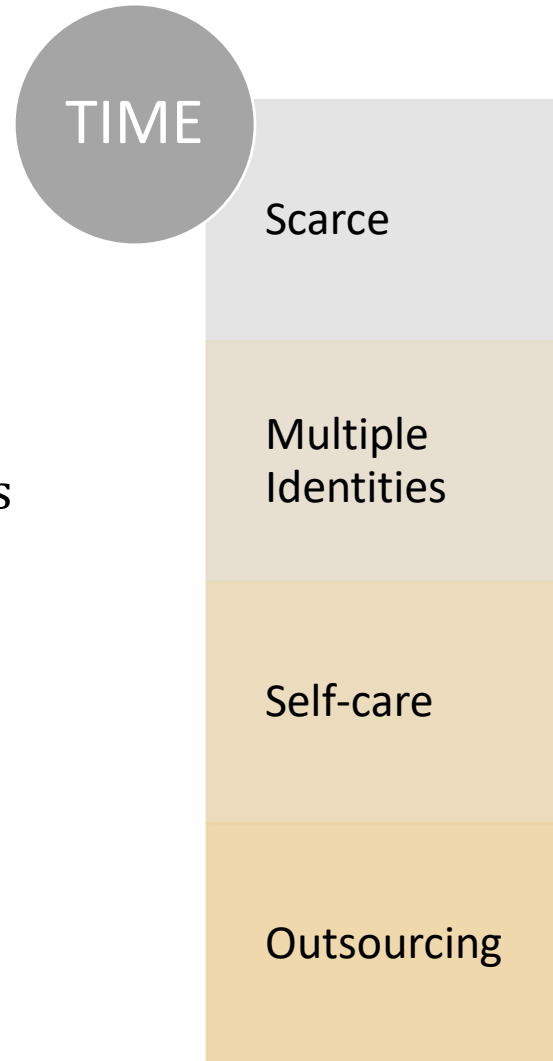
Factors for Conversation

2 Factors Concern now:

TIME - Outsourced care | **SPACE** - Distance & Access



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Mental Health

“the health of the mind”

How we .. Think | Feel | Act

Mental Health Disrupted

- State of mind (*happy, sad, glad, worried, anxious, nervous,*)
- State of body (*healthy, sick, pain, sleep, tiredness*)
- Safe Places (*job, home, family, school, neighborhood*)
- Coping ability (*change, loss, death, study, eviction, income*)
- Sense of connection (*water-cooler conversations*)
- Sense of belonging- *spiritual connection, purpose, other*



During the Pandemic - According to UNICEF...

1. **50%** of all mental disorders develop before the **age of 15**
2. Majority of the **800,000** people who die by suicide annually, are **under 18s**
3. Pandemic disrupted or halted critical mental health services in **93% of countries worldwide**



UNICEF Executive Director, Henrietta Fore, said...

when day after day “you are away from your friends and distant loved ones, and perhaps even stuck at home with an abuser, the impact is significant.”



SCHOOL OF
SOCIAL WORK





**CHANGE
IS GOOD**

**You go
first!**

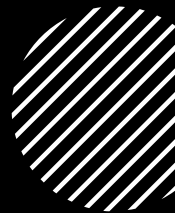
During the Pandemic

- **80% changed**
 - 20% stayed the same
- **Schools felt handcuff**
 - Local control schools
Redefined teaching
and learning
- **Parents loss outsource care**



Mental Health in Schools

"Paying attention to mind health in schools"



Biological

- **When?:** Changes in food, water, eat, sleep, activity, nausea, stomach problems

Brain (learning, pathways)

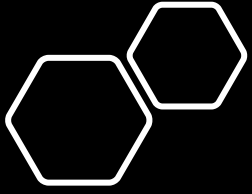
- **Why?:** Thought processes, messages we tell ourselves, Unknown reasons or feelings of help or hopelessness, upset, learning questioned, scared, nervous, suicidal

Life experiences positive + negative

- **Where?:** memories, fixation on an event in time, trauma, purpose or value of things i.e. School questioned

Family situation and history

- **With Whom?:** What happened...?



Defining the Box



Mental Health

(mixed disorders, conditions, symptoms)

- **Internalizing** and/or **externalizing** problems
- Associated with impaired ***socioemotional development***
- Linked historically, diagnostically, and empirically

School *(people and systems)*

- Location for learning away from home
- Learning and ‘other’ exposure changes behavior

Outcomes: School Attendance Problems (SAPs)

Avoidance > Withdrawal > Refusal > Partial > Dropout

Factors: risk and protective, bundling risk, cumulative

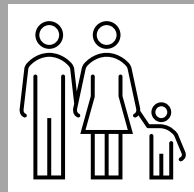


Mental Health Factors

Students who miss school



Personal - (anxiety, mindset, learning difficulties, depression, belief in ability, disability, IEP); **Executive functioning** (tired, just don't want, sleepy, headache, cold, consistent sickness, psychosomatic etc.)



Family | Others - (homelessness, transportation, food, access, trauma, family history, death|loss, peer victimization, unfairness, caring for others)



Environment - (climate, teachers, attendance tracking, discipline, social media, bullying, supports, voice, fairness, programs)

Influenced by 4 Motives

Avoidance of Stimuli

Escape from Stimuli

Attention Seeking

Pursuit of rewards outside of school



Conduct

Conduct inventory of...what, how, who, when institutions offered positive mental health services

Catalog

Catalog well-being outcomes from each activity. Categorize under think, feel, act (Body, Brain, Life, Family)

Define

Define what can be deployed online, hybrid, face-to-face, in group, in community, within families, via online videos, music, fun and play in classroom time, curriculum

Partner

Partner with schools of social work or psychology in your state/region.

Be

Be careful not to isolate solitary kids who thrive on their own, smart or high ability, need to be challenged, love reading, love technology and gaming. Create alternative options (part of day)

Prepare

Prepare for student return, videos, website, assurance of care to needs, offer well-being checks, communication with student and parents, new staff, behavioral modification plans,

Action for schools



Interventions

- Lots of research currently on attendance
*Call for papers (upcoming publication) CiE
Unlearning Attendance, Frontiers)*
- Research on **classification** shifting to **interventions**
- Intervention must have collaboration

Classification

- A. Tier model used (Kearney & Graczyk, 2014)
- B. School refusal
- C. Severe or chronic SR
- D. Average absence (85%)

Common Interventions



Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

with multiple stakeholders to respond to...

(Anxiety, depression, self-efficacy, emotional distress, social-emotional, academic development)

- Psychosocial Intervention
- Narrative therapy
- Motivational Interviewing
- Parental Counselling
- Counselling/ therapy
- Hypnosis | individual psychotherapy
- Family therapy
- Resource/Education
 - ✓ *Resources on spotting and responding to Somatic complaints (stomach-ache, feeling unwell or*
 - ✓ *Resistive behavior (temper tantrums, violent behavior)*



Responsive Activities

In-school, in-patient, out-of-school, multimodal

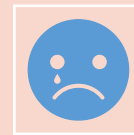
Characteristics of school settings associated with School refusal, Heyne, et al. forthcoming



1 Classroom situation (student-teacher relationships; teacher support; fear of the teacher; noisy and unpredictable classrooms)



2 General aspects **of the school** (fear of unstructured time, school safety, fears from pandemic)



3 Social **aspects** (victimization, bullying, difficulty making friends, feeling isolated)



4 Educational **aspects** (worry about being smart enough, demands from school, academic rigor).

Engaging with Parents



1. Maintain secondary gain from school attendance
2. Establishing a smooth household routine
3. Clarifying the date and process of school return
4. Giving instructions
5. Planning to ignore behaviours that accompany school non-attendance

A photograph of a man carrying a young child on his shoulders. Both are flexing their arms in a celebratory gesture, suggesting a moment of achievement or confidence. The background is a window with a grid pattern.

Engaging with Parents

Melvin & Maeda, 2021

- Modelling confidence
- Escorting the child to school
- Leaving the child at school
- Dealing with running away
- Providing positive reinforcement

Don't Forget the role of...

- Fun,
- Music
- Poetry
- Thinking
- Parents suffering too (loss of parents)
- Help realize full potential
- Teach basic coping skills
- Show good mental health talk about self
- Show how to work through stress
- Connect with others and purpose community service, help others
- Share where to get help
- Exercise



A high-angle photograph of a group of people standing in a circle on a light-colored tiled floor. They are wearing various colored shirts (blue, green, purple, red, maroon). A semi-transparent blue rectangular overlay is centered over the group, containing white text. The text reads 'ACE Recommendations Taskforce formation'.

ACE Recommendations Taskforce formation

Focus on

- Overall campus culture and climate to promote, improve, and foster positive mental health and well-being for all community members.

Improve

- Awareness and Access to services and support for mental health.

Make

- Make administrative improvements that are long-term and sustainable, requiring changes to policies, protocols, and procedures.

UNICEF Director, Fore

“Many children are left feeling **afraid, lonely, anxious, and concerned** for their future. We must emerge from this pandemic with a better approach to child and adolescent mental health, and that starts by giving the issue the **attention it deserves.**”



Goal

- Get students thoughts out of their heads
- Normalize questions and concerns
- Build Relationships
- Provide Resources
- Stay Connected





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