



## Student Mental Health and Addictions Newsletter

November 2021

---

YRDSB Mental Health services are provided by YRDSB psychology and social work personnel

---

### The ABCs of Mental Health: Acknowledging

In our September [Newsletter](#), we introduced the [ABCs \(Acknowledge, Bridge and Connection\) of Mental Health Framework](#) and mandatory mental health student lesson series. We are pleased to share some words from our students and staff regarding these [lessons](#). In this month's newsletter we will take a closer look at the ABCs, focusing on **A-Acknowledge**.

What does it mean to Acknowledge?

To acknowledge is to validate, honour and center feelings and experiences; to greet these feelings and experiences with understanding and compassion. To acknowledge is to be respectful of what is shared and the vulnerability it might take to share one's story, feelings and or experiences.

Why is Acknowledging Important?

Kristalyn Salters-Pedneault, PhD discusses [Emotional Validation](#) (Acknowledging) and invites us to consider the following:

**Communicate acceptance:** When you validate/acknowledge someone's emotions & experiences, you demonstrate care, understanding and acceptance.

**Strengthen relationships:** People who show each other acceptance are able to feel more connected and build stronger relationships.

**Show value:** When you acknowledge and validate someone's emotions & experiences, you are showing them that they are important to you.

**Better emotional regulation:** When people feel heard and understood, it can help lessen the intensity of strong emotions. This can be particularly important when it comes to strong negative or distressing feelings. Some research suggests that offering people emotional validation (acknowledgment) may help them better regulate their emotions.

### Acknowledging in action

We invite you to consider the following ways of acknowledging others:

**Listen with care & be present:** If possible, pause what you are doing & avoid distractions.

**Validate the emotion/experience:** “Thank you for sharing; I can see (understand) why you would feel that way.”

**Express empathy:** Even if the emotion or situation is not something you necessarily understand, show that you care about the other person’s feelings. Words such as “I’m here for you or I am with you” can be great ways of showing empathy.

**Do not minimize:** Never minimize what someone is experiencing.

### YRDSB Mental Health Acknowledges

We Acknowledge the lived and living experiences of our students, families & staff and the visible and invisible barriers that might accompany these experiences. We acknowledge that we exist in a society where factors such as systematic racism, discrimination, and other forms of oppression continue to negatively impact our students, families and staff, adversely affecting their mental health and well-being. We are aware that simply acknowledging is not enough. For this reason, we are intentional about creating learning environments that are identity-affirming, safe and inclusive. We are committed to providing learning opportunities that shift mindsets and ideologies that uphold oppressive practices. Most importantly, **we acknowledge the excellence and brilliance that stretch across all communities and are found within all our students.**

To learn more about the ABC Framework & lesson series, please visit [YRDSB ABCs](#)

We look forward to creating pathways for caring connections and meaningful relationships with you. Share your voice by using this [survey](#) and let’s pave the path forward together.

## **Mental Health COVID-19 Page**

The link below is dedicated to supporting student mental health during this pandemic. Resources for students, parents/guardians as well as community resources are listed. In addition, there are various links to YRDSB mental health supports as well as community supports available during the school closure. Please consider taking some time to familiarize yourself with the [Mental Health and Community Supports During COVID](#). Continue to check out the [YRDSB website](#) for updated information as well as the Twitter accounts @YRDSB and @YRDSB\_SS.

**Patricia Marra-Stapleton, M.Sc., C. Psych. Assoc.**

Mental Health Lead

[patricia.marra-stapleton@yrdsb.ca](mailto:patricia.marra-stapleton@yrdsb.ca)

**Hoshana Calliste, MSW, RSW**

Assistant Coordinator of Mental Health

[hoshana.calliste@yrdsb.ca](mailto:hoshana.calliste@yrdsb.ca)