



PART 2

Being a Trusted Adult

Agenda

- What if you are a Trusted Adult?
- Intervention Language for Educators



What is a Trusted Adult?

What comes to mind when you think of a trusted adult?

Kids say it is someone who is a good listener, offers advice, shows empathy, or won't make you feel silly for coming to them - someone they feel a connection with. A trusted adult is reliable and dependable.

The role of a trusted adult is to:

- Listen and validate how hard it must be to confide in someone or to ask for help.
- And then, help the young person get to the appropriate person to provide the help or support they need.

Who may be a trusted adult?



Parent
Guardian
Grandparent
Family Member



School Counselor
Social Worker
Teacher
Mental Health
Provider



Community
Leaders, Religious
Leader
Coach/Instructor
Camp Counselors
After School Staff



What If You Are The Trusted Adult?

Young people may find it challenging to ask for help. In the process a child may reveal information which makes you and them feel uncomfortable.

- Stay calm and listen
- Thank them for trusting you
- Be sure to take care of yourself

Remember

- We can go a long way toward helping a child simply by acknowledging what they say and treating them with respect and sensitivity.
- There are limits to the kind of support you can provide.
- **Facilitators, Coaches, or Teachers are not responsible for either diagnosing or treating a student. Only a Mental Health Provider can do this.**



Being Concerned

There will be times when you may notice a change in behavior or performance of a child that has lasted two weeks or longer.

- **Confer with your building's administration/pre-selected trusted adult.**
- You may choose to document these changes using the Mental Health Checklist.
- These changes may warrant a conversation.
- If appropriate, schedule a private time for this conversation because a child might disclose some personal information to you.

**Erika's Lighthouse**

Mental Health Checklist

Document changes in behavior you have observed for the past 2 or more weeks.

Student: _____ Observer: _____

- Sad, depressed or irritable mood
- Loss of interest in favorite activities
- Significant weight loss or gain, significant change in appearance
- Restlessness, agitation or anxiety
- Fatigue or loss of energy, including sleeping in class
- Feelings of guilt, inappropriate apologies
- Low self-esteem, self deprecating comments
- Trouble concentrating or making decisions
- Repeated thoughts of death, infatuation with dark and sad things
- Frequent headaches and stomach pains
- Cutting or other self-injury
- Extreme aggressiveness
- Inattention to appearance, or inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Excessive risk-taking behavior
- Drop in school performance
- Low tolerance for frustration
- Lack of motivation or apathy
- Disrespect
- Social withdrawal
- Acting out or misbehavior
- Problems concentrating, unable to store and retrieve information
- Disorganized, forgotten materials and assignments
- Frequent absences or trips to the school nurse



Starting A Conversation



Intervention Language and Being the Trusted Adult

Take into account that this conversation could elicit a personal disclosure and should be scheduled during a protected time and location. Also understand that it is vital to the teacher/student relationship that the student is informed if there are plans to share the disclosure with someone else, who that person is and why it is important to do so (i.e. a parent or school support staff).

Keep in mind that it is normal to feel a little anxiety and discomfort when approaching a student you are concerned about. Just remember the goal is not to take on the student's problem or to have all of the right answers. Instead, focus on approaching the student with honest inquiry, concern and compassion—and connecting the student to the right kind of help.

I notice. State the changes you have noticed – use the mental health checklist, this will help with defensiveness.

I care. This is all about countering the negative thoughts.

How can I help? This is the action step. Give kids choices, but be firm that action will be taken. Affirm that help is available, effective and that they deserve to feel better.

Tips on Being the Trusted Adult

- **Ask Questions and Listen** – Kids want your attention, not your advice.
- **Be Prepared for the Truth** - Remain calm, it's okay to be uncomfortable.
- **Validate the Student's Feelings** – Kids say all the time the most hurtful thing is when their feelings are minimized or not taken seriously.
- **Listen to Your Gut** – It's the best tool you already have. If you are speaking with the student, it is because you care and they know it.
- **Remember your Training** - Follow school protocols to keep everyone safe.
- **Take Action** - If a student needs to speak with someone, walk them down to a counselor or social worker. Check with your school building about who the best person is to help students.

Always wrap up with an action plan that both you and the student develop together. Make sure the student knows there is help available at school (if there is) and in the community and give the student information on how to contact these resources.

REMINDER: As adults working with children we should always keep in mind our responsibility as mandated reporters. If a child discloses plans to hurt themselves, someone else or if someone is hurting them—a report to the appropriate authorities in your area is required by law.

“We need to talk...”

I notice.

“Is everything okay? I’ve noticed you have been....”

I care.

“I’m concerned because I know this isn’t normal for you.”

How can I help?

“What can I do to help? Let’s come up with a plan together.”

QUICK TIPS

- Ask questions and listen
- Be prepared for the truth
- Validate the student’s feelings
- Listen to your gut
- Take action and follow up



Engaging Support: BEACON OF HOPE SIGNS

Have you seen the
lighthouses around school?



A teacher or staff member with a lighthouse on their door
is a Beacon of Hope for good mental health.

If you're concerned about yourself or a friend, talk to one of these trusted adults.



For even more information,
check out our website!
www.erikaslighthouse.org

Explain to the staff what it means to be a “Beacon of Hope” as some are nervous & unsure

Normalize that they are not mental health professionals and not expected to complete a suicide assessment.

“Beacons of Hope” staff members
are fostering resilience

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