

# ACTION PLANS

## SMASHING THE STIGMA OF MENTAL HEALTH

### TOPIC DESCRIPTION:

We need to support students who are in need. Students experiencing mental illness may experience stigma which results in them:

- Not wanting to be seen as “having a problem” and masking how they are actually feeling (e.g. acting funny and popular).
- Feeling lonely, withdrawn and disengaged.
- Feeling that they can’t open up to adults trying to help or seeking help.

Feeling “talked at” and “not with”.

### WHY THIS A PRIORITY:

Mental illness is not openly discussed in our society. Due to the stigma associated with mental illness, students may try to manage things on their own. This may make things worse. Students who feel they can't seek support in their school, may feel uncared for or unimportant. This may result in students disengaging from this learning. Disengaging from learning can affect students later in life. We can smash the stigma associated with mental illness by encouraging open discussion. Students need to feel comfortable talking to their peers and/or staff about their mental wellbeing. Good mental health increases school attendance, learning, well-rounded individuality, and catholic identity.

### SOLUTIONS:

#### What students can do:

- Host student-led events (“Be Yourself Day to celebrate your identity and educate students or Chill Out Days).
- Promote the formation of peer support teams, where students are trained in how to talk to their peers about mental health.
- Work with Guidance Counsellors
- Develop a student led promotion (e.g. It’s OK to Not Be OK) which accesses online programs for mental health.
- Take responsibility and seek mental health support

#### What schools can do:

- Establish wellbeing spaces
- Set up Peer Support Programs (students trained to talk to other students about mental health)
- Partner with students to help them lead health promotion activities and make personal development classes more engaging and relevant
- Appoint a wellbeing representative in each school
- Develop mental health support groups in schools
- Allow students to create more comfortable classroom environments
- Encourage staff to engage in difficult conversations

#### What BCE can do:

- Mandate mental health and wellbeing in the curriculum
- Provide a digital platform for students to reach out and seek help
- Provide Mental Health First-Aid for ALL teachers
- Advocate for mental health awareness and support across BCE.
- Implement Teacher - Student Panels in BCE schools.

