Professional Learning Activity: Reducing the Stigma of Mental Health Disorders and Supporting Learners Online

Learning Objectives:

- Participants will identify the importance of reducing the stigma surrounding mental health.
- Participants will explore methods for connecting with students about their mental health.
- Participants will identify at least one method for reducing the stigma mental health of students in an online, distance learning environment.

Necessary Materials:

- Internet access
- Conversation Notes handout (one per partnership or small group)

Facilitator Email:

Today we are going to learn more about mental health. Specifically, we will dig into resources aimed to provide educators with the tools needed to reduce stigma and connect with students in an online environment to monitor emotional wellbeing. To do so, we will follow this research-based professional learning model developed by Learners Edge.
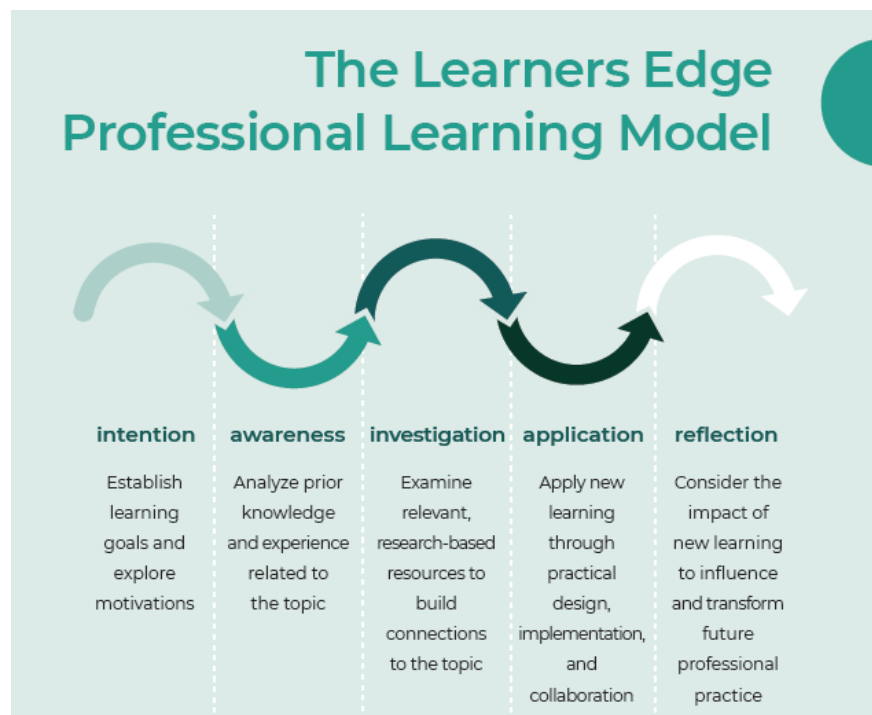
Watch these quick introductory videos to get you thinking about our topic:

[Break the Stigma](#)

[Tackling Mental Health Stigma](#)

[The Butterfly Effect of Pediatric Mental Illness: Let's Break the Stigmas](#)

Now, take a minute to jot down one learning goal you have related to the topic of reducing the stigma of mental health or helping your students with mental health concerns in an online, distance learning environment.

"Stigma is when someone views you in a negative way because you have a distinguishing characteristic or personal trait that's thought to be, or actually is, a disadvantage (a negative stereotype). Unfortunately, negative attitudes and beliefs toward people who have a mental health condition are common." [-Mayo Clinic](#)

To learn more about how you can decrease the stigma of mental health disorders in your classroom or school and support your students, complete the following:

1. *Take a look at this super cool resource, [#MyYoungerSelf, from the Child Mind Institute](#) as it has recorded over 70 different actors, athletes, and other notable change-makers sharing what they would tell their younger self about mental illness. It's a wonderful effort to actively remove the stigma of mental health issues! Consider how you might use this resource with your students to continue to remove the stigma of mental health challenges.*
2. *How can you reduce the stigma around mental health issues in general, and anxiety specifically, in your setting? Read through this article, "[How You Can Stop Mental Illness Stigma](#)," by Laura Greenstein (via NAMI) and check out this webpage devoted to decreasing the stigma, [Stigma Free-NAMI](#).*
3. *Now that you understand the importance of reducing stigma, let's shift the focus to how we can better support our learners struggling with mental health even in a distance learning environment. Read these article with a few quick tips: [How to Teach Social-Emotional Learning When Students Aren't in School](#) and [A trauma-informed approach to teaching through coronavirus — for students everywhere, online or not](#).*

4. *Take a look at some tech tools that you could share with your students even in a distance learning environment.*
   - *[The Best Anxiety Apps of 2019](#)*
   - *[Parenting, Media, and Everything In Between](#)*
   - *[Emotional Intelligence Apps and Games](#)*
   - *[Personalizing Social Emotional Learning with Google Forms](#)*
5. *Draft a quick plan using ONE thing you learned to reduce the stigma of mental health disorders or support your students emotionally in an online, distance learning classroom. Remember, starting small is just fine!*
6. *Lastly, meet virtually with a colleague or small group of your peers to discuss the prompts outlined on the Conversation Notes handout.*

To learn more about mental health, check out these learning opportunities from Learners Edge:

[Webinar Series: Understanding Anxiety](#)

[PD 141: Mental Health Basics for School Staff](#)

[Course 5109: Connection in the Classroom](#)

[Course 5102: Anxiety Awareness: Empowering Students with Help and Hope](#)

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Conversation Notes:

Discussion Prompts	Notes
Share the learning goal you have on this topic.	
What do you already know about the stigma around mental health and supporting students' emotional wellbeing? What more do you want to know? How do you plan to find out?	
Share one takeaway from the articles and videos you reviewed that will positively impact your professional practice.	
How will you implement ONE thing you learned to monitor or assist with emotional wellbeing in your online, distance learning classroom?	
How will learning about stigma and using technology to support students emotionally positively impact your students? The families? The community?	