Building a Mental Health Toolbox for Schools: Practical Strategies for Student Wellbeing

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Agenda

- Why Mental Health Matters in School
- What is a School Mental Health Toolbox
- Implementation Tips
- Practicing the Tools
- Family and Community Partnerships
- Resources

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Why Mental Health Matters in Schools

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Supporting Student Mental Health in School

- Early Recognition
- Impact of Stress Factors
- Shifting from Punitive to Supportive
- Proactive Approach

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What is a School Mental Health Toolbox?

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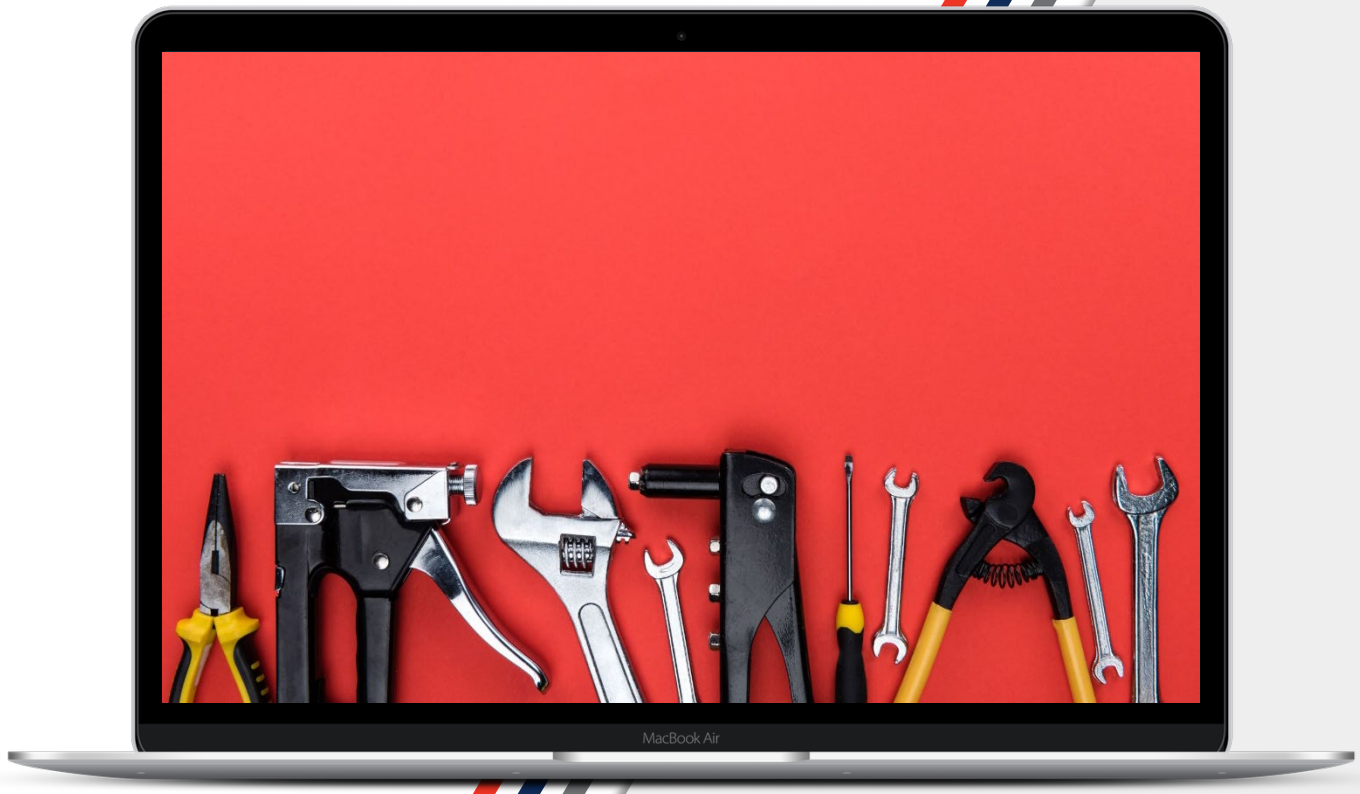
What's Inside?

- Strategies
- Tools
- Resources



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Core Components

- Emotional Regulation Tools
- Coping Strategies
- Social Connection Supports
- Crisis Response Resources

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Core Components

Emotional Regulation



- Mindfulness
- Breathing
- Fidgets
- Timers
- Calming corners

Coping Strategies



- Journaling
- Name it/Tame it
- Thought swap
- Drawing
- Chair Yoga

Social Connection Supports



- Peer check-in
- Conflict pause
- Safe adult list
- Ask for help script
- Connection Groups

Crisis Response Services



- Safety plans
- Threat assessment
- Mental health professionals

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Tiered Integration

- Tier I: All
- Tier II: Some
- Tier III: Few

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Implementation

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Implementation

- **Intentional Teaching and Modeling**
  - Introduce tools by explaining, demonstrating, and guiding student practice for effective learning
- **Embedding Predictable Routines**
  - Daily check-ins and calm-start activities help integrate strategies into the school day seamlessly
- **Visual Supports and Accessible Materials**
  - Visuals, norms, and sensory tools promote independence and self-regulation
- **Schoolwide Collaboration and Monitoring**
  - Staff development, shared language, family communication, and data monitoring refine practices



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Let's Practice

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Tools For Your Toolbox

- Calm My Body
- Calm My Thoughts
- Express My Feelings
- Get Support
- Solve the Problem
- Comfort & Grounding
- Reset & Return

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Share Your Tools

Toolbox Strategies

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Family and Community Partnerships

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Family and Community Partnerships

- Expand resources and strengthen support networks
- Communicate effectively with families
- Collaborate with local providers
- Workshops

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Resources

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Websites

- YouTube
  - Bubble Bounce
  - Circle Breathing
  - Belly Breathing
  - 5-minute mindfulness
- GoNoodle
- kidsmentalhealthfoundation.org
- classroomwise.org
- Headspace.com

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Tools

Fidgets	Timer	Sandpaper
Weighted Items	Clock	Feelings Chart
Headphones	Fabric	Mirror
Journals	Stuffed Animals	Stress Balls
Coloring or Blank Pages	Music	Breathing Cards
Crayons, Colored Pencils or Markers	Choice Cards	Glitter Jar

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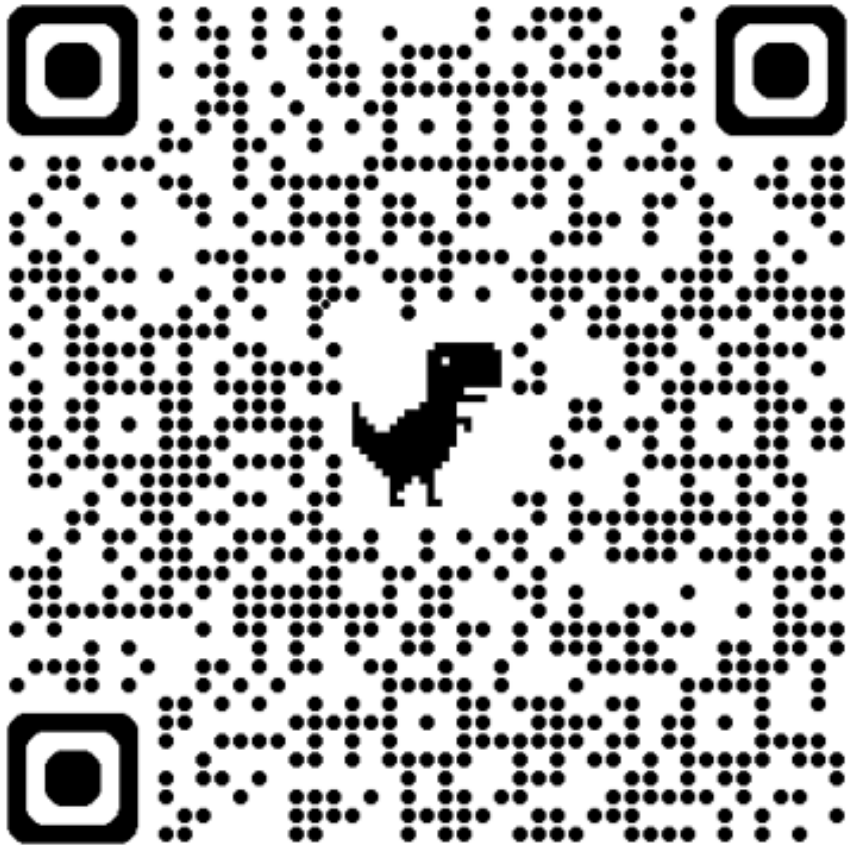
Checklist



School Mental Health Toolbox Checklist

Emotional Regulation Tools

- ☐ Breathing strategies (box breathing, 4–7–8, balloon breathing)
- ☐ Grounding techniques (5-4-3-2-1, sensory reset)
- ☐ Visual regulation supports (Zones chart, feelings chart)
- ☐ Calm corner / regulation space with clear expectations
- ☐ Sensory tools (fidgets, textured items, putty, weighted items)
- ☐ Movement breaks (walk, stretch, chair push-ups)
- ☐ Mindfulness routines (1–2 minute practices)

Coping Strategies

- ☐ Positive self-talk stems ('I can try…', 'I am capable…')
- ☐ Journaling prompts or reflection sheets
- ☐ Coping skill menus / choice boards
- ☐ Break cards or signal systems
- ☐ Problem-solving steps (Identify → Choose → Try → Review)
- ☐ Emotion expression strategies (draw, write, talk)

Social Connection Supports

- ☐ Daily check-in system (written or verbal)
- ☐ Peer support activities (pair-share, connection partners)
- ☐ Classroom community circles / restorative circles
- ☐ Trusted adult identification process
- ☐ Check-in/Check-out routine
- ☐ Relationship-building rituals (greetings, celebrations)

Crisis Response Tools

- ☐ Clear referral pathway (who to call, when, how)
- ☐ Simple de-escalation script for staff
- ☐ Quick-access grounding tools (visuals, prompts)
- ☐ Safety plan template for individual students
- ☐ Re-entry plan and protocol after crisis
- ☐ Help-seeking signage or student-facing supports

Additional Tools

- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____
- ☐ _____

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Questions?

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Toolbox Strategies

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