

The Western Cape Community of Practice

LEARNING BRIEF

July 2022

Tools to strengthen learner wellbeing

After School programmes (ASPs) offer mental wellness support to young people that have experienced trauma and setbacks, directly or indirectly.

The second WC Community of Practice of 2022 explored practical ways to embed **simple but effective mental wellness activities** into regular programming. EMpower, BRAVE, Khululeka Grief Support and the Butterfly Art Project share their insights on how to **practically support learners' mental wellness**.

We unpacked mental health from the perspective of adolescents. Two key takeaways from the CoP were, the importance of having well-trained, attentive, and approachable practitioners, as well as acknowledging that self-awareness is the cornerstone to positive mental wellbeing.

An approach to mental health programming for adolescent youth

Meeting basic needs – Feeding children on a regular basis to ensure that they are not hungry creates balance as opposed to feeding only at breakfast time. The cliché that no one can learn anything on a hungry stomach was emphasized.

A caring adult – A child that has a caring, present and invested adult has a higher chance of navigating emotions. After School practitioners, in most cases, play this role. It is important because learners need role models and people they trust.

Trauma-informed practice and tools – Sessions offering grief support that unpack emotions and feelings are necessary when dealing with emotionally vulnerable youth. Questions such as “what happened, what did you feel, what do you feel now, how did you say goodbye” are critical in allowing kids to come to terms with trauma.

Gender sensitivity – Programmes that are gender sensitive have a greater chance of fostering positive behavioural change outcomes in young people. Intentionally breaking down the stigma around trauma and its gendered nature creates a sense of openness and trust among young people, thus gender sensitivity is non-negotiable.



Practical tools for Mental Wellness Programming

When engaging in mental health, we need practical tools that we can integrate into our programmes. It is important to note that when adopting new tools and models, context is an underlying factor, and flexibility is encouraged.

BRAVE Capacitar

[Trauma Healing](#) - Teaches wellness practices, team building and self-development to empower and awaken people to their own wisdom, strength, and resources.

Butterfly Art Project

[Resources](#) - Trains, mentors, and supports adults working with children in marginalised communities through psycho-social support using art therapy.

Khululeka Grief Support

[Whirlpool of grief](#) – This tool explores feelings of loss and death that can be very difficult. It unpacks these feelings in a way that is empathetic to how one may feel and reveals hidden emotional pain and scars so that we can go and look for them, acknowledge them and journey toward healing.

[Trust Bus](#) - The Trust Bus explores the question of trust and who we trust and what makes someone trustworthy. Children are asked to draw the faces of those people that they feel they can trust in the windows of the Trust Bus.

EMpower

Empower is an organisation that partners with local organisations to enable marginalised young people to transform their lives and communities. The organisation focuses on the mental wellbeing of young people.

[Follow this link](#) to see Empower's youth development tools on their website.

YouTube video: [Mental wellbeing for adolescent youth](#)

The next Western Cape CoP will take place in November 2022. This would be an in-person session. More details to follow.