



# Mental Health Awareness for Educators: Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors

2023/2024

[mimtsstac.org](http://mimtsstac.org)



# Acknowledgments

The content for this training day was developed based on the work of:

- Kent McIntosh
- PBISApps

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# Group Agreements

## We are Responsible

- Return on time from breaks
- Take care of our needs

## We are Engaged

- Share “air time”
- Plan to participate in multiple ways
  - Chat, breakout rooms, polls, reactions, unmute
  - Ask questions

# Training Effectiveness

- At the end of the session, you will be asked to provide feedback on today's training
- Results will be used to make improvements to professional learning and for reporting to TA Center stakeholders
- One of the feedback questions you will see is related to promoting and positively portraying diversity among educators and learners (e.g., focus on asset-based language, positive representation of multiple identities)

# Purpose

- This session is part of the Mental Health (MH) Awareness for Educators Series designed to increase educators' exposure to and knowledge of various aspects of mental health and well-being.
- This session aims to increase participants' understanding of what internalizing and externalizing behaviors are and how they impact students in the classroom and in later life outcomes.

# Intended Outcomes

- Increased knowledge about what internalizing and externalizing behaviors are
- A better understanding of how individuals are impacted by internalizing and externalizing behaviors
- Begin to consider ways that schools can support individuals engaging in internalizing and externalizing behaviors
- Build educator capacity to become Mental Health Aware





# MH Awareness Topics and Goals of this Series

- Understanding ACEs
  - **Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors**
  - Anxiety Disorders 101
  - Depressive Disorders 101
  - Trauma Responses in the Classroom
- Reducing the knowledge gap
  - Increasing educator capacity to support student MH and well-being
  - Promote positive SEB skills for students and staff
  - Reduce the stigma around MH
  - Support positive school climate and student/staff well-being

# Agenda

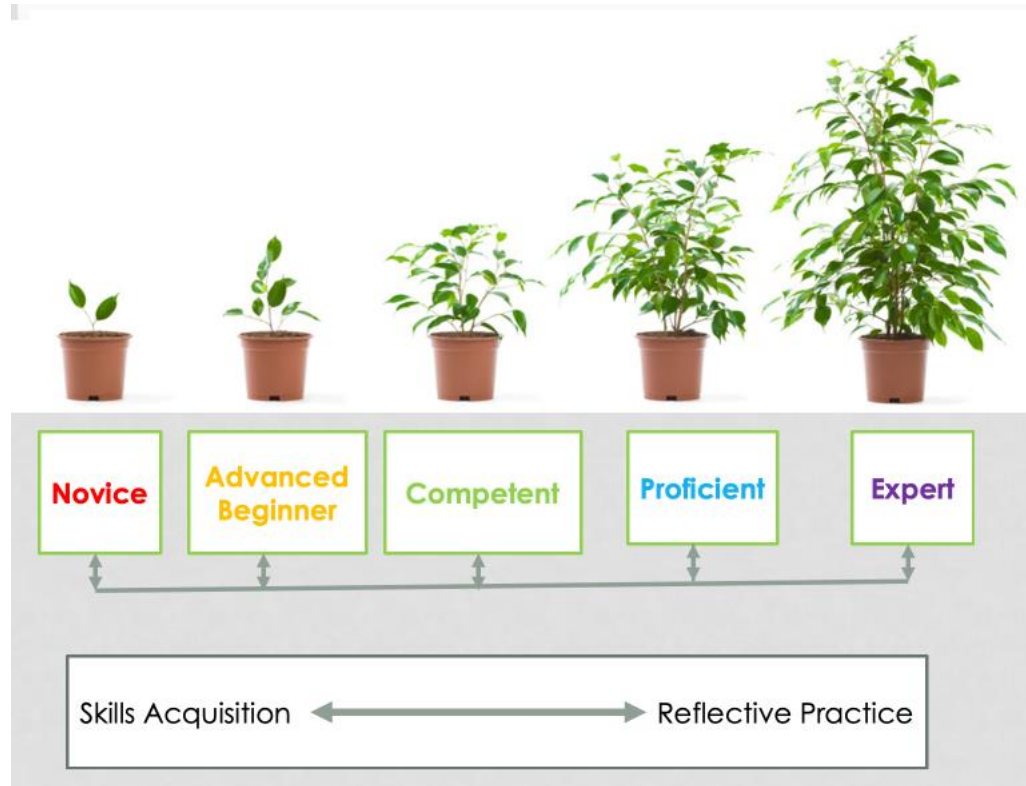
1.0 Understanding Behavior

2.0 The Impact

3.0 Supporting Students

4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

# Activity 0.1

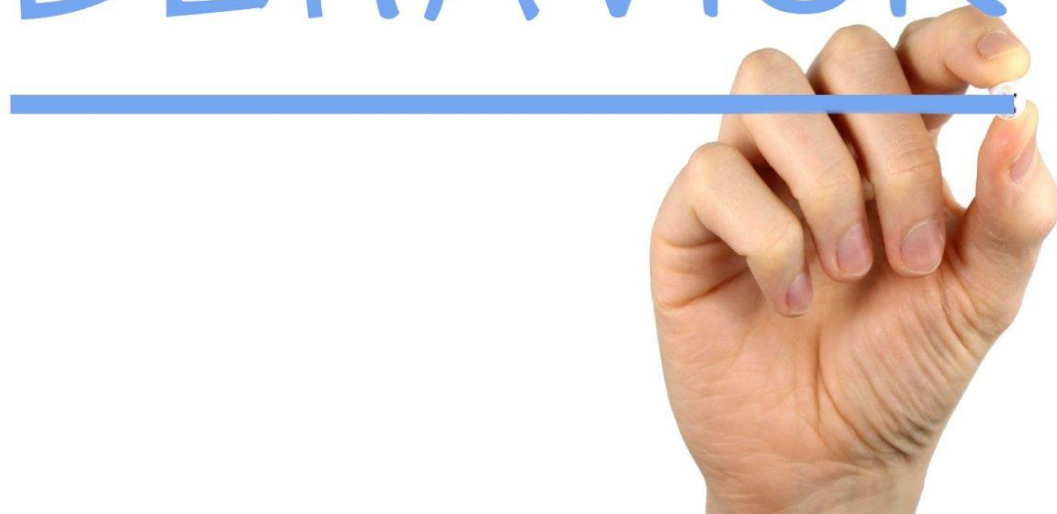


- Self-reflect on your current knowledge and skills related to Internalizing vs. Externalizing Behaviors
- Where do you currently rate your level of knowledge and skills related to Internalizing vs. Externalizing Behaviors?
- You do not have to share your responses!

# 1.0 Understanding Behavior

## Definition of Behavior

BEHAVIOR



- How someone conducts oneself or behaves
- The response of an individual to their environment
- How someone functions or operates

# Activity 1.1

## Quick Write Activity

- Imagine a baby crying
- Take 60 seconds to write down all of the reasons that you think the baby may be crying
- Be prepared to share some of your responses



# Behavior is Communication

- Motivation
  - Obtaining something
  - Avoiding something
- Attention
  - Peers
  - Adult
- Stimulation/Sensory
- Activity/Task



Cave, M., 2018



## Activity 1.2

- Identify one example of how a student could use behavior to **obtain** each of the following:
  - Attention
  - Stimulation/Sensory
  - Activity/Task
- Identify one example of how a student could use a behavior to **avoid** each of the following:
  - Attention
  - Stimulation/Sensory
  - Activity/Task
- Be prepared to share your responses



# Internalizing and Externalizing Behaviors

## Internalizing Behaviors

- Maladaptive over-regulation of cognitive and emotional state often resulting in behavior directed and persisting within the individual

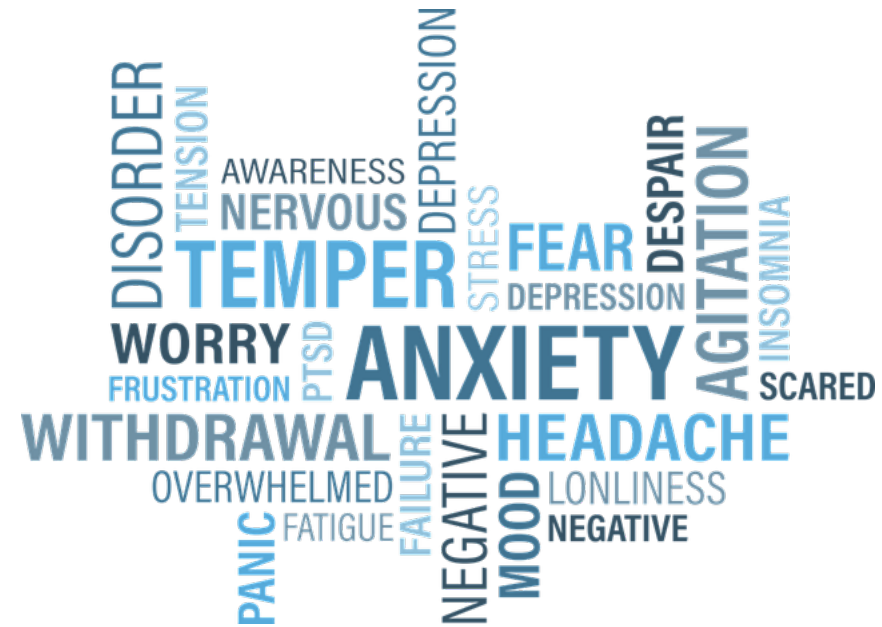
## Externalizing Behaviors

- Maladaptive under-regulation of cognitive and emotional state often resulting in behavior directed outward at others

McIntosh, K., Ty, S.V., and Miller, L.D., 2014

# Internalizing Behaviors

- Anxiety
  - Excessive fear or worry
- Depression
  - Sadness or loss of interest
- Social Withdrawal
  - Avoiding people or activities
- Somatic Complaints
  - Physical sx., i.e. headaches



McIntosh, K., Ty, S.V., and Miller, L.D., 2014

# Externalizing Behaviors



- Aggressive and disruptive behaviors
- Refusal/resistance to following rules
- Hyperactivity-impulsivity
- Disruptive to the classroom and school

McIntosh, K., Ty, S.V., and Miller, L.D., 2014



# Activity 1.3

## Breakout Room Discussion

- Create a Brave and Safe Space
    - Introduce and welcome one another to your breakout room
    - Share your name, location, and role
  - Consider the schools and districts that you support
    - Does your school or district currently offer professional development opportunities for staff to understand internalizing and externalizing behaviors?
    - Are there supports in place to help recognize students who may be exhibiting internalizing behaviors?
  - Share your thoughts and reflections
-

## 2.0 The Impact

# Possible Impact of Internalizing Behaviors

- Increased MH concerns
  - Anxiety Disorders
  - Depressive Disorders
- Less likely to complete high school
- Impaired focus
- Undue attention to non-instructional stimuli
- Low motivation to seek out social experiences
- Self-imposed isolation from peers
- Increased somatic complaints resulting in less time in the classroom

McIntosh, K., Ty, S.V., and Miller, L.D., 2014

# Possible Impact of Externalizing Behaviors

- Increased classroom disruptions
- Impaired relationships
  - Adult
  - Peer
- Increased discipline referrals
- Increased time out of class/decreased instruction
- Impaired focus
- Increased MH concerns
  - Behavior Disorders
  - Attention Related Disorders

# Classroom Impact

Students who exhibit internalizing or externalizing behaviors are more likely than students who do not to experience:

- Increased teacher-student relational challenges
- Increased peer relational challenges
- Lower academic performance
- Increased risk-taking behaviors
- Increased incidences of self-harm and suicidal behavior

Vergunst, F., Commisso, M., Geoffroy, M., et al, 2023



# Long-Term Impact

- Poorer long-term economic outcomes
- Poorer long-term social outcomes
- Individuals who struggle with both internalizing and externalizing behaviors fare worst in the long-term
  - Annual income is nearly 2xs lower than individuals with internalizing behaviors only
  - Annual income is nearly 3xs lower than individuals with externalizing behaviors only
  - More likely to live alone in adulthood without an intimate partner or children

Vergunst, F., Commisso, M., Geoffrey, M., et al, 2023

# Outcomes

“Children with elevated comorbid symptoms are highly vulnerable to poor adult-life outcomes that are robustly associated with health, well-being, and longevity. Early detection, prevention, and support are critical”.



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Vergunst, F., Commisso, M., Geoffrey, M., et al, 2023

## Activity 2.1

- 60-Second Reflection
- How can learning about the impact of internalizing and externalizing behaviors help you to support students better?
- What is your key takeaway from this section of learning?
- What do you want to learn more about related to the impact?



## 3.0 Supporting Students

# Video: Supporting Students



# Where to Start

- Work towards being proactive vs. reactive
- Build competency by understanding the ABCs of the function of behavior
  - Antecedent-what happened before the behavior
  - Behavior-the observable actions
  - Consequence-what happens directly after the behavior
- Data collection
  - Informal observations
  - ODRs
  - Attendance records
  - Academic records
  - Office visits
  - Nurse visits
  - Community provider visits
  - Assessments

# Leverage the Systems and Practices Already in Place



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- MTSS
- PBIS
- SEL
- SEB
- MH



# Activity 3.1

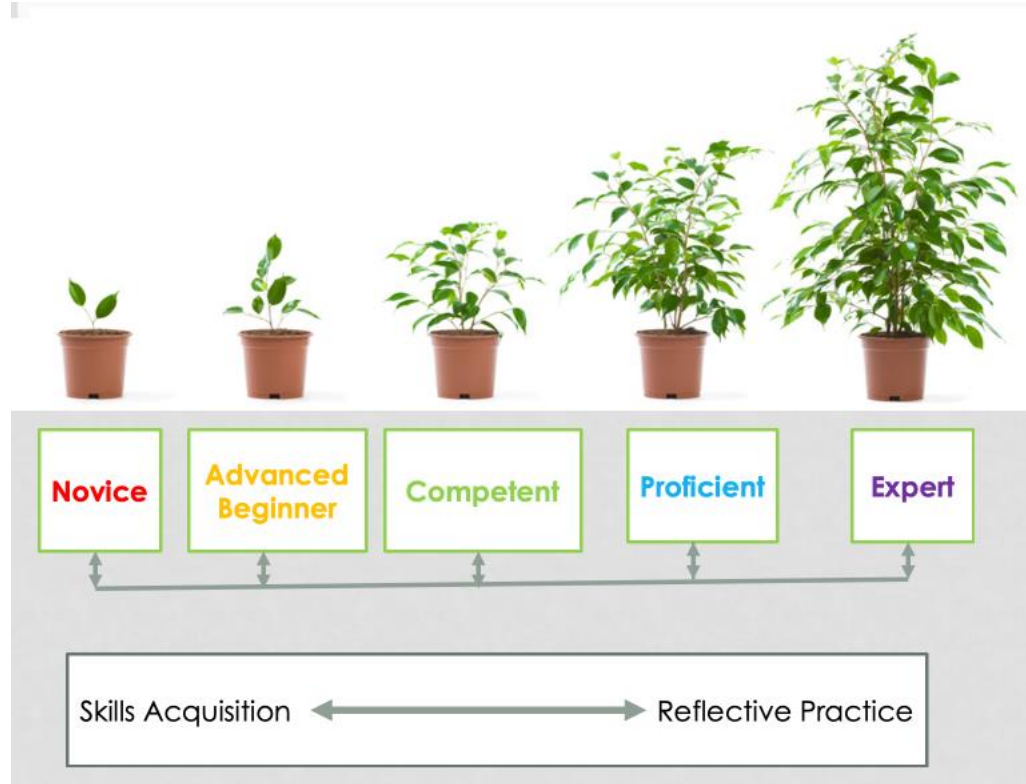
## Participant Poll

- What systems and practices do you currently have at your schools or districts?
    - Are you using an MTSS Framework?
    - Are you using PBIS?
    - Do you teach SEL?
  - Do you currently collect data on internalizing behaviors and externalizing behaviors?
  - What are some ways you can leverage this to support students?
-



## 4.0 Wrap Up and Next Steps

# Activity 4.1



- Self-reflect on your current knowledge and skills related to Internalizing vs. Externalizing Behaviors
- Where do you currently rate your level of knowledge and skills related to Internalizing vs. Externalizing Behaviors?
- You do not have to share your responses!

## Closing Review

Are these behaviors better described by **Internalizing** or **Externalizing** behaviors?

- Negative self-talk, i.e. “I’m not smart, I won’t do well on this test.”
- Yelling out loud, “This test is stupid.”
- Purposefully avoiding eye contact with the teacher during “call and response” activities
- Disrupting the class by speaking during quiet reading time
- Frequent requests to visit the school nurse for headaches and stomachaches
- A student feeling great sadness or shame when they don’t get a perfect test score.

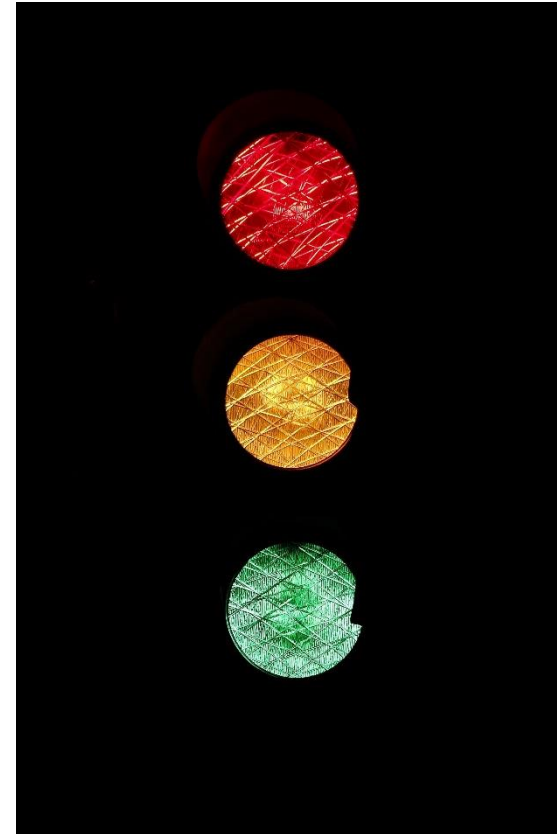
## Next Steps

- Consider what items or resources piqued your interest in learning more today
  - Do you want to explore learning more about the ABCs of Behavior?
  - Do you want to learn more about how to be more proactive vs. reactive when working with students?
- How will you begin to consider leveraging the supports already in place at your school to support students and staff?

## Activity 4.2

Share in the chat:

- One thing to **STOP**
- One thing to **CONTINUE**
- One thing to **START**



# Keep Moving Forward



# References

- Cave, M. (2018, April 10). *Motive, Motivate, Motivation: Why Are My Students Doing That?!*. PBISApps. Retrieved from <https://www.pbisapps.org/articles/motive-motivate-motivation-why-are-my-students-doing-that>
- McIntosh, K., Ty, S.V., & Miller, L.D. (2014). Effects of School-Wide Positive Behavior Support on Internalizing Problems: Current Evidence and Future Directions. *Journal of Positive Behavior Interventions*, 16, 209-218.
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