

SPRING 2025

PRIMHE NEWSLETTER

Preparing Rural Inclusive Mental Health Educators



Recruiting and Retaining High-Quality School-Based Mental Health Professionals
for High-Need and Rural Schools in Tulare County



PRIMHE
Preparing Rural Inclusive Mental Health Educators

Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

Bi-Annual Newsletter

Spring 2025

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Hello Readers! This newsletter is intended to inspire and bring awareness.

Welcome to our PRIMHE newsletter. We are glad you're here!

Each fall and spring, our wonderful team of PRIMHE graduate students come together to offer our readers insightful information, resources, and strategies to promote mental well-being among students, families, and educators.

To the right, you can reference this issue's topics written by our PRIMHE graduate interns.

To learn more about the PRIMHE program, scan the QR code on the front page or click here: [TCOE | PRIMHE](#)

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Nourish your Soil, Tend to your Growth

Plants provide a metaphor for growth and flourishing when our needs are met. Just as a flower needs proper care to thrive, we as individuals also have our own needs. It is of high importance to tend to our minds.

What defines good mental health?

Good mental health is more than an absence of a mental illness. Good mental health means you are in a state of wellbeing where you feel balanced and function well. According to the World Health Organization, good mental health is when you can cope with the everyday stressors of life, learn and work productively, and positively utilize your strengths and abilities (HealthDirect.gov, 2023).

Growing your mental health:

Prepare the soil: Quality sleep (7–9 hours a night), a healthy/balanced diet, basic exercise, and socialization ensure good physical health.

Plant the seeds: Try journaling or writing down your thoughts, as they provide a safe space for self-reflection and processing emotions. Learn about cognitive distortions and work on reframing your thoughts.

Stop and smell the roses: Know what brings you joy. Know your why. Know what matters to you. Take time to rest and reset by reading a book, listening to music, walking, meditating, or simply practice deep breathing.

Pulling weeds: Weeds are bad habits that sneak back into your life. Pulling weeds is a part of growing your mental health. Talk to a mental health provider or a trusted person to weed out unhealthy habits or negative ways of thinking. Weeds are a part of life; self-compassion is a practice to manage life's weeds.

Nourish your plants, nourish yourself.

Just as plants depend on their gardener, our minds depend on us. By nurturing ourselves consistently, we gradually build resilience and strength.

Resist the Urge!

Letting a child struggle on a task or situation helps them build problem-solving skills.



Problem-solving skills empower children to tackle challenges independently and increase their resilience and confidence. Allowing children to find solutions to their problems prepares them for life's difficulties and enhances their critical thinking skills. By **resisting the urge** to "fix" or "do" tasks for them, you are helping their brains develop problem-solving skills. Resisting the urge is challenging; here are some strategies to help.

- **Model Problem Solving.** When facing a challenge, actively think out loud and identify the problem. By verbalizing your thought process, you are modeling critical thinking skills, allowing your children to see how you approach challenges.
- **Team Think.** Consider seeking advice and points of view from your children. By involving them in discussions about challenges to seek an answer, you demonstrate that struggling with finding a solution is acceptable.
- **Practice Brainstorming.** Brainstorming allows children to think outside the box and generate unique ideas. Even if their ideas seem irrational or silly, resist the urge to correct them or give an idea; instead, respond with, "Hey, that's an idea. Let's try it!"
- **Join Them.** Choosing the best solution and acting it out with your child is far more beneficial than giving an answer. Not only will joining them help them feel empowered, but being present with them will also increase their sense of self-worth. If they get it wrong, ask, "Hmm, did that work out? I wonder what could have been done differently. Do you have any ideas?"
- **Recognize Attempts.** Praising your children for their mistakes and failures is helpful to their development and self-esteem. Say, "Hey, I watched you work so hard. I am proud of you for figuring out what works and what doesn't, that means you're learning!"

For more information to promote problem-solving skills, visit:

<https://www.championyourparenting.com/teaching-your-child-problem-solving-skills/>

<https://veryspecialtales.com/problem-solving-activities-for-kids/>



THE POWER OF *Gratitude*



Gratitude is a practice that can shift your attitude, mood, relationships, and energy for the better. Gratitude is appreciating what you have and recognizing the good things in your life, even during tough times. Gratitude is more than just a moment of acknowledgment – it's a gateway to abundance, joy, and peace. When we take time to be thankful, even for the smallest blessings, we shift our focus from what's missing to what's present.

Gratitude doesn't search for perfection but encourages us to embrace the good. It helps us find joy in the everyday, strengthens our relationships, and creates space for positivity to flow into our lives. Practicing gratitude allows us to appreciate what we have, the lessons we've learned, the people who have stood by us, and the strength we have discovered within ourselves. Research shows that practicing gratitude can:

- Improve relationships
- Reduce stress and help you focus better
- Activate the brain's "feel-good" chemicals like dopamine and serotonin
- Improve your quality of sleep
- Strengthen your immune system

Ways to Encourage Gratitude:

- Gratitude Jar: Write down your moments of gratitude on a small piece of paper and collect them in a jar. On tougher days, read through them to recall moments of goodness.
- Gratitude Letter: Write a note to someone who has positively impacted your life.
- Modeling: Share what you're thankful for during dinner or family time.

Gratitude is a daily practice that can have incredible benefits for a lifetime.



What are you grateful for today?



Immerse Yourself in Natural Waters

Being in Tulare County, we are fortunate to be surrounded by different natural terrains, including many natural water sources, from the lakes and rivers in the mountains, to the ocean being less than three hours east. While lakes, rivers, and oceans can all provide fun and excitement, they can also be incredibly beneficial for your health, depending on the environment and the type of water. These benefits include:

Natural minerals within the water, such as sand, salt, etc., can gently exfoliate your skin by removing old, dead skin cells, leaving a smoother complexion. When swimming in mineral-rich water, such as the ocean or mineral spring water, your skin can be rehydrated and help with skin conditions like acne or eczema because the water is filled with beneficial minerals such as sulfur, calcium, potassium, and magnesium. (Quattrini, Pampaloni, Brandi, 2016)

Natural water may help **decrease stress** and soothe your mind and body. Cortisol levels can be reduced just by immersing yourself in natural settings and bodies of water. Being in this environment activates your parasympathetic nervous system, which helps your body recover from stress and relax. Some of the more soothing effects can be the calmness of the sound of the water. Whether it is a lake, river, or ocean, the sound of waves and flowing water can be calming in ways that lower your heart rate and decrease your stress.

Natural water **boosts immunity and muscle recovery**. Bathing or plunging yourself in cold natural water helps boost immunity by causing your blood vessels to constrict and then dilate. This process improves circulation and helps heal sore tissues and muscles. Because of the buoyancy, tension within the muscles, and joints are relieved by the slight stretching of muscle tissue while submerged in water. The potential benefits extend to the cardiovascular system, with some studies indicating a reduction in blood pressure and the prevalence of cardiovascular diseases. (Nutrients 2023)

Bathing in natural water can **improve your emotional health and spirituality**. Being immersed in this natural environment allows more room for mental clarity to help you gather your thoughts, regulate your emotions, and even help you find your sense of peace. Spiritually, bathing in natural water helps with grounding and reconnecting with the earth. For a lot of people, this can be spiritually refreshing and help them feel more engaged with the world around them and with themselves.

Natural waters are a wonderful resource for your mental and physical wellness. With such close access, consider a trip to plunge or step into the benefits of natural waters.

For more information, please visit:

[Exploring the Potential Benefits of Natural Calcium-Rich Mineral Waters for Health and Wellness: A Systematic Review](#)

[Natural mineral waters: chemical characteristics and health effects – PMC](#)



Navigating Healthy Boundaries for Better Mental Health

At some point, everyone has felt the struggles of 'over-committing' or feeling obligated to say 'yes' to every request, whether at work or socially. Often, this results in people neglecting their needs to avoid conflict with others, or, as leadership development expert Gregg Vanourek says, they are not setting boundaries.

Why is setting boundaries so difficult?

Often, people unknowingly establish poor boundaries by not communicating their true thoughts, feelings, or limitations. Because people value personal or professional relationships, avoiding conflict or uneasy conversations feels "easier" by just "going with it." It may be to maintain an image of being capable of handling the extra work or being liked, but at what cost? A person's mental well-being starts with acknowledging and communicating their limits to those around them — establishing healthy boundaries.

What is the benefit?

Reduce stress: setting limits allows us to focus on what truly matters to us instead of feeling overwhelmed by external demands.

Boundaries:

Build self-respect: Setting boundaries shows we value ourselves and our needs, which is essential for cultivating a healthy self-image.

Preserve energy: By not overcommitting or saying "yes" out of guilt, we free up energy to care for our mental health and engage in activities that nurture our well-being.

Improve relationships: Healthy boundaries foster respect in relationships. They allow us to connect authentically without feeling drained or resentful. You learn to communicate your feelings in an appropriate way that avoids conflict.

How do we communicate 'no' respectfully and professionally?

- Just simply say no. "Thank you for thinking of me, but I must say no now."
- Briefly explain: "I appreciate you thinking of me for this project, but I am focusing on other projects right now."
- Suggest alternatives: "Thank you for inviting me, but I am unable to make it this time. Maybe we can revisit this at a later time?" or "I'm not able to commit to this assignment right now, but I can next week."

For more information or suggestions on setting boundaries, visit:

[Setting Boundaries: Info and Practice | Worksheet | Therapist Aid](#)

[Setting Boundaries for Mental Health: Why It's Important](#)

ARE YOU SPEAKING MY Love Language?

Did you know there are five primary love languages in every person? These love languages are words of affirmation, acts of service, receiving gifts, quality time, and physical touch. Every person has a preference, a form of love they seek, especially in children.

Benefits of children knowing their love language:

When children learn how they receive love best — through words of affirmation, acts of service, gifts, quality time, or physical touch — it boosts their self-esteem and improves communication. Knowing your child's love language helps strengthen emotional connections and foster positive social interactions. A child's understanding of their preferred love language fosters more substantial relationships, helps resolve conflict, and equips children with the skills to build healthy, loving connections throughout their lives. So, how can you connect with your child through their love language?

How to express love through the five love languages:

Words of Affirmation — key expressions such as verbal compliments and praise, written notes, and words of encouragement (e.g., "I believe in you." "Look how hard you worked.") are all ways to speak this language. Children associate love with the words they see or hear from you, so be intentional about speaking kind, loving, and empathetic words.



Quality Time — having conversations, sharing an activity (e.g., playing a board game with no phone distractions), or simply being present during play or homework time is the way to speak this language. Children seek connection through eye contact, physical and emotional presence, and curiosity about their world.

Acts of Service — helping with tasks (e.g., "I'll help you with your homework."), making a meal, decorating their room alongside them, or giving them your ear to express their worries are all examples of this love language.

Receiving Gifts — thoughtful gestures do not always need to be purchased. Whether it's baking them their favorite cookies, creating a flower bouquet from your garden, or passing on a family heirloom and sharing its meaning with them, the "gift" is more about the meaning and the belief they gain about themselves ("I am special. I am important. They thought about me.").

Physical Touch — Touch can be a direct way to convey warmth and love (e.g., hugging, gentle back rub, or even a hand massage after a long day). The love language of physical touch is the most common form of love children seek in every emotional state (sad, angry, joy, disappointment, shame, and the like).

Want to find out your or your child's love language, take Dr. Chapman's free online test: [The Love Language® Quiz](#)



IS MY CHILD STUCK IN A STRESS CYCLE?

Stress is a natural part of life, even for children. We can help kids develop emotional regulation skills by teaching them how to complete the stress cycle, fostering resilience, and emotional well-being.

What is the Stress Cycle?






The stress cycle is our body's natural response to a challenge or threat, often called fight, flight, freeze, and fawn. Once the stressful event has passed, the body seeks to return to a state of safety. However, children don't always know how to signal their brain and body that it's safe to relax. Helping kids complete the stress cycle teaches them how to move from tension to calm, improving their ability to handle future challenges.

Signs your child may be stuck in the Stress Cycle

- Behavioral cues: Frequent tantrums, withdrawal, or difficulty focusing
- Emotional signals: Heightened anxiety, irritability, or unexplained sadness
- Physical symptoms: Tummy aches, headaches, or restlessness



Strategies to help children complete the Stress Cycle

- Movement is one of the best ways to release stress.
 - Dancing, jumping, running, or practicing animal yoga poses (e.g., cat stretch, downward dog).
- Creative Expression 
 - Drawing, painting, singing, playing an instrument, listening to music, telling stories, or writing in a journal all promote expression of emotions.
- Connection and Comfort 
 - Give them a big hug or spend one-on-one time doing something they enjoy.
- Breathing Exercises 
 - Practice belly breathing: Inhale deeply for four counts (expanding the belly), hold for four, and exhale for six (pull the belly button towards your spine).
- Routine and Predictability: Consistency reduces uncertainty and stress. Establish regular mealtimes, playtimes, and bedtimes. 
- Name It to Tame It: A simple tool like a feelings chart can make emotions more tangible and less overwhelming. 

Want to know what events are
happening near you?

Gather the family and explore
[HERE](#)



WE WANT
YOUR
FEEDBACK



Thank You

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