

**MENTAL  
WELLNESS  
COALITION**

powered by EVERFI

# *Mental Wellness Basics*

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Impact Report

2018  
—  
2019

EVERFI



# Executive Summary

*Mental Wellness Basics* provides a population-level approach to what is often viewed as an individual issue. Through a public health lens, *Mental Wellness Basics* provides students with opportunities to strengthen their own mental health and develop strategies for overcoming challenges that they may face.

The course helps students develop concrete skills for improving their well-being, while increasing their awareness of resources and empowering them with the knowledge, skills, and language necessary to identify and support a peer who may be struggling.

## 2018-2019 Program Impact

**65,799**

Students across 1,200 schools  
in the program's first year

**39%**

Average increase in assessment  
scores after completing the  
program





# The Need for Mental Health Education

The need for youth mental health and wellness education is urgent. Nearly 20% of youth live with a mental health condition, and 50% of all lifetime mental illness cases begin by age 14.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018, EVERFI launched *Mental Wellness Basics* to destigmatize the topic of mental health, increase student resilience, and empower them to access the skills and resources that they need to support their emotional well-being.

## Graduating High School Seniors<sup>2</sup>

**42%**

Have felt so depressed that it was difficult to function

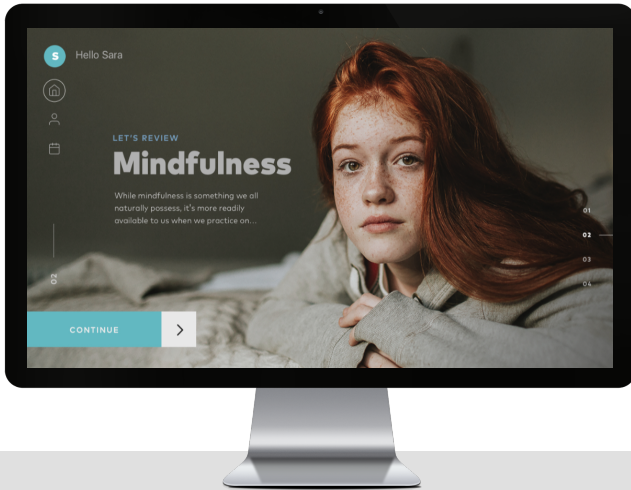
**28%**

Have experienced a depressive episode in the past year

**14%**

Have seriously considered attempting suicide

<sup>1</sup> National Institute of Mental Health. *Mental Health Facts: Children and Teens*. (2016). [www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)  
<sup>2</sup> EVERFI, 2019



# About Mental Wellness Basics

*Mental Wellness Basics* was developed by a team of counselors, psychiatrists, and behavioral and public health professionals to equip students with the critical skills necessary to build and maintain their mental well-being. With four primary goals, *Mental Wellness Basics* takes a scaffolding approach, allowing learners to build their knowledge as they progress through the course, leading to increased awareness, knowledge of resources, ability to seek and offer help, and build skills to maintain one's own mental health.

## Key Outcomes of *Mental Wellness Basics*

### Increase Knowledge & Awareness

by educating students on key concepts related to emotional well-being, and understanding and identifying the warning signs that indicate they or a friend may be struggling.

### Reduce Stigma

by prioritizing mental health as an important part of overall health, discussing potential challenges, and highlighting statistics that paint an accurate picture of mental health among their peers.

### Promote Self-Efficacy

by modeling advocacy for self and others through the presentation of scenarios and teaching a variety of intervention techniques to support themselves or a peer.

### Encourage Action

By introducing evidence-based practices, learners have access to techniques that can be used immediately to improve and maintain their own mental health.



# National Impact

Through interactive scenarios that allow students to explore mental health topics at their own pace, *Mental Wellness Basics* builds a comprehensive understanding of what mental wellness is and the skills for fostering it.

In the course's first year, it reached more than 65,000 students, showing an average assessment score increase of 39% on topics such as understanding mental health disorders, developing healthy coping skills, and seeking and offering help.

**65,779**

Students

**1,200**

Schools

**39%**

**Average increase** in assessment scores after completing the course

# Program Reach and Demographics

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“I can genuinely relate to some of the problems presented in the course. Before taking this course, I thought I was the only person I knew that was experiencing headaches and stomach aches due to stress, but it turns out that there are a lot of people.”

Student - Blue Valley Kansas

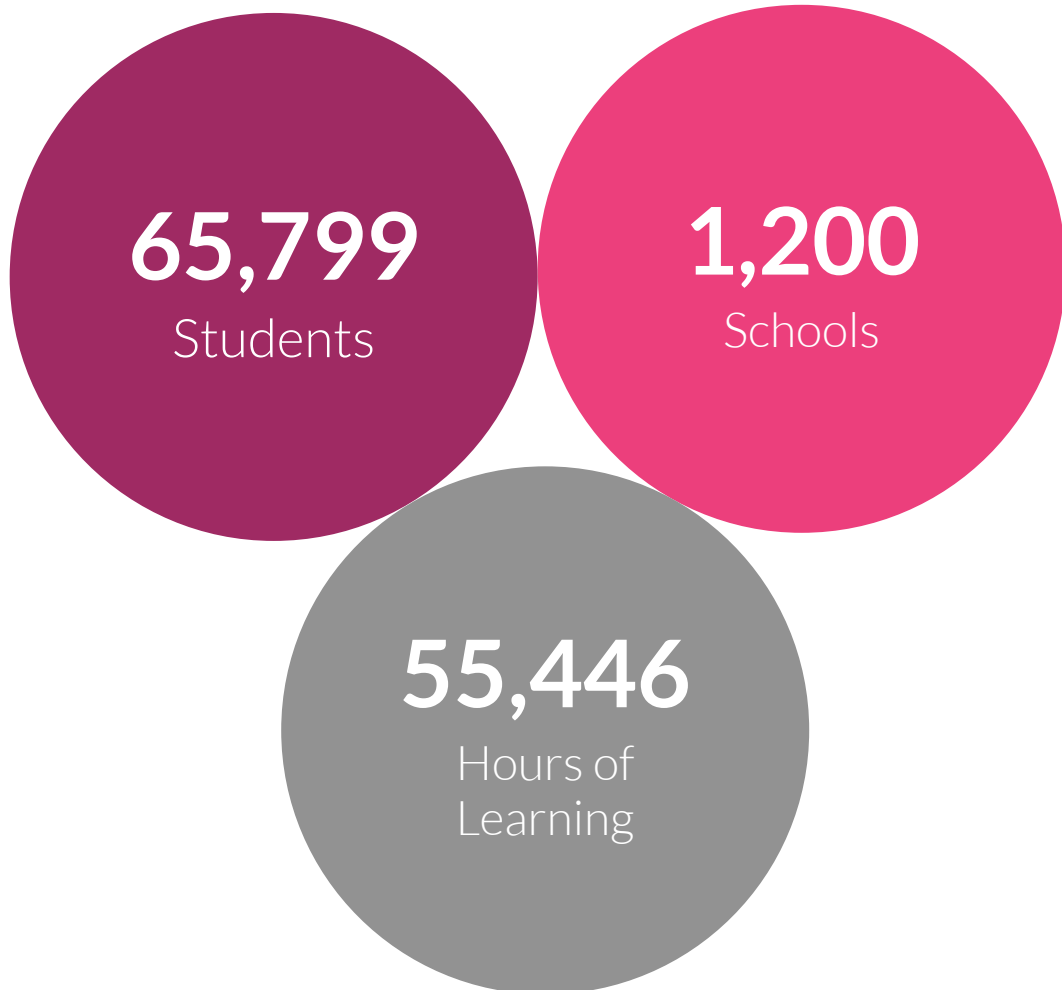
## Program Reach 2018-2019

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“If I feel that a family member or friend is going through something, I will use these strategies to connect with them and try to understand their condition a little bit more. I would like to help as many people as I possibly can. **No one deserves to go through anything like this alone.**”

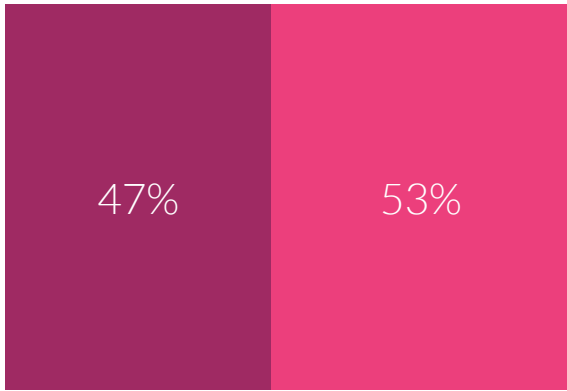
**Student** - Toms River, New Jersey

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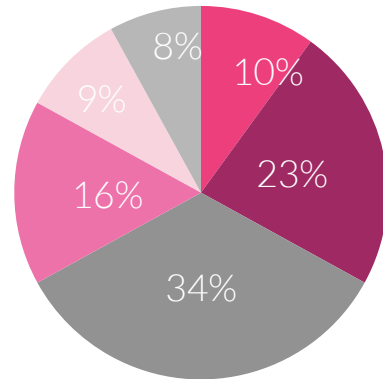
# Student Demographics

Gender



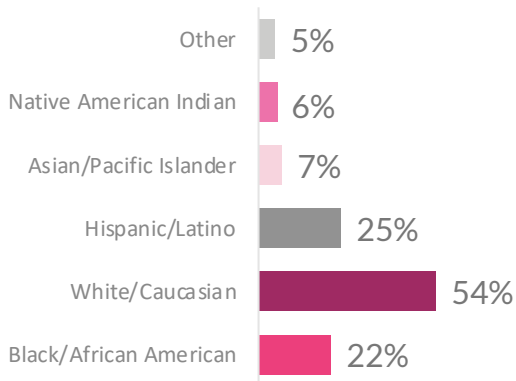
■ Male ■ Female

Grade Level

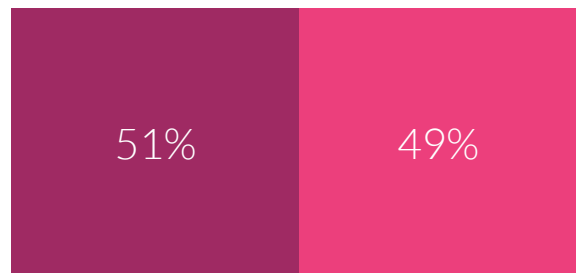


■ 7th grade or younger ■ 8th grade  
 ■ 9th grade ■ 10th grade  
 ■ 11th grade ■ 12th grade

Race and Ethnicity\*



Low to Moderate Income Communities\*



■ Low to Moderate Income Schools  
 ■ Moderate to High Income Schools

\* Students select all that apply.

\* Data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Low to Moderate Income schools are those where more than 50% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price lunch.

Self-reported data from students who respond to surveys and are at least 13 years old.



# Assessment & Survey Results

Responses to *Mental Wellness Basics*

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“I wish that I had known this course before when I was struggling at school and didn't know how to cope through it. With this course, I believe I am aware of how to truly deal with strong emotions and help my friends when they are struggling.”

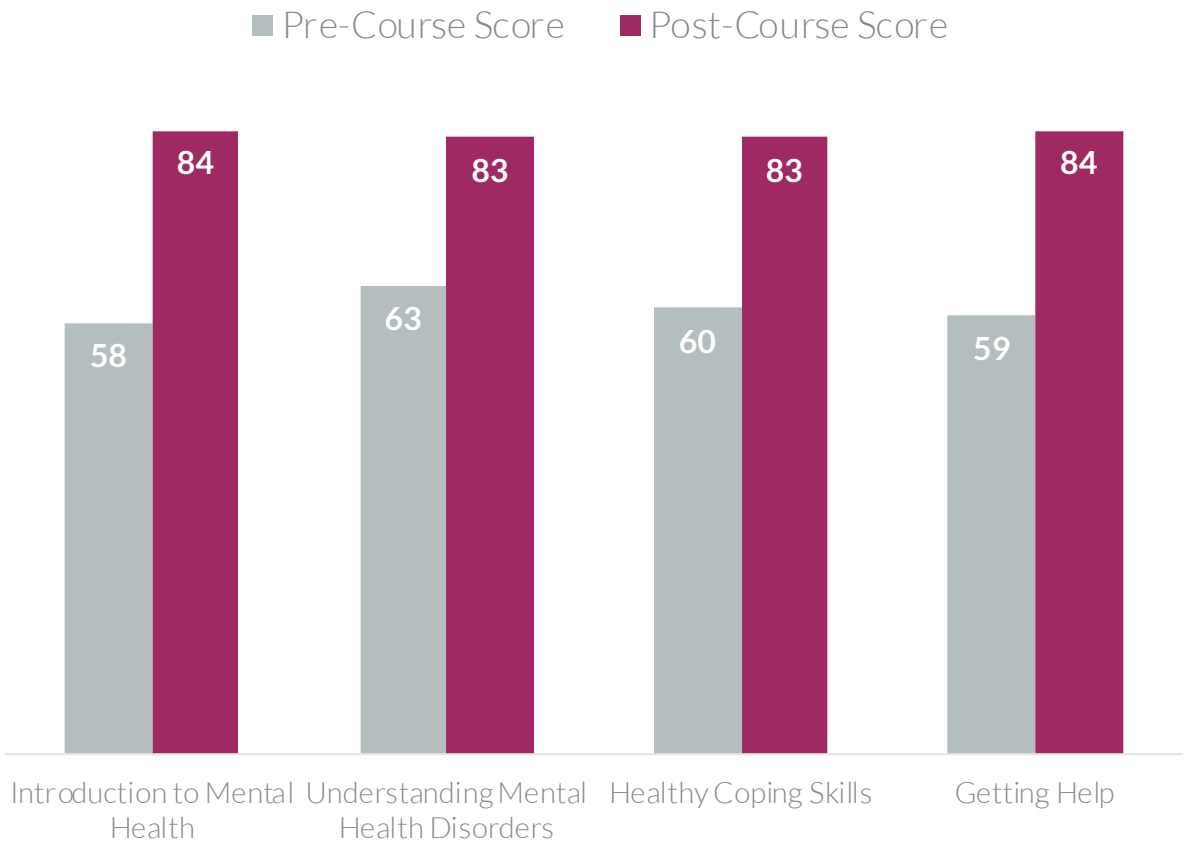
Student – Sugar Land, Texas

## Increasing Knowledge of Mental Health Concepts

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In order to protect their own mental well-being, students must first understand key concepts related to mental health. Through assessments taken before and after each module, students show an increase in their knowledge of mental health.

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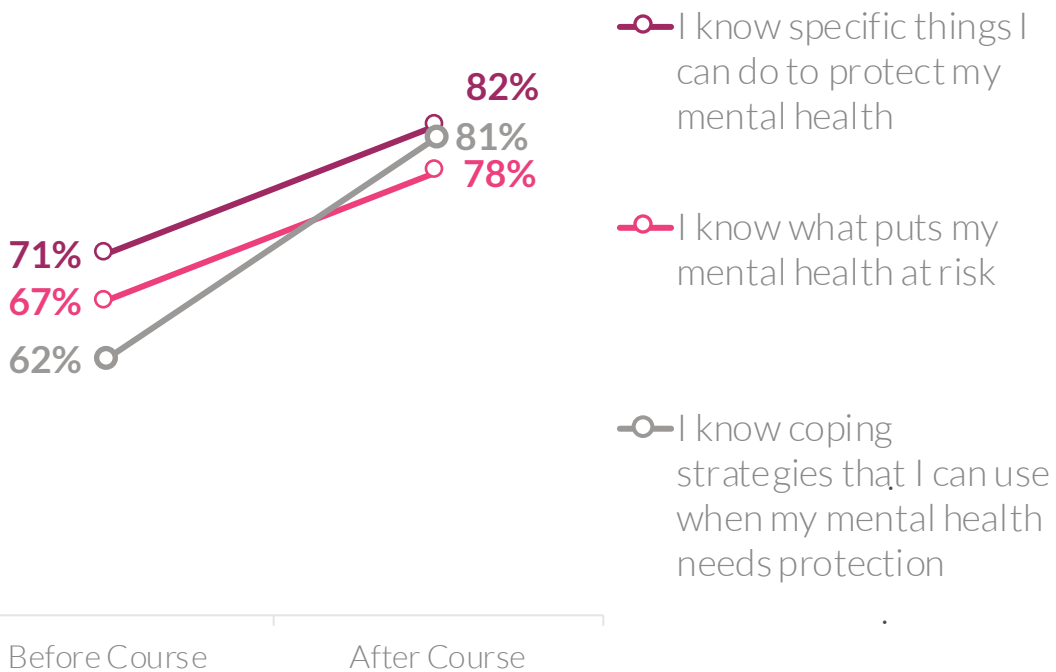
After taking *Mental Wellness Basics*, students improved their assessment scores by an **average of 39%**.

# Raising Awareness of Students' Own Mental Health

By helping students understand challenges to one's emotional well-being, and equipping them with health-promoting strategies to handle those challenges, they are empowered to be advocates for their own mental health or others. From pre- and post-course surveys, we see students increase their ability to recognize risk factors that may compromise their mental health – an important step towards building and maintaining emotional well-being.

The largest increase from pre- to post-course is in the proportion of students who indicate that they know what coping strategies to use when their mental health needs support. This indicates that most students leave *Mental Wellness Basics* with an increased awareness of strategies that they can utilize to increase their mental well-being. Access to and willingness to use healthy coping strategies is a critical step in building overall wellness, and adolescence is a particularly important time in which to develop and hone these skills.

Percent of students who agree ...



# Reducing Stigma and Building Compassion

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Stigma can act as a barrier to action. By describing mental health as an important and dynamic part of physical health that everyone has, while introducing students to accurate statistics related to mental health disorders, *Mental Wellness Basics* reduces stigma and builds compassion for those experiencing them. With lower levels of stigma, students will be more likely to take action by deploying their own mental health strategies or fostering help for themselves or others.

Most students enter *Mental Wellness Basics* with relatively low levels of stigma associated with mental health and relatively high level of compassion. *Mental Wellness Basics* has been shown to further reduce levels of stigma related to mental health, and to further increase compassion among students taking it.

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## Reducing Stigma

- **Just 30% of students** say they would feel **uncomfortable around someone with a mental health disorder** (down from 36% before the course).
- 48% of students say most people think less of a person who has received mental health treatment (51% agreed before the course).

## Building Compassion

- 81% of students said they would feel compassion for someone with a mental health disorder (80% agreed before the course).
- **Nearly two-thirds (66%)** of students said they can **easily understand** what someone with a mental health issue is going through (**up from 52% before the course**).

# Promoting Students' Sense of Self-Efficacy

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In order to take action to protect their mental health, students must feel that it is something that is within their control and that they have the ability to positively impact it. In general, students enter *Mental Wellness Basics* with high levels of self-efficacy—they believe mental wellness is achievable and that they have the capacity to attain it.

Through *Mental Wellness Basics*, we see an additional increase in students' belief that they can do what is necessary to manage their emotions in a healthy way. *Mental Wellness Basics* takes this strong foundation of students' self-efficacy and builds upon it, equipping them with the knowledge and the tools to take action to protect their mental wellness on an ongoing basis.

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After taking *Mental Wellness Basics*...

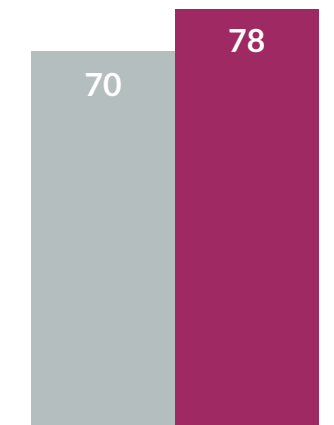
**78%**

of students believe their own mental health and wellness is within their control

**81%**

of students believe when faced with challenges, they believe they have the power to change their situation for the better

■ Pre-Course  
■ Post-Course

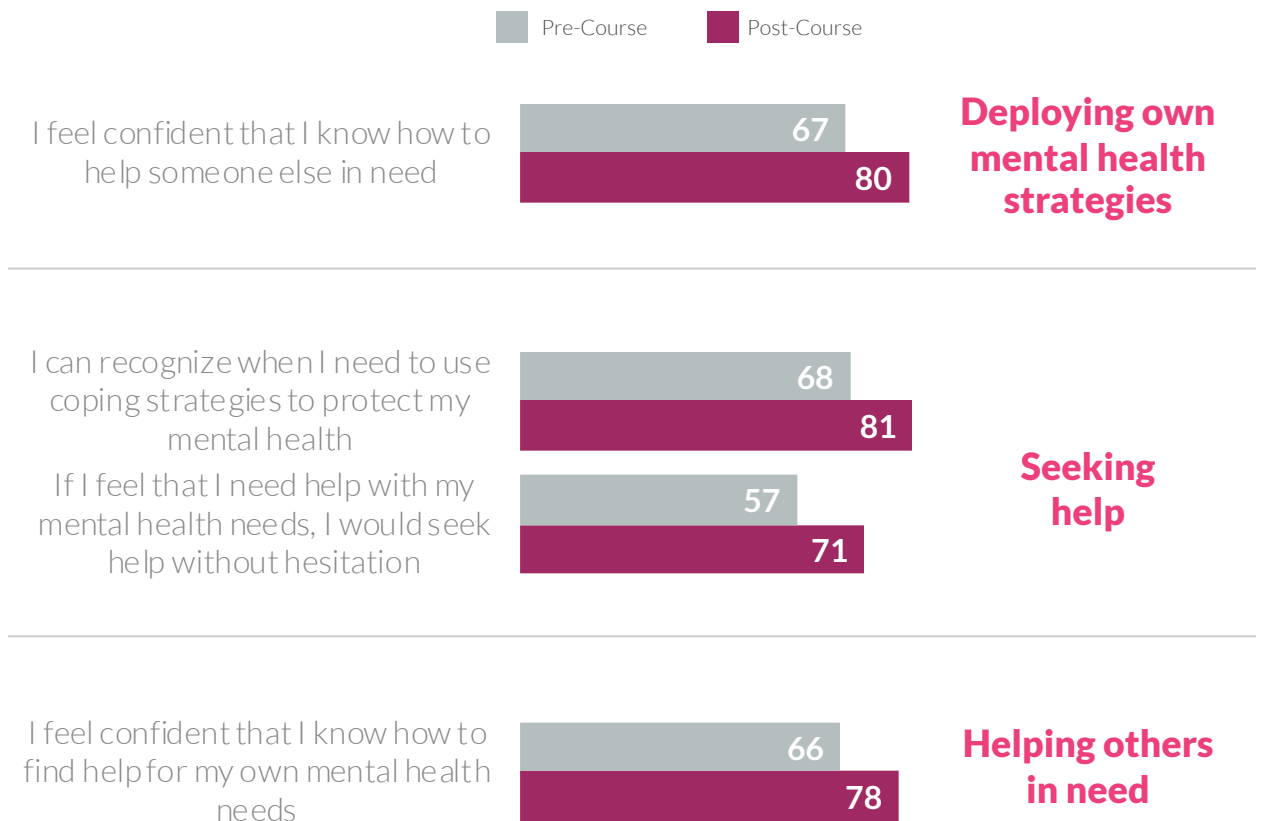


I know what I need to do to manage my emotions in a healthy way

# Encouraging Students to Seek Help

*Mental Wellness Basics* not only provides students with the skills necessary to build their mental health, it also shows them how to seek help should they need it. Students leave *Mental Wellness Basics* more prepared to deploy their own coping strategies, more confident in how to find help if they need it, and more confident in their ability to help others in need. Data indicates that, when it comes to personal challenges, young people are most likely to reach out to a friend for support.

By increasing students' confidence in supporting friends in need, *Mental Wellness Basics* helps to widen the net of support that exists in the communities that have access to it. Whether by utilizing strategies to improve their own mental health, seeking help for themselves, or helping a friend seek help, students leave *Mental Wellness Basics* prepared to take positive action.



## Student Outcomes from *Mental Wellness Basics*

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**Seven-in-ten** students leave *Mental Wellness Basics* saying they better understand how to support a friend who may be experiencing mental health challenges.

**Nearly two-thirds** of students say the course made them more compassionate towards those with mental health conditions and about six-in-ten say the course made them more compassionate towards themselves.

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After completing *Mental Wellness Basics*, percent of students who say this course...

Helped me to understand how I can **support a friend in need** 70%

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**Gave me tools to recognize stress** and ways to cope with it in a healthy way 68%

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**Helped me be more compassionate** towards those with mental health conditions 65%

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**Made me more confident** that I know what to do to stay mentally healthy 64%

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Helped me better **understand my own mental health** 63%

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Helped me **be more compassionate towards myself** 59%

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# Voices of National Students and Educators

Responses to *Mental Wellness Basics*

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“I have never had a talk or discussion based around my mental health. At the beginning of this course, I did not even know what mental health was. This course made me realize that stigma is a real thing.”

Student – Harrisonburg, VA



# Teacher Feedback



## A Unique Resource

78% of teachers surveyed say the course covers content their students would not have otherwise seen.

78%

Teachers express high satisfaction with *Mental Wellness Basics* and see a need for it in their classrooms. More than three-quarters of teachers surveyed say *Mental Wellness Basics* provides their students with content they would not otherwise see.

## Excellent Content

93% of teachers surveyed rate the content as 'very good' or 'good.'

93%

The vast majority of teachers surveyed would recommend *Mental Wellness Basics* to a friend or colleague.

## Easy Curriculum Fit

93% of teachers surveyed say the course was an easy fit into their standard curriculum.

93%

## Highly Recommended

87% of teachers surveyed would recommend *Mental Wellness Basics* to a friend or colleague.

87%

\*From an end of year survey of 57 teachers who used *Mental Wellness Basics* during the 2018-2019 school year.



# Quotes from Students

“The part I liked best about the course are the examples of real life situations because I think **students or people can realize that they are not alone** and many different people go through the same situations that they might be going through.”

**Student** Newburgh, Indiana

“Whenever I am stressed, **I will use my newly learned coping strategies** to help me deal with my stress in a healthy way.”

**Student** Clayton, GA

“[The best part of the course was] the small bits from the student’s lives that I could relate to. It makes more sense that way than if an adult was explaining it to me. **Many of those students had problems that I could relate to or understand so that made it easier to understand the course as a whole.**”

**Student** Lakeport, CA

“I might talk to some of my friends and ask them how they feel because some have been down lately.”

**Student** Fayette, KY



# Quotes from Educators

“This course helped students to see **the importance of maintaining lifelong mental wellness.**”

Teacher Illinois

“It covers very **relevant material** on a subject we don't teach very well.”

Teacher Saskatchewan

“Student **mental health is important for all aspects of a student's life.**”

Teacher California

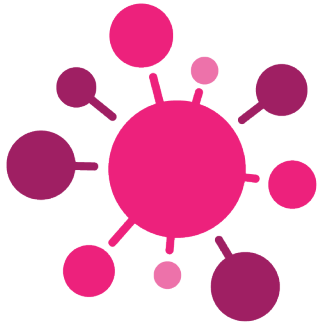
“**I appreciated the chance to have good discussions with my students** after they went through the simulations.”

Teacher Montana

“[This course] was a great way to **promote mental wellness in my school.**”

Teacher California





# MENTAL WELLNESS COALITION

powered by EVERFI

Since launching Mental Wellness Basics in 2018, EVERFI has rallied a coalition of partners, educators, students, and community advocates to support holistic youth mental health and wellness education for middle and high school students.

Learn more about the Mental Wellness Coalition at:

[www.mentalwellnesscoalition.com](http://www.mentalwellnesscoalition.com)

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