MIND THE CLASS
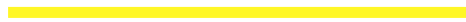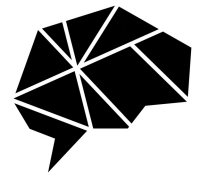
Eliminate the barriers to preventive mental health
PARTERING FOR PROGRESS

THE 5-ELEMENT APPROACH TO STARTING A PREVENTIVE MENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

ADVANCING PREVENTION

Psychological approaches to mental health have long used a medical model of assessment, diagnosis and treatment. Treatment approaches focus on reducing symptoms and behaviors outside the context of their environment. This approach is limited in that it cannot reduce the rates of mental illness nor prevent future mental health problems in those previously treated. There is an 11 year gap between the onset of symptoms and intervention in the current model and 77% of US counties have a therapist shortage leading to an increase in chronic, complex problems by the time people are served requiring more complex, longer term care and limited solutions. This validates the need for a systemic public health model for prevention to close the gap, as mental illness is a universal risk.
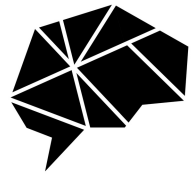
WHERE WE ARE

WHERE WE ARE GOING

www.mindtheclass.org
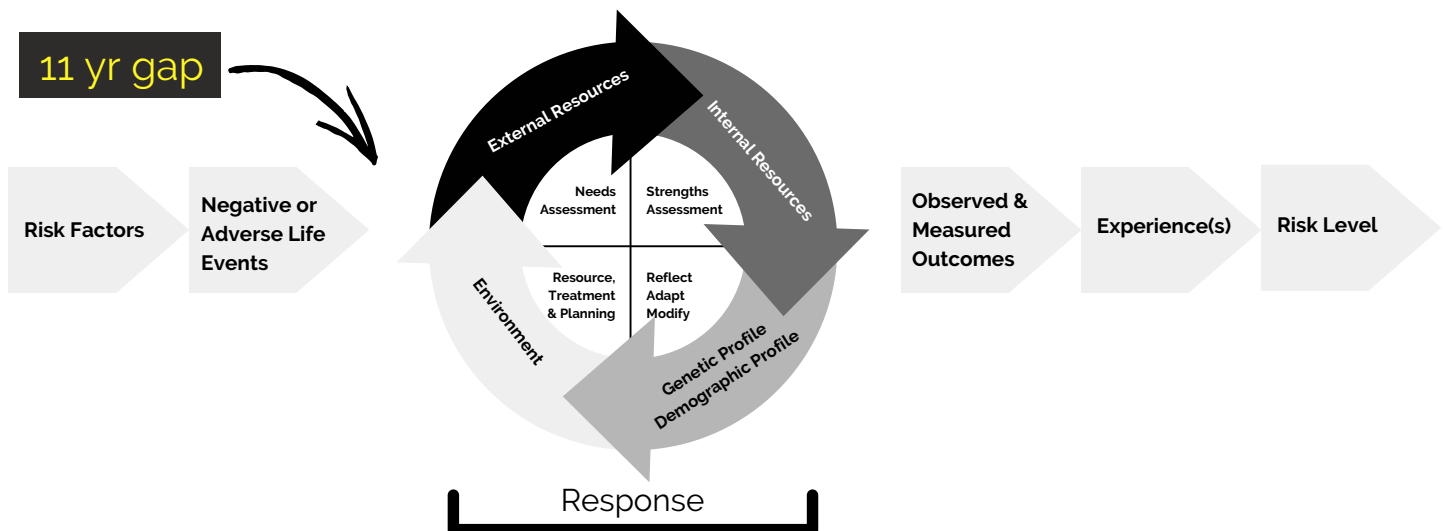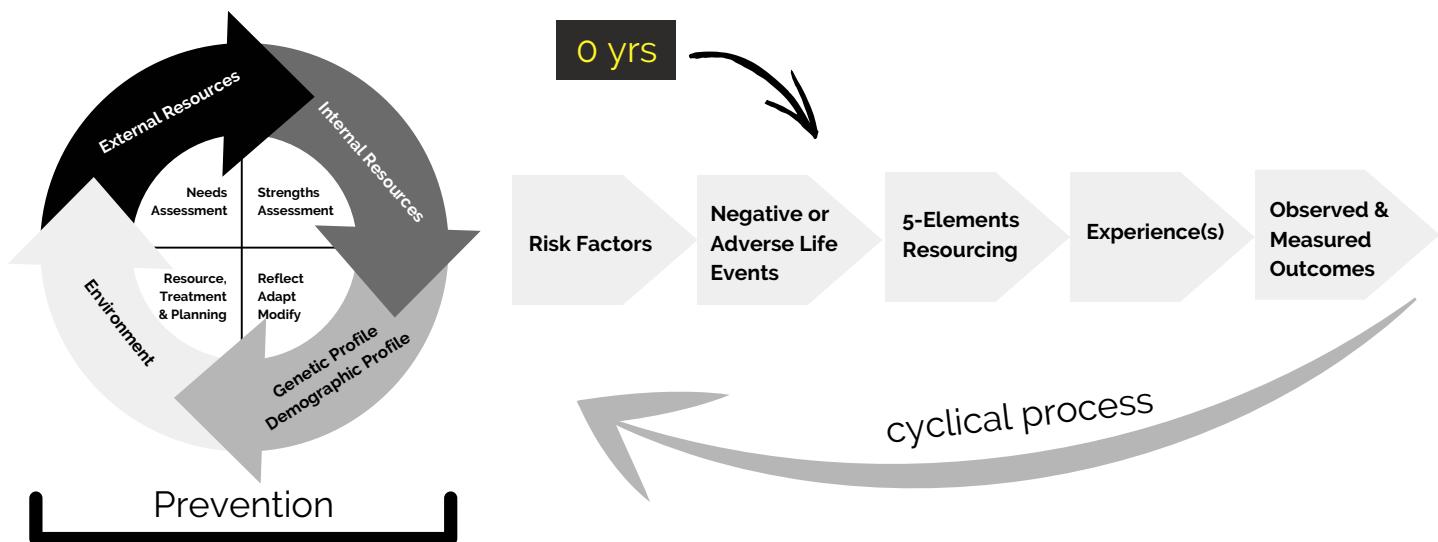
Problems with the current response-based model:

Reactive: Waiting for symptom presentation to escalate to poor functioning or crisis given parent or provider advocacy

Situational: Addresses the individual's mood and behavior related to a single issue while missing environmental factors.

Individual: Requires mental health providers to address 1 individual at a time resulting in overwhelming case loads and provider burnout.

▶ **1 in 5** children ages 13-18 have, or will have a serious mental illness

▶ In the US today there will be almost **13K** kids suspended, **7** kids will die by suicide, **8** will be killed with a gun, almost **3K** will be arrested and another **3K** will drop out of school.

▶ Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death in youth ages 10 - 34 and **90%** of those who died by suicide had an underlying mental illness.

▶ **HALF** of all students will have HIGH levels of chronic stress by their early teen years.

▶ **50%** of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14, yet the average delay of intervention is 11 years

▶ **37%** of students with mental health condition age 14 and older drop out, the highest dropout rate of any disability group.

▶ 20% of teachers are at risk for burnout and **65%** already meet the conditions for burnout.

▶ People with serious mental illness have an **increased risk** for chronic disease, like diabetes or cancer

▶ **60%** of professionals experience lack of support from supervisors, 83% are emotionally drained, **85%** don't feel safe and welcome at work

Disrupt the patterns!
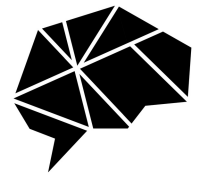
The US Department of Education recommends that we support schools and youth organizations to " Prioritize Wellness for Each and Every Child, Student, Educator, and Provider" and that is what we have done at Mind the Class.

The data related to educator, professional and student mental health underscores an urgent need for effective practices to create an emotionally healthier school setting. There are many challenges to such an undertaking, requiring a multi-layered approach to shifting modes of education, workplace practices, policies and interventions however no such model existed to understand how to approach and prioritize solutions within those categories. We observed a gap in simply defining what we are aiming for and how to make decisions that will support best practices.

We use an inverse design model to shift our attention to the intention, a path toward wellbeing, rather than by focusing our attention on the barriers. **Research has shown that problem-focused solutions enhance our assessment for threats.** We learn to avoid problems we have had in the past by trying to prevent them in the future. The problem with this approach is that it maintains a focus on all of the potential problems that can create stress, leading to hypervigilance, fears and worries (i.e. anxiety). It causes us to spend our time and energy addressing mental health problems and risks as they arise. Furthermore, many of these problems are out of our control, therefore focusing our attention on them will not change them, leading to feelings of hopelessness and helplessness (i.e. depression). When we have a strong foundation of wellbeing (internally and externally) before there is a problem, we can maintain a sense of control through confidence in our ability to resolve it.

We have also observed that a focus on the problems does not support a positive physiological response in the body. The body's physical response to stress can lead to poor sleep and nutrition, low motivation, lack of energy and exercise, and chronic illness and pain. This is because stress holds memory in the body.

In close examination of the research through a thematic analysis, we found the areas of wellbeing that support good mental and physical health were related to 5 areas, which we have labeled as the 5-Elements. We further broke down the key factors in support of those elements and observed internal practices that support good mental health and external practices that support good mental health. **By categorizing the supportive practices, we now have a way to focus forward when we experience a barrier, rather than using past problems and fears to predict and avoid future problems and fears.** This gives us a clear path to aim for which places us on a path around the barriers, thereby eliminating the barriers to achievement. This is the basis of our model.

DESIGNING A SOLUTION

As both a School Leader and a Non-Profit Clinical Director, our teams were overwhelmed with counseling referrals, daily crises, mandates, urgent meetings, and program planning while feeling limited by time, staffing and budget. The more we focused on the problems, the our problem-solving tool boxes grew but so did the number of problems. When we shifted to focusing on how to prevent these problems, we were worried that it would take more time and resources but instead we saw a significant drop in counseling referrals and serious behavioral incidents the first year.

This positive shift led to a desire to understand the science behind what keeps us mentally healthy and helps us cope with life's stressors. The world has a microscope on mental health and wellness at the present that has been compounded by global issues. This has led to both opportunity to make changes and overwhelm and confusion for how to meet growing mental health needs and risks given shortages in therapists and limited funding resources.

Given those limitations, we understand that any approach must fit within the schools current resources and help reduce the stress on the professionals. We must bridge the gap between research and practice to provide schools with the context, tools and strategies that we now know can shift the pendulum away from reactionary to prevent mental health and behavioral health problems. We also know it is important to schools to demonstrate the impact of their investments, which is why we partnered with University researchers to create quality evaluation methods and assessments.

We have defined the elements of wellbeing to determine what helps youth thrive and avoid mental health risks. We created an integrated systemic model based on hundreds of conversations with providers, analysis of the research and evidenced based-practices. It was important that the framework was culturally responsible, trauma informed, and easy to implement. We maximize your time with us for the greatest impact and cost-savings by partnering with your experts toward certification and sustainability through our local partnerships so you have ongoing support.

Our program is built on science and relationships to empower social work teams with a way of reducing the negative impact on professional teams and improving youth mental health to eliminate the barriers to achievement. Our vision for every team we get to work with is to leave them feeling capable, empowered and connected to a community of like-minded-revolutionaries.

Be Revolutionary!
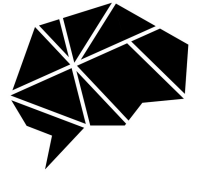
WHO WE WORK WITH

We partner with **school systems and work directly with Social Work leadership** in PreK-8 schools in cohorts of 6-10 schools.

WHAT WE DO

We co-design a customized and sustainable **preventive mental health program** using an evidence-based framework to measurably and profoundly decrease youth risks of developing mental health and behavioral health problems. We discovered 60 integrative key factors in the research that decrease stress and improve coping.

HOW WE DO IT

We provide **strategic and operational consultation, professional development and community partnership development for 20-30 weeks**. We measure wellbeing needs, population factors, and risks to discover evidence-informed preventive solutions. We provide training to a trainer who coordinates a task force for planning and scaffolding implementation. We assist in partnerships with local resources and our technology partners to fill need gaps and build capacity in teams for self-sustaining programs.

THE IMPACT

Systems-wide prevention creates a supportive environment, **reduces risk of mental health problems,** reduce counseling referrals and behavioral incidents, is more cost effective, and creates a calmer more supportive culture and climate. When we architect proactively to improve wellbeing, people feel better equipped to manage uncertainty and change through capacity building, empowerment and connection, improving achievement and retention.

CONSULTATION & PARTNERSHIP APPROACH

We work with an AMBASSADOR from each school in the cohort who will lead an internal TASKFORCE through uncovering risks, needs, and unique systemic factors. We provide training and consultation to support teams in designing a sustainable preventive implementation plan and evaluation process that can evolve year over year.

01. ASSESSMENT

Evaluate and prioritize risk factors, community data, and gaps and strengths using the 5-Elements of systemic wellbeing.

02. DISCOVERY

Multiple perspectives through qualitative interviews uncover a roadmap to support goal setting within each Element.

03. TRAINING

A train the trainer model builds capacity in the Taskforce and system-wide buy-in to permeate a cultural shift.

04. REFLECTION

Teams engage in weekly workrooms, follow a progressive workbook and receive consultation on best-practices.
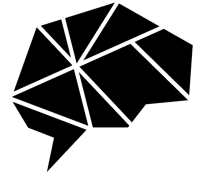
05. PLANNING

Individualized, systemic and integrative practices are scaffolded and paired with local and virtual resources.

06. SUSTAINING

Teams learn to replicate the preventive planning approach, maintain partners and make evidence informed decisions.
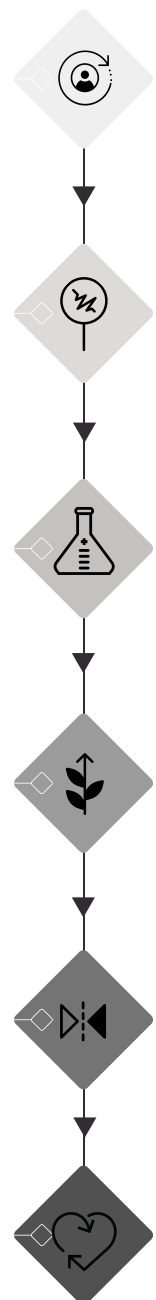
SYSTEMIC WELL-BEING
5-ELEMENTS FRAMEWORK

INTERNAL

EXTERNAL

6 INTERNAL SECURITY FACTORS

ANCHOR

6 EXTERNAL SECURITY FACTORS

6 INTERNAL REGULATION FACTORS

VESSEL

6 EXTERNAL REGULATION FACTORS

6 INTERNAL VALUE FACTORS

CURRENCY

6 EXTERNAL VALUE FACTORS

6 INTERNAL DECISION FACTORS

COMPASS

6 EXTERNAL DECISION FACTORS
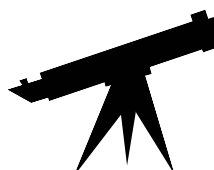
6 INTERNAL RELATABILITY FACTORS

TELESCOPE

6 EXTERNAL RELATABILITY FACTORS
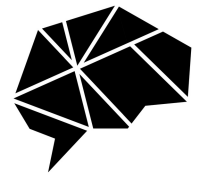
The 5-Elements model was designed to define wellbeing practices that have demonstrated evidence in supporting good mental health and reducing risks associated with chronic stress and trauma while supporting physiological health by shifting behaviors and mindsets within the context of our environment.

1 SECURITY

Emotional insecurity results in poor self-worth, fear of failure, distrust of themselves and others, social avoidance, negative self-perception, difficulty making decisions and more. External risks like threats, abuse, distrust, lack of reliability, instability and chaotic environments can increase insecurity in those environments.

When our environment feels calm and reliable, we feel protected from threat and harm, feel equitably treated and can experience a sense of belonging and connection. In the absence of threats we are able to feel unconstrained by fear and have agency over our thoughts such that we can self-reflect to gain self-awareness and practice self-compassion.

anchor

2 REGULATION

Dysregulation results in low energy, poor physical health, disrupted breathing, over and under arousal, disrupted behavior, poor sleep and nutrition, varied mood and pain. When the autonomic nervous system is stressed, it activates the stress response through the solar plexus and sympathetic nervous system increasing heart rate, muscle tension, airways constrict, stimulates glucose and epinephrine and norepinephrine release.

When the ANS is relaxed, it activates a relaxation response through the vagus nerve and parasympathetic nervous system decreasing heart rate, muscle relaxation and airways relax, stimulates digestion. This can be achieved through internal regulation, exposure to nature, mindfulness and balance, movement and breathing, sensory regulation and reduced stimuli.
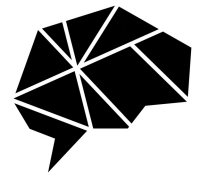
vessel

3 VALUE

Our negative beliefs about ourselves can lead to a negative view of the world while negative experiences can lead to a negative value of ourselves. When we expend our time and energy on things that we don't perceive as value, we can feel a lack of purpose and sense of self which can lead to feeling a lack of control, indifference, isolation, pleasure seeking, acting out, self-harm, suicidal thoughts and behaviors, wishing harm on others, and other forms of self-destruction and internalizing blame and shame. This is further compounded by poor relationships and conflict.

A positive self-worth leads us to place value on things that give us meaning, joy and purpose and see the world as having opportunity to have a meaningful impact. When we receive positive feedback, we feel valuable, worthy and capable. This leads to greater self-acceptance and awareness of our character strengths further supported by quality cohesive relationships.

currency

(CONTINUED) The 5-Elements model provides a way to examine the internal processes that support wellbeing as well as the external and utilize strengths to fill the gaps. It allows us to focus our efforts on coping, calming and thriving rather than to try to eliminate each barrier individually which maintains focus on the problems.

4 DECISION

When we lack a clear system of values and ethics and feel insecure in our identity, we can misperceive situations and events and lack insight. This can lead to poor habits, higher susceptibility to negative influences, poor boundaries, difficulty making ones own decisions, inconsistent behaviors, lack of willpower, poor judgment, and impulsivity,

With a secure system for which to base our understanding of situations and events and explore our thoughts to gain insight and use our values and ethics to have a healthy mindset to make good decisions. This allows us to understand outside influences and self-direct our behavior and expression to set healthy boundaries, build and maintain good habits and trust ourselves to make good choices.

compass

5 RELATABILITY

Different groups of people present unique dynamics and when we struggle to understand our role or we don't feel heard or understood or we are faced with judgment, criticism, rejection and other harsh behavior, we can have a difficult time feeling accepted. This can lead to social isolation, social anxiety, difficulty initiating, exerting power, and passive aggressive or aggressive behavior. We may start to feel more vulnerable and seek control through rigidity and have difficulty staying present and taking the perspective of others.

Instead when we can easily relate to others and understand our role and navigate power dynamics, we can be open-minded and empathetic and allow for disagreement while maintaining rapport and collaboration to seek alignment. When we feel internally related, we can evaluate our own perspective and show willingness to change our mind, engage in self-compassion and be present and self-aware and flexible in my thought process.

telescope

QUALITY ASSURANCE
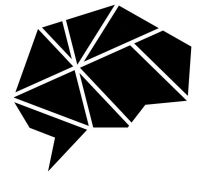
10 AREAS OF RISK ASSESSMENT

Learning & Development Problems

Abuse, Neglect & Violence

Serious Life Events

Household Dysfunction &
Family Mental Illness/Substance Use

Physical Illness & Toxin Exposure

Economic Disadvantage &
Homelessness

Discrimination, Bullying &
Peer Pressure

Poor Access to &
Quality of Supportive Relationships

Risky Behavior &
Observed Risky Behavior

At-risk demographics &
Genetic Background

Populations with higher risk factors benefit from specific consideration, community resource planning and partnership and an understanding of the impact on individual and community mental health.

8 AREAS OF INTEGRATION

Learning Approach
& Neurodiversity

Trauma Considerations

Cultural Considerations

Community Integration
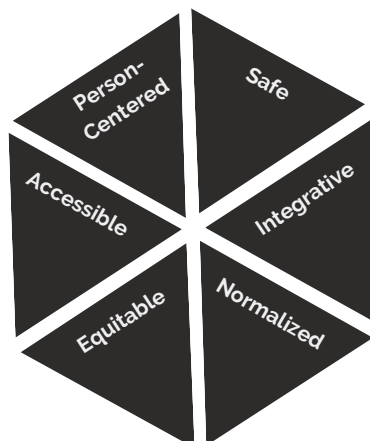
Caregiver Integration

Materials and Resource Tools

Best Practices

Natural Reinforcement

Consultation on specialized integrative approaches ensures high quality strategic and operational planning.

Quality assured planning

Person-Centered

Safe

Accessible

Integrative

Equitable

Normalized

Conscious reflection and feedback loops help us meet high standards for quality application and integration such that we make incremental progress.

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EMAIL: contact@mindtheclass.org

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Partnering for Progress