

Internalizing Challenges



What are internalizing mental health challenges?

- Emotional distress kept on the inside
- Negative feelings and perceptions about the self
- Inaccurate thoughts about self, others and the world
- Body complaints like stomachaches and headaches



What do they look like in students?

- **Frequent or intense sadness** — *cries a lot, appears sad or down*
- **Frequent and intense anxiety** — *anxiety over academics or friends, school avoidance*
- **Worrying a lot** — *tests, social situations, safety and health of themselves and important people in their lives, death and dying*
- **Feeling lonely**
- **Depressed or irritable mood** — *cranky, agitated, flat affect, sad often*
- **Loss of energy and interest** — *feeling tired, not being interested in things they used to enjoy*
- **Feelings of hopelessness** — *nothing will ever change or get better*
- **Low self-esteem** — *I am no good...*
- **Social withdrawal** — *keeps to self, lack of participation in class activities, doesn't interact with peers*
- **Somatic symptoms** — *stomachaches, headaches, not related to illness*
- **Sleep disturbance** — *sleeping too little, too much, more than usual, can't get to sleep or stay asleep*
- **Suicidal ideation or behavior**



Why do they matter?

- Internalizing challenges make it difficult for youth to fully engage in positive aspects of life that may provide support, positive feedback and connection
- Youth may respond to others in ways that disrupt positive connections and reinforce internalizing challenges such as isolation and inaccurate thoughts
- Youth have more difficulty focusing on academics, which may impact learning and increase conflict with teachers and caregivers

