

STRENGTH-BASED COLLECTIVE BRIEF



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5 STRENGTH-BASED PRACTICES FOR SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS

As school counselors, psychologists, and social workers, it's our duty to support the mental well-being of students. A strength-based approach is a powerful framework for doing so. It recognizes that every student has strengths, resources, and the ability to overcome adversity. By focusing on these strengths, we can help students build confidence, set and achieve goals, and improve overall well-being.

Here are 5 strength-based practices that school mental health professionals can use with students right now:

- 1 **COLLABORATIVELY identify students' strengths:** Ask students what *they* think their strengths are. If they are unsure, help them identify their strengths by sharing your perspective, administering a [formal strength-based assessment](#), or encouraging the student to ask others what they think their strengths are.
- 2 **CONTINUOUSLY talk about identified strengths:** Once strengths are identified, they need to be fostered. Have conscious conversations with students about what it means to use their strengths. This will help them build confidence in their abilities and talents.
- 3 **INTENTIONALLY share the student's strengths with teachers and parents:** When other adults know the strengths of students, they are presented with a new perspective of the child's capabilities. This can also help you build positive relationships with parents.
- 4 **CONSCIOUSLY discuss how strengths can be used to overcome challenges:** Talk with students about challenges they are facing and brainstorm practical ways that their strengths can aid in perseverance. This can lead to a focus on solutions instead of problems with the goal of helping students feel more in control of their own lives.
- 5 **PURPOSEFULLY teach the student how to advocate for the use of their strengths:** Empower students to understand when they are in situations that don't allow them to be their best self. Teach concrete self-advocacy tools and statements that can be used to take more control.

A strength-based approach means seeing *beyond* student problems and vulnerabilities, and instead focusing on potential. It's based on the belief that every student has the ability to make positive changes in their lives. We should always start by emphasizing "what's right."

