

# Fostering Mental Health and Well-Being



## EDC's framework to help children and youth thrive in a complex world


EDC delivers multi-tiered mental health supports and programming to foster comprehensive well-being for all. Our innovative, youth-friendly approaches fill critical gaps in the landscape of programs and services to build youths' self-awareness and essential skills before mental health issues arise. Our approaches are evidence based, contextualized, and scalable—especially where clinicians are scarce.


EDC implements programming to support young people at all levels of development and need for support. We listen to communities, and their needs dictate our approach. Our Mental Health & Well-Being Framework lays out the various ways in which we work to help communities thrive.

The framework is an integrated continuum of care for young people, in which each building block of mental health and well-being is accessible to anyone and based on their level of need. Critically, support for each building block is designed to be provided by providers who are accessible to individuals and communities.


### EDC's Well-Being Framework:

Establishing the Building Blocks of Mental Health & Social-Emotional Well-Being

 Mental Health Treatment

 Mental Health Interventions

 Psychosocial Support

 Social-Emotional Learning & Life Skills

 Safe Living & Learning Environments

## We think our approach is unique. Here's why.

- ▶ **We make psychosocial support accessible to all.** We recognize the value of building general psychosocial support skills for anyone who works with young people, enabling them to empower young people to develop critical coping and problem-solving skills, to deepen connections to others, and to be resilient in the face of adversity.
- ▶ **We transform evidence-based clinical mental health practices into effective interventions for community-based facilitators.** A lack of clinical care shouldn't mean mental health symptoms and challenges go unaddressed. Using EDC's expertise in clinical psychology, interactive education, and cultural adaptations, we are bringing innovative mental health education and skill-building approaches to communities with unmet needs for mental health support, thereby helping people deal directly with stress, anxiety, depression, trauma, and other mental health struggles.
- ▶ **We support youth at critical points in their development.** We focus on young people, providing skill building and support before life stressors and mental health symptoms become full-blown mental health disorders. We work in settings where youth are easily reached, such as schools and community training programs.
- ▶ **We plan for scale from the outset.** By working through and with education systems and using scalable technology such as interactive radio and audio instruction, we take mental health and well-being interventions to scale. This approach brings social-emotional and mental health activities into the mainstream, helping to break down mental health stigma that holds back many people from seeking help.

## Safe Living & Learning Environments

EDC recognizes that safety is an enabling factor for continued emotional, cognitive, and physical development. As such, our Mental Health & Well-Being Framework conceptualizes safety as the foundation for all other well-being interventions and incorporates EDC's multi-hazard Safe Living and Learning Approach. This approach recognizes that children and youth do not experience hazards in isolation, but rather as compounded and inter-related dynamics.

Guided by communities in identifying and understanding critical risks, we work collaboratively with schools, caregivers, local youth-serving organizations, communities, protection actors, and local government to take effective steps to create safe living and learning environments for young people and their families and communities. EDC supports local systems and structures to implement a variety of safe living and learning approaches, including safe and caring classroom initiatives, early warning systems to prevent dropout and violence, establishment of referral networks, school safety and violence prevention initiatives, and more.

## Social-Emotional Learning

We've made the commitment to integrate SEL across EDC's portfolio of international basic education, youth, and health programming, drawing on the social-ecological model. We recognize that individuals do not exist in isolation—they are part of a wider environment that includes school, home, community, organizations, institutions, and policy. EDC integrates SEL into programming at each layer of the ecosystem, addressing the needs of learners (child, youth, or adult), teachers, community members, educator training structures, government ministries, and national government policies and standards.

EDC approaches SEL as a contextualized process for building the knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to develop healthy identities, executive functioning and agency, positive relationships, and critical thinking for success in learning and life. We help educators and systems foster learning by leveraging everyday life experiences, direct SEL instruction, and thoughtful integration of SEL into general pedagogy and other content areas, activities, and programming.

## Psychosocial Support

EDC's approach to psychosocial support is skills based and universal. Our training and assistance includes evidence-based approaches to help community focal points integrate asset-based support for young people and adults in dealing with difficult situations and the emotions they elicit, bolstering their coping and problem-solving skills, helping them to overcome adversities, and strengthening social bonds with their families and communities for added support and connectedness.

## We work collaboratively with schools, caregivers, local youth-serving organizations, communities, protection actors, and local government to take effective steps to create safe living and learning environments for young people and their families and communities.

We help individuals—from social workers to teachers to youth peer educators—develop supportive listening skills; coach others to proactively solve problems using their intrinsic strengths and available resources; and be a trusted source of social and emotional support for those navigating challenging situations. EDC's approach has helped individuals, families, and communities build resilience, improve caregiving for children, confront stigma and discrimination, and develop renewed confidence and agency to take steps toward more positive futures.

## Mental Health Interventions & Treatment

We believe a lack of clinical mental health professionals should not impede individuals' ability to improve their mental health, and that young people and adults are capable of learning effective self-help approaches to enable them to maintain good mental health. That's why EDC developed *Mental Health for All*, which adapts and contextualizes evidence-based psychological treatments—including cognitive behavioral therapy, acceptance and commitment therapy, and emotional regulation foundations—into a skills-based mental health curriculum designed to be delivered in groups by non-clinicians with minimal training.

*Mental Health for All* includes instruction on developing emotional awareness, establishing the building blocks of mental health, learning to manage depressed and anxious feelings, coping with adversity, and putting newfound mental health and coping skills into action. *Mental Health for All* was designed for low-resource and low-literacy environments using interactive audio instruction and storytelling. It includes optional animated videos, interactive games, and social media engagement to reinforce key concepts, build skills and break down mental health stigma. We link young people to available clinical mental health services and provide training and support to strengthen provider capabilities to deliver quality evidence-based mental health treatment and care.

### For More Information:

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