



LESSON 1

# Promoting Mattering for Self and Others

Approximate  
time required:

 60 min

If you wish to provide students with additional mental health literacy to establish common language and understanding, consider using lesson 1 in [MH LIT: Student Mental Health in Action](#).

## LEARNING GOALS

We are learning:

- To demonstrate an understanding of mattering and its connection to well-being.
- To practice skills that contribute to creating a positive and inclusive culture that promotes mattering for oneself and others.

## SUCCESS CRITERIA

Co-develop success criteria with students using the following questions: “How will we know we are achieving our learning goals? What will it look like/ sound like?”

For example:

- I know ways I can contribute to a culture of mattering individually, at school and at work.

## BIG IDEAS

- Mattering helps us to feel connected and gives us a sense of community and belonging in different aspects of our lives, including at work.
- Actively cultivating a positive and inclusive culture that promotes a sense of belonging, value, and significance (mattering) for oneself and others, both in personal relationships and work is important.

## CONSIDERATIONS

Creating an inclusive, identity-affirming space for students goes beyond what happens in the learning environment. It extends to the way we talk about the future, how we frame post-secondary plans, and what experiences we hold up as examples of success. It is important to be aware of our bias because implicit bias is present in all of us—our backgrounds, attitudes, and experiences unconsciously affect our perceptions, actions, and decisions. Consider the following questions to help you reflect on and improve your practices:

- As an educator, what can I do to be aware of the privileges I hold that may influence my biases?
- What can I do to identify and acknowledge my biases? And how can I begin dismantling them once I am aware of them?
- Am I open to receiving feedback that my biases are affecting others or that I have unintentionally caused harm?
- Do I actively challenge stereotypes and intervene when I witness discriminatory behaviour or others causing harm?
- Am I proactive in learning about other groups of people and cultures in a respectful and appropriate way? Am I proactive in learning about social justice issues and how they impact people's experiences that differ from mine?
- What version of success am I portraying as an educator? Whose version of success am I projecting when I talk about post-secondary options? How do I acknowledge experiences and versions of success that may differ from my own?
- Am I maintaining high expectations for every student?
- Do I recognize or seek to understand all students' strengths and lived experiences?
- How am I helping students to "know themselves" including their interests, strengths, accomplishments, and skills?

## MATERIALS / HANDOUTS

### [Student Notebook](#)

- 1.1 – I Matter
- 1.2 – Message of Hope
- 1.3 – Wrap Up

### [PowerPoint Slides](#)

- Promoting Mattering for Self and Others

## ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

- [MH LIT: Student Mental Health in Action](#).
- [Tools for student groups: developing accountable and healthy group norms](#)

**Note:** The content of this lesson was repurposed from the School Mental Health Ontario resource [MH LIT: Student Mental Health in Action Expansion Pack 2: The Challenges of Change: Navigating the Transition from Secondary School](#).



## INTRODUCTION TO SKILLS 4 LIFE (S4L)

 5 min

### Slide 1: Intro slide

**Slide 2: Teacher prompt:** S4L focuses on equipping you with life skills to help you navigate post-secondary transitions and support your well-being in the process.

In this unit, we will cover five lessons:

- » Understand the importance of mattering and positive motivation
- » Explore our identities and acknowledge our strengths
- » Learn effective communication and conflict resolution skills
- » Unpack the stress linked to change and transitions, and
- » Identifying strategies to help manage stress

### Slide 3: Lesson 1 learning goals

- » Mattering helps us to feel connected and gives us a sense of community and belonging in different aspects of our lives, including at work.
- » Actively cultivating a positive and inclusive culture that promotes a sense of belonging, value, and significance (mattering) for oneself and others, both in personal relationships and work is important.

## MINDS ON

 10 min

### Shared Classroom Agreements

#### Slide 4: Co-creating shared classroom agreements to guide discussion

**Teacher prompt:** “The goal of co-creating shared classroom agreements is to promote a supportive learning environment that will encourage everyone to share their thoughts, experiences, and aspirations, while respecting and valuing the diverse identities and backgrounds of others.

Spend a few minutes talking with the class about what students need to feel comfortable discussing social and emotional skills in the five lessons to be covered. Collaboratively create some “ground rules” or shared agreements to guide the discussion. Here are some suggestions:

- » Be open to learning.
- » There is room for everyone to contribute, but you don’t have to share if you don’t want to.
- » Allow space for people to speak. One person speaks at a time.
- » Use thoughtful, non-stigmatizing language that promotes inclusivity, respect and empathy for people’s backgrounds and lived experiences.
- » Listen to and respect each other’s opinions and points of view, even if you disagree.
- » Be open to each other’s experiences and appreciate differences. Value everyone’s voice.



- » Respect the privacy and confidentiality of others when discussing our experiences, ensuring a trusting environment for open conversations.
- » Ask for additional ideas from the group.

**Teacher prompt:** “In these lessons, we’ll be focusing on sharing facts and reliable information rather than sensitive personal stories, which take time and attention to share and may be upsetting for some. If there is a personal situation you would like to speak about, please see me. I’ll also be sharing some resources at the end of the lesson.”

If a student does start to make a disclosure during class, you may redirect them using a statement such as the following: “Thank you for sharing. This is important and I want to give it the time and attention it deserves. Let’s check in after class.”

## ACTION TASK (Consider self, others, careers)

 30 min

### Mattering

#### Slide 5: Group activity

**Teacher prompt:** “We just established shared agreements so that all students in the classroom will feel comfortable participating. We all matter! But what does it mean to matter? Let’s brainstorm...”

- » **What does it mean to matter?** What does it look like, sound like, feel like?
- » **What does it mean to not matter?** What does that look like, sound like, feel like?
- » Reinforce that understanding the idea of mattering helps us to feel connected and give us a sense of community.”

#### Slide 6: Notebook activity [NOTEBOOK 1.1 – I Matter](#).

**Teacher prompt:** We encounter groups of people everywhere we go. People may belong to many different types of groups: a family, a social circle, a religious group, a cultural group, a workplace, a school/classroom, a sports team, etc. We are each connected to others in unique ways, and those connections are important to our sense of how we matter in the world.

There are people who rely on you, value you, believe in you, and want you to succeed at school, at work, and in life in general. When you are feeling down and disconnected, it can be helpful to think about groups you are a part of, and remind yourself that you matter to people (and pets too!). Remember that your impact on people and the world isn’t always visible, but it’s always there!

Look at the list provided in your Notebook and check all the boxes that apply to you. Think of it in terms of “I am”. There is space to add other groups or communities not on the list.

### Mattering at Work

#### Slide 7: Drawing connections: Mattering at Work

**Teacher prompt:** After defining what it means to matter and identifying areas in our lives where we matter, let’s consider how this concept connects to the workplace.

- » **“Why is it important to matter at work?”**



**Slide 8: Debrief**

**Teacher prompt:** “In 2022, the [U.S. Surgeon General](#) named “mattering at work” a top priority for improving mental health. The announcement reaffirms what we’ve [known](#) for many years: Mattering and well-being are inseparable, especially where humans spend 35% of their waking lives at work.”

**Slide 9: Drawing Connections**

**Teacher prompt:** “Research shows how important it is for everyone to feel like they matter... so how can we help promote a culture of mattering at school and at work? Here are a few tips:”

## Tips: Supporting a Culture of Mattering

**Slide 10: “Notice others and authentically be interested in what’s going on in their lives.**

**Teacher prompt:** How would you go about doing this?

Some examples:

- » saying good morning
- » knowing their name
- » checking in on them
- » ...”

**Slide 11: Communicate others’ importance by telling them about how their specific strengths, aptitudes, and behaviors make a difference.**

**Teacher prompt:** “How would you go about doing this? For example:

- » be specific about the skill/strength you have noticed
- » highlight the positive impact their specific actions make”

**Slide 12: Show people they are needed.**

**Teacher prompt:** “How would you go about doing this? For example:

- » recognize and value their contributions to a conversation or a team project
- » express appreciation and gratitude for their contributions
- » actively seek their feedback
- » welcome and celebrate diversity and different perspectives”

**Slide 13: Revisiting the shared agreements**

**Teacher prompt:** “Given what we’ve discussed about the importance of mattering, and thinking about the shared classroom agreements we’ve co-created, are there any additions or modifications we’d like to make?”



## CONSOLIDATION

 15 min

### Slide 14: Notebook activity [NOTEBOOK 1.2 – Message of Hope](#)

**Teacher prompt:** “In addition to the importance of mattering and contributing to a culture that promotes mattering in everyday life, at school and at work, it is also essential to matter to yourself and to maintain a positive outlook.

To do so, we are going to create a message of hope to your next year self. Think about where you may be and what you may be doing. Then create an encouraging and positive message for yourself.”

**Note:** This activity was repurposed from School Mental Health Ontario [MH LIT Expansion Pack 2: The Challenges of Change: Navigating the Transition from Secondary School](#).

### Slide 15: A few ideas/reminders

**Teacher prompt:** “You may wish to include some of the following in your message:

- » reminders of how you have been able to get through challenging times in the past and the strategies used
- » reminders that sometimes things haven’t turned out the way you expected and that it was okay and even led to learning, growth, and other positive outcomes
- » encouraging words “

### Slide 16: Sample message

**Teacher prompt:** “In your notebook there’s a sample letter to inspire you. If you prefer, you can create an audio message or video for yourself, too. The important thing is that you offer yourself some compassion and encouragement, whatever format you choose. Remember: you matter!”

## WRAP UP

 5 min

### Slide 17: Notebook activity [NOTEBOOK 1.3 – Wrap Up](#)

**Teacher prompt:** “During this S4L unit and beyond, notice how you are contributing towards promoting a sense of mattering, both for yourself and others. To help you increase your self-awareness, ask yourself:

For myself and for others:

- » What am I already doing well?
- » What would I like to try?

Add these reflections to your Notebook!”

### Slide 18: Key messages:

Mattering is important.

So is positively contributing to a culture that promotes mattering for yourself and others.

