

PROMOTING MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY THROUGH BIBLIOTHERAPY IN SCHOOL-BASED SETTINGS

Considering that one in five children has or has had a mental disorder in a given year (National Institute of Mental Health, 2010), the demand for mental health services within the school setting is immense. Bibliotherapy can serve as a preventative and responsive treatment for increasing mental health literacy within the school setting. The authors review relevant bibliotherapy and mental health literacy research, introduce the concept of mental health literacy in the school setting, and provide counselors and educators with practical tools to implement the concept.

Jorm (2000) defines mental health literacy as “knowledge and beliefs about mental disorders which aid their recognition, management, or prevention” (p. 396). Emphasis on mental health literacy in recent years has increased because of the high prevalence of mental health disorders (National Institute of Mental Health [NIMH], 2014), the social stigma surrounding mental health (Corrigan & Shapiro, 2010), and the need for early recognition and treatment. The conceptual framework of mental health literacy may be an effective way to educate, prevent, and provide early intervention for mental health disorders in school settings.

Public school systems provide an immense amount of mental health care, such as crisis counseling or referrals to outside agencies for students experiencing mental health distress. In 2014, an estimated 81% of public schools in the United States provided mental health support staff for students experiencing emotional and behavioral problems (Centers for Disease Control, 2014); however, students still lack the appropriate and necessary services. Approximately 20% of children have or have had a diagnosable mental health disorder at some point in their lives (NIMH, 2010), and only one in five of those children receives the necessary services for treatment (Kaffenberger & Seligman, 2007). The school counselor’s role is to provide these children with brief counseling services or refer

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them to appropriate outside treatment centers (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2012). However, school counselors' caseloads are often overloaded, demonstrated by the average student-to-school-counselor ratio of 482:1 (ASCA, 2017). This is nearly double the recommended 250:1 ratio of students to school counselors (ASCA, 2017). Even when resources are limited, however, school counselors can use their unique training to address mental health needs of students through prevention and education activities in the classroom, with small groups, with families, and with individual students.

BIBLIOTHERAPY IS USED AS A PREVENTATIVE MEASURE AND AS A TREATMENT INTERVENTION FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF PSYCHOLOGICAL DISORDERS.

An emphasis on mental health literacy is a step toward educating children and adolescents about mental health and providing early interventions. Children who know more about mental health will be more likely to seek help (Beatie, Stewart, & Walker, 2016), often from school counselors or other school personnel, and feel less stigmatized. Although widespread mental health literacy programs exist in countries such as Australia and Sweden (Alan & Robyn, 2012; Svensson & Hansson, 2014), the United States has not yet incorporated mental health literacy into the national educational curriculum. Evaluations of international mental health literacy programs have found them to be advantageous (Hadlaczky, Hökby, Mkrtchian, Carli, & Wasserman, 2014; Mcluckie, Kutcher, Wei, & Weaver, 2014), suggesting that implementation of such programs in the U.S. could increase students' likelihood to seek help and lessen the perceived stigma of mental health concerns.

The ASCA National Model (ASCA, 2012) calls for a school counseling curriculum that ensures equitable access to students and is based in data-driven decision making. Bibliotherapy is an evidence-based approach school

counselors and educators can use to incorporate mental health education into pre-existing school curricula. Bibliotherapy is the use of literature, film, or other media to promote understanding and facilitate problem solving related to one's therapeutic goals (Marrs, 1995). Bibliotherapy is used with diverse populations including children with autism (Scattone, Wilczynski, Edwards, & Rabian, 2002), LGBTQ youth (Frank & Cannon, 2009), and preadolescents experiencing parental divorce (Pehrsson, Allen, Folger, McMillen, & Lowe, 2007). Furthermore, bibliotherapy is used to prevent and treat

mental health problems such as anxiety (Cobham, 2012), depression (Gregory, Schwer Canning, Lee, & Wise, 2004), and aggression (Shechtman, 2006). A wide range of professionals deliver bibliotherapy, including counselors, librarians, and teachers. Although the intervention can be a stand-alone therapeutic option, it is often used in conjunction with other counseling approaches such as traditional talk therapy. School counselors and educators often use books and other media to educate and facilitate discussion among students. The aim of this article is threefold: (a) to review relevant mental health literacy and bibliotherapy research, (b) to introduce the concept of mental health literacy in the school setting, and (c) to provide school counselors with practical tools to incorporate bibliotherapy in the school setting to increase mental health literacy.

BIBLIOTHERAPY

Although the term bibliotherapy was coined in 1916, the use of written material to treat emotional distress dates back centuries. "The Healing Place for the Soul," an inscription above a

library entrance in Thebes in ancient Greece (Heath, Sheen, Leavy, Young, & Money, 2005) provides historical context to the therapeutic use of the written word. McCuliss (2012) details the history of bibliotherapy, highlighting the use of libraries in mental institutions in the 1800s, librarians choosing reading materials to assist psychiatric patients in the 1920s, and the publication of a list of books aimed to help children develop moral character and virtue in the 1950s.

Bibliotherapy is used as a preventative measure and as a treatment intervention for a wide variety of psychological disorders. Long (1993) and Kierfeld, Ise, Hanisch, Gortz-Dorten, and Dopfner (2013) investigated the efficacy of utilizing bibliotherapy in the treatment of children with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, finding that self-help manuals can serve as effective resources for assisting parents in managing their children's externalizing behavior. Studies have also explored the efficacy of bibliotherapy as a preventative approach and treatment option for anxiety and depression. James, James, Cowdrey, Soler, and Choke (2015) found bibliotherapy as an active control to be just as effective as a cognitive behavioral therapy for children with anxiety disorders. Furthermore, research has found cognitive bibliotherapy to reduce depressive symptoms for adolescents experiencing mild to moderate depressive symptomology (Ackerson, Scogin, McKendree-Smith, & Lyman, 1998).

Bibliotherapy is an evidence-based treatment option for a wide variety of psychological concerns. However, practical application strategies for school counselors are scarce. Examining the intersection of mental health literacy and bibliotherapy provides a possible framework for addressing mental health support in school settings.

MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY

Mental health literacy involves the knowledge and beliefs about mental

disorders that aid in their recognition, management, or prevention (Jorm, 2000). It consists of several components, including recognition of specific disorders and types of psychological distress, knowledge about risk factors and causes, and knowledge about mental health treatment. Throughout history, various approaches have been used to increase mental health literacy. A meta-analysis of research related to challenging mental health stigma reveals three strategies for changing public stigma: education to challenge incorrect stereotypes of mentally ill individuals, personal contact with a member of a stigmatized group, and social activism or protest (Corrigan, Morris, Michaels, Rafacz, & Rusch, 2012). Researchers found that both education and personal contact with an individual with a mental illness had positive effects on decreasing stigma; personal contact was more effective at reaching adults while mental health education was more effective for adolescents. Corrigan, Morris, Michaels, Rafacz, and Rusch (2012) theorized that adolescents' beliefs about mental illness are less solidified than those of adults. Thus, an educational approach inclusive of mental health literacy could particularly benefit children and adolescents.

Recognizing Disorders and Distress

An essential component of mental health literacy is ability to recognize mental health disorders and distress (Jorm, 2000). In addition to identifying disorders, counselors emphasize recognition of wellness, defined as “a way of life oriented toward optimal health and well-being” (Myers, Sweeney, & Witmer, 2000, p. 252). Based on the literature, students' ability to reflect on their own wellness and areas of mental health concern could be essential in preventing, recognizing, and treating mental illness. Similarly, providing avenues for mental health literacy for children early in life may equip them to recognize mental health concerns in others earlier than would be typical in the developmental process (Salerno, 2016; Townsend et al., 2017).

Recognition of mental health will look different in schools depending on the developmental level of the students (Berk, 2012). In elementary schools, recognition of feelings is a step toward mental health literacy, as is conflict mediation, a way to cope with and resolve peer conflict. In middle and high school, adolescents face new challenges: increased academic demands and, potentially, the pressure of navigating a difficult social environment. Understanding the symptoms and signs of depression, anxiety, suicidal ideation, and eating disorders in themselves and their peers can be essential to an individual ultimately seeking treatment.

MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY INVOLVES THE KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEFS ABOUT MENTAL DISORDERS THAT AID IN THEIR RECOGNITION, MANAGEMENT, OR PREVENTION.

Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies (PATHS) is one program that aims to promote recognition of emotions and problem-solving skills (Kusché & Greenberg, 1994). PATHS facilitates mental health literacy by providing education about expression, understanding, and regulation of emotions. It is a teacher-taught program and is developmentally appropriate for preschool and elementary-aged children. PATHS uses numerous modes of instruction involving games, crafts, and picture-prompted storytelling. An evaluation of the program revealed that the PATHS intervention group had significantly more emotional knowledge skills than the control group. Teachers and parents also reported that PATHS participants were significantly more socially competent than their peers (Domitrovich, Cortes, & Greenberg, 2007). These findings demonstrate both the positive impact of emotional education and the potential of using mixed media to promote mental health literacy.

Ojio and colleagues (2015) found that a mixed media curriculum (blackboard instruction, videos, group discussions, and vignettes) had a

significant effect on the improvement of mental health literacy, particularly recognition of mental disorders, for secondary students in Japan (Ojio et al., 2015). After receiving just two 50-minute lessons of mental health curricula, students were significantly more likely to accurately label diagnoses such as depression and schizophrenia. Posttests also showed that students were more likely to seek help for mental health distress and advise their peers to seek mental health treatment, demonstrating that knowledge of mental health may lead to direct help-seeking behaviors (Ojio et al., 2015).

Although the modes of instruction in these two curricula were not specific to storybooks, they provide evidence that creative modes of education can effectively improve the recognition of mental health concerns. Table 1 includes several storybooks related to the recognition of mental health concerns, such as depressive disorders and anxiety.

Knowledge about Causes of Mental Health Distress

A critical component of mental health literacy is being able to identify the causes and environmental triggers associated with mental health distress (Jorm, 2000). Children today experience a wide range of emotions tied to stress, trauma, and life adjustments. Half of all children have experienced trauma such as abuse, violence, terrorism, or traumatic loss (American Psychological Association, 2016). Gaining knowledge about the causes of mental health disorders can be a key step toward reducing the stigma of mental health disorders and seeking help for individuals.

A 16-month qualitative study explored children's perceptions of positive mental health and mental illness

TABLE 1

RECOMMENDED BOOKS TO INCREASE MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY IN SCHOOL-BASED SETTINGS

Recommended Books to Increase Mental Health Literacy in School-Based Settings	Author	Recommended Grade Level	Summary of Book
<i>The Feelings Book</i>	Todd Parr	PreK	<i>The Feelings Book</i> matches kid-friendly illustrations to emotions such as sad and brave.
<i>Not Today, Celeste!</i>	Liza Stevens	PreK-2	This storybook explains depression through the eyes of the happiest dog in the world.
<i>When Sophie Gets Angry—Really, Really Angry...</i>	Molly Bang	PreK-2	This story validates the feeling of anger while also promoting healthy coping mechanisms, such as taking some time to regain composure.
<i>The Biggest Test in the Universe</i>	Nancy Poydar	PreK-3	This book challenges children's fears of test taking through humor and reassurance.
<i>Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day</i>	Judith Viorst	PreK-3	Alexander assures children that everyone has terrible, horrible, no good, very bad days but in the end, it is okay.
<i>The Tenth Good Thing about Barney</i>	Judith Viorst	PreK-3	A young boy reflects on the loss of his beloved pet. This story presents a difficult subject in a straightforward way and may help children cope with the loss of their own pets.
<i>Visiting Feelings</i>	Lauren Rubenstein	K-2	<i>Visiting Feelings</i> introduces the concept of recognizing and befriending the many emotions children experience.
<i>Mi Primer Libro de Terapia</i>	Marc Nemiroff	K-2	This storybook explains concepts such as confidentiality and the therapeutic relationship in Spanish.
<i>My Mouth is a Volcano!</i>	Julia Cook	K-3	A boy named Louis just can't help but interrupt. Recommended for children with ADHD or behavioral concerns, this book is an empathetic and entertaining approach to teach respect.
<i>Can I Catch It Like a Cold? Coping with a Parent's Depression</i>	Centre for Addiction and Mental Health	K-4	This story details a child's reactions to his dad's depression and misconceptions about mental illness, and provides suggestions for healthy coping.
<i>Grow Happy</i>	Jon Lasser, Ph.D., and Sage Foster-Lasser	K-4	<i>Grow Happy</i> promotes well-being, problem solving, and attending to one's feelings.
<i>Don't Pop Your Cork on Mondays!</i>	Adolph Moser	4-6	This book offers practical approaches to help children deal with stress with entertaining language and illustrations.
<i>Someone to Talk to: Getting Good at Feeling Better</i>	Paola Conte, Ph.D., Cheryl Sterling, Ph.D., and Larissa Labay, Psy.D.	4-7	Intended for older children, this book explains what therapy is and what to expect during a therapy session.

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TABLE 1

RECOMMENDED BOOKS TO INCREASE MENTAL HEALTH LITERACY IN SCHOOL-BASED SETTINGS, CONTINUED

Recommended Books to Increase Mental Health Literacy in School-Based Settings	Author	Recommended Grade Level	Summary of Book
<i>Feeling Better: A Kid's Book About Therapy</i>	Rachel Rashkin	4-8	<i>Feeling Better</i> tells the story of young girl who receives counseling services through a difficult year.
<i>Turtles All The Way Down</i>	John Green	6-12	<i>Turtles All The Way Down</i> follows a high school student's struggles with obsessive-compulsive disorder as she tries to be a student, daughter, and best friend.
<i>Mind Your Head</i>	Juno Dawson	7-9	With a brief introduction to a variety of mental health topics, this book features real-life stories of young people facing mental health concerns from all around the world.
<i>Chicken Soup for the Teenage Soul on Tough Stuff: Stories of Tough Times and Lessons Learned</i>	Jack Canfield and Mark Viktor Hansen	7-12	Teen contributors share their experiences with difficult topics like suicide, self-harm, and grief. The book is described as uplifting despite the seriousness of the topics.
<i>Stuff That Sucks: Accepting What You Can't Change and Committing to What You Can</i>	Ben Sedley	7-12	The author, a clinical psychologist, helps young people understand and accept their emotions, clarify personal values, and make steps towards managing their circumstances.
<i>I Had a Black Dog</i>	Matthew Johnstone	7-12	Using a black dog as a metaphor for depression, this picture book shows what it is like to struggle with depression and find ways to cope.
<i>Highly Illogical Behavior</i>	John Corey Whaley	9-12	This coming-of-age novel tells the story of 16-year-old Solomon, who struggles with anxiety and agoraphobia.
<i>Don't Touch</i>	Rachel M. Wilson	9-12	<i>Don't Touch</i> is a powerful story about a young girl with extreme anxiety who desperately wants to audition for her school's production of <i>Hamlet</i> .
<i>It's Kind of a Funny Story</i>	Ned Vizzini	9-12	This book tells the story of an adolescent male struggling with perfectionism, anxiety, and depression. He gets a new start after he checks himself into a psychiatric hospital.

(Armstrong, Hill, & Seckler, 2000). Focus groups and interviews with 145 children in rural, suburban, and inner-city schools in Scotland revealed that the term *mentally healthy* was often interpreted as normality or a deficit of mental health concerns. The children also focused on the terms mental or healthy as separate concepts: healthy generally meant exercising and eating healthily, while the word mental had to do with illness rather than mental

health. For example, when asked what it means to be mentally healthy, a participant responded:

Mentally healthy is when you're like disturbed/they feel confused so that if something happens they don't know how to react to it/they cry/lash out and hit people/and get upset over the silliest wee things. (Armstrong et al., 2000, p. 64)

Researchers also asked children about causes of feelings like depression and sadness. The most common answer was boredom (Armstrong et al., 2000), indicating that children may have unsophisticated ideas about the causes of mental illness.

Parents' perceptions of the causes of mental illness may influence children. Jorm and Wright (2008) conducted a telephone survey of adolescents and young adults and their co-resident par-

ents in Australia. They presented participants randomly with one of four vignettes about a specific mental health concern, then questioned participants about their recognition of the concern, their beliefs surrounding it, and their knowledge of mental health in general. This study found that exposure to mentally ill people was associated with lower levels of stigma. Often, parents' beliefs were shared with their children, including the concept that mentally ill people are "weak, not sick" (Jorm & Wright, 2008, p. 145).

The previously mentioned studies provide evidence to the necessity of education regarding causes of mental illness, including biological, social, and psychological factors. Books and other forms of media can provide children with relatable characters and realistic situations surrounding mental illness. Exposure to and education about mental health disorders may decrease the stigma of mental illness and increase the likelihood of help-seeking behavior in struggling children.

Knowledge about Seeking Help

Education about self-help techniques and healthy coping mechanisms can serve as an important protective factor for children. For instance, studies have found that teaching children peer mediation skills also aids students in handling conflict at home (Diver-Stammes, 1991). Group counseling in schools works to decrease aggression and manage anger (Amatea, Thompson, Rankin-Clemons, & Ettinger,

other media can teach coping mechanisms that empower individuals to analyze, challenge, and replace their negative thoughts. One study compared cognitive behavioral therapy to bibliotherapy and psychoeducation treatments; researchers found bibliotherapy treatment was just as effective as cognitive behavioral therapy treatment (James, James, Cowdrey, Soler, & Choke, 2015). This meta-analysis provides the field with important implications, including the efficacy of using bibliotherapy as a brief counseling intervention in schools.

Another study investigated the effects of a brief cognitive behavioral depression prevention program for at-risk adolescents (Stice, Rohde, Gau, & Ochner, 2010). During a depression prevention program, researchers assigned high school students labeled at-risk to one of the following: a cognitive behavioral group intervention, group supportive-expressive intervention, a cognitive behavioral bibliotherapy group, or an educational brochure (control group). The cognitive behavioral bibliotherapy group produced marginally greater reductions in risk for onset of future depressive symptoms, demonstrating that the coping skills taught through bibliotherapy may have a unique contribution in reducing depressive symptoms. Researchers also noted that the bibliotherapy group was the most affordable method of reducing future episodes of depression (Stice et al., 2010).

COPING SKILLS TAUGHT THROUGH BIBLIOTHERAPY MAY HAVE A UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION IN REDUCING DEPRESSIVE SYMPTOMS.

2010; Burt, Patel, & Lewis, 2012), and school counseling services reduce the rate of students dropping out later (Bearden, Spencer, & Moracco, 1989).

Bibliotherapy is often used to treat disorders commonly seen in schools, such as anxiety, depression, and attention deficit disorder. Books and

Bibliotherapy can also be effective in educating parents about mental health and how to manage their child's mental illness. A pilot study tested bibliotherapy as a manual-assisted self-help tool for parents with children who have externalizing problem behaviors (Kierfeld, Ise, Hanisch, Gortz-Dorten, & Dopfner,

2013). Findings revealed that children's problematic behaviors were significantly reduced during the intervention and parenting skills were strengthened. Fewer than 20% of parents indicated their child needed additional intensive behavioral outpatient treatment at the end of the intervention (Kierfeld et al., 2013), demonstrating that counselors can use bibliotherapy to support parents and teach effective methods of self-help.

When children and adolescents struggle with mental illness or know a family member or friend with a mental health disorder, they may not know where to turn for professional help and information. The stigma of mental illness may also work as a barrier to seeking mental health assistance, especially in minority populations. Although research suggests that people of color experience mental illness such as depression at a higher rate than their white peers (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2014), they are less likely to have access to mental health services (Merikangas et al., 2011). The social consequences of early onset psychiatric illness in minority populations are also more profound; researchers found that African American and Latinx persons were 2 to 6 times more likely to be unemployed or to have dropped out of high school as a result of psychiatric illness (Lê Cook, Carson, & Alegria 2010).

Beatie, Stewart, and Walker (2016) researched the psychological factors that may influence mental health help seeking in postsecondary students. The researchers found that self-stigma, defined as an individual's perception that they are socially unacceptable (p. 292), was the strongest predictor of young adults deciding not to seek mental health services. Individuals with little previous exposure to mental health problems were also unlikely to seek help. Researchers concluded that educational campaigns to target self-stigma and increase mental health awareness would increase mental health help-seeking behavior in young adults (Beatie et al., 2016).

Perceived unfamiliarity of treatment also impacted parents of children with

mental illness. In one longitudinal study, researchers tracked children's mental health problems and parental factors such as employment and maternal mental health. Results of the survey data indicated that the most consistent factors influencing help-seeking behaviors are a parental history of seeking mental health treatment for personal stress and recognition that a child's behavior is problematic. Researchers also found that less than one quarter of children who experienced mental health problems received treatment (Oh, Mathers, Hiscock, Wake, & Bayer, 2015). These studies demonstrate the need for increased knowledge about mental health treatment.

IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOL COUNSELORS

Bibliotherapy has the potential to help children recognize emotions, offer effective ways to cope with emotional distress, and introduce children to the many avenues for mental health treatment, thus promoting mental health literacy. Further, school counselors can utilize bibliotherapy to help prepare children to visit an outside mental health counselor, educate a classroom about the role of a school counselor, or encourage children to ask for help when they are facing difficult situations.

Books and other media to facilitate mental health literacy can be brought into the classroom, counseling office, and home. In the school setting, "bibliotherapy sessions can take place as children arrive at school, during special activities, at silent reading time, as a part of library time, during lunch, or just before it is time to leave for the day" (Sullivan & Strang, 2003, p. 76). The versatile nature of the intervention is one of the advantages of bibliotherapy. School counselors can administer bibliotherapy individually, in small groups, or facilitate it in

the classroom. They can also encourage it as a way to foster a connection between children and parents and increase family engagement. A book introduced in a school counseling environment can be brought home and read together by children and adults, and storybooks with a compelling narrative and captivating illustrations have the ability to engage adults as well as children.

BOOKS AND OTHER MEDIA CAN TEACH COPING MECHANISMS THAT EMPOWER INDIVIDUALS TO ANALYZE, CHALLENGE, AND REPLACE THEIR NEGATIVE THOUGHTS.

Bibliotherapy also has the capacity to connect children with their peers, which is a significant predictor of students' socioemotional well-being (Elmore & Huebner, 2010). For instance, school counselors can incorporate a reading mentorship program into their school counseling curriculum by pairing older children with younger peers who have similar challenges. Students take turns reading to each other and talk through what they liked about the book, how they relate to the book, and what they learned. The benefits of reading mentorship programs are dynamic. As students connect with each other, they have the potential therapeutic benefit of relating to the story's subject matter. Furthermore, beginning readers can practice their reading literacy, a critical skill emphasized in elementary school.

School counselors can incorporate bibliotherapy into their classroom curriculum as a means of addressing mental health literacy at all grade levels. In younger grades, counselors can introduce bibliotherapy organically in school counseling lessons; they can choose books based on the needs of students in the class or integrate them into a broad counseling curriculum. In the high school setting where classroom lessons are infrequent, school counselors can advocate for school libraries to include books pertaining to mental health, the developmental

challenges of adolescence, and books featuring diverse characters.

Promoting mental health literacy in schools has the potential to aid students with essential tools to develop healthy coping mechanisms and practice self-care. Taking a few deep breaths before a big test, visualizing the end of the school day on a difficult morning, and handling a conflict calmly are a few coping skills

that bibliotherapy can teach. School counselors also can use bibliotherapy as an adjunct treatment to counseling. Recommending specific books to students facing potentially difficult situations such as questions of sexuality and gender, dysfunction within the family, and mental illness can provide aid to students who may not otherwise have or know of other resources.

Bibliotherapy can be a particularly meaningful intervention within group counseling. The therapeutic benefits of bibliotherapy, identification, catharsis, and insight (Allen et al., 2012), are reminiscent of the benefits of group counseling, including universalization, catharsis, and self-understanding (Yalom & Leszcz, 2005). Counseling groups that target specific issues such as anger management, depression, or parental divorce can help students feel a sense of togetherness and can introduce coping skills. Using bibliotherapy in group settings can further educate students about mental health, foster connections among peers, and provide structure to the group counseling process.

The versatile nature of bibliotherapy also lends well to exposing students to diverse characters and worldviews dissimilar to their own. Kidd and Castano (2013) found that reading literary fiction aids in the development of social/emotional competence and leads to the analysis of other people's

motives, a critical skill for developing empathy. Books commonly used in the high school setting motivate students to critically analyze social landscapes and cultural context surrounding a story. For instance, a character in Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, states that to truly understand an individual, you must "climb into his skin and walk around in it" (Lee, 1960, p. 85). Books can provide poignancy to students struggling to understand the nuances of what it's like to be someone other than themselves.

The demand for preventative and responsive mental health services within the school setting is vast, with an estimated 80% of children with mental illness left untreated (Kaffenberger & Seligman, 2007). An emphasis on mental health literacy is a prospective avenue for educators and school counselors managing the overwhelming demand for mental health support in the school setting. Mental health literacy increases the capability of an individual to recognize, prevent, and seek help for mental health concerns they may encounter in themselves or those around them (Jorm, 2000). The accessibility and ease of implementation of bibliotherapy makes it a particularly feasible and affordable pathway to gain knowledge of mental health. By integrating mental health literacy into the core counseling curriculum, school counselors provide students with both preventative and responsive services to address social and emotional needs.

The field of mental health literacy is still in its formative years, and future research should address the significant gaps in the literature. The vast majority of research under the umbrella of mental health literacy is conducted internationally and published in psychiatric and psychological journals; the field of school counseling should embrace the concept of mental health literacy, both in practice and in research, given its widely applicable nature. ■

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