



SPARROWS HI CURRICULUM

Mental Health, Resilience & Emotional Wellbeing

PURPOSE

The purpose of this framework is to help students understand, nurture and protect their emotional and mental wellbeing within a distinctly Christian framework.

Mental health is a growing concern for young people. Students who understand their own emotional world, develop resilience and know how to seek help are better equipped to flourish and to serve others.

This framework integrates psychological understanding with biblical truth, pastoral care and practical skills.

PHILOSOPHY

God cares about the whole person.

Scripture is full of honest accounts of human emotion including grief, fear, loneliness, despair and joy. The Psalms alone contain every human feeling. We are not required to pretend we are fine.

Mental health is not simply a medical or psychological category. It involves our relationship with God, our understanding of ourselves, our connections with others and the practical rhythms of our lives.

We hold together the reality of spiritual resources and the necessity of professional care where needed. These are not in competition.

GRADUATE OUTCOME

By graduation, students should:

- understand the basics of emotional and mental wellbeing;
- recognise common mental health challenges without stigma;
- have developed personal habits that support resilience;
- know how to seek help for themselves and others;
- be equipped to care for others with compassion;
- hold a biblically grounded understanding of suffering and hope.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

Students explore:

- the Psalms as honest expressions of the full range of human emotion;
- Jesus who wept, who was sorrowful, who cried out in the darkness;
- Paul's honest accounts of weakness, fear and suffering;
- the biblical call to bear one another's burdens;
- the hope of the new creation as the ultimate answer to all suffering.

Emotional honesty is not a sign of weak faith. It is a mark of genuine humanity.

UNDERSTANDING EMOTIONS

Students learn that emotions are God-given signals that deserve attention.

Topics include:

- naming emotions accurately;
- understanding the relationship between thoughts, feelings and actions;
- the difference between emotions and character;
- emotional regulation;
- the role of the body in emotional experience.

COMMON MENTAL HEALTH CHALLENGES

Students develop basic awareness of:

- anxiety;
- depression;
- grief and loss;
- loneliness;
- eating difficulties;
- self-harm;
- burnout.

Awareness is taught without sensationalism and always with hope. Students learn to recognise these challenges in themselves and others without shame.

RESILIENCE

Resilience is the capacity to navigate difficulty and recover from setbacks.

Students develop resilience through:

- secure relationships;
- meaningful purpose;
- spiritual practices;
- physical wellbeing;
- honest processing of difficulty;
- learning from failure;
- community support.

Resilience is not about pretending difficulty does not exist. It is about being anchored deeply enough to weather it.

GRIEF AND LOSS

Students learn that grief is a normal response to loss.

Topics include:

- different types of loss;
- the grief process;
- biblical examples of lament;
- how to support someone who is grieving;
- the hope of resurrection.

Lament is a biblical practice. We are not required to move quickly past pain.

ANXIETY

Students explore:

- what anxiety is and where it comes from;
- the difference between ordinary anxiety and anxiety disorders;
- biblical wisdom about anxiety including the Psalms and Philippians 4;
- practical strategies for managing anxiety;
- when to seek professional help.

We never minimise genuine anxiety with simplistic spiritual advice.

SPIRITUAL RESOURCES

Students explore how spiritual practices support mental health:

- prayer and lament;
- Scripture as comfort and truth;
- worship;
- community;
- rest and Sabbath;
- service to others;
- gratitude as a practice.

These are offered as genuine resources, not as replacements for professional care where needed.

SEEKING HELP

Students learn:

- how to recognise when they or someone they know needs help;
- who to tell;
- what professional help is available;
- that seeking help is courage, not weakness;
- how to support someone who discloses a mental health struggle.

No student should navigate significant mental health challenges alone.

CARING FOR OTHERS

Students develop the skills to support others:

- listening well;
- not trying to fix everything;
- knowing when to refer;
- maintaining appropriate boundaries;
- looking after themselves while caring for others.

HOPE

Christian hope is not wishful thinking. It is a settled confidence in the faithfulness of God.

Students learn:

- the biblical understanding of hope;
- lament and hope held together;
- the hope of resurrection and new creation;
- that suffering does not have the final word.

Hope does not deny difficulty. It anchors us within it.

LEARNING PROGRESSION

The program is structured across three stages of secondary education.

Years 7–8	• Understanding emotions; • resilience; • friendship and belonging; • seeking help. • Emphasis: emotional literacy and safe community.
Years 9–10	• Common mental health challenges; • anxiety and depression awareness; • grief; • spiritual resources. • Students engage with greater depth and personal application.
Years 11–12	• Theology of suffering and hope; • caring for others; • preparing for adult life; • professional help. • Students develop mature and compassionate understanding.

LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Students should regularly participate in:

- honest, age-appropriate discussion;
- Psalm study and lament;
- hearing from Christians who have navigated mental health challenges;
- reflective journalling;
- mentoring conversations.

Learning should be warm, safe and free from stigma.

SAFEGUARDING

Where students disclose concerns about their own or others' mental health, leaders must follow the Child Protection and Responding to Concerns Procedure.

This framework does not equip leaders to provide professional mental health care. It equips them to notice, listen, care and refer appropriately.

Professional referral is always the right response where significant mental health concerns exist.

ASSESSMENT

Growth is demonstrated through:

- increasing emotional awareness;
- growing resilience;
- growing compassion for others;
- reflective journalling;
- mentoring conversations.

Assessment should be gentle and never invasive of personal struggles.

INTEGRATION

This framework connects with:

- Discipleship and Spiritual Practices;
- Student Wellbeing and Pastoral Care;
- Health, Fitness and Outdoor Education;
- Relationships, Family and Human Sexuality;
- Biblical Literacy.

A community where people are known, valued and cared for is itself one of the most powerful supports for mental health.

OUR PRAYER

We pray that Sparrows HI will be a community where no student has to pretend they are fine.

May students find here a safe place to be honest, a community that cares, and a God who meets them in their deepest need.

Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you.

1 Peter 5:7