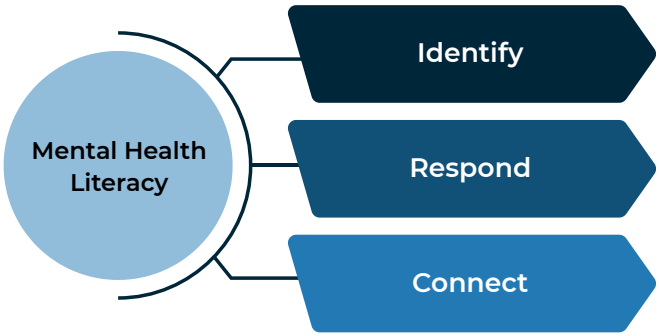
Mental Health Literacy:
A Guide for Direct Support Professionals (DSPs)

Mental health literacy means having the knowledge and skills to recognize signs of mental health concerns, find trusted information and resources, and know how to respond and get help when needed. **Mental health literacy helps you support both the people you serve and yourself** (CDC, 2025).

Ask Yourself

- Have I noticed any changes in myself or the people I support?
- How is this person (or am I) doing today?
- What can help right now?
- Who should I tell or ask for help?



Why It Matters:

- People with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) are more likely to experience mental health concerns (Nguyen et al., 2025).
- DSPs often notice changes in mood, behavior, or daily routines first.
- Taking care of your own mental health helps reduce stress and burnout and improves the support you provide (Gray-Stanley et al., 2010).

Your Role as a DSP:

Identify. Notice changes in mood, behavior, or daily routines (Baker, 2022).
Respond. Offer support and encourage healthy coping skills (Baker, 2022; Traci & Seekins, 2016).
Connect. Document concerns and share them with supervisors and care team members.

Remember to take care of your own mental health, too.

Key Takeaway

You don't have to have all the answers. Paying attention, listening, and connecting people to the right support can make a big difference.



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