

Intro: You are listening to Supporting Supporters, a ChangetoChill podcast. This is a free mental well-being resource offered by Allina Health. My name is Tonya Freeman. I'm a licensed psychologist and regional lead psychologist with Allina Health.

These podcast episodes are aimed with the goal of providing quick, tangible resources and information from Allina Health mental health providers on a range of mental health topics relevant to day to day lives of the listener. We invite you to join us in any way you please, whether you sit back and kick your feet up, or as you engage in movement, your daily commute, or as you prepare for your day. However you choose to join us, we welcome you and we honor your time.

Episode: Hello, my name is Sarah Paper and I'm a Licensed Psychologist with Allina Health. I work primarily with children and teens, in addition to a few adults on a caseload. I know that these last few years have presented many challenges for teachers. This podcast episode is about how to respond to the stress experienced and expressed by others.

When seeing other people hurting stressed or in pain, it is normal to want to ease that pain to make things better for them. But sometimes our responses can be less than helpful or may cause more stress and hurt. Which is certainly the very last thing we intend to do.

What I am going to be talking about today is from the author and psychologist Dr. Dan Siegel. He has written a number of books on parenting, some of my favorites being "The Whole Brained Child" and "No Drama Discipline". Fun fact he also provided therapy to the comedian Chelsa Handler. His skill is called "Name it and Tame it". The skill is initially to be used with kids, which is why it has such a fun name, so you can remember it. What it does is say that by naming and labeling our emotions, it moved the emotion from the animal part of our brain to the verbal part of our brain in which we also use logic and reasoning. This skill calms down our state of arousal we have when we are stressed and overwhelmed. It may seem simple, and that because it is. Its effective with our children, coworkers, friends, colleagues and its effective with ourselves. When we can name those feelings for ourselves, when we can say "I'm feeling stressed" "Im feeling overwhelmed", it tames the emotional reaction that our bodies are giving us to know that somethings not okay. Its sort of like saying "okay alarm, I hear you. I know I'm in a bad place right now". The alarm will no longer need to keep sounding. Once we access the alarm of our amygdala in our brain, we can then access our logic and reasoning and our problem solving and come up with solutions.

Then we can do this for our coworkers, colleagues and our students too. Think about this in the school setting with colleagues. If a colleague comes up and says "I have all these papers to grade, this student was acting out, this parent wants me to call them". You should not jump in with "you should", "you should just", "what if you" all of those can be really invalidating. Its almost like saying "Oh, in the second you told me this I figured out all of your problems, I know how to solve this, its too bad you didn't think of it". Its not helpful at all. But if you say "It sounds like your really feeling stressed, that's a lot your dealing with right now". The person will feel heard and validated and their emotions will be tamed and will be able to come up with their own solutions. They are obviously smart enough to problem solve with those issues, and if they need help they will be in a better place to ask to ask for help. Once you see that they are calm you could even offer "Is there anything I can do to help" "Is there anything you need from me". People often want to help each other through these difficult times. Sometimes the best way we can do that is by being there for each other, listening to each other, and validating each others feelings.

So next time your in a meeting, or are sitting in the lunch room and someone starts sharing their stress and expressing their difficulties with you, make sure to pause to observe their emotions and then practice “Naming and Taming it”. You can practice this with yourself, with your students or with children if you have any at home.

Good luck. Thank you for taking the time to listen to this, I hope you found it helpful. I really appreciate you and all that you do for the students you have and will have. Take care.

Outro: On behalf of Allina Health and Change to Chill, we thank you for taking the time to listen to our podcast. We do hope you enjoyed this episode and we hope that you join us in other episodes covering even more interesting topics with mental health providers. As always, you can find the show notes and any accompanying research and tools at the change to chill website at www.changetochill.org. In health and wellness, take care and see you next time!