

School District of Marshfield

Student Services Newsletter | April 2019



District Mental Health Awareness Day - April 4, 2019

Elementary

The School Counselors and Teachers continue to help students work with mindfulness resources like Mind Yeti. During, the week of April 29th the Marshfield Clinic Center for Community Health Advancement is sponsoring "Screen Free" week. This event will be a great way to look for some screen free activities that are an important part of each child's brain diet.

Middle School

A round table discussion was facilitated during LEARN time regarding healthy activities people do when they are feeling stressed. Students were encouraged to install the "Virtual Hope Box" app onto their iPads and to explore and use the app.

High School

On April 4th the Marshfield Columbus Leadership Alliance (MCLA) student group had positive messaging and mental health resources posted in various areas of the building, and throughout the week of April 8th the MCLA student group coordinated student self-care activities, which were attended during free periods. There was also an Academic and Career Planning (ACP) advisory lesson focusing on managing stress levels through mindfulness and other self-care strategies.



Signs it is Time to Seek Help - Recognizing Symptoms of Anxiety and Depression

Navigating through the school aged years can be hard, for you and your student! Some moodiness is typical, and it is normal to have strong emotions as a reaction to a setback or difficult situation. However, if symptoms persist or are really intense, your student might need more help. How do you know if your student is experiencing normal angst or something more complicated? Here are some things you might notice or your student might report.

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| • Irritable mood | • Frequent crying | • Nervousness |
| • Sadness | • Loss of energy | • Being on edge or restless |
| • Difficulty sleeping | • Hopelessness | • Fearfulness |
| • Difficulty concentrating | • Feeling empty/grey/numb/nothing | • Irrational negative thoughts or fears |
| • Change in grades | • Statements about suicide or death | • Physical complaints (without medical explanation) |
| • Change in eating habits | • Self-harm | |
| • Mood swings | • Withdrawal from family or friends | |
| • Low self-esteem | • Lethargy | |

Anxiety and depression can have a significant impact on the life of your student and your family. Symptoms of depression and anxiety can look very similar. It is important to figure out what is going on with your student, whether they are anxious, depressed, or both, and determining when professional help may be needed. Seeking help has sometimes been stigmatized as a negative or a weakness; however, talking about mental health issues with your student can influence your thier view and break that stigma. Getting help, finding coping strategies, and building supports are important pieces to a student's success.

Here are some other considerations when deciding if your student needs professional counseling.

- Symptoms are persistent (lasting several weeks or months)
- Symptoms interfere with daily activities, family life and/or school
- There is a history of depression and/or anxiety in the family
- Your student has limited coping skills (or current coping strategies are not effective)
- Your student has few connections with trusted adults

If you are unsure how to help your student, your student's school counselor can be an excellent resource for helping to assess, as well as provide information on area counselors/therapists should you feel your student needs a little extra help.



What is Mindfulness

The Healthy Mind Platter



The Healthy Mind Platter for Optimal Brain Matter

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The Healthy Mind Platter was created in collaboration by Dr. David Rock, executive director of the NeuroLeadership Institute and Dr. Daniel Siegel, executive director of the Mindsight Institute and clinical professor at the UCLA School of Medicine. You can find this information on <http://www.mindplatter.com/>.

Focus Time	When we closely focus on tasks in a goal-oriented way, we take on challenges that make deep connections in the brain.
Play Time	When we allow ourselves to be spontaneous or creative, playfully enjoying novel experiences, we help make new connections in the brain.
Connecting Time	When we connect with other people, ideally in person, and when we take time to appreciate our connection to the natural world around us, we activate and reinforce the brain's relational circuitry.
Time In	When we move our bodies, aerobically if medically possible, we strengthen the brain in many ways.
Physical Time	When we quietly reflect internally, focusing on sensations, images, feelings and thoughts, we help to better integrate the brain.
Down Time	When we are non-focused, without any specific goal, and let our mind wander or simply relax, we help the brain recharge.
Sleep Time	When we give the brain the rest it needs, we consolidate learning and recover from the experiences of the day.

Mindfulness is making intentional observations, without judgement, of the present; while clearing your mind of past and future thoughts.

The daily practice of mindfulness has been shown to: enhance focus and reduce attention problems; improve cognitive outcomes and social skills; increase ability to regulate and cope with emotions; reduce stress, anxiety, and depression; and improve physical health.

There are many additional ways to practice mindfulness. Examples include:

- 4-7-8 Breathing (Inhale quietly through the nose to a mental count of 4, hold breath for a count of 7 and exhale completely through the mouth to a count of 8.)
- Listening to Music (Focus on breathing and an instrument or words in the music.)
- Coloring (Focus on the colors, designs, patterns, and breathing during the activity.)
- Blowing Bubbles (Focus on deep breathing in, and exhaling to make a large bubble.)
- Walking (Focus on all senses while observing and noticing the environment.)
- Meditating (Breathing deep and focusing on simple statements such as: "May John/Joan be healthy, happy, and safe"; inhale "Thankful", exhale "Blessed"; "I don't like it, I can't change it, I accept it".)

Start small, five minutes a day, and gradually increase the amount of time spent being mindful. The more you do it, the more benefits are gained!

Healthy Sleep Habits Mean Healthier Students

Did you know that students who do not get enough sleep have a higher risk for many health and behavior problems?

The American Academy of Sleep Medicine recommends that students between the ages of 6-12 years should routinely sleep 9-12 hours per day, students aged 13-18 years should sleep 8-10 hours per day. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) 6 out of 10 students in grades 6-8 and 7 out of 10 students in grades 9-12 do not get enough sleep on school nights.

As a parent/guardian, there are several things you can do to help your student get the sleep they need:

- Stick to a consistent sleep schedule. Students with set bedtimes are more likely to get enough sleep. Ideally, try to keep the same bedtime and waking time, even on days when school is not in session.
- Limit light exposure and technology use in the evenings. Set a "digital curfew" when electronic devices may no longer be used, as the blue light emitted from screens interferes with melatonin production making it harder to fall asleep.
- Encourage reading a printed book before going to sleep, or for older students, writing in a journal.
- Avoid caffeine beginning in the late afternoon.
- Avoid large meals prior to bedtime.
- Make sure your student's bedroom is quiet and dimly lit.
- For students who play on a travel sports team, encourage napping for 20-30 minutes prior to a game or competition. Sleep positively impacts athletic performance and decreases the risk of injury.

