

SDUHSD middle and high school counselors are committed to working in partnership with parents/guardians in supporting student social and emotional well-being. Recognizing that middle school is a time of significant change, middle school counselors will be using this bi-monthly newsletter as a forum to share information about essential topics using a Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) framework that focuses on five key areas: relationship skills, responsible decision-making, self-management, self-awareness, and social awareness. Social and emotional well-being sets the groundwork for a safe and positive learning environment and enhances a student's ability to lead a well-balanced life.

Self-Management Tools for Teens

This month's newsletter will focus on the Self-Management component of Social and Emotional Learning. Knowing one's emotions, how to manage them and ways to express them constructively enables teens to handle stress, control impulses and motivate oneself to persevere in overcoming obstacles to goal achievement. School-related stress and anxiety affects many of our students. During the school year, teenagers report higher levels of stress than grownups, according to the American Psychological Association. If you notice an increase in your middle schooler's stress and anxiety levels, try some of the following strategies to support them:

1. Help them identify factors that cause stress both positive and negative.
2. Discuss physical reactions to stress as well as emotional reactions to stress.
3. Describe strategies for dealing with upsetting situations (disappointment, loss, separation).
4. Encourage your child to reflect on the possible consequences before expressing an emotion.
5. Practice "I-statements" to help your child describe how they feel, why they feel that way and what they might like to change.
6. Practice strategies to reduce stress – try coping skill strategies from page 2.

Great Apps to Support Teens with Stress and Anxiety

Calm This app has guided meditations to help manage anxiety, lower stress and help you sleep better. There is a free version and a subscription version.

Mindshift A free app designed to help teens and young adults with anxiety. It can change how you think about anxiety. Rather than trying to avoid anxiety, you can learn about anxiety and will be guided through ways to cope.

Tips to Help Your Teen with Test Anxiety

Practice positive self-talk

"I studied hard for the test so I will do well."

This creates an "I can" attitude

Practice controlled breathing exercises

Count to 5 as you breathe in, then count to 5 as you breathe out

This increases oxygen to the brain, boosting concentration, memory and problem solving abilities

Being well prepared is the best way to reduce test anxiety.

Space out studying over a few days or weeks

This builds confidence

Coping Skills

Coping skills help us get through difficult emotions, thoughts and experiences. Discuss these coping skills with your teen so they have positive coping skills to access during challenges!

Distraction: Absorb your mind in something else.

Read, talk with a friend, TV, draw, paint, craft, puzzle, create play list

Grounding: Get out of your head and into your body using 5 senses

Notice the colors around you, breathe, yoga, eat slowly, aromatherapy, clay

Emotional Release: When emotions are overwhelming

Run, blast music and dance, shoot hoops, watch a funny movie, let yourself cry

Self Love: Be your own best friend and do things for yourself

Take a bubble bath or long shower, cook favorite food, clean room

Thought Challenge: Shift from "stinking thinking" habits

Write down negative thoughts and reasons they may not be true

Self-Care

Regular self-care practices can keep parents energized and up to the task of parenting teenagers! When parents practice self-care, teens are encouraged to do the same. If you would like to start a family practice of self-care, gather all members of your family and discuss the benefits of making time to do things you enjoy and make you feel happy (ex: exercise, entertainment, doing things in nature, creating, learning something new etc). Brainstorm ideas together, put them on the family week planner/calendar and have fun!

Pacific Trails Middle School

Counseling

News

Lisa Curry, PTMS School Counselor

If you missed the presentation during our Principal's Coffee on Friday March 8 with special guest Dr. Adria O'Donnell, you can view the key slides from her presentation [HERE](#). Topics include fostering teen resiliency, communication and survival tips for parents, anxiety and more.

March 11-15: PTMS Wellness Week. We begin our week with a speaker, Dr. Adria O'Donnell, who will talk with our students about strategies to deal with stress, worry, and anxiety. We also have several fun wellness activities planned for lunch and Homeroom each day. Students can sign up for Wellness Week activities in Homeroom. Please click on [Wellness Week](#) for the calendar of events, which can also be found on the front page of our website.

Thursday, March 14th & Friday March 15th: Counselor Curry will be meeting with current 7th grade students during their history class to explain the 8th grade course selection process. 8th Grade Course Selection paperwork will be given to each student and is due Thursday, March 21st & Friday March 22nd.