

PIN OAK MIDDLE SCHOOL COUNSELING CORNER



VOLUME 5
JANUARY 2025

CLICK TO
ACCESS OUR
COUNSELING
RESOURCES



ACCEPTING INDIVIDUALITY

In a generation where social media easily consumes the students' minds with unrealistic standards and expectations, it is imperative that, as a community, we instill interpersonal connections, opportunities for challenge, and exposure to different environments and cultural backgrounds. Ways we can inspire students to embrace each others' individuality is to hold healthy conversations with our children. These "discussions should foster connection, empathy, and a sense of community" (Ralinda Watts, 2021), and support that all background and beliefs should be viewed with respect and unbiased. Exposing our students to diversity and instilling cultural awareness allows students to be open-minded, empowering them to reflect on their own individuality and the unique impact they can have for the common good. Below are some helpful reads for students to support their journey towards accepting their individuality.

We welcome back your student with open arms! We hope your family enjoyed well-deserved rest and quality time. Being that half the school year is already over, we realize that our children are beginning to build their foundations as individuals and transition into independence. Middle school is a pivotal point in a child's life where what they are exposed to is easily absorbed, thus being the perfect time for students to form and explore their identities and discover their niche in the world. This is important because it gives students confidence in themselves and keeps them grounded in a society where they may be easily swayed. January's counseling newsletter consists of tools that assist in encouraging our children to finding their identity, accepting individuality, and respecting each others' differences. You can also find topics that include coping strategies, such as identifying and managing anxiety, transitioning into the new year, and practicing positive affirmations.

SOURCES:

Watts, Ralinda. April 2021. "Encouraging middle school students to embrace differences". Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/612479/dress-coded-by-carrie-firestone/>

Harper Collins Publishers. 2023. "21 Books about belonging and identity". Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.harpercollins.com/blogs/harperkids/books-about-belonging>

Penguin Random House. 2023. "Dress coded". Retrieved December 15, 2023, from <https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/612479/dress-coded-by-carrie-firestone/>

BOOKS THAT EMBRACE INDIVIDUALITY



Dress Coded by Carrie Firestone

"...Molly starts a podcast where girls can tell their stories, and before long, her small rebellion swells into a revolution. Because now the girls are standing up for what's right, and they're not backing down."



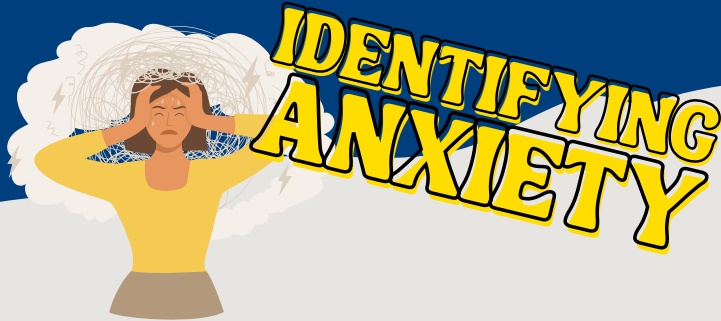
Posted by John David Anderson

"When cell phones are banned at Branton Middle School, Frost and his friends come up with a new way to communicate: leaving sticky notes for each other all around the school. It catches on, and soon all the kids in school are leaving notes—though for every kind and friendly one, there is a cutting and cruel one as well."



You Go First by Erin Entrada Kelly

"Twelve-year-old Charlotte Lockard and eleven-year-old Ben Boxer are separated by more than a thousand miles. On the surface, their lives seem vastly different—Charlotte lives near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, while Ben is in the small town of Lanester, Louisiana. During the course of one week, Charlotte and Ben—friends connected only by an online Scrabble game—will intersect in unexpected ways as they struggle to navigate the turmoil of middle school."



Anxiety is natural and not uncommon amongst students, especially if they strive to do their best academically or try to keep up to the social pressures in today's generation. Transitioning from elementary to middle school or preparing for high school are also big triggers of anxiety. Although it may be normal for teens to experience anxiety, it should not go unnoticed. It is important to recognize the signs and symptoms of anxiety, even the minor indications. If unattended to, high levels of anxiety will begin to effect a child's relationships, self-esteem, and performance at school, leading to depression and other unhealthy behaviors.

Some signs of anxiety are:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Unexplained stomachaches/pains
- Becoming avoidant or clingy
- Hyperactivity or inattention
- Outbursts or oppositional behavior

Ways for parents to help children manage anxiety are:

- Practice mindfulness strategies
- Practice active-listening by asking open-ended questions
- Limit social media and screen time
- Plan activities that your student enjoy
- Seek professional help

Below you can also find some information that help students and their families maneuver through anxiety by clicking on the images below:

ANXIETY

Anxiety is part of the body's natural 'fight or flight' response to stress.

It can become a disorder when feelings of worry, fear or unease become excessive, persistent or interfere with daily activities.

Types of anxiety disorders...

- generalised anxiety
- panic disorder
- social anxiety
- obsessive-compulsive disorder
- post-traumatic stress disorder

Causes

genetics, environmental factors and life experiences

Anxiety may feel like...

- nervousness
- rapid heartbeat
- racing thoughts
- irritable, agitated
- muscle tension
- shortness of breath
- being on edge
- nauseous or diarrhoea
- feelings of doom

Strategies to alleviate anxiety:

- deep breathing
- adequate sleep
- limiting caffeine and alcohol
- seek professional help to discuss therapy or medication treatment options
- regular exercise
- balanced diet
- participate in relaxing activities

Ways to Help Children Identify their Emotions

Name the emotions

Teach children vocabulary of feelings and emotions by naming them appropriately. Use picture books or flashcards as tools for exploring the range of emotions.

Talk about emotions & feelings

Start asking children about how they feel in specific scenarios. Help children to match their feelings and behavior correctly. Also, model how to express feelings and emotions in daily life.

Give positive reinforcements

Praise children every time they talk and express their emotions. Give them understanding that it is perfectly fine to feel what they feel and that their feelings and emotions are valid.

Teach how to control emotions

Teach them coping strategies of how to control emotions. For example, when they feel overwhelmed with emotions, there are ways to calm themselves down.

WAYS TO REFRESH THIS NEW YEAR



Creating new goals and healthy habits as a family helps promote accountability and motivation. Below are some New Years Resolutions you can make together to begin the new year on the right foot:

- Eat dinner at the table together at least 5 nights a week without distractions
- Get at least 8 hours of sleep every night
- Share the peak and pit of your day every day
- Dedicate one day/night a week for quality family time with an activity
- Avoid technology at least an hour and a half before bedtime
- Start a new hobby
- Include 30 min physical activity in your daily routine - ie. walking, stretching, pickleball, dancing

TURNING NEGATIVES INTO POSITIVES



POSITIVE THINKING Affirmations



Parent-Student Activity:

Why not begin the new year with a positive thoughts and affirmations?! Review 150 positive statements with your student. On the last page, have your student write down the top 10 statements that resonated with them the most, and have them post it somewhere they can easily refer back to. This activity is also great for all ages! Click on the image above to access the activity.

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