

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

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CHANGE IS THE NEW NORMAL

This last trimester brings with it more change than most of us have experienced in a long while. Change, as we know, is good but can often bring with it a variety of emotional responses. Over the course of the last couple of weeks, we have started with our new master schedule, which has translated into more time in class. We also welcomed our 6th graders back to school and our 7th and 8th graders start Monday, which is very exciting! We appreciate your patience and grace as we all learn to navigate this new normal. In an effort to support you in the midst of these big changes, we hope to provide some tips and tricks for combating zoom fatigue. We also want to make sure you are all aware of the opportunities our team is providing students for social interaction. We've included some suggestions for how to talk to your children about mental health. We wish you all the best as we move into "the new" and want to remind you, as always, we are here to support you!

COMBATING ZOOM FATIGUE

We know that our new hybrid schedule requires a lot of hours looking at a computer, so we've compiled some tips to stay engaged during student's remote days on Zoom.

1. **Avoid multitasking:** Checking emails, texts or reading during a Zoom call can make it more exhausting for your brain to focus on two things at once.
2. **Take breaks:** When teachers offer a short break make sure you stand up, stretch, get a snack or take a drink.
3. **Turn of your self-view on Zoom:** You don't have to stare at your face on Zoom all-day. Instead, you can opt to turn off your self-view on Zoom and just see your classmates instead.
4. **20-20-20 rule:** Look away from the screen every 20 minutes or so to look at something 20 feet away for 20 seconds to help reduce eye strain.
5. **Eat lunch outside:** Take your lunch break outside without screens to let your eyes take a break from blue-light.
6. **Remove blue light filter.** In the iPad setting, students can click off the blue light filter, to reduce eye strain.



OPPORTUNITIES FOR SOCIALIZATION

Due to the new schedule, our lunch groups has been adjusted. Zoom links are the same as they've been and they are posted in their respective Schoology group pages.

***GIRLS GROUP:** Wednesdays from 11:45-12:15

***SOURCES OF STRENGTH:** Wednesdays 1-1:30

***WACKY WEDNESDAYS** with Mr. Brown (in place of Mad Monday/Fun Friday)- Wednesdays from 11:45-12:15

Mr. Brown and Ms. Phillips are offering a **STEPS-A-GROUP** (on Wednesday mornings) for those students interested in learning strategies for emotional regulation. Email harry.brown@mercerislandschools.org for more information.

****Also, don't forget to check out the IMS webpage for more information re: sports and clubs.****

TALKING TO YOUR TEEN ABOUT

**Article adapted
from the Newport
Academy
Newsletter*



Getting information out of a teen can be difficult, and can feel impossible. The stereotypes of teen communication at this age—monosyllabic answers to every question, a complete lack of eye contact, and the inevitable eye roll when you ask them about their life—are often true. And then there’s the struggle to get them away from their phone, video game, or other device long enough to have a heart-to-heart talk. Here are five ways for parents and other caregivers and mentors to push through those barriers and learn how to talk to teens about their mental health.

1. **Do More Listening Than Talking**- The most productive feedback about teen mental health comes from watching and listening. Look for changes in sleep, mood, level of irritability, and eating habits. Pushing for verbal communication isn’t always necessary or helpful. Active listening does help earn trust, and, over time, may encourage them to be more likely to open up.
2. **Make It Okay to Be Vulnerable**- When parents and other adults are vulnerable and talk about their feelings openly, while respecting appropriate boundaries, teens are more likely to respond in kind. Establishing honest communication requires acceptance, compassion, and a nonjudgmental attitude. Dismissive messages such as “Grow up,” or “Deal with it” send a message that being vulnerable is wrong or that it is not okay to feel what they’re feeling. These types of messages, whether explicit or implicit, keep teens from sharing what they’re feeling or letting parents know they need help.
3. **Teens Need Mental Health Education**- How mental health is perceived and discussed at home directly impacts how they relate to this topic and how willing they will be to discuss it. For example, if a friend or family member is diagnosed with or receiving treatment for any type of mental health condition, be open, and discuss it. Parents who are open and educated about mental health will encourage a similar mindset in their children.
4. **Respect Their Emotional and Personal Space**- As a parent or caregiver, a good rule of thumb for any type of personal or emotional question is to ask twice, but not too many times. The first time lets them know that you are interested; the second time demonstrates that you care. But more than that makes you seem invasive or nosy if they are not ready to open up. Showing concern and respecting their space allows teens to build trust—and those trusting bonds between parents and adolescents are proven to decrease the risk of anxiety and depression.
5. **Be Open to Conversations as They Arise**- Sometimes, the most honest and heartfelt communication happens when it’s not planned—while driving, exercising together, or playing together. All of the listening, respectfulness, and trust-building may come to fruition at the most unexpected moments, so it is important to be ready to listen.

SAVE THE DATE: EVENT FOR MANDARIN SPEAKING FAMILIES

Emotional and Academic Challenges during Covid (presented in Mandarin) on **April 16, 2pm**
Click on these links for more information and registration (to get the zoom links): [KCLS link](#) & [Facebook](#)