

COUNSELOR CONNECTION

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AUTUMN LEAVES AND PUMPKIN THINGS

Our counseling team has been working hard trying to help support students and families with the variety challenges that are occurring with remote learning, as well as in pandemic life in general. We are all traveling a bumpy road, but the good news is that support is available and we are getting more and more creative in our efforts. In this month's newsletter, we wanted to showcase some of the resources available to students in need. First, we revisit the concept of Office Hours and paraprofessional support time, in an effort to make it very clear to families that this opportunity, which is offered twice-daily, should be utilized and encouraged. Furthermore, we are offering some groups designed to help students build upon their resiliency skills and give them guidance related to self-regulation. We also wanted to make mention of a Friday Seminar we hosted called "Be an Upstander." Lastly, we wanted to take a moment to introduce our MIYFS, Audrey Phillips. Our team is meeting regularly and constantly brainstorming ways to better support our students and families during this difficult time. If you have ideas for us, please don't hesitate to reach out. As always, we appreciate your partnership and want to remind you that we are always just an email away! Stay warm and be cozy!

OFFICE HOURS

We wanted to provide an overview of what office hours are, review the benefits and offer guidance to help your student feel more comfortable. As a reminder, there are two available Office Hour sessions each day, from 12:45-1:15pm and again from 2:30-3pm. During this time, teachers are available via zoom to support:

- The opportunity to get to know one another better
- What was missed in class if an absence occurred
- The re-teaching of a concept that was not clearly understood
- Questions about assignments (current & missing)
- Support around learning, homework & projects
- Assessment prep and/or review
- Organizational support
- A space for students to meet up with others for group work.



If your student feels funny about attending and unsure about what to say when they pop into the zoom session, here are some sentence stems you can offer them so they can feel more prepared:

- Hi Mr/Ms____, I am here to find out if I am missing any work?
- Hi Mr/Ms____, I am here because I need some help with my homework.
- Hi Mr/Ms____, I missed class this morning and was hoping you could help me figure out what I missed and what I need to do before we meet again.
- Hi Mr/Ms____, I really didn't understand the part of the lesson when you taught X, can you help me?

We cannot encourage student attendance at office hours enough, since there really are countless advantages. All of these benefits can have a positive impact on your student's connection to their teacher and in turn, build confidence around their learning. While we really want students to show up, we also want them to know this is a space for them to expand upon their learning and to engage more fully with the instruction. Homework help is offered daily from 1:15-2:30 from our support staff. If your child needs help during that time, or the accountability of having someone keeping an eye on them during independent work time, this is another great option for them. As a reminder, links to teacher's office hours, as well as afternoon homework support (provided by our paraprofessional staff), are available on Schoology.

COPING SKILLS FOR THRIVING IN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Emotion Regulation: PLEASE Skills

This concept comes from the DBT STEPS-A program. Emotion mind is the state of mind that is balanced by a reasonable mind. When in balance we can make decisions in the thinking state of Wise Mind. However, there are times when our emotional mind can take over and lead us in directions that can be hurtful and unhealthy to ourselves and others. To reduce our vulnerability to emotion mind we can use the PLEASE Skills.

Treat Physical illness: Take care of your body. See a doctor when necessary. Take medications as prescribed.

Balance Eating: Don't eat too much or too little. Stay away from foods that may make you overly emotional.

Avoid mood-altering drugs: Stay off non-prescribed drugs, like alcohol, marijuana, or other street drugs. Limit your use of caffeine.

Balance Sleep: Try to get the amount of sleep that helps you feel good. Stay on a regular schedule in order to develop good sleep habits.

Get Exercise: Do some sort of exercise every day.

We encourage you to check out the STEPS-A website for useful information on parenting, videos of the Mazza's teaching the STEPS-A skills to their own children and their newsletter. October's newsletter had a great message, [Four tips for helping kids during difficult times](#). Contact Harry Brown, MIYFS counselor for additional information on DBT STEPS-A groups at IMS and your student's IMS counselor for additional information on how to best support your student.

RESILIENCY GROUP

RESILIENCE (n.) - the ability to adapt and recover from adversity or incidences of change that arise in life.

Synonyms: flexibility, elasticity, endurance

Related words: strength, courage, fortitude, stamina, backbone

The counseling team is offering an opportunity for students to participate in a Resilience Group (Start date TBD). In this group students will learn skills that will help them to:

- Develop a greater sense of confidence and self-worth
- Identify personal strengths and abilities
- Develop personal goals for the future
- Understand adversity
- Develop resilience
- Identify and utilize healthy coping strategies
- Become empowered to make their own decisions

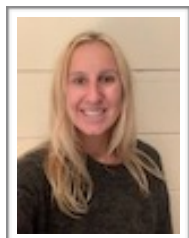
If you are interested in having your student participate in the Resilience Group, please email Dru Klein at dru.klein@mercerislandschools.org.

UPSTANDER SEMINAR

In honor of National Bullying Prevention Month, our counseling team hosted a seminar on Friday, October 23rd. We explained the meaning of the term "Upstander" and highlighted how important it is that we all look out for one another. We showcased students from a variety of student groups around IMS, who took time to share out about their club/group and to speak to their mission and how it applies to making IMS a kind and inclusive community. **The seminar is accessible on the IMS webpage, under the heading "Friday Seminars."**



MEET AUDREY PHILLIPS: MIYFS INTERN



I'm Audrey Phillips, a 26 year old Seattle native who is a graduate student at Antioch University studying Marriage and Family Therapy with an emphasis on Sex Therapy. I graduated from Bowdoin College in Maine with a degree in geology and education. Then I went on to work in the outdoors as a wilderness therapy guide with teenagers for about two years. I enjoy backpacking, reading non-fiction, and am currently developing an app to combat loneliness.

Happy Halloween from your Counseling Team!

