

# COUNSELOR CONNECTION

Dru Klein, Janet Goldstein & Jayna Dash

Harry Brown & Josh Schmader



## Greetings (again) from a safe social distance!

Hello again parents! We hope everyone is hanging in there and figuring out how to adapt to our new version of “normal.” Everyday seems to bring new developments and progress in terms of online learning and figuring out next steps. Our scheduled Spring Break is next week, so everyone will (hopefully) be able to take a bit of a break from all of the communication and concern about school. We won’t be sending a newsletter next week, but we have a lot of important information included in this edition. Please pay close attention to some important dates related to registration and to the changeover to third trimester. We’ve also included some tips for how to manage worry and anxiety during this unprecedented time. Lastly, we’ve developed a “coping toolbox” for you to share with your students, in an effort to keep them grounded and relaxed while at home. We wish you a restful “break.” We will be back in touch soon. As always, please do not hesitate to reach out to your counseling team should you need anything!

### VERY IMPORTANT UPDATES:

- The online registration window has been extended until **April 30th**. Please check out the Registration section of the IMS website for more specific details, instructions and a newly added FAQ document.
- Trimester 3 will begin on **April, 20th**. Beginning on this date, online learning will become required. Students will be expected to visit Schoology daily for updates and assignments from teachers. Stay tuned to your email for more information.



### A note about online learning:

**We need your help, IMS parents, to make sure your students understand that their teachers will be expecting work from them, beginning on April 20th (3rd trimester). Teachers understand that some families have limitations during these times, so please communicate any concerns you might have with your student’s teachers if you anticipate this being an issue for your student.**

## Coping with Anxiety and Worry

We want to assure you that our school-based counseling team is available to support both you and your student. Please understand that we are adapting to new avenues to provide for the needs of our learning community. We now have tools available to us for online conferencing and individual check ins. Our MIYFS partners have implemented a Telehealth program to provide online counseling in a secure HIPAA compliant method. We also wanted to share some ideas with you on how to cope with the challenges we are facing.

**One essential task for all adults is to manage our worry.** *We know our children are watching and will model our behaviors. We are experiencing an intense range of emotions and need to acknowledge the difficulty we may have in managing those feelings. You are not alone; this pandemic has shaken our sense of stability and certainty in what is coming next. This alone can generate the experience of anticipatory anxiety and grief. As Dr. Daniel Siegel teaches us Name It to Tame It. Doing this for yourself and your children will support them into shifting into moving into healthy coping strategies.*

**We suggest creating limits on screen time, especially on viewing information that makes us anxious.** *Focus instead on utilizing the information we know will keep us, our families and neighbors safe. We also need to stay in the present. That leads to regular practices of mindfulness to help us stay grounded, calm and in the present. It is not productive to worry about the future or past regrets. Instead continue to bring yourself to the present and you can be a guide for your children to do the same.*

**Establishing routines and engaging your middle schooler in creating these will support a sense of, we're all in this together.** *We encourage you to listen and validate their concerns. As an example, you could acknowledge their frustration with not seeing friends or not being able to leave the house to do other activities and discuss what you are going to do to get through this challenge. As a family this might include, game night, cooking together, ZOOM Trivia with family and friends, morning announcements, regular sleep and exercise.*

**Most of all we encourage you to stay connected to your middle schoolers, get them out of their rooms for time together even if it's spring cleaning.** *If you do have concerns such as, significant behavior changes, moodiness, irritability, tantrums/meltdown these might be related to anxiety. Please email any of us if you'd like to check in. Mr. Brown has also posted several links to articles in the resources section of his IMS website.*



### Relaxation Skills Toolbox:

Here are some grounding techniques to try on your own and/or with your child(ren):

See the photo on the right for a description of the **5-4-3-2-1 technique**

**Goal of the day:** Rather than thinking about a long list of items for the day, think of one thing you could do for yourself and one thing you could do for someone else.

**Happy memory letter.** Write a letter to a friend/family member about a fun memory you have shared together. You can include how this memory and experience impacted you in a positive way.

**The 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique**

Ease your state of mind in stressful moments.

- Acknowledge 5 things that you can see around you. (Illustration: Eye)
- Acknowledge 4 things that you can touch around you. (Illustration: Hand pointing)
- Acknowledge 3 things that you can hear around you. (Illustration: Ear)
- Acknowledge 2 things that you can smell around you. (Illustration: Nose)
- Acknowledge 1 thing that you can taste around you. (Illustration: Mouth with tongue)