

# COUNSELOR CONNECTION

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## MAY IS MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

Greetings everyone! May is Mental Health awareness month, which is especially important to us a counseling team. As everyone is adapting to our new “normal,” we are keenly aware that this has been a trying time. Included in this edition of our newsletter are some important tips/resources for places to turn should you need support for yourself or your student. Of course, we are always here to help, but we wanted to make you aware of some excellent places to look online should you want to explore some other resources. Additionally, we wanted to introduce a new member of our team, who is doing her Practicum with us this Spring, and who will also be around next year as our Intern. Lastly, we wanted to make sure everyone is aware of an opportunity for students to express their creativity via a poster contest around the theme of “Be Kind to your Mind.” We will be back next week with more! If you have any suggestions for topics you’d like us to cover, feel free to reach out! Have a wonderful weekend.

### MEET OUR NEW INTERN!

Hi amazing Islander families, my name Lauren Gusdorf Samson and I’m currently interning with Mrs. Dash. I grew up on Mercer Island and graduated from IMS in 2000. I have been teaching kindergarten for 12 years in Bellevue. Currently, I am getting my Masters in Counseling at Seattle University. I have so many wonderful memories of attending school on Mercer Island from the staff, community, and life-long friendships. I feel so grateful to be working with the counseling team this spring and next school year. I look forward to meeting and supporting your students in their academic journey.

IMS- 8th grade  
yearbook photo  
(Fall 2009)



Current- 2020

## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH



While 1 in 5 people will experience a mental illness during their lifetime, everyone faces challenges in life that can impact their mental health. The good news is there are practical tools that everyone can use to improve their mental health and increase resiliency – and there are ways that everyone can be supportive of friends, family, and co-workers who are struggling with life’s challenges and/or their mental health.

May is Mental Health Month. Our IMS Counseling Team, Sources of Strength and MIYFS is highlighting #Tools2Thrive – what individuals can do daily to prioritize their mental health, build resiliency in the face of trauma and obstacles, support those who are struggling, and work towards a path of recovery.

(\*See [mhnational.org/mental-health-month](http://mhnational.org/mental-health-month) for more information)

**\*\*If you are concerned that your child is experiencing a mental health concern, contact your assigned counselor or our MIYFS counselor Harry Brown.\*\***

## MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS INFORMATION Continued...

One of the most common mental health concerns is depression. If you think you have depression, professional treatment is always the first step. However, there are other measures you can take on your own to reduce the impact of depression symptoms in addition to therapy. Amazingly, these same steps can help you to improve your ability to manage everyday life stress and reduce factors that may be putting you at risk for future mental health struggles.

### Teen Depression Toolbox

(Much more information available @ [www.erikaslighthouse.org](http://www.erikaslighthouse.org))

**Exercise:** Exercise strengthens our body to manage the physical challenges of daily living. Research proves that exercise even generates feel-good chemicals that can improve our mood.

**Nutrition:** Food is fuel for the mind and body.

**Sleep:** Good sleep matters. Think of yourself as a phone and sleep as its charger. Without sleep the brain and body will eventually shut down. Teens should strive for 8-10 hours of sleep per night. It's more than adults need because teens are still growing. We know it can be hard to find the time, yet there is still a lot we can do to improve our sleep. Start with creating a sleep environment that is cool, dark, quiet and relaxing – think about using window shades, ear plugs, comfortable bedding or a fan. In the hours before bed, pass on doing homework, talking to friends, checking social media or consuming foods that are heavy or spicy, or drinks that contain caffeine or sugar. In addition, staying off of electronic devices like cell phones, TV, tablets and computers an hour before sleep is a good idea.

**Other health issues:** Taking care of health problems can make a big difference in how we feel emotionally. Research even indicates that many untreated conditions share strong correlations with depression, especially inflammatory diseases. Remediating your aches, pains, allergies and other ailments may be just what you need for your mood to improve.

**Avoid harmful substances:** It is important to realize that there are both healthy and unhealthy ways to cope with stress. Negative coping skills include activities that can feel good in the moment, but leave people feeling worse later on and potentially be dangerous. Negative coping includes things like taking drugs, drinking alcohol or engaging in high risk behavior.

**Be mindful:** Mindfulness is the practice of being present in the moment. When we get overwhelmed it is usually because our minds start to think about past setbacks or worry about future challenges – this kind of thinking can lead to feelings of stress and even depression. If we live in the present moment, we can begin to free ourselves of those negative thoughts and feelings and be more effective in what we are trying to do at any given moment – whether it is being more present with our friends or family, school work or hobbies.

## POSTER CONTEST

MIFYS and Sources of Strength are offering a poster contest! We are asking for student designed art projects that reflect the theme "**BE KIND TO YOUR MIND.**" This quote needs to be included in the project and there should also be some mention of May being Mental Health Awareness Month. We are flexible about what the art medium is, but all entries need to be submitted to either Ms. Dash or Mr. Brown, via email, **no later than May 26th.** We will be selecting one winner from each grade, to earn a **\$25 gift card to Island Books.** We will also be submitting all entries to MIFYS for their contest too (flyer about their contest details is attached to our push-out email)

## REMINDER: COUNSELOR OFFICE HOURS

The IMS Counselors are offering an **OPTIONAL** opportunity for **STUDENTS** to check in. We will each be on a Zoom call, partnered with an Administrator, again next week. Dru Klein will be online **Tuesday** from 10-10:30 (students with last names A-G), Janet Goldstein will be online **Wednesday** from 10-10:30 (last names H-O) and Jayna Dash will be online **Thursday** from 10-10:30 (last names P-Z). Students are encouraged to log on to ask questions, to say hello or to simply come for additional adult connection.

\*\*\*Zoom links are posted in the Schoology calendar.\*\*\*