



May is Mental Health Awareness Month!

Community Events:

This year, the SSCPS Counseling Team is incorporating the following to raise Mental Health Awareness in our school community:

- Bulletin boards at the High School and K-8 School.
- Selling Mental Health Awareness bracelets to raise funds for a charitable organization.
- Celebrating Green Day on **May 16th**, a day for students and staff to wear green in support of Mental Health Awareness.
- Classroom Read Alouds and Advisory Lessons

What is Mental Health?

“Mental health is a state of mental well-being that enables people to cope with the stresses of life, realize their abilities, learn well and work well, and contribute to their community. It is an integral component of health and well-being that underpins our individual and collective abilities to make decisions, build relationships and shape the world we live in. Mental health is a basic human right. And it is crucial to personal, community and socio-economic development.”

<https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-responsibility>

Why is Mental Health Important in Schools?

Mental health is crucial in schools for several reasons, and it significantly impacts both students' well-being and academic performance. Here are a few key points on why it's so important:

1. Academic Success

- Mental health affects cognitive abilities, concentration, memory, and problem-solving skills. Students dealing with anxiety, depression, or other mental health challenges may struggle to focus or perform well academically, leading to poor grades and a lack of motivation.

2. Emotional Development

- School is an environment where young people learn how to manage their emotions, form relationships, and navigate social situations. Mental health

support helps students develop these skills, contributing to better social interactions and resilience.

3. Physical Health

- Mental health is connected to physical well-being. Conditions like stress, anxiety, or depression can lead to sleep disturbances, headaches, or digestive problems. Addressing mental health in school can help prevent some of these physical symptoms. Our mental health is as important as our physical health.

4. Preventing Long-Term Issues

- Addressing mental health early in a student's life can prevent more severe problems in adulthood. Untreated mental health issues can lead to long-term struggles with relationships, career challenges, and other aspects of life.

5. Reducing Stigma

- Open discussions about mental health in schools help reduce the stigma around it. By normalizing conversations about mental health, students are more likely to seek help when they need it and feel comfortable discussing their feelings.

6. Improved Social Skills

- Mental health awareness can improve empathy, compassion, and understanding among peers. This leads to a healthier, more supportive school culture where students can express themselves without fear of judgment.

7. Overall Well-Being

- When students feel mentally well, they are more likely to engage with school activities, participate in class, and develop positive relationships.
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How can I take care of my mental health?

Self-care means taking the time to do things that help you live well and improve both your physical health and mental health. Self care can help manage stress, lower the risk of illness, and increase energy levels. Even small acts of self-care in one's daily life can have a big impact.

Self Care Tips

- **Get regular exercise.** Just 30 minutes of walking every day can boost your mood and improve your health. Small amounts of exercise add up, so don't be discouraged if you can't do 30 minutes at one time.
- **Eat healthy, regular meals and stay hydrated.** A balanced diet and plenty of water can improve your energy and focus throughout the day. Pay attention to

your intake of caffeine and alcohol and how they affect your mood and well-being—for some, decreasing caffeine and alcohol consumption can be helpful.

- **Make sleep a priority.** Stick to a schedule, and make sure you're getting enough sleep. Blue light from devices and screens can make it harder to fall asleep, so reduce blue light exposure from your phone or computer before bedtime.
- **Try a relaxing activity.** Explore relaxation or wellness programs or apps, which may incorporate meditation, muscle relaxation, or breathing exercises. Schedule regular times for these and other healthy activities you enjoy, such as listening to music, reading, spending time in nature, and engaging in low-stress hobbies.
- **Set goals and priorities.** Decide what must get done now and what can wait. Learn to say "no" to new tasks if you start to feel like you're taking on too much. Try to appreciate what you have accomplished at the end of the day.
- **Practice gratitude.** Remind yourself daily of things you are grateful for. Be specific. Write them down or replay them in your mind.
- **Focus on positivity.** Identify and challenge your negative and unhelpful thoughts.
- **Stay connected.** Reach out to friends or family members who can provide emotional support and practical help.

When should I seek professional help?

Seek professional help if you are experiencing severe or distressing symptoms that have lasted 2 weeks or more, such as:

- Difficulty sleeping
- Changes in appetite or unplanned weight changes
- Difficulty getting out of bed in the morning because of mood
- Difficulty concentrating
- Loss of interest in things you usually find enjoyable
- Inability to complete usual tasks and activities
- Feelings of irritability, frustration, or restlessness
- Withdrawal with a strong preference to isolate instead of engage socially

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/caring-for-your-mental-health>

Mental Health Resources:

Though SSCPS does not endorse any specific services, here is a list of resources publicly shared that you might find helpful.

Finding a therapist:

- Psychology Today www.psychologytoday.com
- South Shore Coalition of Independent Therapists <https://sscit.org/>
- Interface Referral Service, William James College 888-244-6843
<https://interface.williamjames.edu/>
- Ask your pediatrician or primary care provider for recommendations

Local Resources:

- Hope Floats (Grief) <https://www.hopefloatswellness.org/> 781-585-4221

- ASPIRE Health (Crisis Team) 781-774-6036
<https://www.aspirehealthalliance.org/our-programs/for-adults/emergency-crisis-services/>
- Massachusetts Center for Adolescent Wellness 855-940-6229
www.masscenters.com
- Mindset Social Solutions, Inc. 617-942-1030 <https://mindsetssi.com/>

Additional Resources:

- National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) helpline: 800-950-NAMI or text "NAMI" to 741471
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 800-273-8455 or dial 988
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA): 800-662-HELP (4537)

*****The Counseling Department here at SSCPS is available to all students and their families. Please reach out if we can provide any specific support or resources.*****
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