

May 2021 School Counselor Newsletter

Dear St. John Families,

Happy May! With just six weeks of school left, we're in that final push of the year. As we head into these last weeks, I want to take the time to offer you a gentle reminder to prioritize and take care of yourself. This year has been challenging in so many ways and it's taken its toll on all of us. It is so important that we are doing things to support our own well-being, in addition to our children's.

With that in mind, May is Mental Health Awareness Month! Living through the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on children and adolescents' mental health. While there is not yet a lot of comprehensive data, the CDC reported that through most of 2020, the proportion of mental health-related pediatric emergency admission was 31% higher than it was in 2019.

That is a significant rise and I anticipate that we will continue to see similar trends. It is so important to remain vigilant and know the warning signs for a mental health problem. Some of the common indicators to watch for in your child include: feeling very sad or withdrawn for 2 or more weeks, significant behavioral changes (e.g., no longer interested in a favorite hobby), trouble sleeping, changes in eating habits, unusually irritable, weight loss, among others. I encourage you to take a look at this 3-page guide from Seattle Children's Hospital on [Mental Health and Your Child or Teen](#). This guide includes a summary of what mental health is, what to watch for, and how to help.

St. John is such a special environment full of people who care for and love your child. If you are concerned about your child's mental health or well-being, please don't hesitate to contact me via email at cshaw@st-johnschool.org.

Finally, I want to remind you of the supports I offer our students:

- **Google Classroom (K-5th Grade):** The theme in my classroom this month is Empathy, Inclusion, & Activism. All of the lessons and activities this month have to do with these very important topics. Please contact me if your child is not in my classroom and you would like for them to be added.
- **Virtual Calming Room (Middle School):** Students are invited to check out my [Virtual Calming Room](#). This site has many resources to support positive mental health, including: guided meditations and breathing videos, journaling prompts, yoga videos, and more.
- **1-on-1 Counseling (All students):** I'm available to work with students as requested on a goal-oriented, short-term basis. Please email me to arrange this service.

Wishing your family all my best,

Ms. Shaw

Resources I'm Highlighting this Month

- One strategy I often recommend families implement is creating a Family Charter. A Family Charter is like a written contract or agreement that includes shared goals for how members of the family want to be treated. This is an excellent tool to foster a positive and supportive home environment. Check out this [article](#) on how to create a charter. And take a look at this example charter and template [here](#). Keep in mind that this is just *one* way a charter can look. Have fun working together to create this and customize your family's charter to suit your specific needs!
- In response to the growing racism and Anti-Asian hate toward the AAPI community, [A Kids Book About](#) created a free e-book to help grownups and kids learn about it, talk about it, and help do something about it. Download your e-book [here](#).
- Seattle Children's Hospital has curated an excellent list of resources on [Supporting Mental Wellness and Family Life During COVID-19](#). There are resources on a wide range of topics including emotional regulation during the pandemic, suicide prevention resources, family safety, and much more.
- On May 26th, PNW Parent Education is offering a free online education event called [Digital Safety 101](#). This event will help parents find ways to balance their family's digital life with boundaries, etiquette, and good judgment. Learn more and register [here](#).