

Student Mental Health and Well-Being



Newsletter

TCDSB Mental Health Services provided by **Psychology, Social Work, and Guidance** personnel

Trying Something New for 2018

A Wellness Framework: Face to Face- Gratitude- Sleep

Many people attempt elaborate New Year's Resolutions on January 1st. The most impactful of changes can often be found in the most simple of steps. A Wellness Framework is a type of a road map, or set of principles for wellness. In our fast paced world with many things coming our way, sometimes simple is best. The Wellness Framework is one that I often use when working with parents, staff, and students. I offer it for your consideration.

It seems that people have less time **for face to face** interaction. Sadly, our young people often consider "face time" as "SKYPE" not actually sitting across from a real live person! The loss of face time and relationships is a concern because relationships and face to face are major mental health protective factors. When we are together with those we love and regard, we feel safe and loved. Our bodies respond to the connection in a basic physiological response of releasing oxytocin (the relationship hormone).

Wishing everyone a Happy and Blessed New Year 2018

This physiological response of releasing oxytocin, can counter act the effects of stress, as oxytocin diminishes the impact of cortisol (the stress hormone). So, getting in some real face time is beneficial to our mental health.

The second element is **Gratitude**. Our Catholic Faith is built on many positive pillars including gratitude. Making gratitude an intentional and systematic part of your day, just as we do with prayer and other daily routines, can boost our immune system, help fight cardiovascular disease, and improve levels of optimism. Amazing! (Harvard Medical School, 2011, in praise of Gratitude).

Sleep is a vital element to both physical and mental health. However, in our fast paced lives, it is often the first casualty. In a recent article in the Journal of Sleep Medicine (Dr. K. Krizan, 2017), sleep rates for US teens were drastically reduced and many are described as sleep deprived. Between 2009 and 2015, sleep rates for teens fell dramatically. The average number of hours of sleep required by youth 13-18



Proverbs 3:24 When you lie down, you will not be afraid. When you rest, your sleep will be peaceful.

Fostering The Family:

The TCDSB Pastoral Plan 2015-18 “Together With one Voice: Harmonizing Our Faith Through Family, Parish, and School” 2017 - 18 focuses on the SCHOOL

Family, Parish and School – Unity in Diversity...

Though it is our goal to highlight in depth each community of faith from the educational “village” of family, parish and school every year, it is imperative for us to remember that each of these communities is not simply a discordant or isolated entity; instead, each with the richness of its diversity adds greatness to the harmony of God’s music of love. In other words, the unity of the whole (family, parish and school) does not and should not undermine the uniqueness of the individual. This relationship of unity in diversity reflects St. Paul’s notion of many parts, one body (1 Cor. 12:12-26). This present pastoral plan challenges us as a Board to continue to encourage this ‘symphony’ and build a harmony with ‘ONE VOICE’ in order to develop, celebrate and nurture the wholeness of the human person in our beautiful but sometimes discordant world.

A thought to ponder as an antidote to everyday anxiety during this busy holiday season:

Philippians 4:6-7*New International Version (NIV)*

⁶Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

is 10 hours (US Centres for Disease Prevention). Few teens achieve this level. What is getting in the way of their sleep? The majority of youth are using smartphone / social media during the night. The rates of sleep decline and rates of teenage depression both increase with the prevalence of smartphone use. Rates for sleep deprivation and depression show significant increases around 2011-12, this is the same period where smartphone ownership in the US and Canada first exceeded 50% of the population.

Face To Face, Gratitude, and Sleep are each important parts of a Wellness Framework. Some simple practices may include

Face to Face

- Try to manage screen time in favor of (real) face time. Track your use of screens and try to increase face time.
- Consider a no- screen zone or time at home.
- Encourage youth to meet with their friends and discourage the screen as a means for socialization. When we are with our friends in fellowship, we are with them, not our screen.

Gratitude

- Create a Gratitude practice during your day.
- Set a specific time to reflect on your gratitude (e.g. before bedtime, at the dinner table...)
- Set a specific number of gratitudes to reflect

Sleep

- Create a sleep routine (set a time to wind down, and get ready)
- Slowly add 15 minutes nightly to increase the number of overall hours
- Use an alarm clock, not the smartphone, as a wake up device. No phones in the bedroom.

Mental Health Initiatives 2017-2018

- Support for schools in developing a Mentally Healthy Classroom. See Supporting Minds (30 min presentation available to your school as SW or Psych) on the Ministry’s website and edugains.ca.
 - safeTALK suicide awareness workshops for staff available via PAL
 - Inclusion of mental health to school SLIPs
 - Building partnerships with community agencies, families, and parishes

Suggested Readings and Websites:

Websites:

www.health.harvard.edu

https://www.health.harvard.edu/newsletter_article/in-praise-of-gratitude

www.stressfreekids.com

www.anxietybc.com

braveparenting.net (website showcasing Parenting Strategies with a Christian perspective and a focus on parenting in the smartphone age)

Book Suggestion ; Managing Media Creating Character: Using Technology Kids Crave to Build the Character God Desires, K.Newcom



A Laugh a Day...



Patricia Marra-Stapleton, Psychological Associate/Mental Health Leader

patricia.marra-stapleton@tcdsb.org