

Beyond the Classroom

The Evergreen School District Wellness Newsletter



Facts and Tips about Children's Mental Health and Well-being

Did you know that:

- 1 in 5 children (ages 13-18) have or will have a serious mental illness?
- 50% of all lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14 and 24% by age 24?
- 50% of students (age 14 or older) with mental illness will drop out of school (statistics provided by National Institute of Mental Illness)?

With statistics such as those, we must discuss mental illness and quash the stigma of shame surrounding it. The best way to counter such stigma is through education and awareness. That is why Evergreen School District's Mental Health committee finds it so important to share this information with our parents.

Mental illness is a medical problem, just like diabetes, asthma or heart disease. The American Psychiatric Association defines mental illnesses as health conditions involving changes in thinking, emotion or behavior (or a combination of these). Mental illnesses are associated with distress and/or problems functioning in social, work or family activities. Mental illness is treatable. The majority of children and adults with mental illness can continue to function in their daily lives.

Common warning signs of mental illness among children include:

1. Feeling sad or withdrawn for more than two weeks (i.e., crying regularly, feeling fatigue, feeling unmotivated).
2. Out-of-control, risk taking behaviors that can cause harm to self or others.
3. Sudden overwhelming fear for no reason (i.e., racing heart, fast breathing, physical discomfort).
4. Not eating, throwing up, loss or gain of weight.
5. Trying to harm or kill oneself or making plans to do so.
6. Mood swings that cause relationship problems.
7. Repeated use of drugs or alcohol.
8. Drastic changes in behavior, personality or sleep (i.e., insomnia or waking up early and acting agitated).

9. Extreme difficulty concentrating or staying still that can lead to failure in school.
10. Intense worries or fears that get in the way of daily activities, such as, hanging out with friends and family and/or going to school (#1-10 were provided by National Alliance on Mental Illness).

As parents, we need to be aware of these warning signs in children. The National Alliance on Mental Illness recommends that there are four things that parents can do if you suspect your child may be struggling with any of the above warning signs:

1. Speak with your pediatrician.
2. Get a referral for a mental health specialist.
3. Work with your child's school.
4. Connect with other families for support.

10 Ways to Promote Mental Health and Well-Being in Children

The best way to promote children's mental health is to build up their strengths and assets and give them tools to help them feel successful. Listed below are some ways to help promote mental health and well-being in children.

1. **Model good mental health habits.** Encourage stress-reducing activities, such as engaging in exercise and mindfulness. Mindfulness is when one pays attention to his/her emotions, thoughts and surroundings in the present moment.
2. **Make sure your child gets enough sleep.** Children need between 10 and 12 hours of sleep each night, and teens need a minimum of nine hours of sleep. Sleep supports proper growth and development.
3. **Promote the importance of exercise.** Exercise stimulates endorphins that trigger a positive feeling in the body. Exercise helps release the stress that builds up over a day.
4. **Encourage creativity.** Creativity can be expressed through outlets such as art, music, reading, writing, crafts, coloring, knitting, sewing, pottery, gardening or dancing. Creativity can increase positive emotions and reduce stress.
5. **Encourage kids to talk about their feelings.** This can be difficult for kids and may need to be modeled in order to help them develop proper coping skills. Be sure to talk about your own feelings, apologize, express anger in an appropriate way (without violence) and promote problem solving skills.
6. **Help your child learn to relax.** Mindfulness is helpful, and so is helping your child find a hobby or activity that helps him/her relax.
7. **Maintain daily routines and expectations.** Having routines and consistency often helps make a child feel secure.
8. **Build and maintain caring relationships between family, friends and one's community.**
9. **Bring fun and playfulness into their lives.** Having fun reduces stress, improves one's ability to cope, boosts one's energy, improves connections with others and can help to improve sleep.
10. **Encourage your children's talents and skills.**

Finally, celebrate your children's accomplishments!





Free Family Fun

Christmas in the Park

Friday, November 24-Monday, January 1

Christmas in the Park is a family oriented tradition with Christmas lights, trees and exhibits. Free admission.

Location: Plaza de Cesar Chavez Park (S. Market Street, San Jose between San Carlos and San Fernando Streets)

Hours: Daily 9:00 AM-Midnight

Fiesta Navideña

Friday, December 8

The 7th annual holiday celebration, “Fiesta Navideña,” is a free event for the whole familia! There will be performances, vendors, children’s activities, and tree lighting.

Location: 1700 Alum Rock Avenue

Hours: 5:00 PM-9:00 PM

Evergreen Public Library

Saturdays, December 2, 9, 16, 23, 30, January 6, 13, 20

Kids in grades K-3 can practice their reading skills with teen volunteers. Trained teen volunteers listen to children in Kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade who want to practice their reading skills at the Evergreen Branch library. Teens will ask questions about the books to encourage comprehension.

Location: 2635 Aborn Rd, San Jose

Hours: 11:30 AM-12:30 PM

Morgan Hill’s Kiwanis Holiday Lights Parade and Lighting of City Tree

Saturday, December 2

For more details, visit <http://kiwanisholidaylights.com/the-tour/>.

Location: Morgan Hill--Monterey Road, First Street to Fifth Street

Time: 5:30 PM - 8:00 PM



Introducing Evergreen School District’s

MENTAL HEALTH LIBRARY



Parents and staff are invited to check out Mental Health related books from the District’s Pupil Services Office. Topics include:

*Friendship *Grief *Parenting *Anger Management *Bullying *Self-Regulation *Anxiety

Please visit <http://tinyurl.com/y8zmq4af> (under Pupil Services’ Support Services) for the full list of topics and book overviews.