



DECEMBER

Counseling Newsletter

Great Advice!

Q: *My student never wants to listen to the suggestions that I give them. Is it just because I am their teacher/guardian?*

A: Think of it this way – Students want autonomy and build confidence in their own decision-making skills by helping others overcome their obstacles. Try getting their input on a similar issue that you see them facing. For example, instead of advising, “Set your alarm 10 minutes earlier so you wake up on time,” try, “Lately I have been running late in the mornings, too. What ideas do you think we can try together to help us?” This way, they are able to take ownership and accountability in finding solutions to their own problems.

Mixed Prioritizing

Step one: Create a list of tasks that I need to accomplish. Step two: Number these tasks in order of importance. Step three: Look at the list and feel immensely overwhelmed!?

Many of our students have become comfortable with steps one and two, but then become stuck and feel unmotivated when it comes to initiating these tasks. To this, I recommend “Mixed Prioritizing.” Help your student alternate between tasks in which they feel confident, and tasks that may require a bit more effort. Completing these “easier” tasks will help to build momentum so that they are then more confident to take on a more difficult task. Overwhelming ourselves with all of our difficult tasks in the beginning causes us to burn out quicker!

Important Dates

December 1 – 7th and 8th Grade Course Presentations; Future Storm Family Presentation/Webinar

December 2 – MSM MAP Testing Dry Run

December 3 – MAP Testing

December 11 – Rising 8th Grade Course Selection Forms Due

December 14 to 18 – Rising Freshman Course Selections with HS Counselors

December 21 – Winter Recess

Digital Moods

Students may not be aware of how social media and devices affect their mood. Encourage your student to notice how they feel when they are online and using different apps. Reflect on which apps leave them feeling positive and relaxed, and which apps leave them feeling stressed. It is easier to set limits with your student around technology usage when they are able to directly relate the usage to their own emotions.





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“You Won’t Like Me When I’m Angry!”

You may have noticed that your student has been a bit more on edge lately. Between hormonal changes, school stressors, friendship drama, and more, we are noticing that students are “flipping their lid” a bit quicker than usual. Help your student utilize these strategies to assist in coping with and managing their anger:

Strategy 1: Be Aware of Triggers

- Create a list of anger triggers and review them daily. Reviewing your triggers will keep them fresh in your mind, increasing the likelihood that you will notice them before they become a problem
- Assess whether you can avoid this trigger. This may mean making changes to your lifestyle, relationships, or daily routine.
- If it is not possible to avoid the trigger, create a plan for when you must face it.

Strategy 2: Keep an Anger Log

- After you have calmed down, identify what was happening before the episode. Describe how you were feeling and what was on your mind.
- Describe the facts of what happened. What events triggered your anger? How did you react and how did your reaction change as the event continued?
- What were your thoughts and feelings during the anger episode? Looking back, do you see things differently in comparison to when you were in the heat of the moment?

Strategy 3: Use Diversions

The goal of diversions is to buy you time. If you can distract yourself for just 30 minutes, you have a better chance of dealing with your anger in a healthy way. Remember, you can always return to the source of your anger later when you have calmed down – we are just setting the problem aside for now.

- go for a walk -- read a book -- listen to music -- draw --
- throw ice cubes at the sidewalk -- write in a journal --
- call a friend -- take a shower -- clean your room --

Rules & Consequences

At school and at home, we need to remain consistent and stand firm in our rules and boundaries. Letting something “slide” too often tells us that rules don’t really matter. It is important to assign consequences that are directly linked to each rule. It is often beneficial to have a two-columned list labeled “Rules” (ex. “I agree to finish homework before playing video games”) and “Consequences” (ex. “If not, I understand that I can’t play video games for the day”).

A Mindful Minute

Do a quick sensory check-in by naming one thing you are experiencing with each of your senses. Look around and name one thing you see. Take a deep breath and name one thing you smell. Close your eyes and name one thing you hear. Run your tongue around your teeth and swallow and name the taste in your mouth. Reach your hand out and touch something and name the texture that you feel.

Word of the Month: Empathy

We often confuse “empathy” and “sympathy.” That’s okay! The words aren’t too far off. Consider sympathy as feeling *with* someone. Without needing to directly experience something, you can logically understand the person’s emotion. Empathy takes this to a deeper level. Rather than considering what the experience is like, it is engulfing yourself in the context and placing yourself in their shoes. You are feeling *as* someone.