



Counselor's Corner

November/December 2017

HAPPINESS IS A SKILL WE CAN LEARN

At this busy time of year, it is easy to get caught up in “power doing” with long lists of what we want to accomplish each day while we respond to a multitude of texts, emails and Facebook posts, all while working, cooking, baking, decorating, and taking care of our families! We often get caught up rushing from one thing to the next, not allowing for any breaks for ourselves and our families. This constant “doing” impacts the way we think and the way we relate to all of life as “doing” instead of allowing time for just “being” and experiencing the moment.

As we move through life, things happen that may be upsetting or stressful, but how we respond to these occurrences impacts our ability to feel happy. The good news is that neuroscientists have been studying the way our brains work and that we can actually change and strengthen circuits that increase feelings of well-being.

The four constituents of well-being are:

1. Resilience- the rapidity from which you recover from adversity.
2. Outlook- the ability to see the positive in others and savor positive experiences.
3. Attention- paying attention to what you are doing right now.
4. Generosity- doing for others activates brain circuits that are key to fostering an enduring sense of well-being.

Using Mindfulness and Compassion Training we can measure positive changes in these key areas. It is estimated that 47% of adult waking hours are spent not paying attention to what we are doing in the moment. If we can improve this even by 5%, we can have an enormous impact on our learning, productivity, happiness and connection with others. William James, an American philosopher and psychologist, stated in 1890, “An education which improved this faculty (focusing attention) would be the education *par excellence*.”

We can all take responsibility for our own minds and practice intentionally shaping our brains to enable well-being to be strengthened. Allow yourself to experience the joys of the holidays by noticing all that you are grateful for, being kind and generous toward others, and pausing to pay attention to the people around you. Strengthen your own well-being now. As the dash to the holidays is upon us, I hope you will take a few moments out of your day to give yourself the gifts of peace and joy.

Mindfulness videos:

[Mindfulness: Youth Voices](#)
[Why Mindfulness is a Superpower](#)

Mindfulness Apps:

Headspace
Relax and Rest
The Mindfulness App
Mindfulness for Children

For further details or information, please contact your child's guidance counselor:

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