

Supporting Students through Challenging Times

Capitol Hill Counselors & Social Worker
PTO Meeting 11.9.20

Agenda

- Introduction of counselor and social worker roles
- Normalizing
- General best practices for managing emotions
- Middle School tips
- Elementary tips
- Overview of the relationship between GT students and anxiety
- Additional resources
- Q&A

Who we are and how we can help

School Counselors: can provide short-term individual check-ins, group support, family consultation, academic skills support, classroom lessons

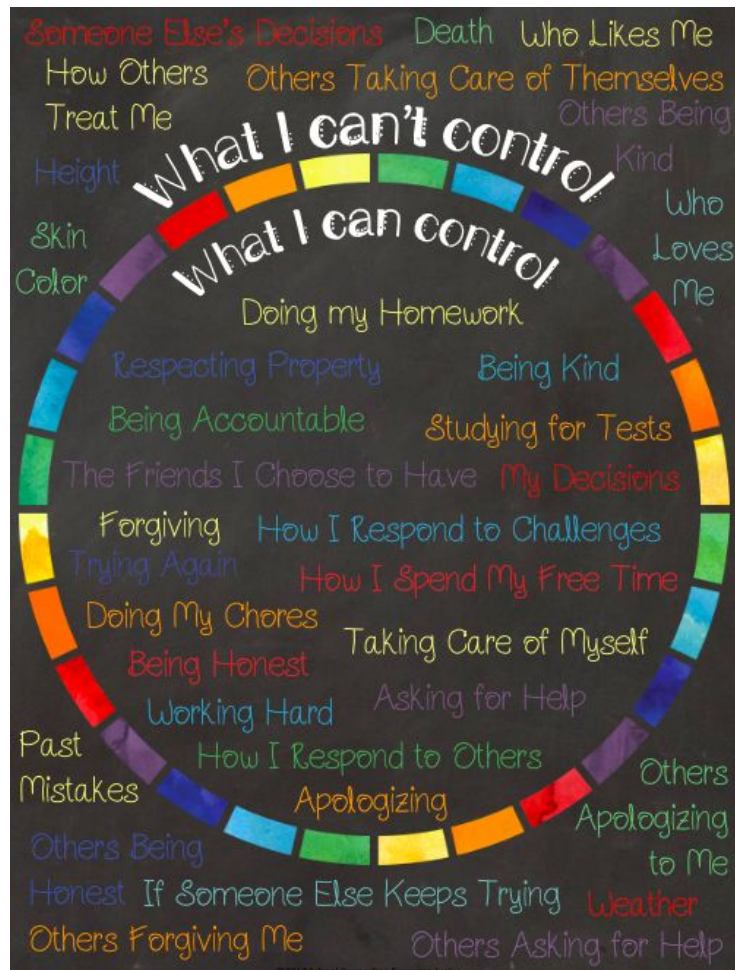
- 1st-4th grade: Megan Rinn
- 5th-6th grade: Zach Nauschutz
- 7th-8th grade: Chi Fomafung

Social Worker: half time with special education students; half time with general education students; support with community, family and twice-exceptional resources

- 1st-8th grade: Lisa Larson

Normalizing

- Existential concerns of this year (pandemic, George Floyd, civic unrest, election, Distance Learning)
- Typical flow of school stress (last week of quarter, holidays, etc.)
- Stress is expected and normal. This is a time to teach and model how to cope.
- Circle of control



General best practices

- Limit media consumption
- Explain concepts in age-appropriate terms (consult with teachers/counselors if needed)
- Talk about it! Avoiding big, “scary” topics can increase anxiety. Let them lead.
- Model your own coping skills and/or name it when lose your cool or use negative coping skills
- Make a plan for coping skills ***when you are all calm***
- When your child is having big feelings or a meltdown, this is not the time to ration or teach
- Rituals and routines
- There are no bad feelings

Middle School strategies for coping

- Structuring your day
- Box breathing
- Grounding exercises (any sort of movement, getting a drink of water, etc)
 - Work your 5 senses
 - 5 things you can see, 4 things you can touch, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste
- Carve out time each day to talk about worries or stressors
- Take a break

Elementary strategies for coping

Worry Time - avoid doing this at bedtime!

Volcano breaths, Birthday candle breathing

Movement (jumping jacks, play outside, squeezes/compression)

Drawing, writing, side-by-side - takes the pressure off

Safe space - decide ahead of time, make a plan and include them

Modeling - narrate the strategies you are using

Boundaries! - find a balance, log off if they have tried their best and put in the time

GT students and anxiety

Anxiety in Gifted Students:

Neuroscience:

Individuals with higher IQ have larger volume in two regions of the limbic system known to be associated with emotional processing. The greater connectivity in these regions may explain why gifted individuals seem to process all information through an emotional filter,” (Ohtani, Nestor, Bouix, Ssito, Hosokawa, and Kubicki, “Medial Frontal White and Gray Matter Contributions to General Intelligence”

Characteristics:

- 1). Perfectionism: ruminating on mistakes (real or imagined stories created in mind are rarely kind)
- 2). Existential wonder/worry
- 3). Sensitivities: sound, smell, taste, touch, sight
- 4). Oppositionality-Can't/Won't
- 5). Distortions about their ability: only smart if excel at Math

GT students and anxiety, continued

Tips:

- 1). How you are can be more important than what you say
- 2). Worst/Best/Most Likely
- 3). Test of Evidence
- 4). Even if/Even Tho
- 5). Fight/Flight/Freeze-Brain Science-PFC/Amygdala

Resources

- [Ramsey County Children's Mental Health Collaborative](#)
- [Parenting in a Pandemic - great tips from AAP](#)
- [SPPS Mental Health and Wellness Activities and Resources page](#)
- [Tips for helping students focus - from Capitol Hill's Occupational Therapist](#)
- [Using iPad apps for student organization](#)
- [Setting up your distance learning space](#) - from Capitol Hill's OT
- [Alternative Work Spaces](#)

Q & A