



Fall, 2022

"Don't spend your energies on things that generate worry, anxiety, and anguish. Only one thing is necessary: Lift up your spirit and love God."

- Padre Pio

St. Cat's Counseling

Letter to Families

Last year at this time, I was writing about the Mariner's fun, but fleeting last gasp to make the playoffs. Oh, what a difference a year can make! They now sit in the driver's seat of a playoff spot with destiny in their own hands. The last time they made the playoffs, I was eight years old and looking at the driver's seat from the back of my parent's 1995 Chevy Blazer. This year, the Mariners can be that team that takes on the anxiety of Seattle sports fans to face their everlasting playoff drought. As we help our kids begin the school year, we, too, can take on some of their anxiety, and transform it into resiliency.

Like a new sports season, a new school year can bring much joy and hope. Yet, amidst the excitement of a new school year, many kids still carry worry, (sound familiar, Mariners fans?). As adults, we know that we, too, must face many worries when we jump into new situations. We fear what we do not know, and fear what could go wrong. Why are our brains trained this way?

There is certainly a psychological response to why we look for danger. And, it is true that some people are born with more optimistic wiring in their brains while others are not. But what is often overlooked is our brain and heart's ability and desire, (and I believe our spiritual duty), to seek what is good, or to "see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living." Our children look to us to see how it can be done, but they need the most practice of all. They look to us to learn proper validation and acceptance, rather than how to ruminate on worry. They look to us to direct them towards two of the most proven contributors to a resilient brain: validation and connection.

Yes, we need to engage with the dark to see the light. And yes, I often encourage parents to validate emotions above all else, which can feel like a fine line between venting and reflecting. But when we pair validation with connection, it creates pathways in the brain for confidence and competence.

Rid our lives of teasing, defensiveness, deflection, or embarrassment and replace that with attunement, responsiveness, engagement, and a willingness to repair. I see so many of our students in "move forward together" mode at the start of this year, eager to shed whatever was holding them back the last couple of years. How awesome is that?!

Finally, as we see our community becoming fully removed from the "pandemic that shall not be named," our students are re-engaging in exciting ways. This year truly will provide lots of goodness to be seen. I am excited to see how we engage and encourage them in this endeavor.

Thank you, as always, for letting me be your child's school counselor. Let's make it a great year!

Kevin Ward, School Counselor
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Roscoe rooting his heart out for the Mariners.
Therapy dogs never take a day off!



Updates From My Office

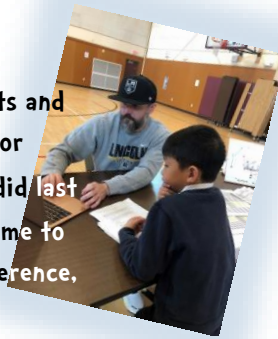
- **Fresher-Upper: What does the counselor do (and not do)?**

With this being the first newsletter of the school year, I would like to take a moment to remind you of what I can provide and what I am unable to provide here at school since I understand that my role is not always black and white. To do so, instead of writing on and on, I decided to utilize [this graphic from the American School Counseling Association](#). If you are unsure, please go ahead and reach out to me. I would rather you do than you don't and will never be offended if you ask for something I can't provide!**

**This graphic is geared towards a national model and does not always reflect how our small, intimate community is able to operate. If your child needs an outlet or you think they would benefit from a visit to my office, remind them that they can always visit me at recess, after a class, or in my office on the second floor. I can't wait to see them!

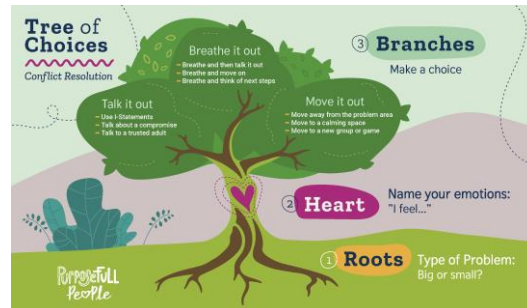
- **Career Day!**

Last year's Career Day was a blast, filled with the excitement and energy of so many parents and community members sharing information about their vocations. This year, I have set the date for **Friday, March 31st** in hopes that we can have even more involvement and expand on what we did last year. As a reminder for those interested, there is an option to sit at a booth and let children come to you, or an option to present in front of classes. That means that no matter your style and preference, there is a place for you! Please consider sharing your gifts with the students on March 31st!



- **Tree of Choices**

Our new conflict resolution tool for the year is called the "Tree of Choices," brought to us by our new SEL curriculum Character Strong. Your child will recognize much of what is on here, including belly breaths, naming emotions, and identifying how big their problem is. I encourage families to use it at home as well!



Resources of the Month

- Kids with sibling rivalries? This week's helpful Parenting tips from GoZen: [Link](#)
- Free Back to School masterclass from ADDitude Magazine: [Link](#)

- Resiliency exercises for kids! Does your child struggle with bouncing back from challenges? Practice these when your child is in a calm space so they can use them when times get rough. [Link](#)
- Screenagers monthly blog for parents of teens: [Link](#)
- “Things to say to an angry child” [Link](#)
- If you or your student needs a bit more stimuli while they work or study, try this new Catholic Lofi channel! [Link](#)
 - Let me know what you think if you try it! Truly a gift for kiddos with ADHD.
- [3 Conversation Starters](#) - 3 Conversation starters to try with your teens for when “How was your day” just doesn’t work as well as you hoped. I shared this last year and still find it helpful!
- [Sound Discipline Calendar](#) - Sound Discipline webinars and trainings. This local place is always a great resource for parents. They provide many services that may be of interest!
- Even when our kids have left home to go back to school, we are always looking for ways to create a positive home environment. Wide Open Schools can help with that - [Wide Open Schools](#)
- [Fall Mindfulness Ideas](#) to try at home!
- **Mental Health Resources:** If you are struggling to find mental health resources in the city, you are NOT alone! Mental health resources are more in demand these days, but you can still put your name on waiting lists, and check in periodically for new resources. Here is my updated list:
 - [St. C’s Mental Health Referrals](#)
 - Low cost from NAMI Seattle: [Low Cost and Sliding Scale Psych Providers](#)
 - Emergency lines from NAMI: [NAMI Helplines](#)

[St. Catherine’s School Counseling](#) – My page on the school site is where I house all these resources, past newsletters, and more. Check it out!

As always, remember that it shows strength and courage to ask for help or advocate for the mental health of someone else. You can save these numbers to be prepared:

Crisis supports are available if your student is concerned for themselves or others. [Teen Link](#) can be reached daily from 6-10 PM at 1-866-833-6546; the following resources can be reached 24/7 365 days a year: [Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 800-273-8255 / Worried about someone on social media? [Support on Social Media - Lifeline](#); the [24-hr Crisis Line](#): 1-866-427-4747; and the [Crisis Text Line](#) can be reached via SMS 24/7— simply text “HEAL” to 741-741.

If you have any questions, concerns, or you think someone needs help, please reach out to me and we can discuss how and when to reach out.