



November, 2020

St. Cat's Counseling

"No fear is so great that it can completely suffocate the hope that springs eternal in the heart of the young..."

- Pope Saint John Paul II

Letter to families

Highway 20 in the North Cascades is one of my all-time favorite drives. Typically, you can enjoy it until mid-November, when the snow begins to fall and avalanche warnings make the pass too dangerous to drive. I drove it this past weekend after an unusually early winter storm had passed. Many small cars were on the side of the road, assuming they would see seasonal October weather but instead, regretting how far they attempted to make it up the snowy pass. In a few weeks, barriers will block the entrance to the pass, saving smaller cars from making the simple mistake of wandering too far.

This year has been one glorious early winter storm; surprising, frustrating, and worrisome. In these situation, we as adults sometimes forget that our kids are just little cars, not made for roaming snowy mountain passes. We know that our kids are resilient, so we start driving up the snowy mountain anyway; we act extra-human and say things we regret, share too much, or act out of fear around the kids we care about so much. Our intent is not harmful, but our impact may be. If we carry an anxious heart, how do we face our anxiety so to keep children growing in confidence without inundating them with our worries (COVID, job loss, homeschool stress, politics)?

I think St. Pope John Paul II was right: children naturally have tremendous hope in their hearts. But what information grows this hope, and what squashes it? How do we look at the mountain that is 2020 and still say to our kids; "Look at the magnitude of that mountain. It's too dangerous for you to drive right now, but here are some tools you'll need so you can traverse it when your time comes." Thank you all for being such strong supports for your children at home. Let's continue to build resilience in our St. Cat's kids by working on ourselves, giving space for emotional expression, and keeping our eyes focused on hope.

Kevin Ward, School Counselor · kward@stcatherineschool.net

What has the school counselor been up to?

Mindfulness

At the beginning of each class this year, I have been introducing the students to a new mindfulness practice. We are all wired differently, so I have been making an effort to throw in a wide variety of mindfulness practices to show our students that mindfulness can work for any type of personality and temperament. Here is what we have tried so far, (*ask your child if they remember!*):

1) Loving Kindness Meditation: [LK Meditation with Headspace](#)

2) 5 Senses Mindfulness: [5 Senses](#)

3) Mindful Smiling: [The Practice of Smiling](#)

4) Mindful Smelling: [Smell Mindfully Ideas!](#)

5) Mindful Drawing: [Drawing Your Breath](#)

[Mindful Art Activities](#)

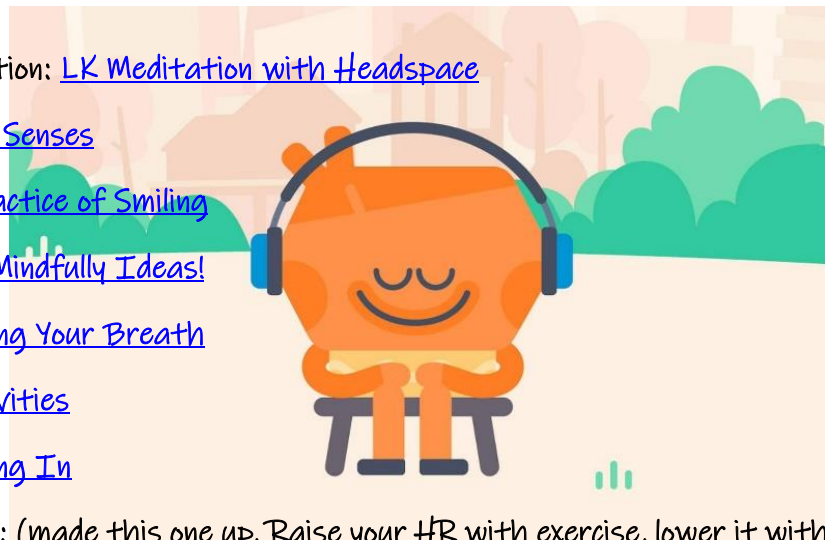
6) Music Mindfulness: [Tuning In](#)

7) HeartRate Mindfulness: (made this one up. Raise your HR with exercise, lower it with breath. Anything to draw your attention to your body in the present moment).

8) Release a Thought (Visualization with a balloon overhead. Allow a negative thought to be taken away inside the balloon).

9) Sounds of Halloween: [Haunted House Sounds!](#) (Where does your mind take you?)

The goal is not just to enjoy 5 minutes of mindfulness at the beginning of each counseling class, but to become *mindful individuals*. I am reminded of the Jesuit goal of becoming *contemplatives in action*, (to see God in all things; here is a nice post from back in March relating contemplation to COVID: [Jesuit Post: Contemplation in Quarantine](#)). Mindfulness can be challenging at first; it is a muscle we must build. Check in with your kids today and ask if they're forming habits of *just 3-5 minutes* of mindfulness a day, in their own way! It can be done while eating, walking, listening to music.... (the list can go on forever!). There are endless benefits to mindfulness. Lead by example and show your children that it's ok to slow down, be mindful, and listen. I think you'll like the results!



What's Up in Mental Health?

The University of Washington School Psychology Clinic currently have openings available for **psychoeducational testing** and **mental health** services. Please see the attached flyers that details the free services. If you think these services would benefit your child, **DON'T WAIT!!** (they fill up *faaaaaassst!!*).



UW School Psychology Clinic • 402 Miller Hall, Box 353600 • Seattle, WA 98195 • 206-543-4970

FREE COUNSELING FOR CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS

The University of Washington's School Psychology Program is offering free weekly counseling sessions for students between the ages 9-18. Students experiencing mental health issues (e.g. anxiety, depression, relationship difficulties, anger problems, and/or adjustment to life stressors) are appropriate referrals for counseling. All free sessions are provided by school psychologist trainees and are supervised by a licensed psychologist/faculty member. Parental commitment to participate and consent is required in order to receive services.

Services begin at the beginning of January and continue until the first week of June. Each counseling session is approximately 50 minutes long and will be scheduled on Wednesday evenings at either 4:30 or 5:30 pm. All families will have the option to choose between receiving services via HIPAA protected telehealth or in-person in the confidential School Psychology Clinic.*

Counseling includes the use of evidence-based therapy practices (i.e. Cognitive Behavior Therapy, Multicultural/Culturally-Responsive psychotherapy, Interpersonal Therapy and Integrative therapy).

If interested, please contact the School Psychology clinic for more information and to schedule a phone intake. (206) 543-4970.

***COVID-19 Precaution Statement:** We recognize the concern of exposure during the pandemic and have taken extra precautions to minimize risk. Our clinic materials are sanitized after every use, each room is equipped with HEPA filters and plexiglass barriers, and everyone is required to wear face masks. Our faculty, staff, and graduate-level students adhere to all UW and State COVID-19 Prevention Policies.

Note: While we take every precaution, we cannot guarantee zero risk of exposure.



FREE TESTING for SCHOOL-AGE CHILDREN

The University of Washington's College of Education invites you and your child to participate in the School Psychology psychoeducational assessment program.

Children in Grades 5 through 12 will participate in testing in February 2021 with two 90-minute in-person sessions. Parents will attend two HIPAA-compliant Zoom meetings.

Under licensed psychologist/faculty supervision, graduate students administer assessments designed to identify strengths, weaknesses, and learning differences that may influence your child's academic performance. Recommendations for supporting your child's learning are provided.

For more information or to apply for participation, please call the School Psychology Clinic at (206) 543-4970.

Confidentiality is **strictly** enforced for all family and student information.

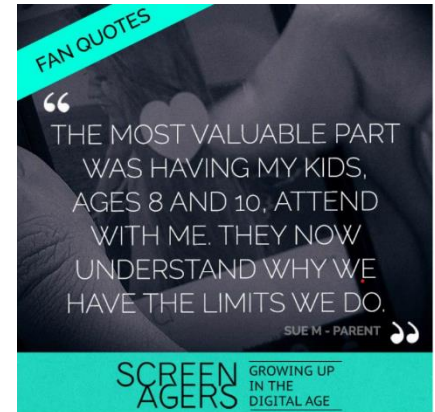
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Attention 5th-8th Grade Families!

Screenagers is a film that takes an interesting look into the vulnerable corners of family life and depicts messy struggles over social media, video games and academics. *Screenagers* goes on to offer solutions on how we can help our kids navigate the digital world. This film provides a powerful platform for our St. Catherine's students and families to engage in healthy dialogue about technology.



So, how do I watch the film? To register and watch, click on the link below:

[Screenagers Registration Link](#)

After registering, you will receive two emails: One confirming your registration for viewing, and another 7 days before your viewing period ends. *The registration and viewing will appear on the same page.*

When can I watch the film?

Each family will have 11 days, from ***Friday, October 23rd through Monday November 2nd*** to view this film at their leisure. Alongside the film, families can ask for access to some set questions, (that I compiled together), that will help spark conversations inside your homes after the viewing is complete. *Ask if you would like a copy!* These questions will then be used as jumping off points for an *online group discussion* when the viewing period ends on *November 2nd*.

Details for the online discussion?

The online discussion will take place on ***Monday, November 2nd at 7pm***, and will be led by myself and some of your students' middle school teachers. A Zoom link will be sent out as we get closer to November 2nd.

My school counseling site on the St. Catherine's website will be periodically updated as well. Not as much as in the spring, but it will essentially act as the hub for some of my favorite resources during COVID.

[St. Catherine's School Counseling](#)

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.



Happy Halloween from the Counseling Banana!