



Spring, 2023

"being alive means being loved"

- Henri Nouwen

## St. Cat's Counseling

### Letter to Families

Just the other day as I walked past the drinking fountain, I was stopped with a very important question from a 2<sup>nd</sup> grader: "Is your baby girl going to go to school at St. Catherine, Mr. Ward?" Followed quickly by, "I want my kids to go here, but I don't know what to name them." In reflection, I realized that somehow, just somehow, this interaction summarized most of my feelings about leaving St. Catherine at the end of this year: my sadness in saying goodbye, my feeling of uncertainty in the future, my *super* worry that this student won't know what to name her future children(!), but most of all, my joy from all the years of listening to ponderings such as these from St. Catherine students.

Shortly after I struggled to answer this intriguing handful of questions from my 2nd-grade friend, I went into her classroom and began to teach about the new character trait of the month: courage. This time of the school year is often when students' relationships are most strained, so I wanted to frame our lessons on courage differently. In order to develop courage, we need to focus on others. The logic is simple: if you think of others more, then you think of your fears less. If we are willing to dive into hardship with others, we have nothing to fear and a lot to hope for. I then started to think about the parallels of the Easter Triduum and a child's relationship to hardship and courage. It always came back to the need for humility and relationship. For all of us, I guess being alive does mean being loved, doesn't it?

As we focus on the character trait of courage this month with our students and as we end our Lenten journey, I wanted to use my goodbye as a simple way of expressing that we can do hard things better together. We can find courage in relationships, and show each other how to carry on through challenges without losing hope.

Newness requires courage, but without humility and connection, newness can overcome us and become sorrow, frustration, and despair. How poignant is it that we are diving into the Easter Triduum, where we begin to understand the meaning of suffering when we let go of pride and grasp onto humility? As we work on the virtue of courage and end this school year, I encourage you to not shield your child(ren) from the hardships of life. Allow them to struggle and be there to validate their struggle without having to fix it or take it away. If we know the story of Easter, we know that we would never want to rob our children of the immense joy that comes after we face our fears.

Happy Easter to you all ☺

Kevin Ward, School Counselor  
kward@stcatherineschool.net

*Feel free to keep in touch next year! You can reach me at [kwardcounseling@icloud.com](mailto:kwardcounseling@icloud.com)*

## Updates From My Office

- **safeTALK - \*Mark your calendars!**

On **Wednesday, May 17<sup>th</sup>** from **6 pm to 9 pm (probably ending earlier)**, students from O'Dea High School will be at St. Catherine to facilitate a safeTALK suicide awareness workshop. This workshop is open to parents of all grades. Middle school students are welcome to attend as well. I have many parents asking for resources when it comes to the topic of suicide awareness, prevention, and intervention. What a blessing to have a community that is willing to be trained in this! Especially in light of the news and how many young people may be thinking of harm to themselves or others, this is the time to be prepared to intervene in a productive, healthy, compassionate, and helpful way.

- To learn more about how our local high school students are helping to spread the message of safeTALK, follow this [link](#).
- To follow more about the Seattle Archdiocese Mental Health Ministry follow this [link](#)
- To learn more about the safeTALK program, follow this [link](#)

- **Thank you, Career Day volunteers!**

Wow, this community boasts an incredibly diverse and passionate group of working parents and guardians! It was amazing for me to see the joy that each of you brought to career day, and how it immediately impacted our students. Since last Friday, I have heard many comments such as, "I never knew I could be a \_\_\_ when I grow up" or "That person was so cool, I want to do that when I grow up." You can't ask for much more, so thank you, volunteers!





Photos on this page courtesy of Anthony Bolante.

## Resources of the Trimester

- Here are two links to help guide conversations at home about school shootings. I know that for some children, it is hard to dispel the fears in their minds and move forward. Remain as open as possible without overwhelming your children as they navigate what has happened in our country and in our community over the past few weeks.
  - A Parent's Guide to Supporting Children After a School Shooting. [Link](#)
  - [Talking to Students About School Shootings](#)
- One of the above resources is from an online mental health company called Little Otter. They provide easy access for parents who would like to provide more mental health support to their children but don't know where to start or how to start. Discover how they can help! [Little Otter](#)
- [A helpful handout](#) for parents: "Don't Let Your Child Grow Up with a Victim Mentality"
- [The Good Egg](#) a book for Easter, good for kids who worry.
- Have you noticed your growing child becoming more stressed over school success? Try these tips to help them prep for tests. [Tips for test and school anxiety](#)
- Knowing where to begin to seek an Autism diagnosis can be daunting. If you or anyone you know is struggling with this, please check out this easy-to-read diagram:
  - [How to obtain an Autism diagnosis](#)
- Book recommendation of the trimester! "The Danish Way of Parenting" by Jessica Joelle Alexander & Iben Sandahl.
  - [Goodreads Link](#)
- How is your child's relationship to stress? Here is a great place to start if you would like to see it develop! [Stress Response & the Brain](#)
- New Sibling kit from [Big Life Journal!](#)
- Archdiocese of Seattle Family and Parenting page with great resources: [link](#)



### 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: (continue to check the site for updates)
  - [St. C's Mental Health Referrals](#)
  - Low cost from NAMI Seattle: [Low Cost and Sliding Scale Psych Providers](#)
  - Emergency lines from NAMI: [NAMI Helplines](#)
  - 988 is the new suicide hotline. I have used them for others before and they are great!

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[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!

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Anytime is the right time to consult a mental health professional who can offer you support and guidance. There's no need for you to wait until your child's negative thoughts and emotions get worse, which could destroy their inner peace. If you feel that your child is always taking things personally, a therapist can help you explore and reshape your thoughts.

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](#): 9-8-8 / 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.



Louise Elizabeth is smiling in her bellbottoms, even despite the Zags massive loss in March Madness. Thank you all for the tremendous love and support throughout my paternity leave, we will miss this community deeply!