

Counseling Newsletter

Greentree Elementary School

Welcome back!

September 2018

Welcome back to another wonderful year of learning and fun! As we settle into this new school year, the counseling team has been working on some exciting plans for the school year.

But wait! Did you know you and your student(s) have a counseling team at your school site? Do you know how your counseling team can support not only your children but you as well?

The counseling team provides support to students and families through counseling services at school. Counseling is provided through one-on-one counseling, small group counseling and community resources. As a team, we will continue to support the school site through in-class Social Emotional Learning opportunities as well as engaging our parent community in workshops and trainings on different topics of interest. Workshops and trainings can be provided

through our staff and/or through partnerships with community agencies.

We invite you to contact us or reach out to us with any questions, concerns, comments or requests for topic-specific workshops. Our contact information can be found on the school website, under the counseling section.



Meet the Counseling Team

The counseling team at our school is part of the student's support team.

Elementary Guidance

Paraprofessional: Mrs. Kimberly Wu will be on campus on Mondays. Ms. Kenya Garay will be on campus on Tuesdays,

some Wednesdays and Thursdays. Mrs. Wu and Ms. Garay will be providing 30 minute in-class lessons as well as facilitating small group interventions.

Elementary Resource Counseling

Specialists: Dr. Mariela Pacheco will be on campus on Mondays and Tuesdays.

Dr. Pacheco will be providing individual and group counseling as well as crisis support and community resources.

Counseling contact information can be found on the Greentree IUSD school website.

Kindness or Altruism?

Do you remember the last time someone was kind to you? How about the last time you were kind to someone else? The word **kindness** is not new to our vocabulary. We hear it in many different situations and in many different forms. Merriam-Webster (2018) defines kindness as: “the quality or state of being kind, treating people with *kindness* and respect.”

Altruism, according to the Greater Good Science Center (GGSC, 2018), is defined as: “when we act to promote someone else’s welfare, even at a risk or cost to ourselves.” Most of us as parents would want our children to personify either and/or both of these traits. Research suggests that there are many benefits to incorporating this

qualities into our life. The benefits include:

- it makes us happy (and who doesn’t want to add a little more happiness into our lives?)
- it makes us healthier by lowering blood pressure, reducing aches and pains and extending our life
- it provides opportunities for greater social connections
- in educational settings, it reduces bullying, promotes team building and healthy relationships

The best way to teach it as parents, is to model it! The more organic our

acts of kindness can be, the more that being kind will come naturally to us, and as a ripple effect, to those around us, including our children.



How to practice at home

So what are some ways that you can teach kindness or altruism at home? Research recommends *that teaching empathy starts at home*. You are your child’s first teacher. You can model authentic instances of both kindness and altruism. Your children are constantly watching you and will learn how to react to situations through our responses and behaviors.

Practice mindfulness as often as possible, especially in high-conflict situations. Someone cuts you off in traffic? Think about doing a whole hand wave and a smile, instead of a single finger wave. Mindfulness is essentially just taking a moment to slow down and think before we act (or for many of us, react) to a situation.

Connect with nature, your community and your family. The GGSC, which has dedicated extensive research to the benefits of kindness and altruism, suggests that spending time in nature can build a “sense of awe” which enhances empathy.

Spending time with other members of the community helps you learn tolerance and understanding for diversity and build meaningful connections.

Coach your children on how to practice “logical reasoning” in everyday life. If we provide opportunities for discussion with our children on how to approach situations like bullying, negative teasing, conflict or disagreements, they will feel empowered to make positive choices and feel supported by you.

Practice random acts of kindness on a daily basis. Whether it is volunteering at your local animal shelter, helping an elderly neighbor with their lawn or going out of your way to befriend a new neighbor, try to incorporate acts of kindness into your daily life.

Be kind to yourself. Regularly practice self-kindness, especially when having a difficult day. Studies show that practicing self-compassion reduces anxiety and depression. Practicing self-care reduces instances of “parenting burnout.”

As parents, many times we berate ourselves when we don’t meet unachievable standards, but understand that you are enough. Children benefit more from spending time with you, whether it is playing or just talking. *So just be in the moment, in every moment* with your children.

-Dr. Pacheco

“Just be in the moment, in every moment.”

Did you know...?

We (the counseling team) would love to hear from you. We encourage you to contact us and let us know any concerns you'd like to see in the newsletter or if you'd like an individual consultation with us.

Community Resources

One of the amazing ways that we support our students and families is by providing a list of community resources that can include outside of school counseling, contact information with agencies and parenting classes information. Please contact us if you'd like more information.

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. The topic of suicide can be a fearful concern to discuss. Fortunately, there are a number of resources available for students and parents to use when talking about this difficult topic. Additionally, the counseling team at school has been trained to not just provide support but also how to talk in a way that is professional and supportive. If you would like more information about how to talk to your child or others about this topic, a great resource is **The Suicide Prevention Lifeline** (<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>) for

more information as well as their contact phone number.

Another great resource is the **Crisis Text Line** (<https://www.crisistextline.org/>), which allows people (including young people) to text with a trained counselor not just about suicide but about any crisis concern.

There are also district wide resources available, including counseling and mental health support. Please reach out to us if you'd like additional resources or support.

