

Thrive update

 **Boulder Valley** School District
Excellence and Equity

Enhance Inspire
Inform healthy kids make smarter students

Volume 2 | Issue 3

NOVEMBER / DECEMBER 2009

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Start a routine for homework, playtime and bedtime expectations. Even if they balk, persevere so home time can be fun and you don't have as many conflicts. The precious little time you have with them while they're young will be wonderful.

from
Mary Ellen Bayko
School Counselor -
Bear Creek Elementary

>> Cultivating good mental health

As parents we frequently remind our child to watch out for traffic when riding a bike, eat healthy snacks, drink plenty of water, wash their hands, and all of those other tips for staying physically healthy. But what about maintaining their mental health?

Nationally, 8.3 percent of youth ages 12 to 17 report experiencing a major depressive episode. Locally, 24.4 percent of Boulder Valley high school students report experiencing depression. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents.

Stress, or rather the response to stress, is one of many factors influencing a student's mental wellness. Students as young as elementary school experience stress, can articulate how stress makes them feel, and, more importantly, are able to identify strategies that help them alleviate stress.

I feel better when my dog comes and sleeps with me. – 3rd grader

I try to think that I can finish on time or can think 'you can do it'. – 3rd grader

I can play with my brother and friends. – 1st grader

Getting a Lego set. – 2nd grader

When I get something done and I'm proud of it. – 5th grader

For middle and high school students, the stresses they encounter and how they respond starts to change. Students experience both sadness and depression. They talk about feelings of isolation and of not being valued as leading to feelings of sadness and even thoughts of suicide. They recognize that participation in some risk behaviors is a means to feel better. They talk about wanting relief from stress and depression, but feel like talking about them is taboo.

As parents we need to focus on our children's mental health as well as their physical health. It is important for all of us to have healthy ways to reduce stress, like exercise, listening to music, playing a game, and sharing our feelings with others that we trust. Creating opportunities to discuss these issues with our children and setting aside family time that includes stress reducing activities benefits everyone.

(The April 2009 issue of Thrive Update had more great quotes from children about stress. It is available on the BVSD website at <http://bvsd.org/parents/Pages/ThriveNewsletter.aspx>.)

by **Leisha Conners Bauer**
Boulder County Healthy Youth Alliance
and **Dr. Jan Hittelman**
Boulder Psychological Services

>> Empowerment Groups Pilot Program

This fall, at Broomfield Heights Middle School we will be offering several student empowerment groups for boys and girls of all grade levels. The groups will be facilitated by a licensed therapist. The therapist Robin Goldstein-Lincoln is a member of the Boulder Counseling Cooperative, a local consortium of licensed psychotherapists dedicated to providing more affordable counseling services. The empowerment groups will provide a safe and supportive place for students to discuss a wide range of topics such as school, self confidence, transitions, and interpersonal relationships. In addition to facilitating meaningful dialogue among students, the groups will also empower students to find positive solutions.

The groups will begin at the end of October, beginning of November and continue for 8 weeks. Referrals for the group sessions will come from parents, teachers, counselors, administrators and students themselves. One group will be held during ELT (extended learning time) which is the last period of the school day on Thursdays. Another group will be held after school that same day and the third group will take place during our late start day on Wednesday mornings from 8:30 to 9:15. The cost to parents is \$10.00 per group session. We hope to offer these groups in 8 week sessions all year long.

This is a pilot program with the goal being to expand this program into several more schools in the district. The Boulder Counseling Cooperative was developed in response to an unmet need for affordable counseling services for middle and lower income families. It is through the commitment of the BCC and their agreement with the school district that we are able to provide these services for our students.

**For more information on BCC, visit:
www.BoulderCounseling.org**

by Brenda Longacre, MA
School Counselor at Broomfield
Heights Middle School

BVSD Counselor Tips

Talk to your children about their days, everyday. "What was the best & the worst part of your day?"

Get to know their friends.

Help them find outlets for stress and encourage them to be involved in those outlets.

Participate with them in these as often as you can.

from Lisa Hassin, M.Ed., LPC
School Counselor - Columbine Elementary

Your children's emotional wellness will never exceed that of your own heart. So take care of yourself and do the work you need to do to be well.

from Sennen Knauer, M.Ed.
BVSD School Counselor Coordinator

Provide consistency in expectations, consequences, and schedule.

Walk the talk. Teach them through example, not just words.

Really LISTEN to them. All of your other responsibilities will still be there. Drop what you're working on, sit down and listen.

from Justin Pacheck, M.Ed., NCC
School Counselor - Lafayette Elementary
and Nederland Elementary

Charge your child's cell phone each night. It'll keep them from using it inappropriately at night.

Establish a routine (time and place) to do homework each night.

from Michael O'Neill
School Counselor -
Southern Hills Middle School

Set boundaries and be calm and relaxed when enforcing them.

from Nick Vanderpol, M.Ed.
School Counselor -
Centaurus High School

>> Hope Coalition

The HOPE Coalition of Boulder County was formed in 2005 to engage and empower the community about depression awareness and suicide prevention in order to save lives. Citizens from Boulder Valley School District, University of Colorado, Parent Engagement Network, Boulder County agencies, Colie's Closet, and parents formed the coalition to work together as a community to understand the stressors in today's society that have triggered an epidemic of depression. The coalition envisions a community where there is no stigma about depression, where seeking help is viewed as a sign of strength, and suicide is no longer considered a solution. Over the past several years the coalition has sponsored gatekeeper trainings that provide education and awareness on the warning signs and symptoms of depression and suicide and directing people to available resources. The coalition also sponsors HOPE awareness events for the community. The aim of these community gatherings is to remove the stigma around depression and suicide so that people feel empowered to talk about it and seek help without the fear of shame. With proper attention and intervention, lives can be saved.

Two resources that are available to youth in Boulder Valley School District are Colie's Closet and the Second Wind Fund of Boulder. Colie's Closet are peer educators who speak to youth in classrooms about depression and suicide awareness and the importance of talking about it. Second Wind Fund provides free therapy to youth who have been identified as severely depressed or suicidal who otherwise could not afford it. Talk to your school counselor or interventionist for more information.

The HOPE Coalition will be offering a powerful presentation on recognizing the signs of depression and suicide prevention at PEN's Community Conversation on January 28th from 6:30-8:30pm at Monarch High School. Remember you are not alone and together we can make a difference.

www.hopecoalitionboulder.org

www.coliescloset.org

Be a good listener and really hear what your children are saying (and not saying).

Be available.

Have positive, fun family time.

from Carol Azzolina, M.A., E.D.
School Counselor - Emerald Elementary and
Whittier Elementary

>> Excerpt from "Connecting with Your Child"

How do parents create more moments of deep connection that not only create intimacy, but also teach their child? One of the main ingredients is to be available to talk and to be with him or her. Another is to listen without judgment or giving advice. Just listen with an empathetic heart. Giving a child the space to be and to share what he feels and thinks without judgments or suggestions getting in the way is a gift. The action of creating and holding a space for your child is powerful and supportive. Often parents feel that they have to say something insightful or do something magical, but a parent's presence is a valuable gift in of itself. Feeling loved and cared about is part of the remedy.

A main factor in creating connection is to honor the emotion that comes up in your child's life, a cord that can connect you with your child. When a child feels angry, sad, scared, or hurt, we often try to get rid of the feeling or mask it with our words of support. Those times that your child is feeling the strongest emotions are the best times to teach them how to feel their emotion and use it positively in their lives.

When you hold a space for your child, he or she can feel the emotion and let the energy of the emotion move through their body and eventually let go of it. The most important focus is to have an attitude that the emotion is valuable. Whether it is joy or love or sadness or fear, emotion can touch your hearts and bring you closer to your child.

For the full article: www.teachingheart.typepad.com

by Tom McSheehy

Tom will be the featured speaker for
the PEN Community Conversation
9-11 a.m. Thursday, November 19.

Make sure your child eats breakfast either at home or at school. Speak to your school counselor about breakfast at your school if you need more information.

from Melissa Glorioso, MSW
School Counselor - Creekside Elementary
and University Hill Elementary

Let your child scrape their knee; he won't break his leg.

from Nick Vanderpol, M.Ed.
School Counselor -
Centaurus High School

Have dinner together most of the time as a family. Kids need to feel anchored and only regular time with parents and siblings can do that.

from Mary Power
High School Counselor

Q&A with Dr. J

Q: Some parents I know seem in a rush to have their children go on medication for things like Bipolar and hyperactivity. What should parents do before making the jump to medication?

A: For psychological disorders, a thoughtful and accurate diagnosis is key to developing an effective treatment plan. What elementary child does not have occasional concentration problems in class? Does this mean that he/she has Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)? Similarly what adolescent isn't moody from time to time? Do we diagnosis him/her with Bipolar Disorder? Many mental health professionals would agree that these two disorders are highly over diagnosed in children and adolescents. This is a significant concern because both ADHD and Bipolar Disorder are typically treated with strong psychoactive drugs. Once diagnosed, patients may be on these drugs for the rest of their lives.

The accuracy of a diagnosis is a function of gathering information from multiple sources and thoughtfully ruling out other variables that may better explain the symptoms. For example poor concentration is also a symptom of depression. Some would argue that mood swings are a normal function of hormonal changes in adolescence. While it can be costly, considering formal testing by a trained psychologist can dramatically increase our objective data and thus increase the accuracy of our diagnosis. There are specific psychometric tests that can assess attention impairment (e.g. the TOVA), mood disorders (the MMPI), and other psychological conditions. A comprehensive psychological evaluation would include a battery of tests; an analysis of the child's medical, family, educational, and social history; as well as surveying parents, teachers and children, in order to get a convergence of multiple data points as to the source(s) of the presenting

problem. In the end the cost of a thorough psychological evaluation may be far less than the impact of an incorrect diagnosis.

When accurately diagnosed and treated, medications can prove to be a great blessing in treating conditions like ADHD and Bipolar Disorder. We just want to do everything we can to be sure of the root cause, which allows us a much better chance of developing a treatment plan to address it.

You can submit your questions directly to me by phone (720-217-3270), fax (720-381-6089), email (Jan.Hittelman@gmail.com), or regular mail (1527 Pine Street, Boulder 80302).

I hope to hear from you soon.

by Jan Hittelman
Licensed Psychologist

>>Calendar of Classes & Events

NOVEMBER 2009

Developing Health Self-Esteem in Your Child

Join us for this free presentation where parents will develop a deeper understanding of self-esteem; what it is, how it develops, if your child has it, and most importantly how to help foster it.

Presenter: Dr. Jan Hittelman

Tuesday, November 17, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Monarch K-8 Cafetorium (263 Campus Drive, Louisville)

To view the handout for the talk, go to: www.boulderpsychologicalservices.com/BPS-Articles-and-Handouts, and click on "Self-Esteem Handout"

Giftedness and Emotional Health and Well-being - Dr. Patty Gatto-Walden

Wednesday, November 18, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Manhattan Middle School, 290 Manhattan Dr., Boulder. Presented by Boulder Valley Gifted and Talented (BVGT). Free; donations accepted. For details, visit www.bvgt.org.

RSVP to programming@bvgt.org.

PEN Presents: Teaching Heart: Recognize and Develop Social and Emotional Intelligence

The Key to a Child's Success and Wholeness

Tom McSheehy, Therapist and Educator

Thursday, November 19, 9:00-11:00 a.m., BVSD Ed Center

For more information contact Betsy Fox, PEN at foxbetsy123@msn.com or visit www.teachingheart.com

Cornucopia of Local: A Fall Farmers' Market

Saturday, Nov. 21, 9:00 a.m.-3:00 p.m.,

Boulder Outlook Hotel, 800 28th Street, Boulder

This free event will include panel discussions on the local food movement and kids' activities, too. Featured speaker is the Renegade Lunch Lady Ann Cooper with BVSD's School Food Project at 2 p.m. Fresh local food will be available for purchase and a portion of the proceeds will go to BVSD's School Food Project. For more information, call 303-910-2236 or visit www.boulderfarmers.org.

Gifted and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (GLBTQ)

Panel Discussion, **Thursday, Dec. 3**, 6:30 p.m., BVSD Education Center, Flagstaff Room, 6500 Arapahoe, Boulder. Presented by Boulder Valley Gifted and Talented (BVGT). This program will explore characteristics that appear in gifted, gay and questioning youth populations. We will look at the impact of being gifted on sexual orientation/identity. Free; donations accepted.

For details, visit www.bvgt.org. RSVP to programming@bvgt.org.

THRIVEupdate for BVSD Parents

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experts and parents

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Look for us on the web!
www.bvsd.com

>>Calendar of Classes and Events

Pathways to Parenting Success: Asperger's, Autism and other Developmental Disorders

Increase your understanding of Autism spectrum disorders and learn about the latest research in this challenging field.

Panelists: Dr. Bruce Casey, Dr. Harriet Austin, Dr. Terry Katz, Jeremy Dion, LPC

Monday, Dec. 7, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Meadows Branch Library, Boulder

For more information: www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com

ADHD Parent Support Meeting (BVSD)

Monday, Dec. 7, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Fireside Elementary School, 845 Dahlia Street, Louisville.

Contact Parent Liaison Anna Stewart for more information: 720-561-5918 or anna.stewart@BVSD.org

PEN Presents: Celebrating Diversity and the Power of Community

Practical skills for authentic connections with each other

Community Conversation with Bill De La Cruz, De La Cruz Consulting Inc.,

Monday, Dec. 14, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Centaurus High School

For more information contact Betsy Fox, PEN at foxbetsy123@msn.com

or Bill De La Cruz at b.delacruz@comcast.net

Pathways to Parenting Success: Understanding and Dealing with Depression/Bipolar Disorder

Mood Disorders impact children, adolescents and adults. Learn how to recognize the symptoms of these challenges and the most effective treatment options for those impacted by them.

Panelists: Dr. Trevor Graham, Dan Fox, LPC, Dr. Harriet Austin, Dr. Leland Johnston

Monday, Dec. 14, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Meadows Branch Library, Boulder

For more information: www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com

SEAC (SpEd) Advisory Committee Meeting (BVSD)

Tuesday, Dec. 15, 9:30-11:30 a.m., BVSD Education Center, 6500 E. Arapahoe, Boulder

The Special Education Advisory Committee is a forum that brings together parents, staff, students and the community. The purpose of SEAC is to ensure meaningful and sustainable communication, while disseminating information, sponsoring presentations and discussing the impact of state legislation related to students with disabilities. Contact Parent Liaison Anna Stewart for more information: 720-561-5918 or anna.stewart@BVSD.org

Pathways to Parenting Success:

Screen Time: TV, videogames & computers. How It Affects Your Child

Participate in a discussion about the effects of screen time on children and adolescent. Learn how to evaluate if your child is spending too much time plugged in.

Panelists: Karen Wilding, LCSW, Linda Cain, MSED, Dr. Jan Hittelman

Monday, Jan. 11, 7:00-8:30 p.m., Meadows Branch Library, Boulder

For more information: www.BoulderPsychologicalServices.com

ADHD Parent Support Meeting (BVSD)

Monday, Jan. 11, 6:00-8:00 p.m., Fireside Elementary School, 845 Dahlia Street, Louisville.

Contact Parent Liaison Anna Stewart for more information: 720-561-5918 or anna.stewart@BVSD.org

PEN Presents: High Performance Parenting

Skills for Parenting in Our Fast-Paced World

Adam Fels, LMS Principal

Wednesday, Jan. 13, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Louisville Middle School

For more information contact Betsy Fox, PEN at

foxbetsy123@msn.com or Adam Fels

at adam.fels@bvsd.org

Build a resilient child. Always give them an opportunity to problem-solve first. Have them brainstorm and then encourage them to practice something you absolutely know they can do.

from Mary Ellen Bayko
School Counselor - Bear Creek Elementary