

Special points of interest:

- School psychologists... support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach.
- Many students experience social, emotional, and behavioral challenges that can interfere with their ability to learn.
- Deep breathing is a technique is great for calming both students and adults.



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What is a School Psychologist?

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“School psychologists... support students' ability to learn and teachers' ability to teach. They apply expertise in mental health, learning, and behavior, to help children and youth succeed academically, socially, behaviorally, and emotionally. School psychologists partner with families, teachers, school administrators, and other professionals to create safe, healthy, and supportive learning environments that strengthen connections between home, school, and the community.”

-National Association of School Psychologists

Mental health strategies and learning

Research has shown that students learn best when they are comfortable in their school setting and at home. Many students experience social, emotional, and behavioral challenges that can interfere with their ability to learn. A school psychologist, along with all of the staff at school, works to ensure that students have the tools they need to face and overcome these challenges.

Here are a few evidence-based strategies for helping a student better regulate their emotions:

Deep Breathing (also called 4-7-8 Breathing)

This technique is great for calming both students and adults. Many people use this strategy, however it's often done without a consistent method, which can make it less effective. Make your deep breathing strategy consistent for the best results! Make sure you're sitting or lying down to avoid feelings of dizziness.

- Empty your lungs of air.
- Breathe in, slowly, for 4 seconds. Breathe in through your nose if comfortable, or your mouth and nose if not.
- Hold that breath for 7 seconds.
- Breathe out forcefully for 8 seconds
- Repeat the process up to 4 times and return the breathing to normal

Try to keep aware of your breathing, even after the exercise, to give yourself a neutral focus for your thoughts. Holding the breath for 7 seconds might be a long time for some people. Similarly, breathing out for 8 seconds might seem like a lot. Some professionals recommend that the ratio of breath is most important, meaning a shorter pattern of 2-3-4 could work. Others simply say that any consistent breathing strategy is helpful, or even add a short “hold no breath” step at the end of the cycle, after step 4. What's most important is to find what works for you or your student and practice it regularly!

Mindfulness and Meditation

There is a bulk of research behind the educational benefits of mindfulness and meditation. In addition to regulating emotion, these techniques can help students maintain attention. Meditation is often a highly structured activity, working best with an environment free of distractions. Many people enjoy using guided meditations led by either a partner or audio from a video or app. However, many concepts that are a part of meditation, including mindfulness, can be used in the classroom as well!

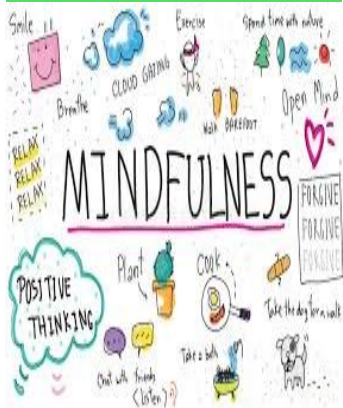
1. Sit in a comfortable position, with your hands resting and your feet on the floor.
2. Use a “soft gaze”, loosely focusing the eyes on one location.
3. Breathe deeply and focus on the breath. Return the breath to normal when comfortable.
4. Attempt to clear the mind with each breath, letting thoughts come and go. Some people benefit from visualizations, such as a balloon expanding and contracting or clouds drifting through the sky.

Listen to the sounds around you with a calm demeanor.

People tend to cling to thoughts and feelings, even when those thoughts and feelings are negative. This can lead to small events feeling much bigger than they actually are. Interrupting those thoughts and feelings with a few moments of mindfulness can help to get back on track.

Talk it Out

The best tool students have in regulating their mental health is a strong support system, both at school and at home. Just knowing that there’s someone to talk to can be a game-changer for a person in need. When talking to someone going through powerful emotions, remember to keep an open mind, speak kindly, and try to empathize with their situation. If you feel that you are experiencing recurring, intense emotions, you may also consider reaching out to a mental health professional, either at school or in the community. Seeing a counselor or school psychologist at school can be a great short-term strategy for dealing with moment to moment issues, while outside community services are better for long-term, consistent concerns. Whatever strategy you may choose, caring for mental health is important not just for students



Upcoming Events:

November 5, 2019:

Election Day

November 6, 2019:

Shortened Day

November 7 & 8, 2019

School Closed– NJEA

Conference

November 27, 2019

Shortened Day

November 28 & 29, 2019

School Closed

Thanksgiving Holiday

Next Issue:

December 5, 2019