

BHS NEWSLETTER

Fall 2023

Tulare County
Office of Education

Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

Teachers, Are You Overwhelmed?

Becoming a teacher comes with significant responsibilities and duties not often listed in the job description, such as mentor, counselor, and companion. Teachers do their best to connect with all students; however, some students can test our teacher's patience and boundaries. One student can change the dynamics of a classroom. **How can we make it possible to stay positive and not fall victim to being reactive rather than responsive?**

One activity is to **write yourself a letter** describing why you entered the teaching profession (identifying your why). In this letter, give advice on what you would tell a fellow teacher if they were struggling with a student, parent, staff, and/or administration. For example, you may be struggling with a student right now; however, kicking them out, showing frustration, and giving up will only encourage their thought that they are not worth the time and energy for support. You want to show students that no matter what, everyone will be accepted and included in your classroom, and you will not give up. This letter to yourself is to be opened when you are feeling stressed.

Another activity one can do is to **refer to your personal core values** of teaching with a quote that moves them, and every morning, they look at this to help ground them and inspire them to be the best they can be.

Seize
THE
Day

Other activities to help avoid burnout include:

- Take mental health moments, whether walking to the restroom or sitting in silence in your classroom for five minutes before starting/ending your day.
- Take charge of your well-being by eating, sleeping, and socializing with loved ones.
- Question the impact before taking on new work.
- Understand that sometimes you must say no and set boundaries to additional commitments.
- Be aware of your stress, your emotions, and your health.
- Get support by advocating for your needs with your school administrator or family members.

This issue

Teachers, Are You Overwhelmed ?	P.1
Effectiveness Over Perfection	P.2
Save Yourself From Task Paralysis	P.3
How Being Mindful Can Save the Planet	P.4
All About Glimmers!	P.5
Quick and Easy Coping Skills	P.6
You Can Help Save a Life	P.7
Strengthening Family Connections	P.8
Art Matters!	P.10
Let's Get Cooking!	P.12
The Benefits of "Once Upon a Time.."	P.13
Tips For Kids to Get a Good Nights Sleep	P.14
Special Thanks	P.15

Thriving Mindfully: Emphasizing Effectiveness Over Perfection



- Prioritizing effectiveness over the pursuit of perfection nurtures your mental well-being. By focusing on what truly matters and striving to be effective, we create supportive environments that unleash our true potential.
- There are four significant benefits of this practice. Practicing effectiveness reduces stress, promotes a healthier mindset, and fosters self-compassion, personal growth, and work-life balance.

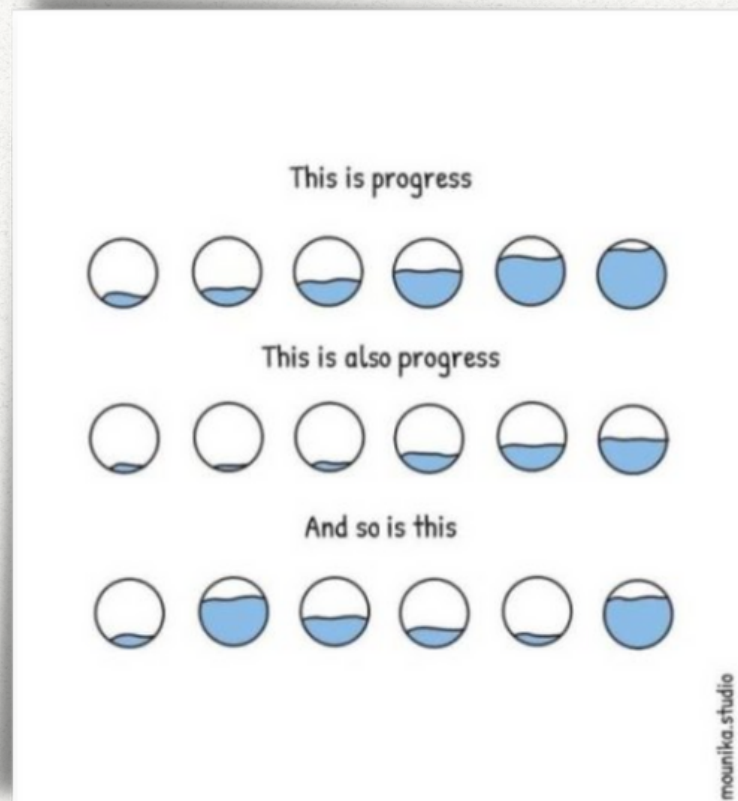
How Can I Start?



- Set realistic expectations and manage stress.
- Break tasks into manageable steps.
- Prioritize and use time-management techniques.
- Embrace self-acceptance and value progress.
- Recognize that small and big steps toward progress can have a meaningful impact on your life.

Remember....

Striving for perfection can never be reached, so avoid the pressure and stress, and practice being more intentional and effective with life instead!



SAVE YOURSELF FROM TASK PARALYSIS



Whether you are a student, a parent, or a professional, you tackle tasks daily. These tasks range in difficulty and time, requiring physical and mental energy. What happens when tasks become overwhelming to manage, and you get stuck in "task paralysis"? Clinical Professor Ellen Hendriksen from Boston University for Anxiety and Related Disorders describes "task paralysis" as a threat that prompts a freeze response in our system's fight or flight response (Smith, 2022). Individuals are encouraged to learn how to identify bodily threats to break free from the frozen state of task paralysis.

To begin reducing some of the pressure of tackling tasks, consider taking a few deep breaths to lower the cortisol (the body's primary stress hormone) levels in the body! Then, consider a few expert tips below:

- Acknowledge your negative thoughts and feelings and practice deep breathing to remove negativity in your body.
- Move your body to help your brain transition from the frozen state.
- Remove distractions to help with focus.
- Connect with someone so that you don't feel alone.
- Start with the task that feels the easiest or most doable.
- Tell yourself it is okay if you don't get it right the first time because you can always learn and do better next time.
- Reward yourself after a completed task by listening to your favorite song or eating a favorite healthy snack (McKenna, 2023).



Daily practice is key to avoid task paralysis. Over time, you will learn to manage even the most difficult projects/tasks, increasing your resilience and overall health.



References

McKenna, K. O. (2023). Overcoming task paralysis. Sit With Kelly. <https://www.sitwithkelly.com/blog/overcoming-task-paralysis>

Smith, D. G. (2022). How to save yourself from task paralysis. TheNewYorkTimes. <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/12/12/well/mind/task-paralysis.html>

How Being Mindful Can Save the Planet

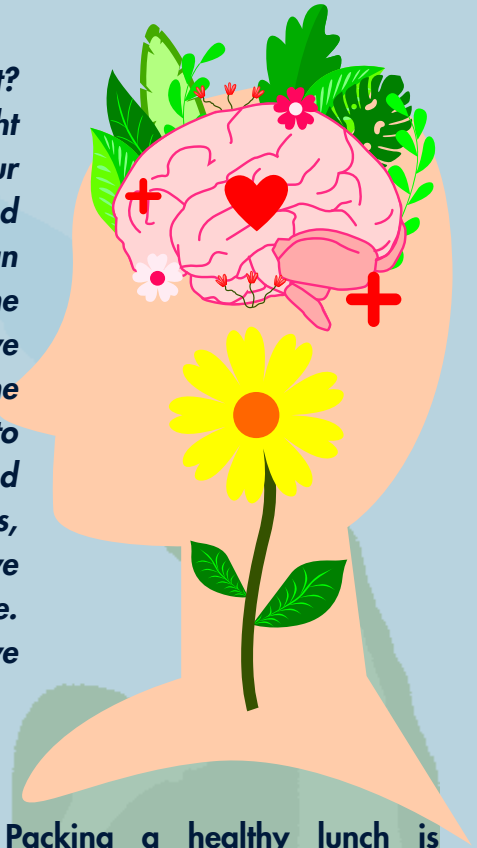
Have you ever thought about what mindfulness has to do with our planet? Mindfulness is a profound process in which we become aware of our thought processes to help us react appropriately to life's events. Once we open our thoughts and hearts, we can recognize that we are connected to the planet and act responsibly to protect our connection with the earth. Climate change is an increasing topic of concern and can have devastating affects on the environment. We can train our brains to think about many things when we live our daily lives that decrease our carbon footprint. According to the Environment Protection Agency, the average U.S. temperature is projected to increase by about 3°F to 12°F by 2100 if the current emissions scenario and climate model continue. This will increase the loss of wildlife, wildfires, droughts, and even heat-related deaths. By changing our behavior now to live more sustainably, we can prevent the devastating effects of climate change. Here are a few small things you can do at work to support the planet you live on:

Encourage Virtual Meetings. Virtual meetings not only save employees time, but they can also lower carbon emissions by saving gas. We are lucky to live in a time where we can access so many people from our desks; take advantage of it!

Carpool. Completely committing to driving to fewer places can be challenging. One way to ease the stress of this demand is carpooling. Creating a plan with a coworker to carpool to and from work or to and from lunch can cut your fuel emissions and gas in half!

Practice Yoga. Yoga is a way to reduce emissions, protect the environment, and cultivate mindfulness. You may prevent your mind from straying and ultimately turn any task into a mindful one by paying attention to your breathing, what you're doing, and how you feel. Yoga can be practiced in your home to help save the environment by reducing gas emissions!

Creating a more aware and sustainable world as we adjust our habits will take persistent work, patience, and compassion. Making these changes will probably cause us to stumble, but we can always get back up and stay in line with "wise thought, action, and effort."



Brown Bag It. Packing a healthy lunch is beneficial in many ways. It benefits your direct health and reduces the amount of processed foods and plastic being used. Using reusable tupperware and cutlery can save much more plastic than you think. Packing your lunch also helps decrease the fuel emissions you give because you do not need to drive somewhere to get your lunch.

Grow Plants. Gardening offers many positive aspects in the life of an employee. Plants can reduce anxiety, depression, stress, and other stressors. Interactions with indoor or outdoor plants can alleviate symptoms of poor mental health. Being a plant caregiver will help with mindfulness and boost the air quality in your house, office, and outdoors!

For more information about what you can do:

How Mindfulness Can Improve Our Planet's Sustainability - Alternative Energy HQ
<https://www.ekhartyoga.com/articles/practice/how-to-start-a-home-yoga-practice>
How Indoor Plants Can Help With Mental and Emotional Health



All About Glimmers!



What are They?

- Glimmers are opposite of triggers.
- They provide us with joy and safety.
- They help us self-soothe.

Examples: Riding a bike, cuddling with your pet, or listening to your favorite song.



How to Discover Glimmers:



- Nature provides us with many glimmers, which can help to discover ours.
- Try picturing a place that brings you peace or a person who you feel safe with.
- Carrying a picture of the place or person can also be helpful.



Regulating Ourselves:



- Glimmers help balance and calm our mind, body, and feelings.
- They allow us to spend less time feeling nervous or worried, allowing us to focus on school, friends, goals, and having fun!



Challenge Yourself:

Set a goal to notice glimmers throughout your day.

- What activities relax you?
- How can you discover more glimmers?
- Consider keeping a journal of your glimmers to reflect on when you feel sad.
- Share your glimmers with those you love or others who may be having a bad day.





Quick and Easy Coping Skills ✨



RECOMENDATIONS FOR COPING SKILLS:

- Deep breathing (use of bubbles can help children understand how to take deep breathes)
- Journal writing
- Count to 10/Count down
- Going for a walk
- Using fidgety toys (spinners, Pop-its)
- Sensory stimulation (splashing cold water, kinetic sand)
- Listen to upbeat, calming music
- Organize/tidy a space (bedroom, backpack, desk)



TEACHERS AND PARENTS CAN SUPPORT THEIR CHILDREN IN USING THEIR COPING SKILLS BY:

- ✓ Modeling coping skills can help children navigate through their emotions and reduce the intensity of unwanted emotions.
- ✓ Talking to the children about how and why they use their coping strategies is important (i.e. help alleviate stress, increase positive mood, build self-awareness, and develop a positive outlook in life).



WHAT ARE COPING SKILLS?

- ✓ Coping Skills are strategies used to manage feelings and handle stress. Coping skills can be used anytime, and using them regularly can help prevent stress and manage children's emotions.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE VISIT THESE WEBSITES:

<https://www.strong4life.com/en/emotional-wellness/coping/healthy-coping-strategies-for-kids>

<https://www.verywellmind.com/fifty-healthy-coping-skills-4586742>



YOU CAN HELP SAVE A LIFE

Suicide can be a challenging topic to discuss with family, friends, or community members. Many believe that talking about suicide will give a person facing mental and emotional pain the idea to consider suicide. However, many studies have shown that talking about suicide openly is a highly effective way to help someone not make that choice.



Some **common signs** will help you know whether you should talk about it.

SHOWING A CHANGE IN BEHAVIOR, SUCH AS:

- Accessing lethal means (obtaining a firearm, knife, or medications)
- Extreme mood swings
- Often eating or sleeping more or less
- Making plans for suicide (writing goodbye letters)
- Withdrawing from friends, loved ones
- Giving away important items or making a will
- Increased substance use
- A sudden increase in joy/happiness without reason



TALKING ABOUT:

- Wanting to die/not wake up
- Experiencing hopelessness
- Being a burden to others



FEELING:

- Trapped or with no reason to live
- Unbearable pain, whether it is emotional or physical
- More anxious, agitated, or full of rage or anger
- Helpless, alone, isolated

What if you are experiencing thoughts of suicide?

- Add self-care activities to your routine
- Eating healthier foods rich in vitamins and protein
- Practicing meditation
- Getting enough sleep (7-8 hours is best)
- Identify people in your life that you can trust and call anytime
- Connect with loved ones, a coach, teacher, spiritual advisor, or mental health professional whom you can call when you feel overwhelmed, anxious, or sad



Please seek help!

- **Call or Text 988**
- **National Suicide prevention lifeline: 1-800-273-8255**
- **Crisis Text line (TEXT "HELLO" to 741741)**
- **For LGBTQ+ youth: 866-488-7386**
- **For imminent danger, Call 911**

How can you help?

- Call 911 if the person is in immediate physical danger
- Be patient and talk openly and honestly
- Be there by expressing support and acknowledging their feelings
- Ask: "Are you thinking about killing yourself?" "Do you have a plan?"
- Keep them safe by reducing access to lethal means, places, and substances
- Help them connect with the suicide prevention lifeline number 1-800-273-8255
- Stay Connected! Follow up and stay in touch after a crisis



Strengthening Family Connections



Relationships are the most meaningful part of life. Whether positive or negative, relationships shape our worldview and impact our mental wellbeing and overall quality of life. For most, family relationships (parent to child, sibling to sibling, etc.) are important, but the time spent getting to know our loved ones can be challenging. Here are a few ways to get to know our family members more to build a stronger relationship and connection.



Ice Breakers

Fun icebreaker questions can promote group participation, allowing us to get to know each other. There are a variety of activities that can be used for children, teens, young adults, and parents. The parents and child complete a questionnaire about each other to see what the other thinks they like and how well they know each other.




Questions for Child/Teen

- What do they like to eat?
- What is their favorite store?
- What is their favorite TV show?
- What is their favorite color?
- What is their favorite activity at school?
- What music do they like?
- Name their best friend.
- Favorite holiday?
- What country would they like to visit?
- What do they do when under much pressure or feeling sad?
- Who is a trusted adult they can connect with for comfort and conversation?

Questions for Parents

- What is their favorite activity?
- What is their favorite TV show?
- How do they spend their free time?
- What is their favorite family memory?
- Favorite food?
- How did they feel at my age?
- What activity do they miss from childhood?

Other fun activities to increase positive social interaction and connection are:



Egg/Water Balloon Toss: Parent and child start close facing one another; as they toss the egg/balloon, they take a step further from each other. The point of the game is to see how far they can get without dropping the egg/balloon. This builds their trust, communication, and problem-solving.

Two Truths and a Lie: Everyone shares two truths and one lie about themselves. The family votes on what the lie is. This is a great way to learn facts about others.



Celebrities/Characters:

Write the names of various celebrities or characters on a small paper and fold them. Mix them up, pick one, and tape it to the back of the child or adult. Everyone gives clues to have the child or adult guess the correct answer.

My Story: Using family photos and talking about the stories associated with those photos can help family members learn more about family history, significant events, and positive memories.



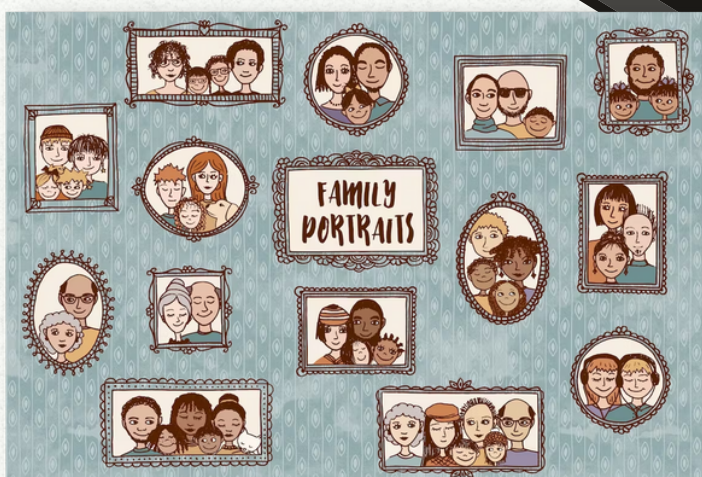
Two Truths and a Lie

Write down two things about yourself that are true and one thing that is a lie. Can your peers guess which one is the lie?

- 1
- 2
- 3

Name: _____

Bright Sprouts
www.brightsprouts.com



ART MATTERS!

What is art, and why is it important?

Art is the expression of creativity and the use of imagination. Art is utilized to appreciate beauty and to reflect individuality. Engagement in art activities from a young age can develop young children's brain capacity, which can be important in their development as individuals.

Art can keep children actively engaged and support the development of social-emotional and cognitive skills. Art supports children's creativity, improves family bonding, increases their self-esteem and patience,

How does art support creativity?

Creativity is expressing our ideas as individuals, such as attempting to do new things and making changes as needed. Art can encourage creativity as children learn to utilize what works best for them, and it encourages them to think about what they would like to do next. Art allows children to express themselves and think about different ways they can use the materials that they have. Parents and guardians can also encourage children to utilize creativity by offering new materials for them to use and asking open-ended questions to their children about their art.

How does art support social-emotional skills in children?

Art can be a great way to help children develop lifelong habits in social skills as it encourages children to communicate their wants, needs, and identify their emotions. Art projects promote collaboration and teamwork, as children sometimes need to collaborate and share their thoughts and ideas. Art is also beneficial in developing communication skills, as children can utilize their art to express themselves in ways that may be difficult verbally. Art is also helpful in developing problem-solving skills as they will sometimes face challenges when completing art projects and will need to come up with solutions or new ideas to complete their task.

The benefits of art in families

Art can benefit the whole family as it can be a way to be creative and learn about each other. By utilizing art, families can gather and use communication, creativity, and problem-solving skills to strengthen relationships among family members. Artwork is a wonderful way to learn what the artist is feeling, thinking, and interested in to boost emotional connection.

Below are some fun and affordable activities that can be done as a family to engage with one another and let your creativity take over.

ART ACTIVITIES!



Index Card A Day Project

Materials: Index cards, markers, colored pencils, watercolor paint, paintbrush, hole puncher, and string or key ring.

On Google Images, families can find ideas for different drawing art textures and inspiration for creative index card art.

The Index Card a Day Project is a 61-day challenge encouraging children to do creative art daily. Children can choose to make this challenge as long or short as they want. Children will use an index card to make their own art each day. Punch a hole in the top left corner of the cards and tie the cards together using a string or keyring to create a small flipbook. Overall, this art project challenges children to boost their creativity.



Big Reveal Art Activity

Materials: White blank paper, watercolor, crayons, stickers, paintbrush, and tape.

For this activity, family members can provide the materials and help children set up. To begin, place the paper on a flat surface. Family members can encourage children to use crayons, paint, and/or stickers to design their paper. If children are using paint, they will need to wait for the paint to dry before they can gently remove the stickers. Children can choose which material they want to use and get creative with their art.




Collage With Tissue Paper

Materials: tissue paper (choice of color), brush, ½ cup of craft glue and ¼ cup of water (mixed together), scissors, and poster board or a large canvas.

Family members can begin by helping children cut out tissue paper. Once the material is ready and the poster board/large canvas is set flat on the table, a family member can direct children to draw a shape. Next, children can fill the shape with tissue paper. During this step, the family member can help the children brush the glue mixture on the tissue paper until the shape is covered.



LET'S GET COOKING!

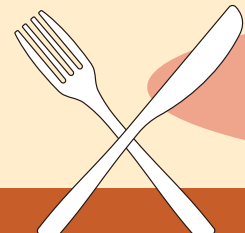


Food is a language anyone can understand, and cooking with children allows parents to communicate safety, love, and encouragement, ultimately strengthening the parent-child relationship.

Cooking and sharing a meal is a wonderful life practice parents can model to their children.

There are many benefits that cooking offers, such as:

- The cooking process incorporates left-brain and right-brain function elements, weaving together logical thought processes with creativity and emotion.
- It strengthens a fundamental life skill needed over the lifespan.
- Cooking increases attention, focus, the ability to follow directions, and task completion.
- Cooking traditional meals can help a child feel connected to their family history, which they can then pass along to their children/loved ones.



Cooking or preparing a meal together, whether making a sandwich or lasagna from scratch, will be a positive memory for your child and you.

The Benefits of "Once Upon A Time..."

The Benefits of Reading

Expands Vocabulary

When a child reads, multiple parts of the brain start working. They notice the context in which a familiar word is used, a new word they have never heard, or synonyms for common words they already know. The more they read, the bigger their vocabulary expands.

Grows One's Imagination

Children are inherently creative, but their imagination grows when introduced to new stories, characters, and fictional entities. Nurturing a child's imagination provides a foundation for creativity in other facets of their lives.

Develops Skills Such as Concentration

While reading may not come naturally to your child, incorporating it slowly in their life will create a more substantial attention span as it continuously activates brain activity.

Opens the Child to Differences and Perspectives

While reading, individuals are exposed to thoughts, reactions, and situations different from their own. Learning about culture, race, and diversity through reading introduces empathy to others and a higher likelihood of becoming friends with individuals different from them.

Resources for Parents:

- [Free reading games designed for ages 6-12](#)
- [Free reading calendar](#)

How to Motivate Reading

Create A Reading Area

Establish a designated area to read, whether an entire room or a corner in the living room. Find a chair, pillow, blankets, or accessories, such as Christmas lights or a stuffed animal, to decorate the spot with your child.

Reinforce Reading is Good

Reinforcing the idea that reading is a beneficial practice can be done verbally or with gifts of encouragement. A few possible verbal phrases are: "Great reading! I'm proud of you," "Look at what you accomplished!" "Wow, you are getting better every time you read!" Another way to encourage your child is with gifts of encouragement. This can be accomplished by presenting fun stickers after reading, buying a scoop of ice cream after completing a book, or even rewarding your child with a new book.

Set an Example

Children are observers. Reading magazines, newspapers, and books in front of them emphasizes the prevalence of reading in everyday life. Recommend your child join you while you read the morning paper!

Expose Your Child to Different Genres

If your child dislikes reading, it may be time to revisit what topics/genres they are reading. Comic books may interest one child, while another prefers books on princesses. Finding the right genre for your child can create a love for reading they didn't know they had.



Tips for Kids to Get a Good Night Sleep

What is the recommended amount of sleep a child should get?

It varies based on age. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends:

Infants under one year: 12-16 hours

Children 1-2 years old: 11-14 hours

Children 3-5 years old: 10-13 hours

Children 6-12 years old: 9-12 hours

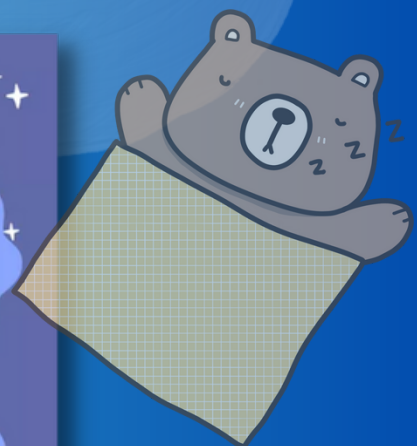
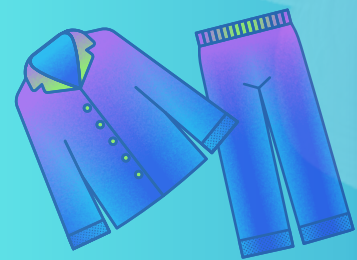
Teenagers 13-18 years old: 8-10 hours

Establishing a consistent bedtime routine is essential. The routine should start at the same time every night. As soon as the sun goes down, start to "wind down" the household.

Elementary Age: Toddler sleep problems are compounded by separation anxiety and a fear of missing out, which translates to stalling techniques (getting out of bed, asking for water, asking for "one more story") and stubbornness at bedtime. Parents can reduce these complaints by giving them control over minor choices like which pajamas to wear, asking if they want to be carried or race to their bed, or creating a bedtime ritual (play for 10 minutes, brush teeth, use the restroom, read a book/sing a song, then lights out, a good night saying, "Love you! Rest your eyes now and sleep").

Adults: Avoid drinking caffeine after 4 p.m. and limit electronic device usage. Put your phone away from reach and instead create a relaxing pre-bed routine, such as meditation, yoga, or breathing exercises (4,7,8 Method: breathe in for 4 seconds, hold for 7 seconds, and exhale for 8 seconds).

Adolescents: Designate a space outside the bedroom for homework, play, or electronic device usage (avoid screen time an hour before bedtime). Doing so will help the mind associate the bedroom with rest and sleeping time.





Thank you

To Our Newsletter Contributors

Adriana Aguilar, MSW Intern

Alexander Fernandes, MFT Intern

Andrea Wullschleger, MSW Intern

Blake Kellerhals, MFT Intern

Brittany McLain, MSW Intern

Elizabeth Meza, MSW Intern

Greg Salcedo, MSW Intern

Isabel Espinoza, MSW Intern

Irma Sanchez, MSW Intern

Laura De La Garza, MSW Intern

Maria Velasquez, MSW Intern

Morgan Goodin, MSW Intern

Nicole Trujillo, MSW Intern

Sal Luquin, MSW Intern

Sandra Zamora, MWS Intern

Yuban Prado, MSW Intern

Gianna Merriam, LCSW

Rosie Hernandez, Ed.D, LCSW, PPSC