



# CST CHATTERBOX

WINTER 2022

## Supporting Children's Mental Health: Tips for Parents and Educators

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**Create a sense of belonging.** Feeling connected and welcomed is essential to children's positive adjustment, self-identification, and sense of trust in others and themselves. Building strong, positive relationships among students, school staff, and parents is important to promoting mental wellness.

**Promote resilience.** Adversity is a natural part of life and being resilient is important to overcoming challenges and good mental health. Connectedness, competency, helping others, and successfully facing difficult situations can foster resilience.

**Develop competencies.** Children need to know that they can overcome challenges and accomplish goals through their actions. Achieving academic success and developing individual talents and interests helps children feel competent and more able to deal with stress positively. Social competency is also important. Having friends and staying connected to friends and loved ones can enhance mental wellness.

**Ensure a positive, safe school environment.** Feeling safe is critical to students' learning and mental health. Promote positive behaviors such as respect, responsibility, and kindness. Prevent negative behaviors such as bullying and harassment. Provide easily understood rules of conduct and fair discipline practices and ensure an adult presence in common areas, such as hallways, cafeterias, locker rooms, and playgrounds. Teach children to work together to stand up to a bully, encourage them to reach out to lonely or excluded peers, celebrate acts of kindness, and reinforce the availability of adult support.

**Teach and reinforce positive behaviors and decision making.** Provide consistent expectations and support. Teaching children social skills, problem solving, and conflict resolution supports good mental health. "Catch" them being successful. Positive feedback validates and reinforces behaviors or accomplishments that are valued by others.

**Encourage helping others.** Children need to know that they can make a difference. Pro-social behaviors build self-esteem, foster connectedness, reinforce personal responsibility, and present opportunities for positive recognition. Helping others and getting involved in reinforces being part of the community.

**Encourage good physical health.** Good physical health supports good mental health. Healthy eating habits, regular exercise and adequate sleep protect kids against the stress of tough situations. Regular exercise also decreases negative emotions such as anxiety, anger, and depression.

**Educate staff, parents and students on symptoms of and help for mental health problems.** Information helps break down the stigma surrounding mental health and enables adults and students recognize when to seek help. School mental health professionals can provide useful information on symptoms of problems like depression or suicide risk. These can include a change in habits, withdrawal, decreased social and academic functioning, erratic or changed behavior, and increased physical complaints.

**Ensure access to school-based mental health supports.** School psychologists, counselors, and social workers can provide a continuum of mental health services for students ranging from universal mental wellness promotion and behavior supports to staff and parent training, identification and assessment, early interventions, individual and group counseling, crisis intervention, and referral for community services.



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- 1) Do good things for others each day. Read to someone, put things where they need to go, hold the door for someone, say thank you . . .
- 2) Show gratitude for what you have. Tell others what you are thankful for . . .
- 3) Be kind. "Try to be a rainbow in someone's cloud." Of all the explanations of kindness, Maya Angelou's might be the best . . .
- 4) Stand up for a cause, redirect others to make the right choices . . .
- 5) Be a good neighbor, say hello, take in a trash container, place a newspaper closer to the door, drop off a treat for a holiday, ask if you can help somehow . . .
- 6) Look at the bright side of things — be a spark— inspire others. Share ideas!

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## COVID-19 Resources

In these difficult times, we want you to know that you don't have to do this alone.



If you're struggling with mental health or substance use issues during the pandemic, call the **COVID Connect Hotline** at **833-223-0011**.

The [Mental Health Association of Essex and Morris](#) has COVID-19 resources available, including:

- \* their [Mental Health and COVID-19](#) portal
- \* NJ Mental Health Cares, a mental health hotline available 7 days a week: call 1-866-202-HELP (4357)
- \* [Virtual support groups](#)

[CARES and Prevention is Key](#) are holding virtual meetings daily, ranging from support groups to family craft sessions. [View the full schedule](#) on the CARES Facebook page.

New Bridge's [Coping with COVID-19](#) guide features tips on staying connected. Also, check out their [short guided meditation](#) to help cope with stress.

NAMI NJ has a [guide to getting immediate help](#), as well as [webinars](#) on COVID-19-related topics.

[Morris & Sussex Resource-Net](#) provides a wide range of information about support, resources, and services for families in Morris and Sussex Counties.

The [New Jersey Children's Alliance](#) provides informational flyers about [Looking Out for Kids During Social Distancing](#)(PDF, 2MB) and [Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse During the COVID-19 Crisis](#)(PDF, 946KB).

Use the [Stigma-Free COVID-19 Youth Wellness Toolkit](#) to get tips on taking care of your mental health.

Read these [Self-Care Tips for Teens during COVID-19](#)(PDF, 9MB).

# The Practice of Mindfulness

## What is mindfulness?

You may have heard of mindfulness practices in schools lately as social-emotional learning becomes more and more integrated into the academic school day. But, what exactly is it? Well, according to [www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org), “when we teach mindfulness to kids, we equip them with tools to build self-esteem, manage stress, and skillfully approach challenges.”

In simple terms, mindfulness is a term used to describe a state of being—paying attention to what is happening in the present moment. It can include what you hear, see, feel, or anything else you notice. Mindfulness meditation is designed to enable children to “meet the stresses of the world with presence, self-compassion, and openness.” ([www.mindful.org](http://www.mindful.org)).

The website cited above also lists the following benefits of mindfulness for kids as:

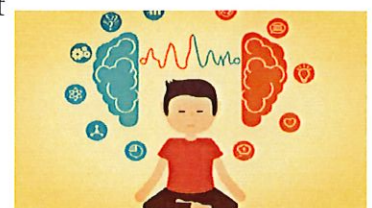
- ◇ Increased focus, attention, self-control, classroom participation, compassion
- ◇ Improved academic performance, ability to resolve conflict, overall well-being
- ◇ Decreased levels of stress, depression, anxiety, disruptive behavior

Further, according to [www.childmind.org](http://www.childmind.org), mindfulness meditation practice can help you calm down. It starts with focusing on your breathing and helps you stay in the present instead of worrying about the past or future.

12 Simple Ways to Teach Mindfulness to Kids (full article can be found here:

(<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/breathe-mama-breathe/201605/12-simple-ways-teach-mindfulness-kids>)

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|--|-------------------------------|
| 1. Notice & name body sensations   | 9. Take a mindful nature walk |
| 2. Enlist a guide  | 10. Practice belly breathing  |
| 3. Share a 3-breath hug  | 11. Let them be               |
| 4. Move, stretch, & notice body sensations                                       | 12. Teach by example          |
| 5. Stop & be aware of surroundings   |                               |
| 6. Describe your own process of noticing, naming & using breath to calm yourself |                               |
| 7. Eat a mindful snack   |                               |
| 8. Count the breaths   |                               |





## Shared Services Child Study Team

Wharton Borough Schools  
973-361-3010

Mine Hill Township School (CAS)  
973-366-0590

Rockaway Borough Schools  
973-625-8601



The Shared Services Child Study Team has made it a goal to increase communication and Special Education knowledge with parents as well as teachers and administration within the three school districts. As part of this goal, you will now be receiving newsletters from the team three times a year filled with information on special education practices/law, community resources, special needs tips, etc. We hope you find this helpful!

Leslie Mozulay, LDT-C  
Stephanie Dzikowski, LDT-C  
Stacy McCoy, School Psychologist  
Brooke Hanenberg, School Psychologist  
Armi Clancy, School Social Worker

## Get to Know Your CST

My name is Stephanie Dzikowski and I am one of the Learning Disabilities Teacher-Consultants on the Shared Services Child Study Team. This is my 12th year in this position on the team.

Prior to becoming an LDT-C I taught in both Newark Public Schools and Middlesex Regional Educational Services both general education and special education for over ten years. I am dual certified as K-8 Elementary Education Teacher and Teacher of the Handicapped K-12. I currently hold two masters degrees, one of which is in K-12 Educational Leadership (Principal Certification and Supervisor Certification) along with my post masters LDT-C certification.

Outside of my Child Study Team position I am an adjunct at Seton Hall University teaching undergraduate courses in Special Education in the evening and I also am a Special Education Clinical

Supervisor for Rowan University where I oversee current teachers returning for their Special Education certification.

Outside of work I am married for 21+ years and have four sons ages 20-14. My oldest attends Stevens Institute of Technology and my second is at Indiana University-Kelley School of Business. My third son is a Junior at Morristown High School while my



**Stephanie Dzikowski**  
**LDT-C**

little one, age 14 (5ft 10), is in 8th grade, and is headed off to high school next year. The only other girl in my house is my little white rescue dog Lexi!! Out of everyone she is always the happiest to see me on a daily basis so she gets super spoiled!

In my spare time I love to ski and run... or anything that is quiet and gives me alone time! My sons are and have been quite involved in sports so I am constantly driving all over and have watched more basketball, baseball and football games than I ever thought possible but I savor this time as I see these hectic times slowing down as each heads to college. I am an active parent volunteer in my boys' own school district as a Football Booster Club Member, MHS Beautification Team Member and HSA-Project Grad Parent Member. My hope for the near future is to get beyond COVID and live life without restrictions! My long term goal is to live a long life in good health anywhere close to my sons.