

# MENTAL WELLBEING NEWS

Northwest School Division Counselling Team Newsletter

September 2022

## Message from the Counsellors

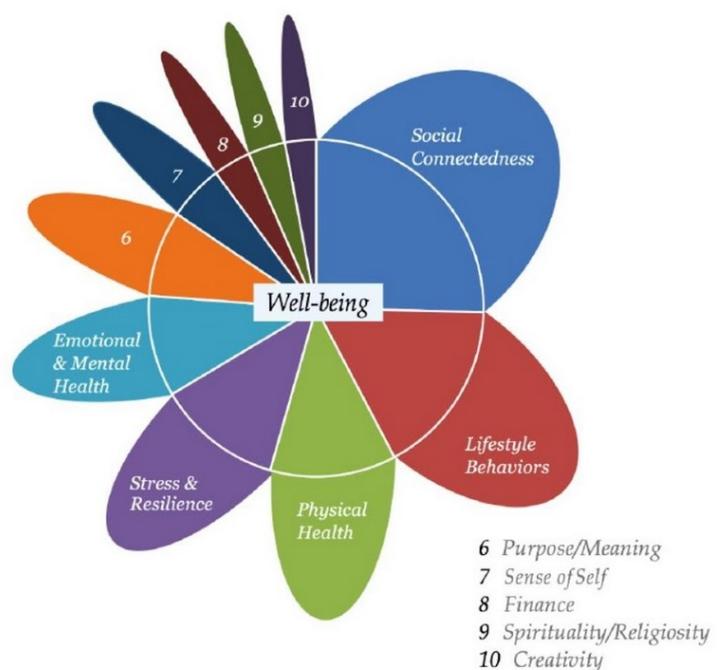
Welcome back, everyone! We hope you had a stress-free, enjoyable, and rest-filled summer, and are feeling energized for the new school year. We are ready to roll and work with you to support our students capacity to succeed. On that note, this month's theme is CONNECTION. After all, we are most successful when we work together, support each other, and feel connected to each other and our students.

Social connection is the single greatest protective factor of mental health and wellbeing with many studies concluding that it contributes between one quarter to over one half of our protection and resiliency. Research about student connectedness or workplace connection provides a variety of definitions, but in essence, it is agreed that connectedness is "the degree to which individuals experience the people and places in their lives as personally meaningful and important" (Schulze & Naidu, 2014).

We are all hard-wired to belong. Even those of us that are hard-core introverts and exhausted at the end of a day filled with peopling require connection. And we need it both at work and in our personal lives. So how can we balance our needs and support each other over the next school year? Do you have a go-to person at your school that you trust when you need validation or to rant? Or do you suck it up and muddle through? Do you even recognize when you need a go-to person?

This year, we encourage you to reflect on these questions and to reflect on how you manage your rough days. We encourage you to be honest about how you're doing emotionally and most importantly, we encourage you to build and/or strengthen your connectedness with each other and with the students you work with.

- Check-in with each other.
- Plan and participate in staff wellness and appreciation events.
- Address conflict and move on.
- Identify a go-to staff member for each student.
- Practice positivity.
- Identify your work spouse.
- Build each other up.
- Provide mentorship to students.
- Engage in random acts of kindness.
- Express gratitude.
- Learn more about each other.



### In This Issue

- Message from the Counselling Team
- Classroom Strategies
- Professional Resources

[Heaney, C. A., Rich, T. S., Avery, E., Min, Y., Chrisinger, B. W., Ahuja, N. J., & Winter, S. J. \(2019\). A qualitative exploration of well-being: What is well-being? How do we know? Why do we care?](#)

## Barriers to Connection

Feeling annoyed that thing wasn't done? Struggles in your relationship? Out of coffee this morning?....

We all have stuff. Yet....

"How are you?"

"Fine."

Not Myself Today.ca is a great tool to practice honesty with this daily scenario if you're not ready to practice it in person, though we encourage you to do that too, and to model it for your students. After all, it's okay to not be okay.

A lack of honesty or authenticity is the greatest barrier to connection. These contribute to resiliency and empathy as much as they do connectedness, which again contributes to mental health and wellness. Being honest about our mood and communicating our needs prevents the build up of micro annoyances that can damage relationships.

Practice being honest with how you are doing and what you need leads to being honest in more vulnerable ways, further developing connection and empathy. So, next time try....

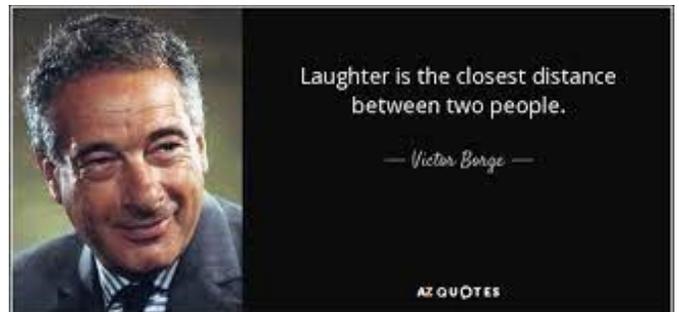
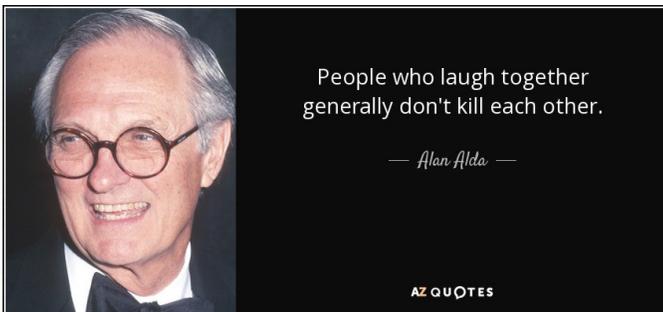
"How are you?"

"Ugh, I'm tired but I'll manage. I just need someone to keep the coffee flowing and to skip out on the staff meeting today. I better go chat with admin about that."

## Building Connections Outside the Box

- Competitions: between staff, staff vs students, students vs parents  
sports, games, cutest pet, arm wrestling, bake off, wordle, races, paper airplanes, your imagination is your only limitation
- Connect staff to their inner child  
kids' games, build snowmen, water fights, easter egg hunt, trick or treating, hula hoops, scooter boards, trade valentines
- Connect to a community partner  
food banks, toy drives, soup kitchens, other charitable organizations
- Collaborate  
Does your curriculum overlap somewhat with another staff member? Are there connections that can be drawn between your unit and someone else's? Can a community member be involved in a unit?

*And laugh together. Nothing connects us like laughter.*



## Resources to check out to support you in your school:



[10 Outside-the-Box Relationship-Building Strategies Beyond A Student Survey](#)

[How Laughter Brings Us Together](#)

[Leading with Laughter](#)

### Counselling Team

Send us an email to provide us with feedback about this newsletter, for further information, or to provide ideas for future newsletters. We'd love your input and to hear your great ideas.

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