

Culture COUNTS

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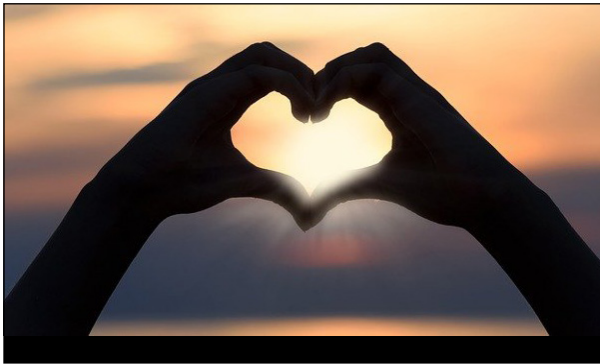
April 2021

Staying Connected: Just In Time Circle Ideas

By Randi Downs

Instructional Coach

As we head into spring after a long winter, it is important that we keep checking in with our students so they can continue to feel supported and part of the community. It has been a joy to see teachers adapting circles amidst the pandemic! Many of you take students outside so you can safely distance while students connect. I've also seen desks pulled to the edge of the room so that



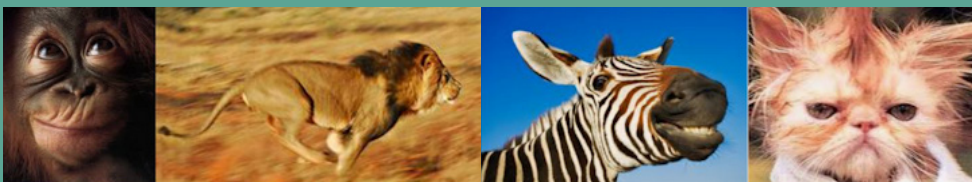
Are you sunrise, daylight, twilight or night?

students can see each other when they respond to a prompt. And even without the use of talking pieces, students have learned to raise their hands or call out a name if the circle is non-sequential. Watching them share the air is inspiring! Check-in and check-out circles need not take a lot of time, but they can be a powerful relationship-building tool.

In the past few months, I've noticed teachers utilizing creative, low-prep circle prompts successfully. At the beginning of class, the teacher projects a collection of animals with different facial expressions and asks students which animal they most relate to on that particular day (see below). In another class, students connect their moods to different paint swatches. Another way to help students feel part of the process is to invite them to share their own pet pictures. These check-ins don't take long, but they impact the entire instructional mood.

When students feel connected, they are more likely to engage with content; they are more likely to take part in discussions; and they are more likely to seek help when needed. Please go to the next page for some ideas you can try!

Which animal can you relate to most today?



“IF PEOPLE STAND IN A CIRCLE LONG ENOUGH, THEY’LL EVENTUALLY BEGIN TO DANCE.”

— GEORGE CARLIN

Please turn to the next page to find resources for self-care.

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Just In Time circles — ideas to try with your students

If you are looking for new prompts to use with your students, here are some resources you can try. I hope you find them helpful as you continue to strengthen your community while helping your students benefit from the power of the circle. - Randi Downs

From Heart-Mind Online:

- What kind of day have you had so far?
- What's one thing about school that you're proud of that you'd like to share with us?
- What concern would you like to set aside so you can be fully present with the class today?

From Restorative Practices at Schoolcraft Community Schools:

- Are you sunrise, daylight, twilight, or night?
Please share why you picked your time of day.
- What are three "gifts" (attributes of yourself) that you bring to the circle?
- What do you think other people see as your best quality? Why?

Compassion Resiliency training in March focused on self-care

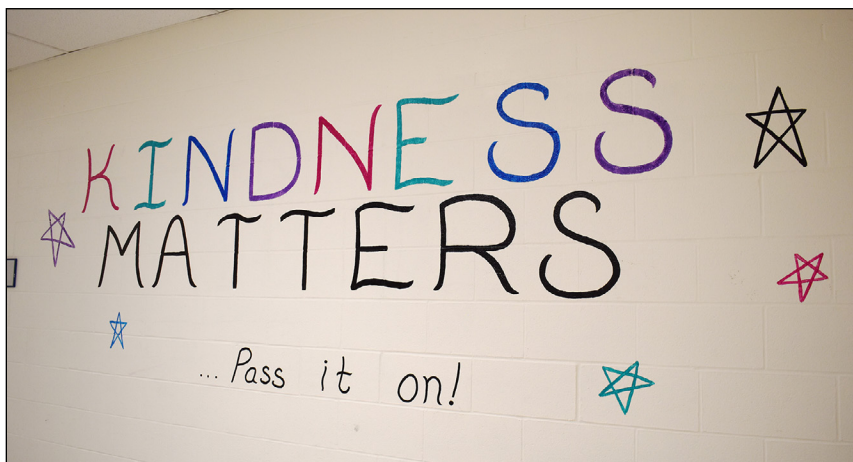
By Dan Hesler

"Talk to yourself like you would someone you love."

- Brene' Brown

Looking back to the month of March, Compassion Resiliency training for OCM BOCES Student Services teachers and staff zeroed in on the importance of self-care. Everyone experiences stress differently, but it is safe to say that, for many of us, this year has been more stressful than previous years.

With that being said, the need for self-care has never been greater. A quote about self-care that resonates with me is, "Put yourself at the top of your to-do list every single day, and the rest will fall into place." (Author unknown.) Using a self-care plan is one way to help achieve your self-care goals. [Please check out this Compassion Resiliency website for more information.](#)



Positive Message

The culture of a school or community is often reflected in its surroundings. If you visit the Crown Road Campus, this message is prominently displayed in a large hallway, constantly reminding students and staff that kindness is valued and encouraged at OCM BOCES.

WELLNESS COUNTS

Seven Valleys staff sample fresh maple syrup, play eclipse ball

The Wellness Committee at Seven Valleys New Tech Academy in Cortland sponsored a staff wellness event on March 13 to visit [SweeTrees Maple](#) in Berkshire, the family-owned business of Seven Valleys facilitator Tom Beasley. Staff members received a tour of the sugarbush and processing area and enjoyed samples of fresh maple syrup. In a separate activity, Seven Valleys staff also participated in an eclipse ball tournament.

Eclipse ball is a sport created in America that combines elements of volleyball, badminton and tennis. For more information, go to eclipseball.com



Noontime walking club starts at Main Campus

Members of the Main Campus Wellness Committee recently started a walking club for the building that begins at 12:15 p.m.

Wellness Committee Update: Main Campus

each day from the administrative entrance. A host from the Main Campus Wellness Committee guides each 20-minute walk.

Committee members are running the club through the month of April and possibly longer. With the warmer weather, several people can be seen each day, making loops and treks near the Main Campus building.

Benefits of walking include a reduced risk of heart disease and strong, stronger bones, more energy, better immunity, improved balance and better mental health.

Spring brings a time of renewal for the weather - and for mindfulness

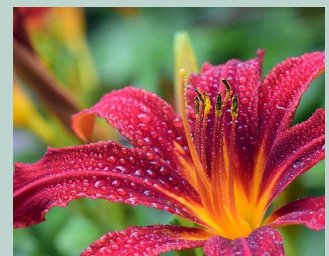
Springtime heralds the arrival of warmer weather, lighter nights and the promise of new life all around us. You can embrace the new season by adding some fresh activities to your mindful routine.

[Here is a link to an article on nine ways to be mindful in the spring and make the most of the season:](#)

The list includes:

- Mindful baking
- Spring wandering
- Flower arranging
- Beautiful bird song
- Watching the sunset
- Painting
- Mindful eating
- Getting into the garden
- Decluttering

Self-care & Mindfulness for the month of April



WELLNESS COUNTS

Tips for physical activity — spring into action by going outside

Adding physical activity to your day may feel easier in spring and summer. Spring weather makes it easy to get outdoors and get your recommended amount of daily physical activity. These activities can count toward your daily total exercise:

Physical Activity: Embracing warm weather

- Go for a brisk walk during your lunch hour or after dinner.
- Take the stairs instead of the elevator or escalator whenever possible.
- Skip the drive-through car wash and wash the car yourself.

- Stretch your green thumb by doing some gardening. Consider growing your own fruit, vegetables and herbs.
- Walk in place while watching TV.
- When possible, ride your bike to school or work — or use it to run errands.
- Plan an active family vacation or a weekend outing.

Like good eating habits, regular physical activity needs to be part of everyone's healthful lifestyle. Remember, your goal is to make changes gradually so you can stick with them and not have to repeat this process next year.

Source: Eat Right Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics, published Jan. 14, 2021

Recipe: Eat healthy with this delicious Greek pasta salad

Ingredients

- 12 oz favorite pasta (elbows, penne, wagon wheels, bow-ties, etc.)
- 1 cucumber – peeled, quartered lengthwise, seeds removed and chopped
- 1 1/2 cup grape tomatoes, halved or quartered if extra large
- 1 1/2 cup olives, halved (Kalamata taste best, but black olives will work too)
- 8 oz feta cheese
- 3/4 tsp black pepper
- 3/4 tsp salt
- 3/4 tsp onion powder
- 3/4 tsp spicy brown mustard
- 1/2 cup and 2 tsp red wine vinegar (you can substitute up to half white vinegar without altering the taste)

Instructions

1. Mix ingredients for dressing in a jar or bowl and set aside.
2. In a large pot of boiling water, cook pasta until al dente. Drain and set aside to cool slightly.
3. Combine chopped cucumber, tomato halves and olive halves in a large bowl with the prepared Greek dressing. Add cooled pasta and stir to combine flavors well.

Greek Salad Dressing

- 1/3 cup and 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tsp garlic powder
- 1 tsp dried oregano
- 1 tsp dried basil



Healthy Eating:
Recipe of the Month

4. Add feta cheese when the pasta is completely cooled. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

This dish can be made up to 24 hours in advance and stored in the refrigerator, covered. Add cheese prior to serving.