

Culture COUNTS

December 2019

Mindfulness through the holiday season

By Dan Hesler

For many people, the holiday season can be a very joyful time and create many positive memories. However, at the same time, the holiday season can add extra stressors for both staff and students. Many of our students thrive with the structure and predictable environment that is created within the school setting. Students with past trauma can have an especially hard time around the holidays. The holiday season can create a lack of routine for many students and trigger past memories. Because students need extra support with self-regulation during the holiday season, staff should keep in mind the importance of asking trauma-informed questions. Here are some tips:

Supporting Our Students During the Holidays

Keep to the routine as much as possible in the next few weeks. Provide opportunities for self-regulation, including:

- Breathing activities
- Mindfulness activities

Instead of asking "How was your weekend?" or "How was your holiday?," ask the following trauma-informed questions:

- What is one kind thing someone said to you?
- What is one kind thing you did for someone?
- What is one thing you are grateful for?
- What is something you are good at?

“

We may not get to decide which kids to serve, but we do get to decide the kind of climate in which we want to serve them.

”

— Jimmy Casas

What are you thankful for?



Turn to the next page to see photos from the Crown Road Campus Harvest Celebration.

Healthy, budget-friendly cooking at Seven Valleys

Students from the Senior Seminar class at Seven Valleys New Tech Academy in Cortland recently participated in a workshop with Cornell Nutritionist Niesa Pantalia that focused on healthy cooking on a budget. Thank you to Seven Valleys New Tech Academy School Counselor Elizabeth Henrichs for sharing this news.



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Solving Problems in Community

By Randi Downs

Lately, I've noticed that participants in our Restorative Practice trainings are struck by the power of problem-solving circles. These "fishbowl" type circles offer an organized way for teachers to efficiently solve problems within the school community.

While many of us have used a [fishbowl](#)* to facilitate student learning, we might not realize the power of this type of circle to solve issues among school staff. Perhaps a problem-solving circle could take place during a staff meeting or before school starts. Because of the efficiency of the protocol, this strategy does not take a lot of time but can yield powerful results. Try the [Fishbowl Problem-Solving Circle Small Group Agenda/Script](#)** to see how you might organize and facilitate a fishbowl the next time a problem arises.

*Visit <http://bit.ly/fishbowlmoboces> to view the fishbowl document.

**Visit <http://bit.ly/fishbowlscript> to view the full fishbowl problem-solving script.



Harvest Celebration at Crown Road Campus

Students at the Crown Road Campus recently participated in a Harvest Celebration that featured turkey, mashed potatoes, corn, sweet treats, and more. During the event, students discussed what they were thankful for, a list that included friends, family, teachers, pets, and the creators of Mario Bros.

Crown Road students made decorations for the feast and artwork for a slide show. Staff members helped with set up, cooking, and serving. Thank you to everyone who helped make this event a success!



Wellness Counts

Staff Development Day Wellness Activities

By Rosanna Grund

As part of the OCM BOCES staff wellness initiative for the 2019-20 school year, staff members have been taking part in a variety of activities.

During a recent staff development day, staff from both the Cortlandville and Crown Road campuses participated in yoga; art and music therapy; managing stress by making sensory items; healthy cooking; walking groups; meditation; and physical activity in the gym. A special thank you goes out to the talented staff for leading these sessions.

In another effort to promote health and wellness with our staff, OCM BOCES hosted flu shot clinics on Nov. 20 and Dec. 3, provided by Wegmans. The clinics were provided at our Crown Road, Thompson Road, Cortlandville, and Main campuses. The clinics were coordinated by the Personnel Office in conjunction with local administrators.



Self Care Mindfulness for December *Building Resilience through Gratitude*

By Rosanna Grund

The book "Onward" by Elena Aguilar stresses the importance of practicing gratitude to build emotional resilience. This practice is on display firsthand in the [video "An Experiment in Gratitude | The Science of Happiness" on YouTube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hv6vTKD6lg), as participants are asked to think of an important person in their life who influenced them. Participants were then asked to write down how and why this person influenced them. Once they had completed this task, participants called that influential person to express their gratitude, reading what they wrote down. Watch to see their reactions, and see how these phone calls increase their happiness.

We know that showing gratitude has the potential to rewire our brains and make us happier. Imagine the effect that gratitude can have on the receiver!

*View the video on YouTube here: <https://youtu.be/oHv6vTKD6lg>

Wellness Counts

Physical Activity Tip for December

The Kicking Airplane



How to do it: Standing with your right leg bent slightly, lift your left leg in back of you, as high as you comfortably can. Raise both arms out to the side. Bring the left knee toward

your chest, and crunch your body toward your knee while squatting down slightly with your right leg. Simultaneously, make fists in front of your face. Next, raise your torso and kick the left leg behind you to complete the repetition.

Do 10 repetitions with your left leg, then switch sides and repeat. Continue for 2 minutes.

Trainer tip: For help balancing, hold on to the back of a chair.

Courtesy of Health News & Views

Spinach & Cheese Stuffed Shells

Recipe + Photo courtesy of EatingWell.com

Ingredients:

24 jumbo Pasta shells
1 ½ teaspoons extra-virgin Olive oil
2 Onions, finely chopped
2 pounds fresh Spinach, trimmed and washed
2 cups part-skim Ricotta cheese
¾ cup plain dry Breadcrumbs
½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese, divided
¼ teaspoon ground Nutmeg
¼ teaspoon Salt + Freshly ground Pepper to taste
1 large Egg white, lightly beaten
3 cups prepared Marinara sauce, preferably low-sodium



Preparation:

Preheat oven to 375°F. Cook shells according to package directions. Drain and rinse under cold water. Set aside.

Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions and cook, stirring occasionally, until softened, about three minutes. If using fresh spinach, add it in batches and toss with tongs until wilted. Drain in a colander, pressing out excess moisture with the back of a spoon. Let cool. Set aside.

Combine ricotta, breadcrumbs, ¼ cup Parmesan and nutmeg in a bowl; mix well. Add the reserved spinach and season with salt and pepper. Stir in egg white.

Stuff each of the reserved shells with a generous two tablespoons of ricotta mixture. Spread 1 cup marinara in the bottom of a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Arrange the stuffed shells in a single layer. Top with the remaining two cups of sauce and sprinkle with remaining ¼ cup Parmesan cheese.

Bake until golden and shells are heated through, about 30 minutes. (If the top browns too quickly, tent loosely with foil.) Let cool for 10 minutes before serving.



Happy Holidays

FROM OCM BOCES