

Culture COUNTS

April 2020

Making the 'Talking Piece' Count - Virtually

By Randi Downs

Prior to social distancing, it was quite common to walk around different sites at OCM BOCES and see circles in action. Most of those circles utilized a talking piece. With the implementation of virtual learning, the concept of a talking piece can continue to be used in a few creative ways.

The talking piece is especially helpful in virtual group environments (whether Zoom or Google Meet), as students may sometimes forget the "rules" of the talking piece and yell out or talk over their peers. This could just be excitement — they want to share with a classmate — or it could be that they need a gentle reminder of the role and purpose of the talking piece. The talking piece continues to be important as we utilize virtual learning tools. On the Zoom platform, for example, the "thumbs up" feature, or holding up one finger, works as a virtual talking piece. The facilitator may also choose to lead the group and call on people during the online meeting.

When having a restorative circle conversation, it's okay to stop the circle and remind students about why and how we use talking pieces or these virtual equivalents. Also, at the beginning of each circle, you can re-explain their purpose and significance. Allow students to choose and share talking pieces to promote ownership in the process. Go over the rules: Tell students that what they say matters, and that the talking piece — or its online version — allows for all voices to be heard. If they forget, it's okay to stop and gather again around that meaning. If we are consistent with this practice, then all stakeholders will benefit — and all voices will be heard. It is important to establish norms for virtual meetings and to give space for sharing and celebrating. Utilizing a talking piece, no matter where you are, allows students to do just that.



I believe that education is all about being excited about something. Seeing passion and enthusiasm helps push an educational message.

— Steve Irwin
"Crocodile Hunter"

Research-Based Tips for Workplace Self Care



Turn to the last page to learn more.

We want to hear from you!

Each month, OCM BOCES strives to create a positive organizational culture and promote wellness among our students and staff through this publication, *Culture Counts*. Employees throughout OCM BOCES are now being invited to provide articles that offer information on these topics or spotlight what we are doing at BOCES to support these themes. The latest newsletters can be found on our website.

We want to hear from you! If you have an article, a celebration, a recipe or a wellness tip you would like to include in this newsletter, please feel free to submit ideas to Special Education Director Rosanna Grund at rgrund@ocmboces.org. Articles are due by the 15th of each month.

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Committed to Your Success

Conducting a Life Space Interview

By Dan Hesler

After a crisis has occurred and a student is returning to baseline, staff members have the ability to help the student learn from the event — and teach them new coping skills — by conducting a Life Space Interview (LSI). Students are more open to listening and trying new skills when they are in the recovery phase and approached by a trusting adult. Many of the students we work with have difficulties with self-regulation, so the LSI represents a specific tool to help teach a young person this skill. Author Susan Craig refers to staff as “emotional detectives,” which means that, rather than judging students, we should approach them with curiosity and empathy. Following the steps of the LSI provides a therapeutic framework for teaching replacement behavior.

Steps of the Life Space Interview

- I** – Isolate the conversation
- E** – Explore student’s point of view
- S** – Summarize the feelings and content
- C** – Connect feelings to behavior
- A** – Alternative behaviors discussed
- P** – Plan developed/Practice new behavior
- E** – Enter student back into the program

More information can be found in the TCI Workbook, page W33-W42, and “Trauma -Sensitive Schools: Learning Communities Transforming Children’s Lives, K-5” by Susan Craig

Join the OCM BOCES Book Club

The OCM BOCES Wellness Committee at Main Campus recently launched a book club as a way of promoting social and emotional health among employees. The first meeting will discuss the non-fiction book “Radium Girls” by Kate Moore. The book recounts a sad period in the early 1900s when female industrial workers were poisoned by the luminous, radioactive paint that made watches glow.

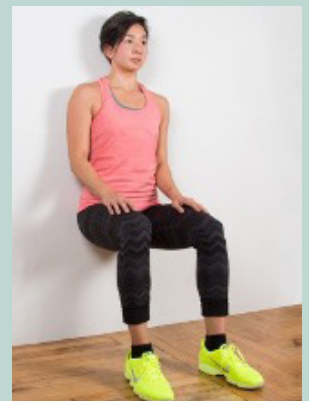


Each month, the book club will select a new book to read and discuss. The book club is also exploring the possibility of meeting via Zoom while social distancing policies are in place. Interested in joining the club or learning more? Please email Terri Hewitt at thewitt@ocmboces.org.

Activity Tip: Try the ‘Wall Sit’

Who needs a chair when a wall is usually nearby?

Slowly slide your back down a wall until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Make sure your knees are directly above your ankles; keep your back straight. Sit this way for 60 seconds per set (or however long it takes to turn those legs to jelly). Need more fire? Add bicep curls.



Wellness Counts

Bringing Wellness into the Workplace at Cortlandville and Crown Road

For a wellness activity at our Cortlandville Campus, staff members in the Special Education department enjoyed a painting activity earlier this year as a stress reliever and team-building activity. Check out their creations in these photos!

At Crown Road Campus, staff recently participated in the “plastic wrap ball game.” The game consists of one person trying to unwrap a ball wrapped in several layers of plastic wrap to reveal prizes hidden inside. At the same time, the person next to them rolls dice. Once the person rolls doubles, the ball moves to the next person. Some of the prizes included candy and notes with sayings such as, “Rub belly, dance until your turn is over.”

Thank you to Catie Reeve and Brenda Cussen for this submission!

(Photos were taken prior to social distancing guidelines.)



Recipes of the Month: Smoothies

Coco-Banana Blastoff



2 cups almond milk
1 avocado, *pitted and peeled*
1 banana, *peeled*
2 Tbs. honey
2 tbs. unsweetened cocoa powder

In blender, puree all ingredients with 1/2 cup of ice cubes. If desired, garnish with coconut flakes, banana and mint. Makes two servings.

Pink Pineapple Dream



1 avocado, *pitted and peeled*
2 cups strawberries
1 cup pineapple
yogurt
1/4 cup raspberries

In blender, puree all ingredients with 1 cup of ice cubes. Makes two servings.

Go Green Machine



2 cups coconut water
1 avocado, *pitted and peeled*
1 cup spinach
1/4 cup fresh cilantro leaves
2 Tbs. agave syrup
1/2 tsp. grated peeled ginger

In blender, puree all ingredients with 1/2 cup of ice cubes. Makes two servings.

Thank you to Anita Parks for this submission!

Wellness Counts

Reminder: Self-Care Isn't Selfish

During this time it is especially important to reach out to others and check-in with those close to you. However, we often overlook ourselves and our own needs. Hopefully this reminder will allow you to slow down, take a [breath](#) (really slow...focus on your inhales and exhales), and take note of ways to take care of yourself.

If you are struggling please reach out to a trusted person. We're all in this together.

Self-Care Challenge

In their book *Fostering Resilient Learners*, Kristin Souers and Pete Hall give us four elements to consider: health, love, competence and gratitude (read the chapter [here](#) password: ocmbores). Here is a guide that may help you reframe your self-care outlook. You may even choose to share your challenge with others to encourage positivity and wellness!



Health Daily exercise- even if it's a 15 minute walk! And don't forget the importance of healthy and planned meals	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun
Love Give yourself a "win" this week. What is one thing you did just for YOU?							
Competence Try something new this week- step out of your comfort zone (new recipe, setting a limit)							
Gratitude Take time to recognize what makes your heart feel full and record it somehow. <i>If you have a few minutes, this video is a beautiful example of the power of gratitude.</i>	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat	Sun

Thank you to Kristen Purcell for this submission!