

Counseling Connections

IN THIS ISSUE:

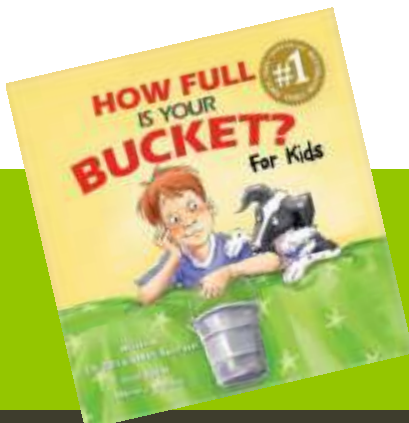
- Are you a Monster or a Mouse?
 - Kindness & Caring
- Coaching Our Kids to Handle Bullying



October 2016

Counseling Calendar

- 10/3 Local Holiday – No School
- 10/5 World Teacher's Day
Click [here](#) for info
- 10/12 Local Holiday - No School
[Yom Kippur](#)
- 10/17 – Teacher prep day – No School
- 10/22 – Make A Difference Day
Click [here](#) for info
- 10/30 – [Diwali](#)
- 10/31 – [Halloween](#)
and [Dia de los Muertos](#)



Are You a Monster or a Mouse?

Recently, I've been visiting our first and second grade classrooms to talk about communication styles. Learning to use assertive communication is an important step towards self-advocacy and resisting peer pressure. Together, we asked the question, "Am I a monster, a mouse, or me?"

Monsters use aggressive communication styles to get what they want or need. They might push, shove, or crowd someone else. They may shout, yell, or threaten. Mice use passive communication styles to avoid conflict. They make their bodies and voices small, and try not to be noticed or hide. When we are being "me" we use an assertive style of communication by speaking clearly and calmly. We make good eye contact and have a relaxed body. Remember the rhyme:

**My body is calm
My voice is strong
My eyes are right where they belong**

Book of the month: How Full is Your Bucket?

A great companion book to "Have You Filled A Bucket Today", this series talks about kindness in kid-friendly language with a fun metaphor for practicing everyday.



Character Counts – Kindness & Caring

Each month we highlight a different character trait for all of our students. October's traits are kindness and caring.

We all like to be treated with kindness and caring. But did you know that the act of being kind to others has a greater impact on our own happiness than whether others are kind to us? It's true! Research shows that kids and adults who practiced single or multiple acts of kindness every day had a higher happiness quotient than those who didn't take this deliberate step.

Demonstrating kindness is also

linked to higher academic achievement, a positive life outlook, and self-confidence.

Closely tied to kindness is "empathy" – the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. Empathy is an essential life skill that provides the ability to see another's point of view, to react to change in the environment, and to be successful in relationships and work.

There are lots of ways to instill a culture of kindness in your household and to model kindness as a value in your family. Random acts of kindness such as leaving a flower on someone's pillow, or telling someone what you appreciate about them, are terrific starters. For more ideas try these links:

[Random Acts of Kindness](#)

[14 Ways to Be Kind](#)

When My Child Isn't Kind....

Children learn many things through trial and error. So when our kids are unkind, it's important to remember that this is part of learning and to correct behavior with firm, yet kind guidance. Acknowledge the mistake and state the better way. Modeling kindness, even in discipline, is a great way to communicate your family's values.

To encourage your child to be kind to others:

Stress your family's values – you might say "In our family, we treat animals kindly. We pet them gently and stop when they move away."

Talk about other's feelings – asking your child how they think the other person felt is a



great way to build empathy.

Acknowledge the kindness you see in others and your child. Recognizing acts of kindness and stating how it makes you feel is a great way to model kindness.

Conversations about...

GROWTH MINDSET

How and when we give kids feedback is an important consideration of growth mindset. We all like to praise and show our appreciation for a job well done, but often the praise adults use with kids can be limiting rather than inspiring.

Let's take an example...

Jonah brings home a book report that received a perfect score. Jonah's mom is happy for him and proud and she lets him know by saying, "Wow! Jonah, you are so smart! That is amazing! You've really started this year off right! Wait until I tell your grandma what a fabulous student you are. She'll be just as proud as I am!"

Next week, Jonah has another book report to complete and he wants his mom to be just as proud. So he tries his best to duplicate the last book report exactly, because this is the product that achieved the best result. His teacher suggests some other creative ideas for book reports, and they sound fun, but Jonah doesn't want to take a chance on something different, so he sticks with the original format. He, in fact, doesn't want to risk it because not only his family's pride but also his "fabulous student" status is on the line.

This happens time and time again with our students who are praised as "smart", or "brilliant". These students often become automatic in the responses and lack the ability to think outside the box. They can become hesitant to try new things or challenge themselves and choose, instead, to only take on roles and tasks that they know they can succeed with.



Let's think of a different way.

When Jonah brings home his book report, this time his mom says, "I see you worked very hard on this and your effort paid off. This was a lot of work! I like the way you used an illustration on the front page, it really gives me an idea of what the book is about right away. Can you tell me what your favorite part of the book was?"

This type of praise does a few things to encourage growth mindset. Firstly, it recognizes effort primarily and draws a connection between amount of effort and results. It also gives specific and honest feedback that allows Jonah to see how his work affects others. Most importantly, it opens the door to a conversation that deepens learning and acknowledges how important sharing of experience is to learning.

This subtle shift in praise can go a long way towards new conversations about learning! I look forward to hearing from you on your experiences with this. Email me anytime!



“Bouncing Back”

Building Resiliency and Grit from Infancy to Adulthood

From striking out at bat to bombing a math test, our kids are confronted with disappointments and set backs each and every day. How kids handle these setbacks is paramount to building resilience and the ability to persevere, as children and adults. Together we'll explore the experiences that build or erode resilience, grit, and a growth mindset. From infancy to adulthood, the opportunity to grow a strong character never ends!

Thursday, November 3rd, 7-8:30 pm

Repeated on Friday, November 4th, 8:30-10 am

Red Oak Elementary, Multi Purpose Room

4857 Rockfield Street, Oak Park

Counselor's Corner



Be sure to check out my [Counselor's Corner webpage](#) for more information about our Elementary Counseling Program in Oak Park. It is my priority to support our students, staff, and parents in the common goal of educating compassionate and creative global citizens.

Holly Baxter, M.A., P.P.S.
Elementary Counselor

hbaxter@opusd.org 818-735-3200 x0234