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BHS A.S.S.I.S.T. SEPTEMBER NEWSLETTER



STRONG CONNECTIONS AT SCHOOL LEAD TO **HEALTHIER CHOICES**

What helps young people make healthy lifestyle choices, resist drugs and alcohol, avoid unsafe sex or succeed in school? The answers aren't simple, and many factors are likely involved, including: effective parenting, stable and healthy living conditions and individual character traits. Scientists are increasingly interested in examining those elements — often called protective factors — to understand which characteristics or situations are most likely to help teens make safer, healthier choices.

One particularly promising factor is *school connectedness* — students' belief that adults and peers at school genuinely care about their education and about them as individuals. A growing body of research indicates that students who feel a part of their school are more likely to engage in healthy behaviors and succeed academically.

WHAT DOES THE RESEARCH SAY?

A long-term national study of more than 36,000 adolescents examined the effects of various protective factors (such as school connectedness, parent-family connectedness, parental expectations for academic achievement and youth involvement in religious activities) on the health and well-being of young people. The findings are striking:

- Of all the protective factors examined, school connectedness was found to be the strongest shield against substance use, school absenteeism, early sexual initiation, violence and risk of unintentional injury (from behaviors like drinking and driving, not wearing seat belts, etc).
- School connectedness was second in importance (after family connectedness) for guarding adolescents against emotional distress, eating disorders and suicidal ideations and attempts.

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- Research also shows a strong relationship between school connectedness and educational outcomes, including: school attendance, staying in school longer, better grades and higher classroom test scores. In turn, students who do well academically are less likely to take part in risky behaviors like smoking cigarettes, carrying weapons, drinking alcohol or having sexual intercourse.

WHAT CAN SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES DO TO FOSTER SCHOOL CONNECTEDNESS?

Our knowledge about school connectedness is evolving, but early research reveals several aspects that can help increase students' feeling of belonging. These include:

- A safe school environment
- A supportive social and psychological climate
- Belonging to a positive, stable peer group
- Commitment to education on the part of both students and adults
- Adult support from dedicated, attentive school administrators, teachers and staff

To help schools enhance this important protective factor, scientists from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention have created a guide that synthesizes available research and outlines strategies. [School Connectedness: Strategies for Increasing Protective Factors Among Youth](#)

identifies six evidence-based strategies that teachers, administrators, school staff and parents can implement to increase the extent to which students feel welcome and engaged at school:

- 1) Create decision-making processes that facilitate student, family and community involvement; academic achievement and staff empowerment.
- 2) Provide opportunities for families to participate in their children's academic and school life.
- 3) Help students develop the academic, emotional and social skills necessary to be actively engaged in school.
- 4) Use effective classroom management and teaching methods to foster a positive learning environment.
- 5) Provide professional development and support for teachers and other school staff to allow them to meet the diverse cognitive, emotional and social needs of students.
- 6) Create trusting and caring relationships that promote open communication among administrators, teachers, staff, students, families and communities.

For more information on school connectedness and how to foster this protective factor, visit www.cdc.gov/Features/ConnectToSchool/.



IS IT DEPRESSION?

With symptoms like headaches, backaches, joint pain and stomach problems, symptoms of depression can often look like other illnesses. Other symptoms, like memory lapses and concentration issues, can also mimic medical problems.

Depressed individuals often focus on these symptoms because they are easier to describe than their feelings of sadness, fatigue, irritability or hopelessness.

In addition to physical symptoms, other behaviors can be an indication of depression. Drinking excessively or abusing drugs, for example, may actually be an attempt to self-medicate a depressive disorder.

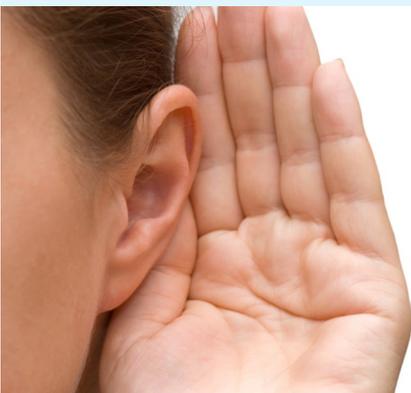
It is important to remember that depression is a medical condition and will not go away by itself; however, there are effective treatments that can relieve symptoms in as little as a few short weeks. Different people need different treatment to overcome depression. That could include medication, talk therapy or a combination of both.

If you think you or a loved one may be suffering from depression, review the "Depression Checklist." If you've experienced any of these symptoms, call BHS at 800-245-1150 to speak with your BHS Care Coordinator about options for assistance.

DEPRESSION CHECKLIST

If you experience any of the following symptoms, contact your BHS Care Coordinator for assistance:

- Sad, anxious or "empty" mood
- Loss of interest or pleasure in ordinary activities
- Decreased energy or fatigue
- Trouble sleeping or sleeping too much
- Difficulty concentrating or remembering
- Inappropriate feelings of guilt or worthlessness
- Irritability
- Recurring aches and pains
- Thoughts of death or suicide



"In a conversation, keep in mind that you're more interested in what you have to say than anyone else is."

~ Andy Rooney, radio and television writer

401(K) FOR KIDS

Give allowance a twist by treating your children like employees. Just as companies match workers' retirement contributions, pledge to match a percentage of whatever sum your kids save. Be clear about the rules, like whether you're contributing 50 cents for each dollar and what the weekly maximum match is.



Believe in Yourself: How to Develop Your Confidence

Confidence doesn't come naturally to everyone. Even the most successful people have struggled with it in their careers. The good news is that you can develop it, if you're willing to work at it. These tips can help you strengthen your confidence. Here's what to try:

Don't compare yourself to others. Focus on your own achievements and ambitions. Other people will always be more successful than you at different stages of your life and career, and thinking about them will only send your confidence plunging. Concentrate on identifying and improving your own unique strengths and skills.

Track your success. Keep a log of your large and small accomplishments. Recording victories on a daily basis will make you feel more successful and reviewing your progress will boost your self-esteem. In addition, reviewing your achievements should give you some good ideas for what to work on next.

Practice being assertive. Take an active role pursuing success, no matter how anxious you feel. Start by visualizing situations where you feel nervous and then picture yourself being assertive. Make these scenarios as vivid as you can so you'll be ready for them in real life. Check your body language in a mirror, practice good posture and a self-assured expression. Then go out and take a few chances, starting with low-risk situations. Once you've survived those, you can move on to bigger personal challenges. You may be surprised by how well practice makes you feel.



Buffalo Chicken Salad

Ingredients:

2 (8 oz) boneless, skinless chicken breast halved
 2 tablespoons favorite hot sauce
 2 teaspoons olive oil
 2 hearts of romaine chopped (~ 8 cups)
 4 celery stalks, thinly sliced
 2 carrots coarsely grated
 2 scallions (green part only) sliced
 1/2 cup light/low-fat blue cheese dressing

Total Time: 20 min; **Cook Time:** 6 min; **Servings:** 4



Instructions:

- Preheat Broiler
- Pound out chicken breast until they are about 3/4 of an inch thick. Cut crosswise into 1/2 inch strips.
- In large bowl combine hot sauce and olive oil, add chicken and toss to coat.
- Arrange chicken on baking sheet and broil until cooked through, about 4-6 minutes, turning once.
- In a large bowl combine the romaine lettuce, carrots, celery, scallions and dressing.
- Divide salad between four bowls, top with chicken and serve with extra hot sauce.

Nutritional Information Per Serving : 254cal,
 10g fat, 31g protein, 10g carbs

Recipe source: foodnetwork.com