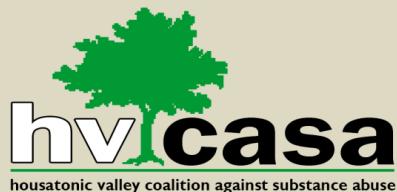


access



Quarterly Newsletter February 2017 Edition

HVCASA is a coalition of volunteers, citizens, and prevention professionals dedicated to developing and coordinating services that reduce the harmful effects of substance abuse and addiction on individuals, families, and children living in the 22 towns that comprise northwestern Connecticut

Stress and Anxiety

We live in such a fast-paced and competitive world where we all are faced with the daily pressures of school, work, and making ends meet. Adults and teens alike in the HVCASA region are reporting that they often feel stressed. The topics of stress and anxiety rise to the top most often in our discussions about what is happening with youth and families. Our youth are feeling the pressure of the expectations put upon them from family, school, and society in general. A survey done by the American Psychological Association in 2013 found that 13-17 year olds are experiencing unhealthy levels of stress. It was also reported that school is the top source of stress for teens, followed by the pressure of getting into a good college, or deciding what to do after high school. HVCASA area teens agree. Through our Teen Advisory Board members, youth participants of our Local Prevention Councils, and regional school Social Workers we hear that kids are stressed and full of anxiety! In response, many of these young people are prescribed medications to mitigate their symptoms.

What can we do to manage stress and keep anxiety at bay?

These healthy coping strategies can help teens and adults....

Communication- Talk about problems and listen to each other

Exercise and eat healthy meals- physical activity is a great stress reducer- take a walk, ride a bike, go for a swim, or practice yoga. Make healthy family dinners a priority

Get some Sleep!- it is simple, but it works. Limit screen time before bed.

Breathe- practice mindful breathing; in a relaxed position, take a few minutes to focus only on your breath- inhaling and exhaling slowly

Have some fun! Create new fun family rituals- watch a movie, play a game, hike together. These activities release stress and provide opportunities to connect with each other

Set realistic and achievable goals- take small steps when tackling large tasks. Resist the temptation to solve your children's problems but rather provide them with tools so they can come up with their own solutions

Adults need to model good stress management skills for their kids

And most importantly- realize none of us is perfect!

Sources:

-Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

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Examples of youth stressors:

- School pressure and career decisions
- After-school or summer jobs
- Dating and friendships
- Pressure to wear certain types of clothing, jewelry, or hairstyles
- Pressure to experiment with drugs, alcohol, or sex
- Pressure to be a particular size or body shape
- Dealing with the changes of puberty
- Family and peer conflicts
- Being bullied or exposed to harrassment
- Crammed schedules, juggling school, sports, activites, social life, and family obligations

Recognizing the signs and symptoms....

- ✓ Increased complaints of headache, stomachache, or muscle pain
- ✓ Increased irritability or anger
- ✓ Excessive worry or nervousness
- ✓ Insomnia or sleep difficulties
- ✓ Disordered eating
- ✓ Shutting down and withdrawing from people and activities

Teens experiencing uncontrolled stress may be more likely to use illegal drugs or engage in underage drinking. Helping young people keep stress at bay is a substance abuse preventive measure

This edition of access  focuses on the category of Support with Assets #1 and #2 and on the category of Positive Identity with Asset #37

HVCASA knows that a highly effective approach to prevention focuses on identifying, enhancing, and capitalizing on the strengths/assets of individual young people and the communities within which they live. Research from Search Institute identifies **40 Developmental Assets** that have a powerful, positive impact on young people. These concrete, common sense assets positively influence the choices young people make and thus reduce risky behaviors.

8 Asset Categories :



Support: Young people need to be surrounded by people who love, care for, appreciate, and accept them.



Empowerment: Young people need to feel valued and valuable. This happens when youth feel safe and respected.



Boundaries and Expectations: Young people need clear rules, consistent consequences for breaking rules, and encouragement to do their best.



Constructive Use of Time: Young people need opportunities—outside of school—to learn and develop new skills and interests with other youth and adults.



Commitment to Learning: Young people need a sense of the lasting importance of learning and a belief in their own abilities.



Positive Values: Young people need to develop strong guiding values to help them make healthy life choices.



Social Competencies: Young people need the skills to interact effectively with others, to make difficult decisions, and to cope with new situations.



Positive Identity: Young people need to believe in their own self-worth and to feel they have control over the things that happen to them.

Support Category

Asset #1 Family Support

-Family life provides high levels of love and support

How do we do this?

- ❖ Give your kids a hug today even if they are really big kids
- ❖ Spend time each week with each of your teenagers individually

Asset #2 Positive Family communication

-Young person and his or her parents communicate positively and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parents

How do we do this?

- ❖ Be willing to talk during times that are comfortable for your children such as in the car or on a walk
- ❖ Regularly sit down and talk to your kids about their commitments to school, friends, jobs, etc. Make sure they are making intentional decisions about what they do with their time

Positive Identity Category

Asset #37 Personal Power

Young person feels he or she has control over “things that happen to me”

How do we do this?

- ❖ Help your child learn to brainstorm so that he/she learns to be empowered
- ❖ Have ongoing conversations about new responsibilities the teen years bring and your confidence in their ability to navigate their expanding world
- ❖ Help your child understand the difference between what we can and cannot control



In the Spotlight

In this segment, HVCASA shines the spotlight on individuals who are doing good prevention work in their community.

Stan Watkins is a vital member of the Stand Together Make a Difference Danbury coalition, the HVCASA Drug Free Schools Committee, and the WCSU substance abuse prevention program. He recently retired from Danbury High School where he was a social worker and crisis counselor, class advisor, and football coach. He was the chairperson of STMAD for 6 years, developing this coalition into the fully functioning substance abuse prevention council it is today. We asked members of the HVCASA family to tell us how they feel about Stan and the work he has done in Danbury and beyond.

Dinilio "DJ" Jimenez current co-chair of STMAD and a social worker at ACE in Danbury said "Several years ago, as a social work intern I was very excited to be placed at Danbury High School with Stan Watkins. I did not know of him prior, but Stan became an immediate mentor and role model for me. I was impressed by his consistent level of commitment to the youth of Danbury for 30+ years. It seemed as if every hour of his day was committed to Danbury and its diverse communities. Stan has recently retired from the high school and even though most would expect him to enjoy his well-earned rest, he remains active and involved in the Danbury community. Stan taught me that we can't sit and wait to see if someone else picks up the "hat" to do the job the community needs and that it doesn't have to be a burden to wear many "hats". I hope that I can be some intern's "Stan" and inspire them the way he has inspired me".

"Stan Watkins' entire career has been devoted to healthy youth development. Whether it was in the halls of Danbury High School or on the athletic fields throughout the area, Stan's priority and passion was the overall wellbeing of Danbury's youth. His tenure as the crisis intervention counselor at the high school has certainly made a positive impact on countless students' lives" shared PJ Prunty, Executive Director, CityCenter Danbury.

Stan is currently a counselor at the C.H.O.I.C.E.S program at WCSU. Sharon Guck, coordinator of substance abuse prevention programs, shared, "Stan has worked at WCSU since 2006. He was originally hired to work with athletes on a NCAA grant, but proved to be such a valuable member of our team, that he has been hired each year to continue his work. He was instrumental in developing our random drug testing program at WCSU and continues to help athletes and all students navigate through their college years. Stan has a special way of working with all students who are facing not only substance abuse issues, but all the challenges our young people face today. He is a talented clinician, patient therapist, and truly cares about our young people. In my 10 years here, I have had the honor of seeing so many students work through very, very difficult issues with the help and expertise Stan provides. He is committed to this field and we are all the better for it".

We thank Stan for his hard work and devotion to the health and well-being of our area youth and we are so happy to honor him in this edition of our newsletter. Here is a lesser known fun-fact about Stan....he is involved in the entertainment industry with Crime and Merriment Mysteries. You can hire him for your next social gathering!



From the desk of Allison Fulton, Executive Director... A high school principal once mentioned to me that he was reluctant to put additional responsibilities on his teaching staff because he did not want to amplify their stress—and ultimately the stress level of his students. It never occurred to me how much the “mood” of the school community can be impacted this way. Of course, the same cause and effect relationship exists in our homes. If parents are “maxxed out”, it is likely their kids are feeling the repercussions, and perhaps modeling their own stress management responses.

This is where we adults can provide some healthy guidance. Just like everything else, we can be living examples of how to handle difficult situations and day to day challenges. So, my message ---one I need to pay closer attention to in my own comings and goings---is to practice skills that reduce those burdensome feelings. We can simplify life at home by leaving more work at the office and signing up on the federal “Do Not Call List”. Try to exercise and socialize in healthy doses, and steer clear of too much sugar, caffeine, and alcohol. It is also helpful to maintain realistic expectations for ourselves and our children. “Adults as Positive Role Models” is one of the attributes included in the Search Institute 40 Developmental Assets research. We can make a difference and alleviate stress among youth, simply by coping successfully ourselves.

The HVCASA Drug Free Schools Committee is sponsoring a Parent Awareness Workshop on March 30th at the Ethan Allen Inn, Danbury. The topic will be stress and anxiety. Our “Save the Date” is below-join us!!



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