

Fall 2025

Tulare County
Office of Education
Tim A. Hire, County Superintendent of Schools

BHS NEWSLETTER

Spreading Mental Health Awareness, Psychoeducation, and Inspiration



“When we embrace change, shed what we’ve outgrown, and find joy in letting go, only then can we invite a new season.”

Rosie Rincon Hernandez, Ed.D. LCSW, PPSC

Bi-Annual Newsletter

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Hello Readers! This newsletter is intended to inspire and bring awareness.

Welcome to our BHS newsletter. We are glad you're here!

With each new season, our committed graduate interns collaborates to share timely insights, helpful resources, and evidence-based strategies, all aimed at supporting the mental health and well-being of students, families, and educators.

To the right, you can reference this issue's topics.

We thank each and every reader for their support and interest in learning and promoting mental wellness in their lives, classrooms, and community.

We invite you to share your thoughts and ideas for future newsletter topics by scanning the QR code at the end of this issue.

With thanks,

Dr. Rosie Rincon Hernandez, LSW, PPS

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Nature Misses You; Time to *Reconnect!*

In today's world, there are endless ways to improve our mental wellness. Nature is one of the simplest yet most effective ways to do so, and it can be easily incorporated into our day-to-day routines. Whether you're taking a walk in the park, sitting in the sun, or doing light stretches outside, there are many ways to connect with nature that don't require much time or effort.

Spending time outdoors is a great way to reduce stress, ease anxiety, and lift your mood. A few minutes of fresh air can help reset your mind, allowing you to have the space you need to recharge and refocus. Our brains often need that break to snap back into clarity, especially if we have been stuck in a cycle of screen time or any other distractions. We're so accustomed to reaching for our phones or sinking into a TV show to unwind, but oftentimes getting relief may simply be stepping outside and absorbing the nature around us.

Being able to take a moment to step outside and take a walk or simply breathing in fresh air, can do more than we imagine for our mental state. It's an easy, natural way to reconnect with yourself and the world around you. Whenever you feel overwhelmed or scattered, try spending a few minutes outside. It is a very accessible and impactful thing to do for your mental health.



You're walking along, and it hits you, the appealing smell of barbecue mesquite wafting in the air. To most, the smell brings a smile, a long inhale, closed eyes, and just a good feeling inside. While this is also true for me, there is more to my thoughts than the anticipation of a good meal. It's the memory of my son taking charge of the workstation, developing his barbecuing skills, and leaving me in complete awe. He showed a type of confidence and leadership that I had not seen much of before.

To provide some context, my son had previously attended a smoked barbecue lesson, where Pitmaster Renea Caroline taught him the basic barbecuing skills, including knife and fire safety, fire-starting methods, types of wood chips, seasoning, meat preparation and doneness. After his mentorship, he participated in a Netflix BBQ special, and after a 6-hour filming day, we sat down and enjoyed delicious smoked meats. I was able to bond with my son in ways we had never experienced before.

Smoking barbecue with your loved ones is an opportunity to bond, learn, and have fun! Moreover, cooking with a child can teach them valuable life skills and enhance their self-efficacy and attitudes towards healthy eating. Smoking barbecue takes patience, collaboration, dedication, and love. And it doesn't always have to be meat; you can smoke fruits, vegetables, and even desserts. Barbecuing is trial and error. If you make a mistake, you can collectively decide what could have been done differently and what you can do to yield your desired results. You can also be creative with the meals you make with smoked meats. For example, you can eat your traditional ribs with sides, or you can use the meat to make short rib mac and cheese— a favorite in our household. You can get as creative as you want! The possibilities are endless.



Short Rib Mac and Cheese

Short Rib Mac and Cheese is the ultimate comfort food. So cheesy with lots of shredded short rib meat.

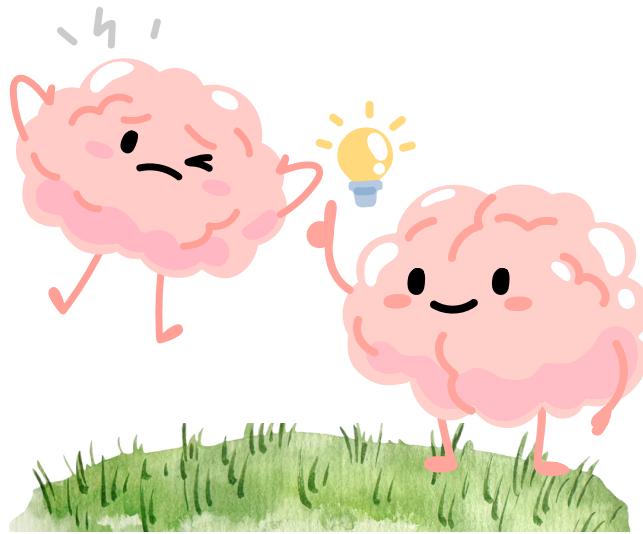
 Spicy Southern Kitchen / Oct 20, 2024

Growth MINDSET

A growth mindset means believing that skills can be improved with effort and practice, and that persistence is the key. Mistakes and failures are not signs of weakness; they are stepping stones to success. Students who see challenges as opportunities tend to show more resilience and confidence. Growth mindset interventions have, in previous research, demonstrated positive effects on students' academic achievement, interest, and well-being (Zhang et al., 2024).

Fun Facts

- **Your Brain Grows with Mistakes!** Each time you learn from an error (mistake), your brain builds new connections.
- **Struggle = Strength.** Research shows that setbacks guide your focus and make your learning deeper or more meaningful.
- **Parents & Teachers Matter.** When adults treat mistakes as lessons, kids are more likely to believe they can grow.
- **Not Alone!** Even the top students report struggling before they succeed; failure is part of every learning journey.



Quick Tips

Students, say, "I can't do this **YET**." After a mistake, ask, "What can I learn from this?" Celebrate efforts, not just grades.

Teachers & Parents: Share your own mistakes. Praise persistence: "I'm proud of how hard you tried." Encourage curiosity and questions.



EMBRACING THE *Season*



We are approaching the last few months of the year, which means a variety of festive celebrations are on the horizon. If you enjoy the season, you might be looking forward to vibrant gatherings, community events, seasonal treats, and cozy moments shared with friends and family. All of these joyful activities can make the change in weather and daylight savings manageable.

However, did you know that just about anyone can experience Seasonal Affective Disorder or SAD? According to VeryWellHealth, SAD is similarly compared to Major Depressive Disorder. Seasonal Affective Disorder can be attributed to various factors; however, the most well-known factor is the decrease in sun exposure associated with shorter days.

With this in mind, the following is a list of seven doable things you can implement in your everyday life, not to feel too "SAD". Ultimately, the goal is for you to take good care of yourself and enjoy the new seasons approaching.

1. Build a healthy sleeping schedule.
2. Nurture your body with nutritious foods you love.
3. Take walks for more sun exposure, even if it's just for a few minutes.
4. Get your body moving with your preferred workout.
5. Spend time with people who make you happy, like friends, family, and community.
6. Do the home projects, arts, and new recipes you have been putting off.
7. Start a book club with friends.

For more information on SAD, visit:
[How Less Daylight Affects Your Health | The Healthy @Reader's Digest](#)
[4 Proven Ways to Tackle Seasonal Affective Disorder, According to Experts](#)

Beyond the Couch

Ukari Matney

Therapy can take many forms. Healing can happen in motion, in nature, through creativity, and in connection. When people think of treatment, they often picture a quiet room and a conversation with a therapist. While that approach helps many, it's just one of many paths to healing. For both kids and adults, therapy can be active, expressive, and even playful. The key is finding what feels right for you. Let's explore a few types of therapy that go beyond words, and sometimes beyond walls.

- **Art Therapy:** Art therapy is a creative way to express emotions through drawing, painting, or other art forms. It helps people explore their feelings when words are insufficient.
- **Play Therapy:** In play therapy, children use toys, games, storytelling, and role-playing to express emotions and work through challenges in a way that feels safe and natural.
- **Movement + Gym Therapy.** In gym-based or movement-friendly therapy, both children and adults can engage their bodies while working through emotions and conversations.
- **Garden Therapy (Horticultural Therapy):** Garden therapy is a therapeutic approach that connects individuals with nature, promoting calmness, mindfulness, and healing.
- **Animal Therapy:** Animal therapy helps a person access comfort, healing, and emotional awareness, whether through caring for and getting comfort from an animal.

Healing can happen in so many beautiful ways and these types of therapy make mental health support more inclusive, engaging, and effective.



❤️ A Child's Self-Worth



Children's emotional health is heavily based on their sense of self-worth. Children who are confident in themselves are more likely to try new things, build healthy relationships, and bounce back from challenges. How can we nurture a child's confidence and self-worth at school and at home?

Positive Reinforcement

Children tend to thrive more when their efforts are noticed. Positive reinforcement means praising what someone is doing right.

- "Good job on helping someone. That was really nice of you."
- "I noticed that you tried your best even when it was hard. That was brave of you."

Acceptance

Everyone is unique in their own way. Feeling accepted is important to a child's emotional development. Let children know they don't have to be perfect to be valued and loved by others. Listen without using judgment. Sometimes, people want someone to just be present for them.

- "I love you the way you are."
- "When things don't work out the first time, that is learning and growing, which is so very important."

Encouragement

Resilience is increased through encouragement. It's different from praise. It shows others that you believed in them before they succeeded. Set small goals and celebrate the process, not perfection.

- "I believe in you."
- "Keep going, practice makes progress."

In nurturing a child's confidence and self-worth, we lay the groundwork for their emotional health and future success. By continuously reinforcing their positive actions, embracing their uniqueness, and encouraging their efforts, we empower them to navigate life's challenges with resilience and self-assurance.

Little Rocks Big Imaginations

Rock painting is not only fun but can be very beneficial to children. It encourages more outdoor activities while offering an environment with an enriched sensory experience. It promotes creativity, enhances fine motor skills (e.g., hand-eye coordination), and fosters the use of positive social skills interactions, such as sharing with others (Cultivate Behavioral Health and Education). Rock painting is also a great way to spend time with the family and share your painted rocks with your communities!

For the best results, use acrylic paints, as they adhere better to rocks. Feel free to follow the guidelines provided for the best experience possible.

Materials Needed:

- Smooth flat rocks
- Paintbrushes
- Acrylic Paint
- Sealant
- Water
- Paper towel



Instruction:

- Clean and dry rocks.
- Seal the rock with sealant before you start painting.
- Paint your rock with your art while using several coats, and let them dry in between.
- Seal the rock again after you finish painting so that it is protected from the weather, moisture, and wear.

For more information and ideas, visit:

Seven Generations Education Institute. (2023, July 30). Discover the joy of rock painting. [Discover the Joy of Rock Painting – Seven Generations Education Institute](#)

Cultivate Behavioral Health and Education. (n.d.) Painted Rock Art: A therapeutic craft for children with autism. [Painted Rock Art: A Therapeutic Craft for Children with Autism – Cultivate BHE](#)

PARENTING WITH SELF-COMPASSION

Michell Uribe

Parenting is one of the most meaningful – and challenging – roles you'll ever take on. Along the way, guilt often sneaks in, whispering that you're not doing enough or that you've made too many mistakes. But here's the truth: good parenting doesn't mean being perfect. It means showing up, learning, and growing with your child – with self-compassion at the center.

The Heart of It: Firm but Kind

Children thrive when they have structure and warmth. Being firm but kind means setting clear boundaries while also offering understanding, patience, and love – to your child and to yourself. It's not about being strict or soft – it's about being steady, supportive, and self-aware.

Community Support is Here

Many local organizations offer parenting workshops, mental health support, and family services at little or no cost. You don't have to do it all alone – and you're not meant to.

Hope Horizon Mental Health

- PCIT / PC-CARE: Interactive therapy to strengthen parent-child relationships
- Building Bridges (Perinatal Program): Emotional support for pregnant and postpartum mothers
- Other Services: Equine-assisted therapy, early psychosis programs, and more

Family Services of Tulare County

- Free parenting classes offered in English and Spanish, for parents of children ages 0–17.
- In-Home Support: Personalized education for families at risk or involved with child protective services.
- Children's Counseling Center: Free therapy for children ages 0–18 and support for mothers with postpartum depression.

Parenting Network, Inc.

- Family Resource Center: Classes, "Mommy & Me" groups, and Medi-Cal assistance
- Support for parents of children with special needs
- Project Fatherhood: Support groups specifically for dads





Imposter Syndrome

Ashley Rodriguez

Do you ever agonize over minor flaws or mistakes in your work? Is it common for you to attribute your success to outside factors or luck? Do you feel like you will eventually be found out as a "phony" or "fraud"? If so, you may be experiencing imposter syndrome.

Imposter syndrome is often associated with negative thinking, self-doubt, lowered self-esteem, fear of not living up to expectations, and even self-sabotage. "For some people, imposter syndrome can fuel motivation to achieve, but this usually comes at the cost of experiencing constant anxiety," (Cuncic, 2024). This phenomenon is actually quite common and can be experienced by anyone, especially those in the mental health professions. In fact, within mental health professionals, this syndrome can be linked with compassion fatigue and burnout.

What is the good news?

There are ways to cope with imposter syndrome! Start with some self-reflection questions:

1. What core beliefs do I hold about myself?
2. Do I believe I am worthy of love as I am?
3. Must I be perfect for others to approve of me?

Next, consider the following:

1. Share your feelings with supportive people you trust
2. Practice skills that will build your confidence in your own abilities
3. Write down all your accomplishments, positive attributes, and strengths without discounting any of them
4. Challenge your negative thoughts (Think Cognitive Behavioral Therapy!)
5. Stop comparing yourself to others
6. Moderate your social media usage, as this can lead to feelings of inferiority
7. Use positive affirmations such as: I have every right to be here. I've earned a seat at this table. It's okay to make mistakes. Mistakes are often our best teachers.



Embracing self-compassion and recognizing your inherent worth are essential steps toward breaking free from imposter syndrome and truly celebrating your achievements.

OSCRRS Program Highlights

Emily Rubalcava



Born and raised in Porterville, California, Emily Rubalcava is a proud first-generation college graduate and the oldest girl in a family of seven siblings. A lifelong Central Valley resident, Emily earned her bachelor's degree in psychology from Fresno State and is now part of the nation's first School Counselor Residency program.

Why School Counseling?

Emily's passion for school counseling began at a young age, shaped by her family's experience with fostering. Seeing her adopted brothers benefit from the support of mental health professionals sparked a deep interest in helping children navigate emotional challenges. Emily also credits her aunt and mother-in-law — both dedicated educators — for their guidance throughout college and for helping her find her path into the field of education.

Impact on Campus

Emily is always seeking new ways to build meaningful connections with her students. She encourages them to take things one step at a time, celebrate even the smallest victories, and reach out for support when needed — whether academically, emotionally, or personally. "Every small step forward counts," she says. "Any progress is good progress."

Upcoming Workshops/Events

Recently, Emily has helped organize a wellness and resilience fair for Suicide Awareness Month, collaborating with local mental health organizations to connect students and families with valuable resources. Currently, Emily is working on putting together a monthly workshop that will create a safe space for students who need additional resources.

Final Thoughts

Emily shares that the OSCRRS residency has given her a deep appreciation for the school counseling profession and strengthened her empathy and resilience. With support from her mentor and peers, she's gaining full-time, real-world experience that's preparing her to be a compassionate and capable counselor.

OSCRRS Program

Highlights

Jose Aispuro



Jose Aispuro was born in Tijuana, Baja California, and raised in Lindsay, California. After spending his early years in Portland, Oregon, he moved to the Central Valley, where he began to truly connect with school and his community. A proud first-generation college graduate, Jose earned his bachelor's degree from Fresno State and is now part of the nation's first School Counselor Residency program.

Why School Counseling?

The journey into counseling is deeply personal for Jose. Growing up feeling like the “new kid” and navigating school inconsistently, he often felt invisible. Now, he wants to be the counselor who makes sure students feel seen and supported. Inspired by the guidance of his former Spanish teacher — who helped him navigate college applications and financial aid — Jose hopes to offer that same hope and direction to students who feel lost or uncertain.

Impact on Campus

One of Jose’s goals is to instill confidence and possibility in all students, especially first-generation youth who may believe they don’t belong in certain spaces. He wants them to know mistakes happen, and how we respond is what helps us grow. His story is proof that with encouragement and the right support, students can break through barriers.

Upcoming Workshops/Events

Parkview Middle School is celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with an entire week of exciting dress-up days, giving students the chance to showcase their culture and pride. One day will honor the iconic singer Selena, encouraging students to dress up in her signature style of wearing purple or something glittery, while another day will allow students to sport their favorite soccer or any sport jerseys. Over at Crossroads Charter Academy, the monthly Parent Night continues to foster strong school-community connections. This event features a fun and creative painting night, offering families a chance to bond with staff and each other through art and conversation.

Final Thoughts

Jose is grateful for the support of the OSCRRS program, which has provided valuable professional development and extensive clinical experience at his placement site, Armona Union Elementary School District. He looks forward to empowering the next generation of students to find their voice, pursue their dreams, and feel a true sense of belonging.



Want to know what events are
happening near you? Gather
the family and explore [HERE](#)



Thank You

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