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In the Office

Robert Brunelle | School Counselor



ADVISORY

In this edition of the newsletter we dip into a piece of what students have begun to reflect on in our Advisory programs. Both Upper and Lower are beginning with the social-emotional category of self-awareness. In order to function with agency to reach our goals we must begin with being aware about who we are beyond the surface. This includes our values, our social battery, what respect means to us, and how our memories and experiences have formed who we are. It is important for an individual to have a grasp on what impacts them, how it does this, and even why it does! This is the first step in being able to tell that to others in order to make sure we can advocate for ourselves and solve conflicts in a healthy way when they arise. Without a base of who we are and what we stand for the more difficult it is to move forward.

In order to continue the conversation at home I challenge families to discuss their values that drive their decisions. Create that common habit of explaining the reason a thing is done based on the value you rely on to drive that behavior. A simple example of this would be stating "I'm glad we all have dinner together at night as it allows us to communicate with each other, something that I value". Additionally, it is important for our students to continue to receive examples of how to create boundaries and take space for themselves when needed. This is presented to students as their social battery. We all have a battery that gets drained and needs to recharge. Labeling that your battery is drained and you need a break is important as it allows our students/children to see that even adults can't always give 100% all the time and they don't need to either. It also provides us with a conversation started on how to recharge our batteries in a healthy way. Do we always want to binge tv or electronics or can we get active, do some mindfulness activities, or connect socially to recharge?

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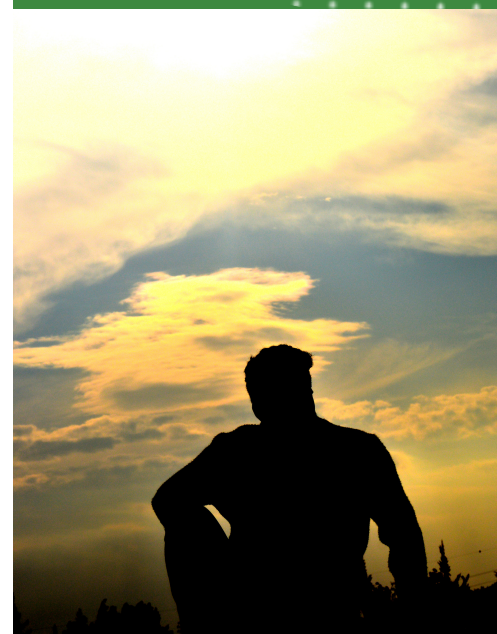
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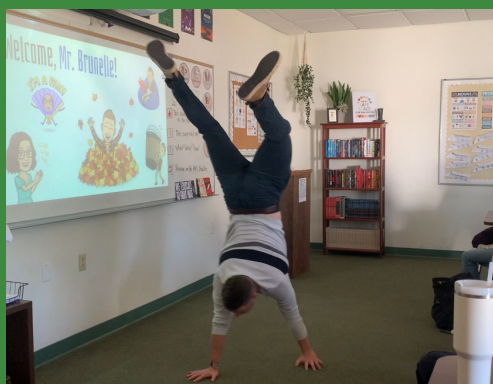
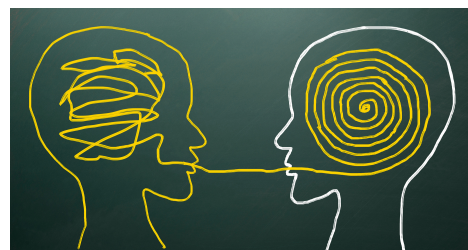
UNDERSTANDING OUR TENDENCIES:

One of the first things we explore when becoming self-aware is our tendencies that shape our behaviors and choices. In reality, we all have been programmed by other people. Our parents, family, friends, and life experiences have shaped our working memory and have come together to form an inner voice that we listen to each day. A lot of us may passively listen but the first step in self-awareness is to become an active listener into our mind and inner voice without judgment and with curiosity.

I like to use the term tendency because it means it is changeable versus a part of us that we must live with. Instead of labeling myself as unorganized I can state I have a tendency to be unorganized. It's ownership and recognition of the behavior but the growth mindset that if I choose I can change the tendency.

Once we become aware of our tendencies we can reflect on if it is something that brings us pleasantness and towards a goal we have or is unpleasant and pushes us away from our goals. When deciding what we want to continue or what we want to restructure we need to be a little selfish. It is critical to talk to ourselves and please ourselves while being aware that external influences might be defining us. I like to tell students to think forward ... imagine your thoughts at night before bed and think if your future self will like it or regret it. We are the only person who will have to live and listen to our thoughts, so using that as a guiding voice to determine our actions, values, and our tendencies is a good rule of thumb.

In order to become aware of our tendencies we must pause and have a conversation with ourselves or have someone we trust inquire with us in a safe and non-judgmental way. In advisory we will be asking these questions so students start to get familiar with what to ask and all the different possibilities of answers that exist based on the variety of experiences someone may have experienced. Common practices to get in touch with yourself include journaling and mindfulness. It is a way to get your thoughts out of your mind and into a reflective state to digest and examine. If we don't stop to think about why we do or say things or take time to respond to our thoughts then we are missing out on understanding the individual we have become. Ask yourself ... What brings me pure joy? Who in my life am I trying to impress? Do I feel like I can share all aspects of myself without judgment? Would I judge someone if they shared a part of them that I didn't agree with? Why? The more we question to gain understanding the more we discover the authentic self and tendencies of those around us. Please be warned that you will only truly learn your authentic self, and tendencies of yourself and those around you, if you are willing to strip away expectations and judgment while providing a space of curiosity. Too often we are told what to do, how to feel, or how to be ourselves... but when people are told this the only thing it is telling that person is that they can't be vulnerable and reveal their authentic tendencies and desires without judgment. So let's get active with our thoughts, pause to have a conversation with yourself, and remain curious.



Fun Facts:

I, Mr. Brunelle, spent some time with the 7th and 8th graders in order for them to get to know the new counselor. We began to build rapport by giving students a chance to ask lots of questions!

Some favorites included that I drink two pots of coffee a day and can walk on my hands thanks to CrossFit. Naturally most classes asked for proof!

It was a blast to find some connections and get so many recommendations about things I should try in Ojai and in California.

SOME NEW REFLECTION SONGS

MUSIC CAN HELP US COMMUNICATE
AND INITIATE REFLECTION IN A FUN
WAY!

“This is What Made Me” by Miss Valeri Lopez:
Sometimes we are afraid to reveal all off our
pieces. These pieces make up who we are.



“FINE” by Kyle Hume: Do we actually
communicate what we mean? This song shares
that sometimes what is said is not always the
truth.



Additional Resource

Whistling Vivaldi |
Claude M. Steele



whistling vivaldi

how stereotypes affect us
and what we can do

CLAUDE M. STEELE

“This is an intellectual odyssey of the first order—a true tour de force.”
—WILLIAM G. BOWEN

Take a deep dive into
how stereotypes
influence our identity
and perspective.