

Wesley Spectrum Academy

Counseling Department Parent Newsletter

Meet the Mental Health Staff

The mental health department at Wesley Spectrum Academy is captained by our Clinical Supervisor, Nancy Rees M.Ed. LPC, NCC. Nancy has 25 years experience as the lead therapist in this unique educational/emotional support setting. She has three adult, daughters and, at last count, 12 grandchildren. There is nothing that this woman can't handle! Ext. 3193.

The department's therapeutic staff is made up of 7 additional mental health professionals who provide one on one counseling. In addition we have 11 Educational Therapeutic Support (ETs) staff members who provide extra support in the classroom setting. Our support is intended to complement the services of private professionals that the students already have in place outside of the school setting.

Sue Deep has 24 years experience as a mental health therapist, 13 of those years with WSA. Previously she worked as an adolescent chemical dependency therapist so she gravitates toward prevention activities. She has two college age children of her own. Her extension is 3198.

For 8 years Michelle Hilty has been a solid rock of support to the middle school students of WSA. With three children from high school through adulthood, she has well practiced parenting skills. She is also our resident guru of organizational skills. Her extension is 3196.

Since 2004 Shelley Carbaugh has provided services to WSA students and previously worked as a mobile therapist. Shelley and her husband recently welcomed a new baby boy into their family. She returns from maternity leave on Nov. 10th. Her extension is 3250.

Our nurse/therapist, Laura Deep, has over 20 years experience as an adolescent psychiatric nurse and has been with WSA for 4 years. She is a perfect fit having worked for an adolescent psychiatric hospital in the past. Laura has three children of her own. Her extension is 3199.

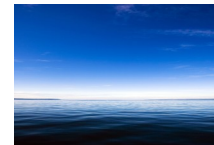
Going into his 3rd year with us is Max Schimmel who was previously employed in another Wesley Spectrum youth program before manning his post here. He is an accomplished athlete and helps coach our flag football team. Max is the male role model of the department. His extension is 3195.

Beginning her 2nd year with us in the role of therapist is Courtney Kunselman. She was with us as a student intern prior to that. Courtney has a natural talent for this work and provides excellent support to our high school students. Her extension is 3200.

Filling in for Shelley during her absence has been Erin Walker-Lodge. She has done a stellar job taking on Shelley's duties and has now moved into her own permanent counseling position here at WSA. This is her second year with WSA as she worked as an ETS last year. She can be reached at extension 3194.

Anger

Anger. It can be an unpleasant emotion at least and frightening at most when expressed without restraint. Learning how to handle anger and other emotions can be a long process that takes us well into adulthood. Regulating emotions does not come naturally to everyone. Some children need more direct guidance about how to handle feelings. Those children who have the most difficulty often become volatile teenagers. Brain studies show that the teenage brain is not fully formed and one of the shortcomings is an underdeveloped frontal cortex where the processes that lead to emotional regulation occurs. As adults we can help teach youth how to regulate emotions by doing it well ourselves. We are their best role models for behavioral patterns they pick up.



TCI Tips

TCI stands for Therapeutic Crisis Intervention. Here at WSA all staff are trained in TCI. Parents can use some of the same techniques with their own teenagers. The most important part of TCI is before a crisis occurs. Often potential outbursts can be avoided all together when adults ask a few simple questions of themselves before they respond to an unreasonable teen:

- 1. What am I feeling now?** Awareness of your own feelings is very important. If you feel anger, your response will probably be angry. An angry response will escalate the anger. So wait until you feel calm to address the issue. It's ok to share with your child that you are feeling angry and need to calm down because you don't want to raise your voice and get into a pointless argument.
- 2. What does my child feel, need or want?** Try to think beyond what they are saying or doing. They may not intend to be rude, disrespectful or inconsiderate. What emotions are they feeling that are out of control? Try to listen to the emotion, not the content of the message. Don't take their feelings personally. Usually anger is a defensive emotion that comes from feeling hurt somehow.
- 3. How is the environment affecting my child?** What is going on in the home or with the family that might be adding to their stress? Maybe an ailing family member or pet; extra guests; the absence of someone important. Any change in normal routines can create uncertainty that leads to uncomfortable emotions in our kids. Try to correct or at least acknowledge the disruption to their lives.
- 4. How can I best respond?** Don't react with an instant negative response or argue with your teen. Accusations like "you always" or "you never" seldom help. Sometimes the best response is a thoughtful silence to assess yourself, the child and the environment. There is nothing wrong with a calmly stated "Well... I will need to think about that for a bit" or "I feel angry so I am going to go calm down before I respond". Then make sure you talk when you are both calm.



Calm adults are in control of themselves and can address behavior problems in children before a crisis occurs.