



*Celebrated/Observed in
March:*

Gender Equality Month

National Nutrition Month

National Women's History
Month



March 6-12:
Teen Tech Week

March 19: Kick
Butts Day



Don't forget to schedule a SAP Team Maintenance!

A maintenance can be a half-day or full-day program of fun activities focused on professional growth of your SAP team. Best practice recommends that SAP teams participate in a yearly maintenance to foster optimal team health and function. We are scheduling maintenance trainings for spring now.

The benefits of participating in a SAP Team Maintenance are:

- Time to focus on strengthening or refining your SAP team procedures & strategies
- Strengthened relationships among team members
- Self-Care for team members (helps to counter-balance the stress that can be experienced from serving on the SAP team)

What's SAPpening

Brought to you by your Center For Humanistic Change Student Assistance Program Liaisons

MARCH 2016

ALERT

Heroin related overdose deaths in Lehigh County have been on the rise this year. Simultaneously, there have been a higher than normal number of individuals accessing local emergency rooms as a result of heroin related overdoses. Awareness of this alarming trend as well as education about drug treatment options are essential. Please let your SAP Liaison know if your school community has questions.

If someone you know has a drug problem, help can be found through Lehigh County Drug and Alcohol Services at 610-782-3555. If there is an urgent concern, call 911.

Synthetic Marijuana

Synthetic marijuana refers to a growing number of man-made mind-altering chemicals that are either sprayed on dried, shredded plant material so that they can be smoked (herbal incense) or sold as liquids to be vaporized and inhaled in e-cigarettes and other devices (liquid incense). While many people use the term synthetic marijuana or "fake weed" to refer to these substances and they are marketed as a "safe and legal" alternative to marijuana, this is extremely misleading. As they are comprised of unknown every changing chemical formulas, their actual effects can be unpredictable and, in some cases, severe or even life threatening. Most of us can remember the rash of K2 overdoses in the Allentown area last spring that garnered national news attention.

Manufacturers sell synthetic marijuana in colorful foil packages and plastic bottles specifically geared to appeal to younger users. They market these products under a wide variety of brand names such as Spice, K2, Joker, Black Mamba, Kush and Kronik. Sadly, they are relatively easy to buy in drug paraphernalia shops, novelty stores, gas stations and through the Internet. The chemicals contained in these drugs have a high potential for abuse and no medical benefit. Authorities have made it illegal to sell, buy, or possess some of these chemical; however, manufacturers sidestep these laws by changing the chemical formulas in their product.

Some synthetic marijuana users report effects similar to those produced by marijuana such as: **elevated mood, relaxation, altered perception, and symptoms of psychosis- delusional or disordered thinking and detachment from reality.** Other psychotic effects may be **extreme anxiety, confusion paranoia and hallucinations.**

As we saw last spring, many who use synthetic marijuana end up in the emergency room with severe effects including **rapid heart rate, vomiting, violent behavior, and suicidal thoughts.** Synthetic marijuana and other synthetic drugs are addictive. Regular users trying to quit may experience withdrawal symptoms such as **headaches, anxiety, depression, and irritability.**

If you hear a student discuss using these substances or suspect a student is using them, please make an immediate SAP referral to begin the process of getting professional help for the student.

Reference: NIDA 2015, retrieved at www.drugabuse.gov.

#stayinformed: Navigating Internet Safety in an Ever-Changing World



How can we ever keep up with our children and teens when it comes to internet safety? Youth are often two steps ahead of the adults in their lives when it comes to technology use and apps used on their devices.

While the apps may be changing from year to year or month to month, the basic approach with children and teens remains the same when it comes to internet safety- **stay informed!** Ryan Klingensmith, a Pennsylvania based therapist who presents on cyber choices and internet safety, outlines an approach that adults and parents can take when it comes to the internet- “ACE”. “A” is awareness. Be aware of what is going on in your school and what students are talking about when it comes to their phones and devices. “C” stands for communicating. Ask students what apps are being used and what kinds of things these apps are being used for. Keep conversations open so that if there are concerning images or messages being shared, they can share them with you. And, finally, “E” is for educate. Remember to have conversations with students about how they can protect themselves online.

And do not forget to **educate yourself!** For younger students, try out the apps or games that they are using at home and in classrooms. Reports from the Federal Trade Commission, year after year, continue to identify that there is little information for parents or adults about the information being gathered on children’s games or apps– access to commercials, the ability to buy directly from within the app, or if information is being providing to third parties unknowingly is all essential information for parents and educators to know (<https://www.ftc.gov/news-events/>). It is important to consider all the options of what might be happening in your classrooms when it comes to protecting students’ privacy and access online.

For older students, check out Facebook, Instagram, YikYak, Twitter, Snapchat, Pinterest or other apps that students are talking about. Get an account and check them out personally, not necessarily to monitor what is happening in your school or community but to stay informed about different ways the app or game could be used. There are a number of different topics that are discussed online that may not be discussed in everyday conversation in our students’ lives. Staying informed can help the adults to make up some of those steps as our students continue to sprint away from us in the technology world!

References: Federal Trade Commission (2016). Klingensmith, R. (2013). *New cyberworries and solutions*. STAR Center.

Recognizing and Responding to Student Depression

Many of us think of depression as an adult disorder; however, more and more we are seeing that adolescents and even elementary aged students are dealing with many stressors which can manifest as depression. Studies show that approximately 49% of children had at least one adverse childhood experience and 23% of children had two or more adverse childhood experiences. Some students are dealing with socio-economic hardship or parental separation or divorce. Some may be living with someone with a drug or alcohol problem and almost 9% were identified as living with someone who was mentally ill or suicidal. Four in every ten children in this country say that they experienced a physical assault during the past year with one in ten receiving an assault related injury (www.recognizetrauma.org).

While home stressors can negatively affect students, social pressures within their school community and online can also play a role in students’ experience of depression. If school personnel can recognize and respond to a student who is experiencing depression, young people can experience improved mood and function better in school and in life.

Depression manifests itself differently in elementary aged students than in adolescents in terms of what teachers will see in the classroom. An elementary student who is experiencing depression may complain of feeling sick, may be absent from school frequently, and may not participate in class. The student may isolate from peers and exhibit problems with social skills and present as defiant. He or she may struggle with work completion and forget to complete assignments. The student may have difficulty concentrating and may miss deadlines. Teachers may also notice that the student’s feelings are easily hurt or that the student cries frequently or exhibits anger.

Adolescents who are experiencing depression may verbalize self deprecating comments. They may exhibit defiance with authority figures and have difficulty interacting with peers due to argumentativeness. The student may isolate or frequently change friends. Teachers may also notice sulking and non-compliance or hear of risky impulsive behaviors such as drug or alcohol use, theft or truancy. The student may act out of character or sleep in class. Of course, the student may also express suicidal thoughts. ***This requires an immediate response!***

As the best approach to a student, or anyone, who is experiencing depression is an individualized one, a referral to your SAP team is warranted if you recognize any of these signs in your classroom.

“When school personnel recognize and respond to a student struggling with depression and intervene with flexible supports, that student can feel—and learn-better.”

Center For Humanistic Change

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