

Lincoln Elementary School Counselor Newsletter

Nov 2018

Dear Parents and Guardians of Lincoln Students, with Fall Break behind us and the holidays coming up, we come to a place of routine, familiarity, and a stronger sense of community. Our hope here at Lincoln is that every child feels they belong in this safe, supportive and caring environment.

With the anniversary of the devastating Thomas Fire approaching, we take inventory of how our community recovered and came together for one another. Unfortunately, we hear too often of fires happening all over our state and news stories of other senseless events. We encourage students to come to you and us with their worries and what feels scary to them. Conversations of support are ongoing. Children feel safer with plans in place and knowing where to go to and who to go to in times of urgency. For our part, we continue to build partnerships with outside resources and relationships with parents who come to us with concerns. Our doors are always open. We're here to help.



Welcome to your Brain House is the topic for my November lesson.

Even with our youngest students, we introduce the parts of our thinking and reacting brain.

Kids are able to understand the basic functions of our "downstairs brain." This is our "flight, fight, freeze, or faint" response that I'm sure you're familiar with. Without this oldest, primal part of our brain, we would not be able to survive and function in high stress/dangerous situations. Just like a muscle, the more we use this part of the brain, the better, stronger, and faster it gets. When babies, toddlers, and young children are exposed to environmental trauma, neglect, or constant stressful situations, their "downstairs brain" of survival goes into overdrive- even when the situation doesn't call for them to fight back or run away. On the flip side, our "upstairs brain" is much more sophisticated. With age, supportive adults, and experience our upstairs/ thinking brain helps us to plan, organize, pause, pay attention, and prioritize. Sounds great, right? Well, be patient because this part of our brain doesn't fully mature until our early 20's. So we can't

expect kids and teenagers to not make mistakes. It's normal & healthy! Thankfully, with the structure and support of nurturing environments (home and school), the upstairs brain can grow and get stronger. Part of my lesson talks about how we help our upstairs/ thinking brain get better and better. They include:

- Eating healthy food from nature (less processed, junk, sugary, artificial colors, etc)
- Getting enough sleep (9-10 hours!)
- Taking deep breaths and other healthy coping skills
- Getting outside!
- Staying physically active
- Having quiet time (best without technology)



Nurturing your child's upstairs/ thinking brain is doable. If you'd like more information and/or support, I encourage you to come to our Fri Parent Support Groups.

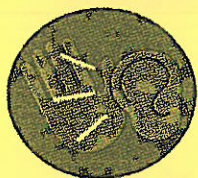
We've met every Fri since Nov 2nd and will continue to do so until Feb 1st. We meet in our school library from 8:15-9:30. Come when you can. It's a safe, supportive space to seek advice, share ideas, and feel connected.

Plus we have food, fresh Starbucks coffee, and a Target gift card raffle! Woo-hoo! Hope to see you :)

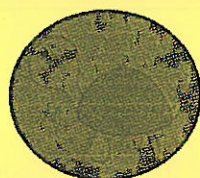
MRS. JACLYN IBARRA, LINCOLN SCHOOL COUNSELOR 805-641-5438

jaclyn.ibarra@venturausd.org

How to nurture your child's mental health



Actively listen before offering your advice



Be patient



Share and validate their feelings



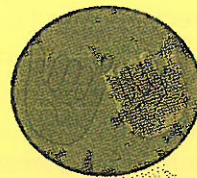
Tell the truth



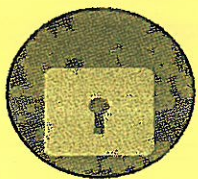
Model healthy behavior



Surround them with healthy adults



Be consistent and follow through with what you promise



Teach them how to be safe



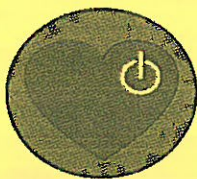
Believe them and in them



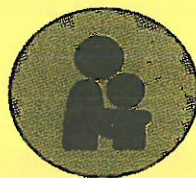
Use open ended questions about everything



Have scheduled family time



Limit electronic time for everyone



Reach out and hug them



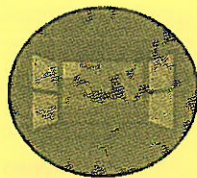
Practice relaxation exercises together



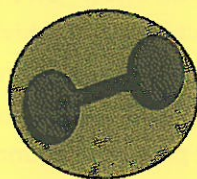
Model forgiveness



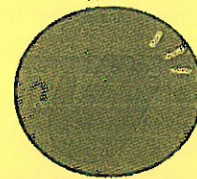
Respond calmly when their emotions are elevated



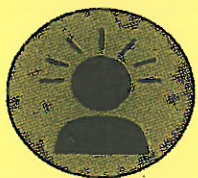
View their behavior as a window to their needs and feelings



Make play and exercise a requirement



Recognize positive choices



Be present



Set and respect boundaries

