



Report for November 2021

Mental Health & Wellness Awareness 2021 - 2022

November



Focus:

**Brain-based Mental Health & Surviving
Trauma**

Melanie S. Baker, M. Sc., Special Education
Chair, Mental Health
Suffolk County PTA Board of Managers

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In another couple weeks, as we gather together, as families and friends, we will celebrate Thanksgiving together, in our new normal, as we slowly emerge from a worldwide pandemic with the many months of quarantine and shutdown that has affected the entire world, on every level of which we could conceive. We have lost many lives during this massive disruption to life as we knew it. Let's take a moment of silence, and honor the memory of those we have lost, those who will be missing from our Thanksgiving celebrations, those though lost, will not be forgotten by us.

We have faced major collective trauma and we will need to acknowledge the trauma and its impact on us, if we are to cope in healthy ways with all that we have faced, and develop resilience from the encounter with a level of crisis that has not faced us as a human species in the last century. Even as we position ourselves to help our students, our children, teens, tweens, and even younger, cope with the emotions with which they may be struggling; we must first acknowledge our own pain and emotional dysregulation.

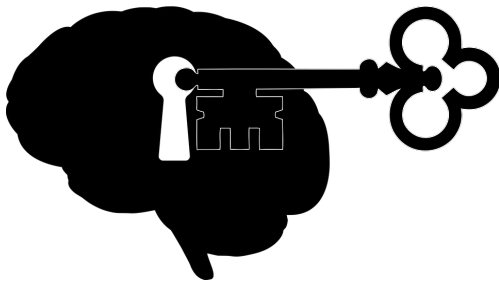
Let us not think that life will ever be as it had been before, for we have been forever changed by all that we have overcome, through this pandemic. It may not necessarily be a doom and gloom message though, the change we now face, in our new post pandemic reality; as we have in this moment of crisis, an opportunity to reimagine something brand new, a new way of relating one to another. We have before us the privilege of creating the kinder, gentler world which we crave now more than ever before.

Dr. Max Banilivy, of Welllife Network, a psychologist with decades of years of experience, treating juvenile mental health challenges, with a focus on youth suicide prevention, invites us into an ambassadorship of mental wellness. As we consider the gauntlet which he has lain down, and determine to step into the role of mental wellness ambassadorship, it challenges us to inform our pedagogical practice as educators, our parenting style as parents, wherever our sphere of influence may extend, we inform it with an intentionality of acknowledging those around us.

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We extend compassion to others, as we crave compassion for ourselves; and we extend compassion for ourselves first. The impact of our experiences has been seared into our brains, and have become a part of us. We will need to rely on each other, and become the village of days long ago, as we go forward in our new post pandemic reality. The rules have changed and demand a paradigm shift on our part, a mindset reset. As Colorado educator Brittni Darras realized, it could no longer be business as usual. In her ted talk, <https://youtu.be/ofjRnIpXBF0>, she expressed the need to connect on a deeper level in her interaction as a teacher, with her students, in strengths based context. ¹

Dr. Donna Volpitta of Pathways to Empower, establishes a brain based paradigm to understand trauma. She shares that it will be determined by our choice, the way we choose to perceive the stressful experiences we have experienced, that will ultimately configure the degree to which we survive and thrive, and become resilient. In the work she does, in which she translates neuroscience so it can be applicable to changing lives, at the intersection of neurology, psychology and education, she has created a Resilience brain based model to foster surviving trauma. ²



Kelly McGonigal's TED Talk, encouraging you to make stress your friend, gives a sure coping mechanism, a strategy, to thrive in the midst of the difficulties which we face. https://www.ted.com/talks/kelly_mcgonigal_how_to_make_stress_your_friend?utm_campaign=tedspreload&utm_medium=referral&utm_source=tedcomshare

Use the keys presented in this discussion as a strategy to a new way of perceiving all that we have come through, so that we may live! Let's be thankful, we made it!



¹ [Teacher writes notes to 130 students after teen's attempted suicide \(today.com\)](#)

² [Pathways To Empower](#)

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Blessings!



Our perception of the experiences we have encountered, rewired into our brains, will determine our victory as we rebuild our lives in our new post pandemic normal. So, let us be more caring, more compassionate, acknowledge each other's strengths, and be gentler with one another, and with ourselves. We can't do it alone, so let's return to the village! A very happy and blessed Thanksgiving to you and yours.

<https://youtu.be/x0QH0Mr-R0>

Call the hotline if in crisis: *National Suicide Prevention Hotline* **1 -800 - 273 TALK (8255.)**

Remember, reach out to your medical doctor, and spiritual leader if you have one, both of whom may refer you for further support.

It's Time To Talk About It

<https://youtu.be/kwn2vur3ifI>

I survive and you can too!

My Mental Health Matters!

"How did I end up here?" I asked myself as I looked around the psychiatric ward of the Brookdale Hospital, glancing behind me as they locked the cast iron doors, sealing my fate.

Still only a teenager, my dreams of a fancy university education in New York disintegrated like dust in the hopelessness of that dark place, which determined to be my new fate.

Graduating at the top of my high school to come to the states to pursue a fancy college education seemed like a dream come true, yet, after only two short years, my dream had turned into a nightmare. I watched the play by play, as if in slow motion, of the desperate lives trapped in this nightmare alongside me. I still see so vividly, as if only yesterday, the woman with unkempt hair, putting on lipstick, in preparation for the love of her life, OJ Simpson's visit.



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I realized my new suite mate, across from me, in her delusions of her love affair with famed football icon, OJ Simpson, very different from my fancy college roommate living, repudiated my entire existence.

Despite my great fanfare, leaving my small island home of Jamaica, filled with such anticipation for college living in the Big Apple, after only 2 years, it all seemed to be over, bitter gall like the sting of the pungent taste of the black charcoal used to pump my stomach, after my then, third suicide attempt, stung at my taste buds, and gained me my entrance into the underside of Brookdale Hospital in Brooklyn, on the other side of locked, cast iron doors.

I had ascertained my life to be over. Hope had evaporated from my soul, as the light dimmed from my eyes. My unwashed, matted hair, and downcast, depressed, forlorn expression, may have been as stark a wake up call for my delusional suite mate expecting OJ, as she had been for me.

It didn't end there for me though, and neither does it need to end here for you, if in a low place.

Fast forward 25 years into my future, as I consider the fullness of my life today, my husband, my wonderful sons, my sweet relationship with my family and my friends, the honor of serving with my church community, the meaningful work I have the privilege of doing; all nearly short circuited in my momentary loss of hope.

I will not deceive you, it took hard work to rebuild my life, from that low point, that low place, I had to learn to let go, to forgive, to make peace with events over which I had no control, those adverse childhood experiences, as coined in professional circles. Yet, I am here today, my cup overflowing with a full life, and I want to encourage you, hold on, don't give up. Help is there for you.

I founded my company, Project R.E.S.E.T.S., Restoring Expectations through Socio-Emotional Trauma Survival, to take away the stigma from mental health challenges, to encourage conversation around mental health and wellness. My motto, 'expanding expectations' premises a healing education; through communication, conversation, yes, let's talk about it!

I choose to survive, it's intentional, and so can you. I will for you, to survive.

Tips for Mental Health & Wellness

By: Melanie S. Baker, M. Sc. Special Education

1. Breathe, deeply; then smile,
maybe laugh right out loud, heartily.
2. Rest, sleep soundly, slow it on down.
3. Exercise, move, walk, dance even.

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4. Eat healthy, well balanced meals.
5. Drink lots of water.
6. Self care is essential! It's okay to do something good for yourself.
7. Support Acknowledge the need to be undergirded to be upheld. Ask for help when you need it.
8. Share your story and dismantle the cloak of secrecy.
9. Serve others.
10. Start a gratitude journal - isn't there something for which you are thankful? Anything?
11. Listen to uplifting music.
12. A small garden may refresh the soul.
13. Spend time with loved ones, make the time.
14. Support of peers is key!

Ask

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Gain strength from those
facing similar struggles.