

the Compass

BVT SCHOOL COUNSELING NEWS | WINTER 2023

Welcome to *the Compass*, our school counseling noteworthy news source. Our team of compassionate counselors are here to guide and support you and your teenager on their educational journey. We're dedicated to fostering the academic, career, and social-emotional wellbeing of your teen to promote individual talents, and a curiosity for learning as they reach their full potential and become career and life ready. Together, we can help you chart their course.



How Are You Feeling?

At any moment, you can scroll through social media and know exactly how someone is feeling just by the emoji that pops up on a post. Imagine how easy it would be to know exactly what your teen is feeling if an emoji popped up each time you engaged with them. Okay, we realize A LOT of emojis might pop up at once—happy, sad, content, anxious, excited, depressed, confident, embarrassed, proud, or disappointed, just to name a few—but there would be no mistaking their emotional state.

It is common for teenagers, like adults, to feel worried, stressed, or sad with the ups and downs of daily life, but opening up about their thoughts and feelings can be difficult. Many teens don't have the social-emotional skills to express themselves or can't find the words to describe their emotions. As adults, we know that talking about our feelings and sharing what we're going through can often put things into perspective, but teens often don't seek out help on their own and might need your encouragement to feel comfortable opening up.

If your teen vents about something that's bothering them, teach them to "sit" with the experience, rather than remove the cause of emotional discomfort. Help them discover that they can handle discomfort and then move on. If you raise concerns with your teen and they don't want to speak with you, suggest other trusted adults they could speak with. Sometimes it's just easier for them to talk to someone else.

If you find your teen is persistently struggling with overwhelming emotions to the point that it interferes beyond their school day and daily life, you might wonder "How do I help my teen navigate this?" These situations can feel overwhelming and isolating. So, begin by reminding yourself that anxiety is a normal emotion. Everyone feels anxious at times. Then, consider speaking with your teen's primary care provider. It's an appropriate place to begin when seeking more support. Having another perspective can be helpful. Remind your teen that talking with their doctor or other health professionals is private and confidential unless they're worried about themselves or someone else's safety.

When it comes to your teen's health and wellness, we have staff on campus who can help direct you toward appropriate and available services. Your teen has access to:

- **School Counselors:** In addition to supporting your teen's personal and career goals, our school counselors offer brief social-emotional interventions to students and make referrals when supplemental support is needed. They also provide psychoeducation around mental health topics, such as anxiety and depression, to our entire student body.
- **Adjustment Counselors:** Our adjustment counselors provide one-on-one short-term, strength-based, and solution-focused support to referred students based on the severity and

complexity of the individual's needs. They also offer a variety of groups and programs for students who need more support.

- **Riverside Clinicians:** In affiliation with Milford Regional Medical Center, our on-campus School Based Health Center provides therapy to referred students during the school day. The clinicians can also help connect your teen with additional services like psychiatry through the Riverside Community Care Clinic.
- **Cartwheel Care:** We recently partnered with Cartwheel Care, a new telehealth mental health service available to students. Your teen can see a licensed clinician (usually one hour, once a week outside of school hours) within seven days of a referral. Services include assessments, therapy, medication, care coordination, and parent support.

The most important takeaway here is that you and your teen are not alone. Don't hesitate to reach out directly for professional support. No matter how you or your teen are feeling, you don't have to go through this alone; hope and help are available. To learn more about our mental health and wellness supports, visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/mentalhealthwellness.

Wrapping Up Holiday Cheer!

Our Student Council is once again hosting its Holiday Gift Drive.

This annual event is filled with cheer, whether you are a family in need of holiday gifts or you'd like to donate to this worthy cause. To participate, simply contact your teen's school counselor by **December 8th**. To learn more visit our Giving Back page at: www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/givingback



Inciting Personal Growth

You've been watching your child grow since day one. Sometimes, they need a push forward, and sometimes, they push you away. Sometimes, it goes well, and sometimes, they need to take a few steps back or move in a different direction to find their way. Finding the right formula for personal growth can be tricky and demands self-reflection and mindful planning.

The end of first trimester is a perfect time to help your teen take stock. Check in to see how they feel about their grades, workload, work-life balance, and how their classes fit with their future plans. If something seems out of balance, encourage them to talk with their counselor. Our add/drop period has

ended, but if your teen is looking for a new challenge or seeking support, resources are still available.

Also help your teen start thinking about next year's schedule. Teachers will make recommendations later in the trimester based on skill level, but your teen needs to keep the bigger picture in mind. It can be challenging for them to find a healthy school-work-life balance, especially when faced with social pressure. Encourage them to voice their thoughts and concerns with their teachers and counselors to gain further insight. To learn more visit www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/courseplanning.

Identifying Depression

Teen depression is all too common. If left untreated, depression can make it difficult for students to attend school and complete classwork, and can even lead to substance abuse and self-harm. So, how do we identify if a teen is struggling with depression? It begins by teaching them how to recognize the signs of depression/suicide in themselves and others, and where to turn for help. In our Break Free From Depression Curriculum, our freshmen:

- Learn the signs and symptoms of depression and suicide.
- Discuss the stigma, risk factors, and internal thoughts associated with depression.
- Review how to talk with a trusted adult or someone they're concerned about, and practice healthy coping skills.

Armed with this knowledge, students participate in a voluntary depression screening. To learn more visit: www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/depressionsscreeningfreshmen.

Scholarships Anyone?

Financing your teen's future career is a BIG deal! Whether they need tuition or new tools and equipment, scholarships can help pay the bills. The Class of 2023 earned over \$7 million in free money! Are you interested in helping your teen take advantage of scholarship opportunities? If so, encourage them to:

- View and apply for statewide, community, and BVT scholarships on the Scholarship Canvas page.
- Look for additional scholarships through your town, places of employment, and any community organizations that you or your teen are associated with.
- Check with prospective schools to see if they qualify for their scholarships.
- Take advantage of the Scholarship Support Days this spring.

Learn more about our scholarship offerings and application process at www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/scholarships.

CALENDAR 2023 – 2024

Parents, keep your teenager up-to-date on all our school counseling events, deadlines, and workshops.

Nov 21st	Junior Parents: Virtual College Application Process Workshop
Nov 27th	Holiday Drive Begins
Dec 1st	College-Bound Senior: FAFSA Opens
Dec 8th	Seniors: QCC Decision Day
Dec 19th	Juniors: Career Action Plan
Jan 17th	Freshmen: Course Selection
Jan 18th	Juniors: Course Selection
Jan 23rd	Sophomores: Course Selection
Jan 30th	Freshmen: Depression Screening Opt-out Deadline
	Freshmen: Break Free from Depression – Pre-Test/Intro
Jan 31st	Freshmen: Break Free from Depression – Module 1
Feb 1st	Freshmen: Break Free from Depression – Module 2
Feb 2nd	Freshmen: Break Free from Depression – Modules 3 & 4/Post-Test
Feb 6th	Freshmen: Depression Screening
Mar 6th & 7th	Seniors: Scholarship Support Days
Mar 14th	Juniors: College Fair

NOTE: All dates are subject to change.

Assessments

MCAS, AP, SAT, PSAT, oh my! Keeping track of all the assessment exams and requirements can be challenging. Here is a sneak peek at the winter schedule:

Winter College Entrance Exams

- Dec 2nd SAT Exam
- Dec 9th ACT Exam
- Feb 10th ACT Exam
- Mar 9th SAT Exam
- Apr 8th–10th Sophomores: PSAT-10
- Mar 26th & 27th Sophomores: ELA MCAS Exam

Visit: www.valleytech.k12.ma.us/assessments for more assessment and registration information. It's your go-to reference for exam schedules, prep courses, and do's and don'ts on exam day. School counselors are available to answer questions and help your teen develop a personal assessment calendar.

