

# A Mindful Minute

Volume 1 September 2017  
Sarah Hazlett, LCSW  
Middle and High School Therapist

---

.....  
**Welcome Back!**



## **How to transition smoothly back to school**

Summer always seems to fly by and another school year is beginning. It can be challenging for both kids and parents (and teachers!) to make the transition from sleeping in to making it on time before the tardy bell rings. Here are a few tips for both students and parents to help start the new school year on a positive note.

- **Be Positive.** Maintain a positive attitude about summer ending. When talking about going back to school make sure to highlight the positives; such as the class they have been excited to take or beginning sports and other activities. It is hard to get excited about doing something if we are reminded 'this might be the last pool day' or 'no more sleepovers with friends'.
- **Ease back to having a schedule.** About a week (or more) before school starts begin the habit of going to bed about 10-15 minutes earlier and waking up closer to the actual time your child needs to wake during the school year. Mom and dad you should join in on this practice because changing a sleep routine can be tough on everyone!
- **Don't forget about nature.** Even though school may have started again, doesn't mean kids need to be inside. The weather is typically still nice in September and into October. It will be hard for some students to be indoors for 7 hours a day. Encourage your child to go outside when they come home to enjoy the outdoors, release some energy, and relieve some stress.
- **Talk about a routine.** The first few weeks before school begins is the perfect time for you and your child to have a conversation about expectations and routines during the school year. Older children will appreciate giving their opinion about when they will complete their homework; while younger children will still need your guidance. Schedules can become hectic fast, especially when there are multiple children at home involved in different activities. Come up with a plan/schedule to help you manage your time after school. Prioritize academics, athletics, family time, social time, church/synagogue/mass, etc., and devote a specific amount of time to any of the aforementioned that are important to your child. Having a conversation about routines and schedules before the hustle and bustle of the new school year approaches is a great way to prevent confusion and arguments in the future.
- **Organize, Organize, Organize** Having your child develop a system of organization can be key to their academic success. Most middle and high school students have an understanding on how they learn best (some still may need help from their parents). Some students like to color code by class, while others find it easier to have a morning and afternoon binder. Some teens who have a harder time with organizational skills will need your help. Make sure you are teaching them the skill of organization instead of doing it for them. Sitting with your teen for 10 minutes once a week to go through papers and organize can be a lifesaver.
- **There is support out there** If you notice your child is having difficulty keeping up with academics-- talk with their teacher. Communication is key! Most teachers have their own website or Google Classroom where assignments are listed, along with the syllabus and other coursework is also available. Their school counselor can also be an excellent resource. Ensure both you and your child have the PowerSchool app on your phones to keep up to date on grades. Too many students wait until March and April to try to recover from the first 3 quarters; which causes unneeded stress for everyone!

---

## Helpful Links

[Back to School Countdown Calendar](#)

[Helpful Parent Printables](#)



## School Refusal

It is estimated between 2-5% of students have a history of truancy at some point during their education. There are many reasons why children may refuse to come to school and usually there isn't just one cause. Beginning a new school, transitioning between grades, being bullied, a parent being ill, stress at home, perfectionism, low self esteem, or a history of panic and anxiety disorders may all be causes of school refusal. It is important for parents to take school refusal seriously and to seek help from professionals. Some helpful tips for parents are:

- Pay attention to your child's feeling.
- Do not make it a pleasant experience to stay home (remove electronics, encourage reading, prevent sleeping during the day)
- Stay calm when your child becomes anxious about a situation or event.
- Recognize and praise small accomplishments.
- Don't punish mistakes or lack of progress.
- Coordinate with the school, treatment providers, doctors, and other caregivers to ensure everyone is on the same page.
- Be flexible.

- Work with the school to develop a plan (sometimes coming in for a few periods or half a day is the beginning of the solution).
- Plan for transitions before they happen.

---

## National Suicide Prevention Week: September 10-16

The high school counseling department will sponsor events throughout the week to spread awareness about suicide and resources for students. Sadly suicide is the 3rd leading cause of death for ages 10-24 in Pennsylvania, which is why we want to ensure students are aware of the resources available. The school has staff trained to assess for safety and make appropriate recommendations/referrals. It can be uncomfortable having a conversation with your child about such a serious topic; here is a link to an article that gives some [tips](#) for parents. **The [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) (1-800-273-8255) is free, confidential, and available 24/7 for any individual or loved one in crisis.**

Here are some warning signs to look for in your child that *may* indicate they are struggling with a mental health issue and need assistance:

- \*Talking about being a burden, feeling trapped, having no reason to live, or explicit plans to kill themselves.**
- \*Using drugs or alcohol**
- \*Searching ways to hurt themselves online**
- \*Acting recklessly**
- \*Increase in high risk behaviors**
- \*Withdrawing from preferred activities; isolation**
- \*Giving away possessions**
- \*Calling people to say goodbye**
- \*Unexplained change in mood**
- \*Increased irritability, hostility**
- \*Feeling depressed, sad, anxious**

# SUICIDE: PENNSYLVANIA 2017 FACTS & FIGURES

## Suicide Death Rates

	Number of Deaths by Suicide	Rate per 100,000 Population	State Rank
Pennsylvania	1,894	13.92	32
Nationally	44,193	13.26	

Suicide is the **11th leading** cause of death overall in Pennsylvania.



On average, one person dies by suicide **every five hours** in the state.

\$ Suicide cost Pennsylvania a total of **\$1,857,069,000** of combined lifetime medical and work loss cost in 2010, or an average of **\$1,178,343** per suicide death.

IN PENNSYLVANIA, SUICIDE IS THE...

**2nd leading** cause of death for ages 25-34

**3rd leading** cause of death for ages 10-24

**4th leading** cause of death for ages 35-54

**8th leading** cause of death for ages 55-64

**17th leading** cause of death for ages 65 & older

**Nearly three times as many** people die by suicide in Pennsylvania annually than by homicide; the total deaths to suicide reflect a total of **35,180** years of potential life lost (YPLL) before age 65.



Based on most recent 2015 data from CDC. Learn more at [afsp.org/statistics](http://afsp.org/statistics).



AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR  
Suicide Prevention

[afsp.org](http://afsp.org)

## Monthly Mindfulness Tip

### Mind Full, or Mindful?



@forbesoste

**Mindfulness is the basic human ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. (mindful.org)**

Mindfulness....it's quite the buzzword these days, but this ancient practice has been around for thousands of years. I try to practice mindfulness in my day-to-day life and teach those skills to the students I see. I began a morning mindfulness group last year with a few students. Each morning for about 20 minutes we participated in a mindful activity in order to start our day focused on the present, being positive, and without judgement. The group will continue this school year, with hopes of it growing. I will include a mindfulness tip at the end of each newsletter because it is something I am passionate about and want to share with others.

**Mindfulness Basics**

1. It might be challenging at first, but give it some time.
  2. You don't need any special equipment, preferably a space with limited distractions.
  3. The goal is to present or aware of the present moment. Naturally your mind wanders and thoughts pop up. Be aware of those thoughts, without judgement, and bring your attention back to the present.
- .....

**About Me**

I am the mental health therapist for the middle and high school at Keystone Oaks. I am a licensed clinical social worker and have been practicing therapy for the past 8 years with children, teens, and families. I wanted to begin a monthly newsletter for parents with resources, tips, and educational articles about topics applicable to teens and mental health. I would love feedback or suggestions for future newsletters. I also created a website that has more resources for students and parents; when you have a free moment please check it out (link below).

Website: [Connect.Nurture.Grow](http://Connect.Nurture.Grow)

Office Phone: 412-571-6239

Email: [hazlett@kosd.org](mailto:hazlett@kosd.org)

.....

