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*Counseling services are available for children and families.
Please contact me for zoom, in person, and phone sessions.*

LET'S GET MOVING! Physical activity and well-being

Physical activity can serve as a welcome break from schoolwork, create time for connection, and improve physical and mental health. Physical activity in children includes play, sports, chores, games, recreation, physical education, or planned exercise. The World Health Organization suggests that children ages 5 to 17 accumulate at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous physical activity daily. When putting our bodies under physical stress regularly, we teach ourselves how to recover and adapt to stress both physically and mentally. When faced with mental or emotional challenges in life, exercise can help you cope in a healthy way.

MENTAL AND EMOTIONAL BENEFITS:

- **Exercise boosts our brain power.** Physical activity helps create new brain cells and improve overall brain performance. Exercise also increases the size of the hippocampus, the part of the brain responsible for memory, learning, and emotions.
- **Exercise improves our mood and reduces anxiety and stress.** It relieves tension, boosts physical and mental energy, and enhances well-being through the release of endorphins (chemicals produced by our bodies that make us feel good). Exercise can serve as a distraction from negative thoughts and feelings and give a greater sense of control over our well-being.
- **Exercise improves sleep.** Because of the body's natural need to recover from physical activity, exercise can help you fall asleep easier and sleep more soundly throughout the night. Exercise also helps regulate our circadian rhythm, our bodies' internal process of when we feel tired or alert. Sleep is important in maintaining attention, learning, memory, and emotional regulation.
- **Exercise can increase self-esteem and self-confidence.** Regular physical activity is an investment in our mind, body, and soul. Feelings of pride in physical accomplishments can foster a sense of self-worth. Physical activity can make you feel strong, powerful, positive, and more relaxed. It helps us do everything better!

Effective forms of exercise for children combine both high levels of physical activity and play. Playing games such as Simon says, hide and seek, Twister, or freeze dance to everyone's favorite music are fun options. Scavenger hunts can be created in your own backyard or try Geocaching, a real world treasure hunt game that uses GPS enabled devices to find hidden treasure <https://www.geocaching.com/play>. There are many free online classes and various exercise related videos on YouTube. The article, "12 Free Online Exercise Resources for Kids" is a great source for ideas <https://familyguide.com/12-free-online-exercise-resources-for-kids/>. Interested in Yoga? Please join in and listen to a short interview on the basics of yoga followed by a family friendly yoga session <https://vimeo.com/452375155/8d2b288404>. Have fun and get moving!

