



The BHWP Messenger

Culturally relevant,
evidence-based, and
trauma-informed
behavioral health and
wellness resources for
schools, staff, students,
and families.



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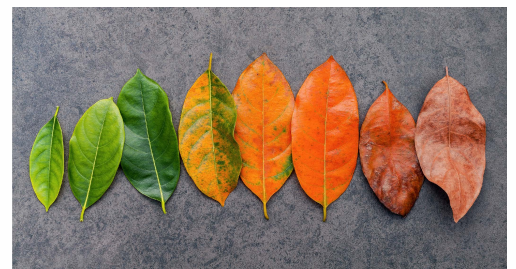
WELCOME TO THE BHWP MESSENGER, a monthly newsletter focused on strengthening the resiliency of students, schools, colleges, universities, and staff. Each issue includes current information about webinars, trainings, resources, effective coping skills, and helpful videos to enhance your knowledge regarding behavioral health and wellness related topics.

Seasonal Affective Disorder

Many Indigenous communities hold seasons in reverence to their way of life. Often the changing seasons signify the beginning or ending of a ceremonial time. The close connection to the environment also brings with it a shift in the body. For some individuals the change in seasons can create unpleasant physical, mental, and emotional symptoms. When this shift in mood, thinking, and behavior occurs at the same time each year with alternating seasons, this type of depression is called seasonal affective disorder (SAD).

Most individuals who experience SAD feel the symptoms begin in the fall or winter when the days become shorter, and daylight is reduced. Their melancholy feelings and signs of SAD typically resolve in the spring with longer daylight hours. Although less common than winter-pattern SAD, “some people may experience depressive episodes during the spring and summer months; this is called summer-pattern SAD or summer depression” (“Seasonal Affective Disorder,” n.d.). According to Mayo Clinic (2021), signs and symptoms of SAD may include having or feeling the following:

- Listless, sad, or down most of the day, nearly every day
- Loss of interest in activities
- Low energy and feeling sluggish
- Sleeping too much
- Experiencing carbohydrate cravings, overeating, and weight gain
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hopeless, worthless, or guilty
- Thoughts of not wanting to live



Fortunately, several activities and treatments can assist those who are experiencing SAD. Treatments include exposure to sunlight, light therapy, psychotherapy, medication, and vitamin D. Some people benefit from sitting close to a window or being outside exposed to sunlight. There is also a treatment that occurs with a special light box mimicking outdoor light and improves brain chemicals linked to mood. During light box treatment, the person sits a short distance from the light box for a certain amount of time during the day, often in the morning. Psychotherapy or talk therapy helps people manage stress, learn healthy coping strategies, and build positive behaviors. Finally, some people benefit from taking medication such as antidepressants or supplementing with additional vitamin D due to the reduced sunlight in the fall and winter months.



In addition to the treatments mentioned above, there are several actions an individual can take to lessen SAD symptoms. According to Johns Hopkins Medicine (n.d.), an individual should consider doing the following:

- Seek help. If someone thinks he/she/they may be depressed, see a healthcare provider as soon as possible.
- Set realistic goals. Do not take on too much.
- Try to be with other people and confide in someone. It is usually better than being alone and secretive.
- Do things to feel better. Go to a movie, garden, or participate in religious, social, or other activities. Doing something nice for someone else can also help someone feel better.
- Get regular exercise.
- Expect one's mood to get better slowly, not right away. Feeling better takes time.
- Eat healthy, well-balanced meals.
- Stay away from alcohol and drugs. These can make depression worse.
- Delay big decisions until the depression has lifted. Before deciding to make a significant transition—change jobs, get married, or divorced—he/she/they should discuss it with others they know well and have a more objective view of the situation.
- Remember: People rarely "snap out of" a depression, but they can feel a little better day by day.
- Try to be patient and focus on the positives. This may help replace the negative thinking that is part of the depression. The negative thoughts will disappear as the depression responds to treatment.
- Let family and friends help.

Leaning into culture is also an effective strategy to lessen symptoms. Consider the following:

- Spend time with an elder or knowledge keeper
- Participate in ceremony
- Host or attend a community meal with traditional foods
- Learn the language, a song, a word, or phrase
- Spend time in prayer or meditation
- Learn to bead, sew, or drum

The changing seasons can be a beautiful time, which is often represented by a cyclical view of the world in many Indigenous cultures. When seasonal changes create unwanted physical, mental, and emotional symptoms it is always best to reach out to a healthcare provider. Try to recognize and address SAD signs and symptoms before they begin affecting daily life. The good news is there are many treatments and activities to assist an individual in remaining healthy and well throughout all seasons of the year.

Navajo Hominy Stew



INGREDIENTS

- 3 cups dried whole white corn
- 12 cups of water
- 16 pieces of diced meat
- Onions
- Herbs

INSTRUCTIONS

Wash the corn, clean dry the corn, soak, and cover overnight.

Combine all ingredients in a pot and cook for 4-6 hours over medium-high heat for stovetop or on high in a crock pot. Stir often and add water when needed. **Don't add water 1 hour before serving, the flavor will be watered down.**

Recipe by [Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Program](#). The Navajo Nation Special Diabetes Program promotes diabetes prevention through nutrition education and physical activity.



Traditional Indigenous Winter Activities

Winter is a time for beloved activities such as snowshoeing and sledding. People may be unaware that these activities were created by Indigenous peoples thousands of years ago. These pastimes, a winter game known as snow snakes, and storytelling are prominent in many northern Tribal communities.



Snowshoes were created as a tool to travel rough terrain covered by snow and ice. Today, adults and youth of all ages use snowshoes for recreation, exercise, and to enjoy time outdoors. Some schools have used snowshoeing and outdoor activities like building snow shelters as opportunities for students to work together and learn Native culture.

Sledding is a fun activity to do with family and friends once the snow falls. Many believe that Anishinaabe, Cree and Innu of Canada, and Chippewa ancestors invented the sled, also known as a toboggan. The Algonquin word for sled or toboggan is odabaggan. Traditionally, toboggans are made by heating or steaming wood, curving the wood into shape, and letting it dry so that it forms a curved shape and easily slides through the snow.

Today, children and youth primarily use sleds for fun, though Tribes once used them to transport heavy loads, including wild game, over the snow, and across long distances. Dogs were also used to assist Native people by pulling sleds, and today there are several well-known dog sled races, such as the Iditarod race and the John Beargrease Sled Dog Marathon. John Beargrease was an Ojibwe man who delivered mail along 90 miles of dangerous Lake Superior shoreline in inclement weather using a dog sled.

The Iroquois developed the winter sport called snow snakes. Playing snow snakes allows participants to have healthy competition with one another by sliding a smooth stick down a hollow track made from snow and ice. Typically, the sticks were made from wood but were sometimes made from bone and had colorful feathers on one end of the snow snake.

The snow snakes were often 9 to 10 feet in length, but today some are adjusted to 2 or 3 feet for younger players. The objective is to send the snow snake farther than other opponents send their snow snakes. Some skilled players have been known to throw the snow snake more than one mile in under three minutes! By engaging in a healthy competition, individuals can grow their own confidence, improve skill building and nurture positive relationships.



The Winter Solstice marks the time for storytelling for many Indigenous Tribes in the Northern Hemisphere. Tribes often tell stories during the winter because the days are shorter and the weather is often inclement. Some Tribes wait until the snow falls to begin telling stories. Another reason storytellers do not tell stories outside of the winter season is that stories often contain animals as main themes or characters. Storytellers use this cold time when animals are less active or hibernate so that the animals will not listen to or overhear the stories about themselves.

Oftentimes, it is respectful to give tobacco to a storyteller, as the story is a gift to the listener. In turn, the storyteller often gives the tobacco to the spirits by putting it on Mother Earth. Some Tribes also dance, pray, sing, and feast during these special Winter Ceremonies.

Winter is a time to appreciate and join in many Indigenous activities. Students, teachers, school staff, and families are encouraged to participate in beautiful winter Indigenous activities. Reach out to others to ask if they want to go snowshoeing, sledding, or to try their hand at building and using a snow snake!

Resources:

The Winter Solstice begins a season of storytelling and ceremony. (2017). Smithsonian Institution. Retrieved December 4, 2022, from <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/blogs/national-museum-american-indian/2017/12/20/american-indian-winter-solstice/>.

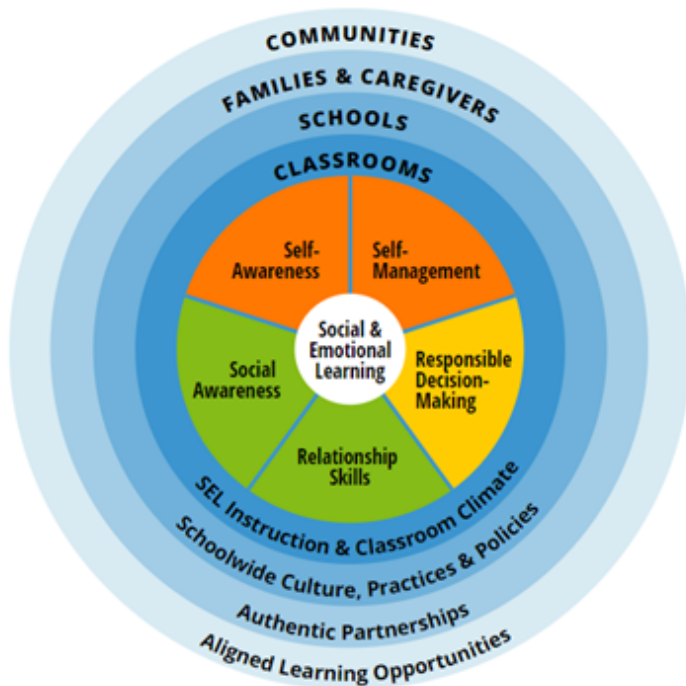
Toboggan - shumín-utapanashku (2005). ***Tipatshimuna***. Retrieved December 3, 2022, from http://www.tipatshimuna.ca/1215_e.php.

[Winter Workout: Enjoy Traditional Native Snow Sports - ICT \(indiancountrytoday.com\)](#)



Social and Emotional Learning

Social and emotional learning (SEL) is a process acquired by all young people and adults to apply the knowledge, skills, and attitude to develop social skills, healthy relationships, and manage emotions. SEL helps build emotional competencies to thrive in an academic setting or life in general. According to the Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL), SEL is the process through which children and adults understand and manage emotions, set and achieve positive goals, feel and show empathy for others, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions. The benefits of SEL are improved academic outcomes, behaviors, and improved lifetime outcomes where the benefits of SEL are long-term. The CASEL framework, also known as the CASEL wheel, foster skills and environments that help progress students learning and development.



The CASEL wheel is mainly used to establish learning standards and competencies for students from preschool to high school. These sections on the wheel portray the information students should know for academic success, social skills, and health and wellness.

One area of SEL that children encounter daily is problem solving. This is sometimes taught in schools, but all too often it is assumed young people know how to solve issues.

During times of conflict, an adult might ask a question like, “Who did this? Did you start the argument?” A more effective method of problem solving is to address it in a way that will help young people own their part of a negative situation and be able to identify several solutions to resolve the problem.

Identify the issue

Describe
your part

List 2–3
solutions

Pick one,
implement,
and evaluate

For example, kids were “play wrestling” and one child got hurt. An adult becomes involved. The adult asks the kids to identify the issue. The child may say, “We were play wrestling, but I got hurt.” Ask each child to describe their part. The child may say, “I got angry and so I hurt him.” The adult asks the kids to identify solutions. Children may identify similar solutions such as not playing anymore, apologizing, or taking some time alone.

Social and Emotional Learning Poster

Use this SEL poster as a reminder of different activities and strategies for integrating SEL into the day. For more SEL printables and resources, please visit:

<https://www.thepathway2success.com/>.

30 Social-Emotional Learning Activities

© Pathway 2 Success

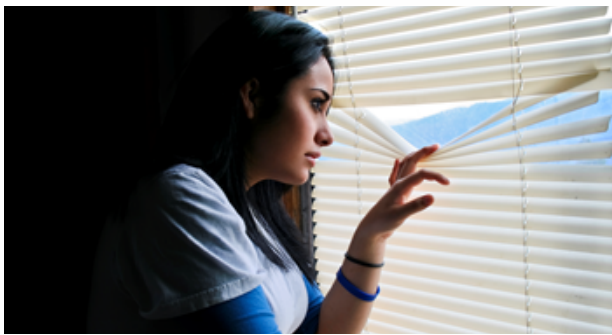


Daily Morning Greetings 	Emotions Check-In 	Journal Writing 	Class Circle Time 	Morning Meeting
Brain Breaks 	Gratitude List 	Mindful Morning Check-In 	Read Alouds 	Practice Coping Strategies
SEL Chats 	End-of-the-Day Reflection 	Positive Affirmations 	SEL Art Activities 	Hold Class Meetings
Weekly Goal Reflection 	SEL Skill of the Day or Week 	Show-and-Tell 	Shout Out Board 	SEL Quote of the Day
SEL Crafts 	Practice Mindfulness 	Social Scenarios 	Play Games and Sports 	Daily Check-In Journal
Daily Jobs 	AM / PM Check-In 	SEL Question of the Day 	Catch-Up and Organizing Time 	Group Challenges

<https://www.thepathway2success.com/30-social-emotional-learning-activities-for-every-classroom/>

Emotional Intelligence and Effective Communication

The Wellness Wednesday webinar in November was titled, **Emotional Intelligence and Effective Communication**. Emotional intelligence is your ability to recognize and understand emotions and your ability to use this awareness to manage your behavior and relationships. Emotional intelligence and effective communication can help communication with family, friends, and co-workers.



Self-awareness helps us recognize our emotions and tendencies in different situations. To help grow your self-awareness, practice being aware of your feelings without labeling them as good or bad. Learning to name our feelings to ourselves helps grow self-awareness.

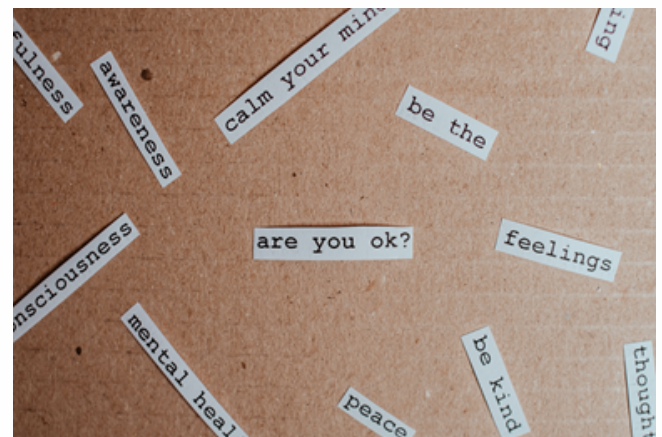
Self-management is our ability to track our emotions and then be able to choose what we say and do. We all have been in situations where we wish that we had not responded so quickly. A self-management strategy is to allow ourselves to pause to notice our feelings and

then choose how to respond to a situation instead of reacting quickly. By practicing self-management, some benefits gained can be taking responsibility for our communication and nurturing relationships.

Self-management in the classroom: Adults who work with young people know communication is more than verbal. An adult's response is especially important when there is potential for escalating student behavior. Young people easily read an adult's tone of voice, facial expression, and body posture. Practicing non-verbal communication that shows a “no matter what, I will care about you” expression in intense times is important.

Adults in young people's lives possess a tremendous power to help grow positive relationships. In all situations, it is the adult's response that decides whether a crisis will be escalated or de-escalated. Practicing self-management along with social awareness can help build positive relationships with students and coworkers in and out of the classroom.

Social Awareness is the ability to recognize emotions and habits of others which also helps us to understand our relationships better. Start by becoming aware of the body language of others when they are communicating with you. What does their posture communicate about how they are feeling?



Relationship management is the combination of all skills just discussed. Achieving an understanding of these skills assists us with meeting our own needs internally and independently, increasing our ability for identifying another person's needs during interactions, and knowing specific ways we can make interactions and our relationships more positive. Relationship management has several benefits which include increasing trust, engaging in healthier interactions, and expanding our communication style.

Speaker-Listener Technique

Rules for the Speaker

- Speak for yourself
- Keep statements short
- Stop to let the listener paraphrase

Rules for the Listener

- Paraphrase what you hear
- Focus on the speaker's message

Rules for Both

- Speaker has the floor
- Speaker keeps the floor while the listener paraphrases
- Share the floor

Resources

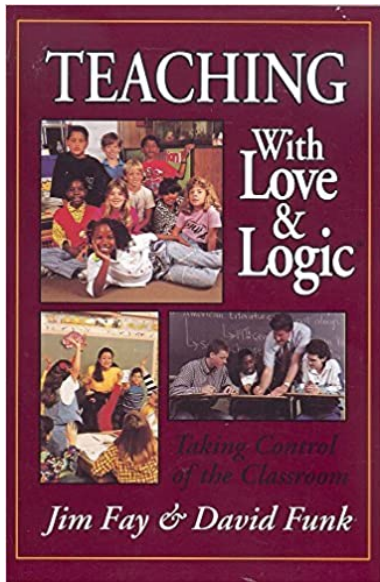
[Edutopia: 8 Proactive Classroom Management Tips](#)

[Emotional Intelligence 2.0](#)

[988 Suicide & Crisis Hotline \(Text 988\)](#)

[Articles and Advice for Educators – Love and Logic Institute, Inc](#)

Book Review for Educators



Our first book review for educators is a book called, ***Teaching with Love and Logic: Taking Control of The Classroom*** by Jim Fay and David Funk.

This book is filled with strategies and tools for teaching young people of all ages respect and responsibility while using problem solving skills in effective and positive ways. It demonstrates how empathy works much better than anger and natural consequences can be more successful than punishment.

Empathy is also an effective way to engage children in solving their own issues.

As Jim Fay explains; “Letting the consequences do the teaching isn't enough. We as teachers must show our empathy—our sincere, loving concern—when the consequences hit. That's what drives the lesson home with children without making them feel as though we're not 'on their side.'”

Consider the following examples:

When Eli's teacher asked him for his homework he said he forgot it.

Angry words: ***“Of course you did. I bet you won't do that again because I have 2 extra assignments for you to do now and during free time.”***

Empathetic words: ***“I know that must feel bad. It would feel bad to me too. Here is the good news though, I have an extra assignment right here. You can work on it now, or during free time. I can help you if you have questions. Good luck and don't forget to ask for help.”***

Remember empathetic words are more effective than angry words.

For more information on this book, please visit: <https://www.loveandlogic.com/>

Meet a Member of Our BHWP Team

Communication Specialist Chantel Atcitty



Yá'át'ééh shik'éeí dóó shidine'ée. Shí éí Chantel Atcitty yinishyé. Bitahnii nisht Kinyaa'áanii bashishchiin Hashtł'ishnii dashicheii Tł'ááshchí'í dashinalí. Ákótégo diné asdzáán nisht. Hello, my friends and relatives, my name is Chantel Atcitty. I'm from the Folded Arms people clan, born for the Towering House people clan; my maternal grandfathers are the mud/clay clan, and my paternal grandfathers are the red cheek clan. I am an enrolled member of the Navajo Nation. I am home-based out of Farmington, New Mexico, near the Four Corners. I have been with BHWP since April 2022 as a communication specialist. My previous work experience as an executive administrative assistant has been beneficial to my current role and with the skills I have learned, I am able to help produce superior products and provide support where needed. Everyone has been welcoming from the moment I started, and I am proud to be a part of a powerful team.

Working behind the scenes for BHWP has allowed me to gain a greater understanding of the knowledge, skills, and behaviors necessary for physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Being a part of this work has taught me to prioritize self-care and my mental health. Having a work-life balance has helped me in tremendous ways as well as making myself a priority when I'm feeling overwhelmed. Connecting with nature is my go-to for immediate stress relief and my self-care plan includes my hobbies.

My hobbies include fishing (especially in Colorado), walking around the parks, road trips/traveling, taking photos, gaming on the PlayStation, and listening to music. Family time is my favorite whether it's movie night or watching the Los Angeles Chargers play during the football season. I am a mom to four well-behaved, yet rambunctious boys who keep me on my toes and motivate me in every way. Part of my emotional wellbeing comes from my kids and putting forth my best efforts for them.



Meet a Member of Our BHWP Team

Care Coordinator Allison Foster



Chokma! My name is Alison Foster, and I am a citizen of Chickasaw Nation. I am also of Cherokee and Muscogee descent. I live in Chickasha, Oklahoma with my husband and two children. I am a care coordinator, and I joined the BHWP team in September. I enjoy the work I do because it challenges me and allows me to work outside of my comfort zone. I appreciate the opportunities this program has given me in the short time I've been here. I also enjoy working with my team and everyone involved in BHWP. Everyone has been welcoming and helpful and I'm so thankful to work with knowledgeable and supportive individuals!

I am currently working on obtaining my bachelor's degree in social work and hope to graduate in fall of 2023. My goal is to continue my education and earn a master's degree in social work. Before starting with BHWP, I was an office coordinator for an outpatient counseling clinic for six years. This is where my interest in mental health began.

I had some of the best coworkers that were passionate about the work they did and seeing the changes that took place within our clients touched my heart. For so long, I wondered what my purpose was and how God would use me. In His time, He has guided me and prepared me to work in this field and to thank Him, I will always give my best.

Some ways I stay healthy spiritually is having a strong foundation, which begins with my faith in Jesus, and includes surrounding myself with positive and encouraging friends and family. I also begin and end each day with prayer, giving thanks to the creator. To stay healthy emotionally and mentally I practice positive self-talk or affirmations. I try to compliment myself throughout the day when I need motivation or during stressful situations to manage my emotions. For my physical health, I recently joined a workout class at my local YMCA.

Any free time I have is usually spent with my family. I love being an auntie to my nephews Samuel, Isaac, Joseph, and Joshua and being a positive influence in the lives of my younger cousins Josiah, Mvhayv, Cecilia, and Zuly! If the weather is right, you can find me outside playing basketball, volleyball, kickball, badminton, or at the park with my children. It is basketball season, so you might also find me cheering on our local Native athletes.

Virtual Talking Circles



BHWP continues to offer two virtual Talking Circles each month. Virtual Talking Circles will occur on Thursday, February 16, 2023, and Tuesday, February 21, 2023.

Both virtual Talking Circles will begin at 1:30 p.m. Pacific, 2:30 p.m. Mountain, 3:30 p.m. Central, and 4:30 p.m. Eastern.

Virtual Talking Circles are available to all staff or employees from Bureau-operated schools (BOS), Tribally-controlled schools (TCS), Navajo District schools, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), Haskell Indian Nations University, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and employees within any BIE department. To get started, we recommend you watch our Talking Circle PSA video, which is available on the [BHWP YouTube channel](#). This will introduce the basics of Talking Circles and encourage interested people to join us for future sessions! You can register by visiting our [events calendar](#)—make sure not to miss out because space is limited.

If your college, university, program, or department has experienced a recent crisis, you can reach out to BHWP for your own Talking Circle with staff/colleagues. Please email biebhw@tribaltechllc.com to coordinate a private Talking Circle.

Upcoming Events and Behavioral Health Conferences

Tribal Public Health Conference 2023

- Date: April 11 – 13, 2023
- Location: Durant, Oklahoma
- Format: TBD
- Price: \$75 early bird opens Dec 1, 2022; \$95 general admission opens Feb 25, 2023
- Registration: <https://tphconference.org/>