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## The BHWP Messenger

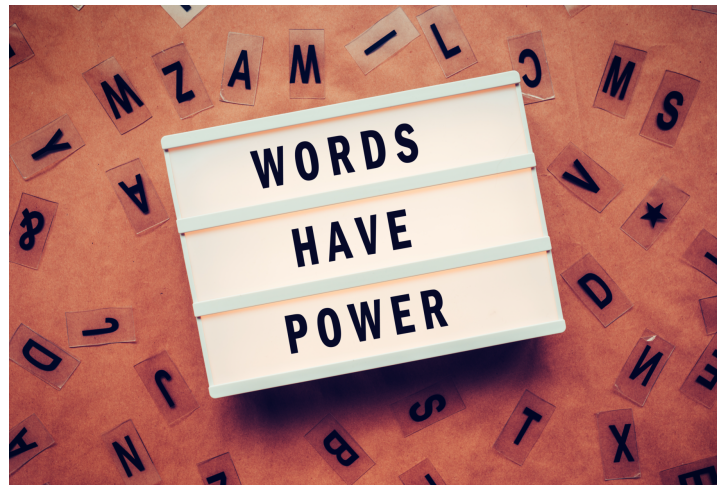
*Culturally relevant, evidence-based, and trauma-informed behavioral health and wellness resources for schools, staff, students, and families*

### Student Experiences – Do Words Really Matter?

By BHWP Behavioral Health Specialist, Carla Parnacher, LCSW

**WORDS HAVE POWER.** Some of my earliest memories are of my *puse* [boh shay] (Muscogee word for *grandmother*) waving to me as I rode the bus home from kindergarten. My *puse* worked in the high school cafeteria.

After her shift ended, she would wait outside of her building and watch for me. She would often find a high school student boarding the same bus and hand them a snack to give to me. My *puse* would instruct the student to tell me “I love you” or “I am happy to see you.” I would receive a cafeteria dessert or dinner roll with the special message. Our small exchange and my *puse*’s thoughtfulness made my 50-minute bus ride home more enjoyable. Each of these interactions grew my relationship with my *puse*.



Words have power; make sure the words that leave your mouth go out in a good way.

During the same school year, I recall my kindergarten class was learning the nursery rhyme, “Hickory Dickory Dock.” The teacher asked for volunteers, and I raised my hand. I sang the song as my *ecke* [idch skii] (Muscogee word for *mother*)

had taught me, in our language, with the use of Muscogee words. The teaching assistant interrupted and immediately stopped me, saying, “We don’t talk like that here.” As a 5-year-old student, I remember

feeling embarrassed and uncertain because I didn’t understand the issue. I felt angry with my *ecke* for not telling me about this unwritten rule that applied outside our home. This unfortunate exchange silenced my future classroom participation for years - and my choice of language.



**WORDS MAKE A DIFFERENCE.** As we communicate with others, whether students or adults, consider their perspectives, experiences, and thoughts. Will your interaction have a positive or negative impact? Words can become lasting memories, like my early kindergarten exchange. Whether positive or negative, words and actions can linger and influence thoughts and actions throughout a lifetime. Statements of affirmation or encouragement are vital, but they may not come easily if important figures in your life did not model this behavior. However, it's especially important for anyone interacting with young people to practice or make an effort.

**“Whether positive or negative, words and actions can linger and influence thoughts and actions throughout a lifetime.”**

Affirmations can be unconditional, and it does not necessarily mean you agree with someone's choice or viewpoint. Children and teenagers need to hear positive words and affirmations about themselves and their efforts. They learn from these experience.

Now take some time and create your own affirming statements and challenge yourself to use them periodically.

Examples to get started are below:

- “Good job!”
- “I am happy I got to see you.”
- “I feel proud of you when you try.”
- “You are strong.”
- “Your braids look good.”
- “I smile whenever I think about you.”
- “You rock!”

## Virtual Talking Circles: June 7 and June 16, 2022

BHWP continues to offer two virtual Talking Circles each month. This month, virtual Talking Circles will occur on Tuesday, June 7, and Thursday, June 16, 2022. Both sessions 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 (HINU), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and employees within any BIE department.



In addition, we invite you to watch our Talking Circle public service announcement (PSA), which is [available here](#) on the BHWP YouTube page. This PSA will briefly introduce you to the basics of a Talking Circles as well as invite you to join us for our next Talking Circle. To register for our next virtual Talking Circles, please [click here](#).

## Meet a member of our BHWP Counseling Team

### BHWP Behavioral Health Specialist Carla Parnacher, LCSW

*Hesci, Osiyo, and Chok'ma!* (Hello!) My name is Carla Parnacher. I am Muscogee and Cherokee from the *Aniwaya* (Wolf) Clan. I also represent a Chickasaw family through my marriage to Jerry Parnacher, Chickasaw and Mississippi Choctaw. We reside on the Chickasaw Reservation and have two sons, two daughters, and eight grandchildren.

I am a BHWP Behavioral Health Specialist. I obtained my Bachelor of Arts degree and Master of Social Work from the University of Oklahoma (OU). I specialize in Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy and Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing. In addition, I am experienced in providing suicide prevention and intervention, gang intervention, and critical incident stress management. I am fortunate to have served Native communities for 28 years.



I am also active in a Native faith-based community. Along with my husband, I serve in mission work across Oklahoma and several reservations. God's word tells us, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything, by prayer and thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God" (Phil. 4:6). I believe self-care starts with spirituality, and this includes prayer, quiet time, and reading scripture. Other activities that are part of my self-care plan include trail running, time with my family, tending to my hummingbird flower garden, and OU sports (BOOMER!).

## Wellness Wednesday

The next Wellness Wednesday webinar will be held June 08, 2022. The topic is "Talking Circles." This webinar will focus on the history, types, and benefits of Talking Circles and the evolution to virtual Talking Circles. The presentation will teach participants how to start a virtual Talking Circle within their community. The webinar will be led by Dave Brave Heart, Adrienne "Riinii" Shipman, and Crystal "Nikki" Factor.



To register, please [click here](#) to visit the event page. After registering for this event, you will receive a confirmation email with the meeting link to join via Zoom and add the webinar to your calendar. *Note:* You may need to check your email inbox folders, including the spam or junk folder. Webinar start times are 1:30 p.m. Pacific, 2:30 p.m. Mountain, 3:30 p.m. Central, and 4:30 p.m. Eastern.

We look forward to seeing you there!

### Subscribe to our YouTube Channel

	The BIE Behavioral Health and Wellness Program	<a href="#">SUBSCRIBE</a>
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Subscribe and “Ring the bell” of the BHWP YouTube channel and receive updates when Wellness Wednesday webinars, Cultural Connections, or other videos are released. Please click the “SUBSCRIBE” image above to visit our YouTube page and subscribe.

**We welcome your suggestions for the BHWP Messenger.**  
Contact us at [biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com](mailto:biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com)