

WILLIAM ANNIN MIDDLE SCHOOL
Counseling Office
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Amy Stem
Student Assistance Counselors

March 20, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We hope you and your family are well, and that the impact on your personal lives has been manageable as we begin our second week of distance learning.

We continue to be available via email during the school day.

- 6th grade counselors: **Cara Rychecky** (Gold and Green teams); **Jamie Sutton** (Blue team)
- 7th grade counselors: **Marissa Berkowitz** (Gold and Green teams); **Andy West** (Blue team)
- 8th grade counselors: **Lori Thompson** (Blue and Green teams); **Andy West** (Gold team)
- Student Assistance Counselors: **Dr. Barbara Kurlansik** (6), **Amy Stem** (7), **Jamie Sutton** (8)

We understand that working independently at home, without daily teacher direction, is difficult for many children. Most children need help organizing their day and structuring their time in order to responsibly complete school work. It is always a balancing act of providing support when needed without doing too much or too little to help. These [homework tips for middle school](#) may be helpful as you navigate distance learning this week.

We also have a [sheet of tips](#) about log-in's and such to help you access school and teacher sites. These will also be available on the [WAMS Counseling Distance Learning Site](#).

Children can become more distressed if they see repeated images or hear repeated reports of the outbreak in the media. It is recommended that children not be exposed to continuous coverage and instead, continue their normal media exposure. Monitoring your child's social media activity becomes more of a challenge when they have more time and access. **Balancing social media with more healthy activities is more important than ever.** For more information, check [Commonsense Media](#).

The **parenting information sheets** shared in last week's letter [COVID-19, Helping families cope](#) provide solid guidelines for continued family discussion and answering children's questions. Everyone acts differently in stressful situations and it would not be unusual for children to worry about their health or the health of loved ones, have difficulty sleeping, have difficulty with "boredom", argue more with parents and/or siblings. Physical activity, creative arts, maintaining contact with friends, being productive and keeping up with school work, and showing responsibility helping around the house can add to a child's resilience in this challenging time.

We know that public health emergencies are stressful and can create fear and anxiety. When fear and anxiety increase, so does the **potential for social stigma and discrimination** when individuals associate certain people or ethnicities with a disease. Some groups, like persons of Asian descent, persons who have traveled, or emergency responders and health care professionals may experience stigma at this time. **The best way to stop stigma is to share factual information and effective prevention measures.**

We encourage you and your child to visit the [BTPS School Counseling Distance Learning Site](#) for daily study tips, wellness tips, coping skills, and activities that are posted.

If you have concerns about your child's emotional or mental health, we recommend these resources:

- your primary care physician/ pediatrician
- mental health practitioners/ therapists accessible through your health insurance provider
- [NJ PerformCare services for children](#)
- [Richard Hall Community Mental Health](#) Children's Outpatient Services, Bridgewater
- [Somerset County PESS](#) (Psychiatric Emergency Screening Service/ Mobile Outreach) via Bridgeway.
- [Crisis Intervention Atlantic Health](#), Morristown Medical Center

From all of us here at WAMS Counseling Department, we are here to support you.

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