

The Counseling Connection

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Dear DRMS Parents & Guardians,

It is that time of year where we begin looking at academic and career planning. PCS offers an excellent program to help organize students for life after high school. This program is called Major Clarity and while your student will use this program in more detail in high school, middle school is the perfect time to

start investigating and becoming familiar with the program. I have worked with the 8th graders and plan to meet with 6th and 7th grade before the semester is over. Your student can also access this program from home, so



please ask them about this and let them show you all the neat things Major Clarity has to offer.

"The secret of getting ahead is getting started."

- Mark Twain

What is Major Clarity?

Oftentimes students graduate high school and are lost about what they want to do next. Major Clarity allows students to begin as early as 6th grade investigating what they are interested in and making a plan for life after high school. This

program is an online program that allows students to explore career pathways and participate in activities and mock interviews surrounding careers that may interest them. Using a personality and learning style

quiz, MC helps students build a portfolio and a career plan based on their interests and skills. This plan will follow them through high school setting them up for success.

Let's Talk Anger

Lately the counseling department has seen a lot of students struggling with anger. We all experience anger, but it is how we control and manage our anger that counts. The middle school years, while at times tumultuous, can also be so valuable for students to begin recognizing emotions and how to appropriately handle them.

Working with your child through this tough emotion will help set them up for success in their future. Anger can be a very slippery slope and if students aren't taught how to regulate the emotion it can become a big problem and an unhealthy coping mechanism.



First, what is anger?

Anger is a secondary emotion. If you learn anything about your child and anger, learn that the anger is masking something else going on. We are quick to label students as having anger problems, but really there is something way deeper going on and to protect themselves it comes out as anger. It could be that something happened at school, or they feel stressed or overwhelmed, scared/sad, frustrated, or even exhausted. The point is to understand that when they react out of anger, it is time to dive in deeper to see

what the bigger picture is. Sometimes in the middle school years feelings that were dormant for years start to resurface and it comes out as anger. Middle school is tricky because they aren't quite adults, but they aren't little children anymore either. They are beginning to see the world through another lens and sometimes that is a negative experience, which results in anger. Your teen might not have an attitude problem just for no reason. They are dealing with a lot and regulating emotions is tough!

***"Where there is anger,
there is always pain
underneath."
- Eckhart Tolle***

An Example

"Johnny" got into a disagreement at school with one of his best friends and it is weighing heavily on his mind. When he got home he was irritated and short with his family. When his mom asked him to start on his homework he lashed out at her and threw his book bag across the room. Mom grounded him for this outburst.

"Johnny" absolutely should have a consequence for this behavior, but what Mom didn't realize is that doing homework really had nothing to do with the outburst. It wasn't so much that he was being defiant, it was that he didn't know how to process what he was feeling and it came out as anger.



How can parents help?

First, TALK to your child. They might refuse to respond and share at first, but the more you try to talk to your child, the more they will eventually open up. You'd be surprised how much they will tell you if you are willing to listen.

Secondly, MODEL proper ways to handle anger. Adults are human too and sometimes react negatively when they feel anger. It is important, however, to show our adolescents the correct way to handle anger. Practice discussing versus yelling; using re-

spectful language versus degrading someone; cooling down versus trying to argue when the anger is highest.

Lastly, HELP your child recognize what triggers their anger and discuss ways to handle these situations when they arise.

The Shame of Anger

Anger creates an incredible amount of shame for anyone, but especially for adolescents. Most students spiral in an angry moment because they don't want to be behaving that way, but literally feel out of control and unable to stop what they are doing. When talking with your child about their anger, tell them they are normal, that

you understand, and that we all experience anger, but we just have to find a better way to handle it. Work **WITH** your child, not against them.



Send them our way!

Concerned about your child's anger or attitude? Do you feel like something is wrong, but your child can't articulate it? Do you feel like your child just has a constant chip on their shoulder ready to spout

off at any second? If so, please send them to the counseling office to see Ms. Uitto or Ms. Chandler. We want to help and can help your child through this tough time.





Questions?

Please reach out if you have any questions or would like more information about the support we offer here at Dan River Middle School to ensure success for all students.

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Middle School Parenting Tip #4

Help teach your child how to identify their emotions. Keep it simple and give them these five choices: mad, sad, glad, bad (shame/guilt), or afraid. The hard part about getting your child to talk to you is they don't know how to articulate what they are feeling. Typically students can identify from that list and then it opens up the conversation from there.

