



26 January 2021

Dear EHS Guardians, Parents and Learners,

MESSAGE FROM THE COUNSELLING DEPARTMENT

BACK TO SCHOOL

MONDAY 15 FEBRUARY 2021



A. ESPECIALLY FOR GRADE 8'S

Practice wearing your mask before school opens so that it becomes more comfortable. Use this time to think about your goals for Grade 8 and what you would like to accomplish this year.

B. THANK YOU TO PARENTS

Before we address the return of learners on Monday the 15th of January 2021, we would like to salute all parents for supporting your children during lockdown – and assisting them with their online school work to the best of your ability.

This is something which many of you were previously not exposed to and we understand that at times, this may have caused additional stress, whilst you were possibly working yourself and having to run your households in new and restricted ways.

C. LEARNERS' NEEDS

Before their return to school, we would like to reassure you that EHS will be comprehensively addressing both learners' physical health and emotional wellbeing from day 1 onwards.

The Counselling Department will be on standby to deal with any fears/worries which may surface, on a one-to-one basis. We have two full-time counsellors and one part-time counsellor.

D. STAFF READINESS

Last year, EHS teachers were briefed by a Medical Expert on Covid-19 in order to provide them with a thorough understanding of the virus and how it should be managed in a school setting (in line with Department of Education protocol).

An EHS Employee Wellness Programme was also launched in 2020 to support teachers and other school staff. This ongoing backing strengthens our Team – and thereby ensures that learners receive our best attention and care.

E. CLARITY REGARDING THE VIRUS ITSELF

If any questions regarding Covid-19 remain in your mind, we would recommend that you review the following website: www.sacoronavirus.co.za. It contains various resources, an emergency hotline and tool kits for coping as well as news and updates.

F. IF YOU ARE CONCERNED OR NEED COUNSELLING

From Tuesday 26 January onwards, you may contact the Counselling Department if you're concerned about your child, or you're an EHS learner wanting to set up a telephonic/online counselling session for yourself. You are also welcome to refer a friend if you're worried about them. Please contact:

- **Mrs K. Hartel** (Head of Counselling, Social Worker) at khartel@edenvalehigh.co.za;
or
- **Ms J. Padarath** (Registered Counsellor) at jpadarath@edenvalehigh.co.za.

We will be available on week days from 09h00-12h00 for counselling and/or enquiries. Our part-time colleague, **Mr J. Sinclair** will be available during similar times until school opens. He may be contacted at jsinclair@edenvalehigh.co.za.

*** Also, check out our '**EHS Counselling Department**' **Google Classroom**. The access code is: k4325ah. (Here we will be uploading various practices to increase positivity and other tools to help you manage your thoughts and emotions).

G. COPING AT HOME WITH ONGOING LOCKDOWN

The EHS Counselling Department would like to offer some suggestions and coping skills for daily living during lockdown, which we hope will aid in supporting your psychological and emotional wellbeing at home. At the end of this document we have also listed some organizations which you may contact for assistance if necessary.

HELPFUL TIPS FOR DAILY LIVING

- 1.** Accept that **some anxiety and fear is normal** – none of us are immune to these feelings. Try to identify and allow all of your feelings rather than deny them. Try to be kind to yourself. This includes being in tune with yourself, acknowledging your feelings and validating them.
- 2. Take a few minutes to assess yourself every day.** Check in with yourself in the mornings & evenings, asking yourself how you are. At the end of each day, reflect on your experiences and set your intentions for the following day.
- 3.** If you notice that you are upset or anxious, **sit still for a few moments** and breathe deeply into your body, imagining that you're receiving whatever it is that you need, say peace and calm. You may even use this time to offer yourself kind affirmations such as, may I be happy, may I be healthy, may I be safe, may I live with ease.
These self-awareness exercises may be used several times a day during times of extreme stress. (Take some relaxation time after the check-in if your stress levels are very high).
- 4.** Once you've acknowledged them to yourself, **it's helpful to share your thoughts and feelings** with family or friends so that you give them the opportunity to support you.
- 5. Try to find a balance.** Now more than ever, make an effort to introduce balance into your daily life and work-space. **Stay on top of things** but know when to take a break (your personal daily check-ins will help with this).
- 6.** The easiest way to bring balance into your life is to set up a **daily routine**. Plan your work and your rest/relaxation around any other activities which you may wish, or need to complete every day. Allocating the same time each day for school work will help you to stay committed and focused.

- 7. Learners, you must log onto Google classroom and the school Communicator, to see what work has been posted.** *If you do not have internet access or the financial means to participate online, please ask your parent/guardian to contact Mrs Hartel (email above), so that we may track learners who are at a genuine disadvantage.*
- 8. Eat healthily, get enough sleep, exercise regularly.** Stressful times can result in healthy routines being disrupted, or the development of unusual habits such as comfort eating. Try not to fall into any behavior patterns which are unhelpful for you, or your companions at home. Try to eat regular, healthy meals and snacks to keep your energy up.
Getting enough sleep is of the utmost importance, however watch out not to sleep too much as this is a form of avoidance and will reduce your motivation levels.
- 9. Try to exercise more regularly** when you are stressed - happy endorphins are released into your body when you exert yourself and your workout will also give you more energy. A minimum of 20 minutes 3 times per week is recommended to get these positive juices flowing.
There are plenty of **home exercise routines** you can follow online which don't require any equipment, just using your own body weight. If you would like an expert to recommend basic exercises for you, you may contact Mrs Hartel (email above) and she will arrange for the LO Sport Department to contact you directly.
- 10.Keep up with social connections.** Do not underestimate the power of meaningful interactions. Use social media intentionally, only to keep up to date and sustain your relationships – it's important to surround yourself with positive vibes and good news.
- 11.Steer clear of social media forums which promote fear and panic** – they are harmful for your mental health. Also be careful not to waste too much time on social media as it is often a negative distraction which can become obsessive. (When interacting with others on Whatsapp or any other social platform ask yourself, does this **truly benefit** me or those around me? If not, disengage).

12. It is helpful to **allocate only a limited, specific amount of time** each day to being on your phone, tablet or laptop for social reasons. We would suggest a maximum of 2 hours – and stop at least an hour before bed to allow your mind to relax.

13. Ask for support if you need it! Again, it is normal to feel ‘not okay’ at times. It’s important to ask for help, whether it be from your family, friends or Counsellors (see below for telephonic & online support).

14. Think of others. Every time you wash your hands, perhaps send out prayers/good energy for those who are less fortunate than you, who are experiencing extreme suffering during lockdown. Whilst washing quietly say, may all others be happy, may all others be healthy, may all others be safe, may all others live with ease.

We wish you all courage, loving kindness, good health and all the support from your family, friends and community that you may need during this unusual time.

Warm Regards,

The EHS Counselling Department

-See Useful Resources below-

TELEPHONIC & ONLINE MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

SMS 31393 or 32312 and a counsellor will call you back (available 24/7)

SADAG Helplines free telephonic counselling & information call 0800 21 22 23 or 0800 70 80 90

Suicide Helpline 0800 567 567

Lifeline National Helpline 0861 322 322

Child-line 0800 55 555

Cipla WhatsApp chat line 076 882 2775

The SADAG website, www.sadag.org contains free online videos, reliable resources, coping skills and information on social distancing, self-isolation, etc.