



# KALAMAZOO CHRISTIAN SCHOOLS

Undeniably Christian. Academically Excellent.

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## Nurturing and Developing Emotional Health

One of the guiding principles of Christian education focuses on the nurture and development of the whole child—academically, physically, spiritually, and emotionally. With the daily pressures of the current culture, students are experiencing higher levels of and more frequent bouts with mental health concerns and crises like anxiety and depression. As part of their work, teachers and staff assist students with navigating the choppy waters of emotional health concerns and every day come alongside them by regularly reminding students that paying attention to and caring for their mental health is equally as important as caring for their physical health. Listed below are several general strategies to help students to maintain healthy emotional life:

1. **Get Enough Sleep.** The amount of sleep you get at night has a significant impact on your overall health and mood. It's important to establish a regular sleep schedule and get at least 8 hours of sleep each night.
2. **Exercise.** When you exercise, your body produces chemicals that make you feel better—both physically and mentally. Exercising regularly doesn't have to be a grueling experience; going for a brisk walk or bike ride can give you the results you desire.
3. **Eat Healthy.** Food is fuel. Putting the right fuel in your body by eating a healthy, balanced diet with plenty of fruits and vegetables can improve brain function and improve your mood.
4. **Talk to Someone.** Actively develop healthy, positive relationships with family and friends. Sharing your thoughts and feelings with a trusted person is a great way for you to process. Hearing others' perspectives and learning from others will often strengthen your mental health.
5. **Address Stress.** People who carry and live with high levels of stress have a greater risk of emotional or mental crisis. It is important to develop strategies which assist in reducing your stress levels and the feeling of being overwhelmed.
6. **Be Grateful.** Notice and acknowledge the good things in your life. Reflect on how those good things make you feel. Thank the people in your life who have contributed to making these good things happen.
7. **Help Someone Else.** Reaching out to people who could use your help has proven to be an effective way of reducing stress and improving your mental health. Consider volunteering at a local non-profit. It will make you feel good about yourself!
8. **Reflect.** Put the phone away and turn the TV off. Create time in your day for rest, relaxation, and quiet reflection. Consider jotting your thoughts down in a journal.
9. **Reach Out for Help.** Sometimes we consult with a medical doctor to help us with our physical health. Taking care of your mental health is equally important; seeking out help

in this area is not a sign of weakness. If you'd like to feel better, talk to a certified counselor, psychologist, psychiatrist, or your family doctor.

Occasionally, life's situations cause students to be anxious—the beginning (or end) of a school year; waiting to hear if they made the team or passed the test; or maybe a disagreement with a friend. In anxiety inducing situations the body responds by releasing hormones which can increase heart rates and breathing and can sometimes produce feelings of nervousness, overwhelmedness, or hopelessness. Ordinarily, anxious feelings go away when stress levels are reduced or a problem is solved. The following strategies and techniques may help children work through their anxiety:

1. **Take deep breaths.** Slow, deep breathing is a great way to bring a calm and relaxed feeling.
2. **Get plenty of rest.** Set a goal of sleeping at least 8 hours each night.
3. **Visualize.** Close your eyes and picture yourself in a quiet, serene setting.
4. **Exercise.** Physical movement reduces stress and makes you feel better. Go for a walk or a bike ride.
5. **Talk to someone.** Talking through anxiety inducing situations with a person you trust will help you reflect on the situation and put things in perspective.

For some people, however, more severe symptoms associated with anxiety—excessive worry and fear, difficulty sleeping and concentrating, feeling irritable, restless, and on edge—persist and can affect their well-being and can interfere with their day-to-day living. Parents, if you notice your child becoming overly (both frequency and intensity) anxious, take some time to talk with your child and consider consulting with a counselor or medical doctor; both can help with finding ways to cope with high levels of anxiety.

The students at Kalamazoo Christian are blessed to be part of a caring Christian school community whose prayer is for its students to grow and develop into healthy Christian citizens who reflect Christ's image and make a Kingdom difference in the world.

- **Dirk Walhout, High School Principal**

