HİSAR OKULLARI İSTANBUL

GUIDANCE BULLETIN

Psychological Counseling and Guidance

March 2023

Supporting the Sense of Security

Hello Dear Parents,

In the process we entered the 2nd month after the pain we went through, we continue to manage complicated emotions and look for ways to stay well together. We try to create our inner balance, we strive to bring together our sense of security, belonging, competence and positive feelings.

While we are going through another period where we prioritize the mental health of our students more than ever before their academic success, we are in a period when it would be good to talk about our feelings as all stakeholders, to value our relationships, and to maintain our routines with all our strength.

As psychological counselors and educators, we know the importance of establishing safe connections with our students, being aware of how this affects the healthy development of the brain, strengthens cognitive flexibility and relationships, we continue to do our supportive, developmental and preventive work to help children/young people access their most valuable internal resources - self-regulation skills.

As psychological counselors and educators, we know the importance of establishing safe connections with our students, being aware of how this affects the healthy development of the brain, strengthens cognitive flexibility and relationships, we continue to do our supportive, developmental and preventive work to help children/young people access their most valuable internal resources - self-regulation skills.

While supporting their development, we ensure that our students have learning experiences that encourage the development of empathy, cooperation, sense of belonging and meaningful friendship skills. We wish them to find the potential to get rid of the feelings of defeat and helplessness in this development process, and to be resistant to the new challenges they have faced in their lives and will face from now on.

We will continue to provide guidance that helps us do well in an emotionally nurturing learning environment…

Warm Regards,

Sibel Yalkın
Head of Psychological Counseling and Guidance Department
Hisar School

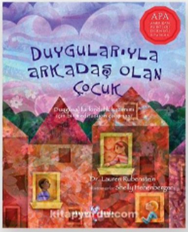
Preschool

“Strong Bonds”

While we were waiting for our students with longing and excitement after the holiday, the opening date of our schools was postponed due to the sad and shocking news of an earthquake, and we were all alone with feelings of sadness, fear, anger and anxiety. I am sure that it has not been easy for you to try to cope with difficult emotions during your stay at home with the children, to support them and to keep them away from the screen. But in this process, we have once again seen how effective it is for children to act and cooperate with you. Of course, as educators, there were issues that occupied our minds and wondered. In particular, what our students know about the earthquake, their anxiety levels, and their needs were among the most important issues for us to observe and follow. Because we know how challenging it can be at times to regulate emotions for this age group; however, we are fortunate that we have strong bonds with our students. Thanks to these strong bonds, our students are aware that we will embrace them, that they can relax by sharing and expressing whatever emotion comes to their visit.

We believe in the healing power of sharing and solidarity, and we wish the continuation of our cooperation with you, our parents, during these difficult times.

Book Recommendation:



Did any emotion come to your visit today?
Can you open the door and invite them to play?
Can you ask what you came for?
Can you say hello and greet and listen to?

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Primary School

"Psychological First Aid at School"

When we encounter unfamiliar situations, we try

to return to our familiar, safe spaces and routines as soon as possible. As a result of the sad earthquake that occurred during the semester break, our perception of security was shaken and our level of anxiety increased. With the break in training, the routines were also broken. The disruption of routines, the sadness and anxiety we experience have brought about the need and questions of us adults and children to be safe. After this process, where we met with our students online, when we returned to school, we observed that our students had different information, details and experiences, heard their needs and answered their questions.

While continuing our individual meetings with the students in need within the scope of "Psychological First Aid at School" activities, we thought, wrote, illustrated and shared our resources for well-being in our group studies together through the "Feeling Good Booklet". We all need to be together, helping and solidarity in difficult times, while we were thinking about our resources that are good for us, our students shared in this direction.

We draw strength from resources that support our psychological well-being in order to pursue our life goals and move forward with the challenges we face. While children try to understand and make sense of what is going on around them with the reactions and beliefs of adults, it is also important for us as adults to be able to recognize, diversify and feed on their resources.

With love and solidarity…

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Middle School

“Sexual Health Education"

Middle School years are the years when the development of students in many areas accelerated, became visible and children had difficulty in keeping up with this development from time to time. While development starts in the physical area, emotional fluctuations begin, increasing the acceleration of cognitive development that started in previous years. The growing child tries to get used to his/her new and changing body and unpredictable developments.

In this direction, we try to make our students realize how their emotions affect their behaviors, their body changes and that these changes are a natural part of the adolescence period, with the "Sexual Health Education" program. Organized with the participation of the Turkish Family Health and Planning Foundation (TAP Foundation); This program, which aims to create personal boundaries of our students, to recognize and appreciate their bodies, to question their gender roles, to support their sexual development, to create awareness of the concept of safe sexuality and to prevent risky behaviors, was carried out by expert trainers at the secondary school level.

After these classes, which our students attend with interest, we can observe an increase in questions and curious research at home. In such cases, it will be useful to remain calm, to provide age-appropriate and correct information, and to answer only the questions. We recommend that you give more space to the importance of personal boundaries, to respect the boundaries of the child, to the thought that "no" is really "no" in your daily life. At the same time, it is very important for you to follow and participate in our "Sexual Health Education" parent seminar planned for the 4th quarter, where Mr. Efsun Sertoğlu will be the speaker.

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High School

“Psychological First Aid”

After closing the first semester by saying "see you in two weeks" to each other, we have returned back to school exactly one month later because of a sudden, uncontrollable and unpredictable situation. We started this term with the awareness of our students' adaptation issues after an extended break. We also structured our counseling program according to the emotional strains that could be caused by the recent earthquake disaster in the country. As the High School Counseling Department, we planned the content of the first lessons after the disaster with our homeroom teachers. We started the individual follow-up process with those in need by opening up space for students to share their feelings and thoughts in these classes. For our counseling sessions in March, we included a lesson called “Psychological First Aid'' which covers practical tools that can be used by our students in order to regulate their emotions in crisis or disaster situations.

With a holistic and inclusive perspective in mind, we also provided information for our teachers about psychosocial intervention and psychological first aid. On the other hand, we created sharing groups in order to support our teachers' well-being. Participation was voluntary and the agenda was structured with expressive art activities and mindfulness practices. Lastly for our parents, we held sharing groups called “Mental Injury: Secondary Trauma” on a level basis.

Yaşanan her zorlayıcı dönemde olduğu gibi, bugün de tüm Hisar Okulları toplumu olarak dayanışma içinde bir aradayız. Biliyoruz ki bireysel ve kolektif alanda uygulayacağımız ilk yardımın bu günlerin daha sağlıklı atlatılmasındaki rolü çok büyük. Ebeveyn olarak duygularınızı fark edip tanımlamanız, onları ifade edebilmeniz, duygularınızı düzenlemeye yardımcı kaynaklarınızı tanımanız ve onları dengelenmeye katkı sağlayacak stratejileri kullanabilmeniz, çocuklarınızın da bu becerileri içselleştirmesi için son derece önemlidir. Her zaman olduğu gibi bu süreçte de gündelik hayatın işlevselliğinin etkilendiği noktalarda bizlerle iletişime geçebileceğinizi hatırlatmak isteriz.

Book Recommendation

Korku çağında çocuk yetiştirmek
ŞENİZ PAMUK
THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
BÜTÜN-BEYİNLİ ÇOCUK KİTABININ YAZARINDAN
ERGEN BEYİN REHBERİ
DANIEL J. SIEGEL
Anne Baba Akademisi
Ey Travma Bizden Uzak Dur!
Travma varsa direnç de vardır...
Peter A. Levine - Maggie Kline
ÇOCUKLUK TRAVMASINI TANIMAK ENGELLEMEK VE İYİLEŞTİRMEK
BİR ÇOCUĞUN GÖZÜNDEN TRAVMA
PETER A. LEVINE, PH.D.
MAGGIE KLINE

- Raising Children in an Age of Fear by Şeniz Pamuk
- Teenage Brain by Daniel J. Siegel
- Trauma Proofing Your Kids by Peter Levine & Maggie Kline
- Trauma Through a Child’s Eyes by Peter Levine

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Supporting the Sense of Security in Children and Adolescents

Life is full of beauties, challenges, ups, and downs. The world we live in can bring us happy lives, and sometimes it can bring unexpected, unpredictable, and insurmountable events that develop suddenly. Although the reactions given after such events vary from person to person, the search for security and meaning can be seriously shaken by the perception that the outside world is a dangerous place.

Security,
The state of being protected from threats to one's physical and mental integrity or property, and feeling away from dangers.

In Maslow's hierarchy of needs, physiological needs are the most basic, followed by the need to be safe. Individuals whose physiological needs are met want to feel safe. Security is defined as "the state of being protected from threats to one's physical and mental integrity or property, and feeling away from dangers." Like self-confidence, it is very important for mental health to feel safe and trust others.

Our children, as well as adults, witness traumatic events; they can hear the same information through television and social media, and they can overhear conversations at home and at school. It is normal for children and young people to feel anxious and insecure in the face of what they witness. However, trust is such a basic emotion, it is the first step of self-confidence which is the most important factor in personality development. Supporting our children's feelings of trust involves supporting their physical, emotional, and cognitive development in the period when they learn how to trust themselves, others, and the world as they grow up and prepare for life.

What is the Role of Sense of Security in the Child's Development?

The foundation of the sense of security, which is critical for human survival, is laid by establishing a healthy contact with the caregiver after birth. It is inevitable that people who establish a secure bond with their caregiver and those who cannot, have different stances towards life. Security allows children and young people to make their own decisions without being dependent on their caregivers. They are able to act boldly and assertively. The sense of security is an integral part of people's ability to evaluate situations and make informed decisions in life.

It is also crucial in the development of psychological resilience. Psychological resilience, which is the key to an individual's self-development, gives the person confidence to try new things, to struggle against difficulties and to overcome these difficulties successfully. Psychological resilience is also a strong defense mechanism that prevents psychological suffering and is used by the individual to cope with stress and fight anxiety.

Due to his nature and existence, people experience anxiety in order to survive and to realize themselves. By providing a healthy management of existential anxiety, security enhances the functionality and well-being of the individual. Children and young people who feel secure can handle their anxiety better when faced with sudden and stressful events than those with a low sense of security. Children and young people who trust themselves and their environment act responsibly towards both themselves and the society as cooperative and sharing individuals. A high sense of responsibility facilitates children and young people to lead a free, independent and self-confident way of life.

Why Is the Sense of Security Damaged?

Throughout human history, overcoming the fear of the world beyond has been a constant challenge. Throughout history, humans have faced a multitude of fears that have evolved with time. In ancient times, people feared natural disasters such as storms and floods, which could wipe out entire communities. They also feared wild animals that posed a threat to their safety and survival. By acknowledging our limitations, we can become more mindful of our actions and decisions, taking calculated risks rather than blindly charging forward. We can also learn to lean on others for support when needed, recognizing that we do not have to face every challenge alone. As this paradox between man's omnipotence and helplessness, in other words, confronting one's own fragility and limitations, can make him more anxious and sometimes angry, it is not surprising to find the sense of security shaken at the root of all this.

Some characteristics of challenging experiences, especially traumatic events, have important effects on the harming of people's sense of security. Some of these experiences are as follows:

- It creates a perception that the person is vulnerable.
- It causes uncertainty. In case of uncertainty, people may have difficulty finding their way.
- It causes loss of one's support resources. These resources are sometimes external resources such as a loved one, a pet, a job, and sometimes internal resources such as courage and self-confidence.
- With its unpredictable, sudden and destructive structure, the person says, "I cannot protect myself from this.", "I cannot control it." causes such thoughts.
- It includes the process of loss and mourning. Even if the person does not live

directly, because of what he has witnessed, “Such events can tear my loved ones away from me.” may have thought.

- It causes the person to form dysfunctional thoughts about himself, others, and the world. Thoughts play an important role in the formation of emotions.
- It shakes their future plans, their search for meaning.

Who Is More At Risk?

The above-mentioned features leave a certain degree of shocking and hurtful effects on children and youth from all walks of life. However, when all segments of the society are evaluated, there are various features and life events that make some individuals stand out more than others. It is very important that these people are closely observed during the process and prioritized while intervening.

Attachment Problems:

Having a healthy relationship with the first caregiver during infancy is critical for developing a sense of trust in the baby. Individuals who feel that they will be fed, protected and emotionally cared for in infancy experience a healthy attachment process. Children and young people who have experienced disruptions in these processes are more likely to be individuals who have difficulty in recognizing and expressing their emotions. They will have difficulty in connecting with their environment, and experience intense anxiety and mood transitions. In the negative events experienced, these individuals' sense of security may be shaken more than their peers.

Parental Attitudes:

Overprotective parents are those who display overprotective behaviors compared to the real risk levels in their environment and the developmental stage of their children. On the other hand, in authoritarian parental attitudes, excessive commitment without bending the rules, the need to control more than giving care is observed. Children who grow up in such families may need support for their sense of security more in the face of traumatic events, as they may experience difficulty in making decisions, shyness, and inadequacy in social relations.

Personality Traits:

Individuals with certain personality and temperament traits that are common in society may be considered to be more at risk compared to their peers in the face of life events that shake their sense of security. Especially when children and young people with anxiety, shyness or introvert personalities cannot reach sufficient social support and cannot express their feelings comfortably, their fear of rejection may increase and they may have difficulties in the context of security.

Psychological Difficulties:

Children and young people who already struggle with psychological difficulties such as attention deficit, impulsivity, anxiety, depression, obsession or phobia etc. before the challenging events should be evaluated in the risk group. They may have more difficulties than their peers in times of crisis because of their existing condition.

How to Support Sense of Security?

Using Information Resources:

Reaching information from the right sources, applying scientific recommendations, taking the necessary precautions without delay, planning what to do in case of risk will ensure the creation of safe spaces for children and young people. In addition, knowing about children's school procedures for emergencies and contacting the school authorities will meet the safety needs of both the parent and the child.

Keeping Calm:

Children and young people tend to catch clues from their parents' attitudes and behaviors in risky situations, and to understand their reactions to events. It is okay for children to see their parents sad or crying; however, when very intense emotions are experienced, it should be prevented from witnessing this for a long time.

Limiting Media Influence:

Constantly watching news about a negative event can increase anxiety in children and teens. It is important to limit the time and exposure to news of violence on television and social media. Spending time with children and teens whenever possible, sharing and evaluating news with them will make it easier for us to understand how they perceive what they read and see. This will also provide an opportunity to correct any misunderstandings.

Avoiding Accusation:

If the incident occurred due to human origin or negligence, people may have a tendency to blame, label, or judge certain individuals or groups. However, care should be taken not to categorize the persons/groups responsible for the incident by targeting their religious, cultural, racial, ethnic characteristics or any psychiatric disorders they have experienced. Such discriminatory statements in children and young people whose sense of security has been shaken may affect them negatively, as they are likely to come together with different groups in the society. Similarly, a person who finds himself in the aforementioned category may feel open to threats from outside.

Maintaining Daily Routines:

it is beneficial to maintain daily routines as regularly as possible in order to develop children's sense of security and to accelerate normalization after events that cause anxiety and stress. Pay attention to meeting basic needs such as food and sleep according to age.

Being Coherent:

Parental coherency is essential in building trust in children and rebuilding sense of security. To ensure coherency, children and young people need to receive non-contradictory information from their environment. The fact that caregivers use a common language, behavior and attitudes will prevent anxiety and insecurity arising from uncertainty.

Active Listening:

Children and young people often need to express themselves and be understood, instead of listening and understanding something. Parents need active listening skills in order to adequately meet this need. Giving advice or offering solutions before the need is understood like “It doesn't matter how you experience your life!” Children may feel more insecure who feels that they are not understood enough by their families and that the feelings and thoughts of others are more important than their own.

Showing Compassion:

The need for compassion, which is an indispensable part of healthy child development, is of great importance in terms of supporting the sense of security that has been shaken. The love and compassion provided by the family makes it possible to create a strong personality and develop healthy relationships with the outside world in individuals who are insecure. They tend to isolate themselves from social environments and are show defensive behavior constantly.

Transparency:

Engaging with youngsters in a way that nurtures their feeling of safety should contain transparency. Information must be age appropriate and the amount of the information must be carefully calculated. Not hiding important information about their lives from themselves, ensuring that they hear this information from their caregivers, and giving them the opportunity to have information from the right sources will increase in their sense of security.

Involvement In Decision Process:

Children and young people can reinforce their need for trust by having a say in the choices that will determine the course of their lives, as well as being informed about the issues that affect them. Seeing that their views and feedbacks are taken into consideration will make it easier for them to contribute to the processes sincerely and to express their feelings and thoughts more easily.

Making Space For New Experiences:

Research shows how effective a supportive environment is in overcoming difficult experiences. Having new positive experiences, sharing time and happiness, especially with close family members, after the events that shake our confidence, will help to restructure the sense of security. In addition, encouraging children and young people to be involved in solidarity services and networks will bring them into contact with their community, and this contact will positively affect their feelings and thoughts.

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