

If you've been following what the Staples Resilience Project has been up for the past couple of years, it's probably already clear that **our students' ability to cope with stress and anxiety is front and center in all that we do**. We are hugely grateful to Staples' physical education teachers, Nikki Ross and Kelly Shamas, for inviting us join them in their **freshman health classes** during their unit on stress this past week. Our goal was to introduce students to *resilience* as a concept; to brainstorm with them, as a group, the many "tools" they already may use to help alleviate anxiety (exercise, talking with their parents/friends/counselors, getting outside, watching a movie, these are some of their own suggestions); and to add one more to their personal "toolbox": Mindfulness.

In our last email, we shared Sarah Rudell Beach's article about the value of teaching mindfulness to teenagers. As she points out, **practicing mindfulness (or meditation) has been scientifically proven to:**

- **reduce stress, anxiety and depression**
- **help with focus and concentration**
- **promote healthier sleep patterns**
- **improve academic test results and athletic performance**

We believe that technology and social media—as useful and engrossing as they can be—contribute to the generalized anxiety that many teenagers experience. Our children are constantly bombarded with information to the point of distraction, and yet they are afraid to shut it down, out of fear that they will miss out on something happening with their peers. **In an attempt to meet them where they are, we introduced the freshmen to "Stop, Breathe and Think," a free app and website**, that allows users to check in with how they are feeling (mentally, physically, and emotionally) and then offers suggestions for different guided mindfulness exercises: Body Scan; Gratitude Meditation; Relax, Ground and Clear; Compassion, etc. These short meditations range from 3-20 minutes in length. They were well received by the students, and many chose to download the app right then and there. If you're interested in checking it out yourself, you can download the app or visit their web site: www.stopbreathethink.org.

On a *daily* basis, Westport's school counselors, social workers and psychologists work with students who are struggling to manage their stress. We are not the only ones, though. **Our school nurses are also very much on the front line in this effort**. We are sharing the attached article from *The Atlantic*, as a shout out to them for all that they do, as well: <http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/10/when-anxiety-hits-at-school/380622/>

The Staples Resilience Project is an ongoing endeavor by the Staples High School Guidance Department. We welcome your feedback at shs-resilience-project@westport.k12.ct.us

If you are interested in reading our earlier emails, they can be found on our web page: Staples High School>Guidance>Staples Resilience Project