

Senator Square: CHS Counselor's anxiety toolbox for everyone

By Michele Quintero

Editor's Note: Michele Quintero is a Carson High School Counselor



In the age of Covid, many are dealing with anxiety and panic. What is the difference? According to the Mayo Clinic, a panic attack occurs when a person feels intense fear that triggers the “fight or flight” response. Many people are experiencing panic attacks, and they feel they are losing control of their bodies and/or their mental and emotional stability; attacks can be so intense as to feel like food poisoning, a heart attack, or even dying. An anxiety attack may come on slowly and often occurs in anticipation of an event. The severity, length, or number of occurrences may vary, often depending on how the sufferer responds to each attack. Those who have experienced panic and anxiety know there are strategies which may be used to alleviate the symptoms and lessen the severity, length, and frequency of attacks. Unfortunately, what may work on several occasions can suddenly stop working. This is why it is so important for everyone, not only students, to fill their ‘Anxiety Toolbox’ with numerous strategies. The more tools, the better equipped to combat attacks when they occur. Maintenance tips used to lessen the frequency and length of attacks: Limit caffeine. It affects sleep patterns and the jittery feelings associated with caffeine can trigger a panic

attack. Ditto with energy drinks. Exercise every day. A brisk walk outdoors encourages stress-relieving deep breaths and, if it is sunny outside, much needed Vitamin D is obtained which promotes better mental and physical health; however, accept the fact not everything can be controlled. What others may do is often unpredictable, but the response can be controlled. For example, perception is everything. Imagine walking down the hall, and someone gives a dirty look. Rather than assume personal hatred, recognize he may have been thinking about something he is dealing with. Learn personal triggers, and avoid them. Some people do not like people sitting or standing behind them. When possible, sit with back to the wall or in the last row. Keep to a schedule too because the brain loves routine, and doing this gives most people a feeling of control. Go to bed and get up at the same time every day, and shower and get dressed even on days working from home. Block in times for exercise and mental breaks in order to avoid burnout on home days. Do not expect personal perfection either; it is then easier not to expect it from others. A person's best may vary depending on a number of factors. Be content with completing a task, even a small one. Avoid and lessen Covid stress. Even if belief in a pandemic is uncertain, it is still impacting people's lives on a daily basis. The best way to limit its impact is to avoid or limit exposure to news about it. Next, find ways to do what everyone misses, but do so in a way which keeps everyone safe. Get creative by taking up bonsai pruning, origami,

learning a new language, or anything which helps to find happiness and create connections with others. For things not possible to do now, recognize this is temporary, and there will be a time when things return to 'normal'. When experiencing an attack, most panic and anxiety attacks last less than ten minutes, distraction is one of the most effective tools. First, breathe. Inhale while counting slowly to three, hold the breath for a count of three, then exhale for a count of three. Do this several times. Feel oxygen deprived, fake a long, lung-expanding yawn. Try to breathe slow and steady so not to hyperventilate. Count backwards from 1000 by 7: 993, 986, 979, etc. It is not so difficult it becomes frustrating, but it is hard enough to keep the attention. Use the senses: First, place both feet flat on the ground; next, look around and list five items seen close by; with eyes closed, note four things the ears hear; touch three things close by; recognize two smells. This can be tough, so just take time, wait, and sniff. Finally, find one thing to taste. Carrying mints, gum, hard candy, or even cough drops can help with this last one. Go through this slowly so the brain has a chance to notice it is not in danger anymore, and does not need any more adrenaline to stay on high-alert. Visualize paradise: For me, this is the ocean. I hear the waves crashing and the seagulls calling to one another; I smell the salt water and sun-tan lotion; I visualize the sun on my face, the sand between my toes, and the people bobbing up and down in the water. I picture myself smiling and enjoying this perfect day. What if I play this game with myself frequently? For example, what if I won the lottery, what would I buy for myself, my family, and my friends? Get specific. What if I could live anywhere? What if I had the skills to be a professional painter, singer, athlete, chef? What if I was granted a free trip to anywhere in the world, where would I go? What would I do there? Replace negative thoughts with positive ones. Anxiety and panic attacks often follow racing negative thoughts. If I am able to replace these with positive thoughts, I will begin to feel relief. Quite often these thoughts are not true, or they are grossly exaggerated. If I never make mistakes, I will never grow. Human beings do not learn nearly as much from successes from missteps. I like to treat myself well, and this helps me treat others well. I ask myself, would I be this angry, mean, or rough towards a friend in the same situation? If the answer is no, I back up in order to become a good friend to myself. As a last resort, I will leave the area. By the time I walk to the restroom, wash my hands and face, the panic attack will likely have subsided. This is a last resort because every time I limit activities or leave situations to deal with anxiety or panic unresolved, I am giving in to my brain's fight or flight response. The more I do it, the stronger it becomes. Continued avoidance greatly limits my activities and makes me feel weaker and less in control. Every time I do not give in to anxiety, I acknowledge it, and when I recognize my strengths, I notice a reduction in panic and anxiety until it becomes a thing of the past.

TOTALS RAISED FOR KELLY GUSTAFSON AND CANCER RESEARCH

The total raised for Kelly Gustafson, through the \$1 hat and wristband day, to help her in dealing with breast cancer, was 491.25, and the total ready to be donated to the Susan G. Komen Foundation to end breast cancer, was \$274.50. CHS Leadership thanks everyone for their time, sacrifice, and participation. For more information about how individuals in the community may participate in the medical fundraisers hosted by CHS Leadership students, please call Adviser, Ann Britt, at 283-1769, or email her at abritt@carson.k12.nv.us.



ACADEMIC LETTERS AWARDED

On Nov. 4, Academic Letters were awarded to students in a show-up and pick-up fashion as Covid interrupted the normal annual guest speaker and evening celebration. Pictured are CHS Seniors Abby Golik and Parsa Hadjighasemi taking a break from basketball shooting to walk out to the Foyer and pick up her third academic letter and his second academic letter awards.



Congratulations to all CHS students who received an academic letter as this displays both individual determination and school pride.

LEADERSHIP RAISES MONEY FOR PANCREATIC CANCER RESEARCH

This month, CHS Leadership students are raising money for those suffering from Pancreatic Cancer which has a survival rate of 5%. The color purple, the same as that used to represent epilepsy, is used to represent this type of cancer, and on Nov. 19 and 20, Leadership is asking everyone to come to school wearing purple in order to create a ‘Purple Out’ on campus. Also, Little Caesars Pizza will be

donating a portion of their sales to support this CHS Leadership fundraiser. According to CHS Leadership adviser and Physical Education teacher Ann Britt, “As you all know, things are much different this year, and Leadership is going to focus some of its efforts on service projects, and one of them is to host a fundraiser for different causes and charities each month.” The students wanted to do it in a fun way, their way. For more information about how individuals in the community may participate, please call Ann Britt at 283-1769, or email her at abritt@carson.k12.nv.us.

HELP WITH MATHEMATICS IS AVAILABLE

Math tutoring is now available and is open to all students every day regardless of cohort. Please check in at the main entrance if joining on a remote learning day on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays for geometry and beyond. From 2:15 to 3:30 p.m., in room 231 on Tuesdays, see CHS teacher Elena Glenn, on Wednesdays, in room 223, see Shanell Cavener, on Thursdays, in room 233, see Monica Flinchum. Grab a snack at 2:05 in Room 163, then head to tutoring. A late bus is available daily. Need help with Algebra 1, check in with Hannah Etchison in room 163.

UNDERSTANDING LEXILE MEASURES WITH NEVADA’S MYON

Nevada students have logged more than 14 million minutes of reading from May 1 until now. To best match readers and texts, K-12 students completed a Lexile Placement when they began reading with myON. As they continue reading on the platform, they are prompted to take Lexile Benchmarks after they have completed at least five books or logged three hours of reading, but not more frequently than once in a 2-week period. Results inform the just-right text recommendations students see within their accounts. This 20-minute on demand webinar, An Introduction to the Lexile Framework for Reading, explains how to interpret Lexile measures and describes how they fit within the text complexity model. Parents, this will help in understanding, along with the Lexile Parent Guide. For more information, please contact Darl Kiernan at: dkiernan@doe.nv.gov.



STUDENT OF THE WEEK

The CHS Student of the Week is a junior, Karyme Negrete. According to her nominating teacher, ELL Paraprofessional Gabriela McNamara, “Karyme is an ‘A’ student; she does not live with her parents and works full time in a Mexican Restaurant. McNamara went on to say, “She demonstrates respect to her peers and teachers, is a humble person, is very conscientious about the importance of school, and puts forth the best in everything she does.” Congratulations to Karyme Negrete. “She shows great potential and is well deserving to be recognized as a student of the week” said McNamara. With so many students at CHS, being nominated as Student of the Week means the student stood out as someone whom the teacher noticed as going the distance academically and relationally. Employees within Carson

City School District nominate the CHS Student of the Week, and it is often the students’ teachers who do the nominating though anyone in the district may do so by sending an email to pbrady@carson.k12.nv.us.



SENIOR IN THE SPOTLIGHT

This week's the Senior in the Spotlight is Heba Syeddah. Heba is an outstanding student and a dedicated member of the Carson High School community. With a 4.72 overall GPA, Heba is currently ranked in the top 5% of the senior class. She is a hard worker and a wonderful young woman. Heba has been very involved in the CHS Future Business Leaders of America FBLA since her freshman year. She has competed at the state level several times, placing in "Introduction to Parliamentary Procedure", "Organizational Leadership", "Business Ethics", and "Introduction to FBLA". She placed second at State in "Introduction to FBLA", which earned her a spot in the national competition where she placed 10th. Heba is a hard worker, both in and out of school. Her teachers say she participates well and does exemplary work. She has been

working for the Carson City Library for the past two years, and last year she was an intern in the Digitorium where she did such a great job they offered her a permanent position. Heba plans to study business in college, focusing on finance or economics. She has not yet decided where she will attend, but whichever college she chooses will be lucky to have her. Congratulations to Heba Syeddah. Carson High School is proud of you.

Phil Brady is an English teacher at CHS.

