



Parenting in the New Normal

CHRIS DUTTON, LCSW - CLINICAL DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL SERVICES

Psychological trauma, as described by Kay Saakvitne, an expert on trauma, is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring condition in which the individual's ability to integrate his or her emotional experience is overwhelmed and the individual experiences it as physically or emotionally harmful and/or life threatening.

The pandemic has had a profound impact on children and teen's mental health, and over the past two years grief, anxiety, and depression have increased dramatically. In young children, we have seen a rise in disruptive behaviors while in teens, we have seen a dramatic increase in panic attacks, self-isolation, and suicidal thoughts.

Children need an opportunity to talk about what is going on in the world and their lives, but sometimes they are not fully aware or able to express their concerns and worries. With that in mind, parents should not feel the need to push their children to talk about it; instead, they can offer some of their own thoughts and

feelings and allow space for their children to react. This often provides new insights for parents who are worried about how their children are feeling.

Most families are likely looking for some concrete strategies they can use to combat their child's anxieties as we begin to live a new normal. Below are some ideas that may help; but first: as a parent, remember to be mindful of your own thoughts and feelings and model your own stress tolerance skills. Kids are like sponges, even when they are pretending to ignore us.



AS A PARENT, WHAT DO YOU DO?

- **START SMALL:** Instead of trying to tackle the big-picture items, consider that your child might need increased support in managing small stressors, even those they did not have trouble with before. To do this, patience is key and crucial to your ability to help out.
- **CREATE STABILITY THROUGH ROUTINE:** Like adults, children and teens thrive on a routine. Getting swept up in typical, day-to-day tasks is a highly effective way to manage anxiety and depression. Work with your child to co-create routines and plans.
- **GET ENGAGED WITH THE SCHOOL:** If your child has been experiencing a lot of anxiety around school, it may be helpful to reach out to their teacher or other point person to inform them of your concerns.

- **PRAISE, PRAISE, PRAISE** your child when they meet expectations, accomplish a goal, or put in the effort you hoped they would. So much of being a parent is being a cheerleader for your child's success. Kids rely on the secure base their parents provide in order to explore the world and try new things. Offering praise and encouragement helps to bolster that base by reminding children that the adults in their lives are here, are proud, and will continue to support them as they face challenges.

The Bridge is also here for you. If you or your child could benefit from talking to one of our therapists, please call us at 860.313.1119 to learn more about the services we offer.

34th Annual Breakfast on the Bridge



Top Left: Kim Ambroise with her family | Top Right: Shari Cantor, Ronni Newton, Susan Hamilton, and Tammy Exum | Middle Left: Rianna Travaglini and Kyeesha Clayborne | Middle Center: Katari Haslam-Washington and Lora Hobson | Middle Right: Susan Hamilton and Margaret Hann | Bottom Center: Kim Ambroise | Bottom Right: Judy Bierly and Martin Smith

Kim Ambroise, an Assistant Principal at Hall High School, was honored with the “Build No Fences” Award at the 34th Annual Breakfast on the Bridge on September 14, 2022. Kim exemplifies a collaborative and compassionate spirit while embracing the Bridge’s vision of Every Family, Every Child, Every Time. Congratulations, Kim, and thank you for always putting our children and families first.



Your Support is Changing Lives

Every day, across our communities, your support provides a hand up, a first step, and a fresh start for hundreds of children and families. You are ensuring a safe haven for teens and young adults who have experienced significant trauma in their young lives. You are welcoming and educating families from all corners of the world. You are promoting positive youth development. And, you are meeting the mental health needs of children, adults, and families.

Your choice to support the Bridge fosters the courage and strength in children and families to meet life’s challenges and build fulfilling lives. Thank you!

Our mission is to foster the courage and strength in children and families to meet life’s challenges and build fulfilling lives.



Celebrating a 15-year partnership WITH THE EXCHANGE CLUB OF WEST HARTFORD

While the Club is very diverse

in terms of age and professional background, all members share the common desire of helping our children and families.

Over our 15-year partnership, the Club has donated \$24,000 to support our programs and services. We appreciate their generous Platinum Sponsorship at our Children’s Charity Ball, gifts in memory of Club members, and donations from their own fundraising events.

In addition, the Club provides Camp Scholarships at High Meadow Day Camp for children in our mentoring and counseling programs that otherwise would not be able to attend. Through their caring and compassion, they have created special memories for our kids that will last a lifetime.

THANK YOU Exchange Club of West Hartford for your exceptional support!



Club members l-r: Richard J. Wallace, Board Member; Martin Keena, Immediate Past President; and Shawn Richard, President.



New Counseling Center

Our new Counseling Center is now open at 1021 Farmington Avenue in West Hartford.

If you, or someone you love, needs help meeting life’s challenges, please call us at 860.313.1119 to learn more about our Counseling Services.

PLEASE INCLUDE US IN YOUR GIVING BY MAILING A GIFT IN THE ENCLOSED ENVELOPE, OR BE IN TOUCH TO LEARN ABOUT THE ADDITIONAL GIVING AND ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES THAT FEEL RIGHT FOR YOU.

EVERY FAMILY is a newsletter of the Bridge Family Center | 1022 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford, CT 06107-2105 | 860.521.8035
info@bridgefamilycenter.org | www.bridgefamilycenter.org | facebook.com/BridgeFamilyCenter | Executive Director: Margaret A. Hann | Editor: Doreen Tarascio.
The Bridge is a private, nonprofit youth and family service agency offering a broad range of services to children, youth, families, and adults. Our counseling centers are in Avon, West Hartford and Rockville, and our Family Resource Center is located within the Charter Oak International Academy in West Hartford.