**Talking About Mental Health October 2019**

I hope that you had a wonderful summer and start to the new school year!  Even with the fun of summer and the excitement of the first day of school behind us, returning to school can be a stressful and exciting time for both students and their families.  Add to that new teachers, new friends, new schools and for some even a new community: that adds up to a lot of change and potential stress!

While a little stress can be motivating and help us to focus, too much stress can tip the balance and trick our bodies into thinking that we are in danger. This leads to a release of adrenalin and keeps you and your body on full alert.  So what can you do? Here are some proven ways to manage stress and take care of yourself from the inside out:

VISUALIZATIONS:  According to research, when you visualize something your brains respond to the images in the same way they would to real-life action.  So if you take 5 minutes to visualize yourself in a favourite place your brain will think you were really there! That’s right! It’s literally a 5 minute vacation with all the benefits!

JUST BREATH: Practice slow, deep breathing.  Although we are all familiar with the “take a deep breath” suggestion when we are panicked or over stressed, you may not know that this has to do with the brain’s “pacemaker” for breath.  The research into the impact of breathing on our brains simply confirms what we already know: the simple act of breathing is connected to our emotional state. Slow breathing really can calm you down!

REACH OUT: Of course sometimes we just need to reach out to someone, write in our journal or scream into the ocean. Getting your feelings out and identifying that you are stressed can actually alleviate some of your stress as well.  Connecting with others and asking for help if you are overwhelmed is a great way to manage stress. Also, if you see someone who looks a bit overwhelmed, reach “in” (check in) and see how they are doing. It can go a long way to know you are surrounded by people who care.

And of course, if your stress begins to impact your daily activities and you continue to struggle, reach out for help.

**Here24/7:** 1 844 437 32477 (HERE247)  TTY: 1-877-688-5501 (Guelph and Wellington)

**Dufferin Child and Family Services:** 519.941.1530 (Dufferin)

**KidsHelpPhone:** Text CONNECT to 686868 or call 1-800-668-6868

*Jenny Marino  is the Mental Health Lead for Upper Grand District School Board*

*Follow me on instagram @ ugdsb\_mental\_health*