



Extended Thanksgiving Break



Monday, November 22-Friday, November 26, 2021

As our learning community continues to navigate one of the most challenging times in the history of education, we recognize that stress levels throughout the Kingston K-14 School District are an area of concern.

As a district, we strive for ways to address the mental wellbeing of our students and staff on a daily basis. However, as I listen to our school community, it is clear that time is what is most needed right now. Time to rest and renew. With that in mind, the district will be closed the entire week of Thanksgiving, Monday, November 22, 2021 through Friday, November 26, 2021. We will **not** make up these 2 additional days later.

Our Board of Education and Administration care deeply about the mental wellbeing of our learning community. Our students, faculty, staff, and parents/guardians have worked tirelessly to persevere in the face of unthinkable challenges.

The extended break will give all of us an opportunity to focus on self-care and family. We have attached self-care resources that may be helpful.

We will have our monthly Mobile Market on Tuesday, November 16. The Kingston K-14 School District has partnered with the St. Louis Area Foodbank to host a Thanksgiving Together event on Tuesday, November 23 at 9:00 AM. Please see our Facebook page or District webpage for more details.

I wholeheartedly believe we will return from the break a stronger, healthier, and more committed learning community.

Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

Dr. Lee Ann Wallace

Dr. Lee Ann Wallace
Superintendent

Ways to Take Care of Yourself

Say no to anything that is not important to you

Give yourself permission to focus on what's important. Getting the unessential responsibilities off your schedule will not only create some extra time and space, but it will also lighten the burden you're feeling to keep up with it.

Limit your media consumption....especially social media

... Because your brain can only process a limited amount of information. When you need your focus to be on work, don't overflow your brain with TV news, newspapers, social media, magazines, and books.

Get enough sleep

This old advice is not only essential when it comes to self-care, it is also absolutely essential when it comes to being able to do your best. Particularly important when it comes to exam periods and work stress, sleep will help you achieve. It's easy to think that a few extra hours of work will do you more good, but it won't. Sleep will.

Listen to your favorite music

Calm music will help you calm down and upbeat music will help you up your game. Pick music that won't distract you (like music without lyrics or in a foreign language). Your favorite music will boost your mood and keep you happy, no matter how tired you are.

Take 5 minutes in the morning to just stretch and breathe

If you start your day in a stressful way, you'll probably feel stressed for the rest of the day as well. Make sure your morning starts with 5 minutes of silence and ease. Stand up and stretch your body to make you as tall as you can be. Then bend over and touch the ground. Stretch again. Try to just feel your body and pay attention to your breath. Starting the day in a way like this will make you more relaxed as well!

Make a plan of everything that needs to be done

Instead of juggling all your to-do's and must-remembers, write them down on a piece of paper. Then make a plan of how you are going to manage everything before your deadline. You may have to schedule a lot of tasks on certain days, and it may seem like too much to do, but at least you'll know that everything will get done. Make sure you stick to the plan, every single day. Don't fall for the temptation to start on tomorrow's tasks today, trust that the plan will take you there, and enjoy some free time on the days when you finish your tasks early.

Make sure you keep in touch with your friends

Just a few text messages, tweets or the occasional coffee will make sure your friendships don't suffer. You will feel much better when you focus on something else entirely, and it will prevent you from becoming a workaholic hermit. You don't have to keep in touch with everybody, most people will understand that you're having a busy period. Just make sure you stay in touch with the people that make you happy and inspired.

Make room for rest

This one's important. Make sure that whenever you plan to rest – really rest. That means that you will have to make a conscious effort to push all work-related thoughts and worries away. It's also important that you rest your mind as well as your body. 5 minutes of stillness is better than 30 minutes in front of the TV!

Write a daily gratitude list

A daily gratitude list is really helpful to shift your focus and help you appreciate the situation. It doesn't have to be long, a few sentences will do. If you keep a gratitude journal, you can also look back on your previous entries whenever you need a little boost of happiness and motivation.

Spend your lunchtime as sacred you-time

... and enjoy your healthy food with a little journaling, blog-reading, or people-watching. See it as a way to nourish your soul on several levels. It's important to eat, but it's equally important to be inspired, creative, silly, whimsical, and happy.

Take a run or a walk

This one is pretty self-explanatory. Any sort of exercise will release endorphins, your body will thank you and it clears your head so you can focus on all the important work that lies ahead.

Keep track of your achievements

It may seem like you're never going to get over a busy period, which is why you should keep a list of achievements close at any time. Whenever you hit a milestone – write it down! It will be very useful when you're feeling tired by the end of the day and know that you still have several more hours of work before you can call it a day.

Light candles

Candles have a relaxing effect, especially gently scented ones. If you can't light candles in your workplace, make sure you light them when you get home. Lavender and cedarwood are scents that can help you relax.

Write support thoughts and affirmations

Support thoughts are thoughts written down when you're calm that can support you when you are really busy and tired. For example, a gentle reminder of why you're doing all the work, a short pep-talk, or a reminder of how wonderful you are is an amazing way of taking care of yourself.

Allow your emotions to come to the surface

If you're tired and sad, cry it all out. If you're stressed, don't try to put on a mask and hide it. Get it all out, all the frustration, the feeling of being overwhelmed, the anger, and the fear. You'll feel much better after.

Delegate

If you're working on a team – make sure you don't try to do everything yourself, delegate as much as you can to lighten your load.

Get more sunlight

Especially if your busy period is happening in winter, make sure you get your daily dose of sunlight if you're spending a lot of time in gloomy libraries and workplaces.

Meditate in the morning

Ten minutes of stillness can make all the difference.

Compliment yourself

Positive self-speech can seriously impact your mood. Instead of adding to the monkey-brain thoughts of not good enough, too stressed, and panic – tell yourself you look good, that you're doing great and that you can manage everything that comes your way.

Accept yourself as you are

Let yourself off the hook and accept that you are only human. You are doing your absolute best, and you are doing exactly what you need to do. Trust your instincts and keep doing whatever you're doing. You don't need to change anything about yourself – trust that you are perfect just the way you are.

American Psychological Association Self-Care Resource Center**Active Minds Self-Care Resources**

What is Self-Care? (Missouri Department of Mental Health)