



AUGUST 2023

# MENTAL HEALTH MATTERS

EVERYONE HAS A STORY



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## Tips for Success:

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- Establish a consistent routine
  - Eat a well balanced breakfast before school
  - Create a distraction free space at home for school work
  - Do NOT procrastinate
  - Make an effort to welcome new students to your school
  - Communicate with your teachers and school staff
  - Join at least 1 club at your school
  - Be kind to yourself and others

# National Nonprofit Day

United Way



United Way  
of Baldwin County

National Nonprofit Day is commemorated each year on August 17 to recognize charitable organizations and the positive impact they have on local communities. Baldwin County is blessed by a number of nonprofit agencies serving children and families. The United Way of Baldwin County provides support for over 30 health and human service agencies.

For more information, visit [www.unitedway-bc.org](http://www.unitedway-bc.org)

DIAL 211

211 is a 24 hour helpline that connects individuals to local health and human support services



## National Grief Awareness Day

August 30, 2023

Dr. Elisabeth Kubler-Ross was a Swiss-American psychiatrist who is known for being a pioneer in studying grief and death. She identified 5 stages of grief: *Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance*

When we experience grief, whether it's the loss of a loved one, a relationship, a career, a home, or other important aspect of our life, we likely experience these stages of grief. A person can navigate the stages of grief in no particular order and often times, one will experience the stages at multiple times before reaching the stage of acceptance.

The most beautiful people are those who have known defeat, known suffering, known struggle, known loss, and have found their way out of the depths. These persons have an appreciation, a sensitivity, and an understanding of life that fills them with compassion, gentleness, and deep loving concern. Beautiful people do not just happen.

**Elisabeth Kubler-Ross**



[www.yourlifeyourvoice.org](http://www.yourlifeyourvoice.org) provides helpful information and tips on navigating grief. The site shares four ways to ease grief:

- Talk to someone about how you feel
- Write a letter to the person you have lost
- Share memories of the person with your family and friends
- Make a memory box

# Prevention & Support Staff Spotlight

## Mrs. Kimberly Windham

Mrs. Kimberly Windham is a school counselor at the Baldwin County Virtual School for students in grades 7th-10th. This is Mrs. Windham's 21st year in education and 8th with the Baldwin County School System. She spent the first 12 years of her career teaching high school in Birmingham, AL. Mrs. Windham earned her BS degree from the University of Alabama in Birmingham in Secondary Education and Language Arts. She earned her Masters in School Counseling from the University of Alabama. Mrs. Windham lives in Fairhope with her husband, Jeff, and their son, Connor, age 14. She loves Disney and enjoys spending time with her pug, Murphy. She loves watching her son play soccer and traveling with her family. When asked what she loves most about being a school counselor at BCVS, she appreciates the diversity of the student body who have a variety of interests that lead them to choose to attend the Virtual School.



*Pictured left to right:  
Mrs. Windham and Mrs. Wolchina*



*Pictured left to right:  
Mrs. Wolchina and Mrs. Windham*

## #pelicans

## Mrs. Diana Wolchina

Mrs. Diana Wolchina is the school counselor at The Baldwin County Virtual School for grades 11th and 12th. She has been in education for 21 years, all of which have been with The Baldwin County School System. She has been at the Virtual School for 2 ½ years. Prior to then, she was at Fairhope Elementary School where she taught 3rd grade, worked in the Math lab, and served as their school counselor. She earned both her BS in Elementary Education and her MS in School Counseling from the University of South Alabama. Mrs. Wolchina lives in Fairhope, AL with her husband, Joe. They have three children: Drew, age 24; Courtney, age 21; and Gavin, age 13. Mrs. Wolchina enjoys fishing and being in the sun. She loves to shop and spend time with her family. When asked what she loves most about being a school counselor at BCVS, Mrs. Wolchina states that she loves helping students to know their potential and witnessing the pride they feel when they reach their senior year.

## Different by Design

# Baldwin County Virtual School



Both, Mrs. Wolchina and Mrs. Windham were recently awarded the RAMP Award. The RAMP Award is the highest honor a school counseling program can receive in the nation. The above photos were taken this summer during The American School Counselor Association's National Conference in which the winners of the prestigious award were recognized at a special Awards Gala.



*Pictured left to right:  
Mrs. Wolchina and Mrs. Windham*

# Mental Wellness in School

As we begin a new school year, we want to be mindful of students who are experiencing mental distress or have mental health needs. Some warning signs to look out for include:

## Academic Red flags

- Dropping grades
- Missed or incomplete assignments
- Inability or unwillingness to participate in class
- Writing or completing art about violence, death, suicide or other disturbing subject matter

## Physical Red Flags

- Unexplained aches, pains, cuts, bruises, scars or burns
- Noticeable weight loss or weight gain
- Falling asleep in class
- Significant changes in appearance
- Signs of alcohol or drug use (breath odor, dilated pupils, etc.)

## Behavioral Red Flags

- Withdrawing or isolating
- Pattern of unexplained tardiness / absences
- Behaviors that disrupt the class
- Avoidance of situations that might be stressful or trigger anxiety such as participating in group assignments
- Seeking excessive reassurance
- Time management problems

***Parents and school personnel, if you notice any of these red flags, please reach out to your school counselors or social worker for help.***

## Mental Wellness Checklist

- Spend some time outside in nature
- write a list of things you are grateful for
- move your body-walk, swim, dance, run
- Take a break from social media and screens
- Spend time with friends face to face
- do something creative
- Nourish your body with good food
- Get restful sleep
- Do something kind for someone
- Laugh

