

COUNSELORS CORNER

December 2023

Mental health is a state of well-being....where the person can cope with normal stressors of life, and is connected to people in their world that they can turn to. Connecting youth with each other and caring adults create healing-centered educational systems. Starting this month in our Jr/Sr High School, Principal Lazor paired staff and students for daily check-ins with each other, to encourage additional caring connections.

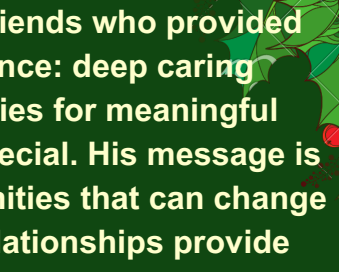
Richard Antoine White is not a name we recognize as a professional athlete, a rap artist, internet mogul or famous politician, but he urges us to dream big and think of ourselves as a superhero. Oh, he must be a motivational speaker. No!

Richard Antoine White is the first African American to earn a PhD of Music in Tuba Performance. He is the principal tuba player in the Santa Fe Symphony and the University of New Mexico Philharmonic, and he teaches at the University of New Mexico. These are extraordinary achievements for a man who started life as a one-pound premature baby surviving on the streets of Baltimore with his mother who suffered with alcohol addiction. In his book "I'm Possible, A Story of Survival, A Tuba and the Small Miracle of a Big Dream", he tells us how he became who he is today. ..

CONNECTIONS!

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Connections to his grandparents, teachers, mentors, and friends who provided him with what we know are the key ingredients to resilience: deep caring relationships, high expectation messages, and opportunities for meaningful participation. Richard does not want us to think of him as special. His message is about the protective factors in families, schools and communities that can change the trajectory of a child's life. He reminds us that caring relationships provide trust and safety in its most raw form, conveying compassion and understanding. He experienced high expectation messages, the belief in his strengths, not his problems and he was given the opportunity to try out his talents and give voice to his hopes, and make decisions, building his sense of agency, the sense of "I can".

In the end, or perhaps where we begin, Dr. White reminds us that all youth possess a drive for growth and competence, how we see it and nourish that drive is through lasting and genuine CONNECTIONS! RSD wants to expand our schools as healing centers of support, where the safety of everyone is a shared priority and every student has connections.

As the evidence-based program of Youth Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) reminds us: it is up to us to notice! This First Aid training curriculum focuses on information participants can use to help adolescents and transition-age youth, ages 12-18. It reinforces the acronym ALGEE as a way to remind us to always: Assess for risk of suicide or harm, Listen nonjudgmentally, Give reassurance and information, Encourage appropriate professional help, and Encourage self-help and other support.

The Counseling Department has two trained professionals available to teach the 8-hour Youth MHFA course (25 maximum class size) and we would welcome the opportunity to bring this training to any sixth through 12th grade students or staff that would like to expand their knowledge of Youth Mental Health First Aid. Can you make this time commitment or would you like to help us schedule time with your class to review important strategies that can be useful?

Please contact Tina Wydeen at cwydeen@riversidesd.com or 570-507-0846 so we can continue to find connections!

