

Dear Counselling Corner:

Thank you so much for explaining what RAC (Real Acts of Caring) is in last week's Counselling Corner. We love the idea and want to get involved as a family! Can you give us some suggestions please? Will you also share with us how RAC can help our children's social and emotional development? Thank you!

Mom and Dad

Dear Mom and Dad:

RAC (Real Acts of Caring) is a great student initiative which originated in Port Coquitlam in 2005 (see realactsofcaring.org for more info). RAC is doing something kind for another and not expecting anything back. Since 2005, RAC has spread to many schools, districts and communities all over BC and beyond. Each year RAC is highlighted by 'RAC Week' which is February 12-18, 2023 this year. RAC now consists of a RAC steering committee made up of leadership students ages 10 and older who meet regularly and promote RAC. They are encouraging as many people as possible to get involved in committing caring and kind acts especially during RAC Week. [This year they are also encouraging people to wear PURPLE on Friday, February 17.](#)

Some RAC activity examples are listed on the RAC website at:

<http://www.realactsofcaring.org/rac-ideas.html> and <http://www.realactsofcaring.org/rac-memory-book.html>

You may also wish to check out these websites at:

<https://www.coffeecupsandcrayons.com/100-acts-kindness-kids/>

<https://www.care.com/c/101-random-acts-of-kindness-ideas-to-practice/>

Here are some RAC activities that took place in Penticton and may give you some ideas:

<https://globalnews.ca/news/4955002/summerland-teens-spread-real-acts-of-caring/>

There are so many benefits associated with providing your child with opportunities to practice caring and kindness. RAC can:

Reduce bullying behaviour

When children bully, very often they are looking for a way of gaining attention and/or feeling powerful and do not really know how to do so in positive ways. Students benefit from also learning what they *can* do instead of being unkind. Having opportunities to get positive attention and feel good inside by practicing caring and kindness is a critical part of any bully prevention program.

Support mental health by decreasing depression and anxiety

Cynthia Germanotta and David Hamilton PhD discuss how practicing kindness can support mental health by reducing anxiety and depression (see <https://bornthisway.foundation/feeling-anxious-or-depressed-try-kindness/>).

Reduce vandalism

When students feel connected to their communities in positive ways, they will be much less inclined to be destructive. Providing students with opportunities to be caring and kind

will open doors for them to become contributing and positive members of society and to get involved in more positive ways.

Increase confidence and self-esteem

When students are put in a position to initiate a caring and kind act, they are likely to build on greater feelings of self-worth.

Build leadership skills

Giving students opportunities to promote RAC, through public speaking in the class, school or community, gives them a voice, improves their presenting skills, and increases confidence.

Provide students with a sense of belonging

Practicing caring and kindness helps students connect in meaningful ways to others and their community. It also helps to promote peer acceptance.

Increase student learning capacity/capabilities

Being caring and kind also increases serotonin, which helps students feel healthier in multiple ways including improved sleep, better concentration, greater ability for critical and creative thinking, and decreased anxiety. Dr. IsHak, professor of psychiatry, has described how practicing kindness can release dopamine that helps to regulate mood. (See <https://www.cedars-sinai.org/blog/science-of-kindness.html>)

Support executive functioning skills

The RAC program provides numerous opportunities to build on skills such as: collaborating, organizing, initiating, planning, problem solving, flexibility in thinking, monitoring of actions, and multi-tasking.

Positive observational learning

Kylie Rymanowicz explains that when students see others participate in caring and kind acts, they discover positive behaviours through observational learning, which is learning things simply by observing others. Children pick up this new knowledge and also learn about the consequences of the behaviours. If students observe other students carrying out caring and kindness and see how these behaviours are reinforced, they are likely to imitate this behaviour too.

(See <https://www.canr.msu.edu/news/monkey-see-monkey-do-model-behavior-in-early-childhood>)

Improve a school culture of learning

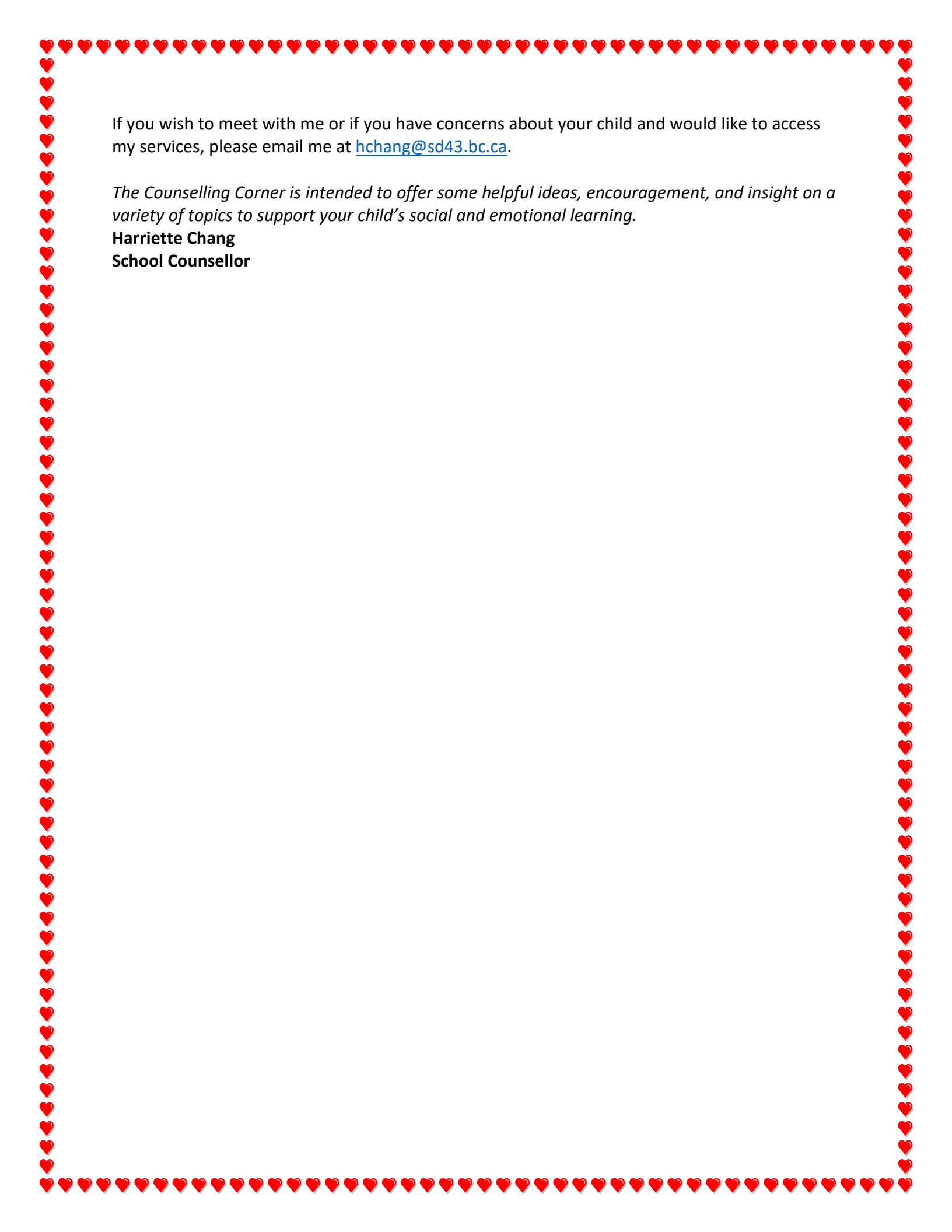
Taking time out of our busy days to teach students how to be caring and kind cultivates empathy and deeper relationships allowing for a culture of learning to thrive.

Help to support caring and kindness in the home

World-renowned psychologist, Dr. Thomas Lickona advocates for the importance of creating a culture of kindness at home and encourages parents to focus on values such as

self-control and gratitude through building positive connections and empowerment.

HAVE A GREAT RAC WEEK!!



If you wish to meet with me or if you have concerns about your child and would like to access my services, please email me at hchang@sd43.bc.ca.

The Counselling Corner is intended to offer some helpful ideas, encouragement, and insight on a variety of topics to support your child's social and emotional learning.

Harriette Chang
School Counsellor