



OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION: **Building strong emotional intelligence and leadership skills**

Schools today are operating in a particularly competitive environment. The public system is broadening its offerings of specialty programs for athletes, artists, technically savvy, gifted and special needs children. The internet has enabled numerous online opportunities. Private schools are continually searching for distinguishing features that can set them apart. The 21st century parent is more discriminating and more demanding and administrators are challenged to refocus on a customer centric vision where the 'customer' is defined as the parents as well as the students. The pressure to succeed can result in stressful environments for faculty, staff and students.

Students identify stress as the number one factor that limits their enjoyment and engagement at school. The stress is produced from a number of factors including:

1. academics
2. dating
3. leaving home
4. extracurricular requirements
5. competition among peers
6. workload
7. university entrance requirements
8. time management
9. parental pressure and expectations

Yale University conducted a survey of 22,000 high school students nationwide to determine how students feel and how they want to feel in school. The disappointing but not surprising results indicated that 75% of the words students used to describe how they feel at school were negative. The emotions students reported most frequently included tired, stressed and bored. In cases where students identified their peers as being mean or cruel to them, the emotions described included loneliness, fear and hopelessness.

The conclusion that can be drawn is that emotions are fundamental to a young person's overall well-being and academic achievement. Today's successful schools will incorporate tools and tactics that support emotional wellness into their programs and community.

Parents and teachers must work together to recognize the stresses that exist and create a safe environment for students to seek help. The steps to creating this environment include:

1. educating parents, students and teachers on the symptoms of stress as well as the importance of emotional intelligence;
2. creating an open environment in which to discuss stress;
3. providing stress management resources and techniques.



Managing stress within the school environment is most successful when all stakeholders, administrators, faculty, parents and students, cooperate in the deployment of a variety of strategies.

Energy Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry customized workshops present a guide to understanding the process of using energy so that it works for you rather than against you as you become mindful of why and how you show up in your life. Each and every day at work, at school and at home, you have the opportunity to **choose** how you will behave. You have the option to bring a positive attitude or a negative attitude to all your interactions. Everyone is a leader in his or her own life and has a choice as to whether they lead by intention or by default. Leading is the way we help move people into action, ourselves included.

Negative, or catabolic energy produces stress that drains energy resulting in lack of engagement, lack of motivation and innovation, low morale and poor performance. People with a lot of catabolic energy feel as though they carry the weight of the world on their shoulders. They may blame others for poor results. They may have high rates of absenteeism, be distrustful of others, show signs of anger and hostility and stifle communication. They may be feeling isolated and feel uncomfortable sharing emotions.

Prolonged catabolic feelings can result in feeling stuck in life, unable to move forward and can lead to chronic depression.

Anabolic people, on the other hand, use positive energy to build themselves up. The energy they utilize is constructive and expanding and fuels high levels of productivity, innovative thinking, less stress and anxiety, and more engagement. Anabolic thinking turns challenge into opportunity because the challenge is not seen as a negative.

Anabolic leaders have high emotional intelligence, and acknowledge and seek to understand the perspectives of others. Anabolic leaders are calm, inspiring and motivating and easily respond to unforeseen circumstance.

The concepts of Energy Leadership and Appreciative Inquiry helps parents, students and teachers become aware of the attitude they bring to their lives, their work and their school so they can learn how to shift from catabolic to anabolic energy and become stronger more resilient leaders.

In the classroom with students, in discussions with parents and in meetings among colleagues, the ideal leader will be inspiring and motivating and will create a ripple effect of positive energy that promotes boundless potential in the classroom, with students and in the world.

Contact MacLean Sewell Coaching to talk about the difference our programs can make at your school.