

GETTING KIDS BACK IN BALANCE

BY KAITLYN VITTOZZI

Every time I turn on the weekend news there seems to be something about mental health, and the challenges youth have encountered coming out of a nearly two year long shutdown. While I love working with kids for yoga and wellness I wanted to sit down with a true expert working with youth in the community so I interviewed Shari Hogan of Soushine Healing Arts Wellness Center.

As a Pediatric Nurse Practitioner, what do you see as some of the biggest challenges for youth in our community right now?

There are many problems facing kids today. The increase in violence can be felt nationally and here locally. Access to weapons and opiates are significantly increasing sudden deaths amongst young people. Social media prematurely exposes children to adult topics, potential predators and creates unnecessary drama, emotional pain and insecurity that are consequently leaving kids feeling isolated and not valued. Post pandemic ripples are magnifying the struggles to meet academic standards and adjusting to in person learning again.

What might be a sign that a child might be struggling?

Signs a child is struggling can be problems with falling and staying asleep and overall sleep quality. Red flags that there are underlying issues will often appear as a child uncharacteristically acting out, pushing boundaries to more of an extreme, having emotional meltdowns, and

increased difficulty focusing at school.

What about a teenager?

When a teen is struggling this can present as them sleeping more, isolating themselves in their bedroom and avoiding family interaction. Their grades often decline and they may lose interest in extracurriculars or activities they previously enjoyed participating in.

College age students often struggle with their new responsibilities and independence. The adjustment can be understandably overwhelming and it's really important to check in with them and offer support.

Encouraging them to use additional academic resources in subjects they may be struggling with can help alleviate some of the pressure. Sending surprise care packages is always a fantastic way to help cure their homesickness!

You are very east meets west! You are a Reiki Master. What is reiki for anyone who isn't familiar with it, and how do you blend eastern and western medicine together?

Blending Eastern and Western medicine combines the best of both practices by treating patients holistically through mind, body, & spirit. Eastern approaches such as Reiki originate from Japan and is a gentle hands-on relaxation technique proven to help people of all ages. Yoga, mindfulness, and meditation are also very effective tools that help children

develop healthy coping skills from a young age. Western medicine certainly has its place, but I have found families appreciate the option of integrating eastern approaches with their children before opting for pharmaceuticals. Natural treatment options can generate profoundly positive results on their own or incorporated into the overall treatment plan, we find many times less is more.

I was talking to a friend about reiki over the summer and her face looked panicked when I brought it up. She thought reiki was conjuring up spirits from the backyard. Are there any misconceptions about reiki you would like to clear up?

I think the big misconception of Reiki is because it's working with energy. We cannot see energy and often if it's not something we can see or hold we tend to fear or doubt it. The truth is we are all energy and emotions are energy that are constantly circulating around the body. When energy is blocked it lowers our vibration and can cause more illness and disease. Reiki helps to release excessive and blocked energy from the body. During a 30-minute treatment I incorporate other tools like calming music or essential oils that help the child become deeply relaxed, calm and grounded. I moved my hands around the body to specific places where energy becomes stuck, and in a very brief time kids feel better. The results have been incredible and it's such a joy to see the relief from both parents and children.

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Do you have any recommendations for parents that are just fed up?

Advice for parents that are fed up - we have all been there! Parenting is challenging and hard work! I suggest taking it one day at a time, being present and focused on what your family needs for today- and do your best. Try not to get caught up and overwhelmed with tomorrow and the next day. Take time for you. Seek help if you need it- there is nothing wrong with needing support. Podcasts and audible books are a great resource!

Tell us about your new location,

Soulshine Healing Arts Wellness Center so folks know what to expect.

Soulshine has been a labor of love for me. As a pediatric nurse practitioner - I originally opened Soulshine 15 years ago - trying to integrate with traditional western medicine and pediatric oncology. The timing was not right and so we are back for round two - with an amazing space on the Erie Canal in Brockport. There is something for everyone and we all need a little nurturing. I provide mental health services and can accept some insurances for youth 21 years and younger. Yoga therapy, reiki, chair

massage, far- infrared sauna, regular and inclusive meditation/yoga classes, astrology readings, metaphysical/painting nights are some of the current offerings. We also offer a monthly women’s empowerment circle led by Becca Phelps. We are creating a community that is safe to rest, promotes healing, instills peace, and encourages belonging. Life is hard and the more we support each other and incorporate new tools to our arsenal, the stronger we are for it!

To connect with Shari or or learn about programming, visit soulshineforhealing.com.