



Mindfulness Director Initiative at Shrewsbury High School

September 4, 2019



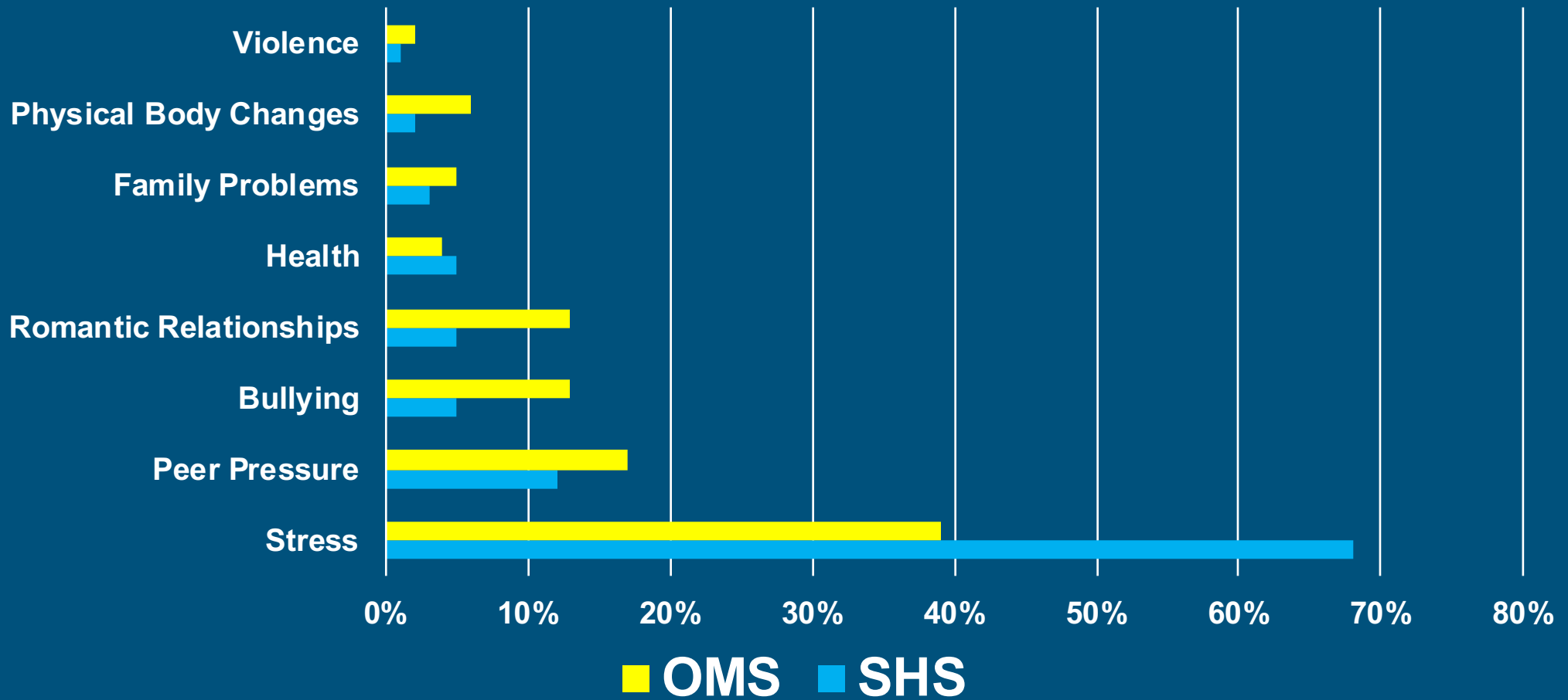
An Opportunity for *Collaborative Innovation*

The Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI) seeks to partner with the Shrewsbury Public Schools by facilitating the integration of mindfulness into the Shrewsbury High School community. During the 2019-2020 school year, MDI will provide a highly qualified Mindfulness Director to support SHS and the SPS at no cost to the district. MDI is a non-profit corporation registered in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. This will be its first public school endeavor.

WHY?

Regional Youth Health Survey (RYHS) data suggests that **students at SHS experience high levels of stress.** Interventions and supports are needed to help students (and adults) reduce stress. Research suggests that mindfulness can help ease anxiety and depression.

Top Issues Reported by SHS and OMS



WHY?

Chronic stress significantly decreases:

- Focus
- Higher level thinking and problem solving
- Creativity and innovation
- The ability to switch strategies flexibly
- Emotional regulation and the ability to “let things go.”

WHY?

Chronic stress significantly decreases:

- Impulse control
- Memory and the ability to access information
- The curiosity and self-compassion required for learning
- Physical, mental and emotional health and well-being

What?

- Research suggests mindfulness helps decrease stress.
- Shrewsbury staff have been learning about mindfulness for the past several years.
- We researched schools engaged in mindfulness practices and programs and spoke with representatives from two schools, the Middlesex School in Concord, MA, and St. Andrews School in Austin, Texas. Both schools are engaged with MDI.

References from Middlesex School, Concord, MA and St. Andrews School, Austin, TX

- “I sincerely believe that it helps students both deal with and prevent feelings of anxiety.”
- “Parents deeply appreciate the opportunity to learn more about how to be both mindful and present in their lives, but also in the lives of their students.”

Additional References

- “Mindfulness has provided an opportunity for building collegiality among the faculty who regularly meet for our morning practice.”
- “Anecdotally, I think it has helped remove stigma from lots of topics related to feelings and mental health.”

WHAT?

Mindfulness is the awareness that arises when we:

- Pay attention
- On purpose
- In the present moment
- In a particular way~without judgment; with curiosity and kindness

HOW?

The Mindfulness Director Initiative will support interested students, staff, families and community members with the practice of mindfulness by offering a diverse set of optional offerings, opportunities, and supports.

HOW?

Examples of optional mindfulness experiences :

- Consultation to teachers regarding integration of mindfulness into teaching practices.
- Individual and small group mindfulness meetings for students and staff.
- Mindfulness mentoring and support for student-athletes, coaches, teams
- Community mindfulness practice and support.
- Opportunities for students to be supported in mindfulness throughout the day (i.e. Mindfulness Lunch).
- Mindfulness Club for interested students.

Mindfulness Activities, Continued...

- Meet with interested members of the school community to discuss mindfulness and ways in which it could support them in their lives.
- Offer voluntary *Introduction to Mindfulness* courses for students, staff, parents, and community members.
- Offer theme-based mindfulness groups for students outside of regular school hours such as “mindfulness in sports,” or “how mindfulness can support test anxiety.”
- Begin to develop online resources for current students and alumni.

Next Steps:

- MDI Director will work with Dr. Lizotte, Mr. Bazydlo, and the SHS community to meet with and educate students, staff, and parents on the topic of mindfulness.
- These experiences are optional.
- We will closely monitor the progress of this initial experience and will plan on reporting back in the spring to review the possibility of a continued partnership.

Next Steps:

- Mindfulness education will take place on a flexible schedule during the school day, before and after school, and in the evening to best meet the schedules of all constituents.

Summary

- Memorandum of agreement between MDI & SPS for this school year outlines expectations
- MDI assumes all financial responsibility for the partnership this year
- No commitment beyond the current year; future of the partnership will be determined in spring of 2020
- Innovative partnership to address strategic priority of “enhanced well-being of all” with a focus on the key issue of student stress