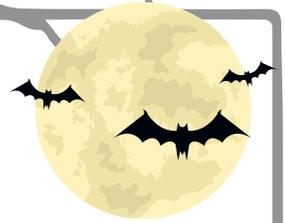


Ghááji' (October) 2025

“Separation of seasons”

PROJECT A.W.A.R.E WILDCATS (PAWS) NEWSLETTER
 “Advancing Wellness and Resiliency in Education”



October is Mental Health Awareness Month: Coping Skills for a Healthier Mind

October is Mental Health Awareness Month—a time to remind ourselves that mental wellness is just as important as physical health. Schools, families, and communities can all play a part in supporting emotional well-being and creating safe spaces for children and adults to manage stress in healthy ways. Small daily practices can make a big difference:

- **Take a break and breathe.** Deep breathing helps calm the body and mind. Even a minute of slow breathing can reduce stress and restore focus.
- **Stay connected.** Talking to someone you trust—a friend, teacher, counselor, or family member—can ease worries and help you feel supported.
- **Move your body.** Exercise, even a short walk, releases endorphins that boost mood and energy.
- **Practice gratitude.** Take time each day to notice things that went well. Gratitude helps shift focus from stress to positivity.
- **Keep a routine.** Regular sleep, meals, and study or work schedules help create stability, especially during stressful times.
- **Be kind**—to yourself and others. Everyone faces challenges. Offering compassion to others and yourself builds resilience and community strength.

Here are a few simple, genuine ways to start a conversation when you need support:

- “I’ve been feeling really stressed lately, and I think I just need someone to listen. Can we talk for a bit?”
This opens the door for connection and lets the other person know you’re seeking a safe, supportive ear.
- “Things have been harder than usual, and I’m not sure how to handle it. Could you help me think things through?”
This shows vulnerability while inviting problem-solving and empathy.
- “I’m not feeling like myself right now, and I could use some support. Do you have time to talk or check in later?”
This helps others know you need help without pressure—encouraging ongoing care and conversation.

Each of these conversation starters reminds us: *it’s okay to ask for help.* Reaching out is a sign of strength, not weakness.

SOURCES:

“Stress Management” and “Building Your Resilience” *Articles describe evidence-based coping strategies.* <https://www.apa.org/topics/stress>
 “Coping with Stress” *Provides clear guidance on staying active, connecting with others, and maintaining healthy habits.* <https://www.cdc.gov/mentalhealth/stress-coping>
 “5 Things You Should Know About Stress” *Outlines how stress affects the body and offers practical ways to manage it.* <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/stress>
 “Stress Management: Enhance Your Well-Being by Reducing Stress” *Highlights the benefits of gratitude, physical activity, and self-compassion.* <https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/stress-management>
 “Helping Kids Cope with Stress” *Offers advice on modeling calm, maintaining routines, and encouraging positive self-talk.* <https://childmind.org/article/helping-children-cope-with-stress>
 “How to Talk About Mental Health” *Offers sample phrases and guidance for reaching out when you or someone else may need support.* <https://www.nami.org/Your-Journey/Individuals-with-Mental-Illness/Talking-to-Others>
 “How to Start a Conversation About Mental Health” *Provides conversation openers for adults and youth about needing help or offering support.* <https://mhanational.org/get-involved/start-conversation>
 “How to Talk About Mental Health” *Emphasizes direct, compassionate communication and normalizing help-seeking behavior.* <https://www.apa.org/topics/mental-health/talk-about-mental-health>
 “Seize the Awkward” *This youth-focused campaign provides realistic scripts and examples for how to reach out for help or check in on someone who’s struggling.* <https://seizetheawkward.org>

The Chinle Unified School District (CUSD) has launched Project A.W.A.R.E Wildcats (PAWs), a collaboration with the Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health, and the Chinle community to create a sustainable infrastructure for school-based mental health programs and services.



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CALMING CORNER



The Chinle Unified School District has implemented 'Calming Corners' as a special designated space for students to go when:

- A break is needed. Feeling overwhelmed or overstimulated.
- Sensory rooms offer calm space to relax and de-stress during the day.
- **All CUSD schools** have their own sensory rooms.

Benefits

1. Helps students with sensory processing challenges, such as those with autism, ADHD, or anxiety.
2. Sensory Calming Corners supports emotional development, independence, and self-regulation.
3. Children learn that it is okay to take a break and respect others' need for space.
4. Children will naturally seek out this area when they need a break.
5. What matters most is the intention behind the space: providing a safe, peaceful, and respectful environment for self-regulation.



HOW CAN YOU CREATE YOUR VERY OWN SENSORY CALMING CORNER AT HOME?

- Place in a quiet area, away from high-traffic parts of your home.
- Should be accessible to all children at any time during the day.
- Designed at the child's level to encourage independent use.
- Set your sensory room up with:
 - Visuals: Bubble tubes, glitter jars, hang up art or images
 - Sound: Soothing music, nature sounds, white noise, etc.
 - Tactile tools/Texture: Fidget toys, stress balls, sheep skin, etc.
 - Comfort items: Bean bags, weighted blankets, pillows, etc.
 - Movement tools: Exercising band, balance boards, crash pads
- No Space? No Problem! Even a small corner can become a sensory space with:
 - A cozy tent or bean bag
 - Simple tools like fidget toys
 - Portable items like headphones, stress balls, or weighted lap pad.

