

Benainu- Between Us: 6th Grade Health and Wellness Program

Overview:

Benainu is Beth Tfiloh's health and wellness program for sixth graders. Over the course of a few weeks, students will participate in eight sessions to explore the physical, spiritual, moral, social, and emotional changes and challenges of adolescence. Session leaders will provide students with information and skills relevant to specific health and wellness topics as well as discuss the common theme of identifying trusted adults in the students' lives to continue exploring these issues with and with whom to engage in more private, personal conversations. This program has a strong home-school connection. Parents are an integral part of the program; parent information sessions, email updates after each lesson, suggested follow up discussions at home, and parental guidance in helping students' integrate the new and complex information into their lives.

Overall, the program considers the whole child—this comprehensive approach to teaching health and wellness is critical to equipping students with the knowledge, skills, and guidance they need to effectively navigate the complexities of adolescence. The hope is that the students' experiences in the program serve as a spring board to continue students' learning and skill development, and guide them in having private, personal conversations with trusted adults while they are at Beth Tfiloh and beyond.

Program Structure

1. Beyond the Lesson- Parent information: Prior to the start of the program parents are provided with a letter describing the program. Session leaders will send an email out to parents after their respective sessions reviewing the information shared and an overview of the students' involvement, questions, and concerns.
2. Beyond the Lesson- Advisory: 6th grade advisors will designate time each week to process the topics taught earlier that week. Grade advisors will create their own format for this.
3. Internet Safety: Mark Kaiser and Mrs. Hervitz will lead a session on internet safety that emphasizes safe and appropriate use of email and social networking sites, the permanency/impacts of social media, as well as defines and explores cyber bullying.
4. Ethical Decisions: Mr. Stevens will address moral philosophy and lead an activity that explores some of the following ideas: competition vs. cooperation, fairness, justice, and equity. Mr. Stevens will also explore how to use these guiding principles when faced with ethical dilemmas.
5. Sleep, Exercise, Nutrition, and Hygiene: Mrs. Herlands will teach the importance of sleep, exercise, nutrition, and hygiene during adolescence. Some examples of topics discussed are: healthy food options, healthy sleep and exercise patterns, typical hygiene routines and addresses eating disorders.

6. Derech Eretz and Empathy: Mrs. Hervitz will focus this session on some of the following: empathy, and showing respect and kindness to yourself and others.
7. Anatomy, Puberty, and Reproduction: This session will be led by Mrs. Finkelstein and Mr. Kuter, accompanied by Rabbi Oratz and Mrs. Hervitz. Students will be separated by gender during this session. The lesson focuses on anatomy, the physical changes of puberty, and basic reproduction. The curriculum is developmentally and age appropriate.
8. Teenage Brain: This session will be led by Mrs. Finkelstein and Mrs. Hervitz, and will focus on brain science as it relates to emotions, hormones, and using your body to calm down your brain.
9. Judaism's Perspectives on Adolescence: Mrs. Schorr, Rabbi Abrahams, Rabbi Krawtawsky, and Rabbi Levi will lead a session focused on the Jewish perspective of health and caring for the body utilizing excerpts from the Torah and Mishnah. Students will be separated by gender during this session. Sessions also explore the concept and various applications of modesty, as well as similarities and differences between males and females, highlighting equality among both.
10. Coping Skills: Students will have a choice to participate in lessons that offer education on and practice using coping skills—options may include: yoga, physical activity, and artistic expression. Leaders, a yoga instructor, Coach Burkom, and Mrs. Spector will discuss the benefits of the activity in relation to stress relief.
11. Performance Assessment Closing Session: Students work together on a skit, poster, slide presentation or Public Service Announcement to share messages that are significant to them from the various sessions.