

BE CAREFUL WITH ADVICE TO A FRIEND

MOVE COULD BACKFIRE, WRITES MELANIE MCGREGOR



MELANIE MCGREGOR
Column

Here's a bit of advice ... giving advice isn't always good.

Imagine a friend comes to you talking about a problem with her partner. She likely needs someone to listen, try to understand and be supportive. However, as listeners, our minds often go to possible solutions to the problem and we may be tempted to say something like, "You need to go to counselling" or "You need to stop doing this or that."

While usually well-intentioned, giving advice can backfire. Your friend may think you don't trust her to find her own solutions. She may think that you are rushing her and that you just want to get to the solution and end the conversation. She may not agree with the advice and feel awkward. Or, she may take the advice and then blame you or trust you

less if things go south.

Even when asked, it is best for us to avoid giving advice for all of these reasons and more. However, there are some more subtle and helpful ways we can encourage people in our lives to consider options to improving their situation. Following are some ideas for doing just this:

- **Get their ideas.** Asking, "What do you think would be helpful?" or "What have you thought about doing?" gives them a chance to share and talk out what might be on their minds and get your support if needed. We can't assume that others always need advice and don't have ideas of their own.

- **Give options and information.** You may know something that could be helpful, and it's all about how you present it. Your response could sound like, "There are counsellors available, or groups that could help or books that might have some tips." Provide some options and see what they latch onto - pushing something on them that might not be meaningful will cross the line into advice-giving.

- **Ask questions.** Rather than saying, "You need to tell

her to stop that," ask instead, "Have you thought of talking to her?" or "What do you think might happen if you tried talking to her about this?" Questions are a gentler way of exploring options, and if others have ruled out or don't want to consider particular solutions, we can move on and continue listening to help them feel heard and possibly develop their own next steps.

- **Share an experience.** We don't want to go on and on and make the conversation about us, but something short like, "I know when I went through something similar, I found talking to family really helped me. Do you think that could help you?" Keep it short, make sure it's relevant and leave the choice up to them.

That's the advice about not giving advice.

Melanie McGregor is the communications and advancement specialist at the Canadian Mental Health Association Halton Region Branch, which provides mental health/addiction community support and education. Visit www.halton.cmha.ca for more information and follow @cmhahalton on Twitter.

KNIGHTS THRIVING ATHLETICALLY AND ACADEMICALLY

PLENTY TO CELEBRATE THIS FALL AT JEAN VANIER, WRITE DEY AND KNYNENBURG



AVA DEY & EMMA KNYNENBURG
Column

Athletic, spirited and scholastic: These are the reasons why Jean Vanier-Catholic Secondary School is flourishing. Students at JV had a great beginning to October, continuing to achieve academic and athletic success.

Our athletes strived to improve their skills and achieve their athletic goals. Special recognition to some of our female senior cross-country athletes that were top finishers and will continue to challenge their endurance as they compete at the Golden Horseshoe Athletic Conference.

Additionally, our junior girls field hockey team demonstrated integrity and a united front while playing in the Halton Finals and, despite their loss, they did an amazing job representing our school.

On Thursday Oct. 17,

our school celebrated the academic achievements and stewardship of our students at the fourth annual Vanier Way Award Ceremony. Students were recognized for their remarkable efforts in living the Vanier Way within our school community.

Other award recipients were identified for their academic success from the previous year, achieving top grades in various courses at all levels. Our school administration was proud of our students' contributions and commitment to building a community full of spirit and acceptance.

On Friday, Oct. 18, as a school community we honoured our Catholic faith, celebrating our first liturgy of the school year. As students of Christ, we proudly came together as a school to strengthen our relationship with God and build spirit.

Students were encouraged to wear a shirt that exhibited school spirit, such as a school sports jersey.

Our chaplain, students of service as well as the band and choir lead the liturgy, rejoicing in a new school year while continuing our journey of faith. Our school continued to exemplify our strong faith by hosting the Grade 7 confirmation retreat for the feeder schools.

JV concluded the month in Halloween festivities by dressing up in costumes, with classes participating in a pumpkin carving contest. Knights for Justice (a branch of the Students of Service school council), organized the "We Scare Hunger" food drive in support of our mission to spread passion by collecting canned goods.

Coming up in November, Jean Vanier Catholic Secondary School will commemorate the members of armed forces who have died in the line of duty, during our Remembrance Day assembly. Various students will also be attending the Ontario Student Leadership Conference in Niagara, to defend our schools title as most Spirited School in Ontario.

Ava Dey and Emma Knynenburg are Grade 11 students at Jean Vanier Secondary School.

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