

2016 March Minutes

Date/Time: Thursday, March 17, 2016 7:00 - 9:00 PM

Place: CGS Grammar School Auditorium

Members Present: See Attached Sign In Sheet

Topic: See Attached Agenda

Speaker: Dr David Stember - Strategies for coping with Anxiety in Adolescents.

The meeting was called to order by Lauren Miller, President. Introduction of officers Carolyn Wilkinson, VP. Lauren and Carolyn then proceeded to update members about our upcoming and fast approaching Resource Fair. Several new vendors have been added. They also spoke about entertainment, the raffle, & the need for volunteers. A separate volunteer signup sheet was out at the sign in table. The High School has added SEPAC to its list of organizations for their students to use when trying to satisfy their requirement of doing community service. A form was created by SEPAC and approved by HS Principal Rich Barden as proof of service.

The members were asked to spread the word to family and friends and that all are welcome. Members were also informed that SEPAC is here to help them in their Spec Ed journey so to please reach out if they are in need.

Dr David Stember was introduced at 7:30 PM. He holds a PhD in clinical psychology and works at Harvard Medical School & McLean Hospital. He presented a broad overview of anxiety. Basically it had a purpose in history as to how to handle a crisis. The Fight, Flight, or Freeze reaction is a normal part in everyone. Unfortunately when it is out of control and interferes with life then intervention is required. Adolescents are susceptible and may engage in avoidance behavior because it makes the anxiety go away, but this is only a temporary fix. Due to inaccurate thoughts the anxiety gets reinforced and can escalate. The feeling reinforces the thinking and causes the physical action---avoiding. Exposure therapy is the treatment that Dr Stember employs. It is only through facing that which makes you anxious that helps you overcome it. Be it reading, math, dogs, socializing, etc. Gradual exposure helps one deal with the thing that makes one feel anxious and works against the avoidance behavior. It helps to get the person to habituate ie get bored of the reaction. Schools need to be careful that the IEPs & 504s do not reinforce avoidance but rather assist in exposure treatment. Cognitive Behavior Therapy with Exposure Therapy has been shown to be just as effective as medication. The only exception is with General Anxiety Disorder where medication is best. Not doing work, procrastinating, doesn't mean lazy, it means avoidance and is a sign of anxious behavior. Dr Stember ended with offering his services, distribution of his cards.

Q & A followed 8:45-9:00PM

Meeting adjourned 9:00PM

Recorded by Carolyn Wilkinson, VP/Secretary