

*At the **Heart** of Wellness*

With McCall & Help

Message from Maria



Maria

Coutant Skinner, LCSW, CEO

Dear friends;

In the fall of my 5th grade year, Ms. Seger assigned us a “how to” speech to be delivered to our entire class. I was very shy, so this assignment was met with no small amount of trepidation. I chose to bring my battery powered pottery wheel in and demonstrate how to make a bowl. On the day of my speech, I realized that having this fun instrument in my bag meant I had something interesting to take out and show the kids at my bus stop, my classmates before school began and friends on the playground at recess. By the time my big moment in front of

How to Build Healthy Habits for Families and Children

If worrying was an Olympic sport, parents could win a gold medal. Kids today are generally unsettled and show increased rates of anxiety and depression. They have a lot that they are dealing with and often lack the language and pathways to express it. On top of that, adults feel that they do not have the appropriate tools to respond to their child’s needs, so they worry.

When parents are afraid, they often act and react out of fear. Instead of coming from a place of nurture and love, fear and worry leads to actions that may be a disservice to that child. When there are clear expectations, structure, and nurture, parents can make better decisions and help build resiliency in their children.

Building Resilience Starts at Home

Children are often more capable than they are given credit for and, with the proper guidance, have the ability to navigate the world around them. They simply need the tools and confidence to do so. If a child knows they can do hard things, get through them, and come out on the other side in one piece they will be less likely to turn to substances to cope.

Setting children up for success starts with the following:

- **High Expectations:** It isn’t about high grades or going to Yale. It’s about understanding what you

the class arrived, I discovered, to my horror, that I had used up the battery life powering my wheel. As I stood in front of the classroom with everyone looking at me expectantly, I felt my face flush and panic set in. I turned to Ms. Seger and told her I couldn't do my speech; the wheel wouldn't work. She gently told me that I needed to go ahead with my assignment and believed that I could figure out an alternate plan to deliver the message. I fought back the tears, took a deep breath, and went through my speech. The big hunk of clay eventually did turn into a bowl of sorts, and I took my seat, relieved to be done. I don't remember my grade, but to this day I can recall that lesson, and in fact I call upon it often. I was ready to limit myself, to throw in the towel and say I can't possibly do this task. I even had a quasi-valid excuse. My teacher did two things in that moment, she held me accountable, and she believed I was capable.

As a parent, a social worker and a supervisor of people doing important and challenging work, I have revisited this defining lesson over and over again. The article to the right represents the evolution of my thinking on how to best support our people as they meet challenges, build

value as a family, what matters most. How do we spend our time, spend money, and relate to others?

- **High Structure:** Children need rules and structure. For example, determine an age-appropriate bedtime and limit screen time. Make sure children know the rules and the consequences.
- **High Nurture:** Love them madly, but do not overprotect them. When a child is struggling, do not rescue them or let them give up. Instead say, "I am here with you, and you have the strength and tools to make it through."

Connect One Meal at a Time

A simple place to start is to put down the electronic devices and eat a meal together as a family, four to five times a week. Family therapist and Executive Director of The Family Dinner Project, Anne Fishel, Ph.D., reports that only 30% of families regularly eat dinner together. In an interview with Harvard, she talks about the benefits of family dinners. They are great for the body, academic performance, and mental health. They also provide an opportunity to build intergenerational social skills connect and relate.

- [Click here](#) to find dinner conversation starters, games, recipes and more!
- Another tradition to try is "[The Special Plate](#)", an easy way to recognize the achievements of your loved ones.

Asking for Help is a True Show of Strength

McCall & Help, Inc. CEO, Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, has an extensive background with children and family therapy. She wants all parents to know that it is okay to ask for help, in fact she has never met a kid or family who couldn't benefit from some counseling. Families may only need a few sessions, or they may need more time,

resilience, and grow. The leadership philosophy of a three-legged stool involving high nurture, high structure, and high expectations – each critical and interdependent – send a loving message that allows the recipient to believe they are capable of hard things. We do indeed have hard and important things to do, my friends, and we are most certainly up to the task. (Not pottery though, I'm probably always going to show off at recess and deplete my batteries.)

All my best,

Maria

Postscript. Many years later, after Joanne Seger retired, she came to work at McCall in our billing department. I had the chance to tell her how much that lesson meant to me and what an influence she had on my life. We became friends and had many wonderful conversations as well as loads of laughs. Joanne passed away from cancer in 2018 and I continue to both miss her and treasure her memory.

but they can make that decision together. She urges parents to not brush off concerning behavior as a phase that will pass. The earlier children are met with a positive intervention the better off the trajectory of their life will be.

Black History Month

Black Health & Wellness

Every year the Association for the Study of African American Life and History ([ASALH](#)) designates a theme for Black History Month. This year's theme is Black Health and Wellness, which acknowledges the legacy of Black scholars, medical practitioners in Western medicine and other practices, such as doulas, midwives, naturopaths, etc., throughout the African Diaspora. You can read more about the theme and contributions of Black communities [here](#).

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), health equity is achieved when all members of society enjoy a fair and just opportunity to be as healthy as possible. The 2022 theme Black Health & Wellness also asks us to reflect upon the inequities in healthcare for racial and ethnic global majority groups in the United States. The pandemic has brought these inequities to the forefront, as reports have shown people of color being more at risk for getting sick and dying from COVID-19 than white, non-Hispanic Americans.

To learn more about Black History Month and Black Health and Wellness, visit the links below:

- [Book Recommendations: Black Health & Wellness](#)
- [PBS Black History for Kids](#)
- [A Short History of Black History Month](#)
- [NBC Connecticut in Color](#)



Joanne
Seger, Teacher & Friend

Did you miss our WZBG Interview?

Click on this [link](#) to hear this month's interview on WZBG 97.3 with Dale Jones and Maria Coutant Skinner, LCSW, CEO. This month our CEO spoke about how parents can help their child build resiliency and healthy habits. Visit McCall's press room to listen! Tune in on the 3rd Wednesday of every month at 8:20 to hear us in real-time.



Our Contact Information

McCall Center for Behavioral Health
58 High Street
Torrington, CT 06790
860-496-2100
<https://mccallcenterct.org/>

Top Workplace USA Award

We are excited to announce that we are a winner of the 2022 Top Workplaces USA award!

This is the inaugural year for Top Workplaces USA, built on the program's 14-year history surveying more than 20 million employees across 54 markets for the regional Top Workplaces awards. Winners of the Top Workplaces USA list are chosen based solely on employee feedback gathered through an employee engagement survey, issued by Energage.

We are deeply honored to be receiving this award, especially during these unprecedented times. Throughout workforce shortages and the ongoing pandemic, our staff has continually demonstrated unwavering support to both their colleagues and clients. They are the glue that holds our community together, making Help, Inc. and McCall such a special place to work.

[Click here to read about the award in the Register Citizen!](#)

