

BOCES #1 recommendations:

I am writing on behalf of Wendy Smith regarding her professional learning sessions on wellness and stress reduction. As the Teacher Center Director at Monroe One BOCES, I have had the pleasure of working with Wendy since 2016. I've hired her each year as a wellness presenter for our teachers, related service providers and paraeducators.

After first meeting with Wendy, I could see her passion for wellness and stress reduction. She created a syllabus for the course, in collaboration with me, to meet the needs of our staff. She was flexible and accommodating. After the first course was complete, I sent a survey to all the participants. The feedback from them regarding the course was overwhelmingly positive. In fact, the participants asked for a second level of training. So, I have been bringing Wendy back each year to provide new learning for our staff.

I even participated in a few sessions myself. She provided a nice balance of direct instruction and skill practice. She taught us the history and biology of stress, as well as many practical strategies for relaxation. We rehearsed exercises in Qigong and meditation. It was very beneficial to the participants and me.

I recommend Wendy as a Wellness consultant or presenter. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,



Jodi Coniglio

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I highly recommend Wendy Smith for teaching wellness classes in the educational setting. I have attended her Wellness Level 1 (2016) and Wellness Level 2 (2017) classes offered through the Monroe Boces No 1 Professional Development program. When I signed up for the Level 1 class, I wasn't sure how "stress-free" I would feel at the end of a busy school day. But, from the beginning of the class, Wendy set a tone of warmth, and in sharing her experience with these strategies, she set positive expectations that they could help us as well. I found that the classes helped me unwind and I felt refreshed after each of them. I looked forward to the following week to learn more strategies that I could incorporate into my day. Those of us in the class, shared our enthusiasm for the next time we'd meet, and we encouraged our colleagues to sign up for the next session.

Wendy uses humor, strategy practice, group sharing, visuals and handouts to share her experiences and expertise in the field of wellness. She is receptive to and readily answers questions, and provides opportunities for sharing experiences with each other to reinforce learning.

At the end of the Level 1 session, two staff members, from different buildings, noted how they had used their newly learning breathing and movement strategies to calm themselves and/or a student effectively in a challenging situation. The effectiveness of Wendy's strategies in the educational setting was demonstrated within the four-week session time.

I signed up for the Wellness Level 2 session as soon as it was listed, and so did my peers, so we wouldn't miss getting in. I appreciated the opportunity to practice more challenging breathing, meditation, and

movement strategies for longer lengths of time, as well as working towards incorporating mindfulness strategies into my daily life. My classmates and I worked on doing “homework” to bring about more lifelong change, supporting each other during the week as we practiced newly learned skills. I am still amazed how deep breathing strategies can change your focus and attention.

As an Occupational Therapist (20 years), I see elementary and high school students who need to work on their self-regulation skills. These Wellness classes have broadened my repertoire for simple, effective self-calming strategies that are readily taught to students. Two weeks ago, I used a combination breathing/movement strategy effectively with a 5th grade student before he got carried away with his anxiety. He was able to tie in the “Zones of Regulation” program with how he felt before and after using the strategy, clearly identifying how he had “moved” from the yellow zone to the green zone by calming himself.

I have learned wellness strategies for myself and my students. I am grateful that my school offered Wendy’s classes, as her strategies are important for leading healthier lives both in and out of the classroom.

Jeanmarie N. Courtney, MS OTR/L
Registered Occupational Therapist

I would like to recommend the Wellness Professional Development workshops by Wendy Smith. Wendy has a very approachable personality, which created a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom; a requirement especially needed for this topic. She shared her story with the group and made participants feel at ease and safe as they discussed their own stories. Wendy provided examples of how she uses the techniques she teaches. Never once did she say that mastering the techniques would be simple, rather, she explained that with perseverance we will see results.

I can say from my personal experience that attending these workshops has made a remarkable change in my life so much that my office mates noticed a change in my attitude. I have a better outlook on life in general, and now find it easy to let things slide. By using skills learned such as *breathing techniques* and *reframing*, I am able to commute to and from work without getting frustrated (it was bad), and communicate with others with a more professional mindset. I also began practicing the techniques she outlined in *A Complaint Free World*, finding success in how I perceive my thoughts/actions and the actions of others.

Wendy gave us encouragement and advice to reshape the way we think about our own lives and the lives of our loved ones. She also provided many resources to help continue our practice of being mindful. I highly recommend Wendy’s stress reduction professional development program to everyone!

Sue Hill
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