

MEGAN COLLINS

TEACHER SPOTLIGHT

Counsellor, Teacher, Mom, Wife, Music Lover, Skilled Learner and Mindfulness Journey-woman

"People will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel." -Maya Angelou

Some decades ago, while trying to make sense of the world as a young adult, a teacher and friend shared an important piece of wisdom with Megan - "Your parents are human like you. They are doing the best they know how." Although at first it seemed an obvious statement, to Megan, it became a great lesson in empathy. Over the years, as she has become a professional, a counsellor, a wife, and a parent, these words have continually served as a reminder that being kind to oneself and to others begins with compassion. Both empathy and compassion are at the heart of Megan's counselling practice and underpin how she helps students unchain themselves from negative self-talk and connect with others.

BY THE NUMBERS

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Instead of New Year resolutions, Megan prefers to use this time to reflect on the journey and her approach to life goals. "I find that sometimes the focus on the resolution or goal detracts attention from reflecting on whether the path being taken, or the goal itself, is an appropriate one."

Looking at life through the eyes of her 4-year-old has renewed Megan's excitement for the work she does. From impromptu family dance parties, to walks and hikes, with her husband Dan and their son Sam, spending time with loved ones is among Megan's favourite pastimes.

Born and raised in Vancouver, Megan's roots expand far beyond our Canadian borders. Her half Jamaican, half Cherokee heritage informs Megan's global perspective and connect her to a larger global community.



Resolving to Embrace Hope

I can't help but be somewhat reflective at this time of year; it's unbelievable to me that 2016 is coming to a close. I am not a resolution person; I have broken too many over my lifetime and disappointed myself one too many times. I do, however, love the feeling of hope I get when thinking of a 'fresh start' as a new year approaches. I love the hopeful space I step into when I think about possibility and potential for myself and others.

As of late, world events seem to be trying to erode some of the hope that I try to carry with me on a daily basis. It has been too easy to slip into the state of feeling fearful and powerless about some of the happenings in our world. This is uncomfortable for me. Especially because as a counsellor, it is my job to hold hope for others. It has been alarmingly easy to feel that sense of uneasiness creep in as events unfold globally.

Yet as I think about what I hope for in 2017, I keep coming back to a quote from the Dalai Lama that has always stood out for me: "Love and Compassion are necessities, not luxuries. Without them humanity cannot survive." So, I am choosing to believe that by holding hope for myself, others, and the global community, I can help to create time and space where the power of human connection and empathy will overpower the negativity and fear that at times seem to dominate. It is easy to be inspired by so many things at Mulgrave, but what stands out most for me is the supportive nature of the relationships here. When I need to remind myself to hold hope, I just observe the myriad ways we are supporting one another, empowering one another and nurturing the best in each other. These connections are powerful, and from them, I know we are cultivating a culture from which we are not only educating our minds but also our hearts. - MC

Megan's Bio

Born and raised in Vancouver, Megan feels fortunate to have had the privilege of growing up in this beautiful city. Having moved to the 'mountains' of the North Shore many years ago, she has a profound respect for the beauty of the natural environment that surrounds us here. Megan has always been a passionate advocate for children and families and has worked in many roles and organisations that support the health and development of children and youth. From youth outreach work, to counselling high-risk young people and new immigrant families, to working in schools, she brings a diverse background to her work supporting our students.

Megan thrives on being encompassed by Mulgrave's progressive learning environment and will always consider herself a student at heart. A strong believer in the power and benefits of mindfulness, she also believes that practicing compassion with ourselves and others is the only way to make the world a kinder place. Music and nature are Megan's therapists and when not at work, she can usually be found outside enjoying the natural environment in the company of her husband and son.

A FEW OF HER FAVOURITE THINGS

MEDITATION

Up until four years ago, before Sam was born, I would meditate for an hour every day. Practicing meditation was a great way to prioritise and find the best focus for my attention. It grounded me and curtailed unproductive thoughts. As a parent, I find I need meditation more than ever, but my growing responsibilities seem to take precedent. So, rather than scheduling a time, I look for breaks in a day that allow me the chance to connect inwardly.

ADICHIE'S TED TALK

One of my favourite TED Talks is that of African novelist, Chimamanda Adichie. In her powerful presentation, she underscores the importance of seeking different stories to capture a country's authentic cultural voice. She's an amazing storyteller whom I'd love to hear speak in person.

BEAUTIFUL CUFF

My grandmother, my dad's mom, is a very reserved person. Although she's not a woman of many words, when I received my degree from SFU I deeply felt how proud she was that I had graduated university. To commemorate this important event in her family's history, she passed on to me a family heirloom - a large cuff bracelet. To this day, whenever I wear it, I feel an empowering energy emanate from it and the strength of the many women in my family whose hard work enabled me to take advantage of opportunities.

EMPOWERING BOOKS

I love books that inspire me to be kind to myself and leave me feeling empowered. Two such books, among the top on my list, are *The Power of Vulnerability* and *Daring Greatly*, both by Brene Brown. These books balance research and storytelling to drive home the message that in order to become stronger, we must embrace the incertitude that comes from feeling vulnerable.