

TheKid COMPASS

Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children

Grades 3-5



We offer this Kid Compass resource in memory of Ab Nicholas. Ab, along with his wife, Nancy, provided the generous support that makes the Samaritan Family Wellness initiative possible.

About the Author

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Welcome & Introduction

Welcome to The Kid Compass!

For years, when we've introduced our Wellness Compass resource for adults, parents, and teens, we're frequently asked if we have anything similar designed especially to meet the needs of young children. We are excited to announce that we have now created just that, a compass resource for younger children: The Kid Compass!

The Kid Compass is the latest addition to the Samaritan Family Wellness model for Well-Being collection of wholistic wellness activities and resources. TKC has been created for use by parents, teachers, counselors, camp staff, or for anyone who works with children. This guide, for grades 3–5, incorporates music, art projects, written projects, conversations, and more.

At this mid grade-school age, children are making a few more of their own choices in each of the eight areas of wellness, while living in a family that is caring for and shaping them, as well. It is wise to help them begin to understand that the choices they make are important and that those choices can make them feel both good and not so good. To help them understand that they *can* make healthy choices as they make strides toward growing independence.

As an adult working with children, you will have an opportunity to walk alongside each child, offering compassionate listening and gentle encouragement. You'll also be able to support their discoveries by modeling the skills you are helping them to learn and experience.

Thank you for your commitment to help others, especially young children, learn skills necessary to grow into healthy, happy adults.

Holly Hughes Stoner, LMFT
& the rest of The Kid Compass Wellness Team



The Kid Compass Model of Well-Being: A Brief Overview

All of our Compass resources—*The Teen Compass*, *The Parent Compass*, and the *Adult Compass*—build on the same four points on the compass: heart, soul, strength, and mind; and eight areas of wellness: healthy relationships, handling emotions, spirituality, rest & play, stress resilience, care for the body, school, and organization.

The activities in this guide have been organized into the four compass points and eight areas of wellness introduced in the Samaritan Family Wellness model of well-being. Designed to be used by anyone who works with children grades 3–5, the Kid Compass is offered as a way to introduce the idea that being healthy is multi-faceted and each area of well-being is influenced by our choices.

As you use this material with children, you can point out the importance of each area of wellness, and that they all work together in a wholistic way. You can also emphasize the importance of balancing all eight areas of wellness in order to promote overall well-being

Because we are describing the same areas of wellness to children that we have used with both adults and parents, we hope you will take time to look over our *Wellness Compass* resources under the adult and parent sections on our website (samaritanfamilywellness.org).

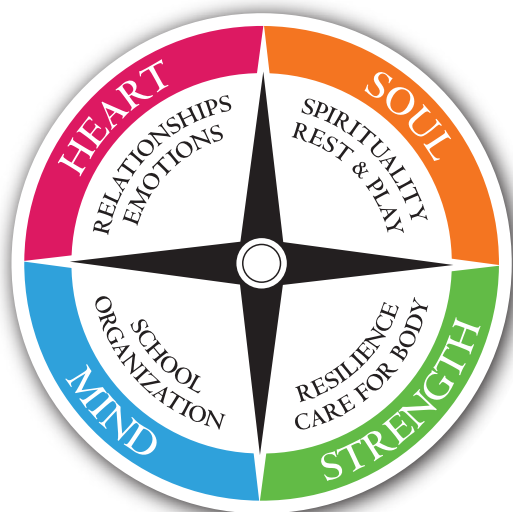
When children and adults talk about health and wellness using a shared non-judgmental vocabulary and images, this helps to support and encourage those important conversations. This benefits both children and adults by making it easier to talk about anything related to well-being that comes up that could flourish from mutual care and attention.

Areas of Wellness

Heart

Relationships. Developing the ability to create and maintain healthy, life-giving connections with others.

Handling Emotions. Developing the ability to express emotions and to receive others' emotions in a healthy way.





Soul

Spirituality. The development of a sense of the wonder of the world and beginning to find meaning in life.

Rest and Play. Developing a healthy balance of school, play, and family life.

Strength

Resilience. Developing ways to deal positively with things that are hard.

Care for the Body. Developing habits that help children to grow up physically healthy.

Mind

School. Developing the attitudes needed to get the most out of educational opportunities.

Organization. Developing the ability to keep track of and make good use of time, money, and possessions.

As an additional visual resource for the compass points and areas of well-being, we'd also like to offer the mobile graphic pictured here. The mobile can help illustrate how movement in any one of the eight areas of well-being affects all the other areas on the compass. When working with children, we encourage you to download this mobile graphic to use as a resource to demonstrate the importance of balance in all eight areas of wellness. When talking about these areas, you can begin by focusing on one area at a time, and then slowly put together the mobile to create a complete picture of how all the areas work together in an integrated way. We also encourage you to have a conversation near the end about the importance of continually addressing each of these eight areas of well-being in life, especially when any of them seems out of balance.



For more information on this guide, or the other Kid Compass resources, visit us online at samaritanfamilywellness.org/thekidcompass

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email holly@samaritanfamilywellness.org



Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 3–5

HEART

Healthy Relationships

Developing the ability to create and maintain healthy, life-giving connections with others.





Following are some suggested activities to use to promote and discuss healthy relationships.

Celebrate the uniqueness of each child. Take time on a regular basis to celebrate special occasions in the life of each child, such as milestones, special interests, gifts, kindness toward a friend, etc. This exercise can model an active appreciation for individuality and can emphasize the value and uniqueness of all. Make your space a place where each child can be lifted up and appreciated regularly.

Talk it out. Talk about things that we all can do that can hurt the feelings of other people, such as a family member, classmate, or friend. Have children brainstorm things that hurt their own, or others', feelings. Make a list so they can see and discuss any feelings they might be experiencing related to these things. Then, discuss both how to use their words to talk with someone who has hurt them, and how to make up and apologize if they caused the hurt. Take suggestions from the group, as well as offering some reconciling actions, such as saying you are sorry, writing a note, offering a hug, calling, shaking hands, offering to do something nice for them, drawing them a picture. To help them remember some of the ideas mentioned, act a few of them out in front of the group, inviting them to participate if it feels right. This activity underscores the normalcy of being hurt and hurting others' feelings and the importance of talking things out, accepting responsibility, and apologizing when appropriate.

Important Relationships. Ask the children to think of important relationships in their lives (parents, classmates, friends, grandparents, teachers, neighbors, other family, teammates, etc.) and name why those people are important to them. Ask the children what they might do for one of those people to let them know they are valued. When talking, the children may mention writing a letter, drawing a picture, creating a video, writing a story about them, writing a poem, or making a gift. After talking as a group, allow the children time to express their appreciation for someone in their life in the way they choose. This activity strengthens relationships and can be done throughout the year.

What Would You Do? This activity is designed for a short group discussion, using one situation every week or so to keep them thinking about their choices over time. Create your own situations for additional discussions.

- You are playing a game at school with some friends and someone else comes along and wants to play, too.
- You and a friend both have new shoes or toys and you like yours better.
- A new student has just joined your class and you notice that they are sitting alone at lunchtime.
- You are playing at a friend's house and they serve a snack that you really don't like.
- You have saved enough money to buy something special, and after you buy it your little brother wants to play with it, too.
- While riding the bus, you see someone being mean to another child and the child starts to cry.



- After your discussion, allow time for them to create drawings or to write about the situation discussed. You can use this activity to explore how our actions impact our relationships, the emotions we feel, and to discover healthy ways to handle them.

Students at this age may begin to notice different races and may begin to form relationships with others who are different from themselves. The following books are all excellent and can be used to open up discussions about wonderings that may arise on this topic, as well as other books that feature healthy relationships.



Read aloud a story to the group and then discuss the relationships in the stories, and the morals of the stories. These books are written for younger children so you will want to acknowledge that, then ask them what the stories are trying to teach young children. What can they learn from the story that could apply to children their ages? After reading the book, have them create a book of their own that teaches the same lesson to children their age.



Last Stop on Market Street by Matt de la Peña

A wonderful story of patience, compassion, and giving back.

Oliver Button Is a Sissy by Tommie dePaola

In this book, a little boy comes to terms with being teased and ostracized because he'd rather read books, paint pictures, and tap-dance than participate in sports. There is a good balance between the simple text and the expressive pictures.

The Monster Who Lost His Mean by Tiffany Strelitz Haber

This book not only teaches children that being mean doesn't benefit anyone, even themselves, but also that by being true to themselves, they'll find their real friends.

Just Because by Amber Housey

Part of the series *Flip Side Stories*, which aims to teach children to see another's point of view. *Just Because* teaches children about the value of giving, being thankful, and having empathy for others.

Sumi's First Day of School Ever by Joung Un Kim and Soyung Pak

With the help of an understanding teacher Sumi, a young girl from Korea who isn't so sure she'll like going to school makes a new friend and she begins to like it.

Enemy Pie by Derek Munson

In this humorous tale, a dad tells his son that the best way to get rid of his enemy is to give him "enemy pie" –which only works if you spend a whole day with your enemy. This book makes the point that if you really get to know someone you will most likely find that you have things in common.

The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss

In this classic tale, two dueling factions, Sneetches with star bellies and Sneetches without, go through a series of transformations and eventually become friends when they can no longer see the difference between each other.

Stand In My Shoes by Bob Sornson

After her sister explains what empathy means, Emily starts to notice how those around her feel.

A Sick Day for Amos McGee by Philip C. Stead

This classic teaches kids the importance of kindness.



Amos and Boris by William Steig

Despite having nothing in common, an unlikely pair of friends, a whale and a mouse, love each other very much.

As you read books with the children, take some time to discuss the relationships in the stories. Ask how the characters showed patience, kindness, self-centeredness, etc. Then, expand the conversation to connect relationships to wellness. Point out that people who are not well frequently act in unkind and selfish ways, but every person can change. Then, if the characters changed in the story, discuss how they changed and what that change meant for the character.

Following are additional website resources to use when discussing healthy relationships.

- [Teaching Tolerance](#) provides educators teaching K–8 resources to promote social justice, challenge bias, and engage students in discussions about diversity that would perhaps not happen otherwise. This website offers lesson plans, printable posters, and more which can be found in the classroom resources section of their website.
- The Smithsonian Museum’s [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) is designed to provide educators with content and resources to better understand race and racial inequity. This resource equips you with tools necessary to help children be more racially conscious, which can help create better relationships in your classroom or community.
- [Responsive Classroom](#) has all kinds of wonderful information and free downloadable materials meant to help adults create a healthy learning environment for young people in grades K-8.



Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 3–5

HEART

Handling Emotions

*Developing the ability to express emotions and
to receive others' emotions in a healthy way.*





Following are some suggested activities to use to promote and discuss handling emotions.

Identifying Emotions. Work with the group of children to come up with a list of emotions they have felt or know about. While doing so, record the list so it can be displayed (images can be used if they are nonreaders), and revisited later as the emotions come up in class. You may even want them to associate a sound with each emotion (angry = a roar, for instance). This helps young children begin to recognize and identify emotions, and also gives them the vocabulary to talk about their feelings with others. Encourage the children to describe how each emotion feels in their body. Finally, help them think about a list of activities that they can do if they feel a difficult emotion in their body. This is a good time to incorporate the other areas of the compass in order to emphasize their interconnectedness. Examples of things they can do when they feel a challenging emotion include, telling someone how they feel, taking a rest, having something healthy to eat, playing with a friend or family member, asking someone for a hug, remembering the things they are good at and/or the fun they bring to the world, etc. Keep this list of possibilities of expressing or handling feelings up in your classroom for all to see, and refer to it from time to time when anyone is struggling with a strong emotion. This normalizes their feelings and begins teaching them healthy ways to handle difficult emotions.

Emotions Journal. Have students rank how they're feeling from a variety of emojis you have drawn on large pieces of paper from your discussion in the previous activity. Then, have them each fill in the statement, "For me today has been _____." Finally, from the list the class made in the previous exercise, have them select two things they could do to help them handle and/or express their emotions. Have the children draw pictures of themselves doing the activity and feeling better. These drawings, done on an ongoing basis, could be kept as an emotions journal to be compiled at the end of the year. Most likely the children will have experienced an array of emotions and they can continue to learn that they are normal and okay—we all have a wide range of emotions. It is what we do with our emotions that is important.

Calm-Down Jars. Make and use Calm-Down Jars with your children. You can find instructions and needed supplies when you google [6 Ways to Make a Calm Down Jar](#).

Here are some other books, along with brief descriptions from the publisher, to read to encourage discussions about handling emotions. We encourage you to discuss the emotions the characters are feeling and how they handle them. Do they handle them well or not so well? Have the children explain their answers.

Oliver Button Is a Sissy by Tommie dePaola

In this book, a little boy comes to terms with being teased and ostracized because he'd rather read books, paint pictures, and tap-dance than participate in sports. There is a good balance between the simple text and the expressive pictures and it is ripe for discussion.



The Monster Who Lost His Mean by Tiffany Strelitz Haber

This book teaches children that being mean doesn't benefit anyone and that by being true to themselves, they'll find their real friends.

Tight Times by Barbara Shook Hazen

This touching, realistic story is about a little boy who really wants a dog but is told he can't because times are tight. Not only does the book try to explain financial trouble, but it also touches on his emotions when the little boy sees his dad cry.

Just Because by Amber Housey

Part of the series *Flip Side Stories*, which aims to teach children to see another's point of view. *Just Because* teaches children about the value of giving, being thankful, and having empathy for others.

The Invisible Boy by Trudy Ludwig

This story prompts kids to think of the way kids who are shy or have no friends may be feeling, and maybe stretches them to reach out next time they see someone who is alone.

Tough Guys (Have Feelings Too) by Keith Negley

Superheroes with tears in their eyes normalize the truth that it's good for everyone, including boys, to express their emotions.

The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss

In this classic tale, two dueling factions, Sneetches with star bellies and Sneetches without, go through a series of transformations and eventually become friends when they can no longer see the difference between each other.

Stand In My Shoes by Bob Sornson

After her sister explains what empathy means, Emily starts to notice how those around her feel.

A Sick Day for Amos McGee by Philip C. Stead

This classic teaches kids the importance of kindness.

The following three books all deal with loss, death, and grieving.

Where Do They Go? By Julia Alvarez

Life and I: A Story About Death by Elizabeth Larsen

Ida, Always by Caron Lewis and Charles Santoso



Following are additional resources to use when discussing handling emotions.

- The movie, *Inside Out*, is a great resource to watch and then use to discuss how holding emotions in or hiding them is harmful to ourselves and to our relationships. After watching, discuss why someone might not want to share their emotions (scared, don't want people to be disappointed, angry or upset, not sure how to bring it up, feel embarrassed, etc.). All of those feelings are normal, but it is usually better to talk about our feelings with a safe person so they can help us work to solve the problem that is causing the strong emotion. Ask children what might we do instead of hiding our feelings? Ask them if they can name safe people in their lives. Have each child name a safe person in their life and have them write that person a letter telling them they are a trusted person. If a child cannot name someone, help them find someone at school. This is a good practice for the child, as well as the adult, as it opens a vital door of communication.
- The website, *Responsive Classroom*, has all kinds of wonderful information and free downloadable materials meant to help adults create a healthy learning environment for young people in grades K-8.
- The website, *School Counselor World*, offers free resources to help teach social and emotional learning. Free resources can be found on their homepage, including:
 - *A Magnet for Feelings*: Emotions are matched to certain situations.
 - *Think It vs. Say It*: Social interactions are addressed, along with the emotions they evoke.
 - *How Does This Emotion Look?*: An emotion is stated and an image is selected to match that emotion.
 - *The Emotion Quiz*: Images are analyzed and the matching emotion is selected.

Me: A Kid's Diary (an app by Tinybop)

- This app was created to help kids develop empathy. *Me: A Kid's Diary* gives kids a safe place to tell their stories, express their feelings, and to document the world around them. The goal of *Me* is to help kids better understand themselves, the world around them, their feelings, and the feelings of those around them.



Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 3–5

SOUL

Spirituality

The development of a sense of the wonder of the world and beginning to find meaning in life.





Following are some suggested activities to use to promote and discuss spirituality.

Discovering value and meaning. Have a conversation with the children and make lists of things that are important to them. Help them to name people, animals, places, activities, and routines that are important to them. While doing so, discuss why each item they list is so important? Help the children verbalize an item's importance, and while doing so, list the ideas mentioned on the board. Then, discuss ways we can show these people and things that we love them. After the whole-group conversation, have each child write a letter to, and/or draw a picture of an important person in their life, explaining to the person why they are important and thanking them for being so important to them. Then, have the children mail their letters and/or drawings to the person.

Building gratitude muscles. Gratitude can be encouraged in young children, and is good to introduce early on as it helps them to build resilience. Make practicing gratitude a regular part of what you do together. Have children take turns sharing with the group what they are grateful for that day. Examples may be things like rain, my dog, music class, my new baby sister, etc. As the adult facilitating the activity, be sure to also share what you are grateful for since you are modeling this concept for the children. In the process, this practice may be beneficial to you, as well.

Noticing the world around us. The natural world around us is amazing! Create an observation journal for each child. This can be as simple as a few pages stapled together in book form. Throughout the year, as the seasons change, we want to help children take note of this and to instill a sense of wonder and curiosity. For example, you could take time a few times a month to have them notice the weather outside. You can increase their vocabulary by introducing words such as drizzly, overcast, sweltering, brilliant sun, etc. Ask the children to record how the weather is different from last time they did this. Have them make an entry in their observation journal each time they observe the natural world around them, and be sure to include the date of the entry for future reference. At the end of the year, send home the observation journals they have completed over the year.

Being of service to others is good for us. Help children to see the need to help others rather than thinking only of themselves by helping them think of ways they could be of service to others around them. Help them think of things in the classroom, at school, on the bus, at home, in their neighborhood, etc., and create a list for all to see while brainstorming ideas. As a follow up to this, children can each choose one thing they will try to do on their own in the coming week. They could take home a small card with their intention written on it to share with those at home, or you could do a group service project such as picking up the garbage outside the home or classroom.

When did you feel most alive today? This can be a group discussion to have at the end of the day or week. Ask the children to name something they learned recently that was interesting, surprising, or fun, like something fun that happened at recess, something funny they experienced recently, or what it felt like when they made a new friend recently. As you talk about their joyous experiences, talk about the good feeling we get when something happens that we like. Continue to celebrate these things and encourage them to keep their eyes open for other things that make them



happy. Then, as a group, keep sharing and lifting up these kinds of things to expand the group's sense of wonder and appreciation for the good all around them.

Creating personal rules and identifying values. These are important tasks for this age group. Share with the children your own personal rules and values and that these act as your compass, directing you as you think about what to do in all the different situations that come up in your life. Then, make lists (individually or collectively) of things that are okay with us, and the things that are not. Discuss with the children why we have decided for ourselves that some things are good and others are not. What do our rules say about our values? As a group have them name the values, beliefs, ideals, and character traits that are important to them. They may offer things such as being kind, honest, working hard, being well known, being good to their family, freedom, being fearless, etc. To help them come up with these you may want to google a list (there are hundreds) so that you can offer others they might not think of.

After your group discussion ask each of them to narrow the list to about five that they personally value the most. Ask them to write about someone who exemplifies one or more of those values in their life, and encourage them to give examples of how that person lives those values. What do they do that demonstrates their values? Example: LeBron James is generous and cares about young people, and this was shown when he gave money to start a school in Cleveland, Ohio.

Finally, ask them to think about whether others in their life can tell that the values they selected are important to them. Have them think of concrete things they could do to show the world what they value. You can expand this idea of identifying values in multiple ways over the school year. Continuously have discussions about values as a part of your everyday life together and be creative in exploring this concept.

Appreciating the unique interest of each child. Help each child identify their own special talents, such as liking to share, liking to help others, being funny or friendly, kind to others, energetic, a hard worker, a good listener, etc. Students may be shy to say good things about themselves. If that is the case, have students come with positive things about each other. Have each child make a drawing or written description of their special talents and how they are important in the world. When they are done, label and hang each in a common area for all to see. Lift up different children's gifts on a regular basis (making sure you mention everyone over time) and talk about how they are all important. A diversity of gifts and talents is found everywhere in nature. Each species of animals and plants are different, and all are important to their ecosystem.

Additional resources to use when discussing spirituality:

- The Smithsonian Museum's [National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) is designed to provide educators with content and resources to better understand race and racial inequity. This resource equips you with tools necessary to help children be more racially conscious, which can help create better relationships in your classroom or community.



Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 3–5

SOUL

Rest & Play

Developing a healthy balance of school, play, and family life.





Following are some suggested activities to use to promote and discuss rest & play.

Play. Have a conversation with the children about play. What does it mean to them? Why is it important? Have the children name the things they like to do for fun. They may name things, such as pretending, playing a sport, going swimming, exploring in the woods, playing alone or with friends or siblings, finishing a puzzle, playing games, reading with someone, cuddling, sledding, etc. Ask them how they feel when they get lots of time to play; expect positive answers. Explain that those positive feelings they experience when playing is one way they can tell it is good and healthy for them. Things that do not make them feel good usually aren't good for them, such as watching TV for long periods of time, or playing video games. These are not as healthy as playing outside or with a friend. After talking as a group, have each child make a poster with their play ideas as a reminder of what they love to do, and/or draw pictures of them playing in a way they love.

Rest. Allow time for rest on a regular basis, perhaps after coming in from recess or another busy activity. These rest times can be as short as five minutes, and can always be longer if you think it would be helpful to the children. This can take place while sitting at their desks or in another comfortable place. It is nice to offer paper and doodling tools and to play soothing music while they are resting. Afterward, talk together about how it feels to take a moment for rest and get their responses. This gives them a chance to slow down and think about the positive impact of rest times. While talking with the children about rest, explain the importance of daily rest for their bodies, especially their brains.

What do you want the adults in your life to know? Ask children if there is something that they want adults in their lives (at school or home) to know about play. Are there specific things they would like more chances to do, such as playing with their dad, going swimming, playing with a friend, etc., or things they would like to do less (scheduled activities might be mentioned)? What are their favorite things to do? To know with whom they like to play? Have children draw pictures of themselves engaging in their favorite way of play, label the drawings (including the date) and hang them in the classroom.

At this time in a child's life, adults are making most of the decisions about their activities and opportunities to play. This activity gives children a chance to think about and express what they like about their options for playing, and what they might like to be different going forward. Share what each child identifies with their parents, as well as the ideas from the group with all of the parents as this list might be important food for thought for families.

Here is a web resource to use when discussing rest & play.

- The website, [Breathe for Change](#), provides resources on yoga, mindfulness, social-emotional learning and offers tools for educators and families. On this website you will find resources for children, teachers, and parents.



Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 3–5

STRENGTH

Stress Resilience

*Developing ways to deal positively
with things that are hard.*





Following are some suggested activities to use to promote and discuss stress resilience.

Timeout. Change tends to come in one of two ways: planned or unplanned. It is a given that unplanned changes will be stressful because they surprise us and can be difficult to handle. But planned changes that we are excited about can also be stressful because they bring with them significant changes to all areas of our lives. Changes, such as the beginning of a new school year, moving, joining a team, a death in the family, parents splitting up, or the blending of families, are all examples of both positive and negative stressors. Children need our help to negotiate these often-difficult changes.

In response to this stress, children often find themselves flooded with emotion—frustration, anger, jealousy, sadness, or grief, to name a few. And this is why it is important for them to learn about the power of taking a timeout. These timeouts do not ignore the pressures and emotions that are present, but give them a chance to calm down, regroup, and then think of a way to express themselves and to solve any issue they are facing.

Set aside a period of time where you brainstorm with the students situations or strong emotions that cause stress. Write them down as you go, and hang the list on a wall so they can refer to it later on whenever they feel strong emotions sweeping over them. Then, suggest that one way they can handle stress is to practice waiting a few minutes, taking a few deep breaths, and then thinking about better ways to talk about the upsetting issue or emotion. Give them a chance to practice this, and then remind them that they can call a timeout anytime they need to.

Stress and the body. The body will always let us know when we are experiencing stress. After discussing stress as a group, invite the children to create a list of healthy stress-relieving activities they can use to respond to their body's messages and then post their responses for all to see. Encourage the children to see that their ideas can come from the other areas of wellness, such as telling an adult how they *feel* so they can help, taking a *rest*, *eating* something healthy, *playing* with a friend, etc. Discussing stress-relieving activities with the group helps them identify things they can do for themselves when they are stressed. It teaches them activities they can do to alleviate stress in a positive way. On a somewhat regular basis have students select one or two things they could do that week from the list of stress-relieving activities that you have created as a class. Then have them draw pictures of themselves doing the activity and feeling better.

Giving and receiving help. It is important to name each other's strengths and struggles, and to normalize the need to both offer help and receive help. Have a discussion where the children have an opportunity to share things that they are having trouble doing, things that are challenging. Examples might include spelling, long division, memorizing math facts, writing a paper, sitting still, controlling their anger, etc. Then have them make a parallel list of strengths that they have. Examples might include being nice, funny, or friendly, understanding math, helping clean up, wanting to help others, etc. Make sure that all the strengths are not academic. Find ways to normalize their need to both offer help and to receive help. Ask the children



how they can help each other. How can they use their strengths to help another? How can they let others know if they need some help? Carry this idea of giving help and offering help throughout the year, emphasizing that they are a community that can care for each other. You may want to have this quote visible in your space and refer to it often to emphasize the point.

Those who are happiest are those who do the most for others.

—Booker T. Washington

Mindfulness practices. Teach beginning mindfulness practices such as the **Take Five Breathing Exercise** found on the website **Childhood 101**, as a stress reduction technique they can use in class or on their own. **Here is a link** to one Youtube video demonstrating this technique. Use this breathing practice with the class when they are nervous, upset, or any time emotions are high.

The importance of someone safe. Talk to the children about the importance of having someone safe to talk to about their feelings when they are experiencing stress. Explain that it can make us feel better to express our emotions, and then grown-ups can help us figure out what to do about a troubling situation. Brainstorm who they can talk to at school—bus drivers, teachers, principals, counselors, etc., and in their lives at home—parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbors, a friend’s parents, religious leader, coach, babysitter, etc. Have each child make a list of people they have in their life that they feel they can talk to about important things. Have each child choose someone to write a note to, and then send the letter to the person to let them know about their trust and their importance to the child. This could open up an important avenue of communication between the child and adult. If there is a child who cannot name someone, please let them know that they can always talk to you. You may also want to let the school counselor or principal know so you and they can keep an eye out for that child.

The things we can and can’t control. Have a conversation with the children that focuses both on naming what they can control in their lives, and what they cannot control, and that both can cause stress. First ask the children to name things they can control (words, helping others, being kind, how they express how they feel, etc.). Then have them name some of the things beyond their control (weather, what happens at recess, their age, etc.) Then, discuss what they can do when things don’t go as they would like, including figuring out how to solve problems even when they can’t control things.

Rest to reduce stress. Allow time for rest on a regular basis, perhaps after coming in from recess or another busy activity. These rest times can be as short as five minutes, and can always be longer if you think it would be helpful to the children. This can take place while sitting at their desks or in another comfortable place. It is nice to offer paper and doodling tools and to play soothing music while they are resting. Afterward, talk together about how it feels to take a moment for rest and get their responses. This gives them a chance to slow down and think about the positive impact of rest times. While talking with the children about rest, explain the importance of resting and taking a break when they feel stress.



Here are some additional resources to use when discussing stress resilience.

- The podcast *Big Life Kids* found at the website, *Big Life Journal* for kids, teaches children to stay resilient, believe in themselves, and face life's challenges with confidence. In each episode of the *Big Life Kids* podcast, Zara and Leo travel the world to discover heroes that are making a difference in our world today. The podcast accompanies the book, *Big Life Kids–2nd Edition*. This podcast is a fun learning experience with additional support resources for each show. This resource can be used in groups with children or shared with parents to be used at home.
- The website, *School Counselor World*, offers free resources to help teach social and emotional learning. Free resources can be found on their homepage, including:
 - *A Magnet for Feelings*: Emotions are matched to certain situations.
 - *Think It vs. Say It*: Social interactions are addressed, along with the emotions they evoke.
 - *How Does This Emotion Look?*: An emotion is stated and an image is selected to match that emotion.
 - *The Emotion Quiz*: Images are analyzed and the matching emotion is selected.



Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 3–5

STRENGTH

Care for the Body

*Developing habits that help children
to grow up physically healthy.*





Activities to use to promote and discuss care for the body:

Listening to our bodies. Introduce children to the concept of listening to their bodies, talking about this frequently as occasions present themselves. Discuss some of the ways our bodies talk to us to tell us that something is happening around us. It can signal that something is either good for us or not so good, healthy or not healthy. Help them to identify ways their bodies communicate, for example, by making us feel tired, hungry, sad, thirsty, scared, giving us a headache, or stomachache, etc. Ask them if they can think of more ways their bodies talk to them. Have they ever experienced any of these things? Give them time to share their thoughts and experiences with the group. The children can give examples orally, by drawing, and/ or in written form. While discussing listening to their bodies, help them see that our bodies are giving us clues as to what they need in order to be healthy. It is important to listen to our bodies as they can guide us to make healthy choices. Make listening to your bodies a regular part of your time together so everyone can get comfortable using this skill.

Our bodies are like a car. Talk to the children about their bodies being like a car. For cars to run well we need to clean them, fill the windshield wiper fluid, put air in the tires, and give them fuel on a regular basis. Discuss with the group why we need to take care of our cars. What could go wrong if we don't care for our cars? Make a list for all to see. Then, compare their bodies to cars and discuss what could go wrong if they don't care for them properly? How do people run out of gas? What can happen if we don't keep our bodies clean? What happens to our bodies if we don't give them time to rest? Discuss the different ways we can care for our bodies every day. Examples can include getting exercise, brushing teeth, drinking enough water, eating healthy foods, etc. Make a list to keep posted and refer to it regularly as a check in to see how well everyone is taking care of themselves. If children are saying they are hungry or thirsty you may want to offer snacks and have each child keep a water bottle at their desk. Refer to this discussion when you offer rest time on other occasions, knowing we can reduce stress by taking good care of our bodies.

Here are some additional resources and suggestions to use when discussing care for the body.

- **Songs for a Healthier America** is a 19-track compilation album that encourages children to exercise and make healthy food choices. A variety of artists collaborated in the project sponsored by the Partnership for a Healthier America, Hip Hop Public Health, and Michelle Obama. View **“Everybody” Music Video with Jordin Sparks** and **Songs for a Healthier America - Feature on Youtube** for a sample of the videos that go with the songs. These songs and videos can be used in class or shared with parents for them to use at home.
- Regularly provide healthy snacks, apple slices, grapes, granola bars, etc. Discuss with the group how important food is as a fuel for our bodies. Discuss what foods are healthy and what others are not and only serve healthy foods. Involve the students in preparing and sharing the food. Make sure the children in your group are getting enough food to eat and have water readily available



during the day. If you find that there are students who are not getting enough food, please let your school administration, school social worker, or another professional know. Keep granola bars, peanut butter, jelly, and bread, and other food that you can easily keep on hand for children who are not getting enough food to eat outside of school. Be discrete about giving food to children so as not to cause any embarrassment. You may need to raise funds to be able to pay for this, but we find people are likely to be generous when they know they are helping to feed children.

- Little children still need a lot of sleep and many are not getting it. If you sense that they are tired, allow time for a quiet rest. Discuss how rest and food are very important fuel for our bodies. Our bodies need rest and that is how we recharge them. Just like a battery needs recharging, so do our bodies.
- The website, [Scholastic](#), offers many lessons geared to this age group that can be used to help children think about taking care of their bodies. To find the lesson plans, search the terms “Lesson Plans Scholastic” and you will find the lesson plan section of their website. Within this portion of the website you can search for lessons and resources that align with what you are teaching. Some search terms you can use to find helpful articles within the lesson plan section of the Scholastic website include: “Taking Care of our Bodies” and “Teaching Children About Their Bodies.”



Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 3–5

MIND

School

Developing the attitudes needed to get the most out of educational opportunities.





Following are some suggested activities to use to promote and discuss school.

Why do we go to school? Facilitate a group discussion with the children about why we go to school. Some answers might include: to learn about the world, to make and be with friends, to have fun, to learn to read, etc. While facilitating the conversation, focus on the fact that they come to school for learning and then to help others with their new knowledge and experience. For example, ask them what they could do to help themselves or others when they can read vs. when they can't.

How we can help others with what we learn at school. Group discussion. Ask children any/all of the following questions, or some of your own. "How can knowing math help you?" "What about science?" "Can you think of ways to help yourself or others with that knowledge?" "Why is it important to know about history or social studies?" "What can we do when we are readers?" "When we can solve math and word problems?" "Why do we want to know more about science?" "Social studies and history?" "Why is it important to know how to write?" "To learn about art or music, or physical education?" Help them think of concrete examples of how they can be a better person in the world because of what they are learning at school. When you begin and end new units of study, talk with children about how that new information could help them out in the world. What is important to know? Why? This discussion is meant to help young people shift their reason for learning and studying from earning grades to how they can help the world with their knowledge. How can we be a better member of our family, school, friends, and part of our neighborhood? Help them think of concrete examples of how they can be a better person because of what they learn at school in each subject area.

Growing confidence. As often as possible, encourage students to express their opinions, talk about their feelings, and make their own choices. This can be done by regularly asking them how they feel about certain things that happen at school, such as riding the bus, recess, different classes, lunch, the rules, etc. Get their feedback about why they feel that way, and take what they share seriously, making adjustments if possible. Allow the group to make choices in the life of their classroom as you feel comfortable, and as is reasonable. This practice of encouraging them to voice their opinions will build confidence to participate in meaningful discussions going forward.

Appreciating the unique interests of the child. Lift up hobbies and interests that children have as you notice them. Communicate your observations with their families, as well, so the family can work to get the resources they need to support their child's interests. This not only recognizes and shows appreciation for the unique interests of each child, but makes them feel valued, as well. At this age, a big part of what we are doing is helping young people begin to recognize their own special talents and helping them to recognize that they have something important to contribute to the school community.

Create a classroom culture where it's okay to make mistakes. As adults we know that we learn more from our failures than we do from our successes, but children don't know this yet. Try to turn every mistake or mishap that happens in your time together into a teachable moment. Stress that they are always learning, and point out that you are, too. When you make a mistake or forget something, point it out and



explain what you will do differently next time as a result of your learning. This will help them see that everyone makes mistakes, it's normal and okay, and that mistakes provide chances to learn how to do things differently in the future.

Point out new things you learn with enthusiasm. Discuss the different ways they can find new information, make every-day observations, learn from a friend or reading a book, learn from a teacher, etc. Regularly ask the children to share things they have learned while not at school, maybe every Monday morning. Connect what they are learning out in the world to the things they have been learning in school, and then help them to continue to make those connections. Find out what things they are curious about. What do they want to learn more about? Based on their answers, have them do research papers on something they would like to know more about. Over time, they can continue to write about new learnings, resources, and connections. The point of this activity is to help build a love for learning that extends beyond the classroom and learning for grades.

Here are some other books to read to promote discussions about school.

Read *Mrs. Spritzer's Garden* by Edith Pattou and follow up with the idea that they all bring their unique selves to school, and that is good. How are they like the flowers in her class? Each is a unique flower in the garden. Describe school as a forest with all kinds of different trees and plants that come in different sizes, colors, and shapes. They are all different and all are important in making the forest a forest. Everyone in their school is also different, needed, and important; each brings different gifts to the school.

Help them identify each of their own special talents, such as liking to share, being funny, kind to others, energetic, a hard worker, liking to help, a good listener, etc. Have each child make a drawing of their special talents and how they are important to their school. Then, label the drawings and hang them in the classroom. Lift up different children's gifts on a regular basis (making sure you mention everyone over time) and talk about how they are all important, just like all the trees in the forest contribute to the beauty of the forest.

Here are some additional resources to use when discussing school.

- The podcast [Big Life Kids](#) found at the website, [Big Life Journal](#) for kids, teaches children to stay resilient, believe in themselves, and face life's challenges with confidence. In each episode of the *Big Life Kids* podcast, Zara and Leo travel the world to discover heroes that are making a difference in our world today. The podcast accompanies the book, *Big Life Kids—2nd Edition*. This podcast is a fun learning experience with additional support resources for each show. This resource can be used in groups with children or shared with parents to be used at home.
- The website, [Responsive Classroom](#), has all kinds of wonderful information and free downloadable materials meant to help adults create a healthy learning environment for young people in grades K-8.



Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 3–5

MIND

Organization

Developing the ability to keep track of and make good use of time, money, and possessions.





Following are some suggested activities to use to promote and discuss organization.

Help students see that rules help to keep us organized. For example: hanging up our coat, putting away the crayons, being on time, cleaning up after ourselves, etc., all help us to be more calm and organized. Discuss what kinds of rules are helpful for us to make for ourselves within our families and at school. Then, list some of your classroom rules and discuss why you have each of these rules. What would happen if we didn't have these rules? Discuss as a group and list the problems that could occur if we were not organized. You may want to do this in three sessions because the contexts are so different that you would likely not be able to give each context justice if done all at once. Discuss how it feels when they don't follow the rules. Ask what emotions they feel: stressed, worried, irritable, etc. Connect how they feel when they are disorganized to wellness and health. Reinforce that they can reduce or avoid stress and worry if they work to be organized.

Taking care of our money. Introduce the idea that people organize their money so it doesn't get wasted or misplaced, and that banks help people to organize and keep track of money. Introduce the idea that we can do three things with our money: we can save it, spend it, or share it.

- Make “banks” using empty peanut cans, water bottles, school milk cartons, or some other small empty container. Each child will need three of the same kind of container to make their own banks. Have the children decorate their containers and label them with the words “save,” “spend,” and “share.” Have them take them home with a note to parents about the idea of doing all three things with their money.
- You might want to then create a group goal and a group money system with a three-part bank that you make. The children would get paid for things such as listening, having a good day as a group, cleaning the room, helping each other out, or any other desired behavior. As the children get paid, put equal parts of the money into their “save,” “spend,” and “share” banks. Later, when you get to a certain amount of money in each bank, decide as a group what to do with the money in each container. Watch [Pocket money—save, spend and share—GetWise | ASB](#) on Youtube for more ideas. Discuss with the group:

- What do they want to save for?
- What would they like to spend their money on?
- With whom would they like to share the money?

Brainstorm with the class a local nonprofit, such as the Humane Society, they can donate to, or somewhere related to something you have been learning about/discussing as a group. Or, keep saving the saved money for something they would like to buy for the community or school. Brainstorm all of these ideas with the kids and then let them vote.



Working together to keep our spaces organized. Tie the concept of organization into doing chores in the classroom, at home, or in any space where you gather with the children. List the chores with the students, and assign jobs that rotate so each child gets an opportunity to help with each task. Make sure everyone has the chance to do as many of the jobs as possible. While doing and discussing the chores, emphasize that everyone's help is needed for the classroom to stay organized. Allow time to clean the classroom, backpacks, desks, lockers, and/or cubbies on a regular basis. Invite the children to write about how it felt before and after cleaning. In their writing, ask the children to compare how each looks and feels.

To emphasize the importance of organization, intentionally take a long time between organizing the space where you gather with the children. You may even ask the custodian to skip sweeping your room for a few weeks and let the papers, etc., on the floor accumulate. Do not mention to the children that this is happening, and see if they notice that the room is getting messy. Once they notice, facilitate a class discussion about how it feels to have a messy environment, messy desks/tables, and cubbies. Have them write a paragraph or two about their feelings and the conversation you had, and have them draw pictures to illustrate what they've learned. Then, have a cleaning party and afterwards discuss how it feels to do the work and then to have a clean organized environment. Throughout this process, stress the idea of teamwork.

Organizational tools. Discuss how planners are helpful organizational tools, and then do an experiment with the group. If they use planners, ask everyone to not use their planners for a week. But before they stop using their planners, ask them to create hypotheses as to what will happen during the experiment. Ask them how it will go in terms of remembering their responsibilities. How will it feel? What differences will they see? Assure them that they will not be penalized for forgotten work but they are still supposed to do as much of their work as they can remember. After the week is over, have the group discuss how things went. What did they notice and learn about themselves and the usefulness of a planner? While reflecting on the experience, make a graph or chart of their answers. Have them write up a short paper about what they may want to do differently now regarding their planner. Ask them how other areas of wellness may be impacted because of their organization: school, relationships, stress, and rest and play. Stress how small changes in one area can also help create wellness in other areas of wellness.

