

# TheKid COMPASS

## Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children

Grades 6-8



*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.*

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## About the Author

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Notes

A series of horizontal lines provided for writing notes.



## *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 students. We are excited to announce that we have now created just that, a compass resource for younger students: 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. The activities in this guide—music, art projects, written projects, conversations, and more—are meant to be used by anyone (parents, teachers, counselors, camp staff, etc.) who works with students ages approximately eleven through thirteen, in grades 6–8.

At this age, students are being allowed more freedom and as a result are making more decisions for themselves. They are away from adults more regularly and are being influenced by the media, their peers, and the larger world. We want to do all we can to help these preteens successfully navigate their growing independence by emphasizing the importance of healthy choices in every area of well-being.

As an adult working with students, 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 students, 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 students grades 6–8, 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.

In order to best meet the needs of this age group, we also have resources for teens that you may want to explore. The Teen Compass wellness resources offered on our website can be helpful in reaching more mature students in this age group. Taught collectively, they are tools for expanding the ideas of being healthy as both multi-faceted, influenced by their daily choices, and powerful because they can choose to make empowering decisions that will impact their future.

As you use this material with students, 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 students that we have used with teens, 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](http://samaritanfamilywellness.org)).

By middle school, most students are making more of their own choices while living with others who are shaping them, as well. So when students and adults can 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 students 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

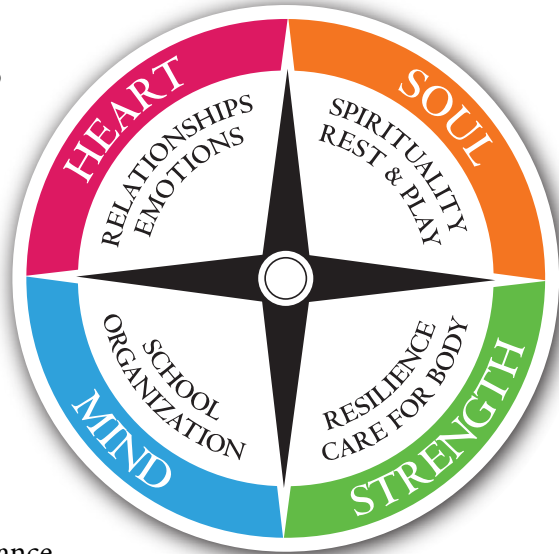
**Resilience.** Developing ways to deal positively with things that are hard.

**Care for the Body.** Developing habits that help students 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.





## *The Importance of Balance in All Areas of Wellness*

As an additional visual resource for the compass points and areas of wellness, 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 students, 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](http://samaritanfamilywellness.org/thekidcompass)

If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email [holly@samaritanfamilywellness.org](mailto:holly@samaritanfamilywellness.org)

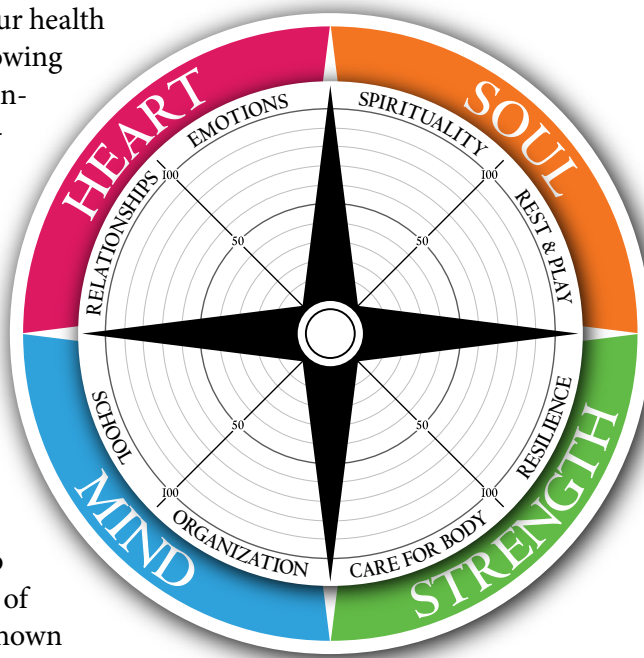




## *Kid Compass Wellness Self-Reflection*

You might want to begin and end your health and wellness initiative with the following exercise that introduces the interconnectedness of all eight areas of wellness by encouraging self-reflection.

The first step in the process is to invite each student to look closely at their life as it is right now by using a tool we've created for them: The Kid Compass Wellness Self-Reflection Tool. This resource—like a mirror—will reflect back to them their current state of wellness. Have each student either draw a large circle divided into eight equal arts, one for each area of wellness, or work with the graphic shown on this page, which is available as a [free download on our website](#).



Then ask them to think about how healthy or well they are in each area of wellness right now. Ask them to fill in each wedge to represent how they think they are doing in each area: 10%? 50%? 90%? It's up to them and their responses are private.

Explain that their results provide them with a present-moment snapshot of their lives right now, showing the areas they have been paying attention to, and the areas where they might want to spend a bit more time and attention.

Once they've completed the first part, have them revisit their responses and ask themselves how they think they are *really* doing in each area. Have them name three areas that they feel good about, and three that could use some of their attention. Explain that we are going to be looking at all eight areas in depth and we will be learning about things we can do in each area of wellness to grow better habits and be healthier.

Collect and save the Compass Self-Reflections they have completed, then have them do the same exercise again after you have completed the activities you have chosen for the eight areas. Ask them to compare their results. Then have students write a reflective paper about how they have grown, what they have learned about health and wellness during the year, and what they will carry with them going forward.





# Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 6–8

## HEART

### Healthy Relationships

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





Helping students to build relationships with each other is a key to creating an optimal learning environment. Stronger bonds mean students will be less likely to be unkind, to exclude others, to call each other names, or to stand by in the face of mean behavior toward a classmate. The safer students feel, the more learning challenges they will embrace, and the more collaborative they will be.

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 student, such as milestones, special interests, gifts, kindness toward a friend, special accomplishments, etc. Rather than focusing on academics, focus on things *outside of school* that lift up their interests and individuality, such as getting a job, starting a sport, volunteering, involvement with outside organizations, taking care of siblings or others, etc. This exercise can model an active appreciation for individuality and can emphasize the value and uniqueness of all. It also helps students get to know more about each other in ways other than what they learn about each other in the classroom, and may foster new friendships. Make your space a place where each student 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 students 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. Mention social media and other forms of communication they use and how they can hurt people's feelings at times, too. Talk about how trouble with a relationship impacts other areas of wellness. One example would be that if they can't sleep, or can't concentrate at school, they become stressed, and that can give them a stomachache, etc. Then, discuss how important it is to talk with someone who has hurt them even though it may not feel comfortable. Not everyone is a safe person to talk with, so it might be helpful to talk first with an adult you trust in order to plan what you want to say so the conversation has the best chance of being a positive experience.

Then discuss ways 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. You may want to keep this idea alive by reminding students about the importance of talking out conflict, as well as taking responsibility and apologizing as these things happen throughout your time together.

**Important Relationships.** Ask the students 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. Usually you will hear about people who care about them, are kind and caring, are loyal,



etc. Remind them that these are things people do to show they value a relationship. Ask the students what they might do for one of those people to let them know they are valued. While discussing, they 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, let them choose one that you have both the time and supplies to accomplish, and give them time to complete the task. Make sure they give the people named the finished products in order to strengthen those relationships. This activity can be done anytime throughout the year.

**Feel, Think, Act.** Teach students the concept of “Feel, Think, Act.” Explain that, at any given moment, rather than reacting to what is happening, it is way better if they stop and feel what is going on, think the situation through, and then take appropriate action. Explain that when people quickly react, they don’t “Feel, Act, Think,” and often they say or do something hurtful or something they later regret.

- This is designed for a short group discussion, using one situation every week or so in order to keep them thinking about the process of slowing down to Feel, Think, Act. Ask them, “What would you do if ...”
  - you are sitting at lunch with some friends and someone else, who no one really knows, wants to sit with them, too?
  - you and a friend both have new shoes and you like yours better?
  - a friend is harassing another student on social media?
  - you are visiting a friend’s house and really don’t want their younger brother hanging out with you?
  - you have saved enough money to buy something special, and after you buy it a friend asks to borrow it for the weekend?
  - you see someone on the bus bullying another child during the ride?
  - a friend tells you he is having serious trouble at home?
  - you are invited to a party but one of your friends is not. She asks you about the party?
  - you are with a friend in the hall at school when another student walks by. Your friend says loudly, “I hate that kid!”?
- Create your own situations for further discussions. After your discussion, give a writing assignment about their thoughts on the particular situation. You can use this activity to discuss how our actions impact our relationships.

Students at this age are thinking and wondering about race, and are forming 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. [The Hate U Give](#) is also an excellent movie.



Collect a group of students's books that revolve around relationships (see list below). Have small groups read the stories and wonder what can we learn from the story that could apply to people their age? What are the author and illustrator trying to teach? Have them create books or stories of their own that teach the same relationship lesson, but to people their age. Have groups share their findings and make a list of lessons for all to see.

*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 students 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 students to see another's point of view. *Just Because* teaches students 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 students, 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 students 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.
- [Project School Wellness](#), offers lesson plans that teach middle schoolers how to be a good friend.
- [Teachers Pay Teachers](#), offers a free resource: [100+ Questions to Build Relationships](#), which can be used to foster relationships and build community.





# Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 6–8

## HEART

### Handling Emotions

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





Helping students to learn to identify and name their emotions, as well as knowing how to talk about and handle both the easy and difficult emotions, will hopefully help them move through the preteen years more easily. The important idea that our emotions and how we handle them impacts other areas of wellness is usually new to young people this age. Helping them understand that can be very helpful as they come to a stage of life usually filled with lots of emotions.

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

**Identifying Emotions.** Work with the group of students 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 and revisited later as the emotions come up in class. Help them to describe how each emotion feels in their body as a way to help them identify the emotions. Examples might include headaches, stomachache, tight chest, etc. Finally, help them think about a list of things (think about the other seven areas of the compass) that they can do if they feel a challenging emotion in their body. Help them to come up with concrete ideas. Examples can include telling someone how they feel, taking a rest, having something healthy to eat, playing with a friend or family member, playing an instrument, going for a run, cleaning their bedroom, asking someone for a hug, remembering the things they are good at and/or the good things they bring to the world. Keep this list of possibilities for 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 strong emotions. This normalizes their feelings and teaches 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 students write a couple of paragraphs about how each activity could help them to feel better. This can be done on an ongoing basis and their drawings/writing could be kept as an Emotions Journal, to be compiled at the end of the year. Most likely they 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 students. You can find instructions and needed supplies when you google [6 Ways to Make a Calm Down Jar](#).

**The Second Arrow.** Use this sentence as a framework for discussion. "*We can't control what other people say and do, but we can change how we let them make us feel.*" Ask students what this means to them.

- Teach the concept of "the second arrow." In a hurtful situation, there is the hurtful thing that happened (first arrow) and then there is the (second arrow) that causes even more pain. The second arrow is what we think about what happened, such as, "I'm no good," "No one likes me," "I'm not worthy," etc. Negative self-talk is rarely helpful and often causes unnecessary pain. Have students create



a poster or posters with the sentence “*We can’t control what other people say and do, but we can change how we let them make us feel.*” Have them come up with ideas of healthy concrete things they *can* do when someone, or they themselves, does something that is hurtful or upsetting to another. Think around the compass. Have students create a poster or posters with the sentence and concrete things they came up with to be hung in the room or around the school.

Collect a group of children’s books that involve emotions (see list below). Have small groups read the stories and then wonder what they can learn about emotions from the story that could apply to people their age? What are the author and illustrator trying to teach about emotions? Discuss emotions characters are feeling and how they handle them. Do they handle them well or not so well? Have them explain.

Have them create books or stories of their own that teach the same lesson about emotions, but to people their age. Have groups share their findings and make a list of lessons for all to see.

Here are some books to help get you started, along with brief descriptions from the publisher.

***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 students 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 students to see another’s point of view. *Just Because* teaches students 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

The following seven books can be used to teach empathy:

*Because of Mr. Terrupt* by Rob Buyea

*Out of My Mind* by Sharon M. Draper

*Mockingbird* by Kathryn Erskine

*Rules* by Cynthia Lord

*Wonder* by RJ Palacio

*Auggie and Me: Three Wonder Stories* by RJ Palacio

*Counting by 7s* by Holly Goldberg Sloan



The following books address relationships, procrastination, manners, sticking up for themselves, peer pressure, and more. [Nurtureandthrive.com](http://Nurtureandthrive.com)



Following are additional resources to use when discussing handling emotions.

- The movie, [Inside Out](#), is a great resource to watch prior to discussing emotions. This movie may seem childish to older students but acknowledge that and emphasize that it helps people of all ages better understand the interconnectedness of emotions to the other areas of wellness. Watch and discuss how holding emotions in or hiding them is harmful to ourselves and to our relationships. What might we do instead of hiding our feelings? 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, yet 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 emotions.
  - As a follow-up activity to watching *Inside Out*, have students each identify a safe person in their lives, one that they feel they can talk to about how they are feeling. Ask the students, "Who are the trusted and safe people in your life?" Have them each write their person a letter telling them so and send the letter to the individual. This is good for the child, as well as the adult, as



it opens a door of communication. Some adults may have no idea that they are so trusted by that child. If a child cannot name someone, help them find someone or offer yourself. You may also want to talk with the school counselor, school administration, or other personnel about this so they can reach out to the child, letting them know they care about them.

- 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 6–8

## SOUL

### Spirituality

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







Spirituality in this sense is not connected to any particular religion or set of beliefs—instead it pertains to the values and “compasses” that guide a person’s life. Young people in late childhood are being led by all sorts of cultural influences, as well as by the values in their home and community. Thus including spirituality as an area of wellness is meant to help them identify their own developing guiding values, their own gifts, and to feel wonder and gratitude in the world.

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

**Discovering value and meaning.** Have a conversation with the students and make a list of twenty things that are important to them. You may want to have them fill in a grid or chart with these areas included. Help them identify why the people or things they have named are so important to them. Discuss what it is about those things that make them so important. What does this exercise say about their emerging values? Can they see a pattern? Have them write a reflection about their discoveries.

**Building gratitude muscles.** Studies show that people who practice gratefulness are more resilient, so make practicing gratitude a regular part of what you do together. Have students share regularly with the class what they are grateful for or appreciate that day. Examples may be things like snow, the weekend, their birthday, a babysitting job, their dog, recess, etc. Help them notice things to be grateful for on a regular basis, lift up the ordinary. As the adult facilitating the activity, be sure to share what you are grateful for since you are modeling this concept for the students. In the process, this practice may be beneficial to you, as well.

**Noticing the world around us.** The natural world around us is full of wonder, and we want to foster that attitude in our young people. Secure or have students make an observation journal for each child, stress observing with all five senses. Take time at least once a month to have them notice the weather outside, even going outside if possible, particularly as the seasons change. Have students take note of the changes to instill a sense of wonder around what is happening. Have them describe in words and/or drawings what they notice, encouraging the use of all of their senses. How is it different from last time we did this? Have students make an entry in their observation journal each time and include the date of the entry for future reference. Send home at the end of the year. Connect this to science if you choose.

**Being of service to others is good for us.** Help students to see the need to help others rather than thinking only of themselves by helping them to 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, students 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 students to name things they learned recently





that were interesting, surprising, or fun, like something fun that happened at recess, something funny they experienced recently, or something that was emotional. Talk about the feeling we get when something positive happens. Celebrate these things and encourage them to keep their eyes open for other things that make them feel good. Keep sharing and lifting up these kinds of things to expand their sense of wonder and appreciation for the good all around them.

**Creating personal rules and identifying values.** These are important tasks for this transitional age (examples might be, I won't cheat, I will always try to be kind). Have students make two lists of ten things; one list to include things that are okay for them to do now or in the future, and one list of things that are not. Reassure them up front that you will not be looking at their answers, and neither will anyone else. Have them think about why they have decided on these rules for themselves. What do their answers say about the values that are important to them? Is the compass of their values sending them in a desired direction? Point out that personal rules are our values, our guide. After the lesson have students tear up their answers and throw them away. Stress that values are personal and so it is wise to self-examine our own from time to time.

**These are important tasks for this age group.** Explain that our values/or our own personal rules act as our compass, directing us as we think about what to do in all the different situations that come up. Make lists (individually or collectively) of things that are okay with them, and others that are not. Discuss with the students 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, treating everyone equitably, being honest, working hard, being well known, being good to their family, allowing freedom, being brave, etc. Record these for all to see. 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. Now we want them to do some reflecting. Have them write about five different people who inspire them because they exemplify those values in their own lives, giving examples of them living into those values. What do they do that shows their values? Example: LeBron James is generous when he gives money to start a school in Cleveland, Ohio. Finally, as a part of this assignment ask them to consider whether others in their lives can tell that those values are important *to them*. Have them think of concrete things they do or could do that would 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 interests of each child.** Help each student 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 student write a description of their special talents and how they are or could be important in the world. When they are done, label and hang each in a common area for all to see. Lift up different student'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. The same is true for them.

**Cultivate a positive mindset.** Have students create a playlist of their ten favorite songs and then write about what their music says about their values and beliefs about the world. Invite them to think about the artist, lyrics, etc. Discuss positive vs. negative mindsets and how they influence our thinking. Have them reflect on and then write about whether they think those values and beliefs are healthy and serve them well. Do the songs express a positive or negative mindset? Read this article online at Forbes: [Get The 10 Habits Used By Positive People To Overcome A Negative Mindset](#) by Paloma Cantero-Gomez to get a great list of habits anyone can use to overcome a negative mindset and share with students.

Additional resource to use when discussing spirituality.

- [Dignitypledge.com](#). This organization's mission is to educate and empower youth to stand up for the value of every person by signing a pledge to do so. Teacher's guides are included.



# Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 6–8

## SOUL

### Rest & Play

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





Rest and play are important for all children, but for a multitude of reasons, as children get older they have less and less time for the freedom to rest or play. Yet both continue to be important because they are major ways students recharge themselves so they can be their best. Whether they are getting enough rest and play also strongly impacts other areas of well-being.

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

**Play.** Have a conversation with the students about play. What does it mean to people their age? Do they feel it is important and why? Have students name the things they like to do for fun. They may name things, such as playing a sport, exploring outside, hanging out with friends, watching TV, playing alone and/or with friends and siblings, playing games, reading, making music, recess, etc. Have them describe how they feel when they have lots of time to play. Expect positive answers. Record their list of fun things to do. Have them make posters with their ideas as a reminder, and/or do drawings of a person playing in a way they enjoy, and that they think is healthy. Put up posters somewhere prominent to serve as suggestions for kids looking for something new to do in their free time, and remember to refer to them throughout the year.

**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 students. This can take place while sitting at their desks or in another comfortable place. The main thing to express is that resting is not being lazy—it is taking care of one of the needs of their bodies. Share this Abraham Lincoln quote with them and ask them what this has to do with rest. “If I had six hours to chop down a tree, I’d spend the first five hours sharpening the saw.” Have them reflect on this quote as it relates to the value of getting enough sleep and rest. What might they want to do differently going forward if they are not getting enough sleep? While they are resting, offering paper and doodling tools and playing soothing music creates an environment that invites them to slow down and go into their own thoughts. Afterward, allow time to discuss how it feels to take a moment for rest and how that helps them to “sharpen their saws,” and leave enough time for their responses. Reinforce the importance of daily rest for their bodies and their brains. Stress that rest and play are things they can do that helps them to reduce their stress. Rest and play are just as important as any work they are trying to do, as it helps them to “sharpen their saws.”

**What do you do when you are overwhelmed or stressed?** Discussion and resource building. Begin a discussion and invite students to tell about their experiences and what circumstances lead to feelings of overwhelm or being stressed out. They may give examples like a parent losing a job, school being hard for them, parents getting a divorce, someone in the family being sick, someone is bullying them, etc. This might very well be a topic that requires more vulnerability than students are ready for, and if that is the case allow them to tell about others who are stressed. Talk about what they (or others) can do when they feel overwhelmed, and remind them that rest and play can offer relief in difficult times like the ones they are naming.



What can they do if it is all getting to be too much? Ask them to think about what they usually do to cope with stress, and think about whether what they do is healthy for them or not. If not, what could they do instead? Get suggestions of healthy things to do from the group, encouraging them to think of things they consider to be playful or restful, and record for all to see. Discuss why each might be helpful and then as an assignment have students list the three suggestions that they feel would be most helpful to them right now and why. Have the students take their lists home and ask them to keep their list somewhere where they can turn to it if they get overwhelmed.

**No homework today!** On a regular basis assign no homework, and tell students that instead of doing homework, they should rest and play that evening or weekend. In this exercise, ask that they do not include screen time, video games, or TV as rest or play. Discuss that electronics do not give their minds a break or time to recharge, which rest and play by definition are supposed to do for them. Following a day or weekend of allowing more time for rest and play, ask students to share what they did for play and how it felt. Did it help them in any way? Emphasize that rest and play help them to recharge their batteries and are an important part of physical, relational, and mental health.

**What do you wish you had more time to do?** At this demanding time in a child's life, scheduled activities can dictate the amount of time the student has for rest and play. This activity gives children a chance to think about and express what they like about their schedules and the number of opportunities they have to rest and play and, if anything, what they might like to be different going forward. Ask them as a group what they want adults in their lives (at school and at home) to know about rest and play for people their age. Are there specific things they would like more chances to do, such as having time to themselves, going swimming, playing with a friend, going to a movie, etc.; or things they would like to do less of, such as homework or scheduled activities? Sharing the ideas of the group with their parents and the school administration might be food for thought for the adults in your student's lives.

Here is one web resource to use when discussing rest and 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 students, teachers, and parents.





# Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 6–8

## STRENGTH

### Stress Resilience

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





Stress is a part of everyone's life and that is good to a point. However, when there is too much, stress can overwhelm us, and that is not good. We want to teach children to be proactive by making choices in their lives that do not create or contribute to their stress, as well as teaching them healthy ways to deal with and disarm stress when they feel it getting to be too much.

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

**Everything is connected.** We want to help students understand that all eight areas of wellness are related, and every one of them impacts the other areas. (Have a copy of the Kid Compass mobile for all to see and keep.) Explain that the unhealthy decisions they might make in the seven other areas could cause stress, whereas making better decisions in those other areas can help to reduce stress overall. An example might be that if you choose to skip breakfast, you are likely to feel hungry all morning and not be able to pay attention in class, which could make the teacher frustrated, which would create stress. If instead you committed to take time to eat breakfast each morning, it could help you reduce stress at school. Use the model of the Kid Compass to help them visualize this connection. Demonstrate that if the mobile is calm and then you tug on one area of wellness, the whole mobile will be set in motion—a disruption in one area ripples across the other areas of wellness. An example of this could be that a fight with a friend that impacts healthy relationships could keep you up at night, which would affect your care for the body. On the other hand, if the whole mobile is jiggling and we calm any one area of wellness, the other areas calm down, too. Help them see that if they make a positive adjustment in one of the other areas of well-being in their lives, it can reduce stress in other areas. Invite them to name possible activities from around the compass they could do to reduce stress. Make a list for all to see and keep posted for them to refer to anytime they feel stressed.

**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, students 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 students 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 them 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, making some money, eating something healthy, spending time with a friend, etc. Discussing these ideas helps them begin to name their experiences and stresses, and teaches them positive things they can do on their own to alleviate stress. Have them create a slideshow or collection of drawings to show the use of their ideas to reduce stress. Share the slide show or drawings with another class. This could be a presentation on how to reduce or handle stress.

**Ongoing stress-buster practice is important.** Ask students to create a list of healthy stress-relieving activities they can use to proactively respond to stress before it escalates to high levels. Then, on a regular basis, have them select one or two things they could do that week from this list. Invite them to first imagine doing that activity, and then to write about 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 students have an opportunity to share things that they are having trouble doing, things that are challenging. Examples might include staying organized, fractions and percents, writing a paper, sitting still, controlling their anger, etc. During a class discussion make a parallel list of strengths and needs that they have identified for their class. Some 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. Then, identify some areas where people need help, things such as getting organized, help studying for a test, help with a computer, or with note-taking. Ask the group how they can help each other. How can they use their strengths to help each other? How can they let others know if they need some help?

- Possibly create a "Help Offered" and "Help Needed" board where they can post their strengths to share and needs, and encourage them to use that resource often. Carry this idea of giving help and offering help throughout the year, that they are a community that can care for each other. Both accepting and offering help reduces stress. It makes both people feel good. Normalize the need to both offer help and to receive help on a regular basis. 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 students about the importance of having someone safe to talk to about their feelings when they are experiencing stress. Sometimes students will keep things from adults because they are afraid they will get in trouble if an adult knows their situation. Help them to understand that adults can help them figure out what to do about a troubling situation, that adults whom they trust are not as interested in getting them in trouble as they are helping them move forward.

Brainstorm with students to come up with a list of people in their lives—bus drivers, teachers, principals, counselors, etc.—that they feel they can talk to about important things. Also name people in their lives outside of school, including parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, neighbors, their friend's parents, religious leaders, coaches, babysitters, etc. Have each student 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 student. This could open up an important avenue of communication between the child and adult. If there is a student 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 student and reach out to help them feel connected.

**The things we can and can't control.** Have a conversation with the students that focuses both on naming what they can control in their lives, and what they cannot control, and the idea that both can cause stress. Have the group name things they *can* control, such as the words they say, if they choose to help others or not, what time they go to bed, how they treat others, how hard they try at school, how they express how they feel, etc. Then, have the group name things they *cannot* control, such as the weather, if someone else is mean, what others do or say at recess or lunch, their age and height, their friends and family, etc. Discuss what they *can* do when things don't go as they would like. Talk about ways to solve problems even when they can't control things. In every situation there is always something positive they can do, even if it means doing something inside themselves, such as holding their tongue, changing their mind, or seeing things from a new and helpful perspective.

**Regular rest to reduce stress.** Allow time for rest on a regular basis. These rest times can be as short as five minutes, and can always be longer if you think it would be helpful to the students. 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, go inside themselves, and think about the positive impact of rest. While talking with the students about rest, explain the importance of resting and taking a break when possible whenever 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 students 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 students 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:
  - *Let's Be Optimistic*. Emphasizes the difference between a positive & negative mindset.
  - *Can You Turn it Around*. Discusses optimistic vs. pessimistic self-talk.
  - *Tips & Tricks of Optimism*. Assess situations and brainstorms how to address them optimistically.





# Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 6–8

## STRENGTH

### Care for the Body

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





When people think about health, they frequently think of this area of wellness. What they don't often realize is that all the other areas of wellness impact their physical well-being and vice versa. In this section we are emphasizing that health and wellness are all connected, all parts are important, and all impact each other.

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

**Listening to our bodies.** Introduce students 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 students can give examples orally, by drawing, and/ or in written form. While discussing listening to their bodies, help them see that their bodies are giving them clues as to what they need in order to be healthy. It is important to listen to their bodies as they can guide them 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 students about their bodies being like a car and using the analogy of the car to help them see that if something is not taken care of, it often breaks down. 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, switch the analogy and compare their bodies to cars and what could go wrong if they don't care for them properly. How do people run out of gas? What can happen if you do not keep your body clean? What happens to your body if you don't give it time to rest? Remind them that these choices are important and are becoming more and more their responsibility. If students are saying they are hungry, thirsty, or need to move, you may want to offer snacks, have each person keep a water bottle on their desks, or allow for movement in the classroom. Remind them that taking good care of their bodies also reduces stress. Discuss ways they can care for their bodies and why they are important. Examples can include getting exercise, brushing teeth, drinking enough water, eating healthy foods, getting enough rest, etc. Make a list to keep posted and refer to it regularly as a check-in to see how well everyone is doing in terms of caring for their bodies.

**Are you getting enough rest and sleep?** Have them reflect on whether they are getting enough rest and sleep. Ask the children how they can tell if they are or are not getting enough rest or sleep. Encourage them to give concrete examples, such as falling asleep in class, being crabby, hard to get up in the morning, yawning, or feeling full of energy, ready to do things that require energy, etc. Discuss what they might want to do differently going forward if they currently are not getting enough sleep. What is interfering with their getting enough sleep? Examples might be playing video games, doing homework, sharing a room with someone who keeps them awake,



worrying about something, friends texting them, etc. Help them brainstorm one small thing they each could do differently to begin to address those challenges to sleep and rest. Examples might be to make a rule for themselves that they turn off their phone at a certain time, talk to someone about what is worrying them, or using a journal to record any thoughts or feelings before bed, do their homework earlier, etc. Help them look around the compass for ideas. Ask them to write their one thing to do differently on a note card and have them take it home as a reminder. A week later, check in to see how things are going. After this exercise, discuss challenges they may have experienced, and how they could address those challenges.

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 students 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 students 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 students who are not getting enough food to eat outside of school. Be discrete about giving food to students 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 students.
- The website, [Scholastic](#), offers many lessons geared to this age group that can be used to help students 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 will find the resources you need to lead a unit about the human body which would be a perfect place to tie in a discussion about their own care for their bodies. This resource includes grab and go lesson plans, unit plans, discussion guides, extension activities, and other teaching ideas.







# Wellness Resource Guide for Working with Children Grades 6–8

## MIND

### School

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





By middle school, students have usually decided if they like school and feel it is valuable, or not. It's important to lift up everyone's talents and interests, and to help them see how learning about all the different things they are being introduced to will help them in the future. The school experience is not supposed to be about grades, but about learning so they are equipped to contribute to the world in a positive way. How they think about school is one of the main influences on how young people engage in school.

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

**Why do we go to school?** Facilitate a group discussion with the students about why they go to school, what they want to do workwise as an adult, and how what they are learning this year will be useful in that line of work, and in their personal life, as well. Focus the discussion on learning to be helpful, for ourselves and for others, with the information we are learning. For example, "How can we help ourselves and others when we are readers?" "How is it helpful to be able to do math?" "Why do we want to know about science?" "Social studies and history?" "Why is it important to know how to write?" "How might these things be helpful in their lives outside of school?" Have a group discussion about this and ask for examples from their lives. Give an assignment to write an essay about what they think they will want to do in their work as an adult, and have them reflect on how each different subject they are learning might be helpful to them in that work and in their adult lives in general. This can help young people see the value of each area of study by connecting it to their future goals.

**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 young people don't always 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. They are nothing to be embarrassed about or hidden, instead mistakes are to be honestly owned and learned from.

**How we can help others with what we learn at school.** Group discussion. Guide students toward thinking about being a better member of their family, class, school, neighborhood, and world. Help them think of concrete examples of how they can be a better person in the world because of what they have learned at school. After the conversation, do an art, music or writing follow-up activity to deepen understanding of this concept. For example, they could write about how they used their Spanish to help someone communicate with the clerk at the grocery store. When you begin and end new units of study, talk with students about how that new information could help them out in the world. Discuss why the information is important to know for their overall well-being.

**Seeking life advice from trusted adults.** Have students interview a parent, teacher, or other adult about their schooling, asking questions like, "What was school like for you?" "What subjects did you learn, and what was your favorite subject?" "How has



what you learned been helpful in your life?” “Do you have any advice to give about how students should approach school now?” Ask the students to take notes and summarize the interview for the upcoming group discussion. Have students share what they learned. Ask the group if there were any surprises in their interviews. What have they noticed in terms of any changes in student life from the lives of those they interviewed? What are both improvements and modern challenges in schools today?

- Make a classroom list, sharing all the advice gathered, and then have each student pick the one piece of advice that is most meaningful to them. Invite them to create a poster with that advice for them to keep. Ask them to put it somewhere prominent where they can see it each day, such as in their locker, bedroom, on their phone, or in the classroom. Tell them this is so the advice can continue to inspire them.

**Reflecting on favorite parts of school.** Have students identify what their favorite part of school is and why that is. Ask them to write an essay about what aspect or subject they like, why they like it, what it might say about who they are, and how that aspect of school might impact their adult life. The point of this exercise is to help them develop a reflective attitude toward school and their learning.

**Cultivating a love for learning.** Discuss the different ways they can find new information. Examples might be every-day observation, watching videos, learning from a friend, reading a book, learning from a teacher, etc. Model as often as possible that learning is both fun and happening all the time. Have children regularly identify things they have learned while not at school. Help them to connect what they are learning in the world to the things you have been learning together in school. Ask them what things they are curious about. What they want to learn more about. Help connect the children with resources or people who can help them expand their knowledge. They can write about these new learnings and 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

**Growing confidence.** As often as possible, encourage students to express their opinions, talk about their feelings, and to make their own choices as much as possible. 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. It also helps them feel that their opinions are valued and respected.

**Learning and current events.** List and discuss current news events and brainstorm how what they are learning this year is helping them to understand these issues. Go through the list of each of their classes and brainstorm in groups how each of their subjects helps them to have a better grasp on what is happening in the world around them. Then discuss why it is important for them to know about all the



subjects even when it is not directly connected to their future work. Emphasize the interconnectedness of all the subjects and how learning now can continue to help them forever.

- On different Fridays have each student make a list to prompt these connections over the weekend. One list could be to name ten things they are curious about. Another list might be ten things they love doing the most. And then ten world issues they would like to work on using the skills or talents on the other lists. After a few weeks of doing this, ask if they are noticing any patterns or connections between the list of the things they love and are curious about and the issues they see in the world. These patterns may be giving them important clues about themselves that may be very helpful in the future.

**What helpful habits do you want to practice?** As a group make a list of habits that are important for being a good member of the school community. Include both habits that are important as a student, and as part of the community. Examples might include, doing homework, asking questions, helping others, participating in class, being respectful, being organized, getting enough sleep, etc. Then, have each child divide the list into the ones that are their strengths, and ones that they need to work on. Have them pick one that needs attention, and invite them to focus on it for the next week or month. Stress that their responses might ebb and flow, but the more they identify and then practice them, the more likely it is that they will become a habit. Emphasize that these do not need to be shared with the class, but they will be shared with you. That these are their private thoughts meant to guide them in creating good habits, and you would like to know so you can help support them. Later have them write you a note about this experience, including an observation of their efforts to pay more attention to creating their new habit. Have them reflect on how the experience went with questions such as, were there any obstacles, what helped them be successful, and what needed more support? Also, ask them to consider if the change is helping them feel any better. This can be done on a monthly basis with changing insights and answers.

Here are some additional resources to use when discussing school.

- The website, [Big Life Journal](#), offers a journal by Alexandra Eidens that helps individual students examine their mindset, think about their talents and goals, grow from failures, and keep creating their future. This resource is good for use with individual youth or in a group setting.
- 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 6–8

## MIND

### Organization

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





It has been observed that one of the predictors of success in school, and perhaps even in life, is organization. A student who loses assignments and materials is unlikely to be as successful as one who keeps track of these things. A person who balances their time in such a way that they do not get overwhelmed and stressed is more likely to be happier and more productive. And a person who manages their money thoughtfully usually feels more secure and satisfied. For these reasons teaching organizational skills can reduce stress and help make for a healthier life

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

**Improving your life with organization.** For example: putting clothes away or in the laundry, cleaning their backpacks, cleaning up after themselves, being on time, creating a budget for their money, etc., help them to be more calm and organized. Discuss what kinds of routines they each make for themselves, what kinds of routines families have to keep themselves organized, and what routines are followed at school. List and discuss why we have each of the routines mentioned. Then discuss how they address organization. What would happen if they didn't have these rules for themselves, at home, or at school? Discuss as a group and list the problems that could occur if they were not organized in these ways. Discuss how it feels when they don't follow the routines. Ask if they feel stressed or worried as a result of disorganization. Also, do they run out of money? Do people get mad when they are disorganized? When they don't have a routine, is it harder to find things? Help students to see that organization, or lack of, influences other areas of wellness. They can reduce or avoid stress, conflict, and worry if they work to be organized; relationships might be more tranquil; and they might get better sleep. Also, by saving money, they may be able to give to a good cause, and this may give them a greater sense of purpose. After the discussion, ask them to write a short essay about how in some way, if they made one change in an organizational routine they currently have, their lives would be better.

- You may want to do this in three sessions (school, home, and personal) as the contexts are so different that you would most likely not be able to give each context justice if done all at once.

**Taking care of their money.** Introduce the idea that people organize their money so it doesn't get wasted or misplaced. And the idea that we can do three things with our money: we can save it, spend it, and/or share it. Have each student make a list of several things they would like to do with their money in each of the three areas. Have them think about what they would do if they were paid \$60 for doing some work for someone over the summer. How would they divide the money into the three sections and what would they prioritize from each section? Ask them to write an essay explaining what they would do and why they would make those choices.

- Watch [Pocket money—save, spend and share—GetWise | ASB](#) on Youtube for more ideas. Tie these practices in wellness.



**Earning money.** Discuss the idea of income as money they receive in some way: earning it, getting it as a gift, allowance, etc. Have them brainstorm ways they could (legally) earn money at their age. Do they have any ideas for starting a small business? Ideas may include: baby sitting, cutting people's grass, helping an older person with something like teaching them how to use their computer, or making something to sell. Discuss what someone would have to do to start their business. Then, they can decide what kind of work they would like to offer, determine the need for supplies, decide how to advertise, and develop a way to keep track of money, etc. Ask students if they can think of other things it would take to start a business. Explore how organization of money, time, and belongings might impact their success. Ask them to write up a business plan for their money-making venture.

**Working together to keep our spaces organized.** Connect the concept of organization to helping in the classroom and doing classroom chores. Emphasize that everyone's help is needed for the classroom to stay organized and neat. Allow time to clean the classroom, backpacks, desks, lockers, cubbies, etc. on a regular basis. Write about how it looks and feels both before and after and compare what they say. Stress the idea of teamwork and taking care of our environment as a component of health. Research tells us that people get stressed when things are unorganized.

**Organizational tools.** Discuss how planners are helpful organizational tools, and then do an experiment with the group. Ask everyone to not use their planners for a week. But before they stop using their planners, ask them to create an hypothesis as to what will happen during the experiment. How will it go in terms of remembering and getting assignments in on time? How will it feel? What differences will they see? Assure them that they will not be penalized for forgotten work, but they are still expected to do as much of their work as they can remember. A week later, have the group discuss how things went. What did they notice and learn about themselves and the usefulness of a planner? Did they feel more relaxed, the same as always, more stressed? Have students make a graph or chart of their answers. Ask them to write a short paper about where they were on the chart, and what they may want to do differently going forward, regarding using their planner. Explain that other areas of wellness are impacted because of their organizational habits: school, relationships, stress, rest and play. Stress how small changes in one area can also help create wellness in other areas of wellness.

Here is an additional website resource to use when discussing organization.

- **Responsive Classroom**, has all kinds of wonderful information and free downloadable materials designed to help adults create a healthy learning environment for young people in grades K-8. Among the materials offered are organizational tools for student use.

