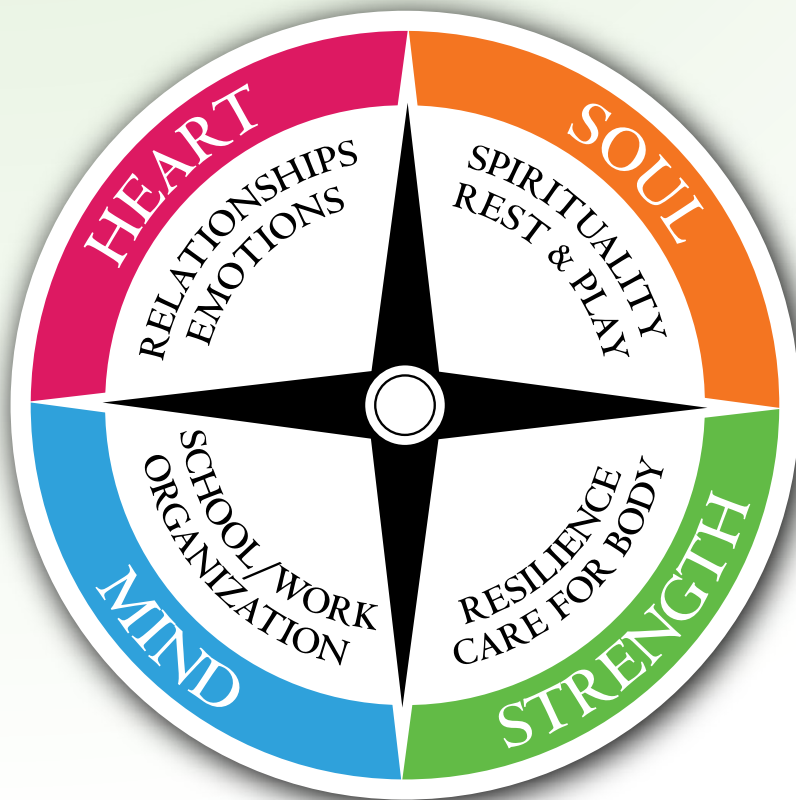


Teen Wellness Circle *Program Workbook*

Facilitator Guide



The Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation—a foundation committed to supporting and enriching the well-being of youth, parents, and families—was created with a generous gift from Ab and Nancy Nicholas. While Ab passed away in 2016, their generous support continues to inspire us and make this resource possible.

Welcome

Dear Teen Wellness Circle Facilitators,

Welcome. We are delighted to have you partake in a “whole new direction” in promoting teen wellness. By providing leadership to teens who want to be more intentional about their wellness, you will be helping teens lead happier and healthier lives.

As a **Teen Wellness Circle Facilitator**, you will be walking alongside teens and sharing their journey by offering compassionate listening, time-tested information, and gentle encouragement. This program is based on the belief that teens often know what is good for them, and yet with all that pulls on their time and energy, they don't always do what they know is best and what they desire for themselves.

Many teens frequently report feeling isolated, confused, and that they have no one with whom they can be totally honest about the joys and challenges of their lives. Often teens tell us that they feel alone and even embarrassed that things in their lives are not going more smoothly. They have the impression that other teens have it all together. This is not true, of course, but they do not know this because they rarely have the time, or the level of trust with other teens, to be real and share the truth. This means that they also seldom have authentic “villages” of support. This program reflects our commitment to helping teens come together, to be honest and vulnerable how hard life can be and, with the coaching of the facilitator and the support of others, make the changes they feel would benefit them.

At its core, a Teen Wellness Circle—which is what you will be facilitating—is a safe space we help create for teens so they can reflect upon their lives and the choices they are making. The support of the group in a Teen Wellness Circle, the coaching you offer, and the tools you provide will help teens to take the actions they know are best for their lives. As a facilitator, you will be coaching groups of teens as they generate NEXT Steps toward creating happier, healthier lives.

In this Facilitator Guide, you will learn the core concepts of the **Teen Wellness Compass**, as well as our approach to coaching, which is based on Motivational Interviewing. You will discover that as the teens you are working with become empowered to change their lives, you will likely also feel more empowered. So, while you are leading others through this process, we ask that you apply what you are learning and sharing to your own life, as well.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to help create a safe place for teens to be real, to grow, and to enjoy the long-lasting benefits of a supportive community.

Thank you for doing your part,

The Teen Wellness Compass Team

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INTRODUCING



The Teen Wellness Compass & The Teen Wellness Circle Program



I. Introduction

A. What is the Teen Wellness Compass?

The Four Compass Points

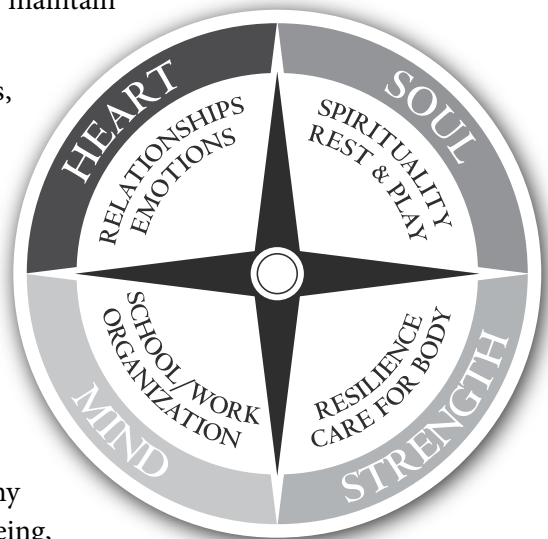
The “Compass” points toward the four dimensions of our being: *heart*, *soul*, *strength*, and *mind*. These dimensions are interconnected as the different parts of our lives are woven together. Much like an ecosystem, each area is affected by the other areas of the compass; therefore, whatever impacts one dimension of our lives (positively or negatively) impacts the other dimensions. A change in one area of our lives impacts the other areas.

The four points of The Teen Compass provide a guide for understanding eight areas of wellness. This will help teens to better understand themselves while, at the same time, helping them to better understand others in their lives.

Eight Areas of Teen Wellness

The Teen Compass is based on the idea that wellness depends on us taking care of and nurturing ourselves in all eight areas identified on the Compass. Here are the eight areas of wellness you will work from in your Wellness Circle.

- **Healthy Relationships.** The ability to create and maintain healthy, life-giving connections with others.
- **Handling Emotions.** The ability to process, express, and receive emotions in a healthy way.
- **Spirituality.** The development and practice of a strong personal value system and a meaningful purpose in life.
- **Rest and Play.** The ability to balance school, work, and play, and to renew oneself.
- **Stress Resilience.** The ability to deal positively with the adversities of life.
- **Care for the Body.** The ability to build healthy habits and practices around our physical well-being, and the ability to end unhealthy ones.
- **Organization.** The ability to keep track of and make good use of time, priorities, money, and possessions.
- **School and Work.** The ability to get the most out of educational, volunteer, and employment opportunities.



B. What is Whole-Person Wellness?

It is worth noting that words “whole,” “health,” and “healing” all come from the same root word “hal” or “haelen.” “Whole” means undivided, complete, or entire. When applied to whole-person wellness, this means that we are addressing all the dimensions of our being: physical, spiritual, emotional, relational, intellectual, and vocational.

This approach to wellness differs from the current predominant way of thinking, focusing or treating each aspect independently, as if one is separate from the others. It is important that we integrate and support all of the dimensions of our being as we seek to be healthy and well.

The greatest wisdom we have learned from the field of whole-person wellness is that the dimensions of our being are interconnected, meaning that each affects the other.

Difficulty sleeping may be connected to any, or all, of the following:

- stress at school
- stress at home
- a sense that life has lost its meaning
- a change in diet
- the recent change or loss of an important relationship

The whole is truly greater than the sum of the parts, and it is time we help teens understand this about their lives, integrating and supporting all of the dimensions of their being as they seek whole-person wellness for themselves as they grow into adulthood.

C. What is a Teen Wellness Circle?

The central focus of a Teen Wellness Circle is to support and encourage teens toward creating healthy changes. It is meant to help teens identify for themselves specific changes that **they** are ready to make and then, over six sessions, receive the support they need to make those changes.

A **Teen Wellness Circle** offers an opportunity for teens to pause and check how things are going for them. First, they will check the direction in which they are heading, in each of the different areas of their lives. Then, they will ask themselves, “Am I heading in the direction that I desire for myself?” A Teen Wellness Circle helps teens explore these questions and, if desired, make adjustments.

It is important to remember that our core values, beliefs, and ideals act as a compass that guides our lives, *and* the lives of teens as well. They point toward our own “true north.” Participation in a Teen Wellness Circle will help teens to become more conscious of their core values, beliefs, and ideals and support them as they work to more fully align their lifestyle choices with their values, beliefs, and ideals.

Additionally, when people of any age are intentionally seeking to make changes in their lives, research shows that **there is only a 10% chance of change when they simply hear a “good idea.” There is an 85% chance of success in making a change when they generate the idea for such change themselves, make a plan for the change, speak the change “out loud” to others, and receive the accountability and support of others who are working toward making their own positive changes.**

*By being part of a **Teen Wellness Circle**, teens are making a proactive decision to pay attention to all aspects of their own health and wellbeing.*

The Role of the Group in a Teen Wellness Circle

Teen Wellness Circles seek to foster authentic conversations, the type of conversations that are substantially different from the usual chats teens have at school or when gathered with friends and peers. Through authentic conversations, Teen Wellness Circles will strengthen the connections already present within a community, as well as creating new friendships between people who they have never met.

How Does Change Happen in a Teen Wellness Circle?

Guided by their core values and beliefs, and supported by the community of their Wellness Circle, teens will find that they can enhance their wellness and resilience. They do this by deciding for themselves which area of the Compass in which to focus, and then making the small, yet steady, changes needed.

An Overview of a Six-Week Teen Wellness Circle

A Teen Wellness Circle meets for six weeks to assist teens in making the changes they decide are right for them. The program is a combination of education, guidance, and life coaching that maximizes their success in making positive changes.

Session 1: Whole-Person Wellness: How Everything Is Connected. In this session you will reflect on your current whole-person wellness using the Teen Compass Wellness Inventory. You will also choose an inspirational quote to support yourself as you map the NEXT Steps of your Journey.

Session 2: Whatever You Pay Attention to Is What Will Grow. You will learn about the wellness continuum and how to pay attention to the “whispers” in your life, *before* they turn into “shouts.”

Session 3: Change is Inevitable. Growth is Optional. You will learn how to turn change into growth as you learn about the Comfort Zone, Growth Zone, and Panic Zone.

Session 4: Trust the Wisdom of the “J” Curve. Here you will learn how to overcome the most common reason people are not successful in their attempts to grow and change. Participants receive continued support from the group.

Session 5: Systemic Dynamics and Change. You will learn how your growth impacts the all other systems in your life and will receive continued support from the group.

Session 6: All Shall Be Well. In this session, you celebrate your successes and share plans for how you will continue to grow and change.

Ways to Engage during the Six-Week Teen Wellness Circle

1. Choose one of the eight areas of wellness on which to focus based on your results from the **Teen Wellness Compass Inventory**.
2. Describe where you are, and where you want to be, in this area of your life. This is the “You are Here” and “Wish You Were Here” part of the **Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey**.
3. Select an inspiring quote to guide you.
4. Pick a mindfulness practice that you will commit to doing during this program.
5. Invite others to support you on your journey.
6. Harness hope from previous positive experiences of growth as you consider any challenges you anticipate on this journey.
7. Set a specific goal for the change and growth you seek.
8. Determine a **NEXT Step** you will take each week toward your goal.
9. Continue to draw support and accountability from your Wellness Circle as you make progress with your goal and NEXT Steps.

The Teen Wellness Circles . . .

- focus on possibilities, not problems.
- will never require you to share if you are not comfortable.
- welcome you wherever you are on your journey toward greater wellness.
- will help you create personal goals and then support you in taking steps toward reaching those goals.
- are helpful when you are going through a transition in your life.
- will help you get yourself headed in the direction you desire.
- will help you reduce and better manage stress.
- are not a substitute for professional help; it is not group therapy or a 12-step group.

will provide a present-moment snapshot of your current state of balance and wellness and support you in taking NEXT steps in reaching your wellness goals.



Expectations for Participants in a Teen Wellness Circle

- Arrive 5–10 minutes early so that the group can start and end on time.
- Make a sincere effort to attend all six meetings. Four is the recommended minimum commitment.
- Honor confidentiality of all that is shared in the group.
- Understand that confidentiality will be waived if a facilitator believes a participant is being harmed, or is believed to be capable of harming themselves or others.
- Avoid giving advice to others. Instead, focus on listening deeply to them.
- “Resource” the group any time you want feedback or ideas from others.
- Do not monopolize “air time” in the group. Everyone needs equal time to speak.
- Establish clear goals and NEXT steps for yourself and commit to working on them between group meetings.

D. What is the Teen Wellness Circle Program?

The **Teen Wellness Circle Program** is designed to assist teens in making the changes they decide are right for them. The program is a combination of education and life coaching that will maximize their success in making positive changes. Hearing or having a good idea about making a change seldom leads to change. Change is much more likely to happen when we generate an idea for change for ourselves, make a plan for the change, speak the idea of change out loud to others, and receive the accountability and support of others who are working on their own positive changes.

The **Teen Wellness Circle Program** is based on a four-step process: **stop, look, listen, and proceed**. *Stopping* involves simply making the commitment to create space in your busy life to participate in this program. *Looking* includes completing the **Teen Wellness Compass Inventory** in the first session. *Listening* involves deciding—based on what you discovered from your Wellness Inventory results—on any changes you want to make in your life. *Proceeding* involves actively working on the **NEXT Steps** that you choose for yourself. You’ll learn more about NEXT Steps in Session 1.

The **Teen Wellness Circle** coaching process, through the power of inspired, authentic conversations, will strengthen the connections already present within the group, and will foster a safe sense of community for those who participate in this program.

Teen Wellness Circle Program Core Values and Beliefs

We believe that it is powerful and helpful when teens can have authentic conversations with others, and as these kinds of authentic conversations are increasingly rare in our modern culture and yet are needed for teens to be healthy and to feel safe.

The path to wellness for teens will be revealed when they are encouraged to slow down, listen to themselves, learn valuable lessons about change, create their own goals, and listen to each other.

Teens have many “compasses” pulling on them, pulling them in all kinds of directions. Teens must define which compasses point toward a “true North” of health and wellness and which do not and which to follow if they want a life full of health and well-being.

Teens need the support of others to attain and maintain wellness. They cannot make this journey alone—they need community.

Wellness requires flexibility and creative responses to the changes and chances of life.

The Core Principles of the Teen Wellness Circle Program

Resilience and wellness are rooted in **community**.

Resilience and wellness are rooted in identifying and acting in alignment with our **core values and beliefs**, or **spirituality**.

You can grow resilience by remembering:

- “Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.” —John C. Maxwell, leadership expert, speaker, and author
- “Whatever we pay attention to is what will grow.” —Deepak Chopra, author
- “We have to *do* different to *get* different.” —Anonymous

II. Key Concepts

A. Wellness

Wellness is a “way of living,” not a destination to be achieved. The aim is to be proactive and intentional so that our daily choices (no matter how great or small) support the life we intend. Wellness includes much more than simply not being ill or sick.

The approach to wellness that is sometimes seen in our current culture borders on being narcissistic, focusing on how to create a “better, richer, slimmer me!” The approach to wellness embedded in the Teen Wellness Compass, on the other hand, grounds all wellness on the relationships teens have with themselves, with their families, with their communities, and with their connection to their core values and beliefs.

B. Intentional

1. refers to “how” people go about making decisions.
2. refers to a “determination to act a certain way” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary).
3. refers to the attention given to a specific course of action and way of living.

The Teen Wellness Circle program empowers teens to become more “intentional” about how they live their lives. It encourages a proactive approach to daily living, rather than the reactive life many teens fall into when times are stressful. These circles help teens have greater influence over the direction in which their lives are heading, take responsibility for the choices they are making and become more aware of the impact those choices have on both their present and future well-being.

C. Inside Out

The Teen Wellness Circle program engages teens in a process of making changes from the “inside out.” There are many “compasses” on the outside that are competing for their attention all of the time, including the “compasses” of family of origin, culture, gender, school, work, family, and friends, each influencing the other and often pointing them in conflicting directions.

Teens who live “inside out” check in with themselves, their values and beliefs, and their gut feelings about what is good for them—their inner sense of knowing, rather than simply following someone else’s advice or example. When teens learn to go inside deeply and consistently, they develop and grow a greater sense of inner wisdom. They can then live their lives with greater resonance, as their outward life begins to match more fully their inner values.

III. Coaching Tools

A. A Very Brief Overview of *Motivational Interviewing* (MI)

(Based on a handout: “Motivational Interviewing: How to Promote Success in Helping People Change,” by Kristin Bell, MD, and Tomoko Tanabe, MD.)

The coaching and goal-setting component of the Teen Wellness Circle program is grounded in a well-researched method of helping people change entitled *Motivational Interviewing*. What follows is a very brief introduction to this theory.

Definition: *Motivational Interviewing* is a person-centered coaching style for eliciting behavior change by helping people explore and resolve ambivalence.

Basics: *Motivational Interviewing* is a collaborative, “expert-less” approach to coaching and facilitating change and growth. The spirit of MI completely respects each person’s capacity for self-efficacy. The person is seen as the expert in knowing best what they need to do.

Motivational Interviewing reframes “resistance” and understands it as ambivalence. All people, relationships, and systems are naturally ambivalent about change.

MI is a method of interacting with people to assess their readiness for change and to facilitate movement from one stage to the next. This is done by addressing a person’s ambivalence about change, examining their personal pros and cons for change, and facilitating exploration of their personal barriers to change.

The tone and demeanor adopted by MI is nonjudgmental, empathic, and encouraging.

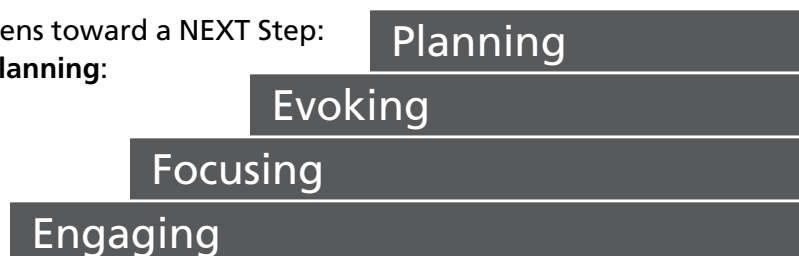
MI is used to selectively illuminate the discrepancy between a person’s desired goal and his or her current behaviors and choices.

Understanding change from the person’s point of view is an important aspect of the spirit of MI. As a facilitator, there are two particularly relevant points to keep in mind.

- Readiness to change is not a fixed personal trait, but a fluctuating product.
- The desire for change needs to be “elicited” not “imposed.”

Basic Coaching Skills You Will Need to Use Based on Motivational Interviewing

Four Important Steps to coaching teens toward a NEXT Step:
Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, and Planning:



1. **Engaging.** This step—establishing and maintaining a genuine, empathetic connection—is essential for all steps of the coaching process. To paraphrase the wisdom from Theodore Roosevelt, “Until they know that you care, they won’t care what you know.”

- Use your **OARS**
 - **O**pen-ended questions. How do you feel right now about the amount of stress in your life?
 - **A**ffirm. I admire how open you are with sharing your fears about . . .
 - **R**eflect. You want to slow your life down, but you believe that is not possible at this time.
 - **S**ummarize. You feel like school is taking over your life. You are concerned about the negative effect it is having on your relationships both with family and friends. You notice that you are irritable and that you are getting sick more often than you use to.

2. **Focusing.** This step of the coaching process is where you begin to help the teens to narrow and sharpen their focus about how they want to change and grow. Using the Teen Wellness Compass tools listed below, you, as the coach, help funnel the teens’ thoughts into a more specific focus.

- The Teen Wellness Inventory is the primary Teen Wellness Compass tool that begins the focusing process.
- The “Mapping the NEXT Steps of your Journey” continues the focusing process.

3. **Evoking.** Here the coach elicits the underlying reason and motivation that the teen has to change. When it comes to coaching change, clarifying the “why” is as important as clarifying the “what” and the “how.”

- Questions to ask:
 - Where are your core values and beliefs in the midst of this change you wish to make?
 - Will your family and friends support you in this change?
 - What comes to mind when you think of this change?
 - What mindfulness practice can help ground this change for you?
- Encourage the group by:
 - Evoking their passions, hopes, dreams, and ideals
 - “Blowing on the spark!” of their desires, hopes, motivation, excitement, and reasons for change

4. **Planning.** As Benjamin Franklin said, “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” This last step in the four step MI coaching process helps the teen create specific action steps they will take within the next week.

- NEXT Steps (*see page 34 for more information*)
- Guiding the teen to create a NEXT Step and sharing that NEXT Step with the group

B. The Stages of Change: *Change as A Process*

It is important to know that all teens move through change differently and at different speeds. We must honor that and be patient and non-judgmental. Change is a process that occurs in predictable stages. Knowing what stage a person is in is essential to helping discern the NEXT Step they wish to create for themselves.



—graphic adapted from *The Transtheoretical Model*, Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992

Pre-contemplation. This is the entry point of a teen into the change/growth process. They have not yet considered the prospect of a particular change and are unlikely to perceive a need for change. At this stage, they are not likely to respond positively to suggestions of change as they are not ready for change. The Teen Wellness Compass Inventory often serves to move teens from this stage to Contemplation.

Contemplation. Once teens have some awareness or desire for a need to change, they then enter this stage. This is often a state of ambivalence, where they both consider change and reject it at the same time. In this stage, the talk is back and forth between the need for change/growth and the amount of work involved. They talk for it and against it at the same time. There is thought about changing, but no specific plans.

Preparation. In this stage the focus begins to change from the need/problem to possible solutions, from the past to the future. There is now a window of opportunity where teens have resolved their ambivalence enough to consider making a change. Here they are now talking more and more about the change. They are also seeking resources and other like-minded people to help support their intended change and growth.

Action. In this stage teens are ready to change/grow and have, in fact, created concrete steps to make the change a reality. This is what NEXT Steps are all about. It is important that the actions taken are focused and achievable. The motto for this stage is, “nothing changes, if nothing changes.” Teens are most vulnerable to stumbling at this stage, or even giving up, so there is a need for strong support and encouragement here.

Maintenance. Once teens have maintained the change and growth for an extended period of time (somewhere in the range of three to six months), there is a good chance that the change will be a lasting one. At this point the change has become a new habit, something that doesn’t require a great deal of conscious thought and energy. Before they know it, teens might even find themselves saying, “Oh, that’s the way I’ve always done it!”

What Stage of Change Do These Statements Represent?

1. "I am always stressed out, but what else is new, everyone I know is stressed out as well."
2. "I'm going to try to get to bed earlier so I can be more well-rested."
3. "I don't like feeling tired all the time. I'm wondering what, if anything, I can do about it."
4. "I am going to start a homework journal this week and write every assignment down in and check it each night."
5. "I can't believe how well things are going at school since I started getting better organized six months ago."
6. "I have lived this long without watching what I eat or exercising, so I don't think I need to start now."
7. "I'm going to walk the dog three times for 30 minutes each time during the next week."
8. "I heard about a new mindfulness app that helps people keep calm in the midst of stress. I'm going to download it and check it out."

1. PC 2. P 3. C 4. A 5. M 6. PC 7. A 8. P/A

IV. Guidelines for Facilitating a Group

A. Facilitating a Teen Wellness Circle

The following pages are meant to help support you as you facilitate your Teen Wellness Circle, all six-week sessions. The potential for teens to make self-directed changes in their lives can be maximized by their experience in the group. Therefore, as a facilitator, you are charged with an exciting and rewarding role. You will set the tone as you smooth the way for teens to engage fully in the Teen Wellness Circle process, helping them become intentional about increasing their wellbeing. This may be a scary thing for teens, so we thank you for being willing to engage with this population and for being willing to facilitate this important process.

The role of the facilitator is to organize and support the group, to oversee the sessions, and then to get out of the way. Of course, you are very important and the group wouldn't happen without you, but you do not need to be an expert in any way to be a facilitator. Instead, **you are much like a midwife who helps guide the process and makes sure that the group is coming along in a safe and productive way.** You will be the one who makes sure that everyone has materials, understands the process, has enough time to speak, and follows the rules regarding such things as giving advice and not monopolizing the conversations. You will be in charge, but in no way are you expected to give advice or tell the participants how to make decisions.

A Teen Wellness Circle is based on the belief that teens are the experts on their own lives and that every teen is creative and resourceful and can determine what to do differently. You will guide and coach the group, rather than direct or teach it. You create the space for teens to experience what is happening within themselves and amongst themselves rather than creating the experience for them. The focus is on the teens, not the facilitator. Think of yourself as a “guide by their side,” not a “sage on the stage.”

As a facilitator, it is advised that you remain primarily the facilitator, participating only as an example in an attempt to make others feel comfortable in sharing.

Whatever is most comfortable is what you should do.

Whatever the case, it is important to be gentle with other people's stories and be a positive presence for them. You have an opportunity to show kindness to teens by embracing them as they are, while they figure out where they are going.

B. Understanding Facilitator Responsibilities

- Organize the group: arranging appropriate time and place, advertising the group and/or inviting participants, securing needed materials, and attending all six sessions.
- Ensure that the integrity and purpose of the Teen Wellness Circle is upheld.
- Set expectations and consistently follow and abide by those expectations.
- Provide and maintain a safe, judgment free, and open environment where all participants feel welcomed, valued, and respected.
- Emphasize that teens should not share more than they will feel good about the next day, and that confidentiality is important to all.
- Gently coach teens to make meaningful, helpful NEXT Steps.

C. Facilitating is Not:

- **Therapy.** Therapy focuses on healing pains and dysfunctions. A Teen Wellness Circle focuses on each individual generating growth that is strategic and action focused.
- **Consulting.** Consultants help diagnose a problem and prescribe appropriate solutions as an expert. Teen Wellness facilitators help teens find their own solutions and encourage them to be the expert in their own lives.
- **Training.** Trainers are instructors hoping to achieve specific objectives. Teen Wellness facilitators, instead, guide teens to create their own goals and NEXT Steps.
- **Mentoring.** Mentors use their own experiences in specific areas to guide individuals. Teen Wellness facilitators guide a process.

D. Managing Group Dynamics

All groups take on their own personality and energy. As a facilitator, it is imperative that you tune into your group and align with the energy of the group. Furthermore, building rapport and trust with group members is a continual process as a facilitator. Ways to build rapport and trust:

- Warmly greet each teen as they enter the room.
- Call on teens by name.
- Remember key issues and concerns teens discuss and refer back to them throughout the six weeks. Let teens know you are listening deeply to each one of them.
- Encourage and empower teens, thank teens for sharing, compliment when opportunities arise, and ask them to repeat something important that they have shared for emphasis.
- Listen to the feelings and needs of group members.
- Reflect back what you hear the group members saying to ensure understanding.

E. Managing Participants Who Require Special Attention

1. Talkative Person

- Affirm to the participant that you “hear” them and are listening by reflecting back or bottom lining what they are saying and then move on.
- Don’t look at this person when asking a question.
- Thank the person for their positive contribution, and then ask for others to share.
- If it continues, talk to the person privately outside of the session.

2. Person Who Is Quiet

- Watch for signs that the person wants to participate and engage them at that time.
- Respect their desire to not share much but trust they may be benefiting from the session despite their silence.
- Connect with them before or after the group time.

3. Person Who Has Difficulty Coming Up with Ideas for Growth

- Resource the group for ideas, if that person would like that.
- Acknowledge their concerns.
- Ask them if this may mean that they need to focus on another part of the Teen Wellness Compass.
- Ask them to observe his/her life this week and see if there is anything that he/she might want to be different.

4. Person Who Is Not Committed to the Program

- Ask the person privately what obstacles they may be facing in completing their Teen Wellness Circle homework or sharing in the Teen Compass process (refrain from judgment).
- Help the person create small steps to make changes.
- Resource the group.
- Move on; don't offer too much attention to this person because it denies others who are prepared and committed to full participation or may embarrass them.

5. Person in Crisis

Require that the person be working with a professional (physician, school counselor, psychotherapist, etc.) if they wish to continue in the group.

- Help the person focus on one goal that will encourage self-care while in this crisis.
- In private, suggest that the Teen Wellness Circle may not be appropriate for them at this time, if this is what you believe. Refer the teen for professional help.

6. Person Who Cries

- Give them time to gain composure.
- Offer them some tissues.
- Give them permission to excuse themselves if they need to.
- Don't draw attention to the fact that they are crying.
- Try to clarify what they have shared.
- Remind the group that crying is natural and is a healthy way of communication, a response that lets us know that something is important and needs our attention.

F. Using Important Facilitator Skills

1. **Active Listening.** Focus completely on what the teen is saying and repeating back what was heard for clarity.

Ways to actively listen include: Summarizing, paraphrasing, and repeating back what was said. This helps clarify things for the facilitator and for the participant. Summarizing the basic truth that is being communicated is useful when a participant engages in long explanations/stories.

2. **Use open-ended questions.** These are not yes or no questions, but questions that allow for honest answers regarding thoughts. These questions that can begin with who, what, when, where and why to help reveal information needed to build awareness for the participant.

If a teen is stuck, asking a question about past successes can help them feel more confident. It will also help them get unstuck when having trouble coming up with an idea for change.

For example, a teen wants to start exercising and states, “I hate to exercise so I have no clue what to do for exercise.” The facilitator could ask, “What are some things you have done in the past to exercise? When you were younger what kind of activities did you enjoy?”

3. **Goal Setting.** Assist teens in setting and maintaining reasonable goals.

Participants in Teen Wellness Circles create their own goals and NEXT steps. However, sometimes the goals or NEXT Steps (Needed, Excited about, and Time-specific) appear unreasonable or unmanageable. (*See page 34 for more information on NEXT Steps.*)

For example, a teen wants to get more organized at home and decides to take two hours every day for a week to do so. In theory, it sounds like a good NEXT Step, but the likelihood of success is small because it lacks the components of a NEXT Step. As a facilitator, you could help the teen make it more manageable by asking questions, such as, “What time of day do you plan to do your organizing?” “Do you think it might be better to start with smaller goal such as 15 minutes a day?” “What area of your life could you focus on for this week?” If the teen is open, they can resource the group for ideas to make their NEXT Step more manageable and realistically doable.

4. **Resourcing the Group.** With the teen’s permission, ask group members for thoughts or suggestions.

When a teen is stuck, asking the group for their comments or suggestions can help the teen create awareness and become unstuck. It is important to remind the group not to give advice unless it has been asked for.

5. Providing Unconditional Positive Regard. Facilitator skills are used in a judgment-free manner and focuses on the teens’ strengths.

Facilitators must keep the teens’ best interests in mind at all times and communicate positively without judgment. Language should be friendly and supportive.

For example, if someone says, “I was not good this week, I didn’t do any of my homework.” The facilitator could say, “I hear your disappointment. What do you think got in the way of you completing your goal?” This is very important, as teens tend to get down on themselves when they are not making the kind of progress that they would like to see. They often worry about letting others down.

6. Celebrating. Facilitators encourage teens to celebrate their small successes, and they celebrate with them.

Unfortunately, many teens wrestle with tremendous shame. Unmet expectations can induce this shame. Shame is not productive and is a dangerous motivator. In this program, you will ask teens to set realistic expectations and celebrate the small changes they make. We also ask them to work on goals that they really care about. Not goals that others have for them.

You can encourage your group to celebrate completing NEXT Steps of changing a thought pattern or finding new awareness about themselves. Celebrating can be expressed as a compliment, such as, “Congratulations for managing your emotions when your friend was rude to you. I know you have been working on that!” It can also be a smile or high five.

List some skills you believe to be your strengths that will help you as a Teen Wellness Circle facilitator.

What aspects (biases, anger, personality traits, etc.) of yourself could potentially compromise the experience for the teens when you are facilitating a group? It is good to be aware of this so you can then work on not letting it happen.

G. Facilitator Checklist

1. Create a safe, supportive, friendly and confidential environment.

- There is NO ROOM FOR JUDGMENT.
- Explain confidentiality. What is talked about in the group needs to stay in the group.
- Explain the limits of confidentiality—specifically if you believe the teen is being harmed or is likely to harm themselves or others. You will alert others if you think a group member or others are in harm.
- Remain friendly and open and maintain a sense of humor.
- Ask participants to use discretion when sharing and to not share something they will regret or feel embarrassed about after the session. This will mean reminding group members to choose steps that they feel comfortable sharing with the group.
- Remind them that if they have a pressing issue that is too private to share, they may want to speak to a professional for assistance in finding other help. Offer to help them find such a person and talk with their parents.

2. Stay within the allotted group time.

- Be mindful of the time throughout the session.
- Announce how much time each person has before beginning to share and enforce that.
- Show the group that you are aware of the time by glancing at the clock or your watch periodically, etc.
- Ask a member of the group to help manage the time.
- Maintain a flexible and focused agenda, keeping the group on task, but being flexible within the structure.

3. Manage the expectations of the group.

- The group will meet for six weeks and they will get started on making changes during that time period. However, significant changes will take more time and more intentionality.
- If they want to continue to work on making changes they may want to join a future Teen Wellness Circle when another one is offered, or possibly get a personal coach for support.
- Getting headed in the right direction is the first step, and they are to be applauded for taking that first step.

4. Explain the six-week program and help set realistic expectations.

- In six weeks, participants may make progress but should not expect radical changes. If can get them off to a good start though.
- A Teen Wellness Circle provides a process of self-awareness and growth. The six weeks are the beginning experience for this process, a time when participants begin to live into a greater sense of well-being.
- Explain the agenda for each session as the session starts.

- Explain, in detail, the “Mapping” section during the first session and as a review if needed.
- A Teen Wellness Circle is a GROUP coaching program. Express the importance for participants to monitor the amount of time they each take to share and to not go beyond the allotted time for each person. Inform the group that as a facilitator, you will help the group be mindful of the time.
- Ask participants in the initial session what they are hoping to get from the program. Try to remember and refer back to their answers throughout the six weeks. This helps create awareness for the participant as well as build trust with the facilitator.

5. Go over the ground rules.

- Be on time.
- Let everyone have a chance to speak without being interrupted.
- Keep discussions confidential.
- Invite participants to create additional ground rules, as they may have ideas that are important to them.

6. Monitor group dynamics.

- Tune into the energy and flow of the group. Sometimes, a group may spend more time on one section than another. Be flexible.
- Be inclusive, making sure everyone feels comfortable.
- Remember that the group members are responsible for their own achievements.
- Let group members support one another while avoiding giving advice to each other.

7. Identify and beware of the “inner-critic.”

- Help participants to approach their changes and the process with positive language and thoughts.
- Identify when the inner critic (shame, self-deprecating comments) shows itself and gently help the participant become aware of this.

8. Guide the sessions, do not control them.

- Let go of the outcome of each session and for each participant. Go with what happens.

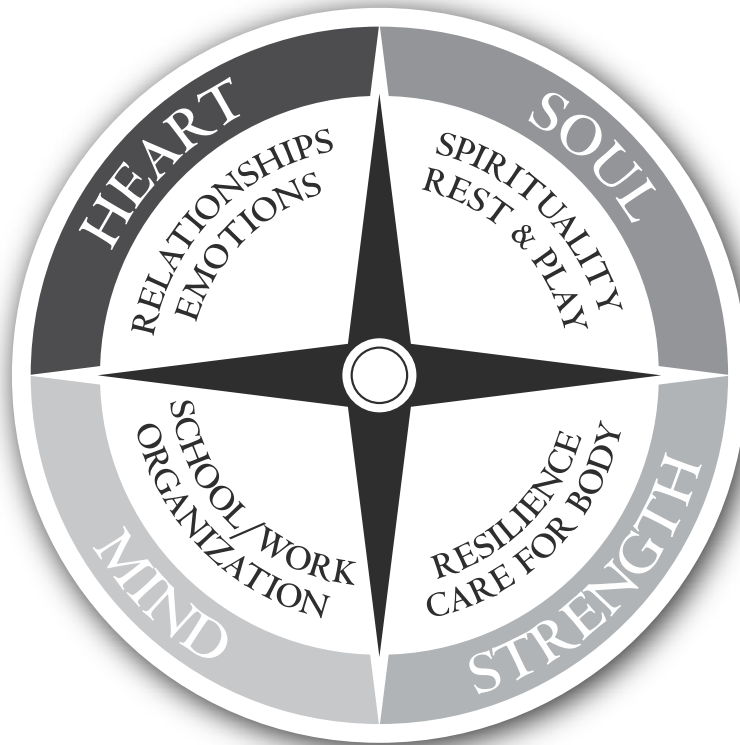
9. Remember to get out of the way.

- Set the tone and energy for the group.
- Explain your role as well as the role the participants play.
- Inform the group of any changes that could arise.
- Identify any changes in the direction of the group and normalize it.
- Set a positive tone can help ease any concerns that may arise during the six weeks.

EXPLORING



Teen Wellness Circle Program Tools



V. Wellness Compass Questions & Quotes



As we shared on page 4, the Teen Wellness Compass used in a Teen Wellness Circle includes four quadrants: heart, soul, strength, and mind. These quadrants are interconnected, each one affecting the others. Whatever impacts one dimension of our lives, positively or negatively, also has an impact on the other dimensions.

Each of the four points on the Compass contains two areas of focus. The goal is to provide teens with a dynamic tool that will assist them in their search for balance and wellness in their lives.

On the following pages you will find quotes, most of which are in the workbook teens will be using in their Wellness Circle, as well as a list of questions meant for individual reflection.

Heart: The emotional/relational dimensions of our lives. The two areas of focus are *Healthy Relationships* and *Handling Emotions*.

Healthy Relationships. The ability to create and maintain healthy, life-giving connections with others.

Hold a true friend with both of your hands. —Nigerian Proverb

Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind. —Dr. Seuss, author

The best things in life are the people we love, the places we have been, and the memories we've made along the way. —Marjolein Basdin, author and illustrator

If you see something beautiful in someone, speak it. —Ruthie Lindsey, speaker and designer

Though we travel the world over to find the beautiful, we must carry it with us or we find it not. —Ralph Waldo Emerson, author

Relationships are important. Relationships are how we interact with all the other people in our lives. While there are times we might feel alone, there are others all around us all the time. When we build healthy relationships with them, those relationships can have a very strong impact on our overall well-being.

In fact, few things affect the quality of our lives more than the quality of our relationships. Think about it. A fight with a good friend can ruin a day. A word of praise from a teacher, parent, or coach can make you feel confident. If a friend betrays you or a parent hurts you, it can make all the other parts of your life seem difficult. Relationships can give us energy or drain us of needed energy. They are very important, and we all need to be intentional about how we both build them and participate in them.

With relationships being such an important part of your life, it is important to pause and take time to look at the relationships you have right now.

Think about your relationships with your extended family, parents, siblings, close friends, and others as you read over the following questions.

- How honest and real are you in your relationships?
- Are you comfortable being vulnerable with those to whom you are closest?
- Are you able to turn to others for help and support when you need it?
- Is there at least one person in your life with whom you can be fully yourself?

Heart

Handling Emotions. The ability to process, express, and receive emotions in a healthy way.

The walls we build around ourselves to keep sadness out, also keep out the joy.

—Jim Rohn, entrepreneur

Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions.

—Dalai Lama, spiritual leader

People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget the way you made them feel. —Bonnie Jean Wasmund, educator

Honor the space between no longer and not yet. —Nancy Levin, author, speaker, and coach

Knowing yourself is the beginning of all wisdom. —Aristotle, philosopher

Feeling and Expressing the Full Range of Emotions. Imagine that your emotions exist on a continuum, or a scale from zero to ten. Think of the emotions on the bottom end of the scale, zero to five, as the difficult or unpleasant emotions, such as fear, worry, anger, and sadness. Now think of the emotions at the top end of the scale, six to ten, as the pleasurable emotions, such as joy, laughter, love, and excitement. Right in the middle, at number five, is considered the neutral point, where we don't really feel much of anything, pleasant or unpleasant.

Here is an important insight: **There is a strong connection between the degree to which we are comfortable feeling and expressing unpleasant emotions and the degree to which we feel and express pleasurable emotions.** Difficulty feeling and/or appropriately expressing unpleasant feelings usually means we will have difficulty feeling and expressing positive feelings, as well. While we know that we all have the full range of emotions, it is when we either hide our feelings from view or let them explode that we get into trouble.

The following questions might be helpful as you think about emotions.

- Are you handling your emotions, or are they handling you?
- Are you comfortable feeling and expressing the full range of emotions: sadness, fear, anger, joy, etc.?
- Do your emotions “get the best of you,” causing you to say or do things you later regret?
- Are you ever concerned that you might be suffering from depression or anxiety? Who would you feel comfortable talking to about these feelings?
- Are you comfortable listening and being present to someone who is hurting, upset, or very emotional?

Soul: The spiritual dimension of human existence. The two areas of focus are *Spirituality* and *Rest and Play*.

Spirituality. The ability to develop a strong personal value system and a meaningful purpose in life.

I don't have to chase extraordinary moments to find happiness—it's right in front of me if I'm paying attention and practicing gratitude. —Brené Brown, professor, author, and speaker

You cannot kindle a fire in any other heart until it is burning in your own.
—Unknown

The purpose of life is a life of purpose. —Robert Byrne, author, engineer, and billiards champion

Don't ask yourself what the world needs. Ask yourself what makes you come alive and then go do that. Because what the world needs is people who have come alive.
—Howard Thurman, philosopher and educator

We must accept finite disappointment, but never lose infinite hope.
—Martin Luther King, Jr., clergyman and civil rights activist

The word *spirituality* comes from the same root as the word *breath*. We see the root of the word spirituality in words like *respiration*, which means *to breathe*, and *inspire*, which means *to breathe new life into something*. In our metaphor of a compass, our spirituality is how we define “true north” for ourselves. **Our spirituality gives our life direction and purpose, inspires us, give us the energy to live, and guides our life choices.**

Spirituality then is not the same as religion, although devoting ourselves to a particular religion is one way in which we could express our spirituality. Spirituality, whatever that looks like for each of us, helps us to define our core values and beliefs, those we turn to to guide all the important decisions in our lives. If honesty, respect, and integrity, for example, are cores values for you, they will guide how you treat others, as well as provide guidance for you if an opportunity to be dishonest or disrespectful comes up. In any of the ethical situations that you face every day, your spirituality helps you as you decide about challenging issues, such as cheating, gossiping, bullying, lying, or stealing.

Another way to think about spirituality is to think of it as the root system of a tree. In order for trees to grow tall and to weather storms, droughts, and floods, they need to have strong root systems. Roots literally keep trees well-grounded. What is true for trees is also true for us. We all need a strong root system to sustain us through the many changes and challenges we will face in life, both now and in the future. It is during these times that our spirituality will give us meaning, hope, and grounding. Our spirituality identifies our purpose, forms ours values, and keeps us well-grounded.

Soul

Rest & Play. The ability to balance work and/or school and play, and to renew oneself.

Give me six hours to chop down a tree and I will spend the first four sharpening the axe.

—Abraham Lincoln, 16th President of the United States

Each person deserves a day away in which no problems are confronted, no solutions searched for. Each of us needs to withdraw from the cares which will not withdraw from us.

—Maya Angelou, author

You can discover more about a person in an hour of play than in a year of conversation.

—Plato, philosopher

Almost everything will work again if you unplug it for a few minutes, including you.

—Anne Lamott, author

'Promise me you'll always remember: You are braver than you believe, and stronger than you seem, and smarter than you think.' Christopher Robin to Pooh. —A.A. Milne, author

Telling others how busy we are seems to have become a badge of honor in our culture. We are involved in so many things and have so many responsibilities that we can easily lose track of how important rest and play are to our well-being.

The quote from President Lincoln talks about the importance of sharpening an axe before using it to chop down a tree. Rest and play help to strengthen our well-being so that when we do need to work hard, we are sharp enough to perform well. If we are having trouble performing well, it may be because we have become tired and dull and in need of some downtime to renew ourselves. In this we are not much different than our phones or any of the other battery-dependent devices we use—we both wear down and need recharging on a regular basis.

Here are some questions for you to think about.

- How often do you allow yourself to simply play?
- What are the attitudes about play in your family?
- How do you play? Is it healthy?
- Do you take time to renew yourself every week or weekend?
- Do you have hobbies that you enjoy?
- Do you get enough sleep most nights?

Strength: The physical dimension of our lives. The two areas of focus are *Stress Resilience* and *Care for the Body*.

Stress Resilience. The ability to deal positively with the adversities of life.

Everything is hard before it is easy. —J.W. Goethe, writer and statesman

Stress is the trash of modern life—we all generate it, but if you don't dispose of it properly, it will pile up and overtake your life. —Danzae Pace, author

There's no such thing as ruining your life. Life's a pretty resilient thing, it turns out.
—Sophie Kinsella, novelist

No matter how you define success, you will need to be resilient, empowered, authentic, and limber to get there. —Joanie Connell, organizational consultant and leadership coach

Be kind, for everyone you meet is fighting a hard battle. —Unknown

Stress resilience has to do with how well we deal with the changes and transitions, planned and unplanned, in our lives and how well we manage stress in general. When we are resilient, which means “to bounce back, or spring back to shape or form,” we regularly take time and allow ourselves to do the hard work of confronting and growing through changes. Too often we try to avoid feelings of uncertainty and confusion during stressful times or times of change. This may seem like a good idea in the short term, but will always limit our emotional well-being in the long run. It is better to talk with others about our feelings and get support.

As you assess your satisfaction with this dimension of your life, reflect on whether you have been through any of the changes listed below. How fully have you addressed any transitions you have been through? Having a trusted person to talk through your feelings can do a world of good for your emotional well-being.

- Divorce or parents separating
- New relationship or ending a relationship
- New person in the family
- Blending families
- Financial stress
- Health issue in yourself or a loved one
- Death of a loved one
- Leaving home
- Moving
- Accident or injury
- Parent loses job
- New school or harder classes

Everyone has stress. There is no place we can go to get away from it. But we don't have to let stress overwhelm us. We don't have to let stress, “stress us out.” Stress is part of life for everyone. Like all aspects of life, we will be better off if we learn skills to help us work through stressful times so they don't take over our lives.

Strength

Care for the Body. The ability to build healthy habits and practices around your physical well-being, and to end unhealthy habits.

I think there's so much emphasis on body image and results and outcome, but really what you should be after is to be healthy and to feel good about yourself. —Abby Wambach, professional soccer player

My smile is my favorite part of my body. I think a smile can make your whole body. —Serena Williams, professional tennis player

The privilege of a lifetime is being who you are. —Joseph Campbell, scholar and author

To be beautiful means to be yourself. You don't need to be accepted by others. You need to accept yourself. —Thich Nhat Hanh, Buddhist monk and peace activist

Beauty is about being comfortable in your own skin. It's about knowing and accepting who you are. —Ellen DeGeneres, TV personality and comedian

Our culture puts a great deal of emphasis, often too much emphasis, on physical wellness and body image. Yet it is important to care for our bodies because they are the only ones we will ever get. It is essential for our long-term health to find a balanced approach to the care and nurturing of our physical wellness. How we care for our bodies, now and in the future, will have a significant impact on how our bodies function and serve us later on. As you think about caring for your body, you might reflect on the following questions.

- Are you thoughtful about your nutrition and eating patterns?
- Have you ever been concerned that you eat or drink for emotional reasons, as a way to comfort yourself?
- What role do alcohol and/or other drugs play in your life? Do you think you are creating healthy habits where these things are concerned?
- Do you go to the doctor and dentist for regular checkups and care when needed?
- Are you comfortable with your sexuality? Are you making healthy decisions in this part of your life?

Mind: The mental/vocational dimension of our lives. The two areas of focus are *Organization & School and Work*.

Organization. The ability to keep track of and make good use of time, priorities, money, and possessions.

The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.

—Stephen Covey, educator and business author

Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up. —A. A. Milne, author

Clutter is not just physical stuff, it's old ideas, toxic relationships and bad habits

—Eleanor Brown, novelist, editor, and teacher

Most people overestimate what they can do in a month and underestimate what they can do in an hour. —Anonymous

Do. Or do not. There is no try. —Yoda, Star Wars character

Do you think getting organized is boring? Many people do. Many of us think we are “too busy” to take time to get organized. Some people even make fun of people who are super organized. Let’s face it, most people think there are more interesting and fun things to do besides organizing their time or their “stuff.” But people who are organized will tell you that being organized contributes to their overall well-being and is well worth the time it takes.

Being disorganized can be both a symptom and a cause of stress in our lives, whether it is disorganization of time, our environment, finances, or belongings. Everything becomes harder and requires more time when we are not organized. A vicious cycle can easily be set in motion; we become more stressed if we are not organized, which in turn leads to us to being even less organized and more stressed.

The good news is that anyone can make immediate progress in becoming better organized once they set their intentions to do so, and once they ask for the support of others. Whatever patterns we have around organizing our time, money, and “stuff” are simply learned habits and—like all habits—they can be changed. It helps to remember that creating a new habit takes time and energy. Research shows that on average it takes at least thirty days of intentional change to form a new habit.

Many of us often find ourselves so busy that everything seems like it is urgent. When this happens, we lose our ability to plan and prioritize. One of the symptoms of getting caught up in the “tyranny of the urgent” is feeling like we are wasting time if we take time out to plan and prioritize. In the end however, as hard as it is to believe, planning and prioritizing will save us time and make our lives much calmer.

Take an honest look at your life and assess how well you are organizing all the important things in your life: calendar, money, personal spaces such as a bedroom, locker and backpack, your school work, and your priorities.

Mind

School and Work. The ability to get the most out of and find balance between the demands of school, work and/or extra-curriculars, and family, and friends.

Let us remember: One book, one pen, one child, and one teacher can change the world.

—Malala Yousafzai, activist for female education and youngest Nobel Prize laureate

It takes courage to grow up and become who you really are. —e. e. cummings, poet, painter, and playwright

The meaning of life is to find your gift. The purpose of life is to give it away.

—Pablo Picasso, artist

When you recover or discover something that nourishes your soul and brings joy, care enough about yourself to make room for it in your life. —Jean Shinoda Bolen, psychiatrist

We are each gifted in a unique and important way. It is our privilege and our adventure to discover our own special light. —Mary Dunbar, artist and teacher

Whether you love it, hate it, or are indifferent about it, school is one of the most important parts of your life. Some say going to school is like a job; it is what you have to do and where you need to do your best. Why? So you can get a job, go to college, be a well-educated member of society, or gain important tools so you can help solve some of the world's problems?

Perhaps there is another reason. There is a story of a student who asked her wise teacher, “I want to make a difference in the world. What does the world need me to do?” The teacher responded, “Do what makes you feel most alive, because the world needs more people who are fully alive.” Maybe the reason you go to school is to help you find and begin to explore what makes you feel fully alive, equip you to live into that passion, and then use it to enjoy life and to make the world a better place.

As you think about the role of school and work in your life, the following questions may be helpful.

- Can you see a sense of purpose in your schooling?
- Do you see how your schooling fits into the bigger purpose of your life?
- How do you relate to those with whom you go to school, work, or serve?
- Are you comfortable expressing your needs and wants where you go to school?
- Are you learning and growing at school?

If you work, or have other extracurriculars, do they ever interfere with your schooling?

VI. Teen Wellness Compass Inventory

Facilitators will benefit from taking the Teen Wellness Compass Inventory, found in the Teen Wellness Circle participant workbook to get a feel for what teens will be experiencing when they complete the inventory. Teens will be asked to take the Teen Wellness Inventory during the first session.

The Teen Wellness Inventory is a core component of the Teen Wellness Circle process. Many teens report that this is one of the most enlightening parts of the entire program. The overall results, or sometimes just one statement from the Inventory, often opens up a whole new level of awareness and desire for change in a person.

The Teen Wellness Inventory offers a **present-moment “snapshot”** of a teen’s current state of wellness and life balance. It simply reveals the areas of a teen’s life to which they have been paying attention, and the areas to which they have not been giving much attention. The inventory also reveals how the different areas of wellness are interconnected, and how one area can affect other areas.



VII. Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey

Once the Teen Wellness Compass Inventory has been taken, teen will map out the changes they want to make, determine what steps are necessary, and then work for six weeks to make the desired changes. The process of doing this includes four specific steps:

1. Stop

Pausing their lives to make the time to participate in a Teen Wellness Circle. Each day, teen will be invited to stop and reflect on their goals and NEXT Steps.

2. Look

Taking a deeper look at their lives as they are right now by using the inventory tool as a mirror to reflect back to them their current state of wellness and balance.

3. Listen

Taking the time to listen to themselves and each other as they discern the changes they feel ready and excited to make.

4. Proceed

Committing to the specific NEXT Steps that will lead to a greater sense of well-being in their lives.

Note ... Note ... Note

The following three pages are taken directly from the *Teen Wellness Circle participant workbook* in order to illustrate the Mapping Process as it takes teens from the Wellness Inventory to setting their NEXT Steps.

Suggestions for guiding teens through each element of mapping NEXT Steps are numbered and noted on each page.

Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey

To be completed between Sessions 1 and 2

- 1** List 2-3 areas of satisfaction from your Teen Wellness Compass Inventory results.

- List 2-3 areas of the Compass you think need more of your attention.

Give some intentional thought to the following questions and then pick the dimension of wellness that you would like to focus on in this program.

- If you think of your shaded Compass as a garden, what area do you think is in need of some additional watering and weeding right now?
- What area do you feel most motivated to work on?
- What dimension do you feel a sense of urgency about?
- What area do you feel would most positively impact your life if it were tended to?

- 2** Which area of the Compass do you want to focus on in this program?

- 3** “You Are Here” | Describe where you are right now in this area of wellness. How would you describe the situation?

“Wish You Were Here!” | Describe what it would be like if you were more intentional about this area of wellness. How would you like things to be?

SESSION 1: Whole-Person Wellness: How Everything Is Connected

13

1 Guide teens away from talking about their “strengths and weaknesses” and instead talk about areas of higher or lower satisfaction and areas of the “garden that they have been watering and those that are perhaps a bit wilted for lack of watering or are in need of weeding.” It is important to note and affirm the areas of higher satisfaction, the areas of the Compass that they have been “watering,” and to note that these will be different for each member of the group.

2 Even though teens may want to work on several areas of the Compass, explain that it is important to start by focusing on just one area.

They can switch to a different area during the six-week program, but they must choose just one to start with. It is good for them to choose an area that they feel ready and excited to work on, to “water.” The area they choose does not have to be the one with the lowest score.

3 In terms of the four steps of coaching using the *Motivational Interviewing* model, this is the “Evoking” step. You are guiding teens to name how it will be different for them when they make the changes they feel ready to make. This evokes their motivations for wanting to do the hard work of growth and change.

1 Talking about possible mindfulness practices will tap into evoking their reasons for changing and growing, and it also encourages teens to ground their growth with a regular practice. If a tree wants to grow new branches, it will also need to grow new and deeper roots to support that growth. A centered mind is much more capable of creating and sustaining change than a stressed and anxious mind.

2 This is now moving toward the “Planning” step of *Motivational Interviewing* coaching. Asking about the support of others alerts the teens that the changes they are seeking to make may directly affect others and they are wise to be proactive in gaining help and support.

3 When a person can predict the challenges they will face when making a change, there is a better chance they will overcome that challenge when they encounter it. If that challenge might arise with someone else in the teen’s life, this reminds them it is important to talk to them proactively and to seek their support.

Inspiring Quote | Many people have found it helpful to choose a quote, a line from a song, a poem, or an inspiring saying to strengthen and inspire them on their journey of growth and change. If you wish, write something here that you believe will help inspire and support you as you work to make the changes you want to make.

1 Mindfulness Practice | (see page 42 for help with this) Write down a centering practice you will commit to on a regular basis during this program.

2 Support from Others | Are there others outside your Wellness Circle whose support you will want or need? Family members? Friends? Other adults? Name them here.

3 Challenges | What resistance or barriers within yourself or from others might arise as you strive to grow and change?

Goals | List one or two goals that you have for yourself. These can be long- or short-term goals.

NEXT Steps | In order to begin moving toward your goals, list one or two NEXT Steps you feel ready to take this week. Remember that NEXT steps are: Needed, you are EXcited to take them, and they are Time-specific (see pages 11–12 for a detailed description of NEXT Steps).

4 NEXT Steps.

Creating a NEXT Step is the essential “Planning” step of the four step *Motivational Interviewing* coaching process. This is what teens will share as they check in each week. It might be helpful to role-play several NEXT Steps with the group by asking them, “What would an example be of a possible NEXT Step for someone who wants to work on the “Spirituality,” or “Rest and Play,” or “Care for the Body” area of the Compass?” Have the group discuss this hypothetical person’s possibilities.

This will give them several general examples of what NEXT Steps might look like. At the same time though, make it clear that no one else can choose a NEXT Step for them. It must come from the “inside out” and must be something each teen feels ready and excited to do. Three

teens in your group might all be working on the Rest & Play area of the Compass, but each will create their own unique, individual NEXT Step that is right for them.

Remember, advice is never encouraged from group members, or the facilitator, but teens can choose to “resource the group” as they create their NEXT Step. For example, if a teen decides they want to take an introductory yoga class but has no idea where to find such a class, they can “resource the group” by asking if anyone has a recommendation for a good introductory yoga class in the area.

4 What is a NEXT Step?

A NEXT Step is just that, the next step you feel ready to take based on a goal you set, inspired by what you learned by taking the Teen Wellness Compass Inventory. After taking the Wellness Inventory, you may or may not feel the need to create a NEXT Step. We are simply offering an invitation to make a change if you feel ready to do so.

A NEXT Step is based on an acronym that stands for *Needed*, *EXcited*, and *Time-specific*.

Needed means that you have a felt need to take this step. It relates to something you have wanted to do, something you know would be good for you. *EXcited* means that you are positively motivated to take this step—you want to take this step, as opposed to being motivated by a feeling that you “should” or “have to” take this step. *Time-specific* means that you will take your step right away or within the next several days. It’s the difference between saying, “Someday I’m going to get my morning routine more organized,” and “Starting tomorrow, I’m going to get up fifteen minutes earlier than usual and prepare a simple breakfast so I’ll feel better during the day.”

N Needed ...

... means the step addresses a felt need that you have.

For example: “For several months now I have been feeling the need to spend less time on my phone texting late at night. When I do, I wake up feeling groggy and have a hard time getting out of bed.”

EX EXcited ...

... means the motivation for doing the step is positive—I “want” to do this rather than I “should” or “have to.”

For example: “I am looking forward to having more energy during the day while still connecting with my friends.”

T Time-specific ...

... means I will do my NEXT Step at this time, or within a specific time frame.

For example: “I am going to tell my friends today that I’m going to start limiting the time I spend on my phone late at night.”

VIII. Mindfulness Practices

Choosing a Mindfulness Practice

An essential step in “Mapping the NEXT Steps of your Journey” is to take on a mindfulness practice for the duration of the time that your wellness circle is meeting. A mindfulness practice is simply a way of intentionally creating time to “stop, look and listen” to one’s deeper self. This is not about just creating “down time” or time to relax, but to intentionally connect with one’s true self.

A mindfulness practice is not about indulging in self-centeredness. There is a very important difference between being self-centered and having a centered self. It is from a centered self that we can best respond—as opposed to react—to the demands of life. When we are centered, our responses and actions will be more closely aligned with our core values and beliefs. Help the teens see this distinction.

There is no “right” practice for everyone. Encourage teens to choose one that is right for them, meaning one that helps them to move beneath the surface clutter in their minds and connect with their deeper thoughts and feelings. We recommend that teens consider **journaling** as a mindfulness practice because it is easy to do and it can be a wonderful way for them to meditate on the NEXT Steps they are working on. Here are two excerpts from one of our favorite books on the benefits of journaling, *Writing and Being: Embracing Your Life Through Creative Journaling*, by G. Lynn Nelson.

- *My journal is my place to let go of formal constraints, to be crazy and creative, to take off my masks, to be me, to find me.*
- *As you write, remember that your journal is a private place, a safe place, and that there you do not need to impress anyone with either your writing or your being. There is no need to pretend. You can make no ‘mistakes’ in your journal. Your journal is a personal and intimate tool, and each person’s journal, like each person, is unique in its ways and its unfolding.*

If they choose journaling as a practice, they may want to purchase a journal, or just use the blank pages in their workbook. Just as there is no right way to journal, there is no right kind of journal. Get whatever feels comfortable. It might be helpful for them to decide how many minutes each day they are going to journal and then make the commitment to stay with that. It’s best to start small, say five to ten minutes, and then, if they wish, add time if they desire.

Another popular mindfulness practice is some form of **meditation**. This can be as simple as setting aside five, ten or fifteen minutes to sit quietly and breath slowly and deeply. It is often helpful to have a word or phrase to repeat as they do this in order to keep their mind from jumping from thought to thought. There are many good apps that teens can download to help them try this. Headspace is a good example.

Walking can also be a mindfulness practice, as can **listening to quiet music**, or whatever provides rest and renewal and allows teens to access their deeper thoughts and feelings. If a teen practices a particular religious faith, there are no doubt specific **spiritual practices** from their faith tradition that they can do as a practice.

The first obstacle teens will most likely mention, as they attempt to begin a regular mindfulness practice, is time. They will feel like they don’t have enough time for this. And they will be right. They won’t have time, so they will need to make time. Rather than suggest times, it is advised that we help teens figure out how and when to do this themselves. Only they know their lives well enough to know what will work for them.

Committing to a practice on a regular basis requires discipline. If they struggle and fall away from it, yet want to continue with this effort, remind them to simply start again. Most people who do a mindfulness practice regularly for at least thirty days will continue on with it because they find it to be beneficial. Help them see that what at first may feel like work should soon feel like a great gift.

Following is a sampling of some mindfulness practices teens have chosen during a Teen Wellness Circle. This is simply a list to help “prime the pump,” in case they are unfamiliar with mindfulness practices. There are many more that you can easily discover on your own. Some of them may already have a practice that works for them. If so, you might want them to share it with others in your Teen Wellness Circle. This list is also found the Teen Wellness Circle participant workbook.

- Keep a gratitude journal and write in it what you are thankful for each day.
- Sit quietly in silence or while listening to music you find calming.
- Meditate on an inspirational reading or quote by repeating it slowly in time with your breath.
- Spend time in nature.
- Read a book that inspires you.
- Choose a mantra and speak it silently or out loud throughout the day.
- Practice yoga, tai chi, or other forms of spiritual movement.
- Play a musical instrument, sing, or dance, with others or alone.
- Paint, draw, or participate in any form of artistic expression.
- Write a letter to someone you love (living or someone who has passed).
- Spend time with your dog, cat, or other pet.
- Create a comfortable, relaxing place in your home.
- Participate in a community of faith.



FACILITATING



a Teen Wellness Circle



IX. Session-by-Session Guide for Facilitating Living Compass

This section contains detailed outlines for each of the six sessions of a **Teen Wellness Circle**. Feel free to adapt them timewise considering your group and works best for you in your context. Please add your own ideas and your own style. For example, you may want to add different quotes or music or other creative ways to open a session. You are also free to mix and match different openings and closings from the sessions as you think best. Just as we invite each person in a Teen Wellness Circle to live their lives from the “inside out,” we encourage facilitators to do the same.

Small or Large Groups

The ideal group size is 6-8 participants, plus one or two facilitators. We recommend you have a co-facilitator when you are starting out. For groups larger than 6–8 people, simply break into smaller groups when you see the prompt in the outline. This provides enough time for the sharing element that is so important in the Teen Compass Circle process.

Six Session Overview

- ✓ **SESSION 1: Whole-Person Wellness: How Everything is Connected.** In this session participants reflect on their whole-person wellness using the Teen Wellness Compass Inventory. Participants get instructions and homework to complete their “Map of Growth and Change” and setting a NEXT Step.
- ✓ **SESSION 2: Whatever You Pay Attention to is What Will Grow.** Participants learn about the wellness continuum and how wellness is so much more than simply not being sick or stressed. Learn how to pay more attention to the things in your life that need more of your ongoing attention, in order for you to have a healthy and balanced life.
- ✓ **SESSION 3: Change is Inevitable. Growth is Optional.** Learn how to turn change into growth. In this session participants report how their journey is going and receive support from the facilitators and the group.
- ✓ **SESSION 4: Trust the Wisdom of the “J” Curve.** Participants learn how to overcome the most common reason people are not successful in their attempts to grow and change. Participants receive continued support from the group.
- ✓ **SESSION 5: Systems and Change.** Learn how your growth impacts other people and relationships in your life. Participants receive continued support from the group.
- ✓ **SESSION 6: Where to From Here?** Participants celebrate their gains and share plans for continued growth.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* the group members, helping them to get to know each other in order to create a safe, comfortable environment.
- *To introduce* group members to the concept of whole-person wellness and how the Teen Wellness Compass is based on this concept of whole-person wellness.
- *To review*, as a group, the entirety of pages 2–7 in the participant workbook, which details the particulars of the program and the expectations of the program from participants.
- *To explain* the process of “Stop, Look, Listen and Proceed” on two levels:
 1. How we “work” the program.
 2. How we speak and listen to one another in the group.
- *To provide* time for group members to complete the Teen Wellness Inventory.
- *To give* group members a chance to share initial reactions and results from the Wellness Inventory.
- *To explain* the “Mapping Your Journey of Growth and Change” process and assign as homework for the upcoming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 1, group members will be able to:

- Define the concept of whole-person wellness.
- Understand their Wellness Inventory results are like a garden—it shows what they have been watering and what may need some extra watering right now.
- Understand how to complete the “Mapping Your Journey of Growth and Change” based on their Wellness Inventory results. **Group members will do this as part of their homework after the first session.**

Session 1: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adapting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring name tags, pens, pencils, participant workbooks, crayons or markers, clock, device for music, and sign-in sheet.

Greet each participant as they arrive and invite them to make a name tag for themselves and complete the sign-in sheet with name, address, phone number, and email address.

0–10 **Welcome.** “We’re excited to have you here.” The facilitator provides a brief introduction of him/herself. Each participant does a brief self-introduction, which includes answering the question: “Why have you chosen to take part a Teen Wellness Circle and what do you hope to gain from this experience?”

10–20 **Getting to Know Each Other.** Start with some kind of “ice-breaker” question—be creative and use what feels natural for you. Here are some examples: “What do you do for fun?” “If you could travel anywhere, where would it be and why?” “Who else lives in your home with you?” “What is a strength that you have that not many people know?” Make it fun and meaningful.

20–25 **Journaling.** Now ask participants to get out their workbook and find a blank page at the end of the book on which to write. Ask them to write for a few minutes about what comes to mind when they think of the word “wellness?” You could also include this in the Getting to Know Each Other and then ask them to share what they wrote.

25–30 **Teaching Segment.** Introduce the overall concept of the Teen Wellness Circle program. 1. It is a whole-person wellness program. 2. The four points of the Teen Wellness Compass are heart, soul, strength and mind; and the eight areas of wellness that emerge from those points are healthy relationships, handling emotions, organization, school and work, spirituality, rest and play, stress resilience, and care for the body.

Emphasize the following: A Teen Wellness Circle is based on the belief that each of us already has some ideas of what we need to do to improve our well-being. This program provides a structure that’s supportive and non-judgmental. It encourages participants to consider the resources they have in fellow participants. The Teen Wellness Compass program provides a key component that’s lacking in many teens’ lives: the opportunity to talk honestly with both other peers and a trusted adult. Teen Wellness Circles are a safe place to have authentic conversations around how we can each create a greater sense of well-being.

Go over the Overview of a Six-Week Teen Wellness Circle, found on p. XX in their workbooks.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

30–35 **Expectations for Participants.** Invite participants to refer to page 3 in their workbooks. Discuss. Ask them to keep in mind the expectations of being on time, respecting talking time, choosing to listen deeply to others (as opposed to giving advice) and completing their homework each week. Completing the homework is really the only way participants will see their progress as the weeks progress. Talk about the importance of confidentiality and the limits of confidentiality. For example, if they are being harmed or are in danger of harming themselves or others.

35–40 **Teaching Segment.** Talk about how when we discuss “whole-person wellness” we are saying that everything is connected. Ask them, for example, if a person is feeling anxiety, or having trouble sleeping, which of the area of the Compass might be causing this? What areas of the Compass would be affected by a person’s anxiety or not sleeping well? The point is to get them to see how all parts of their lives are interconnected and act upon and affect each other.

40–45 Begin the discussion of the Wellness Inventory Tool and Mapping the NEXT Steps of your Journey. **Please use your own words to explain these concepts rather than reading from the guide.**

You may want to introduce the Inventory Tool this way: “To start our journey, we need to see where we are now. So please turn to page 8 When we think of wellness, we need to keep in mind that there are several major categories for us to be aware of and to pay attention to routinely. In order to be balanced and whole, we want each category to be as strong as possible. As you look at the Compass, you will decide honestly where you think you are right now.”

“Beginning on page 26, there is a description of each area of wellness, and a series of statements relating to that area. Begin taking the inventory for each of the eight areas of wellness. On page 25, shade in the appropriate number, 0–100, in the wedge of each area as you complete each inventory. The center of the Compass is “0” and the outer rim is “100” on the scale. The inventory can be found on pages 26–41. (Some people like to use crayons to see different colors for each section.)

45–60 **Begin the Wellness Inventory.** Allow time—approximately 10 minutes for participants to complete the first few areas in the inventory beginning on page 26. Not everyone will finish this during this initial session, so have group members complete their inventory as homework. Stress the importance of doing this by the next session. Play quiet instrumental music while teens are working.

60–65 Give an initial warning when time is about up for this part of the task, and then ask participants to stop taking the assessment. This is to allow enough time to complete the rest of what you need to accomplish in this session. If participants have not finished the inventory ask them to complete it by the next session.

Break out into small groups if your group is larger than 10

65–70 **Sharing.** Give time for each person, if they desire, to share one general comment about their experience of taking the inventory—don’t get into any details about their results. What was this like for them? What did they notice?

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

70–85

Teaching segment. Explain the “Mapping the NEXT Steps of your Journey” process they can find on pages 11–14 in their workbook. Request that everyone complete this homework before the next session.

“On pages 13 and 14, we encourage you to answer each question—your homework between now and the time we meet again.”

Define NEXT Steps. “NEXT Steps are critical. If you concentrate on making them Needed, EXcited, and Time-specific, you will have a much higher chance of success. Give an example of the difference between a longer-term goal and a NEXT Step that supports movement toward that goal.”

Discuss NEXT Steps. “It’s great to have a goal, but a goal without action is not fruitful. What will you commit to do between now and the next session to help you achieve your goal? Again—BE SPECIFIC! When, What, and How will you do it? Also ask yourself, ‘Do I have the confidence, a “7+” on a scale of 0–10, that I will do this?’ If not, perhaps you should rethink your steps so you do not set yourself up for disappointment—an inch of progress is preferred over miles of steps untaken!”

85–90

Closing. “It’s time to wrap up our first session. Thanks for choosing to be here and please invest some time in YOU this week! Complete the Wellness Inventory, read or review pages 7–12, complete your homework on pages 13–14, begin right away to act on your NEXT Step, and we’ll look forward to another great session.”

Remember to send out a summary email to all participants within 48 hours with positive reinforcement for having taken the first step toward wellness. Remind them of the inventory, to complete their “Map” and NEXT Steps and remind them of the date and time when Session 2 is scheduled.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* group members additional experiences with journaling.
- *To teach* about the Illness/Wellness Continuum.
- *To provide* group members an opportunity to “personalize” the Illness/Wellness Continuum.
- To teach about the importance of “what we pay attention to is what will grow.”
- *To discuss* the importance of paying attention to one’s “inner critic.”
- *To discuss* participants’ Wellness Inventory results.
- *To discuss* participants’ “Maps” and talk about any NEXT Steps they took this past week.
- *To choose, write and share* NEXT Steps for the upcoming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 2, group members will be able to:

- Have greater comfort with each other and idea of being in a wellness circle.
- Have greater comfort with journaling.
- Understand the Illness/Wellness Continuum and how it personally applies to their own life.
- Recognize the power of the “inner critic” and how its toxicity can affect how we feel about ourselves and others.
- Have increased familiarity and facility with the “Mapping Your Journey of Growth and Change” process and each of the steps of this process.

Session 2: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adapting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring name tags and sign-in sheet.

0–10 **Welcome.** Start with an ice-breaker/ check-in. You may want to ask them how their week was—play “high/low” where they talk about a high and a low point of the week. Anything that feels easy and natural to ask and get the group “warmed up.”

10–15 **Centering Time.** Here’s one idea. Invite teens to write in the bank page in their workbook one things they are grateful for this past week. If there is time, ask that anyone who wishes to share do so.

15–35 **Teaching Segment.** Familiarize yourself with this so you can say it in your own words. Feel free to add insights from your own experience. For example, “Moving to our key topic today, please turn to page 15 in your workbook: *Whatever you Pay Attention to Is What Will Grow.*

“Our healthcare system can often be better described as an ‘illness-care’ system. Most people seek help at the point of noticing symptoms and disability. This can include pain, disease, degeneration, mental and emotional decline, etc. We go to medical providers to get ‘fixed’ or ‘cured’ and often we don’t think about our health or wellness until something goes wrong.

“You are being proactive by participating in a **Teen Compass Wellness Circle**—paying attention on the front end. Being aware of what is going well and trying to expand that is helpful. Focusing on problems is not so helpful. Have you ever heard the phrase, ‘What you resist persists?’

“Be gentle in your self-talk. We listen to messages, including those from ourselves, over and over—let’s make sure those messages are positive, life-giving ones.

“When you focus on the positive—on possibilities, potential and opportunities—those are the things that will grow in your life. This doesn’t mean all problems will magically vanish, but your new way of looking at the world can allow you to view issues in a calmer, more centered way and consider fresh options. You are better able to make good choices that keep you moving toward your next goal, your next step.

“There is a Native American Tale that beautifully illustrates today’s topic.”

Ask a volunteer to read the *Cherokee Tale of Two Wolves*. If times allows, discuss how this tale applies to their own lives.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

15–35
(*cont'd*)

Cherokee Tale of Two Wolves

One evening an old Cherokee Indian told his grandson about a battle that goes on inside people. He said, “My son, the battle is between two ‘wolves’ inside us all. One is Evil. It is anger, envy, jealousy, sorrow, regret, greed, arrogance, self-pity, guilt, resentment, inferiority, lies, false pride, superiority, and ego.

The other is good. It is joy, peace, love, hope, serenity, humility, kindness, benevolence, empathy, generosity, truth, compassion and faith.”

The grandson thought about it for a minute and then asked his grandfather: “Which wolf wins?”

The old Cherokee simply replied, “The one you feed.”

Break out into small groups if your group is larger than 10

35–75

Sharing. “Now it’s time to share our NEXT Steps.”

Encourage each member to share the areas they feel good about and the areas that they feel need more of their attention. Have them share their NEXT Steps, including their mindfulness practice, wisdom quote, the area of wellness they will be focusing on for the upcoming weeks, and their NEXT Steps from the past week.

During their turn, invite each member to take a few minutes to reflect on NEXT Steps for the upcoming week and write them down in their workbook. Volunteers can share them out loud with the group.

75–85

Journaling. Ask them to take a few minutes to write somewhere in their workbooks their thoughts about the *Cherokee Tale of Two Wolves* and the idea of “Whatever we pay attention to is what will grow.”

85–90

Closing. “It’s time to wrap up our second session. Thanks for choosing to be here and please invest some time in YOU this week! For the next session, read or review page 15, complete your homework on page 16, and continue to act on your NEXT Step. We’ll look forward to another great session.”

Remember to send out an email to all participants within the next 48 hours as a follow up to Session 2 to summarize this session, encourage them with their NEXT Steps, and remind them of their homework and when Session 3 is scheduled.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* group members additional experiences with journaling.
- *To teach* about why growth is hard, using the concepts of the Comfort Zone, Growth Zone, and Panic Zone.
- *To give* group members the chance to discuss different activities and experiences, and in which “zone” each of these activities and experiences would place them.
- *To understand* that these “zones” exist for individuals, relationships/families, and organizations (i.e. schools, clubs, teams, etc.).
- *To give* group members an opportunity to identify the prevailing “zone” in their life experience “right now.”
- *To understand* the difference between intentionally moving out of the Comfort Zone vs. being forced or thrown out of the Comfort Zone unexpectedly.
- *To learn* what a person needs generally (and what each group member needs individually) to move out of the Comfort Zone or out of the Panic Zone.
- *To understand* the difference between change (always happening) and growth (an intentional choice).
- *To check in* regarding how the past week went in terms of NEXT Steps.
- *To choose, write and share* NEXT Steps for the coming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 3, group members will be able to:

- Have greater comfort with self-reflection and journaling.
- Understand the concepts of the Comfort Zone, the Growth Zone, and the Panic Zone, and how each individual has unique comfort, growth, and panic zones.
- Recognize when they are in which “Zone” and know how to move from one to another.
- Understand that while change is inevitable, growth is optional.
- Have increased familiarity and comfort with the “Mapping Your Journey of Growth and Change” process and each of its steps.

Session 3: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adapting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring quiet music (if desired) for journaling time, name tags, and sign-in sheet.

0–5 **Welcome.** Ask participants how their week was and ask any kind of ice-breaker question that seems natural for you and your group.

5–10 **Reflection:** Write the quote “Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.” so all can see it. Ask them to share reactions to this quote.

10–15 **Journaling.** Give them a few moments to reflect and write about the quote in their workbooks.

15–20 **Sharing.** Invitation to share anything they wrote or additional thoughts about the quote.

20–35 **Teaching Segment.** Familiarize yourself with this so you can say it in your own words. Feel free to add insights from your own experience.

Refer teens to the graphic on page 17. “Over time, every individual, relationship, family and group has a set of patterns and habits that become normal for them. These patterns and habits become comfortable and familiar. This ‘Comfort Zone’ (CZ) is like a set of unwritten rules about how things should be/how things are done ‘around here.’ These habits determine what we think we can/cannot do—and sometimes these habits become so ingrained that we are seemingly unable to try anything different.

“Moving out of the CZ and into the Growth Zone (GZ) takes courage. In order to grow and change we must risk moving outside of our CZ. We must be discontent with our current Comfort Zone—it needs to be more important to risk the change of the new than the risk of staying in the old.

“People move into the GZ in two ways, either proactively, or out of necessity because of a change in life circumstances. Signing up for a challenging class, trying a new extracurricular activity, making a new friend, or trying a new hobby, are just a few examples.

“All change is initially uncomfortable—if our brain decides the change is manageable, we work on how to move forward with the change, process the change, organize it, and advance with it.

“If we perceive the changes to be too much, too fast, we may move ourselves into the Panic Zone. If we rigidly defend our CZ, refusing to be proactive about growth, we will often find ourselves thrown from the CZ into the PZ, sooner or later.”

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

20–35
(*cont'd*)

Take a minute and identify some examples of the things that fall into the CZ, GZ or PZ for group members. Read the following list of activities and invite people to share (by show of hands perhaps) what zone each activity would represent to them. *Calling someone to apologize? Tent camping overnight in the Rockies? Having a difficult but needed conversation with a friend or family member? Standing near the edge of the Grand Canyon? Joining a club by yourself? Giving a presentation to 100 people? Moving to a new state? A new country? Abandoning a long-held routine? Turning off your TV for a month? Changing schools?* Invite people to share why an example falls into one zone and not another.

“Different events or situations trigger comfort or panic in each of us. But one thing is true for all of us—those who intentionally stretch themselves into the GZ on a regular basis not only minimize their chances of going into the PZ, but they also expand their CZ, giving them greater flexibility and freedom to take advantage of opportunities and to enjoy life.

“Expanding your CZ benefits you by stimulating your brain activity to provide better mental health, increases your self-confidence, makes you more resilient, and helps prevent you from getting stuck in a rut. It really challenges you to improve yourself.”

35–45

Sharing. Invite the group members to share how the “Zone” concept has been evident in their lives in the past and/or how it is evident right now.

Invite participants to share if or when they have been forced or thrown out of the Comfort Zone. How did they cope with that? What did they learn from the experience?

Break out into small groups if your group is larger than 10

45–80

Sharing. Each participant reports on how the past week went for them—how did their NEXT Steps go? Do they want keep focusing on the same area of the Compass? What is their NEXT Step for this coming week?

80–85

Journaling. Ask them to pause and reflect and then write in their workbooks. “What will you take away from this session and especially the discussion about the Comfort Zone, Growth Zone, and Panic Zone?”

85–90

Closing. Celebrate with them that they are halfway through the Teen Wellness Circle program. Tell them the page (page 18) in their workbooks that they should complete before Session 4.

Remember to send a follow-up email within 48 hours to summarize Session 3 and encourage them to keep working on their NEXT Steps.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* group members additional experiences with self-reflection and journaling.
- *To teach* the J Curve concept.
- *To understand* that J Curves exist for individuals, relationships/families and groups.
- *To help* group members recognize and share J Curves they have already passed through as well as those J Curves they may be experiencing presently.
- *To understand* the difference between intentionally moving into a J Curve vs. being forced into J Curve against our will.
- *To learn* what a person needs in general, and what each participant may need specifically when they are in the midst of a J Curve.
- *To check in* regarding how the past week went in terms of NEXT Steps.
- *To choose, write and share* NEXT Steps for the upcoming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 4, group members will be able to:

- Have greater comfort with self-reflection and journaling.
- Understand the concept of the J Curve.
- Understand that individuals, relationships/families and groups all go through J Curves.
- Recognize when they are in a J Curve and how the choices they make can either help them move through it or cause them to remain “stuck.”
- Have increased familiarity and comfort with the “Mapping Your Journey of Growth and Change” process and each of its steps.

Session 4: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adapting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring name tags, quiet centering music (if desired), and sign-in sheet.

0–5 **Welcome.** Ask a general ice-breaker/check in question—whatever feels natural.

5–10 **Centering Time.** Ask if anyone had more time to think about the three “Zones” we talked about last week and if anyone has an example of when they were in one of the zones this past week.

10–15 **Journaling.** Ask participants to pause and think about, and then write in their workbooks if they would like about the biggest, most significant change they have faced in their life thus far. It could be a move, a health problem for themselves or another, a personal loss, a change in their family, etc.

15–20 **Sharing.** Invite participants to share anything that came up for them in the journaling time.

20–35 **Teaching Segment.** Familiarize yourself with this so you can say it in your own words. Feel free to add insights from your own experience. You might want to reference a J Curve that relates to your own life or your community.

“In our workbook on page 19, we see that when we risk making a change, we often have two very different experiences. One, the experience that we are open to growth, new possibilities, and new learning and two, the experience that this new territory can leave us feeling unstable or unsure.

“On the graph, as our openness to experiences and change increases, stability decreases. So initially, as we begin changes in our path to growth, it’s totally normal to feel unsettled, unsure and a little shaky about the whole thing. Notice on the graph, though, if we keep moving through the experience with openness, stability gradually improves, and continues to improve more and more as we become more open to additional growth experiences.

“A key factor in the successful navigation of a J Curve is asking for support from those around you while you’re in the initial phases of instability and uncertainty.

“Consider this example: A toddler just learning to walk. Everyone around her expects her to fall down because she’s trying something totally new. Everyone knows she’ll need lots of attempts—that she will learn as she keeps trying. Everyone cheers her on even in at the tiniest of steps. The toddler never seems to mind that she doesn’t just start walking. She tries and falls. Tries and falls. Every day. Until she gets more stable on her feet, finds her footing, gets her strength and rhythm and then ... she takes off and never looks back ... on to her next adventure!

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

20–35
(*cont'd*) “Most people understand the J Curve when they experience a loss or a negative situation. It’s more difficult to understand how the concept also applies when we experience a positive change—choosing to transfer to a new school, joining a new team, club or activity, joining a new friend group, starting a new dating relationship, etc. Can you think of positive experiences in your life, which resulted in your passage through a J Curve?”

35–45 **Sharing.** Invite group members to share J Curves they have been through in the past and/or any J Curves they are in right now. Remember: J Curves are both normal and natural.

Break out into small groups if your group is larger than 10

45–70 **Sharing.** Each participant reports on how the past week went for them—including their NEXT Steps.

70–80 **Sharing.** Each participant now takes a few minutes to reflect on NEXT Steps for the upcoming week, writes them in their workbook, and shares them out loud with the group.

80–85 **Journaling.** Ask them to reflect, either out loud and/or by writing in their workbooks who one or two ideas they will take away from this session.

85–90 **Closing.** “It’s time to wrap up our fourth session. Thanks for choosing to be here and please invest some time in YOU this week! For the next session, read or review Session 4 and complete the homework on page 20 and continue to act on your NEXT Steps.”

Remember to send a follow-up email within 48 hours to summarize Session 4 and encourage them to keep working on their NEXT Steps.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* participants additional experiences with self-reflection and journaling.
- *To introduce* participants to the concepts of “systems and change.”
- *To teach* the concept of “Forming, Storming, Norming and Performing” (F, S, N, & P) and how this concept illustrates what happens in a system when there is growth or change in even one member.
- *To assist* group members in recognizing that when one person in a system changes, others in the system may not support the change, or even block or sabotage the change. All of this can happen without people being aware of it.
- *To teach* about the very common phenomenon of “false norming”—in which an individual, relationship or group is in denial about change and tries to pretend that everything is still the same.
- *To show* the process of “F, S, N, & P” is natural and normal and inevitable in every system.
- *To check in* regarding how the past week went in terms of NEXT Steps.
- *To choose, write and share* NEXT Steps for the upcoming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 5, group members will be able to:

Have a greater comfort with NEXT Steps and journaling.

- Understand the concept of “systems and change.”
- Understand the concept of “Forming, Storming, Norming, and Performing.”
- Understand that individuals, relationships/families and organizations all go through the “F, S, N, & P” process.
- Recognize when they are in the midst of systemic change, whether the change is generated by themselves or someone else.
- Have increased familiarity and comfort with the “Mapping Your Journey of Growth and Change” process and each of its steps.

Session 5: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adjusting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring a picture of a mobile—the kind that hangs from the ceiling—or better yet, if possible, bring in a mobile. Also bring name tags, quiet centering music (if desired), and sign-in sheets.

0–5 **Welcome.** Start with a check-in/ice-breaker question. This could be as simple as how their week was, or something that feels easy and natural for you and your group.

5–10 **Centering Time.** Explain, “In this session we will be talking about how we are all interconnected and that changes in ourselves or in people around us will have a ripple effect.” Ask them to think about a time when some change happened to someone in their lives that affected them. Examples could be a new teacher, coach, principal, or change in their family (a grandparent died, a divorce in the family, or a new person coming into their family and had an effect on them (positive or negative).

10–15 **Journaling.** Ask them to write in their workbook about this change and how it affected them.

15–20 **Sharing.** Invite them to share what they thought or wrote about.

20–30 **Teaching Segment.** “Systems and Change.” Refer participants to the graphic on page 21. Familiarize yourself with this so you can say it in your own words. Feel free to add insights from your own experience.

“Any group who interacts regularly constitutes a system—families, friend groups, teams, clubs, etc. Systems like balance. When one person in a system changes, it creates a ‘storm,’ and the system looks to rebalance itself. When worked out well, this leads to a new ‘norm,’ which allows the system to ‘perform’ again. ‘False norming’ is when a system denies that an upset has occurred and tries to pretend everything is still the same.”

Show a picture of a mobile—or if you have one to actually bring, better yet. Show how if one piece of the mobile begins to move around, it soon affects all the other pieces or the mobile and creates a disturbance for those pieces. A mobile is a great example of a “system” where the parts are separate yet all connected.

Example: Four friends are a close friend group. One person in the group wants to invite a fifth person into their friend group—someone the others are not sure about. A “storm” is sure to happen within the original friend group and will have to be worked out if a new “norm” is going to be achieved.

Example: Someone in the family is diagnosed with a serious illness. The old “normal” is gone and there will be considerable “storming” and adjusting before a new “normal” can be reached.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

20–30
(*cont'd*) Example: A teen is part of a friend group that has been getting high. The teen decides he/she no longer wants to do this and is wondering if he/she can still be friends with this group.

“Sometimes the systems we live and work in might resist our attempts at growth and change. If they do, it’s often not even conscious. When one person in a system grows and changes, then the old ‘normal’ of the system will be impacted and others in the system may have to change as well.

“The forming, storming, norming and performing process can be challenging, draining and complicated, but it is an inevitable part of change and is to be expected.”

30–50 **Application.** Invite participants to share “F, S, N, & P” cycles they have been through in their own lives. When has a change in someone they are connected to created a “storm” for them? When has a change they have made created a “storm” for others? A good discussion can be had by asking them if they know people who seem to always be in the midst of some kind of “storm” or another, people who seem to crave “drama” in their lives? What do they think of that? Ask them to think of other systems that are made up of separate smaller parts, like an orchestra, a sports team, club, a theater production group, etc.

Break out into small groups if your group is larger than 10

50–80 **Sharing.** Each participant shares/reports on how the past week went for them, including their NEXT Steps Each member now takes a few minutes to reflect on NEXT Steps for the upcoming week, writes them down in their workbook, and shares them out loud with the group.

80–85 **Journaling.** Ask participants to write in their workbooks one or two things they will take away from today’s conversation.

85–90 **Closing.** Thank them for being there, ask them to complete their homework on page 22, and remind that there is one session left in the six-week program.

Remember to send an email for Session 5 to all group members within 48 hours to summarize the session, to encourage them with their NEXT Steps on page 22, and to remind them of the next meeting date.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* participants additional experiences with self-reflection and journaling.
- *To celebrate* the work that group members have done during their time together.
- *To reinforce* the idea that whole-person wellness is a journey, a process, and not a destination.
- *To reinforce* what participants have learned about the process of “Stop, Look, Listen, and Proceed” being as important as the specific changes they have made.
- *To encourage* group members to keep the process going that they have started—whether informally, with a group of people in their lives, or by enrolling in another Teen Wellness Circle.
- *To check in* regarding how the past week went in terms of NEXT Steps.
- *To facilitate* a closing time that honors and celebrates the work that group members have done.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 6, group members will be able to:

- Have increased comfort with self-reflection and journaling.
- Understand the concept that “Whole-Person Wellness” is a process, not a destination, and something they can work on every day.
- Understand the need to continue the process of growth and change on an ongoing basis (which could include participation in another Teen Wellness Circle).
- Have increased familiarity and comfort with the “Mapping Your Journey of Growth and Change” process and each of its steps.
- Experience the importance of celebrations to honor our growth and the connections that have been shared with one another.

Session 6: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adjusting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring quiet music for centering and writing time for when they write down their closing reflections.

0–5 **Welcome.** “Share something that is bringing you great joy in your life right now.”

5–10 **Centering Time.** Be creative with a question or discussion prompt that feel natural for you. One idea is to ask if anyone has seen a movie lately that has something important, positive or negative, to say about wellness or any of the things they have learned in this program.

10–15 **Journaling.** Invite them to write down thoughts/reflections on where in the culture they see positive messages about wholeness and wellness. Are there people they can think of who model wellness? What TV shows, music, movies, etc., or other things from the culture provide healthy teachings about wellness? Remember: what we pay attention to will grow.

15–20 **Sharing.** Invitation to share anything from the centering/journaling time.

20–30 **Teaching Segment.** Again, familiarize yourself with this so that you can say it in your own words.

Discuss the concept of whole-person wellness as a journey, “a process more than a destination.”

Discuss ideas for group members to keep the process going, and how to continue to build upon the good work they have done in this program.

Talk about how/if participants in this group would like to stay in touch with each other.

Discuss whether or not it would be beneficial to do another Teen Wellness Circle for their community at some point in the future.

Ask if they themselves would participate in another Wellness Circle when offered.

30–60 **Sharing.** Each participant shares about how the past week went for them, including their NEXT Steps, and shares what they plan to continue to focus on going forward as the group ends.

60–70 **Journaling.** Each group member completes the “closing reflection” in their workbook for Session 6, found on page 24 and play music.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

70–90

Closing. Invite each person to read out loud their closing reflection. As each person shares her/his closing reflection, members of the group are invited to share a positive affirmation about that person and their experience of the person in the group.

Thank them for being a part of the program and tell them how much you admire their commitment to honest conversation and wellness.



We would like to thank YOU for giving your time and energy to facilitate a Teen Wellness Circle. These circles can only happen with committed people like you who care enough about teens to give of yourself in this way.

If you would like, please email and let us know how your Teen Wellness Circle went. We love to hear stories of how this program is being used. You can email Holly at holly@samaritanfamilywellness.org, or Scott at scott@samaritanfamilywellness.org.

About the Authors

Scott and Holly Stoner are the Co-Executive Directors of the Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They are both Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs) with a combined sixty-five+ years of experience helping parents and families. They are the creators of both the *Parent Wellness Compass* and *The Teen Compass*.

Holly has worked with many families and children as a teacher at both the grade-school and high-school levels. Scott, too, has worked with many families and children when he served as a pastor of an Episcopal church.

Married for more than 40 years, they have three adult children and two grandchildren. For both, personally and professionally, family has always been what is most important in life.

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