



YELLOW ZONE

a place where you can flourish

creating a Yellow Zone in
schools (**6th - 12th grade**)

Acknowledgement

The Yellow Zone resiliency initiative was developed by Brittany Pfannenstien & Danielle Protivinsky, Stearns County Health and Human Services Public Health Coordinators. Dani and Brittany have developed the Yellow Zone Initiative by compiling evidence-based research and practical resources to be used in the Stearns County community. The Yellow Zone initiative is a continuation of community ACE's initiatives. With influence from Dr. Corey Keyes, and other organizations; Yellow Zone can support the community as a whole to enhance flourishing.

The research used in creating the Yellow Zone Initiative was supported by the wealth of positive psychology research conducted by Dr. Corey Keyes. We would like to show our gratitude to Dr. Corey Keyes for sharing his pearls of wisdom with us during the course of developing this toolkit.

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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Stearns County

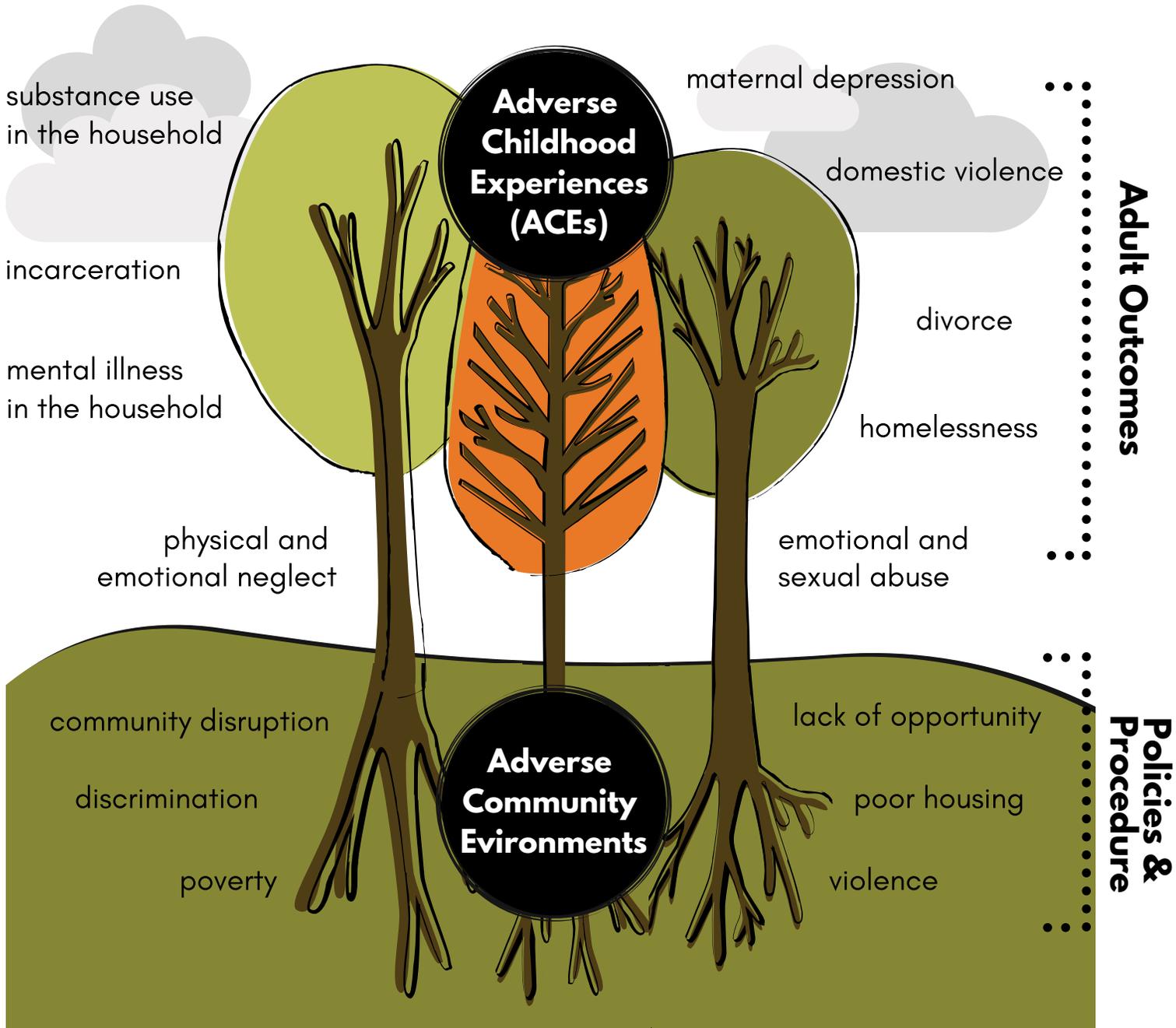
Everyone deserves opportunity for Mental Health and Well-Being.

- Brains are built through experience. The interaction between our biology and experiences shapes the chemicals and structures of our brains, particularly during early childhood and adolescence.
- Fear, trauma, and chronic stress negatively impacts Mental Health and Well-Being. While we all experience stress and hard times, the cumulative impact of chronic or intense stress is real. It gets built into our bodies and is passed on to the next generation.
- Where we live, learn, work, and play impacts our Mental Health and Well-Being. This includes structures and environments that are safe, nurturing, inviting, toxin free, and facilitate relationships, community and culture.
- Resilience is not enough in the face of oppression. Oppression is bad for our Mental Health and Well-Being. Intentional systemic changes to end oppression are essential to help individuals, families and communities thrive.
- Physical health & Mental Health and Well-Being are intertwined. When we experience physical illness, injury or pain it has a negative impact on our Mental Health and Well-being.

Everyone and every system has a role and responsibility in ensuring our collective Mental Health and Well-Being. We all benefit when public and private organizations work together.

- Mental Health and Well-Being happens in and through community. We can spread and protect Mental Health and Well-Being by building positive relationships, social connections and drawing on community and cultural assets.
- Mental Health and Well-Being requires a sense of purpose and power. To truly experience Mental Health and Well-Being we need to feel that we have the power to shape our world and change our lives and conditions for the better. For many, historical trauma is a reality that takes away our sense of purpose and power and continues to be part of our lived experience and reality.
- Positive relationships are central to Mental Health and Well-Being. Relationships provide meaning and facilitate skill development and feelings of belonging. Lack of positive relationships and isolation are detrimental. Positive relationships are not automatic; families and communities need information, resources, and other supports to help cultivate and sustain them.
- Culture shapes our definitions and understanding of Mental Health and Well-Being. It is OK and healthy for individuals and communities to have different perspectives on what it means to be well and how to achieve well-being. Culture is a source of healing, connection and strength.
- Everyone needs opportunity to learn and practice skills to manage life and engage in the world. Skills to manage stress, find balance and focus, and engage socially, are critical components that should be cultivated throughout the lifespan in both formal and informal settings. Skills and experiences that help people feel valuable and engage in their family, community and economy are also critical.

THE PAIR OF ACES



The **Building Community Resilience Pair of ACEs Tree** illustrates the relationship between adversity within an individual and adversity within the community. The **leaves** on the tree represent the “symptoms” of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). ACEs can increase a person’s risk for chronic stress and adverse coping mechanisms, and result in lifelong chronic illness such as depression, heart disease, obesity and substance use. The tree is planted in **poor soil** that is steeped in systemic inequities, robbing it of nutrients necessary to support a thriving community. Adverse Community Environments create a negative cycle of ever worsening soil that results in withering leaves on the trees. ACEs are a national public health concern that demonstrates the need for policy, practice and programs to support and build resilience.

Learn more at www.go.gwu.edu/BCRvideos

BUILDING A FLOURISHING COMMUNITY

in central minnesota

% of adults that as children...

lived with an adult with mental illness
17% **17%** **19%**
 National MN Stearns

experienced physical abuse from a parent or other adult
18% **16%** **15%**
 National MN Stearns

witnessed domestic violence
18% **14%** **15%**
 National MN Stearns

Children in Out of Home Placement per 1,000 kids ages 0-17
11.4 **11.8**
 MN Stearns

Households with income less than poverty level
13% **10%**
 MN Stearns

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

% of 8th grade students who have experienced...

a parent or adult on the household that hit, beat, kicked or physically hurt them in any way
12% **12%**
 MN Stearns

a parent or adult on the household that regularly swears, insults or puts them down
14% **12%**
 MN Stearns

Students who report being connected to a caring adult
60% **62%**
 MN Stearns

Serious crimes committed per 100,000 residents
2,363 **3,108**
 MN Stearns

Adverse Community Environments

% of adults that as children experienced Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

38% **37%**
 National Stearns

62% of Stearns County adults that as children experienced 2 or more ACEs living at less than or equal to 200% of poverty level

Sources: Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS), 2016 Stearns County Community Health Survey, MDH Out-of-Home Care and Permanency Report, Minnesota Compass, 2016 Minnesota Student Survey

The Science of Flourishing

Mental health is the psychological, emotional, and social aspects that affect our well-being whereas mental illness is a condition where the psychological, emotional, and social aspects of our life affect our well-being to the point where day to day life is difficult such as depression and anxiety.

Dr. Corey Keyes created the dual Mental Health Continuum acknowledging that mental health and mental illness are interrelated, but have distinct dimensions. One continua portrays the presence or absence of mental illness whereas the other continua portrays the presence or absence of mental health.

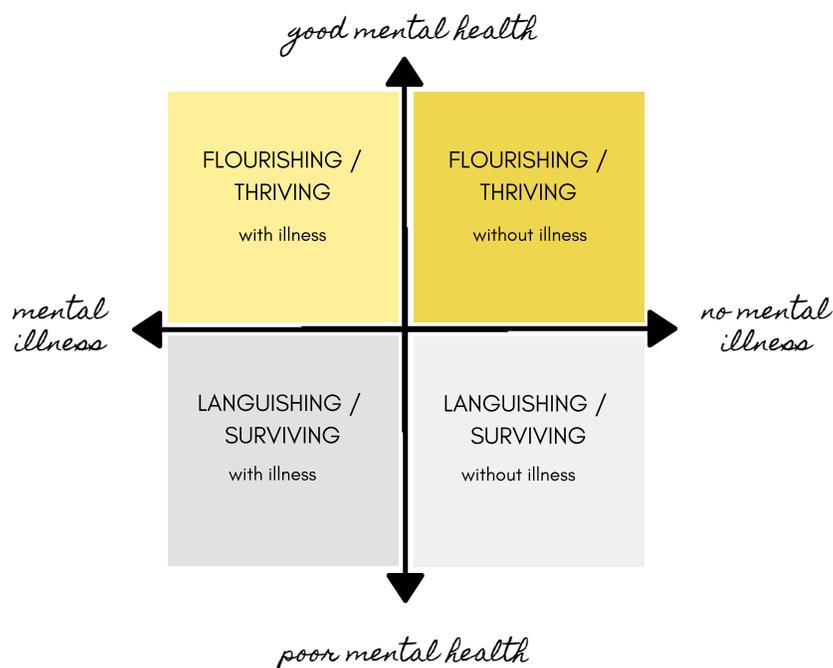
Keyes denotes that an individual is “flourishing” when they are not merely free of mental illness, but rather filled with high levels of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being.

According to Keyes, only 17% of individuals are truly flourishing.

Dr. Keyes’ research consistently demonstrates that individuals who are diagnosed as languishing, either with or without mental illness, are functioning worse in terms of physical disease, healthcare utilization, work productivity, and psychosocial functioning (Keyes 2002, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007). This demonstrates the importance of helping people find pathways from a state of low mental health (languishing) to high mental health (flourishing).

Flourishing individuals are truly living rather than merely existing.

The Mental Health Continuum



Introduction to the Yellow Zone

The Yellow Zone is an initiative created by Stearns County Public Health to help schools, businesses, and the community establish an environment that supports the positive well-being of healthy, productive and flourishing individuals.

A Yellow Zone is a place that cultivates well-being through five basic pillars: Helping, Socializing, Learning, Playing, and Spirituality. All five of these pillars are components that nurture the psychological, emotional, and social aspects of mental health.

Stearns County Human Services is dedicated to supporting the mental health and well-being of Stearns County residents through this Public Health initiative.

A Guide to Creating a Yellow Zone

The Yellow Zone Guide is a free resource created by Stearns County Human Services. This Public Health initiative is aimed at improving mental well-being among the community. Through collaboration with local schools and community partners the Yellow Zone initiative:

- Addresses the difference between mental health and mental well-being
- Provides easy to use information, strategies and promotional resources to cultivate an environment of flourishing

How to Use this Guide

The Yellow Zone School Guide was created to empower and promote flourishing among students, staff, and their families. You can create a Yellow Zone in your school by simply utilizing the strategies and promotional materials created by Stearns County Public Health that are provided through out this guide. It can be utilized in the classroom, by teachers, after-school programs and student community partnerships.

Review the 5 pillars and identify areas of languishing that could be targeted with the provided resources and get started today! By working together, we can overcome the barriers that lead to languishing to build an environment of flourishing through cognitive growth and learning.

Draft Yellow Zone Resolution for School District

WHEREAS, the _____ School Board believes all students and faculty deserves the opportunity for Mental Health and Well-being; and,

WHEREAS, the mission of _____ School District is to _____; and,

WHEREAS, Yellow Zone is an environment that cultivates well-being through 5 pillars, which nurture the psychological, emotional, and social aspects of mental health. As a result, a Yellow Zone will promote flourishing among students and faculty in our district; and,

WHEREAS, to flourish means to live within an optimal range of human functioning, one that has high levels of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being according to Dr. Corey Keyes; and,

WHEREAS, Stearns County Human Services, the Public Health Division has developed this well-being initiative and provides free resources to meet the needs of our community, including schools, at all stages of life; and,

WHEREAS, through the Yellow Zone initiative; _____ will partner with other organizations and the community to encourage efforts to support flourishing, will designate Yellow Zone spaces to support well-being and flourishing among all age groups, request community partner feedback in the creation of Yellow Zone to best meet the needs of _____, call for champions within our community that put Yellow Zone into everyday practice, stress the importance of continued need for education, information, and resources to help the _____ community flourish and request the support from partners in preventive actions to support overall well-being and flourishing.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the _____ School Board designates _____ School District as a Yellow Zone with all the appropriate programs, services and activities and call upon the people of _____ community to support through Yellow Zone our families, friends, neighbors, co-workers and leaders so they can flourish in the community.

Passed by unanimous vote of the _____ School Board this _____ day of _____, 2019

Board Chair Name
Chair
School District
Signed this _____ day of _____, 2019



YELLOW ZONE

Less than
20 percent
of the US population
is flourishing. ¹

3 : 1

the ratio of positive to
negative emotions that
serve as a tipping point
for whether people live
a flourishing life. ²

40 percent

of a person's
happiness is
attributed to their
thoughts, plans and
behaviors. ³

A Place Where You Can Flourish.

Created by Stearns County Public Health

To *flourish* means to live within an optimal range of human functioning, one that has high levels of emotional well-being, psychological well-being, and social well-being, according to Dr. Corey Keyes.

Individuals with less than flourishing mental health report more physical ailments and chronic disease, miss more days of work, use more health care (more prescriptions, more hospitalizations, more visits for physical, mental, emotional reasons), are more likely to die prematurely, and are more likely to develop mental illness.

5 Yellow Zone Pillars

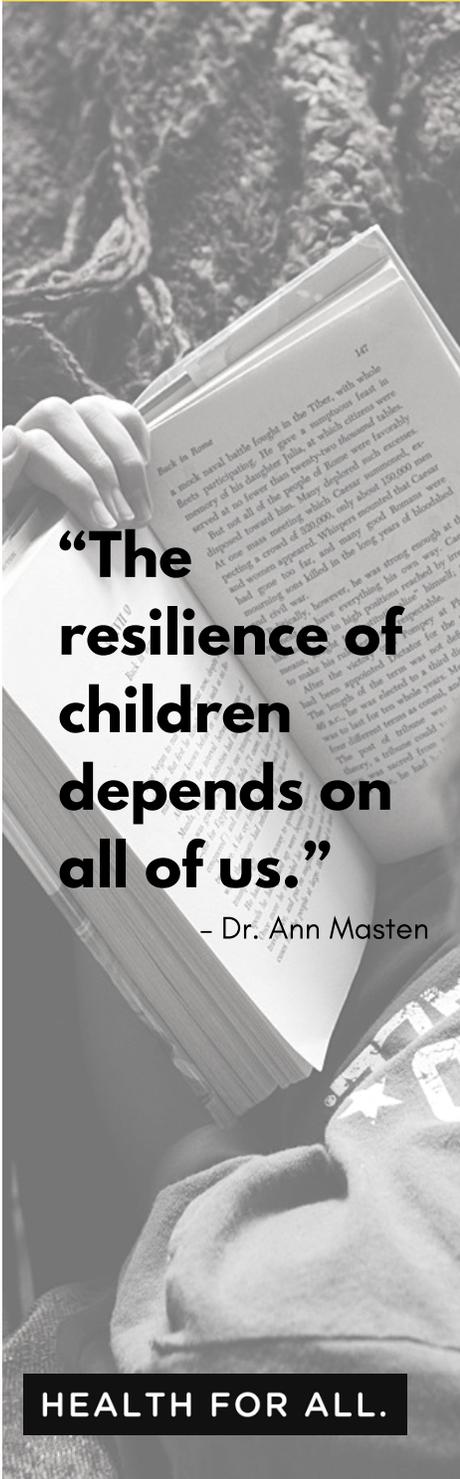
Help - Socialize - Learn - Play - Spiritual

A Yellow Zone is an environment that cultivates well-being through 5 pillars, which nurture the psychological, emotional, and social aspects of mental health. As a result, a Yellow Zone will promote flourishing among individuals.

You can create a Yellow Zone by utilizing the tools and resources provided through out the Yellow Zone Toolkit.

YELLOW ZONE

in schools



“The resilience of children depends on all of us.”

– Dr. Ann Masten

HEALTH FOR ALL.

Empowering teachers in the classroom to help promote flourishing among students.

Science tells us that interventions that strengthen the capacity of families and communities to protect young children from the disruptive effects of toxic stress are likely to promote healthier brain development and enhanced physical and mental well-being.

– American Academy of Pediatrics

The introduction of positive psychology into the classroom has huge potential to change the trajectories of the lives of many of these young people by moving beyond repair to also inspire growth. Research by Corey Keyes shows us that healing and growth can be simultaneous processes. We don't always need to wait until something is fixed before we work on building our strengths.

instead of

what is wrong with this student?

ask yourself

what happened to this student?

what does this student need to reach their potential?

These approaches nurture students' stamina and persistence, allowing them to better deal with frustration, which benefits their social behavior in class and their capacity to take on greater academic challenges.



YELLOW ZONE

Kind people have
23 percent
less cortisol (the
stress hormone)
and age slower
than the average
population! ²

Of people who
volunteer -
94 percent
say it improves
their mood.

96 percent
says it enriches
their sense of
purpose in life.

78 percent
say it reduces stress. ³

HEALTH FOR ALL.

A Place Where You Can Flourish.

help

The most powerful and simple way to increase your well-being daily is to do 1 deliberate act of kindness for someone else. Research has proven that helping others is actually a core need for overall well-being. Doing an act of kindness decreases stress, improves happiness, lowers blood pressure, release "feel good" hormones and even inspire others! The key to is to do something that pulls you out of your normal routine, something extra, special, and remarkable to improve the happiness of someone else. In fact, kindness is contagious! Kindness can improve the happiness of the giver, receiver and any observers. This is why it is common to see people "pay it forward."

Holding a handshake or a hug for at least 6 seconds releases oxytocin, the neurochemical that helps us feels connected and loved.

And did you also know that kindness is teachable? "It's kind of like weight training, we found that people can actually build up their compassion 'muscle' and respond to others' suffering with care and a desire to help." - Dr. Ritchie Davidson , University of Wisconsin

RANDOM ACTS OF KINDNESS

Random Acts of Kindness (RAOK) can be a very simple, yet effective way to brighten another person's day. When teaching students about RAOK, ensure you provide a clear understanding of what kindness looks like throughout the building. You may teach them the term "bucket filling," which refers to a system that encourages students to fill up each other's invisible buckets by doing RAOK.

"Be kind whenever possible. It is always possible." – Dalai Lama

Examples: RAOK in the Building

Independent Acknowledgment

Have students write down a RAOK someone did for them recently and how it made them feel. Collect them and read them aloud to help children understand how kindness makes others feel.

Write Thank You or Complimentary Notes for Another Person

Has a friend helped you recently? Did someone bring in birthday treats? Write down your appreciation and give it to them!

Create an RAOK Acknowledgement Jar

Setup a jar with strips of paper and a pen next to it for people to acknowledge someone else's work. Read the acknowledgements aloud at the beginning of the week to acknowledge students and inspire them to pass it on.

Make a RAOK Bulletin Board

Provide post it notes for individuals to display the RAOK they are doing for others to inspire and motivate others to do the same.

Celebrate National Kindness Day on February 17th

Free Posters, RAOK Lesson Plans, videos and ideas for each grade can be found at:
www.RandomActsofKindness.org

Pass It On! Recognize kindness around you and be kind to others.

RAOK

Lead by Example!

Smile.

Write a nice quote to display.
Give someone a compliment.
Leave a random positive note.

Say hello to a new face.
Send an encouraging email.

Enjoy lunch with someone.
Write down your favorite quality about someone and give it to them.

Bring in treats for your class.
Offer your help outside of the norm when time permits.

Let go of any grudges and forgive mistakes.

Leave change in the vending machine.

Leave a used book.

Be kind to yourself.

VOLUNTEER WORK

Donation Drives

Divide the class into teams and hold a monthly contest to see which team can donate the most to a charity, shelter, food shelf or Goodwill.

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YELLOW ZONE

To offset our negative bias, which we all have as a survival mechanism, we must experience

3 good

things for every

1 negative

experience

for our mood to

“break even.”

To cultivate greater positive emotion, we must have a

6 : 1 ration

ration for every bad experience, we must have

6 positive
positive experiences.³

HEALTH FOR ALL.

A Place Where You Can Flourish.

socialize

Express gratitude each and every day. Research has proven that socializing is actually a core need for overall well-being. Establishing social connections, listening skills, and participating in activities like gratitude; we can build our resiliency and flourish.

Gratitude is associated with optimism and has been determined that grateful people are happier, receive more social support, are less stressed, and are less depressed. Research shows people who have a high level of gratitude have strengthened cardiac and immune¹ systems, decreased stress, anxiety, depression and headaches, higher levels of happiness, improved emotional intelligence and increased self esteem.

For 1-2 weeks before bed, write down 3 good things that happened to you that day and what your role was in them. It gives you a mental health boost for 6-12 months!²

People who have one or more close friendships are happier. Take time out of your day to build social connections. During these conversations, focus on being present and truly listen.

Source [1] www.articles.mercola.com/sites/articles/archive/2017/08/10/gratitude-health-benefits.aspx [2] Seligman, Steen, Park & Peterson, 2005 [3] www.pursuit-of-happiness.org/history-of-happiness/barb-fredrickson/

AN ATTITUDE OF GRATITUDE

Research shows only about 10 percent of our happiness depends on our situation, which means that WE are responsible for our own happiness! One major component to one's happiness is resilience and the ability to manage stress. Resilience is a learned skill and the more it is practiced, the better we become at it. One way to build one's resilience is to express gratitude often. We can do this by practicing being content and focusing on what we have, not on what we don't. Gratitude is contagious. Expressing it regularly will build a positive culture throughout the building.

Examples: Strategies for the Classroom

3 Good Things

Three Good Things is an evidence-based tool that refocuses your mind on the positive, instead of the negative. Have students designate a notebook as their Gratitude Journal. Then ask your students to begin their morning by writing down 3 good things that happened to them the day prior. By the end of the year, the student will have a list of hundreds of things they expressed gratitude for. Have students discuss their 3 Good Things with each other to practice expressing their gratitude and listening skills, too! Remind students positive things can be big or small! A smile, a hug, holding the door for someone, sunshine, blue sky, warm weather, cozy nights, laughter, giving compliments, etc.

Write a Gratitude Note

Have students write a gratitude note to someone they care about. Assign them to take the note they wrote and read it aloud to the person they wrote it for. Have a classroom discussion after the assignment is completed. How did the students feel when they read their note? How did the person feel after the student read their note to them?

Model Gratitude

Research shows that people are more likely to value gratitude when they can see it firsthand. Be a role model by expressing your gratitude to your students throughout the day. This will demonstrate that gratitude is an important value. Tell them stories about what you are grateful for, and make sure that they always hear thank you. This is particularly important for younger kiddos.

According to Psychology Today, there are **7 scientifically proven benefits for expressing gratitude:**

- Gratitude opens the door to new relationships
- Gratitude improves physical health
- Gratitude improves psychological health
- Gratitude enhances empathy and reduces aggression
- Grateful people sleep better
- Gratitude improves self-esteem
- Gratitude increases mental strength

PROMOTING HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CLASSROOM

People who have one or more close friendships are happier. Take time out of your day to build social connections with students, parents and co-workers. During these conversations, focus on being present and truly listen.

Examples: Strategies for the Classroom

Student Spotlight

Each week, have a student make an "About Me" board to display. Have them include facts that others may not know about them so everyone gets to know each other on a more personal level. Don't forget to make one about yourself too!

Daily Greeting

Greet each student as they walk into your classroom. Do your best to make a personal connection with them! How did their basketball game go last night? Give them a compliment. Make it more meaningful than a simple and typical "hello."

Share Goals on a Whiteboard

Use space on the whiteboard where students only write their non-school related wellness goals. Things like "limit screen time", "play basketball 4 times per month", or "read 10 books this year" are some good ones to get people started. It will inspire and motivate others, too! Check in and ask these students how their goals are going.

"Office Hours"

Establish set times you are available to meet with students through out the week outside of the normal classroom instruction time. This could be time that is built into your week that allows you to have an open door for students to come in and talk with you, both academic and personally.

Staff Visibility

Make it a goal to be visible to all students through out the school day.

Connection Time

Make time for students to truly connect with each other. A simple way to do this is offering a list of ice breakers at the start of class and have each student answer one of the ice breakers.

Team Building Activities

Team-building games and activities are a great tool for helping students learn to work together, listen carefully, communicate clearly, and think creatively. They also give your students the chance to get to know each other have fun!

planning for a

YELLOW ZONE

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YELLOW ZONE

More than
90 percent
of teachers believe
growth mindset is
associated with
excitement about
learning, persistence,
high levels of effort,
and participation in
class. ²

20 percent
of teachers strongly
believe they are
good at fostering a
growth mindset in
their own students. ²

1 in 5
teachers have deeply
integrated growth
mindset into their
teaching practice. ²

HEALTH FOR ALL.

A Place Where You Can Flourish.

learn

Focus on learning something new each and every day. Research has proven that learning is actually a core need for psychological well-being because as human beings, we have a natural desire to learn and progress. It is through learning that we build confidence and a sense of self-efficacy. Studies also highlight the effects of learning new things, which includes building emotional resilience, social capabilities, positive health behaviors and better physical health. ¹

Focus on progress and search out opportunities to stretch your existing abilities!

We are all responsible for our own learning and growth! Many of us carry around the belief of natural talent and fixed beliefs of things they can and cannot do. According to researcher Carol Dweck, the attitude and belief that you can't learn something is part of a mindset, and it's something that we can change. An individual that has a growth mindset believes that challenges are learning opportunities, and that failure is an opportunity for growth. Dweck's research demonstrates that growth mindset also boosts resilience, positive emotions, and someone's ability to bounce back quickly from the agony of defeat.

ADOPT A GROWTH MINDSET

According to Carol Dweck and her team at Stanford University researcher, people essentially adhere to one of two mindsets—a growth or a fixed mindset. People with a fixed mindset believe that their basic qualities, such as their intelligence and talents, are fixed traits. Instead of developing their intelligence and talents, they spend their time hoping their traits will lead to success. They don't seek to develop themselves, because they think that talent alone leads to success. They turn out to be wrong—brain science has proved otherwise. People with a growth mindset believe that they can improve their intelligence and talents with effort. By applying themselves, they think that they can get better. They see brains and talent as just the starting point, and build on them with hard work and determination. Brain scans have actually revealed that effort does lead to growth in intelligence and enhancement of initial talent over time. People with this mindset have a love of learning and demonstrate greater resilience. Success at work depends on having a growth mindset.

Use the following four steps to develop a growth mindset, based on research by Dweck:

Listen to the voice of a fixed mindset in your head. This is about being mindful of your own thoughts when faced with a challenge. Notice if the thoughts are telling you that you don't have the talent, the intelligence or if you find yourself reacting with anxiety or anger when someone offers feedback to you.

Notice that you have a choice. You can accept those fixed mindset thoughts or question them. Take a few moments to practice a mindful pause.

Question the fixed mindset attitudes. When your fixed mindset says "What if I fail? I'll be a failure," you can ask yourself "Is that true? Most successful people fail. That's how they learn." Or if fixed mindset says "What if I can't do this project? I don't have the skills," reply with "Can I be absolutely sure I don't have the skills? In truth, I can only know if I try. And if I don't have the skills, doing this will help me to learn them."

Take action on the growth mindset. This will make you enjoy the challenges in the workplace, seeing them as opportunity to grow rather than avoid. Use the above system if you mind starts leaning towards the fixed mindset.

- Shamash Alidina, *Mindfulness for Dummies*

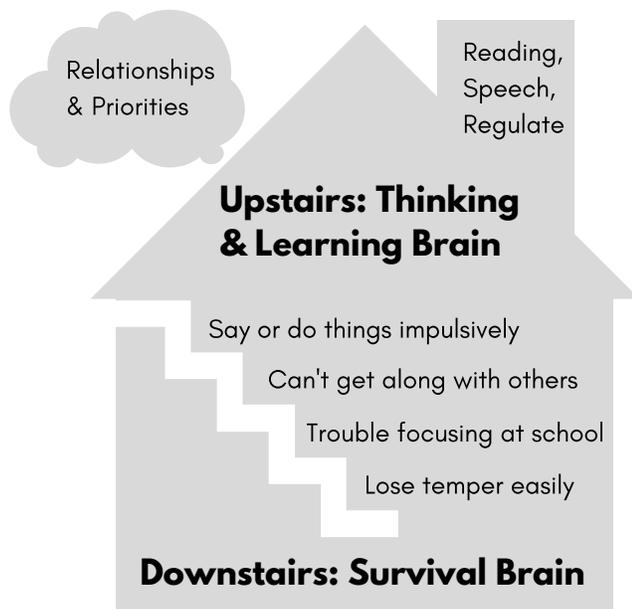
Statements that Transform your Mindset!

Accept opportunities that are out of your comfort zone · Mistakes are an important part of the process
 Skills are built, not born. They're yours if you work for them · Choose learning well over learning fast
 Actively seek out new things · Appreciate obstacles - growth comes from struggle
 The more you do, the more you learn · Just because you haven't seen change, doesn't mean you won't

TEACHING ABOUT THE BRAIN

When children understand what's happening in the brain, it can be the first step to having the power to make good choices. It can be equally powerful to teachers and parents too because knowing how the brain works means we can also understand how to respond when children need our help.

Dr. Dan Siegel and Dr. Tina Payne Bryson have a concept in their book "The Whole-Brain Child" that helps us understand the brain in a simple way that can be taught to children.



Upstairs Brain & Downstairs Brain

Picture a brain like a house.

Downstairs is where important things happen, such as basic functions like breathing, strong emotions, and innate reactions to danger. It's like the downstairs of a house, which is where we typically find the basics—kitchen, living room, bathroom.

The upstairs brain is more complex as this is where thinking, imagining, planning come from. We use the upstairs brain to think critically, problem solve, and make good decisions.

When I am in my Upstairs Brain...

- Think before I act
- Am in control of my body and reactions
- Can focus
- Can see others' point of view
- Think before I speak
- Feel like I can get my work done

When I am in my Downstairs Brain...

- Act before I think
- Am not in control of my body and reactions
- Feel too stressed and tired to focus
- Yell, scream, argue or run away
- Only see a problem from my point of view
- Feel like I cannot get my work done

We need the upstairs and the downstairs brain to work together. The staircase is one of the most important parts of a two-story house, and that same logic is true for the brain. When the brain's staircase is built, the upstairs brain can monitor the strong emotions and impulses from the downstairs and make sense of them. As you work with children, ask yourself, **"Am I engaging the upstairs brain, or am I triggering the downstairs brain?"** As adults, you can be the brain's staircase builder to make sure the staircase is properly working!

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YELLOW ZONE

93 percent

of parents believe play is essential for child development.²

81 percent

of teachers said that kids' behavior changes positively after recess. These changes include more positive moods, longer attention spans, fewer behavior issues, increased participation in class, more eagerness to learn, and improved academic performance.³

20 minutes

of recess per day is recommended by the CDC.

HEALTH FOR ALL.

A Place Where You Can Flourish.

play

Engage in play each and every day. Research has proven that play is actually a core need for overall well-being. Play contributes to flourishing by optimizing healthy brain development and managing stress. Play has proven to improve social-emotional, cognitive, language, and self-regulation skills which are carried on through adulthood. Other benefits of play include improving self-esteem, confidence, and creativity while developing their imagination, dexterity, and physical, cognitive, and emotional strength. In fact, play has even been shown to help children adjust to the school setting and even to enhance children's learning readiness, learning behaviors, and problem-solving skills.

Play supports the formation of the safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with all caregivers that children need to thrive.¹

Play isn't only for children! Playing with children adds value for adult caregivers as well, as they can reexperience the joy of their own childhood. Studies have shown that through play, caregivers learn to see through the child's perspective and are more likely to communicate effectively with the child. Play can also result in decreases in parental experiences of stress and enhancement in the caregiver-child relationship.¹

Source [1] www.pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/3/e20182058
[2] www.fatbraintoy.com/play/2013/5/infographic_the_importance_of_play.cfm
[3] www.voiceofplay.org/2018-survey-recess/

Ways to Encourage Play Each Day

Make Time. Children need the freedom to play which won't easily happen when their schedule is full of structured activities and screen time. Look at how to free up time if necessary.

Aim for an hour a day of uninterrupted time or 2 x 30 minutes as a minimum. Children need time to develop an idea and let it run on. More is better of course!

Reduce the reliance on structured toys and equipment that limit a child's ability to use the toy creatively by putting time limits on the use of these toys.

Offer support to younger children who are learning to play creatively and may find deep play more demanding at first. Act as a second in command playmate but offer options when things falter to keep the play going. Don't direct however tempting that may be.

Declutter play spaces. Too many toys can swamp creativity and encourage children to flit from toy to toy without getting the experience of deep play.

Focus on the process not the outcome. Don't look for results or expect to be told what happened or how it went. Play can have a dream like quality which can't easily be described but is none the less important.

Benefits of Play

Physical. Active play helps children with coordination, balance, motor skills, and spending their natural energy (which promotes better eating and sleeping habits).

Emotional. During play, children learn to cope with emotions like fear, frustration, anger, and aggression in a situation they control. They can also practice empathy and understanding.

Social. Playing with others helps children negotiate group dynamics, collaborate, compromise, deal with others' feelings, and share, etc.

Communication. Play lets children exchange thoughts, information, or messages by speech, signals, writing, or actions.

Creative. By allowing imaginations to run wild during play, kids create new worlds, and form unique ideas and solutions to challenges.

Cognitive. Children learn to think, read, remember, reason, and pay attention through out play.

DESK STRETCHES



ABCs or Point and Flex. While seated, keep your ankles moving by spelling words, writing your ABCs or pointing and flexing your toes!

Neck Rolls. Start with your head at neutral and tip your head to the right or left before circling backward and then returning to neutral. This dynamic movement relaxes and stretches your neck muscles and your cervical spine!



Wrist and Forearm Stretch. Standing up, place both your hands on your desk with your fingertips pointing toward your body and your palms down. Your elbow pits should be pointed away from you.



Spinal Twist. With your hips square in front of you, twist your torso to the left and right looking over your shoulder. You can grab onto your chair for some added pressure.



Cat/Cow. Throw it back to yoga class! Place your palms face down on the table in front of you. Take a deep breath in as you pull your shoulders down and back, pressing your chest forward between your shoulders. As you breathe out, roll your shoulders forward and round through your upper back.

Standing or Seated Forward Fold. This one can be done sitting in your chair or from a standing position. With your feet planted on the floor, bend forward as far as you can, reaching for your toes.



Seated Figure 4. Cross your right leg over your left quad and place your ankle just above your knee. Keep your back flat and your shoulders strong as you lean forward, bringing your chest as close to your legs as possible. Come up to neutral and switch sides.

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YELLOW ZONE

30 minutes
minutes of meditation
a day not only
reduces the sense of
loneliness, reduces the
risk of heart disease,
depression, and
premature death. ³

**A study done found
that students that
mediated for**

20 minutes
a day were able to
improve their
performance on tests
of cognitive skill.
In some cases doing

10 times
better than the
group that did not
meditate. ³

HEALTH FOR ALL.

A Place Where You Can Flourish.

spiritual

Take a minute to embrace spirituality each and every day. Research has proven that spirituality is actually a core need for overall well-being. Spirituality can be practiced in a variety of ways, such as meditation and mindfulness. Meditation and mindfulness reduces rumination of stress, boosts working memory and focus, lessens emotional reactivity and boosts cognitive flexibility, creates greater relationship satisfaction, increases happiness and boosts the immune system. We can also help children promote spiritual well-being through value, beliefs, purpose, and goals both physically and mentally.

Emotions can transfer, so check your mood and be intentional! What do we want to pass along to others?

it is important to express your feelings. Expressing what is on your mind will help you to maintain a focused mind. After a long day or a significant event, you may feel confused and not be able to make sense of your feelings. By writing down your thoughts, you may be able to think clearer and move forward. Also, looking for deeper meanings in your life and analyzing occurring patterns will help you see that you have control over your destiny. Being aware of this can help you achieve a happy and healthy life.

Source [1] www.researchgate.net/publication/253807608_The_Impact_of_Lifelong_Learning_on_Happiness_and_Well-being [2] www.edweek.org/media/ewrc_mindsetintheclassroom_sept2016.pdf [3] www.liveanddare.com/benefits-of-meditation/

spiritual

POSITIVE THOUGHTS & AFFIRMATIONS

Children who have negative experiences or trauma often possess the belief that they are unworthy, damaged, or worse. These negative thought patterns build the belief system that is carried on through adulthood. It is important to help build children's self-esteem and positive belief system. Giving children positive affirmations daily will help them internalize positive beliefs about themselves, which will boost their confidence and help them to possess a healthy self-esteem.

Example Positive Thoughts & Affirmations

**I am worthy · I believe in myself and my abilities · I have many talents · I matter
My family, friends and teachers love me for who I am · Every day I get better
I am deserving of love, happiness, trust and kindness · Today, I am a leader
I believe I can be whatever I want to be · Everything will be ok · Today I will be happy
All of my problems have a solution · Today is going to be a great day
I believe in my goals and dreams · I can make a difference · Every day is a fresh start**

Examples: Strategies for the Building & Classroom

- Display a Daily Affirmation

- Have Posters Displaying Positive Affirmations

Post written affirmations for students and parents to view the positivity and encouragement happening in your class or building. You can even allow students or teachers to add positive notes to your affirmation board.

- Incorporate Positive Affirmations in Lesson Plans

Teach your students what the affirmation(s) look like and sound like and how to do them appropriately. It only takes a few moments to incorporate it regularly!

- Start the Day by having Students Write a Positive Thought

Incorporate practicing positive affirmations into your regular morning routine by having students journal a daily affirmation or verbally expressing one. Provide them with examples if needed. It can set the tone for their whole day.

- Tell Students Positive Affirmations throughout their Day

Positivity is contagious! Complementing a student not only brightens their day, but can lead to them expressing complements to others.

spiritual

MINDFUL MEDITATION

Educators and students are experiencing more stress during the school day than even before due to the pressure of standardized testing, curriculum components, social aspects and simply less free time. Although it is difficult to change the way the school system operates, it is possible to change the way educators operate within the system.

Mindfulness is noticing what is happening right now. It is a way of paying attention to what's going on inside (your thoughts, feelings, physical sensations) and outside (your interactions and surroundings) with openness and curiosity. Practicing mindfulness cultivates a child's understanding that strong thoughts and emotions do not need to overpower them even when their feelings are big or scary. When kids (and adults) turn their attention towards their present moment experiences, their racing minds tend to slow, and they develop a sense of self awareness. This self-awareness allows children to label their emotions, understand that those emotions are impermanent, and use strategies to regulate those emotions.

- Stop, Breathe, Think

Free, Online Mindful Meditation Tools

Stop, Breathe, Think - www.stopbreathethink.com/educators

Take advantage of free Stop, Breathe, Think Toolkits that contain classroom activities that only take a few minutes to implement, and can have a lasting, profound impact. The resources are designed to support teachers working through a typical elementary school day, navigating transitions and building social emotional awareness inside and outside of the classroom. Teachers can also apply for a free, lifetime membership to their meditation apps by emailing ariana@stopbreathethink.com

Calm - www.calm.com/schools

The Calm Schools Initiative offers every teacher free access to Calm. Calm aims to empower teachers with mindfulness tools and resources they can use to help kids learn mindfulness. Teachers have unlimited access to a growing library of guided meditations and mindfulness exercises, including Calm Kids, a program tailored for age groups from pre-K through high school.

DreamyKid - www.dreamykid.com

Made just for kids, Dreamy kid offers meditations such as Body Scan, an ADD and ADHD session, ambient background noise, and more. General and issue-based meditations, guided visualizations and affirmations are added each month. Schools can get a free promo-code to unlock all of the programs by contacting jenna@dreamykid.com for more info or call 631-553-7788.

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The Mental Health Continuum – Short Form Scoring

Items 1 - 3: Emotional Well-being

Flourishing: answered "every day" or "almost every day" at least once

Languishing: answered "never" or "once or twice" at least once

Moderately mentally healthy: neither languishing nor flourishing

Items 4 - 8: Social Well-being & Items 9 - 14: Psychological Well-being

Flourishing: answered "every day" or "almost every day" at least 6 times

Languishing: answered "never" or "once or twice" at least 6 times

Moderately mentally healthy: neither languishing nor flourishing

Resources & Tools

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are serious and more common than you might think. In some cases, the number of Central Minnesotans who have had ACEs is higher than national averages. In Central Minnesota, several organizations are working to address the impact of ACEs. Through a collaborative effort, these organizations continue to identify the tools and resources needed to address and prevent ACEs from having devastating effects on our communities.
www.feelinggoodmn.org/adverse-childhood-experiences

The Bounce Back™ Project is a unique collaborative of physicians, nurses, hospital leaders, staff and community partners in Wright County, MN, who have come together for a single purpose – to impact the lives of individuals, communities, and organizations by promoting health through happiness. The tools shared by Bounce Back™ are easy to use, can make a difference and anyone can do them! These tools include: Random Acts of Kindness, Three Good Things, Gratitude Letters, Social Connections and Self-care and Mindfulness. www.bouncebackproject.org

Health Powered Kids is a free, online resource that includes school and community-based lessons and activities on nutrition, physical fitness, hygiene and mind-body balance, activities for families to do at home and in their community, mind-body activities for stress-reduction and relaxation and health and wellness information available through the internet and printed materials.
www.healthpoweredkids.org

There is so much pressure to be your best in school, at home, online, during after-school activities and in your social life...just about everywhere. Reducing stress really isn't about changing your life, it's about changing the way you react to it. Check out **Change to Chill**, a free online resource for teens to get perspective on things that matter and achieve balance. www.changetochill.org

Helping Traumatized Children Learn includes tools and resources to help individual teachers and administrators convert the urgency they feel about trauma sensitivity into the awareness and action of a committed coalition—and, ultimately, to the understanding and engagement of the entire school.
www.traumasensitiveschools.org

Peacemaker Resources is a non-profit organization based in Bemidji, MN that offers universal prevention tools to groups leading to systemic changes that benefit individuals and communities. They work with youth and adults in programming related to three focused areas: Social and Emotional Learning, Cultural Responsiveness and Trauma-informed Practices. www.peacemakerresources.org

The Minnesota Department of Health provides learning opportunities for anyone interested in building resilience and promote mental well-being. Effective well-being strategies and practical implementation steps from communities across Minnesota help communities, families, and youth thrive. <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/cfh/topic/mentalhealth/community.cfm>

Dr. Corey Keyes - Promoting and Protecting Mental Health as Flourishing, A Complementary Strategy for Improving National Mental Health among children and youth

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