

# Facilitator's Guide

# GROWING HEALTHY MINDS

for Parents with Children Ages 6-12

A resource to strengthen parents' knowledge  
and skills to improve their child's social and  
emotional wellbeing

## Parents Matter Project

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**MIDDLE CHILDHOOD MATTERS**  
—COALITION TORONTO—

Ontario  
Trillium  
Foundation  Fondation  
Trillium  
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario  
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### Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto (MCMCT)

The Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto (MCMCT) is a group of 20 social service, child welfare, education, recreation, health organizations and parent leaders promoting and influencing a system that prioritizes children ages 6-12 (middle childhood), and their families. MCMCT envisions a city where children ages 6-12 and their families have equitable opportunities and resources to thrive.

The Coalition believes, and research states, that this is an important time in a child's life. To support children's healthy development during this stage, MCMCT promotes high quality, affordable, accessible and culturally appropriate out-of-school time programs (before and after school time, summertime and holidays). The Coalition was one of the driving forces behind the development of the City of Toronto's first Middle Childhood Strategy, which prioritizes programming for this age group.

Our member organizations work with thousands of parents and children across Toronto. MCMCT recognizes the vital need to educate and support parents, caregivers and adult allies living, working and caring for these children across Toronto.

**CONNECT WITH US**

  @MCMCToronto

[www.middlechildhoodmatters.ca](http://www.middlechildhoodmatters.ca)

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Thank you to all the Middle Childhood Matters Coalition Toronto parent leaders and coalition members, who gave their time and insights into making this guide possible. As well, to all the Toronto service providers who promote the unique developmental needs of children ages 6-12, we are grateful to you all.

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# INTRODUCTION

The Parents Matter Project endeavors to support and educate newcomer, low-income and racialized parents in Toronto with children ages 6-12 (middle childhood) on how to best improve developmental and social outcomes for their children. This includes the creation and implementation of topic-specific parent learning sessions. Parenting and family relationships provide the foundation from which children ages 6-12 can develop the skills to overcome challenges and thrive to adulthood. These parent learning sessions aim to build upon the assets, capabilities and strengths of parents to help increase their knowledge on a number of topic areas relevant to their child's social and emotional development.

This facilitator's guide provides practical learning sessions to increase familial relationships, including resources that can be utilized and accessed beyond the life of the session. This is grounded in the knowledge that families crave more meaningful time together and the need to have access to materials, tools and skill building knowledge on an ongoing basis that is accessible at all times. By attending a learning session, a parent will leave with more knowledge, awareness and confidence in their ability to parent throughout this developmental stage. The interactive activities and supplementary resources will help parents to solidify their learnings.

In addition to Growing Healthy Minds, 15 evidence-based learning sessions have been developed in collaboration with experts in the fields such as:

- Sleep and Bedtime Routines
- Body Image and Self-esteem
- Healthy Eating and Nutrition
- Physical Activity
- We All Have Mental Health
- Children's Mental Health Challenges and Seeking Support
- Counting on Math
- Reading is Everywhere
- Keeping Children Safe Online
- More than Just Video Games
- Raising Responsible Digital Children
- Cognitive Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence
- Emotional Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence
- Social Development in Middle Childhood and Adolescence

# FLOW OF THE LEARNING SESSION

LEARNING SESSION STRUCTURE	DESCRIPTION
Learning Objectives	What parent participants can expect to learn by attending each learning session.
Warm-up/ Check-in	An activity to introduce and ground parent participants. The purpose is to begin getting to know each other by creating an inclusive and welcoming environment where all voices are heard and valued.
Group Agreements	An opportunity to collectively co-create the conditions of how learning will unfold. Creating a group agreement demonstrates that the space is shared by all.
Reflection Moment	Guiding questions are used to prompt reflection on current knowledge of the topic presented.
Content Development	How the information will be delivered and resourced (learning discussions) how learning happens- what do we need to know.
Action Moment	Each learning session will motivate concrete actions for parent participants to go from “reflection to action-now what?” with tips, tools and hands-on experience.
Evaluation and Check-out	Reinforce new learnings, takeaways and evaluate the learning.

# FACILITATION TIPS

- Prepare your session in advance; read content carefully and resources needed.
- Be clear and concise in your interactions.
- Listen to what is said.
- Remember to integrate important points that have not been raised by parent participants.
- Validate questions outside of the lesson plan raised by parent participants and direct them to their service provider.
- Be ready to accommodate changes and respond to your audience. Flexibility will be required from time to time and you may need to adapt the agenda in some situations.
- When appropriate, share your own lived experience as a parent or caregiver. However, be conscious not to dominate the conversation.



## Useful Tips to Successfully Facilitate a Group Discussion

### 1. Adults learn better when:

- They are personally motivated and engaged.
- They have the opportunity to reflect on what they are learning.
- They can exchange knowledge and experiences with others.
- They can have better understanding of what they learn and the implementation of that learning at home.

### 2. Adapting for inclusion:

- Know the diversity within the group: who are the participants? What experiences do they bring?
- Integrate cultural experiences: consider how both the facilitator and parent participants can bring their cultural experiences into the session.
- Be sensitive to emotional responses: depending on parent participants lived experiences, sometimes exercises can trigger participants’ emotions.

# GROWING HEALTHY MINDS

## Overview

The nature of wellbeing is complex and means different things to different people. Parents have a unique opportunity to role model for their children ages 6-12 the importance of taking care of your mental health just as you would for your physical health. When parents take care of their own mental health, they demonstrate coping and flexible thinking skills that build resilience in children. Resilience is the ability to thrive during both good and challenging times and adapt well to stress or adversity. It is the ability to “bounce back”, to keep trying, to come back after hard times, to get back on your feet.

## Learning Objectives

- a. Parenting with a positive mental health lens
- b. Growing children’s resilience
- c. Parents’ role in strengthening children’s coping skills and developing flexible thinking



### Materials and Supplies

<b>FLIP CHART</b> 	<b>MARKERS</b> 	<b>POST-IT NOTES</b> 	<b>PENS</b> 
<b>VISUAL AIDS</b> 	<b>SPEAKERS</b> 	<b>INTERNET ACCESS</b> 	<b>LEARNING TOOLS</b> 
<b>FLIP CHART PAPER</b> 	<b>ATTENDANCE FORM</b> 	<b>EVALUATIONS</b> 	

# LEARNING SESSION OUTLINE

Agenda	Length of the learning session (1 hour)
1. Welcome and Introduction	(5 minutes)
2. Check-in	(10 minutes)
3. Reflection Moment	(10 minutes)
4. Content Development	(25 minutes)
5. Action Moment	(5 minutes)
6. Evaluation and Check-out	(5 minutes)

## 1. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)

Facilitator(s) will welcome parent participants and organization(s) supporting the learning session. Housekeeping items should be introduced: washroom facilities, fire exit and additional information needed for the learning session.

Materials needed: Pens

### Appendix 1 - Tool 1.1 Agenda

**Tool 1.2** Attendance and Photo Release Form

**Tool 1.4** Evaluation (Pre)

## 2. Check-in (10 minutes)

*Getting to know each other:* Introductions of parent participants (5 minutes)

Facilitator asks parent participants to sit/stand in a circle and invites them to state their names, their children’s names and ages. Along with this introduction parent participants are asked to answer the following question:

*If you could choose to be one age forever, what age would you choose and why?*



### Facilitator Tip

This activity will welcome parent participants to share something about themselves, that is not too personal, in a comfortable, supportive environment.

## 2.a Group Agreements

(5 minutes)

*Materials needed:* post-it notes, markers, flip chart paper, pens.

Facilitator asks parent participants any of the following

### ? Guiding Questions

- What do we need from each other and ourselves to create a safe learning space?
- How are we going to learn together in this space?

Parent participants are asked to write their answers on a post-it note and place it on the flip chart. Facilitator will read them out loud for parents' consensus.

The list should be posted visibly for the length of the learning session.

*Building a group agreement with parent participants is an important step to take when working with groups. It invites members to co-create a safe space for sharing where all voices are heard and valued.*



## 3. Reflection Moment

(10 minutes)

*Materials needed:* Projector, computer, speakers and internet connection.

### Appendix 2 Learning Tool 2.1

Facilitator asks parent participants the following question:

*What factors influence mental health and wellbeing?*



### Facilitator Tip

**Learning Tool 2.1** “Ministry of Education Framework” should be projected while sharing the answers to the reflection question. This framework is useful as we consider our parenting lens, our relationship with our children and how this sets the stage for lifelong wellbeing for our children. To further explore wellbeing:



Visit Link: [www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/wellbeing2.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/wellbeing2.html)

## Discussion Points

- Wellbeing is complex and means different things to different people.
- Wellbeing can be understood to be a positive sense of **self/spirit** and belonging that is felt when our cognitive, emotional, social and physical needs are being met.
- Wellbeing can be seen as having four interconnected elements that are critical to child development, with **self/spirit** at the centre.
- **Cognitive:** The development of abilities and skills such as critical thinking, problem solving, creativity, and the ability to be flexible and innovative.
- **Emotional:** This involves learning about experiencing emotions, and understanding how to recognize, manage, and cope with them.
- **Social:** The development of self-awareness, including the sense of belonging, collaboration, relationships with others, and communication skills.
- **Physical:** The development of the body, impacted by physical activity, sleep patterns, healthy eating, and healthy life choices.
- The concept of **self/spirit** has different meanings for different people, and can include cultural heritage, language, community, religion or a broader spirituality.
- This framework is useful as we consider our parenting lens, our relationship with our children and how this sets the stage for lifelong wellbeing for our children.

## 4. Content Development

(25 minutes)

*Materials needed:* Projector, computer, speakers and internet connection.

Appendix 3 - **Learning Tool 3.1**

**Learning Tool 3.2**

**Learning Tool 3.3**

## 4.a Caring for Our Own Wellbeing as Parents

(10 minutes)



### Facilitator Tip

Choose **one (1)** of the following activities to start the discussion and debrief as a group. Each activity takes 10 minutes, guiding questions and discussion points are designed for both activities.

#### Activity A: Keep Calm

Instructions: Use **Learning Tool 3.1** “Keep Calm” which should be projected while debriefing.

Facilitator invites parent participants to turn to a partner and discuss the following:

#### ? Guiding Questions

*What do you think this means and what does it have to do with parenting?*

#### Activity B: Wellness Bingo

Instructions: Facilitator distributes bingo cards to each participant using **Learning Tool 3.2**. The goal of the game is to collect signatures on the bingo card by asking participants to write their names on the activities they do for parenting wellness. A “winner” is determined when a line or full card of names is completed and participant(s) shout(s) BINGO!



To continue with the topic of “Caring for Our Own Wellbeing as Parents” consider the following:

It is important to pause and consider our own parental wellbeing. Parents and caregivers are important role models for their children. If we hope to nurture wellbeing in our children, we need to have awareness and understanding of what that means for ourselves.

## ? Guiding Questions

1. In what ways can parents take care of their own wellbeing?  
**Possible Answers:** Perhaps work schedule, exhaustion, resources, family demands etc.
2. What factors might interfere with parents’ wellness?  
**Possible Answers:** Perhaps work schedule, exhaustion, resources, family demands etc.
3. How can we address this?  
**Possible answers:** Focus on manageable, meaningful steps; delegate; let go of all/nothing thinking; determine what can be let go of.

## Discussion Points

- Our mental health and wellbeing influence our ability to nurture the cognitive, physical, social and emotional wellbeing of our children.
- It can be helpful to consider how oxygen masks work in an urgent or emergency situation on an airplane. Oxygen masks can be released from the ceiling and the instructions are to ensure adults put their mask on first before they assist children or others.

## 4.b Resilience

(15 minutes)

“Our kids need the advantages that risk-taking brings!”  
~ Dr. Michael Ungar





### Facilitator Tip

Choose **one (1)** of the following activities to start the discussion and debrief as a group. Each activity takes 15 minutes, guiding questions and discussion points are designed for both activities.

#### Activity C: Video

Instructions: Watch video *Olaf in Frozen*.

Video duration: (1 minute and 35 sec).

Parents may be familiar with this character from the Disney movie *Frozen*. Olaf the Snowman shows our children (and us) what resilience can look like.



Video can be found here:  
<https://youtu.be/An2OalbPSII>

#### Activity D: Parenting for Resilience Placemat

Instructions: Working with a partner and using the placemat template **Learning Tool 3.3** brainstorm all the ways parents nurture resilience in their children.

**Facilitator Tip:** Instruct parent participants to write answers on the centre of the placemat template.

Consider one parenting practice you personally would like to pay more attention to. Share why this is important to you.

**Facilitator Tip:** Instruct parent participants to write answers on their own section of the border of the placemat template.

**Examples May Include:** Make sure they get enough sleep, encourage active play, encourage creative outlets, create a space for kids to talk about their troubles, help them relax, have a predictable routine, foster volunteering and helpfulness, bring fun and playfulness into their lives, offer a variety of healthy food and eat together when possible.

### Discussion Points

- Resilience has come to mean an individual's ability to overcome adversity and continue their healthy development.
- An easy way to think about resilience is the ability to “bounce back” after a challenge or hardship.
- Sometimes we use an elastic band as a way of visually representing the ability to bounce back. The band is stretched and when released returns to its regular shape.
- As parents we know our children will have struggles and challenges in life that will stretch them. We want this for them in order to learn, develop and grow. Our hope is for them to navigate challenges and “bounce back”.

Resilience is an important aspect of wellbeing. As parents each and every day we are engaged in promoting the resilience of our children. Key contributors to the development of resilience in children include:

1. **Structure:** Predictable and expected routines such as bedtimes, mealtimes...
2. **Consequences:** Consistent rules/expectations, natural, logical and meaningful consequences when broken/not met that consider the child's age and stage...
3. **Parent-Child Connection:** Time together doing an enjoyable activity such as playing a game or reading, rituals such as cooking or shopping together, active listening, asking about their day...
4. **Nurturing Relationships:** Demonstrating affection, care, love, humour, shared experiences...
5. **A Sense of Control:** Opportunity for children to make age appropriate choices – activities, clothes...
6. **A Sense of Belonging/Cultural Roots/Spirituality/Life Purpose:** Opportunities to be together as family, be a group member, participate in traditions...
7. **Fair & Just Treatment:** Maintain consistent and age appropriate rules, expectations and consequences, invite child input into discussion and decision-making (voice, not necessarily choice) follow through..
8. **Physical & Psychological Safety:** Safety rules, expectations are clear and consistent, boundaries, acceptance...



As parents we care so much and want to protect our children – sometimes we even get in the way of our children’s resilience development and “bubble wrap” out of love, care and concern. Learning about resilience provides parents with long term tools to further support their children. A well known author and researcher on the topic of resilience is Dr. Michael Ungar. To learn more:



Visit Link: [www.michaelungar.com/about-michael](http://www.michaelungar.com/about-michael)

After debriefing, facilitator hands out **Learning Tool 3.4** for parents to take home.

### Take Home Message

## BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN 20 PRACTICAL & POWERFUL STRATEGIES

Building small humans into healthy, thriving big ones isn’t about clearing adversity out of their way. Of course, if we could scoop them up and lift them over the things that would cause them to stumble, that would be a wonderful thing, but it wouldn’t necessarily be doing them any favours. A little bit of stress is life-giving and helps them to develop the skills they need to flourish. Strengthening them towards healthy living is about nurturing within them the strategies to deal with that adversity. Here’s how.

1. Resilience needs relationships, not uncompromising independence.
2. Increase their exposure to people who care about them.
3. Let them know that it’s okay to ask for help.
4. Build their planning and organizational skills.
5. Encourage a regular mindfulness practice.
6. Exercise often.
7. Build feelings of competence and a sense of mastery.
8. Nurture optimism.
9. Teach them how to reframe.
10. Model resilience.
11. Facing fear – but with support.
12. Encourage them to take safe, considered risks.
13. Don’t rush to their rescue.
14. Connect with them in a way that is effective.
15. Always remember that we can change, and so can other people.
16. Let them know that you trust their capacity to cope.
17. Build their problem-solving toolbox.
18. Make time for creativity and play.
19. Shhh. Let them talk.
20. Try ‘how’, not ‘why’.

### 5. Action Moment

(5 minutes)

**Turn and Talk:** Facilitator invites parent participants to turn to an elbow partner and share the following:

One (1) new learning from the workshop and how it might be applied in their children’s life.

Facilitator hands out **Learning Tool 3.5** for parents to take home.

### 6. Evaluation and Check-out

(5 minutes)

*Materials needed:* Pens, **Learning Tool 1.5** Evaluation Form (post).

**Evaluation:** Invite parent participants to give their feedback. Provide parent participants with pens and evaluation forms to be filled out. Encourage them to be honest. Their responses are anonymous and they don’t have to answer any questions they don’t feel comfortable answering.

**Check-out:** Thank parent participants for their participation and time.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

- Tool 1.1** Agenda - Growing Healthy Minds
- Tool 1.2** Attendance and Photo Release Form
- Tool 1.3** Facilitator's Check List
- Tool 1.4** Evaluation (Pre)
- Tool 1.5** Evaluation (Post)

## APPENDIX 2

- Learning Tool 2.1** Ministry of Education Framework

## APPENDIX 3

- Learning Tool 3.1** Keep Calm and Put Your Own Oxygen Mask On
- Learning Tool 3.2** Wellness BINGO
- Learning Tool 3.3** Resilience Placemat
- Learning Tool 3.4** Take Home Message Building Resilience in Children. - 20 Practical, Powerful Strategies
- Learning Tool 3.5** Personal Resilience

## APPENDIX 4

Resources

## APPENDIX 5

References

## APPENDIX 1.1 - AGENDA

### Tool 1.1 Agenda - Growing Healthy Minds

1. Welcome and Introduction (5 minutes)
2. Check-in (10 minutes)
3. Reflection Moment (10 minutes)
4. Content Development (25 minutes)
5. Action Moment (5 minutes)
6. Evaluation and Check-out (5 minutes)

APPENDIX 1.2 - ATTENDANCE AND PHOTO RELEASE FORM

Tool 1.2 Attendance and Photo Release Form

FULL NAME	EMAIL	PHONE NUMBER	DO YOU CONSENT TO HAVE YOUR PHOTO TAKEN?	SIGNATURE REQUIRED
1.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
2.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
3.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
4.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
5.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
6.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
7.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
8.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
9.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
10.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
11.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
12.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
13.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
14.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
15.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
16.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
17.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
18.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
19.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	
20.			<input type="checkbox"/> Y <input type="checkbox"/> N	

APPENDIX 1.3 - FACILITATOR'S CHECK LIST

Tool 1.3 Facilitator's Check List

Materials and Supplies:

- Markers
- Flip Chart (if needed)
- Flip Chart Paper
- Post-it Notes
- Pens
- Internet Access/Connection
- Projector
- Computer
- Speakers
- Learning Tools
- Attendance Form
- Evaluation Forms (Pre & Post)

**APPENDIX 1.4 - EVALUATION (PRE)**

**PARENT EVENT: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / 201\_\_**

**Do at START  
of Event**

**Please answer the questions below.**

**PART 1: About You**

1. **Your gender:**  Female  Male  Trans  I describe my gender in a different way
2. **Your children's age(s):**  0-5  6-12  13+
3. **Parenting status:**  I'm a single parent  I'm **not** a single parent
4. **What country were you born in:** \_\_\_\_\_
5. **What is your postal code:** \_\_\_\_\_
6. **Do you have any relatives living with you at home?**  Yes  No  
If YES how many? \_\_\_\_\_

**PART 2: About the Event**

7. **How did you hear about this event?**  Friend/Family  Another Organization  
 Internet  Flyers  Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_
8. **Please rate your knowledge on:** (Circle ONE answer per question)

		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
a	Wellbeing	H	M	L	DK
b	Resilience	H	M	L	DK
c	How to parent with a positive mental health lens	H	M	L	DK
d	How to strengthen coping skills in my child	H	M	L	DK
e	How to develop resilience in my child	H	M	L	DK
f	How to take care of my own wellbeing	H	M	L	DK
g	Please rate your level of confidence with growing healthy minds	H	M	L	DK

**PART 3: About your Learning**

9. **What do you hope to learn today about Growing Healthy Minds??**

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**THANK YOU!**

**APPENDIX 1.5 - EVALUATION (POST)**

PARENT EVENT: \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / 201\_\_

Do at END of Event

Please answer the questions below.

PART 1: About the Event

1. Please rate your knowledge on: (Circle ONE answer per question)

		HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	DON'T KNOW
a	Wellbeing	H	M	L	DK
b	Resilience	H	M	L	DK
c	How to parent with a positive mental health lens	H	M	L	DK
d	How to strengthen coping skills in my child	H	M	L	DK
e	How to develop resilience in my child	H	M	L	DK
f	How to take care of my own wellbeing	H	M	L	DK
g	Please rate your level of confidence with growing healthy minds	H	M	L	DK

PART 2: About your Learning

2. What did you learn today about Growing Healthy Minds?

PART 3: About your Satisfaction

1	How often will you use what you learned about growing healthy minds? (Circle ONE answer)	Never	Sometimes	Always
If never, please tell us why not?				
2	How informative was the facilitator? (Circle ONE answer)	Not Informative	A little Informative	Very Informative
3	How satisfied are you with this event overall? (Circle ONE answer)	Not Satisfied	A little Satisfied	Very Satisfied
4	If we could improve ONE THING – what would it be?			

**THANK YOU!**

**APPENDIX 2**

Learning Tool 2.1 Ministry of Education Framework

**WHAT DOES WELLBEING LOOK LIKE FOR YOUR CHILD?**



Learning Tool 3.1 Keep Calm



KEEP  
CALM  
AND PLACE YOUR  
OXYGEN  
MASK  
ON  
FIRST!

Learning Tool 3.2

WELLNESS BINGO

Instructions: The “winner” is determined when a line or full card of names and is completed and participant(s) shout(s) BINGO!

COOK A NEW RECIPE OR FAVOURITE RECIPE	PLAY WITH MY CHILDREN	WRITE IN A JOURNAL	THINK OF FIVE THINGS I AM GRATEFUL FOR	HAVE COFFEE WITH A FRIEND
GO FOR A WALK	LISTEN TO MUSIC	WATCH A MOVIE	TAKE A NAP	SING LIKE NO ONE'S LOOKING
TALK TO SOMEONE	TRY AN EXERCISE CLASS	 FREE	PLAY A GAME WITH MY FAMILY	READ
DO SOMETHING FOR SOMEONE IN NEED	PRACTICE DEEP BREATHING	THINK POSITIVELY	DRAW, PAINT, EXPLORE MY ARTIST SIDE	GO SWIMMING
CHANGE PERSPECTIVE	BE IN NATURE	TAKE A BATH OR SHOWER	PRACTICE MINDFULNESS	WATCH SPORTS

Learning Tool 3.3 Resilience Placemat

Step 1: Individually consider one parenting practice you personally would like to pay attention to. Share why this is important to you (write quietly in this section for one (1) minute).

Step 2: With your partner brainstorm all the ways parents nurture resilience in their children

Step 2: With your partner brainstorm all the ways parents nurture resilience in their children

Step 1: Individually consider one parenting practice you personally would like to pay attention to. Share why this is important to you (write quietly in this section for one (1) minute).

APPENDIX 3

Learning Tool 3.4 Building Resilience in Children  
20 Practical, Powerful Strategies

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN  
20 PRACTICAL & POWERFUL STRATEGIES

Building small humans into healthy, thriving big ones isn't about clearing adversity out of their way. Of course, if we could scoop them up and lift them over the things that would cause them to stumble, that would be a wonderful thing, but it wouldn't necessarily be doing them any favours. A little bit of stress is life-giving and helps them to develop the skills they need to flourish. Strengthening them towards healthy living is about nurturing within them the strategies to deal with that adversity. Here's how.

1. Resilience needs relationships, not uncompromising independence.
2. Increase their exposure to people who care about them.
3. Let them know that it's okay to ask for help.
4. Build their planning and organizational skills.
5. Encourage a regular mindfulness practice.
6. Exercise often.
7. Build feelings of competence and a sense of mastery.
8. Nurture optimism.
9. Teach them how to reframe.
10. Model resilience.
11. Facing fear – but with support.
12. Encourage them to take safe, considered risks.
13. Don't rush to their rescue.
14. Connect with them in a way that is effective.
15. Always remember that we can change, and so can other people.
16. Let them know that you trust their capacity to cope.
17. Build their problem-solving toolbox.
18. Make time for creativity and play.
19. Shhh. Let them talk.
20. Try 'how', not 'why'.

Learning Tool 3.5 Personal Resilience

PERSONAL RESILIENCY

THE BASICS OF SELF-CARE



**EAT** We all need to refuel. If we are under a lot of stress, be mindful of the foods you choose. Also, keep a healthy snack close by so that you can refuel easily and avoid being "Hangry".

**SLEEP** Aim to get seven to nine hours of sleep each night. Research has shown that getting five hours or less of sleep a night can create health problems. Getting enough sleep also helps you to better deal with the stresses of everyday life.

**DRINK** A lot of water and consider decreasing or discontinuing your caffeine intake as the latter creates a stress reaction in your body and can cause you to feel nervous or contribute to sleeping difficulties.

**MOVE** The positive effects of being physically active are astounding. It increases your energy, enhances your immune system, reduces insomnia, stimulates brain growth, and even acts as an anti-depressant. You can achieve these benefits by as little as a 30-minute walk. Endorphin production following physical activity is nature's gift to you for stress management!

**CONNECT** Strong social connections are one of the most powerful influences on our mood. Those who are dedicated to spending time with friends, and family show the highest levels of happiness. If you can't see your loved ones every day, you can still send an email or make a phone call.

**PAUSE** Make sure to take time for yourself during the day, to listen to music, take a few deep breaths, meditate, write in a gratitude journal, do a few stretches, take a brisk walk or do some other activity that helps you feel restored.

**ACKNOWLEDGE** Be mindful of your thoughts and feelings, both positive and negative, as part of your self-care. Finding a healthy outlet (see some suggestions below) to process your emotions and self-talk can lead to optimal self-care practices.

**REFLECT** Take time to reflect on what is important to you both personally and professionally. Your values and sense of purpose help you focus on what is meaningful for you. Taking time to reflect can assist you to intentionally and systemically make decisions in your life.

**REPEAT** Research has shown that trying a new skill/habit/routine for 21 days in a row will increase the likelihood of maintaining this new practice. It is recommended having an accountability partner during those first few weeks; it's a helpful strategy to enhance your success rate of maintaining your new practice.



WHY BOTHER?

Taking care of oneself is a crucial and necessary ingredient for those who care for others. This is especially true of those working in helping professions (mental health professionals, teachers, nurses...) and of those who are parents or engaging in elderly care. Self-care is just like the oxygen mask on a plane. We need to place it on ourselves before we can possibly hope to help others.

+ BUILDING HAPPINESS

External factors often only have partial influence on our level of happiness.

Promotions, new relationships, and lucky lottery wins give only a temporary boost to happiness before we return to our baseline.

Sustained happiness takes work. Listed here are a few exercise ideas that, when practiced frequently, can build habits of happiness.

Choose a few exercises that fit well with your life and make a point to practice them every day.

Journal About Gratitude

Every night write down three good things about your day. They don't have to be major. They might be as simple as a good meal, talking to a friend, or getting through something difficult.

Write a Letter

Think about someone who has had a major impact on your life, someone who you would like to thank, or someone who you appreciate having in your life. Write a letter with specific details about what it is you appreciate about them, and send it.

Visit Someone Whom You Appreciate

Take the idea of a gratitude letter a step further and actually visit the individual whom you would like to thank. You can choose to deliver and read a gratitude letter, or simply visit and tell them why it is that you appreciate them.

Say, "Thank You"

Keep your eyes open throughout the day for reasons to say "thanks". Try to notice and recognize the actions that people do, such as a coworker who works hard or a friend who seems willing to listen.

Take a Gratitude Walk

Go for a walk and make a special effort to appreciate your surroundings. You might notice the smell of flowers, a pretty building, or a soothing breeze. Spend a few minutes focusing on each of your senses (sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch) to find new things you may not have noticed.



Resources

Promoting and Supporting Student Wellbeing in Ontario  
[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/domains.jpg](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/about/domains.jpg)

Personal Resiliency

<https://smh-assist.ca/wp-content/uploads/Personal-Resiliency.pdf>

Building Resilience in Children-20 Practical, Powerful Strategies (Backed by Science)

[www.heysigmund.com/building-resilience-children/](http://www.heysigmund.com/building-resilience-children/)

Resilience in Kids Video

<https://youtu.be/HYsRGe0tfZc>



