Well Aware: Developing Resilient, Active, and Flourishing Students
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Introduction

Welcome to the Well Aware Study Guide

This resource will summarize key concepts and points, delve deeper to offer some further resources, provide a checklist to assess understanding that can be used for personal awareness or small-group inquiry, and suggest a well-being focus.

Inquiry Ideas

1. Explore a chapter: Have each person (or in pairs) review a different part of the chapter, and then discuss in a group.
2. Try out an Awareness Activity on your own or in pairs, and discuss in a group.
3. Use 1 or 2 points in the Check for Understanding feature in this guide to spark a discussion. Ask yourself:
   - How can you apply this information in your classroom?
   - What kind of difference will this make in your teaching?
   - What is one thing you learned about yourself? Your students? Your teaching practice?
4. Use the Check for Understanding feature to create an Individual Continuum of Knowledge for yourself for each chapter (see Well Aware, p. 28, for an overview of a Mental Health Literacy—Continuum of Knowledge). Respond to the following questions:
   - What information/strategies are you aware of?
   - What strategies are you currently using to promote mental well-being?
   - What areas do you need to learn more about?
5. Well-Being Focus: Use the questions to deepen your understanding and learning of the chapter.

The nature of Well Aware and this guide may bring up sensitive issues. It is important to know where you can seek support for yourself and others if needed. You may experience some ups and downs on the pathway to positive mental health. This is natural. It is important to view challenges as opportunities to learn and grow from, and to honour your initiative and efforts in trying something new and different. This is an opportunity to increase your knowledge and understanding to enhance your own positive mental health and that of your students.

Please join me in this exciting journey to explore Well Aware: Developing Resilient, Active, and Flourishing Students by Patrick Carney.

Note: All page references in the study guide refer to Well Aware.
Chapter 1: A Culture of Positive Mental Health

Chapter 1 looks briefly at each part of the foundation for developing a culture of positive mental health.

It all starts with the question: **What is positive mental health?**

A state of positive mental health encompasses a sense of emotional and spiritual well-being, having enjoyment in life, realizing our potential, meeting challenges, being productive, respecting self and others, and contributing positively to the community.

Positive mental health is a way of being for everyone to strive for, and is the foundation for developing life skills, academic success, and overall well-being.

The Well Aware Model and School-Based Approaches for Promoting and Supporting Well-Being (see Fig. 1.2, p. 7) give us a framework for beginning on the pathway to positive mental health.

**Positive Mental Health**
Whole-School Whole-Community Approach

- Actively promoting a positive mental health curriculum, practices, and expectations
- Creating a healthy, supportive, inclusive class and school
- Gaining knowledge of healthy development and an awareness of school and community resources
- Understanding how your relationship with students supports their positive mental health

Social-Emotional Learning Approach

- Developing self-awareness and management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making
- Managing own energy states, emotions, behaviours, and attention in acceptable ways

Strengths-Based Approach

- Recognizing and nurturing inner strengths, capabilities, and resources
- Focusing on strengths first
- Seeing challenges as learning opportunities

Resilient, Active, and Flourishing

- Believing in own strengths, abilities, and self-worth to develop positive relationships, be flexible, plan, problem-solve, and manage emotions
- Having a balanced lifestyle including daily fitness, good sleep, nutrition, and spiritual connections
- Experiencing joy, engagement, meaning, accomplishments, and connections

Creating a culture of positive mental health where values, attitudes, and practices are used school-wide begins with you—in educator well-being.

Teacher well-being supports student well-being. All the skills and strategies to support students can be applied to teachers too, using a slightly different lens.
CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

☐ You can understand the definition of positive mental health.
☐ You can identify the four components of positive mental health.

WELL-BEING FOCUS

Individual

• What healthy choices can you weave into daily routines and instruction to help students understand the link between positive choices and well-being?

Group

• Pair up with a colleague and brainstorm 10 healthy choices and ways of introducing one per month to your students.
• Brainstorm healthy choices as a group and discuss how each class can focus on one. Then share this information school-wide.
Chapter 2: A Whole-School Whole-Community Approach

In the whole-school whole-community approach, the role of the teacher is comprised of four interrelated areas:

1. Teacher–student relationship
2. Mental health literacy
3. Teaching and learning
4. School and classroom environment

(See Fig 2.1, p. 19.)

The Teacher–Student Relationship

Let us consider for a moment what it means to have students in your school for approximately 1000 hours each year. This gives you a unique opportunity to support students and to influence their well-being. Research shows that just one supportive adult in a child or youth’s life makes a difference. They are less likely to develop mental challenges or substance abuse issues (Weisz, Sandler, Durlak, and Anton, 2005, see Well Aware, p. 20).

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

The Teacher–Student Relationship:

Check out some practical tips to build caring relationships with students.

Four Ways Teachers Can Show They Care: http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/
(enter “four ways teachers can show they care” in the search box)

When teacher–student relationships include care, compassion, empathy, encouragement, and support, these qualities contribute to a student’s positive mental health and academic competence.

Teachers are a role model for behaviour. How you cope and react to different situations and emotional states in the classroom and school gives students a real-life example of how they should respond.

With all the challenges you face in a day, being a role model is not easy!
Did You Know?

The key to staying calm is to take a moment to regulate your own emotions before trying to help someone else. Being self-aware and managing your own energy states, emotions, responses, and social-emotional skills are essential to your positive mental health and your students’ too.

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Mindfulness:

Read about how mindfulness can help you manage emotions.

Can Mindfulness Make Us Better Teachers?
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/ (enter “can mindfulness make us better teachers” in the search box)

Seven Ways Mindfulness Can Help Teachers:
http://greatergood.berkeley.edu/ (enter “seven ways mindfulness can help teachers” in the search box)

Traditionally, academic achievement was valued more than a student’s efforts. The whole-school whole-community approach values the dignity and worth of the whole child. Educators join with parents, families, the school, and the community to encourage each child to strive to be the best they can be socially, emotionally, intellectually, physically, spiritually, culturally, and academically. These interdependent areas of development are important to the well-being of all students and the community.

Mental Health Literacy

Within the field of mental health there has been little focus on having a developmental understanding of a person, positive features of recovery, and overall well-being. Mental health concerns often begin when people are young. Schools are now recognized as a crucial environment in which to promote and support positive mental health and mental health literacy.

Mental health literacy for schools involves the knowledge, skills, and belief that school staff have in promoting positive mental health in the classroom, reducing stigma, identifying risk factors, helping students access support, and understanding the link between positive mental health and student success.

As educators, what you think and know about mental health influences students’ perceptions and attitudes.
Do you know the facts?

Think about what you could do to support a positive understanding of mental health.

**STIGMA FACTS**

It results from misinformation, fear, mistrust of differences. Stigma is a significant barrier in seeking support. It leads to social exclusion and discrimination.

Positive mental health is for all, not just for those at risk or with disorders.

There is strong evidence that contact-based education reduces stigma. Meeting and talking with people who share their experiences of mental health issues, management, or recovery, watching videos of such individuals, and reading stories of those with mental health challenges are all effective ways to decrease stigma (Mental Health Commission of Canada, Opening Minds, see Well Aware, p. 26).

Mental health is on a continuum, meaning that everyone copes with social, emotional, and mental health challenges at some point. Even in a state of positive mental health you can experience mild distress.

To learn more about mental health, the Mental Health First Aid Canada program aims to improve mental health literacy. It also provides the skills and knowledge to help people better manage potential or developing mental health problems in themselves, a family member, a friend, or a colleague. For more information, go to [www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca](http://www.mentalhealthfirstaid.ca).

The program does not teach people how to be therapists. It does teach people how to

- Recognize the signs and symptoms of mental health problems.
- Provide initial help.
- Guide a person toward appropriate professional help.
The Mental Health Continuum

Mental health challenges are complex and are affected by several factors:

- Individual: temperament, learning ability, social skills
- Family: attachment, parenting style, communication
- Environmental: physical conditions, social conditions, sense of belonging in school and community

Mental health literacy is also on a continuum. It moves from awareness; to deeper knowledge and identifying and supporting students who are struggling; to expertise with promotion, prevention, and intervention strategies and programs.

Think about where you are on the continuum.

An important first step in identifying possible issues is observing and recording a student’s behaviour. **Pay attention to frequency, duration and intensity and signs of concern**, such as extreme mood swings, constant worrying, or aggression toward self or others. For the full list, see pp. 29–30, Some Signs for Concern.

Some students may see self-destructive behaviour as way to escape from emotional challenges and pain. When taken to the extreme, such behaviour could lead to suicide. As educators, it is important to know the warning signs of significant distress.

Possible warning signs: desire or intent to die, feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, behaviour out of character, social withdrawal or loss of interest, giving away prized possessions, destructive or risky behaviour (see pp. 30–31).

**Note: Even one warning sign can be serious!**
Practical Protocols You Can Follow

You are an important part of a team to help the student. There are things you can do to help!

- Know your school’s suicide, bullying, abuse, family issues, and substance abuse policies.
- Listen without judgment.
- Don’t minimize or make promises. Safety takes precedence over confidentiality.
- Share information with administration, support staff, guidance staff, and mental health professionals immediately.
- Ensure the student is supervised in all areas while you consult with others.
- Ensure the student is escorted directly to guidance staff.
- Be part of the student’s school support team.

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Understanding Mental Health:

Check out some great mental health resources for staff, students, and friends. These links include quick facts, strategies, videos of people with mental health issues, and more.

Bridging the Distance (from five northern Ontario colleges)
http://www.bridgingthedistance.com

The ABCs of Mental Health
http://www.hincksdellcrest.org (select “Resources and Publications/The ABCs of Mental Health/Enter the Resource”)
Teaching and Learning

An exciting shift is happening in schools. Across the country curricula are being revised to incorporate positive mental health and social-emotional learning concepts and strategies.

Some examples of these revisions are

- PE: physical activity to decrease sadness, frustration, and/or anger
- Music/Art: opportunities to express emotion
- Language: writing to express or release feelings
- Science/Math: predictability can be comforting, e.g., when exploring different problem-solving models
- History/World Studies: a sense of belonging, of being part of something bigger

A multi-modal approach is needed to integrate positive mental health (PMH) and social emotional learning (SEL) across all areas of student development.

Multi-modal Approach to Teaching

Well-Being of Students
See Fig. 2.4, p. 34, Positive Mental Health
Social emotional learning is a crucial area in supporting the development of positive mental health. There are five key competencies:

- Self-Awareness
- Self-Management
- Social Awareness
- Relationship Skills
- Responsible Decision-Making

### Did You Know?

Self-regulation lays the foundation for social emotional learning. A child **has to be regulated first in order to develop the “core competencies.”** According to CASEL, the outcomes of social emotional learning are positive social behaviour, fewer conduct problems, less emotional distress, and better academic success (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning, 2013, see Well Aware, p. 35).

### School and Classroom Environment

In a culture of positive mental health, social-emotional values, attitudes, and practices are followed by the whole community everywhere and every day. In a whole-community approach, clear and consistent expectations for behaviour, a common language, and common practices are used every day to sustain a positive culture of mental health.

A whole-community approach includes the

- **Broader Community:** partnering with parents, service agencies, leadership programs, medical practitioners
- **School Community:** school staff, administration, board consultants implementing school-wide SEL curriculum
- **Classroom Community:** modelling, practising, encouraging integration of SEL concepts and thinking in all areas of life
When students have positive self-worth, a sense of belonging and trust, and positive relationships, they show prosocial behaviours when they care for others, demonstrate social justice, and make connections and contributions to the larger community.

A student’s self-esteem and confidence increases when he or she has a voice, opportunities to make decisions, and chances to deal with natural and logical consequences of his or her decisions. A healthy, caring environment supports these qualities. See pp. 37–38.

**AWARENESS ACTIVITY**

Teach students to use the 3 Rs of natural consequences:

- **Related** Is the consequence directly related to the situation?
- **Responsible** How does the consequence support responsible decision-making and behaviour?
- **Respectful** Is it respectful of the student’s dignity?

**Diversity and Inclusion**

These are crucial elements to incorporate when creating a healthy, caring environment. This includes embracing differences in race and cultures; sexual orientation; special physical, emotional, and behavioural needs; learning needs and strengths; and personal preferences or strengths. It is important to recognize and honour both individual differences and differences within larger cultural and social groups.

As an educator, it is helpful if you are aware of the different issues ethnocultural groups cope with. **Acculturative stress** may be experienced when adjusting to a new culture. Students may show signs of marginalized feelings, depression, anxiety, and identity confusion. **Intergenerational trauma** may be experienced when acculturative stress, isolation, and marginalization is passed on from one generation to the next.

Note that **different cultures have different understandings of mental health and wellness**. This may affect how children and youth show signs of mental difficulties, talk with others about challenges they experience, cope, and accept support and help.
First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples have identified important key attributes when promoting social inclusion of different cultures: integration and cooperation, interactivity, accessibility, and sensitivity. See Best Start Resources, p. 41.

Policies for safer schools and student groups that focus on supporting diversity reduce harassment, and create a more inclusive environment. Think about how the halls, walls, and resources in your school or board represent students, families, and your community.

**Ways to Promote Diversity and Inclusion (see p. 42)**

- Help all students feel included and welcomed.
- Encourage discussions about diversity.
- Present multiple perspectives on topics.
- Invite students, families, and community members to be cultural resources.
- Engage in regular diversity dialogues with students, families, and the community.
- Encourage prosocial behaviours: empathy, compassion, and social justice for all.

**AWARENESS ACTIVITY**

Being culturally responsive:

Watch a five-minute film festival on culturally responsive teaching.

Think about how you can support the diverse cultural needs of your students.

http://www.edutopia.org (enter “culturally responsive teaching film festival” in the search box)
Encouragement

Approaches that strengthen positive self-worth and belonging are important for the well-being of all students. According to Dreikurs, all children have a positive desire to solve problems and to belong. **Misbehaviour is seen as discouragement. It is the student’s way of expressing that they have reached their capacity to cope.** Discouraged students may seek attention, power, and revenge, or give up by showing symptoms of withdrawal and depression (Dreikurs, Cassel & Dreikurs, Ferguson, 2004, see *Well Aware*, p. 43).

In the past, misbehaviour has been viewed as uncooperative or defiant behaviour. Negative consequences were given to a misbehaving student to redirect or eliminate the behaviour.

Let us stop and think about this for a moment.

**Misbehaviour = Discouragement and an Inability to Cope**

**Ask yourself these questions:**

- How might you support a student who is acting out versus a student who is feeling discouraged or stressed?
- Would you use different approaches?
- Do you know the student’s story?

**How a behaviour is perceived determines the response to it.**

Encouragement is one way to support the well-being of all students. **Praise and encouragement are different.**

Praise focuses on a completed product or level of achievement. It can be manipulative and judgmental. A praised student seeks approval from others. There is an external locus of control, conformity, and self-worth based on others. As a result, the student develops a dependence on others.

Encouragement focuses on effort, respect, self-direction, and self-motivation. There is an internal locus on control, self-evaluation, understanding, and personal self-worth. An encouraged student develops self-confidence and self-reliance.

To develop a climate of encouragement,

- make relationships a priority.
- have respectful dialogues with all.
- practise encouragement daily.
- involve students in decision-making.
- resolve conflicts.
- have fun!

(Timothy Evans, 2004, see *Well Aware*, p. 43–44.)
Encouragement Statements to Try

I KNOW YOU CAN DO IT.
YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES.
WHAT DO YOU THINK ABOUT THIS?
I COULD REALLY USE YOUR HELP.
WHAT CAN WE DO TO SOLVE THIS?
YOU ARE WORKING SO HARD ON THIS.
I KNOW YOU DID YOUR BEST.
YOU MAKE ME SMILE.

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Encouragement Exchange:

Teachers  Begin weekly staff meetings with positive comments about your class or school, followed by staff concerns, articles or books of interest, etc.
Pair up with a colleague and give each other weekly encouragement statements for two months.
Give students written encouragement statements at the end of each week.

Students  Work together to create an encouragement poster about class strengths and challenges.
Discuss supportive strategies.

Physical Space  Create a student/family-friendly Encouragement Wall where encouragement and information can be displayed and shared with everyone in the school.
The Power of a Circle

Using circles is a great way to develop healthy, caring environments and to support social emotional learning. In a circle, self-knowledge and self-management comes from self-reflection and sharing experiences. Students have opportunities to reflect on real-life experiences to express themselves and receive feedback in a safe environment.

Did You Know?

The practice of a circle exists in different cultures. First Nations, Inuit, and Métis cultures use talking circles to promote wholeness, inclusion, connectedness, and continuity. To learn more about the origins of talking circles, see

http://firstnationspedagogy.ca (select “More/Pedagogy: Talking Circles”)

http://www.livingjusticepress.org

In a circle, everyone is equal and connected. Students can share observations about topics; describe how they feel, support, and encourage others; share inspirations; solve problems; resolve conflicts; make decisions that affect the classroom; and discuss community issues or world news. Circles can also be a safe and respectful way to discuss topics promoting positive mental health such as healthy choices, identifying feelings, collaborative problem-solving, and personal safety.

Circles can help students learn about each other, develop a sense of belonging, gain respect for self and others, show empathy and caring, engage in problem-solving, build skills in recognizing and managing emotions, address challenges in a positive and constructive way, and make responsible decisions.

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Circle Knowledge:

Watch a great video about using dialogue circles to support classroom management and restorative justice circles to solve problems.

Think about how you can use a circle to develop positive relationships with your students.

http://www.edutopia.org (enter “using dialogue circles to support classroom management" in the search box)

For information on facilitating a circle, see p. 45. For Guidelines for Initiating Classroom Circles, see pp. 47–48.
CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

☐ You understand that the whole-school whole-community approach consists of four interrelated areas.

☐ You recognize that just one supportive adult in a student’s life can make a difference.

☐ You acknowledge that it is important to regulate your emotions before helping others.

☐ You have learned that mental health literacy is on a continuum. What level are you at?

☐ You have discovered that self-destructive behaviour is a way to escape emotional pain. Do you know the possible warning signs and what you can do about them?

☐ You recognize that explicit teaching, embedded learning, modelling, and practice are needed to integrate positive mental health and social-emotional learning concepts.

☐ You understand that a student must be regulated to be able to learn.

☐ You see how the promotion of diversity and inclusion can be used in the classroom and school.

☐ You recognize that student misbehaviour equals discouragement and an inability to cope. How you perceive behaviour determines your response.

☐ You understand what a circle is, and how it can be used.
WELL-BEING FOCUS

Individual

- Reflect on the Role of the Teacher (see p. 19, Fig. 2.1) and how you can incorporate two points each month in your class/school.

Group

- Pair up with a colleague. Each of you can choose a different teacher role. Reflect on how you can incorporate the points in your classroom. Share this information with each other.
- Divide educators into four groups. All groups brainstorm how to address the points in their teacher roles. Groups then share the experiences over time with the larger group.
Chapter 3: A Social-Emotional Learning Approach

Emotions develop through experience and reflection. Childhood and adolescence lay the foundation for the development of social emotional skills. The ability to understand our feelings, share those feelings, and create caring relationships with others is central to our well-being.

Children and youth need many opportunities at each grade level to learn about emotions, to reflect on their experiences, and to express emotions in different ways such as verbally, in writing, and through art, drama, dance, and music.

Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is a person’s capacity to recognize feelings in oneself and others, motivate ourselves, and manage emotions in relationships. Each capacity is interrelated with the next (Daniel Goleman, 1998, see Well Aware, p. 55).

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Emotional Intelligence:

Watch a short video to learn why emotional intelligence is important in schools. Think about the multi-modal approach to teaching and how you can explicitly teach, embed, and model EI learning for your students.

Daniel Goleman Introduces Emotional Intelligence
The inner circle shows Goleman’s areas of social intelligence (see p. 55). The outer squares show social emotional skills that relate to each area.

The Collaborative for Academic and Social Emotional Learning (CASEL), co-founded by Goleman, has defined five core social emotional learning (SEL) competencies that integrate cognitive, affective, social, cultural, behavioural, and prosocial areas of development:

- **Self-awareness**: recognizing emotions and thoughts and their influence on behaviour
- **Self-management**: regulating emotions, thoughts, and behaviours effectively in different situations
- **Social-awareness**: taking the perspective of and empathizing with others
- **Relationship skills**: establishing and maintaining healthy and rewarding relationships
- **Responsible decision-making**: making constructive and respectful choices about personal behaviour and social interactions

See p. 57 for a full description.
Understanding Emotions

Emotions are made up of three parts:

1. Subjective experience: How we feel and at what level or gradation
2. Physiological response: Physical cues that help us recognize emotions in self and others
3. Behavioural or expressive response: Communicating our emotions through language and gestures.

The physiological and muscular sensations we feel in our bodies bring emotions to our conscious awareness. Specific situations may bring up emotions and body responses. Once we recognize these triggers, we can learn to calm ourselves down or motivate ourselves to be alert depending on what is needed in the situation.

There are 13 primary emotions common to all human cultures: fear, disgust, anger, surprise, happiness, sadness, amusement, excitement, contempt, shame, satisfaction, embarrassment, and pride.

Did You Know?

People often experience more than one emotion at a time, experience the same emotion in different ways, and have different emotional reactions to the same situation.

For useful strategies and activities to help students understand emotions, look at Developing Emotional Awareness, p. 64.
AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Social Emotional Understanding:

Hear about how teachers are using the SEL core competencies. How can you integrate SEL in your classroom?

Five Keys to Successful Social Emotional Learning (video): http://www.edutopia.org (enter “5 keys to successful social emotional learning” in the search box)

Information to help parents understand and develop SEL: http://www.parenttoolkit.com

Self-Regulation

Related to self-awareness, students who can manage their energy states, emotions, behaviours, and attention in constructive ways are promoting their well-being. Self-regulation supports optimal learning states.

Self-regulation: managing physical, emotional, and mental states in socially acceptable ways

Self-control is about controlling impulses. This is not self-regulation.

The awareness and ability to adjust emotional states is crucial in sustaining self-regulation. Emotional regulation is about up-regulating positive emotions and down-regulating negative ones. In Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation, Stuart Shanker describes a Five-Domain Model of Self-Regulation.
Five-Domain Model of Self-Regulation

For a summary of the domains, what regulation looks like in each domain, and what educators can do, see pp. 68–69.

Five Steps for Self-Regulation

1. Reframe (dysregulated behaviour is stressed behaviour)
2. Recognize the stressors
3. Reduce the stress
4. Reflect (what it feels like to be calm and stressed)
5. Respond (develop strategies to manage and lessen stress)

(Shanker, 2015, http://www.self-reg.ca/; select “Information” on the top menu to go to What is Self-Regulation?)
AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Understanding Self-Regulation:

- Dr. Shanker explains what self-regulation is and why it is crucial to learning. Dr. Stuart Shanker – Self-Regulation and Learning

- How does self-regulation help you think about your students differently?


- Read Calm, Alert, and Learning: Classroom Strategies for Self-Regulation.

- Encourage students to find what works for them by trying out different tools (see pp. 73–74).

Behaviour-management techniques do not enhance emotional understanding, social intelligence, or self-regulation. Instead, think about:

- What is the cause of the behaviour?
- How can stressors be decreased to help the student learn to self-regulate?

Applying the **Five Steps for Self-Regulation across all domains, and teaching students to self-regulate helps them to optimize their energy levels, emotions, and focus; to make learning meaningful; to create positive relationships; and to enrich their lives and well-being.**

**The Zones of Regulation**

The Zones of Regulation by Leah Kuypers is an approach based on cognitive behaviour theory and practices to recognize feelings, and to learn to up- and down-regulate emotions and physical states. Students become more aware of and able to control their own emotions and impulses, manage their sensory needs, and resolve conflicts. Emotions are grouped into four categories along a continuum of arousal. This structured program teaches students how they feel in each zone, and how to identify triggers and strategies to alert and calm that work for them.

**Note:** It is all right to stay with each lesson plan longer than suggested so that all students understand the concepts and have more time to practise them.
Blue: low arousal—sad, tired, bored
Green: optimal arousal—happy, focused
Yellow: heightened arousal—excited, stressed, frustrated
Red: extreme arousal—elated, angry, terrified

Note: There are no bad zones or bad feelings.

Self-Regulation and Zones of Regulation are easily incorporated throughout the academic curriculum:
- Math: Chart arousal levels
- Language Arts: Develop feeling vocabulary, identify feelings, develop social thinking, write about feelings, engage in discussions that promote speaking and listening skills
- Physical Education: Practise strategies to be calm and alert

Self-Regulation and Patterns of Stress

Stress is the body’s alarm response to situations perceived as overwhelming or threatening. Stress affects all the domains. It causes reactions such as increased heart rate, emotional sensitivity and mood swings, poor concentration, and withdrawal. At low levels, stress can be helpful to keep us alert, and can motivate or increase performance level. At higher levels of stress we feel overwhelmed, and we may shut down. To help students identify stress, see the Sample Stress Checklist, p. 76.

Being on the stress rollercoaster affects our energy states and arousal levels:
- **Hyper-responsive:**
  - High energy; oversensitivity to internal/external stimuli; crave sensation to calm self
- **Hypo-responsive:**
  - Low energy; withdraw to cope with too much stimuli; difficulty synchronizing sensations
- **Mixed Responsivity:**
  - Energy levels frequently shift; responses to sensation are misinterpreted by the brain and body
- **Modulated:**
  - Self-regulated; calm, alert, and learning
All students have individual differences that influence how they organize experiences and respond to stress. We need to understand a student’s individual differences in order to reach them to help them self-regulate.

Individual difference areas:
- Sensory modulation and processing
- Motor planning/postural control
- Auditory processing
- Receptive and expressive communication
- Visual-spatial processing
- Praxis (knowing how to do things to solve the social problem of the moment)

It can be overwhelming to think about each student’s specific needs or issues. But students can learn to regulate themselves. Consider students’ strengths, be flexible, work with students to make class-wide decisions, and practise Strategies for Balance and Well-Being (see pp. 80–81).

**Note:** It can take 4–6 weeks of daily relaxation practice for people to develop deep relaxation skills.
Social and Relationship Skills

To be socially successful, a student needs to identify their own needs and wants, and be aware of and appreciate the needs and wants of others. Executive function skills are the conscious control of what we think and do. A student can self-regulate using executive function skills to assess, anticipate, plan, execute, and adapt in activities with others to develop positive interactions and social relationships. Strategies such as **active and reflective listening and I-messages support the development of positive relationship skills.** For more strategies, see Social and Relationship Skill Development, pp. 83–84.

**AWARENESS ACTIVITY**

Relationship Skills:

A great way to spark a discussion with students: watch the five-minute film festival on kindness, empathy, and connection, and another on preventing bullying.

Think about how kindness and generosity promote a culture of positive mental health.

[http://www.edutopia.org](http://www.edutopia.org) (enter “kindness empathy connection film festival” in the search box)

[http://www.edutopia.org](http://www.edutopia.org) (enter “preventing bullying film festival” in the search box)

Communication and conflict-resolution skills are also vital to have successful social relationships. Some conflicts that occur in the classroom will require teacher intervention, but many misunderstandings can be solved by students themselves. Encourage students to define what is a positive peaceful classroom or community, discuss rules to maintain it, find compromises, do what is right or just, and understand and accept natural consequences of actions. Approaches such as Roots of Empathy or Restorative Justice Circles are programs that help to create peaceful classrooms (see pp. 86–89).

**Responsible Decision-Making**

By thinking beyond themselves in the moment, a child or youth is more likely to select choices that have positive social and future benefits.

There are three types of decisions:

- No decision: go along with the decisions others make
- Snap decision: quick choice made without consideration of the result
- Responsible decision: considering others and the future
As an educator, you can teach students to make responsible decisions for themselves by following this easy framework:

### Six Steps to Responsible Decision-Making

- **IDENTIFY YOUR CHOICES**
- **WHAT IS BEST FOR YOU NOW?**
- **CONSIDER OTHERS (NOT ONLY ME)**
- **CONSIDER YOUR FUTURE (NOT ONLY NOW)**
- **MAKE A CHOICE AND DO IT**
- **ASSESS CHOICE (HOW DID IT WORK?)**

**Children need to know age- and developmentally appropriate facts** at each grade level about the harmful nature of eating issues, alcohol, street drugs, and common prescription drugs so that they can make responsible decisions. These facts can contribute to their own physical and mental health development.

**Did You Know?**

Students with emotional difficulties are at a greater risk of using alcohol or drugs to relieve painful emotions.

How will this awareness affect your practice in the classroom?

How can you apply this information to your daily routine?

High levels of stress are a factor of substance abuse. Teens who are stressed and unable to self-regulate may use a substance for relief from anxiety, low moods, or social pressures. They may use the substance again for short-term relief.

There is a link between excessive weight in childhood and ill health, including diabetes, hypertension, emotional problems, and poor social well-being.

Some people use food as a way to soothe emotional discomfort. Eating to regulate emotions includes approach/avoidance: eat or not eat. This may lead to cravings for fatty foods and impulsive binge-eating, followed by guilt and purging.

Responsible decision-making to address such issues can involve assertiveness skills, drug knowledge, positive life goals, and self-confidence. Teach students that food is fuel, to eat when hungry, to choose healthy satisfying foods, to enjoy what they are eating, to stop when full, to reflect on emotions, and to talk about problems and emotions instead of suppressing or transferring them. Emotional self-regulation is important to support behavioural self-regulation and responsible decision-making.
CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

☐ You understand that the ability to understand and share feelings and create caring relationships is central to well-being.

☐ You are aware that emotional intelligence helps us to guide thinking and behaviour to develop positive relationships.

☐ You know the five SEL Core Competencies.

☐ You acknowledge that people often experience more than one emotion at the same time, experience the same emotion in different ways, and have different emotional reactions to the same situation.

☐ You recognize that self-regulation supports optimal learning states. You know the Five-Domain Model of Self-Regulation, and the Five Steps of Self-Regulation.

☐ You comprehend that Zones of Regulation help students to up-regulate and down-regulate emotions and physical stress.

☐ You acknowledge that individual differences affect how a child organizes experiences and resolves stress.

☐ You can understand that active and reflective listening and I-messages support positive relationship skills.

☐ You know the Six Steps to Responsible Decision-Making.
WELL-BEING FOCUS

Individual

- Think about the Strategies for Balance and Well-being (see p. 80) and Community Connections (see p. 81). How can you use these strategies for yourself? With your students?

Group

- Use the Circle format and choose a strategy from pp. 80–81. Have each person reflect on how they felt before and after experiencing the strategy.
- Pair with a colleague to think about the Social and Relationship Skills (see p. 82) and how they can be incorporated into classroom routines.
- Practise active and reflective listening skills and I-messages with each other.
Chapter 4: A Strengths-Based Approach

When we focus on problems, risks, discipline, and deficits, we lose sight of the need to build positive foundations that prevent problems, promote strengths, and give all students the skills to deal with adversity and achieve well-being. Pivotal to strengths-based learning are the values of trust, respect, intentionality, and optimism.

Using a strengths-based perspective helps to understand and nurture all students by

- Acknowledging and supporting their differences and unique gifts
- Not allowing an issue to define a child, but building a strong social-emotional foundation and targeting support from a strengths-first approach
- Encouraging them to use their strengths to solve problems and achieve their personal goals

**Note:** Gifts such as high intelligence and high sensitivity can be sources of stress for students, and may negatively affect their well-being if not viewed from a strengths perspective. See Principles of Strengths-Based Teaching Practice, pp. 98–99.

**Recognizing and Building Strengths**

Children and youth are often unaware of their strengths, have negative self-concepts, or may believe they have strengths without understanding what those capacities mean. Positive change comes by connecting students’ strengths with their wishes and desires.

Help students understand their strengths by giving them opportunities to explore, reflect, apply, and build on those capacities. To raise awareness of how students can use their strengths to achieve, accomplish, and overcome, see Strengths-Based Strategies for the Classroom, pp. 102–104.

**AWARENESS ACTIVITY**

**Strengths-Based Challenge:**

Take the challenge and use only strengths-based words and positive language for two days. Challenge your colleagues and students to do the same! See p. 97 for a list of words.
Understanding the Gifts

Recognizing and understanding a student’s unique qualities as gifts, rather than problems, supports inclusion, capacity building, and positive well-being.

Children have multiple and diverse aptitudes and capacities, and they are not fixed. People use different styles in different circumstances. This highlights the importance of differentiated instruction and multi-modal teaching approaches.

Remember?

Learning is more meaningful when it is tied to personal strengths and goals, when students celebrate and learn from each other, and when they explore and build their capacities. See Fig. 4.2, Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, on p. 109.

The Multiple Intelligences

- Verbal-linguistic
- Bodily-kinesthetic
- Musical-rhythmic
- Intrapersonal
- Logical-mathematic
- Naturalistic
- Interpersonal
- Visual-spatial

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Multiple Intelligence Assessment:

Try the MIA and see if you learn something new about yourself.

http://www.edutopia.org (enter “multiple intelligences self-assessment” in the search box)

Multiple Intelligences Thrive in Smartville:

Think about how you can integrate MI learning in your class or school.

Multiple Intelligences Thrive in Smartville
The Gifts

High Intelligence
- Strengths: curious, intense, creative, abstract and independent thinker, long attention span
- Challenges: different learning and social interests than peers, needs high levels of intellectual stimulation, may argue or withdraw
- Strategies: value intelligence, teach SEL skills, support affinities-based learning, arrange mentorship (see pp. 106–107)

High Sensitivity
- Strengths: processes info thoroughly, has highly tuned nervous system, observant, reflective, intuitive, empathetic, emotionally sensitive
- Challenges: easily misunderstood and overstimulated, cautious about change, sensitive to being evaluated
- Strategies: minimize visual and auditory stimuli, provide quiet spaces, teach SEL, encourage expression through the arts (see pp. 112–113)

Introversion
- Strengths: careful, deliberate, conscientious, strong sense of conviction, determined, persistent, insightful problem-solver
- Challenges: struggles to fit in, may be perceived as aloof, disconnected, or unfriendly, difficulty speaking spontaneously, often uncomfortable in large groups
- Strategies: provide quiet spaces to recharge, think, create; find like-minded peers, teach SEL, encourage affinities-based learning, give time to reflect before responding (see pp. 117–118)

High Activity
- Strengths: high energy, spontaneous, divergent thinking, playful, action-focused, curious, imaginative
- Challenges: easily distracted, trouble focusing or sitting for long periods, acts impulsively, acts out
- Strategies: minimize visual and auditory distractions, integrate physical activity throughout the day, teach SEL, teach and practise relaxation skills, practise positive thinking, teach decision-making skills (see pp. 119–120)

High Excitement
- Strengths: adapts to different situations, motivated and focused to meet goals
- Challenges: social and performance anxiety, avoidance behaviours, may be perceived as shy or obstinate
- Strategies: teach relaxation skills, reframe anxiety, gradually desensitize, encourage visualization of success (see pp. 123–124)
Strengths Versus Discouragements

Struggles and challenges can be opportunities to learn when understood from a strengths perspective. When gifts along with challenges are not supported, these characteristics can turn into discouragement. Depression is a severe form of discouragement and sadness that has multiple pathways. Students may struggle to focus and concentrate, be tearful over minor issues, withdraw from activities and peer groups, and minimize symptoms. Promoting character strengths, positive emotions, positive relationships, and meaningful accomplishments helps to deal with stress and mental health challenges.

Honouring and nurturing the gifts of each individual develops class and community strengths in diversity. Focusing on strengths first and creating positive experiences, goals, and strong caring relationships brings us closer to optimal learning. This focus will also encourage positive well-being in classrooms, schools, and a community of care for all.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

☐ You understand that focusing on deficits does not promote strengths or give students skills to deal with adversity.

☐ You recognize that a Strengths-Based Approach acknowledges strengths, supports differences, encourages personal problem-solving, and builds strong social-emotional skills.

☐ You acknowledge that it is important to recognize a person’s unique qualities as gifts rather than problems.

☐ You comprehend that students are often unaware of their strengths or have a negative self-concept.

☐ You can identify the Eight Aptitudes of Multiple Intelligence.

☐ You know the Five Gifts.

☐ You recognize that struggles and challenges are learning opportunities when understood from a strengths perspective.

☐ You can understand that learning is more meaningful when connected to personal strengths and goals—students celebrate and learn from each other.

☐ You realize that honouring and nurturing unique differences develops class and community strengths in diversity.
WELL-BEING FOCUS

Individual

- Self-assess your strengths to create a personal strengths profile that can be used as an example for students (see p. 102).
- Brainstorm with students strengths-based characters in the media, films, stories, and your community. Discuss how these individuals turned personal challenges into opportunities to learn and grow.

Group

- With colleagues, think about planning with strengths in mind (see pp. 102–104). How can you include the strategies in your classroom?
- Discuss the Gifts with other educators (see pp. 105–122). How does this strengths-based understanding change your perception of your students? What strategies for well-being can you use class-wide?
Chapter 5: Resilient, Active, and Flourishing

There are many pathways to reach optimal mental health. Skills, attributes, and resources that develop positive well-being and help us deal with challenges in life enable all to flourish. Resilience, physical activity, and flourishing are at the centre of positive mental health and well-being.

The Medicine Wheel is a model that uses a whole-person perspective on well-being. The circle represents the life cycle and a balance in all dimensions: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual of the individual, family, and community. A person can focus on each dimension individually, but they are all connected and influence each other. With the focus on positive well-being versus deficits, the Medicine Wheel is a strengths-based approach that fosters positive mental health promotion, healing, and pathways to well-being.

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Medicine Wheel:

Learn more about how medicine wheels can be used in schools. [http://www.cea-ace.ca](http://www.cea-ace.ca) (enter “nicole bell teaching medicine wheel” in the search box)

Resilience

Resilience encompasses skills and positive characteristics that people gain from life experiences and relationships. These tools and attributes help us solve problems, cope with challenges, and bounce back from adversity. Developing and maintaining resilience is a lifelong process.
### Five Skills to Develop Resilience

| Positive Relationships          | • One caring adult makes a difference  
|                               | • Develop trust, caring, empathy |
| Flexibility                    | • Try new things  
|                               | • Learn from mistakes and challenges  
|                               | • Celebrate efforts  
|                               | • Analyze problems and consider alternatives |
| Realistic Action Planning      | • Assess if action/situation is healthy  
|                               | • Be aware that positive outcomes need planning, effort, action |
| Listening and Problem Solving  | • Active and reflective listening  
|                               | • Aware of situation/context and non-verbal cues |
| Managing Emotions              | • Identify emotions  
|                               | • Have positive mindset and perspective  
|                               | • Find humour in a situation |

(See pp. 139–142.)

### 3 Cs of Resilience

- Control: Taking charge of aspects of the situation and influencing a positive outcome
- Challenge: Mistakes are viewed as opportunities for learning and growth
- Commitment: Active engagement in work and activities that are meaningful

For attitudes that foster resiliency, see What Makes Us Resilient? on p. 138.

### AWARENESS ACTIVITY

**Resiliency Resource:**

Reaching IN…Reaching OUT—guidebook, skills videos, books for adults and children  
(see also the Parent Website at the top right of the home page):

[http://www.reachinginreachingout.com](http://www.reachinginreachingout.com)
Barriers to Flexible and Resilient Thinking (see pp. 144–146)

WATCH OUT FOR…

Strategies for Building Resilience

- Positive Self-talk: Identify thinking traps, explanatory style; use positive self-statements
- Coping Cards: Reminders of personal coping strategies, skills, positive statements, calming facts
- Mindfulness Strategies: Breathing and eating slowly to develop awareness of body, mind, and feelings

(See pp. 147–148 for more information.)

Social-Ecological Perspective on Resilience

There are seven common mental-health-enhancing experiences, referred to as “tensions,” that include both individual and environmental aspects. Individuals develop skills for resilience when they successfully negotiate a balance among the tensions. Teachers and schools need to ensure that all students have access to school resources and engage in school activities to develop resilience skills. See Ungar’s Seven Tensions for Resiliency Development (pp. 153–154).
Principles to develop resilience for at-risk children and youth:

1. Shape the student’s environment to support his or her development.
2. Early intervention is best, but it is never too late to help.
3. Complex problems need a whole-school approach.
4. Consistency and connection with one positive adult is most effective.

See Supporting Resilience for Children and Youth at-Risk, pp. 155–156.

**Physical Activity**

Sedentary behaviours leave people at risk for decreased fitness, poor self-esteem, weak academic performance, obesity, or increased aggression. Regular exercise helps to sustain mental and physical health and learn new skills. Exercise is also associated with improved interpersonal relationships, social skills, self-image, confidence, cognitive functioning, better psychological functioning, and overall life satisfaction and happiness.

**Did You Know?**

Exercise also improves brain function.

In the book *The Spark*, John Ratey describes how exercise increases the chemicals in our brains that support the functions of thought and emotion. Stress disrupts this. **Exercise strengthens the interconnections in the brain, while inactivity causes the brain to slow down.** Activity is crucial to well-being (see p. 158).

**AWARENESS ACTIVITY**

Exercise Improves Brain Function:

Think about how you can use playful movement daily to “turn your student’s brains on.”

**Run, Jump, Learn! How Exercise Can Transform our Schools** (John Ratey)

Guidelines for educators; the new PE; using the Spark in Schools: [http://www.sparkinglife.org/](http://www.sparkinglife.org/)
Promoting Physical Activity in Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Create Safe Environment</th>
<th>• Comfortable regardless of body shape, ability, gender, culture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Approach</td>
<td>• Meaningful part of daily routines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Make connections between physical/mental health and well-being</td>
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<tr>
<td>Set Reasonable Goals</td>
<td>• SMART or ABCD models</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Plan for derailing issues</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Limit intensity</td>
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<td>Maintenance</td>
<td>• Makes you feel good now</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• See positive change</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Supportive network</td>
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(See pp. 158–164.)

Flourishing

Flourishing is an area of positive psychology that focuses on understanding and creating well-being. In Seligman’s concept of flourishing, a person needs to engage in experiences that involve all five elements to flourish (see pp. 165–169).

**Flourishing:** positive emotions, engagement, meaning, and personal strengths that create well-being

**Five Elements of Flourishing**

- Positive Emotion: Fun and enjoyment
- Engagement: Passionate and in the flow
- Meaning: Sense of purpose
- Accomplishment: Competency (curiosity and a love for learning)
- Positive Relationships: Connection, belonging
Flourishing and Mental Health

The absence of mental health issues does not mean positive mental health, just as the absence of disease does not infer physical health. All people can flourish with or without mental health challenges.

Mental Health Commission of Canada Strategies:

- Comprehensive, home-based approaches to support parents
- Early intervention
- School-based programs to support health, social-emotional development, build resilience
- Targeted programs for at-risk children and youth

Promoting a culture of positive mental health in schools develops resiliency skills, encourages an active lifestyle, and provides opportunities for all students to flourish.

CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

☐ You can understand that the Medicine Wheel is a whole-person, strengths-based approach that fosters positive mental health.

☐ You know the Five Skills to Develop Resilience.

☐ You are watching out for barriers to flexibility and resilient thinking.

☐ You have tried positive self-talk, coping cards, and mindful strategies to build resilience.

☐ You understand the social-ecological perspective of resilience and how schools can help students gain access to resources for success and well-being.

☐ You acknowledge that exercise improves brain function and is important to well-being.

☐ You understand that it is important to integrate daily meaningful physical activity throughout the curriculum.

☐ You know the Five Elements of Flourishing.
WELL-BEING FOCUS

Individual

- Think about the Five Skills to Develop Resilience (see pp. 139–142). How can you actively model the skills for students?
- How can you directly teach these skills and provide opportunities for students to experience these skills too?

Group

- With colleagues, use Ungar’s Seven Tensions (see pp. 153–154) to assess your school to develop a Plan for Resiliency Development.
- What tensions have been addressed? What areas need support and strategies?
Chapter 6: What About Me? Educator Well-Being

How educators feel makes a difference to their ability to respond effectively to the challenges they face. Typically, the well-being of teachers has been given little importance and was seen through a deficit-only lens, focusing on stress and burnout. There is a strong need to view teacher well-being from a strengths-first approach. What we have learned in promoting student well-being is now applied to your wellness tool kit—viewed through a different lens.

Teacher well-being matters!

Teacher well-being promotes student well-being.

It is of utmost importance to acknowledge and celebrate the unique personal strengths and talents each teacher brings to his or her school. Teaching to strengths or passions takes learning to a deeper and more enriching level for students; you enjoy what you are doing, have a sense of competence, and enjoy positive relationships with students and colleagues that contribute to a positive sense of well-being.

Social emotional intelligence also applies to teaching. It includes recognizing and responding to feelings of self and others, teaching social emotional skills, building positive relationships, fostering resilience, and encouraging physical activity and characteristics of positive mental health that allow you and your students to flourish.

The Value of Social Emotional Skills

- Good at regulating emotions and building positive relationships = higher job satisfaction and positive feelings
- Developing own social emotional skills = positive and effective learning environment
- Positive teacher well-being = whole school approach
- Encourages emotional awareness, incorporates daily reflection, tackles stressors, creates a culture of improvement and mutual support

(See pp. 180–183.)
Resources for Educator Social Emotional Learning

Training for social emotional skills can decrease stress and job dissatisfaction while increasing teacher efficacy.

The Emotionally Intelligent Teacher by CASEL is a workshop that gives teachers strategies to increase emotional intelligence skills in personal and professional relationships. It also provides activities to increase skills for improving interactions within the school community.

RULER is a whole-school approach that teaches about emotional intelligence. The ruler tools enhance each person’s ability to understand and regulate emotions, empathize, develop decision-making skills, and build positive relationships to create a healthy social emotional school community. To learn more about RULER, visit http://ei.yale.edu (select “RULER/RULER Overview”).

AWARENESS ACTIVITY

Social Emotional Learning in Teacher Education:

Watch a short video to hear more about the link between teacher well-being and social emotional learning.

How can teachers manage their own stress while being mindful of their students’ emotional and physical well-being in the classroom?

http://selted.weebly.com/

Teacher Resilience and Personal Competency

The five areas of personal competence that Goleman first described also applies to the role of teaching:

Self-Awareness

Understand your emotions and how they affect your work. Know your strengths and limits. Have a balanced lifestyle. Develop a strong sense of self-worth and understanding. Learn by trying. See challenges as learning experiences and have time for reflection.

Managing Emotions

Self-regulate up or down as needed. Use skills of self-control. Be adaptable and flexible. Name emotions and identify healthy strategies to attain balance.
**Self-Motivation**

Take initiative and be innovative. Think creatively and be optimistic.

**Empathy**

Be aware and sensitive to the thoughts, feelings, and needs of others. Maintain an awareness that dysregulated behaviour is stressed behaviour.

**Note:** Unmet needs drive dysregulated behaviour for both adults and students.

**Managing Relationships**

Foster healthy relationships through active listening and open communication. Negotiate, mediate, and work cooperatively to solve problems and manage change.

**Strategies to Develop a Healthy Work-Life Balance**

- Build a professional network
- Continue to pursue professional development
- Expect leadership from administration
- Exercise a voice in decision-making
- Have balance in what you do

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**AWARENESS ACTIVITY**

The Importance of Self-Care:

Social workers do it. You can, too. Check out this resource to learn more about self-care, develop a self-care plan, and explore assessments and activities:

[http://socialwork.buffalo.edu](http://socialwork.buffalo.edu) (enter “self-care starter kit” in the search box)
FOCUSING ON ACADEMICS BEFORE STUDENTS ARE REGULATED DOES NOT WORK.

MANY OF THE STRATEGIES THAT HELP STUDENTS TO SELF-REGULATE HELP TEACHERS, TOO.

SELF-REGULATION AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING ARE NOT INNATE. THEY ARE SKILLS THAT NEED TO BE TAUGHT AND LEARNED.

ALL BEHAVIOUR IS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION.

ACTIVELY MODEL YOUR SELF-REGULATION STRATEGIES FOR STUDENTS TO SEE AND HEAR.

SHARE THE BURDEN. INCLUDE STUDENTS IN DECISION-MAKING WHEN POSSIBLE.

JOIN YOUR STUDENTS IN THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING JOURNEY.

A Caring Inclusive Professional Environment

A supportive school environment strengthens teachers’ social emotional abilities and creates a culture for using these skills effectively. The graphic on the next page summarizes the characteristics of a positive school working environment.
Creating a Positive School Working Environment

| Belonging                      | • A connection to school and professional learning environment  
|                               | • Create a strong communal identity                          |
| Values                        | • Foster respect, acceptance, trust, inclusivity, caring  
|                               | • Respect and dignified treatment as professionals         |
| Strengths                     | • Acknowledge teachers' diverse and individual strengths   
|                               | • Mistakes are seen as learning opportunities              |
| Learning                      | • Teacher decision-making, degree of autonomy in work      
|                               | • Opportunities to learn SEL skills, reflect, share, innovate |

(See pp. 192–193.)

A caring and inclusive professional environment that supports a culture of positive mental health makes it easier to attain shared goals. It also provides opportunities to make positive connections with parents and to access community resources to further enhance well-being for all.

Managing Stress

Our responses to tensions such as workload, deadlines, and other people produce stress. Stress is good if it motivates us. Stress is problematic when it controls or overwhelms us. Stress affects us physically, mentally, emotionally, and behaviourally. See Recognizing Stress-Related Symptoms (pp. 194–195).
Managing Stressors

Begin at number 1 and proceed through the list as needed.

1. Have clear expectations of self and others
2. Change only what is possible
3. Promote celebration of differences
4. Don’t procrastinate
5. Keep a to-do list and prioritize
6. Be creative
7. Create a positive work space
8. Connect with co-workers
9. Take stress-management training
10. Use EAP services as needed

(See pp. 195–196.)

Teacher Engagement

Teachers who are flourishing are actively engaged; recognize their strengths; and have opportunities to hypothesize, research, and reflect both independently and collaboratively in relation to their classroom and whole-school environment to attain positive personal and professional goals.

Collaborative Inquiry is a model for professional learning that supports educator choice and decision-making, action planning, positive collaboration, open-ended investigation, and time for reflection to enhance professional learning and understanding. Collaborative Inquiry involves one or more teachers working together to address a learning need.

Five Stages of Collaborative Inquiry

- Gather information
- Plan to implement
- Implement
- Observe and assess
- Reflect and extend

In an inquiry cycle, professional learning occurs in each phase, trial and error is encouraged, and instant success is not expected. Teachers learn from one another and grow together through comparison, collaboration, and understanding. This professional-learning model supports a strengths-first, whole-school whole-community approach that fosters teacher efficacy, teacher well-being, and student well-being.
CHECK FOR UNDERSTANDING

☐ You can understand that teaching to strengths and passions takes learning to a deeper, more enriching level.

☐ You are aware of the value of social emotional skills for yourself and your students.

☐ You recognize that CASEL and Edutopia are good resources for teachers.

☐ You know the Five Areas of Personal Competency.

☐ You acknowledge that many of the strategies that help students self-regulate help educators too.

☐ You can identify the elements of a professional, inclusive, caring environment.

☐ You recognize the signs of stress and what you can do to manage stress.

☐ You understand that there are Five Stages of Collaborative Inquiry that support teacher engagement.

WELL-BEING FOCUS

Individual

- Think about social emotional intelligence in teaching and Community Connection strategies (pp. 180–183). How are you using these strategies to enhance your own learning? To strengthen your relationship with colleagues? With students?

Group

- With colleagues, reflect on the five areas of Teacher Resilience and Personal Competency (pp. 185–188). In which areas do you feel strong? In what areas do you want to develop further knowledge? Talk about how you will do this. Share the experience with the group.

- Think about the strategies to develop a healthy work-life balance (p. 189) with other educators. What strategies are already in place in your school? How can you support each other to strengthen these areas further? Implement others?
Putting It All Together

It all starts with you! Creating a culture of positive mental health starts with educators and their own mental health and well-being. Putting yourself at the top of the list enables you to better advocate for and support the mental health development of students. The more you understand about evidence-based mental health strategies, the more you can utilize them for yourself and students. The whole-school whole-community approach is pivotal for flourishing and creating a culture of positive mental health and well-being.

Remember: What You Do Makes a Difference!

Teacher well-being promotes student well-being.

Take time each day to reflect on the essential components of positive mental health, and on what you are doing to enhance it for yourself and your students.

May you continue your journey to flourish!
Paula Jurczak is a Registered Clinical Counselor, Registered Social Worker, and Certified DIR Clinician and Training Leader in BC specializing in assessment and treatment of infants, children, and adolescents with complex mental health issues, specialized medical conditions, and special needs. Paula holds a Master’s Degree in Counseling Psychology and a Bachelor’s Degree in Social Work. She works collaboratively with The Mehrit Centre (TMC) to support Self-Regulation in schools and social service agencies across Canada. Paula also presents internationally and provides psychoeducational workshops, reflective parent coaching, online support services and support groups, and consultation to hospitals, mental health clinics, preschools, and schools.
Promoting positive mental health and well-being through knowledge and understanding

The study guide can be used by educators working on their own or with a partner, or by a book study group leader, to enhance exploration of Well Aware: Developing Resilient, Active, and Flourishing Students.

What’s in this resource?
• Chapter-by-chapter summaries of key concepts
• Further resources to delve deeper into chapter topics
• Personal awareness and small-group inquiry activities
• A well-being focus for each chapter
• Checklists to assess understanding