



Counselor's Corner

June 2018

Fostering Well-Being in Children

Well-being comprises of a set of skills that can be learned and cultivated over time, just like learning to play a musical instrument or riding a bike. Evidence suggests mental training in the areas of (1) positive outlook, (2) rebounding from negative emotion, (3) mindfulness, and (4) caring for others can make a difference in improving well-being and rewiring areas of the brain

Positive Outlook: Prolonging positive emotion and having a positive outlook have been shown to improve psychological well-being.

Rebounding from Negative Emotion: Resilience or how quickly a person recovers from adversity, can result in less negative emotion.

Mindfulness: When people are really focused on what they're doing, and their minds are not wandering, they actually feel better about themselves. Studies show that mindfulness -- being in the present moment -- can lessen our tendency to want and desire things we don't have.

Caring for Others: Empathy, compassion and gratitude comprise another component of well-being. There's substantial evidence to suggest that engaging in acts of generosity is an effective strategy to increase well-being. By being generous to others, you benefit them and yourself.

Well-Being Tips for Children and Families

Create a Quiet Space: To balance the busyness of our lives, dedicate some time and space for quiet. Find a spot where you and your children can pause for a few moments and develop a sense of familiarity with quiet. Notice how, when we allow our bodies to rest in quiet, our minds can settle and we may become aware of things around us and in us in a new and different way.

Pay Attention with Purpose and Curiosity: With mindfulness, we bring our attention to whatever is happening in the present moment in

the environment around us (like sounds or sights), and in our internal experience (like sensations or emotions). For example, take a walk outside and try to notice sounds of all types.

Pause and Notice the Breath: Bringing attention to the sensations and movement of the breath in the body can be calming and quieting. With children, explore the breath by having them lie on their back and notice the movement of the chest or belly as the breath moves in and out of the body.

Offer Caring Wishes: We can practice caring and compassion for ourselves and others by offering wishes such as, "May we be happy, may we be safe, may we be filled with love." Caring wishes can be used when we experience discomfort before taking a test, when an emergency vehicle passes with its sirens blaring, or simply to send kindness to another person, knowing that we all wish to be happy. When we share a caring wish verbally or even silently to ourselves, it can help to calm emotions and strengthen our feelings of connection.

Practice Gratitude: Asking ourselves what we are grateful for opens our eyes to the goodness around us and supports our overall sense of well-being. We can cultivate gratitude by taking a few minutes to reflect on the good things that happened during the day, keeping a list of people and things for which we are grateful and/or creating a gratitude journal using words and pictures. By pausing and paying attention, we can appreciate things we might otherwise take for granted such as the warmth of the sun, clean water to drink, a neighbor's smile and even our breath.

This edition of Counselor's Corner comprises of two abbreviated articles from the Center for Healthy Minds:

<https://centerhealthyminds.org/about/why-well-being>

<https://centerhealthyminds.org/join-the-movement/well-being-tips-for-children-and-their-families>

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