

# **Mental Health and Well Being for Youth**

**Presented by Jess Willows  
and Kyla Cleator**

# Brief Introduction

Jess

Kyla

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# Shape of the Day

Framework for our presentation/discussion is around Mental Health and Well Being for Youth (impacted by the pandemic but we are not necessarily going to focus on the pandemic). This will not be about Mental Illness...we are not MH experts! This is about our collective experience in schools with youth and families.

- Research
  - Resources and Strategies
  - Questions
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# Sharing Current Research on social-emotional well being for youth during the pandemic

Middle Years Development Instrument: Children's Perspectives on their Health, Well-Being and Assets both Before and During a Global Pandemic (2020-21)

*UBC School of Population and Public Health*

*27 school districts and independent schools, 39,000 students in grades 4-8*

*Monitor social emotional competence, well-being, mental & physical health, assess influences of large scale events*

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# Key Findings

- Older grades (Gr. 7-8) lower levels of well-being compared with previous years
- Younger grades (Gr. 4-5) reported higher levels of well-being than older grades; consistent with previous years
- Well-being was positively related to the number of assets in their lives
- After school time looked very different in 2020-21 (increase in screen time, decrease in physical/educational activities)
- Self-regulation decreased in both older and younger grades

*Assets: connectedness to adults and peers, healthy levels of nutrition and sleep, positive school experiences and after-school activities*

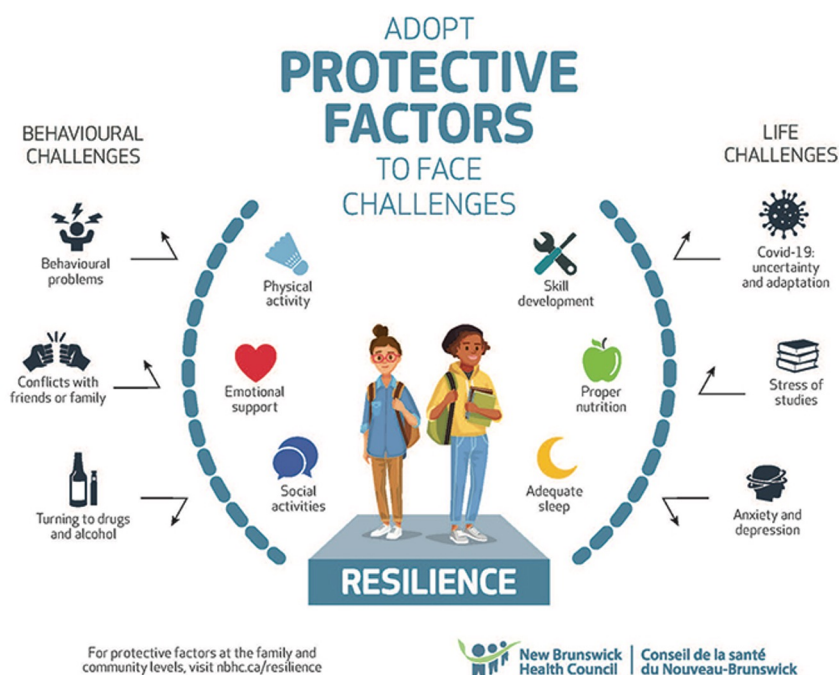
*“Protective factors”*

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# Let's talk about assets...protective factors

Research has consistently documented significant declines in well-being as children enter early adolescence, however these declines are not inevitable through a focus on protective factors and promoting assets:

- Connectedness to adults and peers
- Nutrition & sleep
- Positive school experiences
- After-school activities



# Health Link BC has some great resources!

## Mental Health Tips

In this section, learn tips on how to boost your mental well-being and keep your mind active.

- An Active and Healthy Brain
- Belly-Breathing (Diaphragmatic Breathing)
- Connect: Build Positive Relationships
- Five Ways to Well-being
- Keep Learning: Open Your Mind
- Keeping an active and healthy mind
- Mental and Emotional Benefits of Activity
- Notice: Savour the Moment

All of these focus on action of some kind.

## Ex. Five Ways to Well-being

Connect...

Be active...

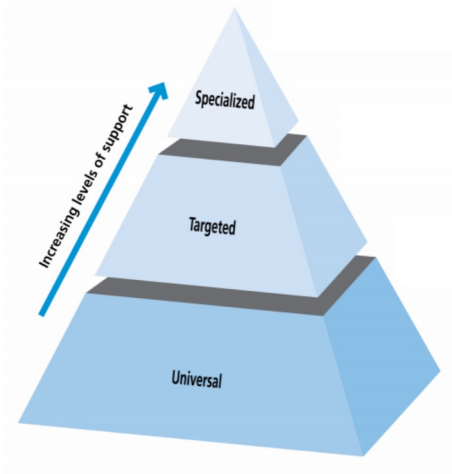
Notice...

Keep learning...

Give...

# Understanding the Pyramid of Support

We are including this into the discussion to share what schools use in terms of providing support.



Understanding the pyramid; it's about organizing supports not the students. Triage example

Understanding mental health vs. mental illness. Recognizing the difference.

Red flags, developing a bit of an understanding about where things are falling in the pyramid.

Knowing when it's time to reach out, who, what... etc.

Understanding the boundaries. Example of crisis incident.

Knowing our role...the idea of notice, wonder, curiosity and so on.

Knowing your lane!



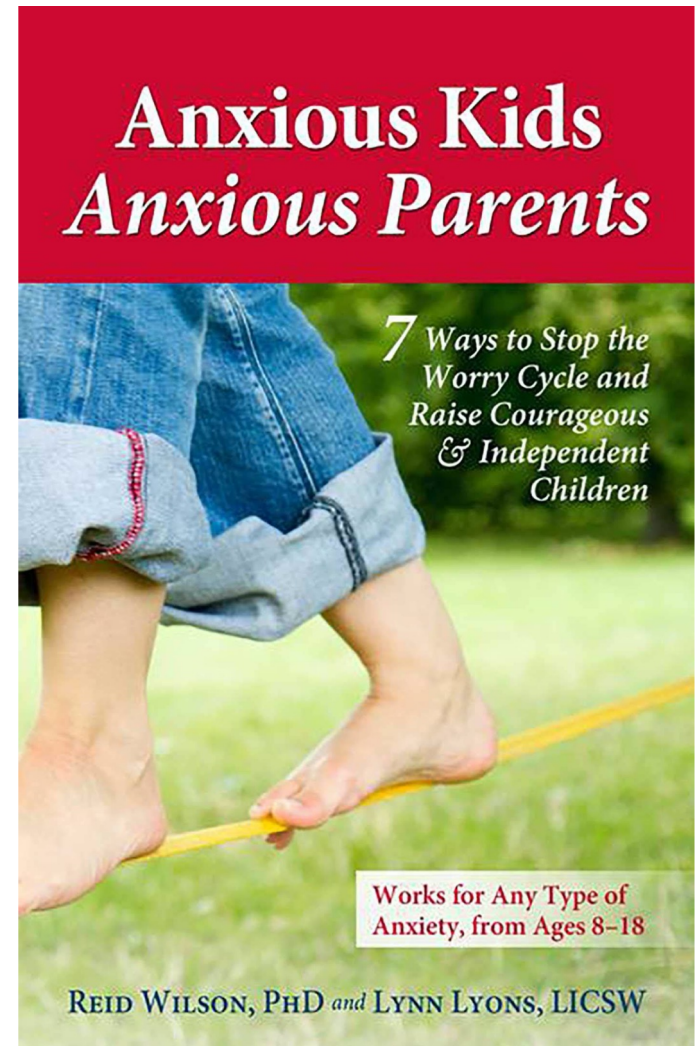
# Managing Anxiety

Lynn Lyons

Anxious Kids Anxious Families (2013)

Normal, Expected Strategies (that don't work very well long term):

- Accommodation
- Overprotection (step in quickly)
- External (vs. Internal) reassurance
- Preparation (talking, planning, if-maybe-so-ing)
- Stepping in to fix the problem
- Avoidance
- Express worry and fear (safety chatter)
- Frustration



# Anxiety...

Reassurance and anxiety: short term decrease, long term increase

-It's quicker and easier to reassure...but don't! Instead, cue teen to externalize worry and talk to it. When teen asks for reassurance, remind him/her to give himself/herself that reassurance. "How might you answer that?" "That sounds like worry talking. What can you say back?"

Other pieces Lynn Lyons teaches (including strategies on how to...):

-Expect to worry

-Be unsure & uncomfortable on purpose

-It is not about eliminating or avoiding but perceiving and managing through a different lens. Make a plan and take action on that plan. Problem solving emphasis.

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# Anxiety Canada website

## Anxiety Canada: Anxiety in Youth

A fantastic resource for supporting your kids with anxiety.

Including the “Mindshift” App

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## things to say to your anxious child

1. I'm here with you. You're safe.

2. Do you want to do some dancing or running to get rid of the worried energy?

3. Tell me about it.



4. What would you like to say to your worry? What might your worry say back? Then what?

5. Let's draw it.

6. What does it feel like in your body? Where is the worry? How big is it?



7. Match your breaths to mine.

8. Let's think up some endings for what could happen (anxious ones, goofy ones, AND realistic ones).

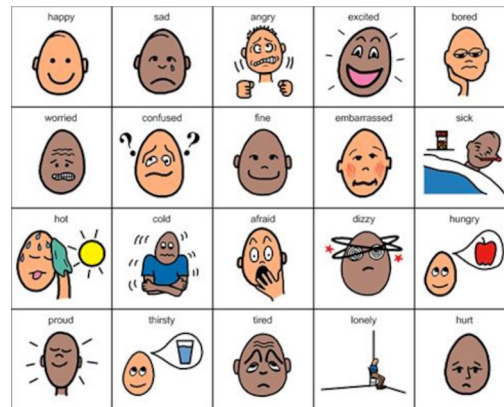


9. What's something we could do to help you feel better?

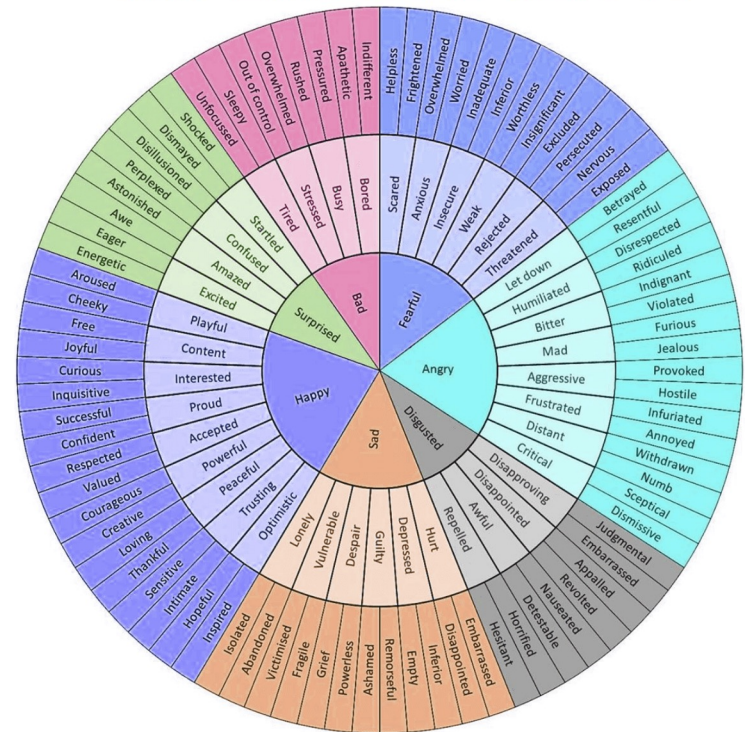
# Social-Emotional Strategies

**CASEL:** Self-awareness, self-management, relationship skills, social awareness, responsible decision making.

Visuals: Zones of Regulation, Feelings/Emotion Wheel



## The Emotion Wheel



# Awareness + Tools

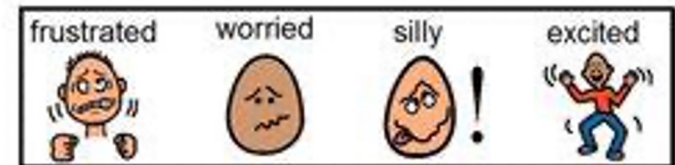
Child/Youth:

- Build skills in emotional awareness
- Develop a “toolbox” of strategies to support themselves when experiencing difficult emotions

Adults: Model strategies, guide through questioning/prompting, develop list of strategies together, emphasize choice: they can choose strategies that work best for them

## Yellow Zone

I need to watch out



I can try these tools:



# Take a Break Strategies



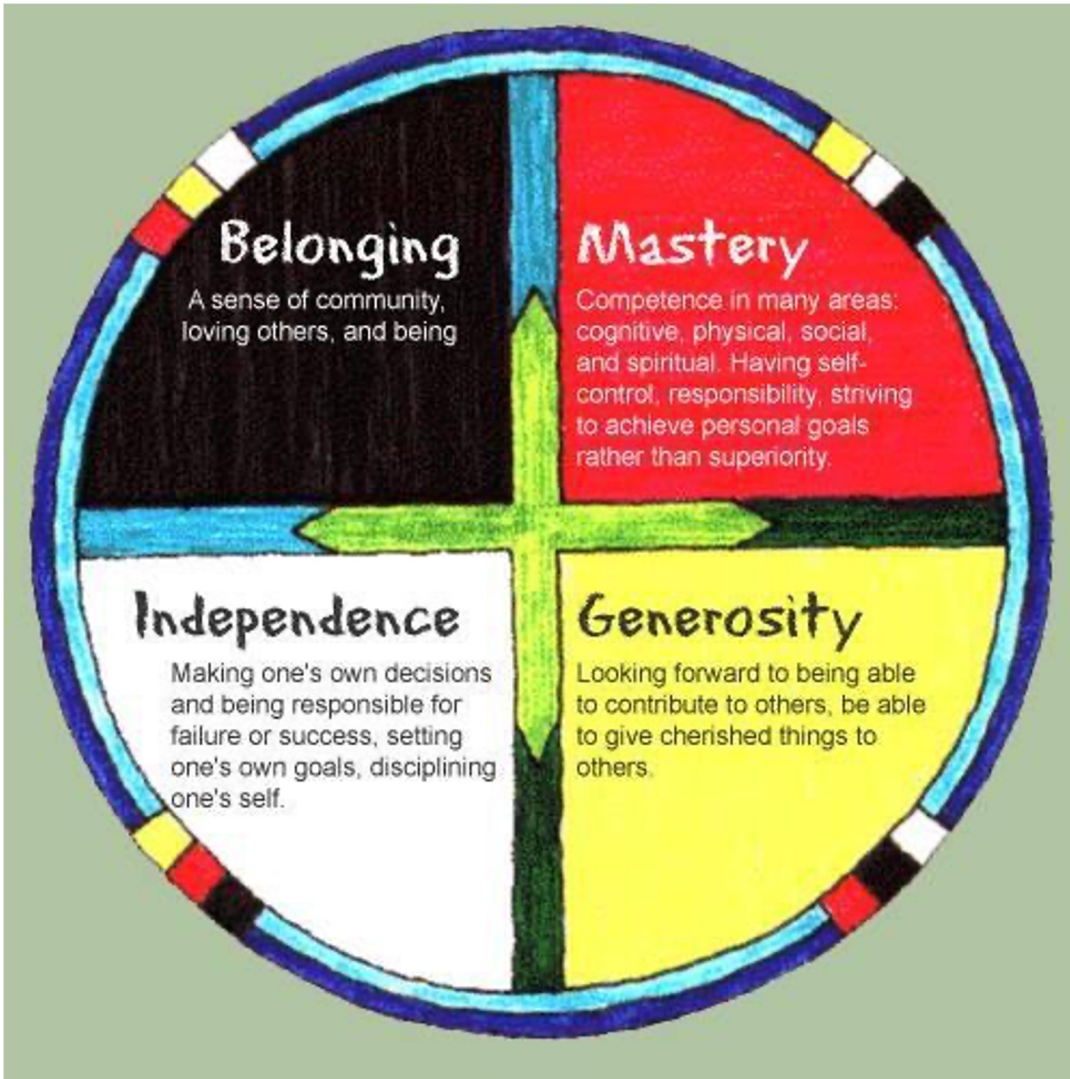
# SEL Strategies...

SEL strategies often used in schools: Morning meetings and/or Morning/Afternoon check-ins, time in natural settings, consistent routines, practicing teamwork and collaborative problem-solving (i.e., through games), creating opportunities to practice listening to others and understanding others' perspectives, anticipating and evaluating the consequences of one's actions, mindfulness exercises, books that explore self-awareness, emotional understandings, etc.



Identity related strategies: developing interests and sense of purpose, integrating personal and social identities, creative pursuits, setting personal and collective goals.





## Dr. Martin Brokenleg “Circle of Courage”

Model of Resilience, built upon belief that all individuals have four universal needs.

Reminder to create opportunities for youth to build experiences in each of these areas.

# Our Umbrella

Listen - Notice - Wonder

Don't try and fix it

Knowing when to seek support - when your moving up the pyramid...universal strategies are quite enough. It's the balance (diagnosis, medical model, fixed mindset as opposed to a growth mindset).

Ask- how are you feeling?, how can I help?, what strategy(ies) to use?

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**Questions?**

