



YELLOW ZONE

Adolescence is a sensitive time for brain, body and emotional growth. Ongoing changes in the brain, along with physical, emotional, and social changes, make teens more vulnerable to mental health problems.

Relationships and the environment influences the way your teen acts, thinks and feels. Each day is full of experiences that help your teen develop an independent identity, explore grown-up behavior, and move towards independence. Positive relationships and environments help guide and influence healthy brain development and resilience.

A Yellow Zone is an environment that promotes healthy development and well-being through 5 pillars:

Help **Spirituality** **Learn** **Socialize** **Play**

Research demonstrates that these 5 pillars nurture the social, psychological, and emotional aspects of mental health.

Use the information in this guide to create a Yellow Zone, a place where even the smallest of us can flourish.

Help

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

Spirituality

Spirituality can be practiced in a variety of ways, such as meditation and mindfulness. Meditation and mindfulness reduces rumination of stress, boosts working memory and focus, lessens emotional reactivity and boosts cognitive flexibility, creates greater relationship satisfaction, increases happiness and boosts the immune system. We can also help children promote spiritual well-being through value, beliefs, purpose, and goals both physically and mentally.

Learn

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

Socialize

Establishing social connections, listening skills, and participating in activities like gratitude; we can build our resiliency and flourish. Gratitude is associated with optimism and has been determined that grateful people are happier, receive more social support, are less stressed, and are less depressed. Research shows people who have a high level of gratitude have strengthened cardiac and immune systems, decreased stress, anxiety, depression and headaches, higher levels of happiness, improved emotional intelligence and increased self esteem.

Play

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

Help

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

Lead by Example!

Smile and say hello to a stranger · Give someone a compliment · Hold the door open for others
 Leave a positive note for the mail person · Write a thank you note · Say "please" and "thank you"
 Donate gently worn clothes · Help someone · Give a hug · Tell someone you appreciate them

Did you know? Holding a handshake or a hug for at least 6 seconds releases oxytocin, the neurochemical that helps us feel connected and loved.

Spirituality

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

Example Positive Thoughts & Affirmations

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

We are busier than ever! Teens need opportunities to take a break throughout their busy day. Practicing meditation and mindfulness for just a few minutes is a great way to effectively give teens a chance to rest their minds and develop resilience. Research proves that practicing meditation and mindfulness throughout the day has profound impacts, such as reducing stress and anxiety, calming the body and improving attention. Meditation and mindfulness can be practiced in a variety of ways, such as simply taking 10 slow, deep breaths or playing a meditation app! See a few below to help you get started. Free, meditation apps:



Stop, Breathe,
Think



Calm



Smiling Mind



Insight Timer



Headspace

Learn

Growth Mindset is a concept that refers to the idea that when putting forth effort, it is possible to increase intelligence, talents and abilities. People who encompass a Growth Mindset acknowledge that their abilities develop with experience. They continue to seek out opportunities to gain knowledge to further expand their skills. It is closely related to self-esteem. The Growth Mindset is a learned attribute that leads to lifelong success. Establish a positive environment that provides opportunities for adolescents to gain confidence and learn strategies to complete tasks, solve complex problems and overcome challenges. See a few ways below to help your teen develop a growth mindset.

Goals are Good! Pressure Isn't

- Focus on the process of goal setting rather than the goals themselves
- Create vision boards or bucket lists

Make Space for Failure

- Let your teen do the problem solving
- Focus on your role as support and staying close
- Be mindful of your reactions

Listen More Than You Talk

- Ask your teen for suggestions, solutions and advice
- Empathize rather than criticizing or judging

Socialize

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

3 Good Things

Three Good Things is an evidence-based tool that refocuses your mind on the positive, instead of the negative. Have teens designate a notebook as their Gratitude Journal. Then ask your child to write down 3 good things that happened to them the day prior. Remind them that positive things can be big or small! A smile, a hug, holding the door for someone, sunshine, blue sky, warm weather, cozy nights, laughter, giving compliments, etc.

Model Gratitude

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

Play, every day

Play supports the formation of safe, stable, and nurturing relationships with all caregivers that children need to thrive. Children love to play and become absorbed in the activities they choose for themselves. Don't forget, play isn't only for children! Join them!