

Foundations of Wellness

Grade Band: 3-5

Student Objectives:

- Describe and analyze the three components of wellness: physical, social, and mental/emotional
- Reflect on personal levels of well-being
- Set a goal to enhance personal wellness

Materials:

- Student Activity Sheet: Wellness Inventory – one per student
- Student Activity Sheet: The Wellness Triangle – one per student or group
- Student Activity Sheet: Wellness Cards – one per student or group (split into separate cards)
- Grapes, apple slices, or cheese stick pieces – 3 per group
- Toothpicks – 7 per group
- Three different-colored sticky notes per student

Suggested Time Frame: 2-3 class sessions (based on 45-minute intervals)

Instant Expert:

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), **health literacy** is defined as “the degree to which individuals have the capacity to obtain, process, and understand basic health information and services needed to make appropriate health decisions.” For children, this translates into the ability to make healthy choices, to think about and practice health-enhancing skills, to say kind words, and to learn about feelings and how to express them.

An important foundation of helping children become health literate is teaching them about **wellness**. Wellness is more than just being healthy. It is the active process of becoming aware of and making choices toward a healthy and fulfilling life.

Striving to achieve optimal wellness decreases stress, reduces the risk of illness, and strengthens social and emotional health. It is important for students to learn about wellness as a foundational piece because statistical data shows that these are areas of need by the time students reach high school. (YRBSS Data: Mental Health, Physical Health, Social Health)

Several different dimensions of wellness have been defined including social, physical, mental, environmental, academic, spiritual, and occupational. For young children, it is often best to introduce the idea of enhancing wellness by balancing three of these dimensions: physical, social, and mental. Those are the three dimensions that will be explored in this lesson.

To illustrate and reinforce balance of the three dimensions of wellness, the lesson includes a visual triangle. The triangle includes:

- **Physical Wellness** - Examples include:
 - Taking care of your body
 - Getting physical activity
 - Having good personal hygiene
 - Having healthy eating patterns and nutrition intake
 - Being safe
- **Social Wellness** – Examples include:
 - Interacting with people around you
 - Getting along with others in a variety of settings and online
- **Mental/Emotional Wellness** – Examples include:
 - Liking who you are and accepting yourself
 - Expressing and processing emotions
 - Coping with the demands of daily life
 - Managing stress and pressure

Balance equates to the equal proportion of physical, social, and mental/emotional health on the sides of the wellness triangle. For example, if they have not slept or eaten breakfast (physical wellness), students' ability to manage stress will be impacted (mental/emotional wellness), and interactions with friends, teachers, and others could be affected (social wellness).

It is important to help students understand that **balance** can be very difficult to accomplish, but knowing what wellness is and how to work toward making appropriate choices will help them throughout their lives. Note: This may be the first time that students are introduced to the term stress. **Stress** is how our body changes in response to changes around us. Stress can be good and helpful, but it can be bad if it stops us from participating in daily life (hanging out with friends, going to school).

Within this activity, students evaluate their own behaviors related to wellness and set personal goals to improve their balance. Ideas could include:

Physical Wellness Examples:

- Focus on eating a variety of foods (include fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean protein, and dairy – USDA’s 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans)
- Engage in physical activity daily
- Get at least eight hours of sleep every night
- Maintain good hygiene (wash hands, brush teeth)

Social Wellness Examples:

- Practice good communication with friends and family
- Show respect to other people
- Be dependable (do chores, keep promises)
- Support friends making good choices
- Share emotions with friends or family
- Participate in activities that improve social wellness (sports, clubs, or activities that include several people)

Mental/Emotional Examples:

- Show emotions by communicating with others
- Talk to friends or family when you need to
- Know what you are really good at (reading, sports)
- Handle stress effectively to solve problems
- Be open to new ideas and new ways of doing activities

In the final session, students are asked to apply what they have learned to make decisions in authentic wellness-related situations. You may give all scenarios to the students or let students choose one that matches their area of growth based on the “Wellness Inventory.”

Note: As always, you will want to be sensitive to individual students’ unique situations and follow your school or district’s policy when it comes to the collection of personal information related to minors.

Additional Resources

- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration: <http://www.samhsa.gov/>
- Physical Activity Guidelines: (chapter 3 – Active Children and Adolescents) <http://health.gov/paguidelines/guidelines/chapter3.aspx>
- USDA’s 2015-2020 Dietary Guidelines for Americans <http://health.gov/dietaryguidelines/2015/guidelines/>

Procedure:

Session 1: Introducing Wellness

1. Distribute seven toothpicks and three grapes, apples, or cheese stick pieces to small-student groups. Challenge each group to develop a freestanding structure with a solid foundation using only the materials you have provided.
2. Invite groups to present their structures and explain how and why they made decisions about materials and construction.
3. After all groups have presented, discuss the following questions:
 - a. Other than the same materials, what do all or most of the structures have in common?
 - b. Why is a solid foundation so important for a structure to stay standing?
 - c. What could happen if a foundation isn't strong or sturdy enough?
 - d. How could this exercise relate to health? Remind students that a foundation is a strong base for something. What do they think a foundation for their health could be? Note: This abstract question may be difficult for some students so you may need to share examples.
4. Introduce the term, "wellness" by writing it on the board. Ask students what word is contained in the word, "wellness." Circle the word "well." Ask students what it means to be well. Accept all wellness-related answers. Explain that "wellness" is all about making choices that can help them stay healthy now and in the future. Invite volunteers to share or draw examples of what they think the term "wellness" means.
5. Tell students there are different types of wellness. Show students the image of the "Wellness Triangle" (student activity sheet) to illustrate the three types of wellness covered in this lesson and the balance between them. Review each "side" of the wellness triangle. (Note: You may want to explain that triangles are a great base of support because they have equal, balanced sides. This is a great way to look at wellness.)
6. Ask which types of wellness students think that the images they drew or the words they wrote represent. Note: Examples you can reinforce or share are listed below:
 - a. Physical – Walking, playing sports, recess, jumping rope, eating a variety of foods, how we take care of our bodies, regular bathing and showering, brushing hair and teeth, getting enough sleep, limiting screen time.
 - b. Social – Talking to friends, playing with someone on a sports team or at recess, online games, social media, speaking and listening, conflict resolution, making

friends, respecting self and others, loving who you are, doing your best in school, completing your homework, helping with chores around the house.

- c. Mental/Emotional – How I feel/emotions, goal-setting, decision-making, managing stress, coping with difficult situations and daily tasks (school work, homework, etc.), believing in yourself, having a positive attitude, being able to learn from mistakes or failures.
7. Once students understand the three types of wellness, distribute the three separate wellness cards (student activity sheet) to each student or to each student group. Read the statements below, and challenge students to hold up the card that reflects the matching type of wellness. Review answers after each one and ask students to explain the reasons for their answers. Note that some statements could belong to more than one dimension, but the primary dimension is given as the correct answer.
- a. My family is important to me. (Mental/emotional wellness)
 - b. I have at least one good friend I talk to. (Social wellness)
 - c. I sleep at least eight hours every night. (Physical wellness)
 - d. I eat a variety of fruits, vegetables, proteins, grains, and dairy. (Physical wellness)
 - e. I am a responsible person. (Mental/emotional wellness)
 - f. I tell others how I feel. (Mental/emotional wellness)
 - g. I can get along with different people. (Social wellness)
 - h. I do well in most subjects at school. (Mental/emotional wellness)
 - i. I am physically active almost every day. (Physical wellness)
 - j. I can say no to people. (Social wellness)
 - k. I listen to people when they speak. (Social wellness)
 - l. I can talk about problems. (Mental/emotional wellness)
 - m. I enjoy doing many different activities. (Mental/emotional wellness)
 - n. I wear a helmet when I ride my bike. (Physical wellness)
 - o. I enjoy doing things with my family. (Social wellness)
8. Challenge students to share risks of not maintaining physical wellness (they could get sick or injured), social wellness (they may not have friends and be sad), and emotional wellness (they may feel stressed or upset).
9. End the session by asking each student to share one thing they learned about wellness.

Session 2: Wellness and Your Life

1. If you are starting a new session, review what students learned in Session 1 about wellness. This may be a good time to reinforce learning by introducing the three decision-making scenarios from the “It’s Your Decision” section below.

2. Tell students that they are going to explore more information about wellness and analyze how they can improve or maintain their personal wellness. Distribute the “Wellness Inventory” (student activity sheet) to each student. Review directions, and invite students to complete the activity sheet and then add up “Yes” and “No” answers for each component of wellness.
3. Refer students to the reflection section of the “Wellness Inventory.” Ask them why it’s important to reflect on areas where they are really strong as well as areas where they need to work harder. Direct students to complete this section.
4. Distribute two sticky notes of different colors to each student. Direct them to write the area of wellness where they are really strong in one color and the area of wellness where they need to work harder in another. Then, invite students to hang their sticky notes in an area of the room. In which area of wellness are most students in the class strong? For which area of wellness do most students want to work harder?
5. Explain to students that balance can change from day to day. Everyone is different and that is okay. We have to take time to think about personal wellness and try to make decisions that help us maintain balanced wellness each day. What’s important is that we consistently do the best we can in all areas.
6. Now, refer students to the goal-setting section on p. 2 of the “Wellness Inventory.” Explain that, now that they have reflected on their own wellness strengths and areas of improvement, it’s time to come up with some ideas for how they can do better in one area of wellness.
7. Once they are finished completing this section, invite them to tell a partner one thing they do really well when it comes to wellness and one thing they could do better to change some of the “No” answers to “Yes.” They should think about balance as they do this. Note that students will have an opportunity to focus on goal-setting in Lesson 3.
8. On a third sticky note, invite students to write at least one wellness goal they have created for themselves and someone who can help them reach this goal. Remind students that there are a lot of people who care about them and want them to be happy and successful. Identifying who can help them meet their goal and sharing their goal with that person is important. Invite students to place this sticky note anywhere they choose. They should pick a place where they will be reminded of the goal and who can help them.

9. Finally, give students the following exit journal prompt:
I can take care of my health (physical, social, mental/emotional wellness) by doing the following things...

You Decide: *This feature helps to reinforce decision-making with students and can be integrated into the lesson or serve as an extension.*

Physical Wellness:

Xavier is playing outside a couple of days a week on his scooter, but he can't play on the other days of the week. He loves to ride down hills. He does not have a helmet. What is the component of wellness that Xavier may need help with? Using the goal-setting steps from the Wellness Inventory, help Xavier set a goal to improve this area of wellness.

Social Wellness:

Sara is having a hard time making friends at her new school and no one plays with her at recess. What is the component of wellness that Sara may need help with? Using the goal-setting steps from the Wellness Inventory, help Sara set a goal to improve this area of wellness.

Mental/Emotional Wellness:

Jose loves reading and playing on the basketball team. Sometimes he feels sad and does not know how to tell people. What is the component of wellness that Jose may need help with? Using the goal-setting steps from the Wellness Inventory, help Jose set a goal to improve this area of wellness.

Family Connection:

Have students share their "Wellness Inventory" with their families and identify a family member who can help them achieve their goal.

For other tools to extend learning outside of the classroom, refer to the School-to-Home activities on TogetherCounts.com. Begin these activities together at school and then encourage students to continue them with their families.

Community Connection:

It's important for children to know that there are many people in their communities that can help them maintain wellness throughout their lives. Assign student groups an area of wellness and challenge them to research community organizations that focus on helping others in that area. Compile a list of all organizations and related contact information that could be shared with families and others in the school community.

Standards Correlations:

National Health Education Standards

- Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.
- Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors to avoid or reduce health risks.

SHAPE America, National Physical Education Standards

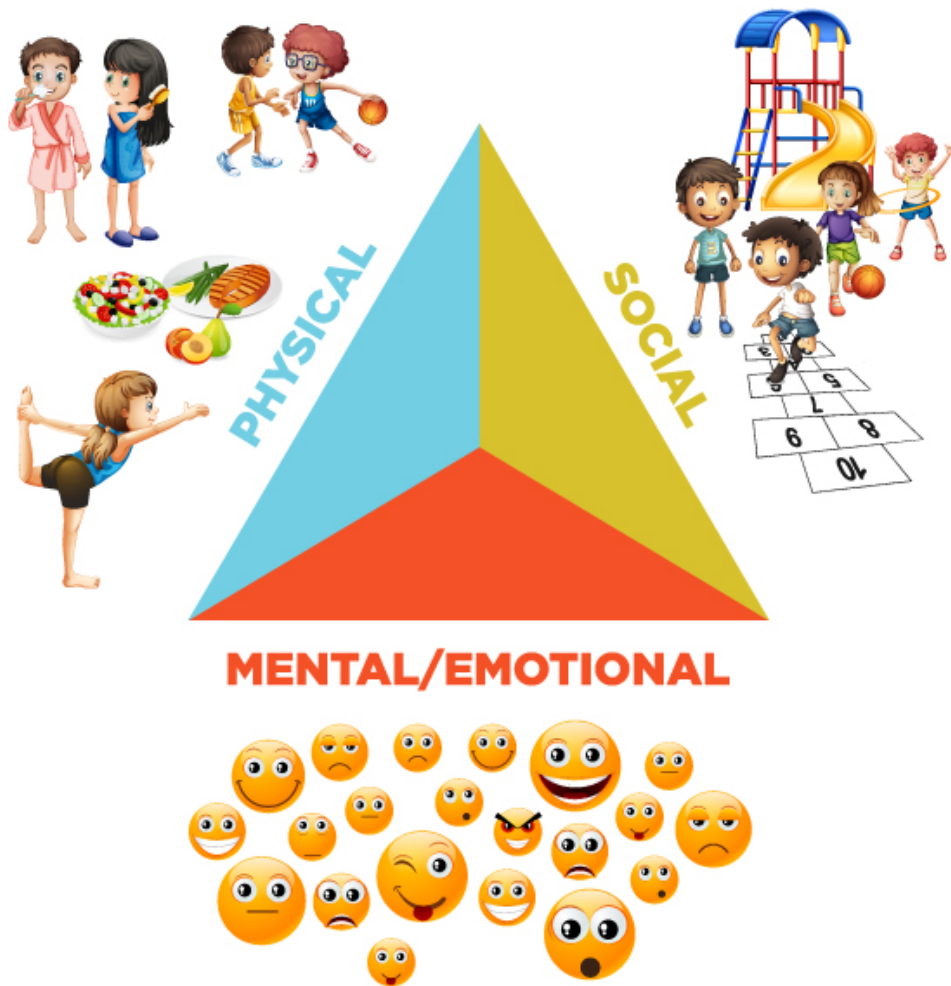
- Identifies physical activity benefits as a way to become healthier.

Common Core State Standards, Speaking and Listening

- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

Student Activity Sheet

THE WELLNESS TRIANGLE



Student Activity Sheet: Wellness Inventory

Physical Wellness		
1) I play or move for at least 60 minutes every day.	Yes	No
2) I keep my body, hair, and teeth clean.	Yes	No
3) I sleep at least eight (8) hours each night.	Yes	No
4) I go to the doctor and dentist regularly (even when I am not sick).	Yes	No
5) I wear a seatbelt when in a car.	Yes	No
6) I eat fruits, vegetables, grains, proteins and dairy foods each day.	Yes	No
7) I use a helmet when riding my bike or scooter.	Yes	No
Add the number of "Yes" and "No" answers		

Social Wellness		
8) I have a friend or someone I can talk to when I am happy or sad.	Yes	No
9) I care for and respect important people in my life.	Yes	No
10) I can disagree with others and not get angry.	Yes	No
11) I say "no" when people ask me to do something that can hurt me or others.	Yes	No
12) I am happy when I can help others.	Yes	No
13) I am dependable.	Yes	No
14) I am a good listener.	Yes	No
15) I ask for help when I need it.	Yes	No
Add the number of "Yes" and "No" answers		

Mental/Emotional Wellness		
16) I feel good about myself and like who I am.	Yes	No
17) When I am angry or upset, I can tell people how I feel.	Yes	No
18) I listen to others and let people help me when I do not understand a concept.	Yes	No
19) I have a favorite activity I like to do (sports, music, games, art, reading)	Yes	No
20) When I make a mistake, I am able to learn from it.	Yes	No
21) When I feel sad, I can talk to someone.	Yes	No
22) I like to learn new information and skills.	Yes	No
Add the number of "Yes" and "No" answers		



Put the total number in the columns	Yes	No
Physical Wellness		
Social Wellness		
Mental/Emotional Wellness		

Student Activity Sheet: Wellness Inventory (p. 2)

Reflection:

- 1) What area of wellness has the most "Yes" answers?
- 2) What area of wellness has the most "No" answers?
- 3) Does your triangle have equal or balanced sides? Yes No Almost
- 4) Is there an area that you are really good or strong?

Physical Wellness

Social Wellness

Mental/Emotional Wellness

- 5) Is there an area where you need to grow or work harder?

Physical Wellness

Social Wellness

Mental/Emotional Wellness

Goal-Setting:

- 6) Where do you want to do better and grow? Circle the area below.
Physical Wellness Social Wellness Mental/Emotional Wellness
- 7) What do you want to improve (i.e., eat breakfast every day, make a new friend)?

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- 8) Write three ways you can do better in the area selected

a:

b:

c:

Who will help you along the way?

Student Activity Sheet

WELLNESS CARDS

✂



 **PHYSICAL WELLNESS** 

PHYSICAL
SOCIAL
MENTAL/EMOTIONAL


✂





 **SOCIAL WELLNESS** 

PHYSICAL
SOCIAL
MENTAL/EMOTIONAL

✂



 **MENTAL/EMOTIONAL WELLNESS** 

PHYSICAL
SOCIAL
MENTAL/EMOTIONAL