



Parent Wellness Circle *Program Workbook*

Facilitator Guide



The Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation—a foundation committed to supporting and enriching the well-being of youth, parents, and families—was created with a generous gift from Ab and Nancy Nicholas. While Ab passed away in 2016, their generous support continues to inspire us and make this resource possible.

Welcome

Dear Parent Wellness Circle Facilitators,

Welcome! We are delighted to have you partake in a “whole new direction” in personal and family wellness. By providing leadership to those who want to be more intentional about parenting, you will be helping families lead happier and healthier lives.

As a **Parent Wellness Circle Facilitator**, you will be walking alongside parents and sharing their journey by offering compassionate listening, time-tested information, and gentle encouragement. This program is based on the belief that parents innately know what is good for their families yet, with all that pulls on their time and energy, they don't always do what they know is best and what they desire for their families.

Many parents frequently report feeling isolated, confused, and that they have no one to be totally honest with about the joys and challenges of parenthood. Often parents tell us that they feel alone and even embarrassed that things at their homes are not going smoothly. They have the impression that other families have it all together. This is not true, of course, but they do not know this because they rarely have the time or the level of trust with other parents to be real and share the truth. This means that they also seldom have authentic “villages” of support. This program reflects our commitment to help parents come together, to be honest and vulnerable about family life, and with the coaching of the facilitator and the support of others, make the changes they feel would benefit their families.

At its core, a Parent Wellness Circle—which is what you will be facilitating—is a space we help create for parents to reflect upon their lives as a parent and the lives of their families. The Parent Wellness Circle and the coaching you offer provide the tools and support parents need in order to take the actions they know are best for their families. As a facilitator, you will be coaching parents as they generate NEXT Steps toward creating happier, healthier homes.

In this Facilitator Guide, you will learn the core concepts of the **Parent Wellness Compass**, as well as our approach to coaching, which is based on Motivational Interviewing. You will discover that as the parents you are working with become empowered to change their lives, you will likely also feel more empowered. So, while you are leading others through this process, we ask that you apply what you are learning and sharing to your own life, as well.

Thank you for your time and your commitment to helping to create a safe place for parents to be real, to grow, and to enjoy the long-lasting benefits of a supportive community.

Thank you for doing your part,

The Parent Wellness Compass Team

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INTRODUCING



**Parent Wellness Compass
& Parent Wellness
Circle Program**



I. Introduction

A. What is the Parent Wellness Compass?

The Four Compass Points

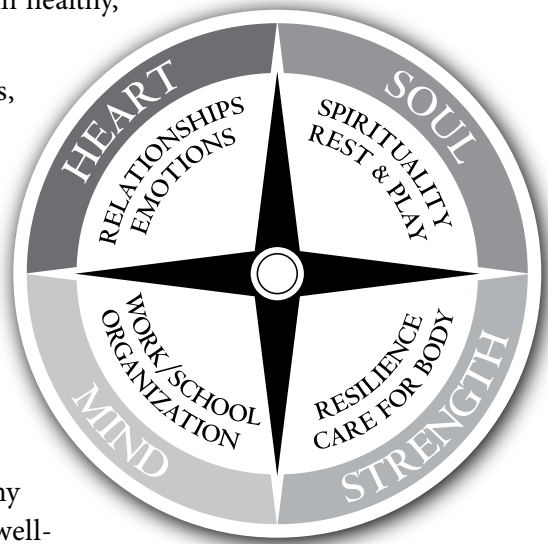
The “Compass” points toward the four dimensions of our being: *heart*, *soul*, *strength*, and *mind*. These dimensions are interconnected and our lives are intricately woven together. Much like an ecosystem, each area is affected by the other areas of the compass; therefore, whatever impacts one dimension of our lives (positively or negatively) impacts the other dimensions. A change in one area of our lives impacts the other areas.

Within the four points of the Parent Wellness Compass, we will provide a set of maps for understanding eight areas of family wellness. These maps will help parents to better understand themselves as a parent while, at the same time, helping them to better understand their children and their family as a whole.

Eight Areas of Parent and Family Wellness

We are not compartmentalized people. The *Parent Wellness Compass* is based on the premise that parent and family wellness is a multidimensional phenomenon that requires us to take care of and nurture ourselves, and our families, in all eight areas identified on the compass. Here are the eight areas of wellness:

- **Relationships.** The ability to create and maintain healthy, life-giving connections with others.
- **Handling Emotions.** The ability to process, express, and receive emotions in a healthy way.
- **Spirituality.** The development and practice of a strong personal value system and a meaningful purpose in life.
- **Rest and Play.** The ability to balance work, school, and play and to renew oneself.
- **Stress Resilience.** The ability to deal positively with the adversities of life.
- **Care for the Body.** The ability to build healthy habits and practices regarding our physical well-being, as well as the ability to end unhealthy ones.
- **Organization.** The ability to keep track of and make good use of possessions, money, and time.
- **Work and School.** The ability to get the most out of employment, educational, and volunteer opportunities.



B. What is Whole-Person Wellness?

It is worth noting that words “whole,” “health,” and “healing” all come from the same root word “hal” or “haelen.” “Whole” means undivided, complete, or entire. When applied to whole-person wellness, this means that we are addressing all the dimensions of our being: physical, spiritual, emotional, relational, intellectual, and vocational. This approach to wellness differs from the current predominant practice in our culture of treating each aspect independently, as if it is separate from the others.

Wellness has become an increasingly important and popular focus. Yet, until very recently, wellness focused primarily on the physical aspects of health. We now know that when we spend time proactively working on our physical wellness, we experience a much lower rate of disease. Whole-person wellness simply extends this idea to all of the dimensions of our lives. The Parent Wellness Compass provides a way for us to address each of the dimensions, which results in much lower rates of disease, and “dis-ease.”

The greatest wisdom we have learned from the field of whole-person wellness is that each of the dimensions of our being are interconnected, meaning that each affects the other.

Difficulty sleeping may be connected to any, or all, of the following:

- stress at work
- stress at home
- a sense that life has lost its meaning
- a change in diet
- the recent loss of a loved one

The whole is truly greater than the sum of the parts, and it is time we integrate and support all of the dimensions of our being as we seek whole-person wellness, for ourselves, and for our families.

C. What is a Parent Wellness Circle?

The central focus of a Parent Wellness Circle is to coach others toward creating healthy change. It is meant to help parents identify for themselves specific changes that they are ready to make and then, over six sessions, receive the support they need to make those changes.

A **Parent Wellness Circle** offers an opportunity for parents to pause and check their bearings. First, they will check the direction in which they are heading in different areas of their lives. Then, they will ask themselves, “Am I heading in the direction that I desire for myself as a parent? Am I leading my family where I want it to go?” A Parent Wellness Circle will help parents explore these questions and, if necessary, make any needed adjustments.

It is important to remember that our core values, beliefs, and ideals act as a compass that guides our lives, and the lives of our families. They point toward our own “true north.” Participation in a Parent Wellness Circle will help parents to become more conscious of their core values, beliefs, and ideals and support them as they work to more fully align their choices as a parent with their values, beliefs, and ideals.

Additionally, when people are intentionally seeking to make changes in their lives, research shows that **there is only a 10% chance of change when we simply hear a “good idea.” There is an 85% chance of success in making a change when we generate the idea for such change ourselves, make a plan for the change, speak the change “out loud” to others, and receive the accountability and support of others who are working toward making their own positive changes.**

*By being part of a **Parent Wellness Circle**, parents are making a proactive decision to pay attention to all aspects of health and wellness—for themselves and for their families.*

The Role of the Group in a Parent Wellness Circle

Parent Wellness Circles seek to foster authentic conversations, the type of conversations that are substantively different from the usual chats at school or at the grocery store. “Small talk” is the social lubricant for most of us—the weather, a favorite sports team, the activities of our children—but these conversations will only go so far in creating the sense of community many parents crave. Through authentic conversations, Parent Wellness Circles will strengthen the connections already present within a community, as well as creating new friendships between people who have never met.

How Does Change Happen in a Parent Wellness Circle?

Guided by their core values and beliefs, and supported by the community of their Wellness Circle, parents will find that they can enhance their wellness and resilience as a parent by choosing an area of the Compass in which to make small and steady changes that they decide for themselves.

Overview of a Six-Week Parent Wellness Circle

1. Choose one of the eight areas of wellness on which to focus based on your results from the **Parent Wellness Compass Inventory**.
2. Describe where you are, and where you want to be, in this area of your life. This is the “You are Here” and “Wish You Were Here” part of the **Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey**.
3. Select an inspiring quote to guide you.
4. Pick a centering/mindfulness practice that you will commit to doing during this program.
5. Invite others, as needed, to support you on your journey.
6. Harness hope from previous positive experiences of growth as you consider any challenges you anticipate on this journey.
7. Set a specific goal for the change and growth you seek.
8. Determine a **NEXT Step** you will take each week toward your goal.
9. Continue to draw support and accountability from your Parent Wellness Circle as you make progress with your goal and NEXT Steps.



Parent Wellness Circles . . .

- focuses on possibilities, not problems.
- helps increase your confidence as a parent.
- never asks or requires you to share if you are not comfortable.
- supports you as you take concrete steps toward your goals.
- provides much-needed support when you, your child, or someone in your family is going through a transition.
- aids you in achieving greater balance in your family life.
- encourages you to reduce and better manage stress in your life.
- assists you in making the positive changes you've wanted to make as a parent.
- is not a substitute for professional help; it is not group therapy or a 12-step group.

Expectations for Participants in a Parent Wellness Circle

- Arrive 5–10 minutes early so that the group can start and end on time.
- Make a sincere effort to attend all six meetings. Four is the minimum commitment.
- Honor confidentiality of all that is shared in the group.
- Respect everyone's journey and process, and never judge.
- Avoid giving advice to others and instead, focus on listening deeply to them.
- “Resource” the group any time you want feedback or ideas from others.
- Do not monopolize “air time” in the group. Everyone deserves equal time to speak.
- Establish clear goals and NEXT Steps for yourself and commit to working on them between sessions.

D. What is the Parent Wellness Circle Program?

The **Parent Wellness Circle Program** is designed to assist parents in making the changes they decide are right for them. The program is a combination of education and life coaching that will maximize success in making positive changes. Hearing or having a good idea about making a change seldom leads to change. However, change is much more likely to happen when we generate an idea for change for ourselves, make a plan for the change, speak the idea of change out loud to others, and receive the accountability and support of others who are working on their own positive changes.

Parent Wellness Circles are based on a four-step process: **stop, look, listen, and proceed**. **Stopping** involves simply making the commitment to create space in your busy life to participate in this program. **Looking** includes completing the Parent Wellness Inventory in the first session. **Listening** involves deciding—based on what parents discovered from their Parent Wellness Inventory results—on any changes they want to make in their lives. **Proceeding** involves actively working on the NEXT Steps that they choose for themselves. (You'll learn more about NEXT Steps on page 36.)

The **Parent Wellness Circle** process, through the power of inspired, authentic conversations, will strengthen the connections already present within the group, and will foster a sturdy sense of community for those who participate in this program.

Parent Wellness Circle Program Core Values and Beliefs

- We believe in the restorative power of authentic conversations. Through such conversations, we gain access to our own innate wisdom, and the wisdom of others. We also believe such authentic conversations are increasingly rare in our present.
- We long for our families to be healthy and yet, the paradox is that out of fear, we too often ignore that longing.
- Health and well-being begins with, and flows from, a deep connection to our beliefs, and a sense of purpose and meaning.

The path to family wellness becomes evident when we are willing to slow down, become centered, and listen to ourselves and to each other.

Wellness is a decision, a choice. It is a positive, proactive response to our deepest desires for our family's well-being.

Few things affect the state of our personal well-being more than the quality of our relationships, and few things affect the quality of our relationships more than the state of our well-being. There is a reciprocal relationship here that cannot be denied.

Parents have many “compasses” pulling them in many different directions. They can enhance their family's well-being when they are able to discern what direction true North is for them at any given time in their lives, and when they are intentional about heading in that direction.

Family wellness is a journey and not a destination, and that journey requires flexibility and creative responses to life's ebbs and flow. Times of transition (such as facing the challenge of a long-term illness, moving to a new part of the country, losing a loved one through death, receiving a promotion at work, or living through a divorce) require parents to pay special attention to their circumstances and intentionally make choices toward wellness, and to seek the support of others.

The Core Principles of Parent Wellness Circles

Family resilience and wellness are rooted in **community**.

Family resilience and wellness are rooted in identifying and acting in alignment with our **core values and beliefs**, or **spirituality**.

Parents grow resilience by remembering:

- “Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.” —John C. Maxwell, leadership expert, speaker, and author
- “Whatever we pay attention to is what will grow.” —Deepak Chopra, author
- “We have to *do* different to *get* different.” —Anonymous

II. Key Concepts

A. Wellness

Wellness is a way of living, not a destination to be achieved. The aim is to be proactive and intentional so that our daily choices (no matter how great or small) create a healthy place for all family members to grow and thrive.

The approach to wellness that is sometimes seen in our current culture borders on being narcissistic, focusing on how to create a “better, richer, slimmer me!” The approach to wellness embedded in the Parent Wellness Compass grounds all wellness in our relationships with ourselves, with our families, with our communities, and with our connection to our core values and beliefs.

B. Intentional

Refers to “how” people go about making decisions, and to a “determination to act a certain way” (Merriam-Webster Dictionary). “Intentional” is the attention given to a specific course of action and way of living.

The **Parent Wellness Compass** process empowers parents to become more “intentional” about how they live their lives. **Parent Wellness Circles** encourage a proactive approach to daily living, rather than the reactive life many folks fall into when times are stressful. Families have greater influence over the direction in which their lives are headed when they take responsibility for the choices made, and become aware of the impact those choices have on the life of their family.

C. Inside Out

Parent Wellness Circles engage people in a process of making changes from the “inside out.” There are many “compasses” that are competing for our attention all the time, trying to direct us in different aspects of our lives, including the “compasses” of family of origin, culture, gender, work, family, and friends.

Parents who live “inside out” check in with themselves, their values and beliefs, and their gut feelings about what is good for their families—their inner sense of knowing. They do this rather than simply following what is expected by the culture or someone else’s advice. When parents learn to go inside deeply and consistently, they develop and grow a sense of inner wisdom. They can then proceed to live their lives with greater resonance as their outward life begins to match more fully their inner values.

III. Coaching Tools

A. A Very Brief Overview of Motivational Interviewing (MI)

(Based on a handout: “Motivational Interviewing: How to Promote Success in Helping People Change,” by Kristin Bell, M.D., and Tomoko Tanabe, M.D.)

Definition: Motivational Interviewing is a person-centered coaching style for eliciting behavior change by helping people explore and resolve ambivalence.

Basics: Motivational Interviewing is a collaborative, “expert-less” approach to coaching and facilitating change and growth. The spirit of motivational interviewing completely respects each person’s capacity for self-efficacy. The person is seen as the expert in knowing what they need to do best.

Motivational Interviewing reframes “resistance” and understands it as ambivalence. All people, relationships, and larger systems—i.e. congregations—are ambivalent about change.

The Spirit of Motivational Interviewing: MI is a method of interacting with people to assess their readiness for change and to facilitate movement from one stage to the next. This is done by addressing a person’s ambivalence about change, examining their personal pros and cons for change, and facilitating exploration of their personal barriers to change.

The tone and demeanor adopted by MI is nonjudgmental, empathic, and encouraging.

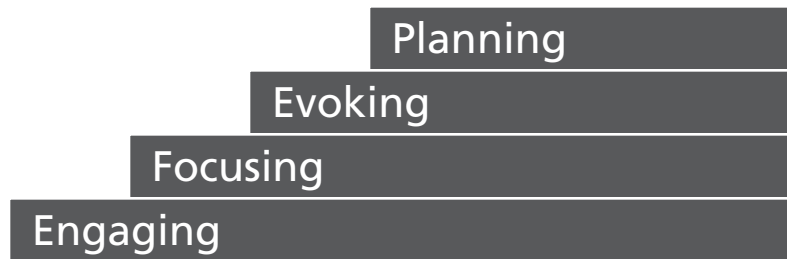
MI is used to selectively illuminate the discrepancy between a person’s desired goal and his or her current behaviors and choices.

Understanding change from the person’s point of view is an important aspect of the spirit of MI. As a facilitator, there are two particularly relevant points to keep in mind.

- Readiness to change is not a fixed personal trait, but a fluctuating product.
- The desire for change needs to be “elicited” not “imposed.”

Basic Coaching Skills based on Motivational Interviewing

Four Steps to coach parents toward a NEXT Step: Engaging, Focusing, Evoking, and Planning:



1. **Engaging.** This step—establishing and maintaining a genuine, empathetic connection—is essential for all steps of the coaching process. To paraphrase wisdom from Theodore Roosevelt, “Until they know that you care, they won’t care what you know.”

- Use your **OARS!**
 - **O**pen-ended questions. How do you feel right now about the amount of stress in your life?
 - **A**ffirm. I admire how open you are with sharing your fears about . . .
 - **R**eflect. You want to slow your life down, but you believe that is not possible at this time. You know others forgive you, but you feel you cannot forgive yourself.
 - **S**ummarize. You feel like your job is taking over your life. You are concerned about the negative effect it is having on your family relationships. You notice that you are more irritable with your children and that you are also getting sick more often. At the same time, you do not see any way to work less in the current job. You are just beginning to consider the possibility of looking for a different job.
- Important qualities to cultivate:
 - Empathy
 - Desires
 - Goals
 - Hopes

2. **Focusing.** This step of the coaching process begins to narrow and sharpen the coachee’s focus about how they want to change and grow. Using the Parent Wellness Compass tools listed below, the coach helps funnel the person’s thoughts into a more specific focus.

- The Parent Wellness Inventory is the primary Parent Wellness Compass resource that begins the focusing process.
- The “Mapping the NEXT Steps of your Journey” continues the focusing process.

3. Evoking. Here the coach elicits the underlying reason and motivation that the person has to change. When it comes to coaching change, clarifying the “why” is as important as clarifying the “what” and the “how.”

- Questions to ask:
 - Where are your core values and beliefs in the midst of this change you wish to make?
 - How does your family support you in this change?
 - What comes to mind when you think of this change?
 - What spiritual practice can help ground this change for you?
- Encourage the group by:
 - Evoking their passions, hopes, dreams, and ideals
 - “Blowing on the spark!” of their desires, hopes, motivation, excitement, and reasons for change

4. Planning. As Benjamin Franklin said, “If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” This last step in the four step MI coaching process helps the person create specific action steps they will take within the next week.

- NEXT Steps (*see page 36 for more information*)
- Guiding the person to create a NEXT Step and sharing that NEXT Step with the group

B. The Stages of Change: *Change as A Process*

It is important to know that all parents move through change differently and at different speeds. We must honor that and be patient and non-judgmental. Change is a process that occurs in predictable stages. Knowing what stage a person is in is essential to helping discern the NEXT Step they wish to create for themselves.



—graphic adapted from *The Transtheoretical Model*, Prochaska & DiClemente, 1983; Prochaska, DiClemente, & Norcross, 1992

Readiness Ruler

Using this scale, you can help parents reflect on how ready they are to change their behavior or break a habit. Ask them how ready they are to make such a change and have them give a number between 0 and 10 as their answer. Depending on their answer you can adjust your questioning.

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|
| 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|

0–1: Not at all ready to change (Pre-contemplation)

2–3: Thinking about changing (Contemplation)

4–6: Planning and making a commitment (Preparation)

8–10: Actively changing (Ready for Action)

(For more information and resources go to: motivationalinterviewing.org)

Pre-contemplation. This is the entry point of a parent into the change/growth process. They have not yet considered the prospect of a particular change and are unlikely to perceive a need for change. At this stage, they are not likely to respond positively to suggestions of change as they are not ready for change. The Parent Wellness Compass Inventory often serves to move parents from this stage to Contemplation.

Contemplation. Once parents have some awareness or desire for a need to change, they then enter this stage. This is often a state of ambivalence, where they both consider change and reject it at the same time. In this stage, the talk is back and forth between the need for change/growth and the amount of work involved. They talk for it and against it at the same time. There is thought about changing, but no specific plans.

Preparation. In this stage the focus begins to change from the need/problem to possible solutions, from the past to the future. There is now a window of opportunity where parents have resolved their ambivalence enough to consider making a change. Here they are now talking more and more about the change. They are also seeking resources and other like-minded people to help support their intended change and growth.

Action. In this stage parents are ready to change/grow and have, in fact, begun concrete steps to make the change a reality. This is what NEXT Steps are all about. It is important that the actions taken are focused and achievable. The motto for this stage is, “nothing changes if nothing changes.” Parents are most vulnerable to stumbling at this stage, or even giving up, so there is a need for strong support and encouragement.

Maintenance. Once parents have maintained the change and growth for an extended period of time (somewhere in the range of three to six months), there is strong evidence that the change will be a lasting change. At this point the change has become a new habit, something that doesn't require a great deal of conscious thought and energy. Before they know it, parents might even find themselves saying, “Oh, that's the way we've always done it!”

What Stage of Change Do These Statements Represent?

1. “Our family is always stressed out, but what else is new? Every family I know is stressed out, too.”
2. “I'm going to get the kids to bed earlier so we can all wake up more rested.”
3. “I don't like feeling tired all the time. I'm wondering what, if anything, I can do about it?”
4. “I am going to start a gratitude journal tonight and write three things I am grateful for in my family each day.”
5. “I can't believe how well things are going at home since I rebalanced my work schedule six months ago.”
6. “I worry about my teenager much of the time. I wish I could do something concrete to help him.”
7. “We have lived this long without watching what we eat or exercising, so I don't think we need to start now.”
8. “I'm going to walk on the treadmill three times for 30 minutes over the next week.”
9. “I heard about a new app that helps families budget and keep track of their finances. I'm going to download it and check it out.”
10. “My sister's family really likes their place of worship. I've been thinking about strengthening the spiritual life of my family. I'm going to look at the websites of five local faith communities this week and see if any seem like a good fit for our family.”

1. PC 2. P 3. C 4. A 5. M 6. C 7. PC 8. A 9. P/A 10. P/A

IV. Guidelines for Facilitating a Group

A. Facilitating a Parent Wellness Circle

The following pages are meant to help support you as you facilitate your Wellness Circle over the six-week session. The potential for parents to make self-directed changes in their lives can be maximized by their experience in the group. Therefore, as a facilitator, you are charged with an exciting and rewarding role as you smooth the way for parents to engage fully in the Parent Wellness Circle process and become intentional about increasing their wellness. Thanks for being willing to engage in the process.

The role of the facilitator is to organize and support the group, to oversee the sessions, and then to get out of the way! Of course you are very important and the group wouldn't happen without you, but you do not need to be an expert in any way to be a facilitator. Instead, **you are much like a midwife who helps guide the process and makes sure that the group is coming along in a safe and productive way.** You will be the one who makes sure that everyone has materials, understands the process, has enough time to speak, and follows the rules regarding such things as giving advice and not monopolizing the conversations. You will be in charge, but in no way are you expected to give advice or tell the participants how to make decisions.

A Parent Wellness Circle is based on the belief that parents are the “experts” in their lives and that every parent is creative and resourceful, and can determine what to do differently. You will guide and coach the group, rather than direct or teach it. You create the space for parents to experience what is happening within themselves and amongst themselves rather than creating the experience for them. The focus is on the parents, not the facilitator. Think of yourself as a “Guide by their side,” not a “Sage on the stage.”

As a facilitator, it is advised that you remain primarily the facilitator, participating only as an example in an attempt to make others feel comfortable in sharing.

Whatever is most comfortable is what you should do! Whatever the case, it is important to be gentle with other people's stories and be a positive presence for them. You have an opportunity to show kindness to parents by embracing them as they are, while they figure out where they are going.

B. Understanding Facilitator Responsibilities

- Organize the group: arrange appropriate time and place, advertising the group and/or inviting participants, securing needed materials, and attending all six sessions.
- Ensure that the integrity and purpose of the Parent Wellness Circle is upheld.
- Set expectations and consistently follow and abide by those expectations.
- Provide and maintain a safe, judgment free, and open environment where all participants feel welcomed, valued, and respected.
- Emphasize that parents should not share more than they will feel good about the next day, and that confidentiality is important to all.
- Gently coach parents to make meaningful, helpful NEXT Steps.

C. Facilitating is Not:

- **Therapy.** Therapy focuses on healing pains and dysfunctions. A Parent Wellness Circle focuses on each individual generating growth that is strategic and action focused.
- **Consulting.** Consultants help diagnose a problem and prescribe appropriate solutions as an expert. Parent Wellness facilitators help parents find their own solutions and encourage them to be the expert in their own lives.
- **Training.** Trainers are instructors hoping to achieve specific objectives. Parent Wellness facilitators, instead, guide parents to create their own goals and objectives.
- **Mentoring.** Mentors use their own experiences in specific areas to guide individuals. Parent Wellness facilitators guide a process.

D. Managing Group Dynamics

All groups take on their own personality and energy. As a facilitator, it is imperative that you tune into your group and align with the energy of the group. Furthermore, building rapport and trust with group members is a continual process as a facilitator. Ways to build rapport and trust:

- Warmly greet each parent as they enter the room.
- Call on parents by name.
- Remember key issues and concerns parents discuss and refer back to them throughout the six weeks. Let parents know you are listening deeply to each of them.
- Encourage and empower parents, thank parents for sharing, compliment when opportunities arise, and ask them to repeat something important that they have shared for emphasis.
- Listen to the feelings and needs of group members.
- Reflect back what you hear the group members saying to ensure understanding.

E. Managing Participants Who Require Special Attention

1. Talkative person

- Affirm to the participant that you “hear” them and are listening by reflecting back or bottom lining what they are saying and then move on.
- Don’t look at this person when asking a question.
- Thank the person for their positive contribution, and then ask for others to share.
- If it continues, talk to the person privately outside of the session.

2. Person who is quiet

- Watch for signs that the person wants to participate, and engage them at that time.
- Respect their desire to not share much, but trust they may be benefiting from the session despite their silence.
- Connect with them before or after the group time.

3. Person who has difficulty coming up with ideas for growth

- Resource the group for ideas, if that person would like that.
- Acknowledge their concerns.
- Ask them if this may mean that they need to focus on another part of the Parent Wellness Compass.
- Ask them to observe his/her family life this week and see if there is anything that he/she might want to be different.

4. Person who is not committed to the Program

- Ask the person privately what obstacles they may be facing in completing their homework or sharing in the Living Compass process (refrain from judgment).
- Help the person create small steps to make changes.
- Resource the group.
- Move on; don't offer too much attention to this person because it denies others who are prepared and committed to full participation.

5. Person in crisis

Require that the person be working with a professional (physician, clergyperson, psychotherapist, etc.) if they wish to continue in the group.

- Help the person focus on one goal that can encourage self-care while in this crisis.
- In private, suggest that the Parent Wellness Circle may not be appropriate for them at this time. Offer resources that can help the person with their particular issues (community resources, websites, therapists, etc.).

6. Person who cries

- Give them time to gain composure.
- Offer them some tissues.
- Give them permission to excuse themselves if they need to.
- Don't draw attention to the fact that they are crying.
- Try to clarify what they have shared.
- Remind the group that crying is natural and is a healthy way of communication, a response that lets us know that something is important and needs our attention.

F. Using Important Facilitator Skills

1. **Active Listening.** Focus completely on what the parent is saying and repeat back what was heard for clarity.

Ways to actively listen include: Summarizing, paraphrasing, and repeating back what was said. This helps clarify things for the facilitator and for the participant. Summarizing the basic truth that is being communicated is useful when a participant engages in long explanations/stories.

2. **Questioning Past Successes.** Use open-ended questions. These are not yes or no questions, but questions that allow for honest answers regarding thoughts. These questions that can begin with who, what, when, where and why to help reveal information needed to build awareness for the participant.

If a parent is stuck, asking a question about past successes can help them feel more confident. It will also help them get unstuck when having trouble coming up with an idea for change.

For example, a parent wants to start exercising and states, “I hate to exercise so I have no clue what to do for exercise.” The facilitator could ask, “What are some things you have done in the past to exercise? When you were a kid, what kind of activities did you enjoy?”

3. **Goal Setting.** Assist parents in setting and maintaining reasonable goals.

Participants in Parent Wellness Circles create their own goals and action steps. However, sometimes the goals or NEXT Steps (Needed, Excited about, and Time-specific) appear unreasonable or unmanageable. (*See page 36 for more information on NEXT Steps.*)

For example, a parent wants to get more organized at home and decides to take two hours every day for a week to do so. In theory, it sounds like a good NEXT Step, but the likelihood of success is small because it lacks the components of a NEXT Step. As a facilitator, you could help the parent make it more manageable by asking questions, such as, “What time of day do you plan to do your organizing?” “Do you have time to set aside two hours a day to organize the way your day is organized now?” “What area of the house could you focus on for this week?” If the parent is open, they can resource the group for ideas to make their NEXT Step more manageable and realistically doable.

4. **Resourcing the Group.** With the parent’s permission, ask group members for thoughts or suggestions.

When a parent is stuck, asking the group for their comments or suggestions can help the parent create awareness and become unstuck. It is important to remind the group not to give advice unless it has been asked for.

5. Providing Unconditional Positive Regard. Facilitator skills are used in a judgment-free manner and focuses on the parent's strengths.

Facilitators must keep the best interests of parents in mind at all times and communicate positively without judgment. Language should be friendly and supportive.

For example, if someone says, "I'm feeling bad about myself because I didn't do any of the homework I wanted to complete." The facilitator could say, "I hear your disappointment. What do you think got in the way of you completing your goal?" This is very important, as parents tend to be hard on themselves when they are not making the kind of progress that they would like to see.

6. Celebrating. Facilitators encourage parents to celebrate their small successes.

Unfortunately, many parents wrestle with tremendous shame. Unmet expectations can induce this shame. Shame is not productive and is a dangerous motivator. In this program, you will ask parents to set realistic expectations and celebrate the small changes they make.

You can encourage your group to celebrate completing NEXT Steps by changing a thought pattern or finding new awareness about themselves. Celebrating can be expressed as a compliment, such as, "Congratulations for managing your emotions when your son was rude to you. I know you have been working on that!"

List some skills you believe to be your strengths that will help you as a Parent Wellness Circle facilitator.

What aspects (biases, anger, personality traits, etc.) of yourself could potentially compromise the experience for a participant? It is important to be aware of this so you can then work on not letting that happen.

G. Facilitator Checklist

1. Create a safe, supportive, friendly and confidential environment.

- There is NO ROOM FOR JUDGMENT.
- Explain confidentiality. What is talked about in the group needs to stay in the group.
- Remain friendly and open and maintain a sense of humor.
- Ask participants to use discretion when sharing and to not share something they will regret or feel embarrassed about after the session. This will mean reminding group members to choose steps that they feel comfortable sharing with the group.
- Remind them that if they have a pressing issue that is too private to share, they may want to speak to a professional for assistance in finding other help.

2. Stay within the allotted group time.

- Be mindful of the time throughout the session.
- Announce how much time each person has before beginning to share and enforce that.
- Show the group that you are aware of the time by glancing at the clock or your watch, etc.
- Ask a member of the group to help manage the time.
- Maintain a flexible and focused agenda, keeping the group on task but being flexible within the structure.

3. Manage the expectations of the group.

- The group will meet for six weeks and they will get started on making changes during that time period. However, significant changes will take more time and more intentionality.
- If they want to continue to work on making changes they may want to join another Parent Wellness Circle when another one is offered or possibly get a personal coach for support.
- Getting headed in the right direction is the first step, and they are to be applauded for taking that first step.

4. Explain the six-week program and help set realistic expectations.

- In six weeks, participants may make progress but should not expect radical changes.
- A Parent Wellness Circle provides a process of self-awareness and growth. The six weeks are the beginning experience for this process where participants begin to live into a greater sense of family wellness.
- Explain the agenda for each session as the session starts.
- Explain, in detail, the “Mapping” section during the first session and as a review if needed.

- A Parent Wellness Circle is a GROUP coaching program. Express the importance for participants to monitor the amount of time they each take to share and not go beyond the allotted time for each person. Inform the group that as a facilitator, you will help the group be mindful of the time.
- Ask participants in the initial session what they are hoping to get from the program. Try to remember and refer back to their answers throughout the six weeks. This helps create awareness for the participant as well as build trust with the facilitator.

5. Go over the ground rules.

- Be on time.
- Let everyone have a chance to speak without being interrupted.
- Keep discussions confidential.
- Invite participants to create additional ground rules as they may have ideas that are important to them.

6. Monitor group dynamics.

- Tune into the energy and flow of the group. Sometimes, a group may spend more time on one section than another.
- Be inclusive, making sure everyone feels comfortable.
- Remember that the group members are responsible for their own achievements.
- Let group members support one another while avoiding giving advice.

7. Identify and beware of the “inner-critic.”

- Help participants to approach their changes and process with positive language and thoughts.
- Identify when the inner critic (shame, self-deprecating comments) shows itself and gently help the participant become aware of this.

8. Guide the sessions, do not control them.

- Let go of the outcome of each session and for each participant.

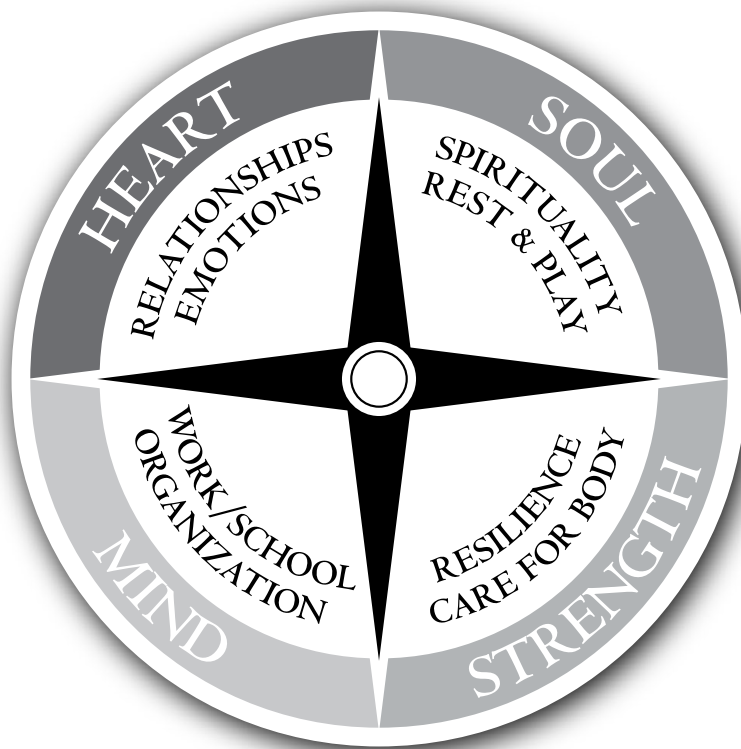
9. Remember to get out of the way.

- Set the tone and energy for the group.
- Explain your role as well as the role the participants play.
- Inform the group of any changes that could arise.
- Identify any changes in the direction of the group and normalize it.
- Set a positive tone can help ease any concerns that may arise during the six weeks.

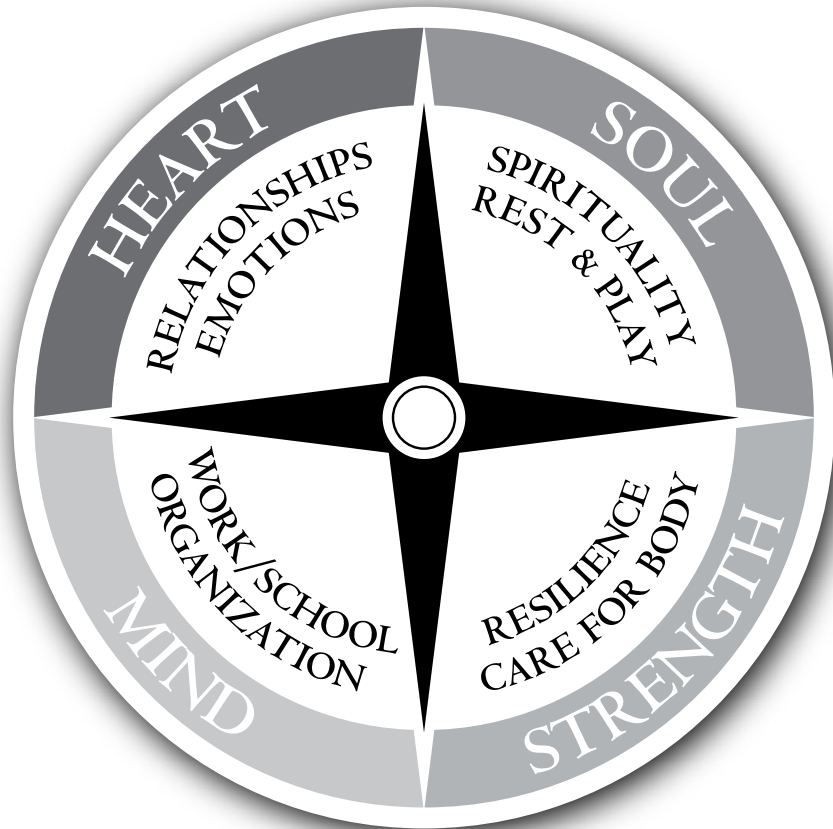
EXPLORING



Parent Wellness Circle Program Tools



V. Parent Wellness Compass Questions & Quotes



As we shared on page 4, the Parent Wellness Compass used in a Parent Wellness Circle includes four dimensions of family life: heart, soul, strength, and mind. These dimensions are interconnected, each one affecting the others. Whatever impacts one dimension of our lives, positively or negatively, has an impact on the other dimensions as well.

Each of the four points on the Compass contains two areas of focus. The goal is to provide parents with a dynamic tool that will assist them in their search for balance and wellness in their lives.

On the following pages you will find quotes, some of which are in the workbook parents will be using in a Wellness Circle, as well as a list of questions meant for individual reflection or discussion at home. Feel free to copy and share these pages with the group, as they are not in their workbooks.

Heart: The emotional/relational dimensions of our lives. The two areas of focus are *Healthy Relationships* and *Handling Emotions*.

Healthy Relationships. The ability to create and maintain healthy, life-giving connections with others.

Don't worry that children never listen to you; worry that they are always watching you.

—Robert Fulghum, *The House at Pooh Corner*

Piglet sidled up to Pooh from behind. "Pooh?" he whispered. "Yes, Piglet?" "Nothing," said Piglet, taking Pooh's paw. "I just wanted to be sure of you." —A. A. Milne, author

Trust is the glue of life, it's what holds all relationships together. —Stephen Covey, author

There is no doubt that it is around the family and the home that all the greatest virtues, the most dominating values of human society are created, strengthened, and maintained.

—Winston Churchill, British prime minister

It is better to bind your children to you by a feeling of respect and gentleness, than by fear.

—Publius, ancient philosopher

Our family and friends know us best. Think of the wizard in the *The Wizard of Oz*. Our family and friends see the insecure “man behind the curtain,” even though we may be able to hide behind a public persona with the rest of the world. I once heard a wise teacher say, “Don’t ask me if I am a good person. Ask my family, friends, and colleagues because my relationships with them are the best measure of how fully I am living my core values and beliefs.”

Reflect on the following questions related to healthy relationships.

- How honest and authentic are you in your relationships with family members?
- Do you model healthy relationships with family, friends, co-workers, and in intimate relationships?
- Are you comfortable being vulnerable with your child?
- Do you and your child have support systems outside of the family that you can turn to?
- Is there at least one person in your life that you can be fully yourself with? Does your child have such a person, too?
- Do you have any old, unresolved hurts from your family of origin that affect the quality of your family life today?
- Do you help maintain and nurture the healthy relationships in your life and those of your child?
- Do you protect your child from relationships that could be harmful to them?
- Do you protect your family from toxic relationships and end them when it is necessary?

Heart

Handling Emotions. The ability both to express emotions and to receive others' emotions in a healthy way.

Better than being the head of the family is being the heart of it. —Anonymous

Have a heart that never hardens, a temper that never flares, and a touch that never hurts.
—Charles Dickens, author

Children need love, especially when they are acting in a way that is most unlovable.
—Harold Hulbert, writer

Making the decision to have a child is momentous. It is to decide forever to have your heart go walking around outside your body. —Elizabeth Stone, author

People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel. —Bonnie Jean Wasmund, author

Adopt the pace of nature, her secret is patience. —Ralph Waldo Emerson, author

Much has been written in recent years about emotional intelligence. It is now clear that the higher our “EI,” or emotional intelligence, the greater satisfaction we will experience in other areas of our lives. A high degree of emotional intelligence is characterized by the ability to stay calm and centered even in the midst of a strong emotional force field around us. Such a person can choose their responses rather than be overtaken by a “knee jerk” reaction. While our IQ cannot be raised significantly, the good news is that our “EI,” our emotional intelligence, can be raised.

Reflect on the following questions related to handling emotions.

- Are you handling your emotions or are they handling you?
- Are you comfortable feeling and expressing the full range of emotions: sadness, fear, anger, joy, etc., with your family?
- Do your emotions “get the best of you,” causing you to say or do things you later regret?
- Are you ever concerned that you might be suffering from depression or anxiety? Are you aware of ways in which this is impacting your ability to be a good parent? Would you be comfortable seeking help?
- Would you be comfortable seeking help if you were troubled by emotions?
- Are you comfortable listening and being present to your child when they are hurting, upset, or very emotional?
- How well are you able to “accept the things you cannot change, [and] have the courage to change the things you can change?”
- Are you teaching your child how to effectively recognize and handle their own emotions?

Soul: The spiritual dimension of human existence. The two areas of focus are *Spirituality* and *Rest and Play*.

Spirituality. The ability to develop a strong personal value system and a meaningful purpose in life.

There can be no happiness if the things we believe in are different from the things we do.

— Freya Stark, British author

Leaders honor their core values, but they are flexible in how they execute them.

— Colin Powell, former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations

There's nothing that can help you understand your beliefs more than trying to explain them to an inquisitive child. — Frank A. Clark, writer

Your beliefs become your thoughts. Your thoughts become your words. Your words become your actions. Your actions become your habits. Your habits become your values. Your values become your destiny. — Mahatma Gandhi, Indian civil rights leader

Something precious is lost if we rush head long into the details of life without pausing for a moment to pay homage to the mystery of life and to the gift of another day.

— Kent Nerburn, author

You will be helping parents to reflect on the following topics related to their values and beliefs.

Defining their family values. Have parents clearly identify their core values and beliefs. How are they similar or different from the values and beliefs that are reflected in the culture and community around them? If their children are old enough, do they talk with them about their family's values and beliefs? Might they write them down and post them?

Communicating values with their children. How do they express their values to their children? Specific methods could include modeling, talking with them directly, and intentionally sharing experiences.

Integrating values into daily life. What concrete things do they do to practice these values as a family? These could include doing community service, being a part of a place of worship, or sitting down for meals together.

Seeing values in action. Do they see their values reflected in their own behavior and that of their children? Do they periodically take time to observe what values are really being lived out in their family's lives?

Soul

Rest and Play. The ability to balance work and/or school and play, and to renew oneself.

If you haven't time to respond to a tug at your pants leg, your schedule is too crowded.

—Robert Brault, writer

It is paradoxical that many educators and parents still differentiate between a time for learning and a time for play without seeing the vital connection between them.

—Leo Buscaglia, motivational speaker and professor

The prime purpose of being four is to enjoy being four—of secondary importance is to prepare for being five. —Jim Trelease, author

People who cannot find time for recreation are obliged sooner or later to find time for illness.

—John Wanamaker, merchant and Postmaster General

Kids: they dance before they learn there is anything that isn't music.

—William Stafford, poet

A good laugh and a long sleep are the best cures in the doctor's book. —Irish Proverb

Tension is who you think you should be. Relaxation is who you are. —Chinese Proverb

It seems that one of the greatest shortages in many family's lives is time. We are so busy at times that we lose sight of how important true rest and play is to our families' well-being.

Reflect on the following questions related to rest and play.

- How often do you do things that are purely for fun with your children?
- What were the attitudes of your family of origin about childhood play?
- How do you play and how does that align with how your children like to play?
- Do your children like to play alone or with others?
- Do your children play well with others?
- With whom do they play and what do they like to do together?
- Do you regularly take time with your family?
- Do you truly re-create during your vacation time?
- Do you and your children have hobbies that you enjoy together?
- Do you and your children get enough downtime?
- Does your family have a winding down or bedtime routine?

Strength: The physical dimension of our lives. The two areas of focus are *Stress Resilience* and *Care for the Body*.

Stress Resilience. The ability to deal positively with the adversities of life.

When it rains, I let it. —A 113-year-old man when asked about his secret to a long life

Is everything as urgent as your stress would imply? —Carrie Latet, poet

Stress is the trash of modern life. We all generate it but if we don't dispose of it properly, it will pile up and overtake our life. —Danzae Pace, writer

You don't get ulcers from what you eat. You get them from what's eating you.
—Vicki Baum, writer

Life is about 20% in what happens to us and 80% in the way we respond to the events.
—Ted Engstrom, author

The time to relax is when you don't have time for it. —Sydney Harris, journalist

Adopt the pace of nature, her secret is patience. —Ralph Waldo Emerson, essayist

Stress resilience has to do with how well we deal with two separate aspects of our lives. The first is how we emotionally and physically negotiate significant changes and transitions (planned and unplanned). The second is how well we manage stress in general in our lives. Being highly “resilient,” which means “to bounce back, or spring back to shape or form,” implies that we have taken the time and allowed ourselves to do the hard work of fully working through the stages of accompanying grief any time we have a significant change in our lives, or in the lives of our families. Too often we try to avoid these feelings, which seems like a good idea in the short term, but will always limit our emotional and physical well-being in the long run.

Reflect on how the following events might be contributing to stress in parents' lives and in the lives of their families.

- Divorce or break up
- Blending families
- New relationship
- New child in the family
- New job or loss of job or change of job
- Financial Stress
- Major health concern for yourself or a loved one
- Death of a loved one
- Child leaving home
- Move to a new location
- Recent accident or injury
- Work stress
- Unemployment or other work problems
- Legal problems

Strength

Care for the Body. The ability to build healthy habits and practices around your physical well-being, and to end unhealthy habits.

If you don't love yourself, you cannot love others. If you have no compassion for yourself then you are not capable of developing compassion for others. —Dalai Lama, spiritual leader

We do not stop exercising because we grow old—we grow old because we stop exercising.
—Kenneth Cooper, M.D.

The first wealth is health. — Ralph Waldo Emerson, essayist

The produce manager is more important to my children's health than the pediatrician.
—Meryl Streep, actress

If I knew I was going to live this long, I'd have taken better care of myself.
—Mickey Mantle, baseball player

Being our best through generous self-care is the finest way to be of service to others.
—Anonymous

We live in paradoxical times when it comes to attitudes and habits regarding our physical well-being. We know more than any other generation about what good nutrition looks like and what constitutes a healthy diet. We know how important movement and exercise are in maintaining physical wellness. At the same time that we have all of this clear information and guidance on healthy ways to live, we as a culture continue to struggle with growing health problems, ones that are, in large part, attributed to our unhealthy choices. The intent is never to shame or judge, but to invite all of us into a meaningful conversation about how to address the health challenges that face our families each day. We are in this together.

Reflect on the following questions as they relate to caring for our bodies.

- Are you handling your emotions or are they handling you as they relate to food and self-care?
- What role do alcohol or other drugs play in your life? Are you content with that role and how it relates to modeling healthy choices in this area for your children?
- Are you consistent about going to the doctor and dentist for regular checkups and care when needed? Do you take care of yourself as well as you take care of your children or other family members?
- Do you model self-care and self-discipline in front of your children in healthy, positive ways?
- Do your eating, drinking, sleeping, exercise, and screen time habits model a healthy example for your children?
- Do you get the sleep you need to be an effective parent?

Mind: The mental/vocational dimension of our lives. The two areas of focus are *Organization & Work and School*.

Organization. The ability to keep track of and make good use of time, priorities, money, and possessions.

Organizing is what you do before you do something, so that when you do it, it is not all mixed up. —A.A. Milne, author

The key is not to prioritize what's on your schedule, but to schedule your priorities.
—Stephen Covey, author

Panic is not an effective long term organizing strategy. —Starhawk, author

By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail. —Benjamin Franklin, American Founding Father

There are occasions where saying “no” is the best time management practice there is.
—Catherine Pulsifer, author

It wasn't raining when Noah built the ark. —Howard Ruff, financial advisor

Being disorganized can be both a symptom and a cause of stress in our lives, whether it be disorganization of our possessions, time, environment, finances or planning. Everything becomes harder and requires more time when we are not organized. A vicious cycle can be established if we become more stressed due to not being organized, which in turn may cause us to be even less organized, which in turn will most likely cause more stress.

So much for the “bad news” The good news is that anyone can make immediate progress in becoming better organized once they set their intentions to do so and once they ask for the support and coaching of others. Whatever patterns we have around organizing our time, money, “stuff,” etc. are simply learned habits, and like all habits they can be changed.

Research has shown that on average it takes thirty days to form a new habit. In *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey writes about what he calls the “tyranny of the urgent.” By this he means that people often are so overwhelmed with all that they are trying to do in the now that soon everything seems like it is urgent and they lose their ability to plan and prioritize. One of the symptoms of getting caught up in the “tyranny of the urgent” is that it feels like we are wasting time if we take time out to plan and prioritize. In the end, planning and prioritizing will save us time and make our lives much calmer, but it is so hard to realize this when we are caught up in our constant busyness.

Reflect on the following questions related to organization.

- Do you plan ahead for mealtimes, including time for grocery shopping, cooking, and clean-up?
- Are you intentional about planning what needs to get done around your house?
- Does your child contribute to a sense of organization in your home by helping with chores?
- How do you keep track of a family calendar, including school commitments, sports, work obligations, assignments, and other activities?
- Do you know where your child is most of the time and with whom they are spending time? Do you have a way of getting in touch with each other at all times?
- Do you provide a designated work space and necessary tools they need to be successful in school?
- Do you schedule time to help and support your child when needed?
- Do you keep careful track of your money, and do you teach your child to do the same?
- Do you have resources readily available that anyone could access, such as emergency numbers, names of doctors, family members, and teachers?
- Are your important documents filed and organized so you can retrieve them easily?
- Do you take steps to simplify your life, clearing clutter or things you don't need?

Mind

Work and School. The ability to get the most out of employment, educational, vocational, and volunteer opportunities.

Nine tenths of education is encouragement. —Anatole France, novelist

There is nothing in a caterpillar that tells you it's going to be a butterfly.
—Buckminster Fuller, architect and inventor

Everyone has his own specific vocation or mission in life to carry out a concrete assignment which demands fulfillment. Therein he cannot be replaced, nor can his life be repeated. Thus, everyone's task is as unique as his specific opportunity to implement it.
—Viktor Frankl, Holocaust survivor

Keep away from people who try to belittle your ambitions. Small people always do that, but the really great make you feel that you, too, can become great. —Mark Twain, author

Grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference. —Reinold Neibuhr, theologian

A well-educated mind will always have more questions than answers. —Helen Keller, first deaf-blind person to earn a bachelor of arts degree

This is the true joy in life—being used for a purpose recognized by yourself as a mighty one; being thoroughly worn out before you are thrown on the scrap heap; being a force of nature instead of a feverish selfish little clod of ailments and grievances complaining that the world will not devote itself to making you happy. —George Bernard Shaw

We have included work in this section as everyone in the family has a role to play and work to do: adults at their place of employment and/or at home, teens at school and often work, and children at school and/or at home. Acknowledging and honoring these roles are important for the well-being of the whole family. The challenge is how to balance all of these roles and responsibilities. It is important to remember that balancing the demands of work and school for our families is an ongoing process.

Think about the following questions as they relate to work and school.

- Are you intentional about setting boundaries with your child as they relate to school?
- Does your child have any input in the creation of homework rules?
- Does your child know what is expected of them—and why—around chores, homework, bedtime/curfew, behavior in public, respectful language, and computer/ TV/phone time allowed?
- Is your child aware of consequences when they do not behave as expected?
- Do you have a clear way of communicating and checking in with your child through, for example, family meetings for an older child, and illustrating with pictures or acting it out for a younger child?
- Are you and the co-parent in agreement over rules and the ways to follow through with discipline or consequences?
- Are you satisfied with your child's behavior, school effort, helpfulness?
- Do you fight with or nag your child? If yes, what are you fighting and nagging about and why?
- Do you allow time and space for you and your child to be both together and apart?
- Have you helped your child develop healthy boundaries around sexuality?
- Are you comfortable setting healthy limits on certain media, activities, or friends?
- Are you intentional about providing education and discussion, or helping your children get involved with appropriate activities and friends?
- Do you see a connection between your values and your work/service/schooling?

VI. Parent Wellness Compass Inventory

Facilitators will benefit from taking the Parent Wellness Compass Inventory, starting on page 38 of the *Parent Wellness Circle Program Workbook* before Session 1 to get a feel for what parents will be experiencing. Parents will be asked to take the Parent Wellness Inventory during the first session. If you prefer a digital format, additional Wellness Inventories are available for free online at samaritanfamilywellness.org.

The Parent Wellness Compass Inventory is the core of the Parent Wellness Circle program. Many parents report that the inventory is one of the most enlightening parts of the entire program. The overall results, or sometimes just one statement from the Inventory often opens up a whole new level of awareness and desire for change in a person.

The Parent Wellness Inventory offers a **present-moment “snapshot”** of a parent’s current state of wellness and life balance. It simply reveals the areas of a parent’s life to which they have been paying attention, and the areas to which they have not been giving much attention. The inventory also reveals how the different areas of wellness are interconnected, and how one area can affect other areas.



VII. Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey

Once the Parent Wellness Compass Inventory has been taken, parents will map out the changes they want to make, determine what steps are necessary, and then work for six weeks to make the desired changes. The process of doing this includes four specific steps:

1. Stop

Pausing their lives to make the time to participate in a Parent Wellness Circle. Each day, parents will be invited to stop and reflect on their goals and NEXT Steps.

2. Look

Taking a deeper look at their lives as a family as they are right now by using the inventory tool as a mirror to reflect back to them their current state of wellness and balance.

3. Listen

Taking the time to listen to themselves and each other as they discern the changes they feel ready and excited to make.

4. Proceed

Committing to the specific NEXT Steps that will lead to a greater sense of well-being in their lives and in the lives of their families.

Note ... Note ... Note

The following three pages are taken directly from the *Parent Wellness Circle Program Workbook* in order to illustrate the Mapping Process as it takes parents from the Wellness Inventory to NEXT Steps.

Suggestions for guiding parents through each element of mapping NEXT Steps are numbered and noted on each page.

Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey

To be completed between Sessions 1 and 2

- 1** List 2-3 areas of high satisfaction from your Parent Wellness Compass Inventory.

- List 2-3 areas of low satisfaction from your Parent Wellness Compass Inventory.

Give some intentional thought to the following questions and then pick the dimension of whole-person wellness that you would like to address in this program.

- If you think of your shaded Compass as a garden, what area do you think is in need of some additional watering right now?
- What area do you feel most motivated to work on?
- What dimension do you feel a strong sense of urgency about?

- 2** Area of whole-person wellness you wish to address in this program.

“You Are Here” | Describe where you are right now in your life in this area of wellness.

- 3** “Wish You Were Here!” | Describe what it will be like when you are where you want to be in this area of wellness.”

Session 1: Understanding Parent and Family Resilience

13

1 Guide parents away from talking about their “strengths and weaknesses” and instead talk about areas of higher or lower satisfaction and areas of the “garden that they have been watering and areas that are perhaps a bit wilted for lack of watering.” It is important to note and affirm the areas of higher satisfaction, the areas of the Compass that they have been “watering,” and to note that these will be different for each member of the group.

2 Even though parents may want to work on several areas of the Compass, explain that it is important to start by focusing on just one area. They can switch to

a different area during the six-week program, but they must choose one to start with. It is helpful for them to choose an area that they feel ready and excited to work on, to “water.” The area they choose does not have to be the one with the lowest score.

3 In terms of the four steps of coaching using the Motivational Interviewing model, this is the “Evoking” step. You are guiding parents to name how it will be different for them when they make the changes they feel ready to make. This evokes their motivations for wanting to do the hard work of growth and change.

1 Talking about possible centering practices can evoke some of their reasons for changing and growing, and it encourages parents to ground their growth with a regular practice. If a tree wants to grow new branches, it will also need to grow new and deeper roots to support that growth.

2 This is now moving toward the “Planning” step of Motivational Interviewing coaching. Asking about the support of others alerts the parents that the changes they are seeking to make may directly affect others and they are wise to be proactive in asking for help and support.

3 When a person can predict the challenges they will face when making a change, there is a better change they will overcome the challenges as they encounter them. If a challenge might come up with someone else in the their lives, this reminds parents that it is important to talk to the other person, proactively seeking their support.

Inspiring Quote | Choose an inspiring quote that will motivate you as you navigate the NEXT Steps in your journey. This quote could be from a song, a poem a famous author, a spiritual text, or other source.

1 Centering Practice | (see page 54 for help with this) Write down a centering practice you will commit to on a regular basis during this program.

2 Support from Others | Are there others outside your Parent Wellness Circle whose support you will want or need?

Previous Successes | What previous successes do you have in making positive changes in your life that can serve as hope for you?

3 Challenges | What resistance within yourself or others might arise as you seek to make changes in yourself and/or your family?

4 NEXT Steps.

Creating a NEXT Step is the essential “Planning” step of the four-step Motivational Interviewing coaching process. This is what parents will share as they check in each week. It might be helpful to role-play several NEXT Steps with the group by asking them, “What would an example be of a possible NEXT Step for someone who wants to work on the “Spirituality,” or “Rest and Play,” or “Care for the Body” area of the Compass?”

This will give them several general examples of what NEXT Steps are. At the same time though, make it clear that no one else can choose a NEXT Step for them. It must come from the inside out and must be something each parent feels ready and excited to do. Three parents in your group might all be working on the Rest and Play area of the Compass, but each will have their own unique, individual NEXT Step that is right for them.

Remember, advice-giving is never encouraged from group members, or the facilitator, but parents can choose to “resource the group” as they create their NEXT Step. For example, a parent decides they want to take an introductory yoga class, but has no idea where to find such a class, and so they “resource the group” by asking if anyone has a recommendation for a good introductory yoga class in the area.

4 What is a NEXT Step?

A NEXT Step is just that, the next step you feel ready to take based on a goal you set, inspired by what you learned by taking the Parent Wellness Compass Inventory. After taking the Inventory, you may or may not feel the need to create a NEXT Step. You know better than anyone what you and your family need. We are simply offering an invitation to make a change if you feel the desire to do so.

A NEXT Step is based on an acronym that stands for *Needed*, *EXcited*, and *Time-specific*.

Needed means that you have a felt need to take this step. It relates to something you have wanted to do, something you know would be good for you and your family. *EXcited* means that you are positively motivated to take this step—you want to take this step, as opposed to being motivated by a feeling that you “should” or “have to” take this step. *Time-specific* means that you will take your step right away or within the next several days. It’s the difference between saying, “Someday I’m going to get our morning routines more organized,” and “Starting tomorrow, I’m going to get up fifteen minutes earlier than usual and prepare a simple breakfast before the kids get up.”

N Needed . . .

. . . means the step addresses a felt need that you have.

For example: “For several months now I have been feeling the need to set a screen curfew in our house, a time each school night when all screens are to be turned off.”

EX EXcited . . .

. . . means the motivation for doing the step is positive—I “want” to do this rather than I “should” or “have to.”

For example: “I am looking forward to having more time to connect as a family, and also everyone getting to bed earlier.”

T Time-specific . . .

. . . means I will do my NEXT Step at this time, or within a specific time frame.

For example: “I am going to start the conversation about a nightly screen curfew tonight. We will discuss reasons and work out the details for this new rule over the next several nights, and then we will start the screen curfew Monday.”

Sharing your NEXT Steps with others in your Parent Wellness Circle is one important NEXT Step you can take. You will inspire and learn from each other as you do this, plus you will become a built-in support system for each other as you put your NEXT Steps into practice.

VIII. Centering Practices

Choosing a Centering Practice

An essential step in “Mapping the NEXT Steps of your Journey” is to take on a centering practice for the duration of the time that your wellness circle is meeting. A centering practice is simply a way of intentionally creating time to “stop, look, and listen” to our deeper thoughts and feelings as a parent. This is not about just creating “down time” or time to relax, but to intentionally connect with our true selves.

A centering practice is not about indulging in self-centeredness. There is a very important difference between being self-centered and having a centered self. It is from a centered self that we can best respond—as opposed to react—to the demands of family life. When we are centered, our responses and actions will be more closely aligned with our core values and beliefs.

There is no “right” centering practice for everyone. Encourage parents to choose one that is right for them, meaning one that helps them to move beneath the surface clutter in their minds and connect with their deeper thoughts and feelings. We highly recommend that parents consider **journaling** as a centering practice because it is easy to do and it can be an important way for them to meditate on the NEXT Steps they are working on. Keeping a journal as a parent is also a great way to document the unfolding development of both their children and themselves. They could write about something special their child did during the day, about what they are learning about life and love through their child and through being a parent, as well as about their joys and frustrations. It can be very moving, fun, and even humorous to go back and read what they wrote months, or even years, later.

Here are two excerpts from one of our favorite books on the benefits of journaling, *Writing and Being: Embracing Your Life Through Creative Journaling*, by G. Lynn Nelson.

- *My journal is my place to let go of formal constraints, to be crazy and creative, to take off my masks, to be me, to find me.*
- *As you write, remember that your journal is a private place, a safe place, and that there you do not need to impress anyone with either your writing or your being. There is no need to pretend. You can make no ‘mistakes’ in your journal. Your journal is a personal and intimate tool, and each person’s journal, like each person, is unique in its ways and its unfolding.*

If they choose journaling as a centering practice, they may want to purchase a journal. Just as there is no right way to journal, there is no right kind of journal. Get whatever feels comfortable. If they don’t have a journal, they can begin by using the blank pages in their workbooks. It would be helpful for them to decide how many minutes each day they are going to journal and then make the commitment to stay with that. It’s best to start small, say five to ten minutes and, if they wish, add more time as they go along.

Another popular centering practice is some form of **meditation**. This can be as simple as setting aside five, ten, or fifteen minutes to sit quietly and breath slowly and deeply. It is often helpful to have a word or phrase to repeat in order to keep the mind from jumping from thought to thought.

Walking can also be a centering practice, as can **listening to quiet music**, or whatever provides rest and renewal and allows parents to access their deeper thoughts and feelings. If they practice a particular religious faith, there are likely specific **spiritual practices** from their faith tradition that they can do as a centering practice.

The first resistance parents will most likely face as they attempt to begin a regular centering practice is time. They will feel like they don't have enough time for this. And they will be right. They won't have time, so they will need to make time, whether early in the morning, during nap time, or after the kids are in bed. Doing a centering practice on a regular basis will require discipline. If they struggle and fall away from it, yet want to continue with this effort, remind them to simply start again. Most people who do a centering practice regularly for thirty days will continue on with it because they find it to be beneficial. What at first may feel like work should soon feel like a great gift.

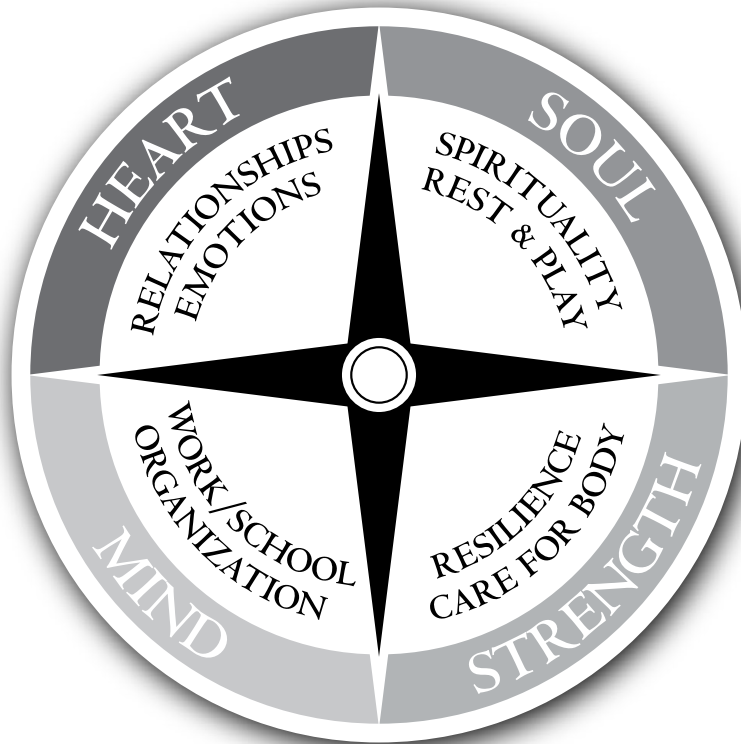
Following is a sampling of some centering practices other parents have chosen. This is simply a list to help "prime the pump," in case they are unfamiliar with centering practices. There are many more that they can easily discover on their own. They may already have a practice that works well for them. If so, parents might want to share it with the others in the Wellness Circle. This list is also found on page 54 of the *Program Workbook* that parents will be using.

- Keep a gratitude journal and write what you are thankful for each day.
- Start a mindfulness practice.
- Play a musical instrument, sing, or dance, with others or alone.
- Sit quietly in silence or while listening to music you find calming.
- Meditate on a spiritual reading or quote by repeating it slowly in time with your breath.
- Spend time in nature.
- Read a book that inspires your soul.
- Choose a mantra and speak it silently or out loud throughout the day.
- Practice yoga, tai chi, or other forms of spiritual movement.
- Paint, draw, or participate in any form of artistic expression.
- Write a letter to someone you love (living or someone who has passed).
- Spend time with your dog, cat, or other pet.
- Create a meditation space in your home.
- Participate regularly in a community of faith.

FACILITATING



A Parent Wellness Circle



IX. Session-by-Session Guide for Facilitating a Parent Wellness Circle

This section contains detailed outlines for each of the six sessions of a **Parent Wellness Circle**. Feel free to adapt the outlines to what works best for you in your context. Please add your own ideas and your own style. For example, you may want to add different meditations or music that best reflect your group's traditions and practices. You are also free to mix and match different openings and closings from the sessions as you think best. Just as we invite each person in a **Parent Wellness Circle** to live their lives from the "inside out," we encourage facilitators to do the same.

Large Groups

For groups larger than ten people, if you think it would help with time, break into a few small groups for sharing of progress with NEXT Steps. This way of doing things provides enough time for the important sharing component of the Parent Wellness Circle. Not everyone will hear each other's progress, but it assures that everyone has ample time to share.

Session Outline

We have included a session outline at the end of each session that you can copy for your group.

Six Session Outline

- ✓ **SESSION 1: Understanding Parent and Family Resilience.** Parents assess their own wellness and also reflect on their family's wellness using the Parent Wellness Compass Inventory tool. Participants also choose a centering practice and a Wisdom quote to help them accomplish their newly created NEXT Steps.
- ✓ **SESSION 2: What School of Parenting Did You Attend?** Parents reflect on the lessons they learned about family life and parenting as a child and consider how those continue to influence their parenting today.
- ✓ **SESSION 3: Your Parenting Voice.** Parents learn about four different parenting voices and identify their own parenting voice.
- ✓ **SESSION 4: Rethinking Discipline.** This session discusses the difference between thinking of discipline as punishment and thinking of it as teaching. Parents also learn about the "Comfort Zone," the "Panic Zone," and the "Growth Zone," as they relate to family life.
- ✓ **SESSION 5: Staying Connected Through the "J" Curves of Life.** Parents learn about the important of staying emotionally connected as a parent, especially through tough times.
- ✓ **SESSION 6: The Journey Continues.** Parents celebrate their gains and share plans for continued growth. They also revisit the value of seeking support from their communities.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* group members, introduce each other, and to create a safe, comfortable environment.
- *To introduce* group members to the concept of holistic wellness and how the Parent Wellness Compass is based on this concept.
- *To ground* the program in the theory that parent wellness and being well as a person is a prerequisite for being the best parent possible.
- *To review*, as a group, the entirety of pages 2–6 in the *Program Workbook*, which details the particulars of the program and the expectations of the program for participants.
- *To explain* the process of “Stop, Look, Listen and Proceed” on two levels:
 1. How the program works.
 2. How we speak and listen to one another in the group.
- *To provide* time (25 minutes) for parents in the group to complete the Parent Wellness Inventory.
- *To give* group members a chance to share initial reactions and results from the Wellness Inventory.
- *To introduce* group members to the importance of a centering practice and to invite them to choose a centering practice for themselves while in their Wellness Circle.
- *To introduce* group members to the centering practice of journaling as one possible centering practice they can try.
- *To explain* the “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey” process and assign as homework for the upcoming week (found on pages 12-15 in their workbook).

Objectives:

By the end of Session 1, group members will be able to:

- Define the concept of holistic wellness.
- Understand what a centering practice is and how/why such a practice is important for them as parents.
- Understand some of the benefits to be gained from the centering practice of journaling.
- Understand how to complete the “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey” based on their Wellness Inventory results. **Group members will do this as part of their homework after the first session.**

Session 1: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adapting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring name tags, pens, pencils, participant workbooks, crayons or markers, clock, device for music, and sign-in sheet.

Greet each participant as they arrive and invite them to make a name tag for themselves and complete the sign-in sheet with name, address, phone number, and email address.

0–10 **Welcome.** “We’re excited to have you here.” The facilitator provides a brief introduction of him/herself. Each participant does a brief self-introduction, which includes answering the question: “Who are your children and why have you chosen to take part in a Parent Wellness Circle?”

10–20 **Centering Time.** Invite participants to sit with themselves in quiet meditation. Explain that it is simply sitting quietly breathing deeply and slowly. Ask participants to sit quietly doing this for several minutes. Play quiet music as they do this. Explain that this exercise allows them a time to transition into the space and to relax before class begins.

20–25 **Journaling.** Now ask participants to turn to page 15 in their workbook and journal for a few minutes on how the centering time felt.

25–35 **Teaching Segment.** Introduce the overall concept of the Parent Wellness Compass program. 1. It is a holistic wellness program. 2. The four points of the Parent Wellness Compass are: heart, soul, strength and mind; and the eight areas of wellness that emerge from those points are: healthy relationships, handling emotions, organization, work and school, spirituality, rest and play, stress resilience, and care for the body.

Emphasize the following: A Parent Wellness Circle is based on the belief that each of us already knows what we need to do to improve our well-being and that of our families. This program provides a structure that’s supportive and non-judgmental. It encourages participants to consider the resources they have in fellow participants. The Parent Wellness Compass program provides a key component that’s lacking in many of their lives: the opportunity to talk honestly with other parents. Parent Wellness Circles are a safe place to have authentic conversations around how we can create and nurture healthy families.

Go over the Overview of a Six-Week Parent Wellness Circle, found on p. 6 in their workbooks.

35–40 **Expectations for Participants.** Invite participants to refer to the bottom of page 4 in their workbooks. Discuss. Ask them to keep in mind the expectations of being on time, respecting talking time, choosing to listen deeply to others (as opposed to giving advice) and completing their homework each week. Completing the homework is really the only way participants will see their progress through the weeks ahead. (Refer to pages 15–22 in this guide for additional information.)

Details for Each Segment

40–45 **Teaching Segment.** Ask participants how their wellness affects their ability to be effective, loving parents. Invite them to reflect on how other areas of their lives affect their ability to parent. Remind them that with focus and intent they can move their family toward greater wellness. Discuss the reading in the first session in their workbook: *Understanding Parent and Family Resilience*.

45–55 Begin discussion of the Inventory tool and “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey” process (review chapters VI and VII in this Facilitator Guide). **Please use your own words to explain these concepts rather than reading from the guide.**

You may want to introduce the Inventory tool this way: “To start our journey, we need to see where we are now. So please turn to page 9. When we think of family wellness, we need to keep in mind that there are several major categories for us to be aware of and to tune into routinely. In order to be balanced and whole, we want each category to be as strong as possible. As you look at the compass, you will decide honestly where you think you are right now.”

“Beginning on page 38, there is a description of each area of wellness, and a series of statements relating to that area. Begin taking the inventory for each of the eight areas of wellness. On page 37, shade in the appropriate number (0–100) in the wedge of each area as you complete each inventory. The center of the Compass is “0” and the outer rim is “100” on the scale. The inventory can be found on pages 38–53. (Some people like to use crayons to see different colors for each section.)

55–65 **Begin the Wellness Inventory.** Allow time—approximately 10 minutes for participants to complete the first few areas in the inventory beginning on page 38. Not everyone will finish this during this initial session, so have group members complete their inventory as homework. Stress the importance of doing this by the next session. But they will have enough time during the session that if they have any questions, there will be time to ask questions. Play quiet instrumental music while parents are working.

62 Give a warning that time is about to expire for this part of the task, and then ask participants to stop taking the inventory. This is to allow enough time to complete the rest of what you need to accomplish in this session.

Break-Out Session for Large Groups

65–70 **Sharing.** Give time for each person, if they desire, to share one general comment about their experience of taking the inventory—don’t get into any details about their results. What was this like for them? What did they notice?

70–80 **Teaching segment.** Explain the “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey” process that begins on page 13. Request that everyone complete this before the next session.

“On pages 13, 14, and 15, we encourage you to answer each question—your homework between now and the time we meet again.”

Details for Each Segment

80–85

“I’d also like each of you to find a Wisdom quote that you can write on page 14 and then share next week, something that will inspire you on your journey. You’ll find some examples throughout your workbook, but feel free to use whatever speaks to you.”

Explain that journaling can be a valuable tool for this journey. Encourage parents to choose at least one thing that will nurture them through these upcoming weeks and offer them the opportunity to experiment. “Not everything works for everyone. That’s why there are plenty of choices. Be gentle with yourself, but stretch just a little.”

Point out the importance of the next three items in the workbook:

- Support from others—Whose support will participants need/want? Support helps us to be successful.
- Previous successes—What challenges have you successfully faced before? Achievements can provide hope for current goal setting.
- Challenges—What might be encountered? Within self? Within others? Recognizing challenges can help us plan for ways to navigate around them.

Define NEXT Steps. “NEXT Steps are critical. If you concentrate on making them Needed, EXcited, and Time-specific, you will have a much higher chance of success. Does anyone want to give an example of a desired goal for the duration of this program and then let me help you craft it into a NEXT Step?”

Discuss NEXT Steps. “It’s great to have a goal, but a goal without action is not fruitful. What will you commit to do between now and the next session to help you achieve your goal? Again—be specific! When, What, and How will you do it? Also ask yourself, ‘Do I have the confidence, a “7+” on a scale of 0–10, that I will do this?’ If not, perhaps you should rethink your steps so you do not set yourself up for disappointment—an inch of progress is preferred over miles of steps untaken!”

85–90

Closing. “It’s time to wrap up our first session. Thanks for choosing to be here and please invest some time in YOU this week! Complete the Wellness Inventory, read or review pages 7–12, complete your homework on pages 13–15, begin right away to act on your NEXT Step, and we’ll look forward to another great session next week.”

Remember to send out a summary email to all participants within 48 hours with positive reinforcement for having taken the first step toward parent and family wellness. Remind them of their homework and when Session 2 is scheduled.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members and reintroduce everyone by name.
- *To give* group members additional experience with centering practices and journaling.
- *To introduce* participants to the difference between love-based and fear-based parenting.
- *To reflect* on what school of parenting the participants attended as children.
- *To assist* group members in recognizing that no matter what school of parenting they attended, it is possible to forge their own style of parenting.
- *To discuss* participants' Inventory results.
- *To discuss* participants' NEXT Steps; provide opportunity for sharing centering practices.
- *To choose, write and share* NEXT Steps for the upcoming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 2, group members will be able to:

- Have greater comfort with centering practices and journaling.
- Recognize the benefits of a strong emotional bond between parent and child.
- Recognize how their parenting style was influenced by their upbringing.
- Understand the difference between “love-based” and “fear-based” parenting.
- Have increased familiarity and comfort with the “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey” process and each of its steps.

Session 2: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adapting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring name tags and sign-in sheets.

0–10 **Welcome.** As a check-in, invite volunteers to share one thing for which they are grateful from the past week, for themselves and/or their family.

10–15 **Centering Time.** Focus this time on what the participants have just shared. Invite them to begin by making a mental list of what they are grateful for, and then focus and meditate on one thing from their list.

15–35 **Teaching Segment.** Familiarize yourself with this so you can say it in your own words. Feel free to add insights from your own experience. For example, “Moving to our key topic today, please turn to page 16 in your workbook: *What School of Parenting Did You Attend?*”

“Whether we recognize it or not, we all attended a parenting school when we were children. Some of us attended a school of love-based parenting, characterized by affirmation and support from our parents. Others may have attended the school of fear-based parenting, where the parents expected children to be totally obedient and to be ‘seen but not heard.’”

Invite participants to share what their parents were like, and how that influenced them as parents, either positively or negatively. Help participants to see that most parents merely imitate what they learned as children. Even if parents were punitive or abusive it was most likely how they were parented, not a reflection of what the child deserved.

“The important thing is to recognize that it’s possible for you to become the parent YOU want to be, whether or not the parenting school you attended was positive. Look at the graphic on page 17. The symbol of the ‘teeter-totter’ is an apt one because each of us has the capacity to be on either end of the teeter-totter, being a ‘fear-based’ or ‘love-based’ parent.”

Break-Out Session for Large Groups

35–75 **Sharing.** “Now it’s time to share your NEXT Steps.”

Encourage each member to share their Wellness Inventory results and their NEXT Steps, including their centering practice, Wisdom quote, the area of parent wellness they will be focusing on for the upcoming weeks, and their NEXT Steps from the past week.

During their turn, invite each member to take a few minutes to reflect on NEXT Steps for the upcoming week and write them down in their workbook. Volunteers can share them out loud with the group.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

75–85 **Journaling.** Give people 10 minutes to reflect and/or journal on page 19 in response to these questions: “What school of parenting did you attend? Is this different from the way you want to parent your own children? How?”

85–90 **Closing.** “It’s time to wrap up our second session. Thanks for choosing to be here and please invest some time in YOU this week! For next week, read or review pages 16–17, complete your homework on page 18, and continue to act on your NEXT Step. We’ll look forward to another great session next week!”

Remember to send out an e-mail for Session 2 to all participants within the next 48 hours to summarize this session, encourage them with their NEXT Steps, and remind them of their homework and when Session 3 is scheduled.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* group members additional experiences with centering practices and journaling.
- *To teach* about the different parenting voices and parenting styles.
- *To provide* group members an opportunity to identify themselves with one of the four Parenting Voices described in the workbook.
- *To teach* about the benefits of an Authoritative Parenting Voice.
- *To discuss* how children respond to each of the Four Parenting Voices.
- *To explore* the analogy of parenting voices to singing voices.
- *To check-in* regarding how the past week went in terms of centering practices and NEXT Steps.
- *To choose, write and share* NEXT Steps for the coming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 3, group members will be able to:

- Have greater comfort with centering practices and journaling.
- Understand the concepts of different parenting voices and parenting styles.
- Recognize how children respond to each of the Four Parenting Voices.
- Have increased familiarity and comfort with the “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey” process and each of its steps.

Session 3: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adapting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring quiet music for centering practices/journaling time, name tags, and sign-in sheet.

0–5 **Welcome.** Have group members share something in their family they are grateful for from today, or from the past week.

5–10 **Centering Time.** Reflect on the following quote:

Children are likely to live up to what you believe of them.

—Lady Bird Johnson, former First Lady of the United States

Ask participants to meditate on what positive vision or belief they have of their children, and how they can help their children live into or achieve that vision.

10–15 **Journaling.** Have participants journal about the type of person they want their children to become. Space for journaling can be found on page 23 of their workbook.

15–20 **Sharing.** Invitation to share anything from the Centering/Journaling Time.

20–35 **Teaching Segment.** Familiarize yourself with this so you can say it in your own words. Feel free to add insights from your own experience.

“Today we are going to discuss different styles of parenting, and how we can think of parenting styles as four distinct ‘voices.’ It might be helpful to refer to the graphic on page 21. Just as a singer’s voice might develop a certain style (e.g. jazz, rock, country, or opera), every parent develops a particular parenting voice. Unlike singing voices, where no style is better than another and preference is based on taste, the different parenting styles afford real benefits or disadvantages to children.

“You may have heard the term ‘autocratic’ applied to dictatorial or oppressive governments. The **Autocratic** style of parenting resembles these types of governments. It is a fear-based style of parenting characterized by setting absolutes, dogmatic attitudes, and an ‘I’m the boss’ attitude.

“At the other end of the spectrum is the **Permissive** parenting voice. In this style, the child tends to be the boss, the parent is lenient, and tends to give in to the child. Instead of being the child’s parent, the parent strives to be the child’s friend and boundaries are often unclear.

“Some parents adopt a **Disengaged** parenting voice. Parents who adopt this voice are usually distant and detached. Often they are exhausted and depressed, and fail to set any boundaries or rules.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

- 20–35
(*cont'd*)
- “Finally, there is the **Confident/Consistent** parenting voice. Those who parent with this voice are accountable, authentic, and assertive. They are reliable; they set clear boundaries, and ‘walk the talk.’
- “As you may have guessed, the Confident/Consistent parenting voice is the style that we will champion in this program. Research consistently shows that children raised with this type of parenting display higher level social skills, achieve more, and have higher self-esteem.”
- Invite discussion with the parents. If you’d like, use the questions below to spark discussion:
- Do you think once a parent develops a particular “Parenting Voice” it’s possible to transition to a different one?
- Do parents use multiple “Parenting Voices”?
- What happens when two parents in a child’s life employ different parenting voices?
- 35–45
- Sharing.** Invite the group to share how Parenting Voices have been evident in their lives in the past and/or how it is evident right now.

Break-Out Session for Large Groups

- 45–75
- Sharing.** Each participant reports how the past week went for them, including their centering practice, wisdom quote, area of family wellness they are working on, and their NEXT Steps.
- 75–85
- Journaling.** Each person now takes a few minutes to reflect on NEXT Steps for the coming week and writes them down in their workbook on page 22.
- 85–90
- Closing.** “It’s time to wrap up our third session. Thanks for choosing to be here and please invest some time in YOU this week! For next week, read or review pages 20–21, complete homework on page 22, and continue to act on your NEXT Step.

Remember to send out a summary email to all participants within 48 hours with positive reinforcement and affirmation. Remind them of their homework and when Session 4 is scheduled.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* group members additional experiences with centering practices and journaling.
- *To explain* why discipline can be difficult, using the concepts of the Comfort Zone, Growth Zone, and Panic Zone.
- *To give* group members the chance to discuss different activities and experiences, and in which “zone” each of these activities and experiences would place them.
- *To understand* that the root meaning of the word “discipline” means “to teach” and thus, to discipline is to teach.
- *To provide* **group members with an opportunity to reflect on the connection between the Zone model and discipline.**
- *To understand* the difference between intentionally moving out of the Comfort Zone vs. being forced or thrown out of the Comfort Zone unexpectedly.
- *To check-in* regarding how the past week went with centering practices and NEXT Steps.
- *To choose, write and share* NEXT Steps for the upcoming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 4, group members will be able to:

- Have greater comfort with centering practices and journaling.
- Understand the concept of the Comfort Zone, Growth Zone, and Panic Zone.
- Understand the difference between intentionally moving out of the Comfort Zone vs. being forced or thrown out of the Comfort Zone unexpectedly.
- Have increased familiarity and comfort with the “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey” process and each of its steps.

Session 4: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adapting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring name tags, quiet centering music, and sign-in sheet.

0–5 **Welcome.** Ask if anyone would like to share a time they were able to move from the panic zone to the growth zone last week.

5–10 **Centering Time.** Read the following quote aloud. Give participants time to sit with the quote in silence.

Change is inevitable. Growth is optional.
—John C. Maxwell, author and speaker

10–15 **Journaling.** Have participants journal about changes their family has gone through on page 27 of their notebooks.

15–20 **Sharing.** Invite participants to share anything that came up for them in the Centering/Journaling Time. Ask, “When have you experienced the most difficult changes in your family life? How have you learned from those changes? How about positive changes? Can they also be challenging?”

20–35 **Teaching Segment.** Rethinking Discipline. Discuss the group’s initial thoughts on discipline. Then discuss it as teaching. How might that shift in thinking impact their life with their child?

35–45 **Sharing.** Invite group members to share times when they intentionally placed themselves in the Growth zone, even though it may have been uncomfortable. How did they make that decision? What effect did it have on their families?

Break-Out Session for Large Groups

45–70 **Sharing.** Each participant reports on how the past week went for them—including their centering practice, Wisdom quote, area of wellness they are working on, and/or their NEXT Steps.

Remain in Break-Out Session for Large Groups if needed

70–80 **Journaling.** Each participant now takes a few minutes to reflect on NEXT Steps for the coming week, write them down in their workbook on page 26, and shares them out loud with the group.

85–90 **Closing.** “It’s time to wrap up our fourth session. Thanks for choosing to be here and please invest some time in YOU this week! For next week, read or review pages 24–25, complete homework on page 26, and continue to act on your NEXT Steps.”

Remember to send out a summary email to all participants within 48 hours with positive reinforcement and affirmation. Remind them of their homework and when Session 5 is scheduled.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* participants additional experiences with centering practices and journaling.
- *To introduce* participants to the concepts of the J Curve.
- *To understand* J Curves are inevitable, especially for parents and children.
- *To help* group members recognize and share J Curves they have already passed through as families, as well as those J Curves they may now be experiencing.
- *To understand* the difference between intentionally moving into a J Curve vs. being forced into J Curve against our will.
- *To learn* what a family needs in general, and what each participant may need specifically when they are in the midst of a J Curve.
- *To check-in* regarding how the past week went in terms of centering practices and NEXT Steps.
- *To choose, write and share* NEXT Steps for the upcoming week.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 5, group members will be able to:

- Have a greater comfort with centering practices and journaling.
- Understand the concept of the J Curve.
- Understand that individuals, relationships, families, and organizations all go through J Curves.
- Recognize when they are in a J Curve and how the choices they make can either help them move through it or cause them to remain “stuck.”
- Have increased familiarity and comfort with the “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey” process and each of its steps.

Session 5: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adjusting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring name tags, quiet centering music, and sign-in sheet.

0–5 **Welcome.** Invite group members to share one happy or positive thing that happened to them or their families in the last day or week.

5–10 **Centering Time.** Read the following quote:

One thing I had learned from watching chimpanzees with their infants is that having a child should be fun. —Jane Goodall, primatologist

Have participants spend some time in silence, reflecting on this passage, noting particular feelings that may arise for them as they sit with this quote.

10–15 **Journaling.** Have the participants reflect on the ways parenting brings happiness into their lives. What is fun and rewarding about raising a child? Parents should journal on page 31.

15–20 **Sharing.** Invitation to share anything that came from the centering/journaling time.

20–30 **Teaching Segment.** “Staying Connected Through the “J” Curves of Parenting.” Refer participants to the graphic on page 29. Familiarize yourself with this so you can say it in your own words. Feel free to add insights from your own experience.

“On page 29, we see that when we risk making a change, we often have two very different experiences: 1. The experience that we are open to growth, new possibilities, and new learning and, 2. The experience that this new territory can leave us feeling unstable or unsure.

“On the graph, as our openness to experiences and change increases, stability decreases. So initially, as we begin changes in our path to growth, it’s totally normal to feel unsettled, unsure, and a little shaky. Notice on the graph, though, if we keep moving through the experience with openness, stability gradually improves and continues to improve more and more as we become more open to additional growth experiences.

“A key factor in the successful navigation of a J Curve is asking for support from those around you while you’re in the initial phases of instability and uncertainty.

“Consider this example: An infant is just learning to walk. Everyone around her expects her to fall down because she’s trying something totally new. Everyone knows she’ll need lots of attempts—that she will learn as she keeps trying. Everyone cheers her on! Even at the tiniest of steps. The baby never seems to mind that she doesn’t just start walking. She tries and falls. Tries and falls. Every day. Until she gets more stable on her feet, finds her footing, gets her rhythm, and then ... she takes off and never looks back. On to her next adventure!

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

20–30
(*cont'd*)

“This concept has important implications for your lives as parents. Parenting is really a succession of J Curves, as change and growth is never-ending. It probably seems like every day, your child is accomplishing a new milestone or entering a new phase of life. Your challenge is to maintain loving connections with them to support them as they go through these often-stressful changes.

“Consider the analogy of a tank of gas. Just as your car requires refilling, so does the ‘emotional tank’ of your child. Use your actions and your words to reassure your child that you love them, and that you are there to support them. Always ask yourself, ‘What have I done to show my child that I love them?’”

30–50

Sharing. Invite group members to share J Curves they have been through in the past or are going through now as a family. Remember: J Curves are both normal and natural and are what life is made of.

Break-Out Session for Large Groups if needed

50–80

Sharing. Each participant shares/reports on how the past week went for them including, their centering practices, Wisdom quote, area of wellness they are working on, and their NEXT Steps. Each member now takes a few minutes to reflect on NEXT Steps for the upcoming week, writes them down in their workbook, and shares them out loud with the group.

80–85

Journaling. Work on mapping the NEXT Steps of your journey. Choose one of the prompts and explore it further on page 31.

85–90

Closing. “It’s time to wrap up our fifth session. Thanks for choosing to be here and please invest some time in YOU this week! For next week, read or review pages 28–29, complete homework on page 30, and continue to act on your NEXT Steps.”

Remember to send out a summary email to all participants within 48 hours with positive reinforcement and affirmation. Remind them of their homework and when Session 6 is scheduled.

Purpose:

- *To welcome* back group members.
- *To give* participants additional experiences with centering practices and journaling.
- *To celebrate* the work that group members have done during their time together.
- *To reinforce* the idea that parenting and family wellness is a journey, a process, and not a destination.
- *To encourage* participants to enlist the help of their “village” in raising their children.
- *To encourage* group members to keep the process they have started going—whether informally, with a group of people in their lives, or by enrolling in another Parent Wellness Circle.
- *To check-in* regarding how the past week went with their NEXT Steps.
- *To facilitate* a closing that honors and celebrates the work that group members have done.

Objectives:

By the end of Session 6, group members will be able to:

- Have increased comfort with centering practices and journaling.
- Understand the concept that “Parent and Family Wellness” is a process not a destination.
- Understand the need to continue the process of growth and change on an ongoing basis (which could include participation in another **Parent Wellness Circle**).
- Understand the interconnectedness of all areas of parent wellness.
- Appreciate the need for parents to be positive systems of support for one another.
- Experience the importance of celebrations to honor our growth and the connections that have been shared with one another.

Session 6: A Step-by-Step Guide

This outline is for a 90-minute session—it can be broken into two sessions or shortened as needed by adjusting the group discussion or reflection segments.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

Before the Wellness Circle Begins. Bring quiet music for centering practices/journaling time.

If you are doing a closing celebration you will also need: A large “pillar” candle Enough votive candles for everyone, A small table, Matches, A parting gift for each participant, such as a copy of the *Parent Wellness Compass* book, or anything you feel is fitting for your group.

0–5 **Welcome.** Share something that is bringing you happiness in your life right now.

5–10 **Centering Time.** Read the following quote and meditate on what it means to you.

Perhaps it takes courage to raise children.

—John Steinbeck, author

10–15 **Journaling.** Invite parents to write down their thoughts/reflections related to the quote you just read together. You can ask, “Do you agree with Steinbeck? In what ways are you a ‘courageous’ parent?”

15–20 **Sharing.** Invitation to share anything from the centering/journaling time

20–30 **Teaching Segment.** Discuss the concept of family wellness as a journey, “a process more than a destination.”

Discuss ideas for group members to continue to build upon the good work they have done in this program.

Talk about how/if participants in this group would like to stay in touch with each other.

Discuss ideas for getting support from their children’s “village.”

Discuss whether or not it would be beneficial to do another Parent Wellness Circle at some point in the future or to get together to read the *Parent Wellness Compass* book of reflections as a group.

30–60 **Sharing.** Each participant shares about how the past week went for them including their spiritual practice, Wisdom quote and area of whole-person wellness they are working on, and their NEXT Steps.

60–70 **Journaling.** Each group member completes the “closing reflection” page in their book for Session 6, on page 34. You may want to play quiet music to set a reflective tone. Tell them they will have an opportunity to share their thoughts later if they choose to.

Elapsed Time
(in minutes)

Details for Each Segment

70–90

Closing. Optional closing reflections.

Closing with candles. In this closing ritual, each person lights a candle from the larger, center candle and reads out loud their “closing reflection.” To do this, you will need to have a small table to put in the center, a large “pillar” candle to put in the middle and then a votive candle for each person. You will have lit the pillar candle while the group was taking time to complete the “closing reflection.” As each person shares her/his closing reflection, he/she will light their votive candle from the flame of the pillar candle and place then place their votive on the table, with all of the votives eventually forming a circle around the pillar candle. You will need matches or some other candle or wick to make lighting the votives from the pillar candle.

Closing without candles, with personal affirmations. In this Closing Ritual, each person reads out loud their “closing reflection.” You may stand in a circle, holding hands if you wish. As each person, who wishes to, shares their closing reflection, members of the group are invited to share a positive affirmation about that person and their family.



If you are so inclined, please email and let us know how your *Parent Wellness Circle* went. We love to hear how this program is being used and experienced in the world.

Email us:

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Thank you.

About the Authors

Scott and Holly Stoner are the Co-Executive Directors of the Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They are both Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs) with a combined sixty-five+ years of experience helping parents and families. They are the creators of both the *Parent Wellness Compass* and *The Teen Compass*.

Holly has worked with many families and children as a teacher at both the grade-school and high-school levels. Scott, too, has worked with many families and children when he served as a pastor of an Episcopal church.

Married for more than 40 years, they have three adult children and two grandchildren. For both, personally and professionally, family has always been what is most important in life.

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