

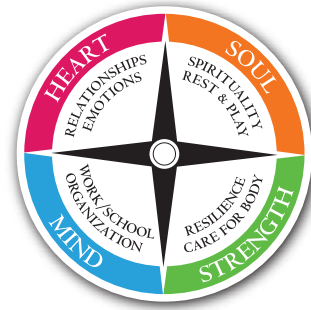
Parent Wellness COMPASS

Parent Wellness Circle *Program Workbook*



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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.



This Workbook belongs to:

Parent Wellness Circle Date: _____

Thank you for honoring my privacy by not reading what I have written. It is intended for my reflection alone.

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Ten Guideposts for Engaged Parenting

1. Practice loving-kindness
2. Embrace imperfection
3. Understand shame and practice resilience
4. Make space for rest, creativity, and gratitude
5. Hold spirit sacred
6. Make mistakes, make amends
7. Learn hope
8. Practice forgiveness and self-compassion
9. Lean into discomfort and pain
10. Practice courage by setting limits and respecting boundaries

—Dr. Brené Brown, from her audio book, *The Gifts of Imperfect Parenting: Raising Children with Courage, Compassion, and Connection*

An Invitation to the Parent Wellness Circle Program

Your children would be lost without you. As a parent, you are the one helping them navigate their way in a complicated world. You help them find their way each day through the love, support, guidance, and direction you give them. What an awesome privilege and responsibility we have as parents.

Parenting is a journey and as with any journey, it is important to be intentional about the direction we are headed. As licensed marriages and family therapists with a combined sixty-five+ years of experience, we have helped thousands of parents navigate the concerns and challenges of parenthood. As parents ourselves, we also know how easy it is to feel overwhelmed, and at times, even lost. And it is at those times that we can especially benefit from having a compass—a Parent Wellness Compass—to help us find our way again.

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 Compass Inventory** in the first session. **Listening** involves deciding—based on what you discovered from your Wellness Inventory results—on any changes you want to make in your life as a parent. **Proceeding** involves actively working on the **NEXT Steps** that you choose for yourself. You'll learn more about NEXT Steps in Session 1.

This program also addresses eight dimensions of wellness: Healthy Relationships, Handling Emotions, Organization, Work and School, Spirituality, Rest and Play, Stress Resilience, and Care for the Body. You will learn about each of these dimensions of wellness and how they are interconnected. You will learn and practice being more intentional about how you lead your life as a parent, and how you can best serve as a compass for your children and for your family.

There is no greater honor and joy than being a parent. And for us, there is no greater honor than being able to walk a part of the journey of parent wellness with you.

Holly Hughes Stoner, LMFT and D. Scott Stoner, LMFT

Co-Directors, The Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation

Welcome to Your Parent Wellness Circle

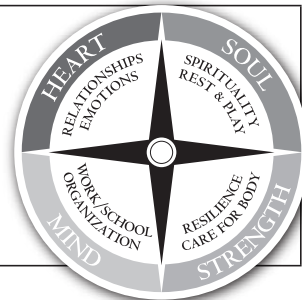
When our children are feeling overwhelmed or unsure of themselves, they turn to us for support. But where can we turn for support when we feel overwhelmed or unsure of ourselves? A **Parent Wellness Circle** is one place we can turn to both receive and provide support for the amazing journey of parenthood. And, just like our children come to us to share their joys or concerns, we, too, can share our parental joys and concerns with our Parent Wellness Circle. Many of us are familiar with the proverb, “It takes a village to raise a child.” Parent Compass Wellness Circles are based on the belief that it also takes a village to support and guide a parent.

These circles, though, are meant to be much more than simply a source of support. The central focus of a Parent Wellness Circle is to coach you toward creating healthy change. It is meant to help you identify for yourself specific changes that you are ready to make and then, over six sessions, receive the support you need to make these changes. **Parent Wellness Circles** will help you check your bearings as a parent and then help you as you make any needed changes in order to point yourself, and your family, in the direction you choose to go.

It is important to remember that your core values, beliefs, and ideals act as a compass that guides your life, and the lives of your family. They point toward your own “true north.” Your participation in a Parent Wellness Circle will help you to become more conscious of your core values, beliefs, and ideals and support you as you work to more fully align your choices as a parent with your values, beliefs, and ideals.

We have conducted thousands of hours of family counseling, as well as a multitude of parenting and family wellness workshops. We find that most parents come to counseling or to workshops looking for information on how they can change their children. Having a concern about a child is a great reason to seek parenting advice, but most parents quickly discover that the best support they can receive is support that helps them grow and change as parents. Starting with your own wellness as a parent will always maximize your ability to positively influence and guide your children.

A Parent Wellness Circle creates the opportunity for you to pause and check your bearings. First, you will check the direction in which you are heading in different areas of your life. Then you will ask yourself, “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?”



Your Parent Wellness Circle will help you explore these questions and, if necessary, make any needed adjustments.

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 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, or 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 to be well and whole.

Guided by your values and beliefs, and supported by the community of your Wellness Circle, you will find that you can enhance your wellness, for yourself and for your family, by choosing an area of the Compass and making small and steady changes that you decide are right for you.

The Core Principles of Parent Wellness Circles

1. Family resilience and wellness are rooted in **community**.
2. Family resilience and wellness are rooted in identifying and acting in alignment with one’s **core values and beliefs**, or **spirituality**.
3. 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

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.



Parent Wellness COMPASS



Parent Wellness Circles are designed to assist YOU in making the changes you decide are right for you. The program is a combination of education and life coaching that will maximize your 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.

SESSION 1: Understanding Parent and Family Resilience. Research shows there are three key factors in supporting resilience: a supportive community, a clear sense of spirituality (core values and beliefs), and making choices that promote balance in all areas of wellness. Each participant will first complete the Parent Wellness Compass Inventory and then be introduced to “Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey.” You will also explore and learn about “Whatever We Pay Attention to Is What Will Grow.”

SESSION 2: What School of Parenting Did You Attend? The primary place we learned what it means to be a mother/father is the family in which we grew up. Some of what we learned may or may not be helpful as we parent our own children. This session talks about the important differences between loved-based parenting and fear-based parenting.

SESSION 3: Your Parenting Voice. The issue for us is not whether or not we have a strong voice. The issue is whether or not our voice is clear, consistent, and in alignment with our core values and beliefs. Four different parenting voices will be explored and discussed.

SESSION 4: Rethinking Discipline. This session reminds us that the root meaning of the word “discipline” is “to teach.” Disciplining our children is first and foremost about teaching—*not* punishing—them.

SESSION 5: Staying Connected Through the “J” Curves of Parenting. It is relatively easy to maintain a loving connection with our children when things are peaceful and calm. But what happens when we, or our children, are stressed and overwhelmed? In this session, we share some tools that will help us stay connected, even during highly emotional times of change and transition.

SESSION 6: The Journey Continues. Parenting is hard work, and so we need multiple levels of support from friends, extended family, school, and the wider community. In order to continue being a healthy compass for our children, we need to commit to connecting with others who can help us stay true to our core values and beliefs.

An 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 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.



SESSION 1: Understanding Parent and Family Resilience

Resilience is defined as the capacity to adapt to, and manage, significant stressors and challenges. Everyone has some resilience skills developed from working through adversities they have faced in life. And, everyone can enhance their existing resilience skills by learning new thoughts, practicing good communication skills, and developing healthy habits, which is exactly the point of Parent Wellness Circles. They are designed to help parents and families enhance the kinds of thoughts, communication skills, and habits that strengthen resilience.

While there are many factors that can enhance resilience, research tells us that three stand out as foundational: a supportive community, a clear sense of spirituality (core values and beliefs), and making choices that promote balance in all areas of wellness. These three factors give parents and families the support and guidance they need when they run into the inevitable twists and turns on the journey of parenthood. Parents and families with a high degree of resilience are the ones who know and accept and acknowledge that raising children are both one of the greatest joys they will experience, and one of the hardest things they will ever do. They also are the ones who understand the importance of having a community of support, a clear sense of spirituality, and of making choices that promote balance in all areas of wellness. These parents and families are willing to acknowledge vulnerability and seek out the support they need from their extended families, friends, other parents, and community groups. Parents who are resilient also turn to each other for the support they need.

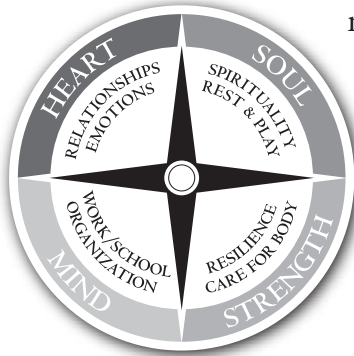
Let's be clear: resilient parents and families are not those without challenges. There is a common misunderstanding that resilient families are free of challenges, when the reality is that all families face difficult times. No family is immune. Resilient families are not problem-free families, but rather families who have developed—and continue to strengthen—the thoughts, communication skills, and habits that give them the ability to cope with their challenges. In fact, some of the most resilient parents and families are those that have faced some of the most difficult challenges, yet have come out the other side and are once more moving forward.

Parent Wellness Compass: A Brief Overview

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.



The four points of the Parent Wellness Compass provides a set of maps for understanding eight areas of family wellness. These maps will help you to better understand yourself as a parent while, at the same time, helping you to better understand your children and your 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 you will work from in your Parent Wellness Circle:

1. **Relationships.** The ability to create and maintain healthy, life-giving connections with others.
2. **Handling Emotions.** The ability to process, express, and receive emotions in a healthy way.
3. **Organization.** The ability to keep track of and make good use of possessions, money, and time.
4. **Work and School.** The ability to get the most out of employment, educational, and volunteer opportunities.
5. **Spirituality.** The development and practice of a strong personal value system and a meaningful purpose in life.
6. **Rest and Play.** The ability to balance work, school, and play and to renew oneself.
7. **Stress Resilience.** The ability to deal positively with the adversities of life.
8. **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.

Parent Wellness Compass Inventory

During the first session of your Parent Wellness Circle, you will complete the Parent Wellness Compass Inventory. Your results will provide you with a present-moment snapshot of your life and that of your family. It will show you the areas you have been paying attention to, and the areas where you might want to invest more of your attention. Think of the eight areas of wellness in your shaded-in compass as a garden; some areas are well-watered, and some are in need of weeding, and perhaps are a bit wilted and in need of your attention.

As you reflect on each dimension of your whole-person wellness, it may be helpful to read about each area of wellness, beginning on page 37. Each Parent Wellness Inventory (on pages 38–53) contains ten statements related to that particular area. It is helpful to remember that your inventory is simply a “snapshot” of your life at this very moment.

Whatever We Pay Attention to Is What Will Grow

One of the core principles of a Parent Wellness Circle is, “whatever we pay attention to is what will grow.” As a parent, at any given time, we have areas of our lives with which we are satisfied, and other areas where we are less so. Chances are pretty good that the areas where we experience satisfaction are the areas where we have been focusing our attention. The opposite of this is also true. If we are less satisfied with some area of our lives, it may well be because we have not been giving it enough of our attention.

This can quickly become an ongoing cycle because we tend to prefer focusing our attention on the areas of our lives that are going well, while tending naturally to ignore or avoid the areas with which we are less satisfied. A person who hasn’t exercised in years may find it hard to pay more attention to that area of their life. A person who neglects keeping a budget and making good financial decisions may resist paying attention to that area of their life, as well, because it can be unpleasant. We are all capable of minimizing and denying those areas of our lives that are not going so well because it pushes us out of our comfort zone and can be overwhelming. Let’s take a quick look at the Parent Wellness Compass Inventory, which will be your trusted compass and guide for the next six weeks in your Parent Wellness Circle, and beyond.

Parent Wellness Compass Inventory Sample Responses

► Organization

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never	Sometimes			Half of the Time		Most of the Time			Always	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

My family and I have a system for planning and keeping track of activities that works for everyone. 7

We have regular family meetings to clarify priorities and then plan our activities accordingly. 6

I feel good about the way my family and I spend, share, and save, our money. 6

Chores and expectations for helping around our home are clearly defined and carried out. 7

Modeling for them, how to help keep 4

activities our family participates 5

with whom they are spending 6
that I know.

of money my children have access 6

to manage their time and am 6

describe me as well organized. 7

TOTAL 60

of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with

nd 51

► Handling Emotions

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never	Sometimes			Half of the Time		Most of the Time			Always	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

I am helping my children to learn about, feel, and express the full range of emotions (sadness, fear, joy, boredom, anger, joy, love) in healthy ways. 6

The words I use and the way I speak to my children are helping to build a solid and healthy sense of confidence within them. 5

I forgive myself and my child when we make mistakes and express forgiveness easily. 4

My relationship with alcohol and other drugs, as well as other possibly addictive behaviors, does not negatively affect my family. 5

I give my child daily positive affirmations. 8

When my child misbehaves in some way, I use that as an opportunity to teach him or her about a better way of doing things. 6

When I am emotionally upset, I have places to turn to re-center myself, and I teach my child to do the same. 7

I take my children's emotions seriously and do not minimize their feelings. 3

The relationships in my life are emotionally stable and are a healthy model for my children. 5

I “say what I mean, mean what I say, and I don't say it mean.” 8

TOTAL 57

Shade in the Handling Emotions “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

Area of Whole-Person Wellness: **Heart**

41

Parent Wellness Compass Inventory Sample Results



Once you have arrived at your total score from each inventory, shade in that section of the compass on p. 37 (0 is at the center, 50 is halfway out, and 100 is at the outer edge). Your scores are not “good” or “bad,” nor are they “strong” or “weak.” This inventory is simply a “snapshot” of your life at this very moment. It might be helpful to think of it as a garden. Your results show areas of the garden you have been watering, and which areas may be in need of some additional watering.

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.

Mapping the NEXT Steps of Your Journey

To be completed between Sessions 1 and 2

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?

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.

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

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.

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.

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?

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

SESSION 2: What School of Parenting Did You Attend?

One of our primary roles as a parent is that of teacher. In order to become a teacher, one must first attend some sort of a school in order to learn the material they will be teaching. Each of us has already attended a “school” that taught us about parenting: the family in which we grew up. There we were taught what it means to be a parent and a family, and we carry those lessons with us to this day. The adults who raised us were our primary teachers, and we spent thousands of hours in their “classroom.”

Some of us were fortunate to have attended a wonderful “school” of parenting with wonderful, loving teachers. Some of us were not so fortunate. None of us chose the family—the parenting “school”—into which we were born. And whatever our experience, we had no choice but to internalize that experience.

It has been said that the way we speak to our children as they are growing up will become the inner voice they hear throughout their lives. To the degree this is true, what does your inner voice tell you about how you were parented? How, for example, did your inner voice respond when you completed the Wellness Inventory last week? Did it respond with love and acceptance, or doubt and self-criticism?

Even if we were fortunate to have attended a great parenting school, we realize that much about parenting has changed since we were children—there are new challenges in the world, and new ideas about how to grow healthy and resilient families. In any field, whether it be business, art, construction, education, medicine, technology, or parenting, new ideas emerge that will help us to better understand and do our best work.

One of the biggest developments in the field of parenting, research shows, is the awareness that one of the most important factors in effective parenting is the stability and the strength of the emotional bond between parent and child. The “old school” way of thinking about parenting did not place as much emphasis on this bond, focusing instead on the need for children to obey their parents. In years past it was common to hear people say that children were “to be seen and not heard.” With this approach to parenting, children often behaved and obeyed out of fear of punishment ... and this was seen as a good thing. The “old school” model was top-down, more of a command-and-control approach to parenting.

When instead, we place primary emphasis on the stability and strength of the emotional bond parents have with their children, it does not mean that we no longer focus on our children’s behavior or that we become permissive. To use the analogy of a classroom, think about teachers who try to motivate students by scolding them

or embarrassing them in front of the class. The students may obey and perform out of fear, but they will most likely learn less and will be filled with resentment. Effective teachers, on the other hand, have high expectations and standards for their students while, at the same time, motivate them with a relationship based on excitement, respect, and positivity. The students *want* to perform well in this kind of classroom; in fact, they usually are enjoying themselves so much that they forget they are learning. These two different approaches to teaching diverge in that one approach leads with love and the other leads with fear. When you think of the “school” of parenting you attended as a child, was it more love-based or fear-based? Or did it fluctuate between the two?

The diagram below shows the two basic emotions, love and fear, and the emotions that derive from them. They are presented on a teeter-totter to emphasize the constant need for us to decide which end of the teeter-totter we weigh most heavily with our words and actions. Like a teeter-totter, at times we will find ourselves going back and forth between love and fear. It is so easy for fear to overpower love, and for us to parent out of our fears, especially if this is how we were parented. Yet with practice and with commitment and perseverance, we can learn to lead primarily out of our love rather than out of our fear. When we do this, we will have a much better chance of positively influencing our children, not just for today, but for a lifetime.

Your Parent Wellness Circle is a safe place to talk openly about your fears as a parent. And with the support of the other parents in your circle, it is also a good place to create NEXT Steps, steps that will help you tip the teeter-totter more often from fear to love. With the support of your circle you will be better able to address your fears with greater confidence and calmness.



Mapping Your NEXT Steps

To be completed between Sessions 2 and 3

Area of wellness you wish to continue to focus on (or a new area):

“You Are Here” | Describe where you are right now and note if this is different than Session 2.

“Wish You Were Here!” | Restate or refine where you want to be.

Wisdom Quote | Keep the same or choose a new one.

Centering Practice | Keep the same or choose a new one.

Support from Others | Have you asked others for support? Do you need to?

Goal | Keep the same or choose a new one.

NEXT Steps | List one or two NEXT Steps you will take this week to achieve your goal.

SESSION 3: Your Parenting Voice

Our voice is as unique as our fingerprint. When you know someone well, you can instantly recognize their voice. We once did an exercise with a group of parents and children to demonstrate this point. We had a group of thirty parents stand in the back of a room and had all of their children stand in the front of the room with their backs to their parents. We then had each parent take turns reading out loud from a book and we asked the children to turn around only when they recognized one of their parents reading out loud. Without fail, each child immediately recognized their parent's voice.

As you reflect on your voice as a parent, we invite you to think of more than just the mere sound of your voice. Our voice as a parent also includes the day-to-day way in which we speak to, and interact with, our children, the very words and the tones we use. Is your voice confident and consistent? Is it anxious or angry? Do you use words and tones that lift up or tear down? Do you ever feel that you have lost your voice as a parent, that you wield little influence over your children?

You also may find that you feel confused and drowned out by the many voices around you, voices telling you how you *should* live and parent. The voices of your culture, your family of origin, your friends, and neighbors, can overwhelm your own voice at times.

The question is not whether or not you have a strong parenting voice. You do. The power that your voice has in influencing your children, intentionally or unintentionally, is real. And so there are three important questions we will help you address:

- Is my voice as a parent mindful and intentional, and is it aligned with my core values and beliefs?
- Is my usual parenting voice love-based or fear-based?
- How can I strengthen and clarify my parent voice?

Most of us have a fairly clear idea of who we want to be as a parent. The struggle for many, though, is how to align our day-to-day behaviors and decisions with our ideal on a consistent basis. One day our parenting voices are clear, loving, and consistent. Another day, or maybe even later that same day, we are inconsistent, becoming either controlling or permissive, without even realizing it.

Parenting Styles: Which One Reflects Your Voice?

Imagine that you decide to become a professional singer. As you start to train and develop your voice, you would naturally begin to develop a certain style that fits you and your voice, whether that be jazz, classical, rock, hip-hop, or country. A similar phenomenon happens for parents. Over time, as parents develop their

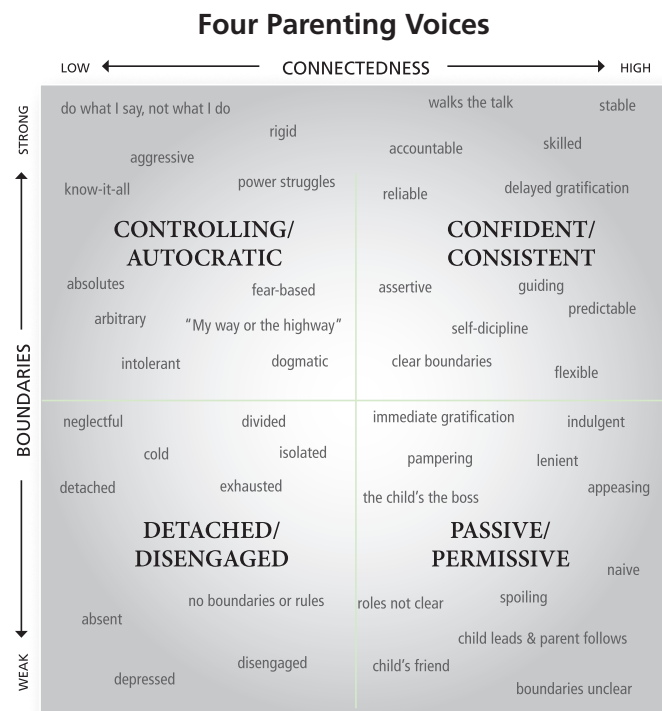
parenting voice, their voice usually falls into a particular parenting style. We have found four general parenting styles that exist between a parent and child, styles that are directly related both to the amount of connectedness, and the boundaries each parent sets up and maintains. Refer to the image on this page to better understand the four parenting styles and how each style is created by different amounts of connectedness and boundaries.

As you can see, when parents have few boundaries *and*—at the same time—are not emotionally connected with their children, we say that their parent voice is “Disengaged” or “Detached.” If, on another hand, they are connected emotionally *and* have clear and consistent boundaries, these parents will have a “Confident/Consistent” voice. One is obviously healthier than the other. The other two voices: “Controlling/Autocratic” and “Passive/Permissive,” are high in one area but not in the other, and have definite limitations, as well.

The analogy of a parenting voice and a singing voice is helpful, but only up to a point. In singing, all styles are equally valid and the one you choose is simply a matter of aptitude and taste—no one singing style is better or more effective than another. In parenting, there is one style, one voice, that is clearly more effective than the others. Research has shown that children raised in homes where parents used the Confident/Consistent style fare the best, tend to have higher self-esteem, higher social skills, and higher achievement. Children raised with a voice from the other three quadrants tend to have trouble in a variety of ways with self-esteem, achievement, and social skills.

A concise way to summarize the Confident/Consistent parenting voice is: “Say what you mean, mean what you say, and don’t say it mean.” The first two phrases point out the importance of parents creating and maintaining strong boundaries, and the last part promotes high connectedness. Both qualities are important ingredients in creating a healthy environment for your family to learn and grow.

The good news for us is that, with practice, our parenting voice will become more confident and consistent, keeping in mind that the goal of practice is not perfection, but progress.



Mapping Your NEXT Steps

To be completed between Sessions 3 and 4

Area of wellness you wish to continue to focus on (or a new area):

“You Are Here” | Describe where you are right now and note if this is different than Session 3.

“Wish You Were Here!” | Restate or refine where you want to be.

Wisdom Quote | Keep the same or choose a new one.

Centering Practice | Keep the same or choose a new one.

Support from Others | Have you asked others for support? Do you need to?

Goal | Keep the same or choose a new one.

NEXT Steps | List one or two NEXT Steps you will take this week to achieve your goal.

SESSION 4: Rethinking Discipline

We often hear parents talking about how to discipline their children. They wonder what is appropriate for the age of their child and for the trouble the child has gotten into. Should the punishments get more severe as a child ages and the trouble is more serious? “How do I discipline my two-year old son when he runs out into the street? What about when my ten-year old daughter lies about what movie she and a friend have watched? Or when my teen steals money out of my wallet?” We love these questions because they give us a chance to discuss the true meaning and role of discipline in raising a child.

The word *discipline* means “to teach,” it does not necessarily mean to punish, as many people think. A discipline is a branch of knowledge, typically one studies in higher education and a disciple is one who is taught, a student. Both definitions imply that both teaching and learning are an important part of discipline.

Thinking of discipline as teaching is new for some parents and can change the way they parent. The most common understanding of discipline is to link it with punishment and/or consequences for bad behavior. Punishment by itself is merely a penalty for an offense, and learning how to do things differently next time is not always the goal. If we get caught in a cycle where we are regularly punishing and yelling at our children, then we may need to step back and take a fresh look to how we think about and use discipline.

One of the first things we will discover when we switch our thinking about discipline as teaching, rather than punishment, is that teaching takes more patience, effort, and time. No wonder it sometimes seems easier to just dole out punishments. Whether we are teaching our child how to safely cross the street, how to tell a friend that they aren’t allowed to watch rated R movies, or how to budget money so they don’t need to take money that isn’t theirs, it takes time and attention. It is hard work, but in the end it will be well worth your time as your child will learn new skills, and your relationship will be stronger.

Here is what we believe are the key skills and attributes needed to effectively teach, and thus discipline, our children:

- Think of difficult moments in your life together as teachable moments. We want to ask our children what can be learned from the experience. Help them think through what has happened, and what they could do differently next time. Their ideas will often align with your own ideas.
- Be clear and consistent about what you believe and expect. Say what you mean. Mean what you say. Don’t say it mean.
- Be a disciplined disciplinarian. Do not attempt to discipline when you are emotionally flooded. Call a time out on yourself and reengage your child when your teaching can be responsive, as opposed to reactive.

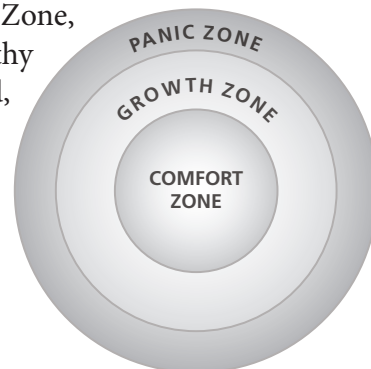
- Walk the talk. Practice what you teach. Model what you expect. Your actions always teach louder than your words.
- Commit to your own life-long learning as a parent.
- Acknowledge when you have made a mistake. Say you are sorry and repair the relationship.
- Talk with your child about your expectations and why they are important to you when things are calm. Explain how your expectations connect to your core values and beliefs.
- Know what you want your child to learn. We will need to adapt our lessons depending on who our child is and what arises. Being flexible and being a learner yourself is always important.

The diagram below is a helpful way to think about the process of teaching and disciplining our children. In this diagram the Growth Zone is where learning occurs. When our children are struggling with a particular behavior or issue, our goal as parents is to help them turn that experience, no matter what it is, into a growth experience. This might mean helping them move out of a Comfort Zone, or pulling them in out of a Panic Zone. Growth does not occur when we are stuck in the Comfort Zone as then we miss chances for growth, and neither does it occur when we and/or our children are in the Panic Zone.

Thinking about these three zones and how they relate to parents can be helpful, too. Healthy parents intentionally move themselves into the Growth Zone on a regular basis, learning new and effective skills to respond to changing stages and corresponding issues. Imagine, for example, that you are a parent who is very uncomfortable talking with your teen about topics such as drugs, alcohol, and sexuality. You will likely either stay in the Comfort Zone and avoid such discussions, or go into the Panic Zone and overreact out of fear. Healthy parents will move themselves into the Growth Zone by seeking out resources such as books, podcasts, family therapists or other supportive parents to learn how to best talk with their teen about these important issues.

Parents who regularly put themselves in the Growth Zone serve as role models for their children. Every parent and every child will have their share of times when they react to each other from the Panic Zone, that is just how family life goes sometimes. Healthy parents quickly recognize when this has happened, make amends, and move themselves and their families back into the Growth Zone.

Think of the NEXT Steps that you are creating for yourself in this program as a concrete way of putting yourself in the Growth Zone.



Mapping Your NEXT Steps

To be completed between Sessions 4 and 5

Area of wellness you wish to continue to focus on (or a new area):

“You Are Here” | Describe where you are right now and note if this is different than Session 4.

“Wish You Were Here!” | Restate or refine where you want to be.

Wisdom Quote | Keep the same or choose a new one.

Centering Practice | Keep the same or choose a new one.

Support from Others | Have you asked others for support? Do you need to?

Goal | Keep the same or choose a new one.

NEXT Steps | List one or two NEXT Steps you will take this week to achieve your goal.

SESSION 5: Staying Connected Through the “J” Curves of Parenting

Pause for a moment and think of an adult who had a significant, positive impact on your growing up, and is someone you admired and respected. It could be a family member, teacher, coach, mentor, or any adult who taught you important life lessons. The positive energy you feel when you think of that person is likely because of the positive, stable, and caring bond that you had with them. This was their greatest gift to you. If that person had not been able to create such a connection with you, you would have never benefited from their wisdom.

The important adults in our lives, as children and as teens, who had a strong impact on our development influenced us through their caring connection. The same is true for our children as human beings are wired for connection. Your children will connect with and be influenced by many people, but you are the primary person your child wants to connect with, and be influenced by. It may not always seem like it but you are, during childhood and even during adolescence, their primary connection, their primary source of love and safety.

While it is easy to embrace the idea of maintaining loving connections with our children, doing so is not always easy. The most common reason for the breakdown of loving connections between parents and children is stress. When one or the other (or both) are overwhelmed with strong emotions either may say or do things they regret. We call this emotional flooding, and it happens to all parents and all children. We are most likely to see emotional flooding whenever someone in the family is going through a time of change or transition. These times of stress can naturally create strong emotions of anxiety, loss and irritation. And to make things even more confusing they can create excitement for one member of the family and sadness for another. It is quite common for these emotions to be expressed at home, and to be acted out and directed toward one another in a family.

The J Curve, depicted below, shows how we move through transitions. All transitions, even positive ones that we choose, initially create a sense of instability and anxiety. To go back to an image from Session 3, the early stages of change often send us into the Panic Zone as we wonder and worry how things will go. “Will I like high school and will I be able to see my friends with all of the different classes? Will the kids like me on my new soccer team and am I really good enough? How will my family adjust to my new work schedule? When a parent and child are stuck in conflict it is frequently when one or both of them are on the downward slope of a J Curve, they are adjusting to some change.

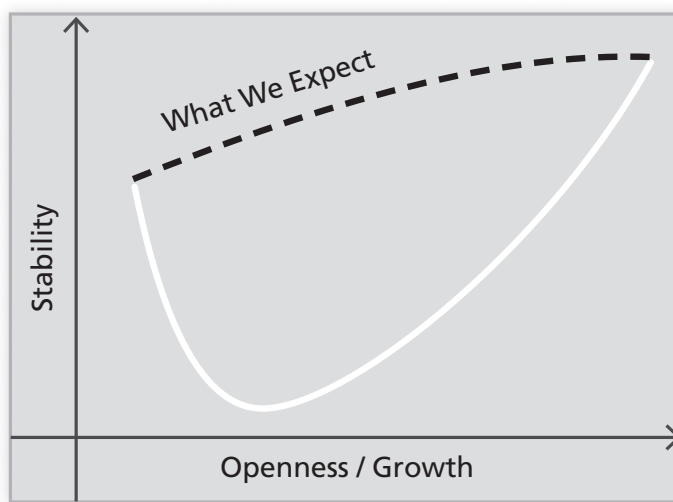
The goal of every child’s development is to move them from complete dependency to eventual autonomy. This process is never a straight, linear progression, but rather

is filled with many, many J Curves. Every stage of a child's growth, whether it's an infant learning to sleep through the night, a toddler experimenting with saying, "No," a kindergartner going off to school, a teen learning to drive, or a young adult leaving home for the first time, it creates a J Curve for both child and parent. This in turns creates plenty of strong emotions and even some instability. It is during these times when parents have to be especially intentional about maintaining loving connections with their children.

Here are a few specific things we can do to maintain and strengthen the connection and influence we have with our child, especially during the J Curves of life:

- Fill your child's "love tank" on a regular basis. Words of affection, affirmation and respect, along with loving gestures are concrete ways to fill your child's "love tank." Your child needs to feel your love every day. Your love needs to be felt as unconditional, separate from how you feel and react to bad choices and decisions that they make, loving him or her at the core of who they are.
- Remember that to discipline means to teach and teaching takes time and patience.
- Repair a broken or damaged connection as soon as possible. Take responsibility when you have broken or damaged your relationship with your child and make repairs immediately.
- Pay attention to the good things your child does. What we pay most attention to regarding our child is what we will see grow in them. For example, if they are appreciated, they will appreciate, if they are blamed, they will blame.
- Think of your child as having an "emotional bank Account." You make "deposits" in that bank account when you love, appreciate and affirm him or her. You make "withdrawals" when you criticize, disrespect or shame. Set a goal of keeping the ratio of deposits to withdrawals at 5:1.

In Session 1 we share the principle, "Change is inevitable, growth is optional." Here we say, "J Curves are inevitable, maintaining loving connections are optional—but so essential for a happy, healthy family life."



—Adapted from *The J Curve: A New Way to Understand Why Nations Rise and Fall*, by Ian Bremmer, 2006

Mapping Your NEXT Steps

To be completed between Sessions 5 and 6

Area of wellness you wish to continue to focus on (or a new area):

“You Are Here” | Describe where you are right now and note if this is different than Session 5.

“Wish You Were Here!” | Restate or refine where you want to be.

Wisdom Quote | Keep the same or choose a new one.

Centering Practice | Keep the same or choose a new one.

Support from Others | Have you asked others for support? Do you need to?

Goal | Keep the same or choose a new one.

NEXT Steps | List one or two NEXT Steps you will take this week to achieve your goal.

SESSION 6: The Journey Continues

Congratulations on your commitment over these past six weeks to become a more intentional parent. In Session 1 we talked about three key factors for enhancing our resilience and wellness as parents: a supportive community, spirituality (core values and beliefs), and making choices that promote balance in all areas of wellness. Let's now take a moment as we conclude our time together to reflect again on these factors.

A compass will always point north except when there are other forces, electrical or magnetic, interfering with the needle. If there are other interfering forces, it will be hard for the needle to be pulled toward north and the compass will become unreliable. Human beings are much the same way. When it comes to our inner compass, we can think of north as our spirituality—our core values and beliefs. Our inner compass will point to north when we are not unduly influenced by forces around us. When external forces and pressures begin to interfere with our inner compass, we can become disoriented and find ourselves heading in a direction other than north, living in ways that do not reflect our values. In this program, you have now learned a process for checking your bearings and reorienting your life, step-by-step, as needed.

One of the most important things we can do for our children is to help shape their sense of true north. And one of the most important things for us to remember is that, as parents, we are the primary influence in shaping our children's core values and beliefs. Children, by their very nature, are in the process of developing their own inner compass, one that will guide them for the rest of their lives. In the meantime, and this is a humbling thought, we serve as the primary compass for our children. There is no higher calling, no more important work, than being the primary creators of a child's spirituality and the core values and beliefs that will guide them for the rest of their lives.

In their own way, our children—and through our parenting of them—serve as a compass for us, as well. Nowhere is the state of our own wellness more apparent than in the way we interact with our children. When we are oriented toward our true north, our interactions with our children are more likely to be focused on the things we value and hold to be most important. And when we allow ourselves to be pulled in too many directions, when we are not oriented toward our own true north, we might well veer off-course and end up taking our family in a direction we do not want to go.

As you conclude your six-session Parent Wellness Circle, keep in mind that resilience and wellness are not a final destination, but an ongoing journey for every family. Make the process of “stop, look, listen and proceed” a regular part of your

day-to-day life as a parent. Regularly check your bearings and, if you find yourself off-course, quickly reorient yourself toward your true north.

There is a familiar African proverb that says, “It takes a village to raise a child.” We’d like to expand that proverb to make the point that parents need the support of a “village” as much as their children do. We say, “It takes a village to support a parent.” You know this to be true because you have experienced a village of support from the other parents in your wellness circle over the last six weeks. We hope you will find ways to stay connected, and to continue to offer support to one another. Many groups decide to reconnect after a few months and complete a six-session Parent Wellness Circle again, either with the same group members, or creating a new circle and inviting other parents to join. Even though the program is the same, you and your children will be in a new place and so the experience will be different for you. Choosing to stay connected with others will offer valuable support for you and your family as you make choices that promote balance in all areas of wellness.

You can also continue your journey toward greater parent wellness by reading the book, *Parent Wellness Compass: Outfitting for the Journey*, also written by Scott Stoner and Holly Hughes Stoner. This book of thirty-two reflections is designed for individual or group use, and could be used as a resource for your wellness circle if you choose to keep meeting. More information on this book can be found on the inside back cover of this workbook.

As you complete this program, you may find that you have a desire to facilitate a Parent Wellness Circle yourself using this program. We encourage you to do so. While training is not required to facilitate this program, we highly recommend it. Find out about our book, and upcoming trainings at our website: ParentWellnessCompass.org.

It is now time to honor and celebrate all that you have experienced in this program. Please take a few minutes to reflect and write some thoughtful responses to the questions on the following page, and then take time to share your responses with your wellness circle.

We wish you only the very best as you continue the awesome journey of parenthood. It has been an honor to walk this part of the journey with you.



Closing Reflection and Celebration

To be completed at the end of Session 6

Celebrate! | Write down one or two things you want to celebrate from your six-week Parent Wellness Circle.

The area of wellness to which you will continue to pay attention:

A wisdom quote you wish to remember:

A centering practice you want to continue:

One thing you are grateful for as you conclude this Parent Wellness Circle:

Something you now know and something you can affirm now about

Yourself: _____

Your Child/Children: _____

Others: _____

Parent Wellness Compass Inventory: Your Results



To be filled out in Session 1

After you've rated each statement in the Parent Wellness Compass Inventory, add them together to arrive at your total number, and then shade in that area of wellness on this page (a total of "0" is at the center, "50" halfway out, and a total number of "100" means you shade in the whole "wedge"). See pages 10 and 11 for an example. Once your Compass is shaded in, it might be helpful to think of it as a garden. Your results show areas of the garden you have been watering, and which areas may be in need of some additional watering.

HEART

HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS



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

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, *The House at Pooh Corner*

My friends are my estate. —Emily Dickinson

Trust is the glue of life. ... It's the foundational principle that holds all relationships. —Stephen R. Covey

Be who you are and say what you feel because those who mind don't matter and those who matter don't mind. —attributed to Dr. Seuss

Few things affect the quality of our lives more than the quality of our relationships, especially within our families. Being intentional about nurturing those relationships is one of the most important investments we can make in our family's happiness and well-being. Everyone knows the benefits we gain from working proactively on our physical wellness. When we exercise and eat well, we have greater strength, flexibility, and a greater overall sense of well-being. The same is also true when we work proactively on our relationships.

As you reflect on this area of wellness, you have an opportunity to pause and think about the quality of the relationships you currently have—with your children, the other parent (if you are co-parenting), and with other members of your family. Even healthy relationships can be enriched, and so we will offer some concrete tools wherever you currently are on the spectrum.

It is not uncommon for parents to struggle with relational patterns they have with their children and with other family members. They often feel defeated and powerless to affect any change in themselves or others. The good news is that any relationship can be changed and improved with commitment and patience. Healthy relationships don't just magically "happen" any more than good health just "happens." Both require an ongoing commitment of time and energy in order to make more positive choices. With a new mindset and new skills, every relationship can be improved.

*Please complete the **Healthy Relationships** Wellness Inventory on the following page.*

► Healthy Relationships

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never		Sometimes			Half of the Time			Most of the Time		Always	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

I model healthy relationships for my child. _____

I work to help my children recognize relationships that are unhealthy and, when necessary, help them choose other relationships. _____

I think before speaking to my child when emotions are high. _____

Our family talks about important issues affecting us, even when it may be uncomfortable to do so. _____

The way I regularly interact with my children is helping to build a loving and healthy relationship. _____

I am satisfied that our family is not overly connected to email, texts, phones, social media, or computers in ways that are interfering with our relationships. _____

I set a good example for our family by saying I’m sorry when I hurt someone, and help my children to do the same. _____

I feel confident that our relationships with family, friends and others are creating a strong, caring community for our family. _____

I am able to resolve conflict with my children in a productive way. _____

Our family works together as a team when needed. _____

TOTAL _____

Shade in the Healthy Relationships “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

HEART HANDLING EMOTIONS



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

Children need love, especially when they do not deserve it. —Harold Hubert

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

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

Families constantly find themselves swimming in a sea of emotions. There are the emotions of the parents, the emotions of the children, and the emotions of the family as a whole. Because few things stir up stronger emotions than raising a family, both parents and children feel and deal with the full range of emotions every day.

Just because we experience many emotions doesn't mean that we are dealing with them well. In fact, if we are not mindful, we may find that we are reacting in ways that are habitual and unconscious, often in patterns—good or bad—that we learned from the adults who raised us. We may react emotionally without first thinking.

A commitment to emotional wellness begins with regularly stepping outside of ourselves and our emotions to reflect on how well we are handling our own emotions. Are we able to feel and express the full range of emotions in a way that is constructive? Are we teaching our children to do the same? What are we modeling for our children around emotional wellness? We are here to help you answer these questions as you become more aware of some of the qualities of emotional wellness for parents and families. The way we handle our emotions with our children has a direct effect on our children's well-being, and so when we take steps to nurture and strengthen our own emotional wellness, our children benefit, as well.

When you find yourself feeling overwhelmed by the emotional challenges of raising a family, know that you are not alone. As with all of the areas of wellness explored in the **Parent Wellness Compass**, we simply are seeking to make progress, not perfection.

*Please complete the **Handling Emotions Wellness Inventory** on the following page.*

► Handling Emotions

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never		Sometimes			Half of the Time			Most of the Time		Always	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

I am helping my children to learn about, feel, and express the full range of emotions (sadness, fear, joy, boredom, anger, joy, love) in healthy ways. _____

The words I use and the way I speak to my children are helping to build a solid and healthy sense of confidence within them. _____

I forgive myself and my child when we make mistakes and express forgiveness easily. _____

My relationship with alcohol and other drugs, as well as other possibly addictive behaviors, does not negatively affect my family. _____

I give my child daily positive affirmations. _____

When my child misbehaves in some way, I use that as an opportunity to teach him or her about a better way of doing things. _____

When I am emotionally upset, I have places to turn to re-center myself, and I teach my child to do the same. _____

I take my children’s emotions seriously and do not minimize their feelings. _____

The relationships in my life are emotionally stable and are a healthy model for my children. _____

I “say what I mean, mean what I say, and I don’t say it mean.” _____

TOTAL _____

Shade in the Handling Emotions “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

SOUL SPIRITUALITY



There are two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.

—Albert Einstein

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

Here are the two best prayers I know: "Help me, help me, help me" and, "Thank you, thank you, thank you." —Anne Lamott, author

Something precious is lost if we rush headlong into the details of life without pausing for a moment to pay homage to the mystery of life and the gift of another day. —Kent Nerburn, author

The word *Spirituality* comes from the same root as the word “breath.” Spirituality is that which gives us breath, that which animates our lives. In the metaphor of a compass, our spirituality is how we define “true north” for ourselves and our families. Our spirituality gives our life direction and purpose.

Spirituality is not the same as religion. A person may or may not express their spirituality through a traditional set of religious beliefs and practices. If you are familiar with twelve-step programs, such as Alcoholics Anonymous, you will have heard of the concept of a “higher power.” All twelve-step programs are deeply spiritual and ask those in their programs to identify their higher power. That higher power might be the good of humankind, or it might be a traditional expression of religious belief. The point is that everyone has a higher power or a true north that helps orient the important decisions in their lives. Spirituality is what grounds our core values and beliefs, as well as our moral and ethical standards.

An essential job for parents is to teach their children values by which to live. Parents, through the actions they model and the lessons they teach their children, provide answers to spiritual questions such as, “How should I treat others who are different from me and from my family?” “How should I treat others who are less fortunate than me?” “How should I care for the earth and the natural world around me?” “How should I give back to the world?” Some families express their spirituality through volunteer work or community service. Some participate in important spiritual traditions that are central to a family’s identity and have been passed on from one generation to the next.

Parenthood is itself a spiritual journey where we clarify and strengthen our own core values and beliefs. It connects us with the spiritual side of life, offering both miracle and vulnerability.

*Please complete the **Spirituality** Wellness Inventory on the following page.*

► Spirituality

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never		Sometimes		Half of the Time		Most of the Time		Always		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

My life has a clear sense of meaning and purpose. _____

I am satisfied with my spiritual life. _____

I have centering/spiritual practices that are a regular part of my life. _____

I am able to forgive people who have hurt me and model forgiveness within my family. _____

The way I live my life is consistent with my spirituality, core values, and beliefs. _____

I have a deep sense of gratitude for the many blessings in my life, and help my family to do the same. _____

People who know me well would describe me as compassionate. _____

My spirituality, core values, and beliefs are primary guides in making parenting decisions. _____

Our family is connected to a community that deepens our spiritual roots. _____

I am learning spiritual truths through my children and my journey as a parent. _____

TOTAL _____

Shade in the Spirituality “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

SOUL

REST AND PLAY



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

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

Kids dance before they learn there is anything that isn't music. —William Stafford

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

This is an area of wellness that is often overlooked in our current fast-paced culture and, at times, even neglected. Most parents we talk with report that their families don't have enough rest and play in their lives, and we believe that unless they are intentional about making it a priority, it won't happen.

The word "recreation" literally means "re-creation," the state of creating anew. Recreation rebalances our lives and recharges our batteries; it renews us. Yet not all forms of modern recreation are truly re-creative, and so we need to be mindful about choosing activities for ourselves and our families that truly renew and revitalize us.

While it can be challenging to make time for recreation, the good news is that we have built-in playmates and role models when it comes to rest and play—our children. Children are experts at playing and we simply need only to allow ourselves to be reminded by them just how important and refreshing it is to make time for laughter and fun.

Recreating as a family is an important element in building family bonds and strengthening relationships. If you ask someone what are some of their favorite memories from childhood, most will share a story about a time their family had fun together, such as a family trip, vacation, or a fun activity they did together. Recreating as a family provides a wonderful opportunity for children to see us relaxed and having fun, as well a time for them to have fun, too. There is no doubt that parenting is serious business, but it can also a great deal of fun.

*Please complete the **Rest and Play Wellness Inventory** on the following page.*

► Rest and Play

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never		Sometimes		Half of the Time		Most of the Time		Always		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

I feel positive about the amount of time that everyone in our family spends on screens each day. _____

I feel positive about the number and the types of extra-curricular activities in which my children are involved. _____

I take adequate time to rest and renew myself. _____

I feel that we have adequate time together as a family to connect and have fun. _____

I am satisfied with the amount of sleep that my children and I get. _____

I have at least one hobby or interest that I enjoy. _____

I am satisfied that the way we all spend our unstructured time is renewing. _____

I look on the bright side of life and laugh often. _____

My family and I try new things, new activities, and explore new places together. _____

I have fun with my children. _____

TOTAL _____

Shade in the Rest and Play “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

STRENGTH STRESS RESILIENCE



When it rains, I let it. —Samuel Pamer, 113-year-old man when asked about his secret to growing old

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

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

Obstacles, of course, are developmentally necessary: they teach kids strategy, patience, critical thinking, resilience and resourcefulness. —Naomi Wolf

The word “resilience” means “to bounce back,” so when we talk about Stress Resilience, we are talking about the ability to bounce back from, and recover from, all kinds of stressful situations. Recent research has shown that resilience is not something a person or a family either has or doesn't have, but rather is something that can be learned with practice and knowledge. In fact, some of the most resilient families are those who have persevered through times of great stress, calling on healthy skills and habits they learned and nurtured along the way.

Stress is inevitable in the lives of all parents and families. The question is not whether we will face stress as a family, but how we will respond to it. When we proactively cultivate healthy habits, we will be better able to respond to stress from a place of strength. With that comes a much greater chance that we will be resilient and able to bounce back from whatever is stressful to us, instead of simply reacting to it.

Whenever a person with in a family, or the family as a whole is going through a time of significant change, stress will increase. Such changes could include a move, a change in job, a marriage or divorce, an illness or death, someone leaving home, a new baby, change of school, financial challenges, or changes in the surrounding community. It is during such times that we will have to be patient with ourselves and not minimize the amount of extra energy it takes to navigate a significant change.

And, as with all areas of wellness, what we model for our children around how we handle stress significantly influences how they learn to handle it, too.

*Please complete the **Stress Resilience Wellness Inventory** on the following page.*

► Stress Resilience

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never		Sometimes		Half of the Time		Most of the Time		Always		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

I adjust to changes in our family life in a positive way, and help my children to do the same. _____

When we are stressed or in the midst of a transition, my family and I are comfortable seeking support from others. _____

I am satisfied with the way I manage my own stress, so that it minimally impacts my children. _____

My family and I are able to keep our challenges in perspective. _____

My family and I recognize the stressors in our lives and take steps to address them. _____

My family and I have effective ways to alleviate stress, such as exercising, meditating, journaling, and connecting with others. _____

My family and I work to avoid activities that add excessive stress to our lives. _____

My family and I have a network of support around us that we can turn to when stressed. _____

I am able to respond thoughtfully to stressful situations, rather than merely reacting, and am teaching my children to do the same. _____

My family and I know how to take timeouts in the midst of stressful situations when needed. _____

TOTAL _____

Shade in the Stress Resilience “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

STRENGTH CARE FOR THE BODY



It's bizarre that the produce manager is more important to my children's health than the pediatrician. —Meryl Streep

Self-care is never a selfish act—it is simply good stewardship of the only gift I have, the gift I was put on earth to offer others. —Parker J. Palmer

The best way to care for others is to first care for ourselves. —Anonymous

We don't stop exercising because we grow old; we grow old because we stop exercising. —Kenneth Cooper, M.D.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in the past 30 years, childhood obesity has more than doubled in children and quadrupled in adolescents. For adults, the American Heart Association projects that we will be spending \$800 billion dollars annually to treat heart disease by the year 2030. Similarly, experts predict that by 2020, Type II diabetes will cost Americans \$500 billion annually. It is important to note that while not all of these conditions are completely dependent on lifestyle alone, the daily choices we make do have a great impact on our well-being. How we care for our bodies, and how we teach our children to do the same, truly matters.

Out of deep concern and compassion, we need to look at what we each can do to change things, beginning in our own homes. The intent here 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 and we are all, in one way or another, affected by the choices that we collectively, as a culture, are making regarding how we see and how we care for our bodies.

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. In this complex cultural climate, it is indeed an awe-inspiring and sometimes overwhelming path before us as parents.

*Please complete the **Care for the Body** Wellness Inventory on the following page.*

► Care for the Body

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never		Sometimes		Half of the Time		Most of the Time		Always		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

I am a good role model for my children in terms of caring for my body. _____

I am teaching my family the skills needed to avoid unhealthy choices. _____

I go to the doctor and dentist for regular checkups, and have my children do the same. _____

My family and I get the sleep we need to function at our best. _____

I model listening to my body and making healthy adjustments as needed, and encourage my children to do the same. _____

I model a healthy approach to sexuality for my children. _____

I do my best to make sure we all eat a healthy diet. _____

I model healthy decisions regarding the use of alcohol, other drugs, and tobacco. _____

I do my best to make sure that both my children and I get exercise on a regular basis. _____

I have enough physical and mental energy to be the parent I want to be. _____

TOTAL _____

Shade in the Care for the Body “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

MIND ORGANIZATION



The more you have, the more you are occupied. The less you have, the more free you are. —Mother Teresa

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

With organization comes empowerment. —Lynda Peterson

The bad news is time flies. The good news is you're the pilot. —Michael Altshuler

The area of Organization in the **Parent Wellness Compass** focuses on how we organize our schedules, money, and priorities in our families. The holistic approach to wellness taught in this program emphasizes that all eight areas of wellness are interconnected. For example, we know that being disorganized can be a cause and a symptom of stress, or of relationship trouble, or can result in a lack of time for rest and play. We see this both in our lives as adults, and in the lives of our children.

One of the themes running throughout this program is the importance of raising our families with intention and purpose. These values are so important because our children are watching us, and learning from us how to organize their lives, spend their time, spend, share and save money, and how to determine priorities. As parents, we serve as a model and a compass for our children and how we organize our time, money, and priorities will have a strong influence on them.

Stress arises in many families when they allow outside pressures to influence their decisions about how to organize time, money, and priorities. Of course, sometimes this is unavoidable, such as when an unexpected crisis happens that affects everyone. It is also common for families to find themselves overextended because they have agreed to too many time and/or financial commitments. The cumulative effect of overcommitting creates a burden on the family to stay organized and centered.

*Please complete the **Organization** Wellness Inventory on the following page.*

► Organization

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never		Sometimes		Half of the Time		Most of the Time		Always		
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

My family and I have a system for planning and keeping track of activities that works for everyone. _____

We have regular family meetings to clarify priorities and then plan our activities accordingly. _____

I feel good about the way my family and I spend, share, and save, our money. _____

Chores and expectations for helping around our home are clearly communicated, are understood, and carried out. _____

I am teaching my children, and modeling for them, how to help keep our home clean and organized. _____

I feel confident that the number of activities our family participates in is good for everyone. _____

I know where my children are and with whom they are spending time, and feel comfortable with what I know. _____

I am intentional about the amount of money my children have access to and how they use it. _____

I am helping my children learn how to manage their time and am working to model the same. _____

People who know me well would describe me as well organized. _____

TOTAL _____

Shade in the Organization “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

MIND WORK AND SCHOOL



Nothing will work unless you do. —Maya Angelou

Most of us spend too much time on what is urgent and not enough time on what is important. —Stephen R. Covey

Some people, for the sake of getting a living, forget to live. —Margaret Fuller

Striving for excellence motivates you; striving for perfection is demoralizing.
—Harriet Braiker

Any educator will tell you that children do best at school when there is a strong alliance between school and home. When parents support and reinforce what children are learning at school, everyone benefits. Both school and home go better when the other is honored and respected. Creating a strong alliance between parents, children, and educators is essential for our children's well-being. And it is still important for parents of older children and teens to continue to stay involved and available to help them negotiate the increasing stress they face to perform academically, fit in socially, figure out the world of peer relationships, and navigate the dizzying array of increasingly greater expectations everywhere they go.

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.

Balancing the demands of work and school for our families is an ongoing process. As you complete the Wellness Inventory you may become aware of where you are currently feeling out of balance. This knowledge can help you create NEXT Steps to help you and your family get back in balance.

*Please complete the **Work and School** Wellness Inventory on the following page.*

► Work and School

Rate the statements below by placing a number from 0–10 in the space provided. When you are done, add up the numbers and transfer the total to the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37. If a statement does not apply to you or your family, then simply give yourself a “10” for that statement.

Never		Sometimes			Half of the Time			Most of the Time		Always	
0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

I make sure my children know I value their education by supporting school-related activities. _____

I am aware of my child’s school responsibilities and make sure he or she has the time, materials, and support needed to fulfill them each day. _____

My children have age-appropriate opportunities to contribute to the creation of our rules around homework and other obligations. _____

I model the importance of learning by being a life-long learner myself. _____

I willingly help my children with homework when needed. _____

I am connected with my children’s school and teachers in a way that is appropriate for the age of my children. _____

I see, appreciate, and celebrate the unique gifts that my children possess. _____

The role of grades and other measures of performance in our home is healthy for all involved. _____

I lift up my child’s strengths at school as much as I do his or her challenges. _____

I feel that my work and other commitments do not overly interfere with my time with my family. _____

TOTAL _____

Shade in the Work and School “wedge” of the Wellness Inventory Compass on page 37 with your total.

Choosing a Centering Practice

An important step in “Mapping the NEXT Steps of your Journey” is choosing a centering practice because we make our best choices and decisions when we are centered. In fact, we may say something like the following when we are not centered: “That wasn’t like me to say or do that” or, “I certainly wasn’t my best self last night.” Statements like these acknowledge that when we don’t act from a place of centeredness, our actions are less likely to be in alignment with our core values.

A centering practice is simply a commitment to do something on a regular basis that connects us with our “best self” and/or our Higher Power. A centering practice calms us and recharges our spirits. By definition, our spirit is unique, and so what refreshes our spirits will be different for each of us. Yet, while each of us is unique, we share the universal need to have our spirits regularly tended to and nurtured.

Following are some examples of centering practices people have chosen during their Parent Wellness Circle. This is simply a list to help “prime the pump,” in case you are unfamiliar with centering practices. There are many more that you can easily discover on your own. You may already have a practice that works well for you. If so, you might want to share it with others in your Parent Wellness Circle.

- 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.

About the Authors

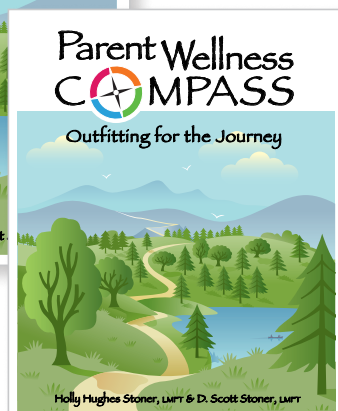
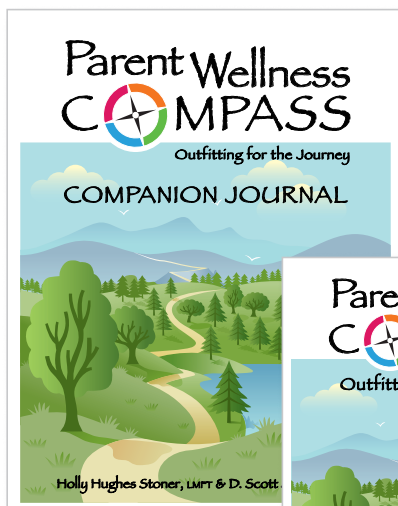
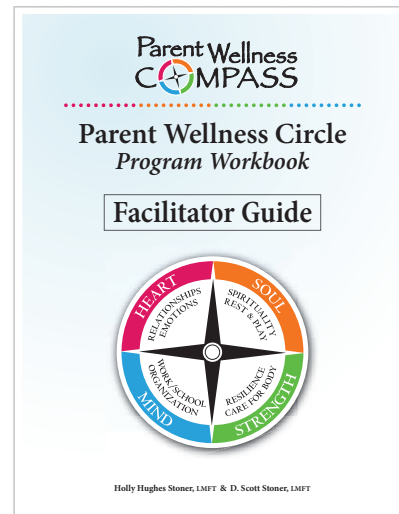
Scott and Holly Stoner are the Co-Executive Directors of the Samaritan Family Wellness Foundation in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They are both Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists (LMFTs), each with over three decades of experience helping parents and families. They are the creators of the *Parent Wellness Compass*, *The Teen Compass Wellness Notebook*, and several small-group coaching programs, including the *Parent Wellness Circle*, the *Teen Wellness Circle*, and the *Adult Wellness Circle*.

Questions? Email us: holly@samaritanfamilywellness.org



To Order (SamaritanFamilyWellness.org):

- *Parent Wellness Circle Program Workbook Facilitator Guide*
- *Parent Wellness Compass: Outfitting for the Journey [with complimentary Companion Journal]*



We created the **Parent Wellness Circle Coaching Program** based upon the principles in our book, *Parent Wellness Compass: Outfitting for the Journey*.

In this six-week program, parents gather with a trained facilitator in a **Parent Wellness Circle** to set goals, share thoughts, and to support each other as they journey through the program.

Parents are invited to complete the **Parent Wellness Compass Inventory**, a foundational resource in the program, during the first session and their results then serve as a guide to help them identify and create NEXT Steps* on their journey toward parent and family wellness.

We regularly offer facilitator trainings for leading **Parent Wellness Circles**. If you have an interest in becoming a trained facilitator for this program, please contact us. You can stay up to date on this program and our trainings through our website: SamaritanFamilyWellness.org.

*Visit our website to learn more about NEXT Steps.



SamaritanFamilyWellness.org

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