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Building Mental Wellness - Together

Teacher Resource Guide

As a community and country, all our teachers need access to mental health training and practical resources that provide skills and tools to help them manage their ever-changing classroom environment and the accompanying emotional and behavioral needs of their students. Schools that serve as a primary community hub for meeting children's needs, such as inner-city schools or schools in low-income areas, need support and accessible resources now more than ever.

Teachers have always worn many hats. The pandemic further magnified the many roles they have to maintain. Teachers are dealing with SO much, often too much. We want to reach as many people as possible, providing valuable, practical resources not only to support their students but also to support the teachers.

Grounding Techniques

- Hot or cold: hold a cold water bottle, take a cold drink, splash water on face, rub polished stone, frozen boo-boo pack.
- Use a roller ball scented with essential oils. **Lavender** is very soothing. Use essential oils in a spray bottle or diffuser in the classroom, especially lavender. We love the products at [Sweet Streams Lavender](#) (use LAVLOVERS10 for a discount).
- Change of scenery – go for a walk, visit another classroom as a helper, run errands, get a drink.
- Listen to music with bilateral or binaural beats without words. Search for spa music or binaural/bilateral beats on any music service, YouTube, or Insight Timer app.
- Being outside can be healing, soothing, and grounding for students AND adults.
- Access to coloring sheets or pencils, crayons, paint sticks (e.g., [Kwik Stix](#)) that promote rhythmic movement.



- Classroom-wide mindfulness or dance breaks (YouTube has a ton of free ideas).
- Grounding with Senses (5 things you see, 4 things you can physically feel, 3 things you can hear, 2 things you can smell, 1 thing you can taste).
- Lotion, especially scented, can be soothing for students to use.
- Weighted blankets or carrying something heavy can calm a restless body
- Fidgets can provide calm, sensory input, rhythm, or movement.
Examples include: [Ball of Whacks](#), [Nee-doh](#), [Crazy Aaron's Thinking Putty](#), [magnetic finger rings](#), [Ramen Noodlies](#), stretchy fidgets, [Zzzopa ball](#) (it spins and isn't loud), [Beads Stress Relief Ball](#), silicone "Chewable" necklaces (e.g., feather or shark tooth).

All of these can be found at [The Learning Tree](#) and most on Amazon

For anxious kids

- Create a calming corner with soothing books, coloring pages, a weighted blanket, [lava lamp](#), liquid timer bubbler, or expandable ball to use as they breathe, and earplugs or noise-canceling headphones for those who are easily overstimulated.
- Post a visual schedule and alert students if you know you will be gone, a sub will be filling in, or if the schedule will change.
- Many anxious kids prefer to sit at the back of the room so they don't have to worry about what is behind them.
- For heightened anxiety or panic, the [Panic SOS audio in the Calm app](#) is super helpful.
- Give student a "fast pass" to be able to leave the room to an agreed-upon place without calling attention to self. They can place it on the desk when they feel the need for a break and leave.
- Kids who are shy or struggle to express their needs to their teacher and other important adults often benefit from using a nonverbal cue or sticky note to alert the teacher they need something.
- Some kids who struggle to express themselves appreciate a daily note or prompt from the teacher (sticky note or small journal) that they can reply to if want to. This activity makes adults and expressing concerns feel more approachable.
- Keep an anonymous box for kids to write down worries or struggles.



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Classroom interventions to promote focus

- Include brain breaks (dance parties, mindfulness videos, walks outside, I-spy, coloring sheets, yoga moves) as part of routine schedule.
- Incorporate rhythm, movement, or gestures into any lessons or brain breaks when possible.
- Use standing desks, yoga ball, wobble stool, or allowing kids to stand to work.
- Play spa music with bilateral or binaural beats while doing independent work. There are no words, and it promotes focus and not a distraction. Search spa, bilateral, or binaural beats music on YouTube or any music service. [Insight Timer](#) and [Calm](#) also offer many options.
- Create a comfortable classroom with soft colors in shades of purple, green, and blue, which have been shown to lower blood pressure.
- Include plants in the classroom, with students taking turns being responsible for their care. Even better if you are able to plant any type of garden as classroom project or even a [wall of plants](#).
- Offer [weighted lap blankets](#) for kids who need to feel more grounded or safe.
- [Yes, No, Maybe buttons](#): Makes answering questions more engaging. Can play the Yes, No, Maybe game based on information they are learning
- Simon Says and Mother May I promotes listening and following directions in a fun way.
- Use a visual timer to support focus in a fun way (e.g., [Secura 60-Minute Visual Timer](#), [Sensory Liquid Motion Timer Bubbler](#), [Sand timer](#)). Note that timers sometimes can cause anxiety as well.

Games, Toys, and Cards for the Classroom

- [Mindful Moments and Movement Cards](#) by The Invisible Riptide
- [Affirmations and Wisdom for Life Cards](#) by The Invisible Riptide
- [Pinch Me Therapy Putty Locket with Riptide Calm Strip](#)
- [Taco, Cat, Goat, Cheese, Pizza](#) game - fun and focus
- Cotton balls dunked in water and thrown at a whiteboard that you divide into four squares: can use feelings, faces, and other categories for a fun way to answer questions.
- [Just Between Us](#) conversation cards by Meredith and Sofia Jacobs
- [Totem](#) for small groups: focuses on building strengths
- [Yoga Pretzels](#) cards
- [Mindfulness Matters](#) game: a tool to use in session and for families to practice using to focus on mindfulness
- [Mindful Land Meditation and Mindfulness Kit](#) for Stress Reduction
- [Little Renegades Mindful Kids Cards](#) - Daytime Affirmation and Mindfulness for Kids.



- [Totika](#) (Jenga with a Twist) or [Totika Pluntika](#) (marble plunking) or [Totika Kohatu](#) Stacking Blocks and Card Decks for Mindfulness, Resilience, Life Skills
- 52 Card Decks: [Essential Conversations](#), Essential Relationships, Critical Thinking, Coping Skills
- [Imagine Meditation Kit for Kids](#) - Award-Winning Mindfulness kit of XL Cards with Calming Guided Meditations for Empowerment, Focus and Relaxation.

Videos, songs, apps, and books with activities

- [Mandala Maker](#) app: promotes calm and bilateral movements.
- [Hold On For One More Day by Wilson Phillips](#) —normalize life is hard.
- ["Just Breathe" by Julie Bayer Salzman & Josh Salzman \(Wavecrest Films\)](#) - great intro to breathing for younger elementary children by children.
- [Understanding Stress and The Mind-Body Connection](#): Understanding stress with a glass of water.
- [Dan Siegel's hand model of the brain](#): Helps understand our brains and easy way to teach children how to understand their brains. [Additional version of Dan Siegel's hand model of the brain and the science of flipping your lid.](#)
- [The Invisible Boy](#) by Trudy Ludwig and Patrice Barton: Shows how random acts of kindness make you feel good. Create a random act of kindness jar for your classroom.
- [Peaceful Piggies](#) or [Moody Cow Meditates](#), both by Kerry Lee McLean: Have each child make a mind jar full of feelings and thoughts using a mason jar (find recipes for these on the Internet).

Suicide prevention and awareness

- [Better Stop Suicide](#) app: records life-saving message and many other wonderful quick and easy to access features.
- [A Friend Asks app from the Jason Foundation](#): How to help yourself or get help for a friend
- [Not OK App](#): A free digital panic button to get you immediate support via text, phone call, or GPS location when you're struggling to reach out
- [PleaseStay.us](#)
- [Suicide Prevention Discussion Points](#) for *The Invisible Riptide*
- Find additional Suicide Prevention Resources at www.theinvisibleriptide.com

Podcasts for understanding and supporting student mental health

- [Dare to Lead Podcast: Brené Brown with Dr. Laurie Santos on Creating Meaningful Connection](#)



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- [WorkLife Podcast: Adam Grant with Annie Murphy Paul on The Next Big Idea](#)
- [Unlocking Us: Brené Brown with Karen Walrond on Accessing Joy and Finding Connection in the Midst of Struggles](#)
- [Raising Good Humans with Dr. Aliza Pressman](#)
 - S2 Ep 38: Beyond Just Behavior: Using Brain and Body Connection with Dr. Mona Delahooke
 - S2 Ep 36: Anxiety may be as contagious as Omicron: Helping our Kids When We Have Our Own Anxiety to Reckon With with Dr. Harold Koplewicz
 - S2 Ep 33: "I Can, Therefore I Must" —The Risks of High Achieving Stressors and the Powerful Protection of Close Relationships with Professor Sunday Luther.
 - S2 Ep 12: How to Have a Healthy Transition From Summer Back to School With Child Psychiatrist Dr. Helen Egger.
 - S2 Episode 7: Challenging Friendship Scenarios with Bestselling Author Rachel Simmons
 - S1 Ep 100: Dr. Elisha Goldstein Talking Mindfulness and Concrete Ways to Manage Anxiety for both caregivers and children.
 - S1 Ep 84: How To Talk To Middle Schoolers About Thorny Topics with Michele Icard.
 - S1 Ep 80: Puberty: How to Talk About it and What to Say with Vanessa Kroll Bennett.
 - S1 Ep 77: Dr. Dan Siegel Talks About The Stories We Tell to Help Kids Make Sense of Their Inner Experiences.
 - S1 Ep 76: Executive Function Skills Are The Air Traffic Control System of the Brain with Professor Phil Zelazo.
 - S1 Ep 68: Unpacking gender, and sexuality with Dr. Nia Heard Garris and Dr. Nevis Heard.
 - S1 Ep.67: The Power of Co-Regulation with Dr. Claudia Gold
 - S1 Ep 66: Dr. Shauna Shapiro on using mindfulness to help grow our emotional resources and our children's self regulation.
 - S1 Ep 59: Trauma therapist Janina Fisher, PhD on how we can steady our nervous system during stressful times.
 - S1 Ep 46: Dr. Allison Briscoe Smith: How we talk about race, raising anti-racist kids and the science of hope.
 - S1 Ep 29: What to think about before we post and talk about our kids online with law Professor Leah Plunkett.
 - S1 Ep 9: Girl Friendships: bullies, best friends and true friends with Rachel Simmons
- KCUR: [Kansas City counselors create books to help kids navigate anxiety and depression and build resilience.](#) Jan 26, 2022.

Books and Apps for Teachers to Support Themselves and Their Students

- [What Happened to You](#) by Bruce D. Perry and Oprah Winfrey
- [Atlas of the Heart](#) by Brene Brown
- [The Extended Mind: The Power of Thinking Outside the Brain](#) by Annie Murphy Paul
- [The Whole Brain Child: 12 Revolutionary Strategies to Nurture Your Child's Developing Mind](#) by Dan Siegel
- [Brainstorm: The Power and Purpose of the Teenage Brain](#) by Dan Siegel



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- Insight Timer
- Calm
- Mood Meter app
- Sanity and Self

BOOKS TO ADD DIVERSITY TO THE CLASSROOM

- Loujain Dreams of Sunflowers by Lina Al-Hathloul and Uma Mishra-Newbery
- Eyes that Kiss in the Corners by Joanna Ho
- Eyes that Speak to the Stars by Joanna Ho
- I am Enough by Grace Byers
- Black Gold by Laura Obuobi
- Turning Pages by Sonia Sotomayor
- All Are Welcome by Alexandra Penfold and Suzanne Kaufman
- Flying High: The Story of Gymnastics Champion Simone Biles by Michelle Meadows
- Change Sings by Amanda Gorman
- Food Around The World: Mindful Living Diversity and Inclusion Series by Olivia Xiaoyu and Alex Wang

BOOKS TO HELP WITH ANXIETY

- Hey Warrior by Karen Young
- Hey Awesome by Karen Young
- The Invisible Riptide by Carron Montgomery:
- The Whatifs by Emily Kilgore
- Trying by Kobi Yamada
- What Do You Do with a Problem by Kobi Yamada
- Catching Thoughts by Bonnie Clark and Summer Macon
- After the Fall by Dan Santant
- Master of Mindfulness: How to be Your Own Superhero in Times of Stress by Laurie Grossman
- Brain Bullies: Standing Up To Anxiety & Worry by Brett Novick

BOOKS TO HELP KIDS UNDERSTAND HOW THEIR BRAIN WORKS

- Your Fantastic Elastic Brain by JoAnn Deak, PhD
- Dear You, Love From Your Brain by Karen Young



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BOOKS THAT PROMOTE HOPE AND ACCEPTANCE

- [Maybe: A story about the endless potential in all of us](#) by Kobi Yamada
- [You Belong Here](#) by M.H. Clark
- [The Boy, The Mole, The Fox and The Horse](#) by Charlie Mackesy
- [Finding Muchness](#) by Kobe Yamada
- [It's OK to be Different: A Children's Picture Book About Diversity and Kindness](#) by Sharon Purtill
- [I Can Do Hard Things: Mindful Affirmations for Kids](#) by Gabi Garcia
- [The Invisible Riptide](#) by Carron Montgomery

BOOKS ABOUT FRIENDSHIP ISSUES AND BOUNDARIES (elementary)

- [The Not-So-Friendly Friend: How to Set Boundaries for Healthy Friendships](#) by Christina Furnival
- [Personal Space Camp](#) by Julia Cook
- [My Invisible Bubble: Empowering Children to Set Boundaries](#) by Michelle Chan
- [Making Friends is An Art!](#) by Julia Cook
- [Zero, One, and Two](#) (3 book series) by Kathryn Otoshi

BOOKS TO PROMOTE FEELINGS IDENTIFICATION AND EXPRESSION

- [A Little SPOT of Emotion 8 Book Box Set](#) (Anger, Anxiety, Peaceful, Happiness, Sadness, Confidence, Love, & Scribble Emotion) by Diane Alber
- [The Way I Feel](#) by Janan Cain
- [Today I Feel Silly](#) by Jamie Lee Curtis
- [The Invisible Riptide](#) by Carron Montgomery
- [Cloud's Best Worst Day Ever](#) (Kimochi's Series)



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ADDITIONAL BOOKS FOR MIDDLE AND HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

- [From Surviving to Vibing](#) by Carron Montgomery and Dr. Caroline Danda
- [51 Reasons to Never Fight Alone: 51 Inspiring Interviews to Help Teens Overcome Their Struggles & Improve Their Mental Health](#) by Shelomo Solson
- [SUPERPOWERED: Transforming Anxiety into Courage, Confidence and Resilience](#) by Renee Jane and Dr. Shefali Tasberry
- [The Body Image Book for Girls: Love Yourself and Grow Up Fearless](#) by Charlotte Markey
- [Being You: The Body Image Book For Boys](#) by Charlotte Markey, Daniel Hart, & Douglas Zacher
- [Mindfulness for Teens in 10 Minutes a Day: Exercises to Feel Calm, Stay Focused & Be Your Best Self](#) by Jennie Marie Battistin
- [Put Your Feelings Here](#) and [Put Your Worries Here](#) journals by Lisa Schwab
- [Manifestation Journal for Beginners: An Introduction to Harnessing the Law of Attraction & Journal for Creating the Life You Want](#) by Lauri Albert
- [Gratitude Journal for Teens: Prompts to Cultivate a Habit of Awareness and Improve Well-being](#) by Scarlet Paolicchi
- [Your Life, Your Way: Acceptance and Commitment Therapy Skills to Help Teens Manage Emotions and Build Resilience](#) by Joseph Ciarrochi, Louise Hayes, and Katharine Hall
- [Shoot Your Shot: A Sport-Inspired Guide To Living Your Best Life](#) by Vernon Brundage Jr.
- [The Teen Girl's Survival Guide: Ten Tips for Making Friends, Avoiding Drama, and Coping with Social Stress](#) by Lucie Hemmen

We are working on creating a teachers' Wishlist on our website that provides resources to support the hard work that they are doing and to help promote a mentally safe and therapeutic classroom. As a community, we can donate items and promote self-care for these hard-working professionals.

We hope you feel supported and your imagination is sparked by these ideas, which are based on our training, experience, and communication with schools. Really, however, we want to hear from you. We know this list is not exhaustive.

Please drop a comment below or email us at info@theinvisiblertiptide.com to let us know what resources and activities work for you in your classroom and for yourselves. Speaking of yourselves, please look for our blog on Self-Care. If you don't take care of yourself, then you have nothing left to give, and what you give as teachers is essential to all of us in our communities and families.



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