

BUILDING PROTECTIVE FACTORS

Name:

- Some health questions are simple: How can you protect your teeth from cavities?
- Some health questions seem more difficult: How can you protect your mental health?

All health is impacted by something called **Protective Factors**. When it comes to mental health, protective factors are good relationships, healthy habits, and other beneficial parts of your daily life that positively impact you. When you have a range of protective factors, you're better able to handle life's challenges.

Some examples of protective factors include...

CONNECTEDNESS

Connectedness means feeling socially close to people in your life such as friends, peers, and family members. Social support and connection are key protective factors against suicide. Positive and supportive social relationships can help buffer the effects of risk factors in people's lives.

Who are people in your life that you can talk to about your problems?

HEALTHY COPING

Healthy coping strategies are techniques that help reduce stress in a way that does not harm you. Examples include:

- Exercise
- Listening to music
- Talking to a trusted adult

What are your healthy coping strategies?

Matching Protective Factors

Support system
Not smoking
Seat belts
Washing hands

Lung Cancer
Suicide
Common cold
Car injury

STUDENT BIOS

Look for these protective factors in the student bios below. Circle each example you see.

- Access to effective mental health services
- Caring for others
- Connectedness to positive peers/family
- Exercise
- Family support
- Good communication skills
- Neighborhood safety/closeness
- Range of supportive adults
- Strong school involvement

Elena is a 6th grade student who is well liked by her peers. She has two older siblings and a family dog. At school, Elena participates in a community service club. Each month, she visits a nursing home and reads to the seniors. Outside of school, she has a group of friends from her neighborhood that she has known since she was little. They spend a lot of time biking around the nearby park. While she is close with her own parents, she sometimes finds it's easiest to talk things through with her friends' parents.

Daniel, a 8th grader, is a member of the soccer team and never misses a practice. His favorite subject is History, and he prefers writing papers rather than taking tests. Daniel's friends describe him as funny and easy going. He enjoys watching Netflix and playing video games. He has struggled with anxiety over the years and continues to see a therapist regularly. Talking to his therapist or his parents when he is feeling anxious has really helped him manage stressful situations.

Nathan, a 7th grader, is considered the class clown by his peers. He recently joined his school's drama club. Outside of school, he plays the drums in a band with his friends. He is close with his family and has dinner together with them most nights. Nathan enjoys listening to music from his favorite bands. He likes talking to his favorite teachers about new music he discovers.