

# BUILDING PROTECTIVE FACTORS ANSWER KEY

Name:

- Some health questions are simple: How can you protect your teeth from cavities?  
**Answers may include:** brushing teeth at least twice a day, flossing, going to dentist, etc.
- 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?

**Use these thought bubbles to engage in discussion or encourage students to write down on a piece of paper.**

## 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	<del>---</del>	Lung Cancer
Not smoking	<del>---</del>	Suicide
Seat belts	<del>---</del>	Common cold
Washing hands	<del>---</del>	Car injury

Look for protective factors in the student bios below.

Anna is a sophomore student who is well liked by her peers and has a close group of friends. She has three younger siblings and a family dog. At school, Anna is an active member of the debate team. Outside of school, Anna has a group of friends from her neighborhood that she has known since she was a kid. They spend a lot of time at the local coffee shop where two of her friends work. While she is close with her own parents, she sometimes finds it's easiest to talk things through with her friends' parents.

### **Answer Key**

- Connectedness to positive peers
- Neighborhood safety/closeness
- Strong school involvement
- Range of supportive adults
- Family support

Amari, a junior, is captain of the wrestling team at his high school, and never misses a practice. His favorite subject is History, and he prefers writing papers rather than taking tests. Amari's friends describe him as funny and easy going. Amari 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.

### **Answer Key**

- Access to effective mental health services
- Range of supportive adults
- Family support
- Good communication skills
- Exercise
- Healthy coping

Ryan, a senior, is considered the class clown by his peers. He just joined the theater and math club. After high school, he plans to attend the local community college while keeping his restaurant job. He hopes to save up to be able to attend the state university in a few years but in the meantime, it will be nice to stick close to his brothers and hang out with his friends from work. He isn't in a rush to get his own apartment because his mom depends on him to help get his brothers ready for school and help out with homework. Sometimes his little brothers get on his nerves but, in the end, he really loves taking care for them.

### **Answer Key**

- Positive recreational outlets
- Familial support
- Strong school involvement
- Caring for others
- Planning/decision making skills