Promoting Mental Health Wellness in Vermont

Recommendations for Families and Youth-serving Professionals
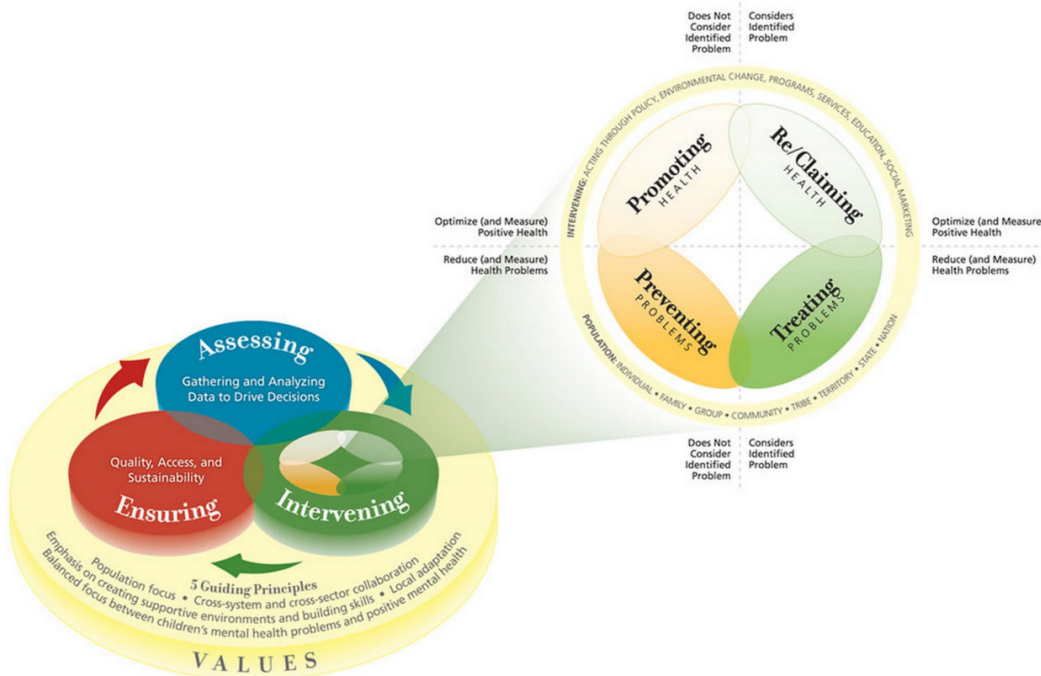
The Issues

In 2012 the Center for Health and Learning published the *Youth Suicide Prevention Platform* for Vermont, outlining the current issues affecting our state and suggesting strategies for suicide prevention. These approaches have been effective in creating various programs that target those in need of immediate assistance and training individuals and organizations to recognize youth at risk. While these methods and programs need to continue and be expanded, it has been recognized that broader and more upstream strategies also need to be developed to promote greater mental health wellness among our youth in general, thereby reducing the need in the long run for the current "problem-based" interventions.

Upstream approaches are much more effective and efficient solutions because they tend to get to the source of an issue. However, as the stream metaphor suggests, there is usually no one "source", but a complex watershed that contributes to the flow. There is an accumulation of scientific evidence, despite this, that has been able to identify the many tributaries (the environmental factors) that are most critical to the overall mental health of an individual. It has also been demonstrated that early childhood programs are a particularly cost effective place for mental health interventions when compared to older youth or adult programs, when many problems have accumulated and prevention becomes more difficult.

The Need for New Solutions & Approaches

A shift is taking place in public health from a focus on "preventing" disease (an illness model) towards "promoting" mental health (a wellness model). While there is obviously a great overlap in these two things in practice, wellness promotion facilitates a whole health and whole society approach and focuses on the big picture. The Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development gives the following visual framework for this shift change in their publication *A Public Health Approach to Children's Mental Health.*[1] In this model, we begin by assessing the current issues around a given problem. This is often done using surveys that gauge the attitudes and behaviors of a large population of youth. The Search Institute has been a leader in doing these kinds of assessments, and it has led them to develop a theory that there are 40 developmental assets that all youth need to succeed.

A Conceptual Framework for a Public Health Approach to Children's Mental Health

Developing Youth Assets

While assets usually refer to "property or resources", the Search Institute chose this term because the items they identified are like the building blocks for human development and act like assets in a person's life, as they increase in value over time and provide a sense of security.[2] While no person usually has all 40 identified assets, the more assets a young person has the better off they are and the more likely they are to grow up to make wise decisions and become caring and responsible members of society. The reverse is also true, however. Those youth with the fewest assets are more likely to have behavioral problems, use drugs, and suffer with depression and attempt suicide. In a community or systems approach to developing assets, it is critical to provide early intervention and identify signs and symptoms of problems in individuals with a biological predisposition and family history of drug use and depression. This is a critical time to frontload the family and child with opportunities to experience and develop assets so that the youth will not experiment with drugs and alcohol in the first place, both of which have shown to worsen symptoms of depression and mental illness, like major depressive disorder, bi-polar disorder, anxiety disorders, and several personality disorders.[3]

Assets are like the building blocks for human development. They increase in value over time and provide a sense of security.

Search INSTITUTE

Assets & Depression/ Attempted Suicide

THE BOTTOM LINE: The more Developmental Assets youth report, the less likely they are to report being depressed or having attempted suicide.

DEFINITION: Youth who report that they are frequently depressed and/or have attempted suicide.

SOURCE: Surveys of 89,000 U. S. youth, grades 6 to 12, in 2010. See *A Fragile Foundation: The State of Developmental Assets Among American Youth*

SURVEY: *Profiles of Student Life: Attitudes and Behaviors*
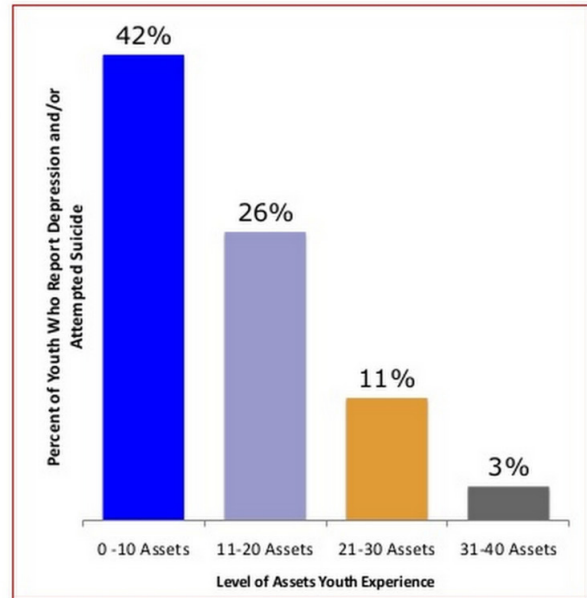
* Developmental Assets are supports, strengths, and non-cognitive skills they experience in themselves, their families, their schools, and their communities.

Percent of Youth Who Report Depression and/or Attempted Suicide

42% — 0 -10 Assets
26% — 11-20 Assets
11% — 21-30 Assets
3% — 31-40 Assets

Level of Assets Youth Experience

These assets have so consistently shown to be determinants of mental health that we feel that they should be considered on par with the discovery that the lack of certain vitamins lead to various diseases. While detecting which assets may be missing in a person's life may be fairly simple, the cure is obviously not as easy as giving someone a vitamin.

The following table lists the 40 identified assets. These are broken up into two large categories of internal and external assets and 8 subcategories including support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time, commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity. By identifying youth's assets and those that are lacking in children's lives, programs can be developed that promote and increase these missing assets, thereby hopefully decreasing many of the mental health problems that Vermont youth currently face.

asset type	asset name and definition	

EXTERNAL ASSETS

SUPPORT

1.	**FAMILY SUPPORT** — Family life provides high levels of love and support.	72%
2.	**POSITIVE FAMILY COMMUNICATION** — Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).	32%
3.	**OTHER ADULT RELATIONSHIPS** — Young person receives support from three or more nonparent adults.	50%
4.	**CARING NEIGHBORHOOD** — Young person experiences caring neighbors.	40%
5.	**CARING SCHOOL CLIMATE** — School provides a caring, encouraging environment.	35%
6.	**PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN SCHOOLING** — Parent(s) are actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.	33%

EMPOWERMENT

7.	**COMMUNITY VALUES YOUTH** — Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.	25%
8.	**YOUTH AS RESOURCES** — Young people are given useful roles in the community.	32%
9.	**SERVICE TO OTHERS** — Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.	50%
10.	**SAFETY** — Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.	54%

BOUNDARIES & EXPECTATIONS

11.	**FAMILY BOUNDARIES** — Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.	47%
12.	**SCHOOL BOUNDARIES** — School provides clear rules and consequences.	56%
13.	**NEIGHBORHOOD BOUNDARIES** — Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behavior.	48%
14.	**ADULT ROLE MODELS** — Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.	28%
15.	**POSITIVE PEER INFLUENCE** — Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.	68%
16.	**HIGH EXPECTATIONS** — Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.	55%

CONSTRUCTIVE USE OF TIME

17.	**CREATIVE ACTIVITIES** — Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or other arts.	20%
18.	**YOUTH PROGRAMS** — Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and/or in the community.	61%
19.	**RELIGIOUS COMMUNITY** — Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.	51%
20.	**TIME AT HOME** — Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.	56%

INTERNAL ASSETS

COMMITMENT TO LEARNING

21.	**ACHIEVEMENT MOTIVATION** — Young person is motivated to do well in school.	71%
22.	**SCHOOL ENGAGEMENT** — Young person is actively engaged in learning.	62%
23.	**HOMEWORK** — Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.	53%
24.	**BONDING TO SCHOOL** — Young person cares about her or his school.	61%
25.	**READING FOR PLEASURE** — Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.	23%

POSITIVE VALUES

26.	**CARING** — Young person places high value on helping other people.	52%
27.	**EQUALITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE** — Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.	54%
28.	**INTEGRITY** — Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.	71%
29.	**HONESTY** — Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."	69%
30.	**RESPONSIBILITY** — Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.	67%
31.	**RESTRAINT** — Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.	47%

SOCIAL COMPETENCIES

32.	**PLANNING AND DECISION MAKING** — Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.	33%
33.	**INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE** — Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.	48%
34.	**CULTURAL COMPETENCE** — Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.	42%
35.	**RESISTANCE SKILLS** — Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.	45%
36.	**PEACEFUL CONFLICT RESOLUTION** — Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.	44%

POSITIVE IDENTITY

37.	**PERSONAL POWER** — Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."	45%
38.	**SELF-ESTEEM** — Young person reports having a high self-esteem.	52%
39.	**SENSE OF PURPOSE** — Young person reports that "my life has a purpose."	63%
40.	**POSITIVE VIEW OF PERSONAL FUTURE** — Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.	75%

PROMOTING RESILIENCY IN CHILDREN

Along with the concept of assets, Dr. Peter Benson from the Search Institute has also developed a theory of change and a framework for thriving, which seeks for children and adolescents to identify the "sparks" or passions, skills, and strengths in their lives.

"Every teenager has a spark - something inside that is good, beautiful, and useful to the world. Sparks illuminate a young person's life, and they provide energy, joy and purpose." While most youth can identify the sparks in their lives, they can shine dimly or brightly depending on the people around them that serve as champions. The four stages of thriving are 1) the identification of the youth's spark 2) a development of a growth mindset, which helps youth understand that they can change the direction of their lives and set goals to be all that they can be, 3) self-reflection regarding their strengths and weaknesses and 4) building goal management skills.[4]

A resilience-based approach is at the core of asset-building in childhood. Resiliency programs are grounded in the idea that all people have the capacity to triumph over hardships and to flourish in spite of them. They promote long-term relationships and focus on success rather than simply eliminating failure. Research has identified seven factors that affect resiliency; these are Initiative, Creativity, Humor, Morality, Insight, Relationships, and Independence.[5] Dr. Rich Lerner, Director of Tufts' Institute for Applied Research in Youth Development organizes indicators of thriving into six C's: 1. Competence (Healthy Habits, Life Skills, Love of Learning, Emotional Competence & Social Skills), 2. Connection (Positive Relationships & Spiritual Growth), 3. Character, 4. Caring, 5. Confidence (Confidence & Persistent Resourcefulness) and 6. Contribution (Purpose).[6]

Research in resiliency has also revealed various ways that caregivers and those who work with youth can promote higher levels of self-worth and coping mechanisms in children. **For example, by focusing on the process versus the outcome or the person, children are much more likely to overcome setbacks and feel less helpless. While conventional wisdom would say that all praise is good praise, these findings show us that children respond better in the long run and are more likely to master tasks when the praise is centered on the effort made and the obstacles overcome versus their inherent traits, like being 'smart' or 'good'.[7]**

INCREASING COMMUNICATION AND COPING SKILLS

Every person faces problems at various times in their lives and go through stressful situations which require communication and coping skills. Children who lack self-awareness and communication skills, along with a range of coping skills to rely on, can often turn to self-harm or violence when feeling hurt or vulnerable. In the rush of today's world, when children do not have the opportunity to simply talk or vent, feelings of hurt and anger may manifest themselves in ways that are not productive. Children need practice in communicating and problem solving.[8]

All youth, but especially those who have difficulty in executive functioning, such as those who have been diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder or other learning disabilities, need assistance in coming up with ways to solve their own problems and relieve stress. Parents, social workers, teachers, and any other adult that works with youth should aid them in doing this by asking them to brainstorm a list of possible solutions to a given situation or to predict the most likely consequences for various choices. They can also encourage youth to express themselves through drawing, journaling, writing, poetry, or even music, or drama. Youth can then learn to find positive and creative ways to express their emotions.[9]

Children should be encouraged to find the kinds of activities that are in line with their interests and personalities. While some enjoy quiet activities such as journaling, other kids need more active pursuits, such as sports or making things with their hands. Helping them find activities they enjoy not only gives them an outlet for coping, but it can relieve stress, and encourages that 'spark' that leads to not only surviving, but thriving.[10]

YOUTH'S SENSE OF BELONGING

A key aspect to promoting mental health wellness at an early age is to help youth find a place where they can belong. A sense of belonging is a critical part of a person's self-esteem and identity. It is more than simply being among other people; it is finding a group into which you naturally fit or one that accepts you as you are. More and more studies are revealing the importance of connections in our lives. Beyond "nature" and "nurture", a third "n" is being increasingly researched – and that is of our "networks".[11]

Indicators of Thriving:

1. **Competence**
2. **Connection**
3. **Character**
4. **Caring**
5. **Confidence**
6. **Contribution**

People are social creatures, and children and teens are particularly geared toward this. Investigating the social interactions of youth and their behavior has revealed that high degrees of social integration (number of friends, a high frequency of social contact, low levels of isolation and loneliness) serve as protective factors against mental health problems. Also, positive connectedness of individuals and their families to community organizations such as schools and churches has shown to increase a sense of belonging, self-worth, and access to larger sources of support. A sense of belonging in school is particularly important for academic achievement, and therefore, success in many other aspects of life. Mitchell Beck and James Malley state in a *Pedagogy of Belonging*:

Most children fail in school not because they lack the necessary cognitive skills, but because they feel detached, alienated, and isolated from others and from the educational process. When children feel rejected by others, they either internalize the rejection and learn to hate themselves or externalize the rejection and learn to hate others. In East of Eden (1952), John Steinbeck described it as the story of the human soul: "The greatest terror a child can have is that he is not loved, and rejection is the hell of fears. I think everyone in the world to a large or small extent has felt rejection. And with rejection comes anger, and with anger some kind of crime in revenge for the rejection, and with crime, guilt—and there is the story of mankind." (p. 270)[12]

Those youth at risk for behavioral and mental health problems most often have a history of neglect, rejection, and abuse that begins in early childhood. The school setting is a place where a child hopes to find positive influences and gain acceptance. When the school climate focuses on competition versus cooperation, it alienates those who long to find that place of safety and acceptance. Feelings of estrangement and academic failure often lead youth to drop out in order to seek their own sense of belonging, often in antisocial or gang related groups.[13]

Teachers are critical individuals in the lives of at-risk youth. Teachers often spend more time with children than any other adult and are an important source of stability, but they can sometimes be at a loss for how to deal with the very students who need the greatest help. The youth most in need of healthy human relationships tend to resist them, as they are often afraid of more rejection and, therefore, build walls to prevent the pain. Teachers may respond to this type of behavior by attempting to control the situation or by threatening the student to behave with various means of punishment. More resources and trainings are needed to better enable teachers and school professionals to give these youth the type of support and sense of belonging that they so desperately require.[14, 15]

Recommendations for Materials Developed for Youth-connected Professionals and Families

The most basic step with regards to these upstream strategies is educating both professionals and families about assets and resiliency research to ensure that they have access to the resources that are already available to them. Using online websites, print media such as posters and brochures, and social media sites, these messages can be brought to a wider audience. While this type of information can be found on the Vermont Department of Mental Health website, we need to question how many people this is reaching. The average citizen is unlikely to visit the site unless they already have a mental health issue. In reaching upstream, we want to connect in a greater extent to those who have interactions with children in order to promote good mental health from a young age.

CHL proposes to do this through the development of an online portal called Health and Learning 4U, which would be available to school districts through their school websites, as well as pediatric offices, agencies who work in early childhood education, and other youth-serving professionals. Within the portal would be resources for families and caregivers to help their children, which most school websites and pediatric offices are currently lacking. Developing teacher-focused and other youth-serving professional resources would be another aspect of the website, with particular focus on aiding them in developing a sense of belonging to the students within their classrooms and encouraging students to find their own personal spark. Creating an available portal that all schools can include within their own websites is crucial because parents and teachers are much more likely to visit their own school's website than any other government agency. Constructing lists or interactive resources is often beyond the scope of most school's website goals. If they can, however, simply create a link to one portal that has all of the resources available to Vermont parents and teachers, it would be much more convenient and helpful to getting out the key mental health promotion messages. Although the Vermont Department of Health and Mental Health both have links to wonderful resources on their web pages, it is not organized in as an engaging or interactive manner as we envision the HL4U portal, but is simply a list of links to other websites.
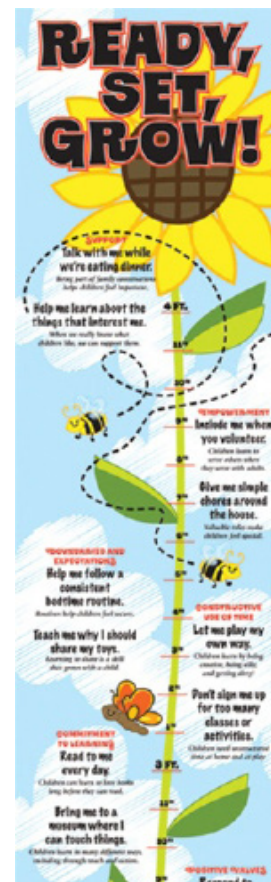
The print media approach can be fairly similar for health care professionals, and other youth-connected professionals, such as teachers, social workers, corrections officers, counselors etc. In health care settings, posters and brochures can be made available in doctor's offices and waiting rooms and anyone involved in the process of screening a patient can encourage parents or other caregivers to examine these materials and try to determine, for example, how many assets the child has and where there is room for development. The health care provider can then speak with them about this during the examination and work together to create solutions that would increase the number of assets in that child's life. Also, the Bright Futures initative, which has been created by the American Academy of Pediatrics, should be promoted to a much greater extent in Vermont. In the Bright Futures *Guidelines for Health Supervision of Infants, Children, and Adolescents*, they state:

Although consideration of physical abnormalities or nutritional needs may come easily to the practictioner, proper and effective techniques to consider and asses a child's family mental health are not integral to the current standard of care. [16]

Bright Futures has a wide range of wonderful print and online resources available, but these have not been publicized enough in Vermont.

Comparable brochures and posters can be made available to early childhood education centers, day care facilities, mother's groups, grade schools, community centers and churches. If a parent or caregiver has already seen this material, there is no need to do the assessment repeatedly, but by providing this information in many different settings and channels, it will ensure that hopefully no one is missed. Repetition will also empower families to be well-versed in understanding the types of things their children need, as well as reminding them of their importance. For those children who have very low numbers of assets, it can serve as a screening tool in order to get these children into programs that can work with them to create resiliency in their lives and give them coping tools to thrive even amid circumstances that may otherwise lead to risky behaviors, depression, or suicidal attempts.

The Search Institute has a large number of posters, books, and full curriculum already available for purchase. Depending on budgetary allowances, there is no need to re-invent the wheel with regard the creating the materials necessary for promoting the knowledge of developmental assets. The following page, however, shows an example of a brochure that was developed in Canada based on the 40 developmental assets. A similar brochure could be made for the state of Vermont, with lists of local and online resources.

Although consideration of physical abnormalities or nutritional needs may come easily to the practictioner, proper and effective techniques to consider and asses a child's family mental health are not integral to the current standard of care.

- Bright Futures

Developmental assets are the 40 values, experiences and qualities which empower youth to succeed.

These assets are the most widely used approach to positive youth development in Canada. They are grounded in extensive research in youth development, resiliency and prevention.

Vision
Youth in Flamborough are asset-rich, make healthy decisions, are involved in the community, and are supported, loved and cared for by the whole community.

Goals
- To increase awareness of developmental assets among parents, teachers, businesses, community groups and organizations
- To create a network of caring adults and organizations that promote and support each other in asset building
- To engage youth in building assets for themselves, their peers, and younger children

Our focus
- Conduct a survey of all grade 7–12 students to determine existing levels of assets
- Train groups about developmental assets
- Develop a media strategy and attend existing events to promote this initiative
- Inspire and equip parents to build assets
- Provide opportunities for youth to take leadership in building assets

80% of 15 year olds don't feel they have enough positive & meaningful relationships with adults.

Be an Asset Builder!
- Have family dinners together
- Say 'hi' and learn the names of youth that you see regularly in your business, neighbourhood, or organization
- Provide opportunities for young people and spend time with them
- Spread the word about ASSETS!

HC-HY FLAMBOROUGH is a partnership of parents, community groups, schools, businesses, agencies and organizations working together to create an asset building community in which all young people thrive.

Our Community Partners
- Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board
- Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board
- Local Ward 15 Councillor Judi Partridge
- Alternatives for Youth
- Centre for Addiction and Mental Health
- City of Hamilton
- Flamborough Chamber of Commerce
- Flamborough Family YMCA
- Flamborough Women's Resource Centre
- Hamilton Police Services
- John Howard Society of Hamilton, Burlington & area
- Lions Clubs of Flamborough
- Lions Quest Canada
- Market Mechanics Inc.
- MediaBay Creative
- Optimist Club
- Rotary Clubs of Waterdown and Flamborough
- Turning Point Detox
- Waterdown Church Network
- Youth Unlimited

Interested in becoming involved? Contact us at: www.focusonthe40.ca

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES HEALTHY YOUTH® FLAMBOROUGH

Brochure sponsored by the Rotary Clubs of Flamborough AM and Waterdown

listen
laugh
inspire

A community led initiative to support positive youth development

www.focusonthe40.ca

FOCUS ON THE 40

www.focusonthe40.ca

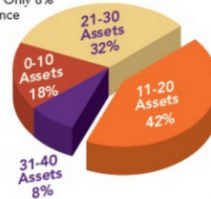HEALTHY COMMUNITY – HEALTHY YOUTH FLAMBOROUGH

What are Assets?

Developmental Assets are 40 values, experiences and qualities that help young people make positive choices in life and avoid engaging in high-risk behaviours.

Only 22% of teens feel like they can speak their minds about the things that matter to them.
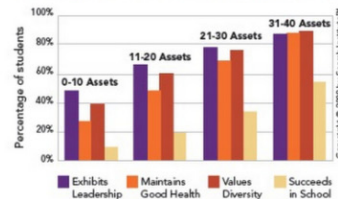
The average student experiences only 18 of the 40 assets. Only 8% of students experience between 31 – 40 assets.

This places many students at risk for making harmful and unhealthy choices.

0-10 Assets 18%
21-30 Assets 32%
11-20 Assets 42%
31-40 Assets 8%

The power of assets to promote...

Percentage of students

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0-10 Assets | 11-20 Assets | 21-30 Assets | 31-40 Assets

Exhibits Leadership | Maintains Good Health | Values Diversity | Succeeds in School

The power of assets to protect...

Percentage of students

Copyright © 2009 by Search Institute™

0-10 Assets | 11-20 Assets | 21-30 Assets | 31-40 Assets

Problem Alcohol Use | Violence | Illicit Drug Use | Sexual Activity

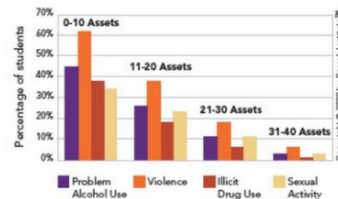How does your child score? To find out and learn more, visit www.focusonthe40.ca NOW!

The 20 External Assets

Support
- Family support
- Positive family communication
- Other adult relationships
- Caring neighbourhood
- Caring school climate
- Parent involvement in schooling

Empowerment
- Community values youth
- Youth as resources
- Service to others
- Safety

Boundaries and Expectations
- Family boundaries
- School boundaries
- Neighbourhood boundaries
- Adult role models
- Positive peer influence
- High expectations

Constructive Use of Time
- Creative activities
- Youth programs
- Religious community
- Time at home

The 20 Internal Assets

Commitment to Learning
- Achievement motivation
- School engagement
- Homework
- Bonding to school
- Reading for pleasure

Positive Values
- Caring
- Equality and social justice
- Integrity
- Honesty
- Responsibility
- Restraint

Social Competencies
- Planning and decision making
- Interpersonal competence
- Cultural competence
- Resistance skills
- Peaceful conflict resolution

Positive Identity
- Personal power
- Self-esteem
- Sense of purpose
- Positive view of personal future

listen
- listen to what they say
- ask them about themselves & their friends
- give them a voice & vote
- believe what they say

www.focusonthe40.ca

laugh
- laugh at their jokes
- be silly with them
- watch a funny show together

www.focusonthe40.ca

inspire
- volunteer together
- give them helpful feedback
- be a mentor
- lead by example

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Likewise, the following poster was created for the St. Louis Parks, Minnesota area. A similar poster could be created for Vermont, and the design process can be used as an education tool itself. In conjunction with the Department of Education and Department of Mental Health, a campaign could be created within the school system and an art contest held to determine which drawings would be used. In both an adult and youth engagement strategy, teachers and students would discuss the assets and create pictures of what they feel this looks like in their communities and lives. A panel of judges could choose the final pictures for the poster and it could then be hung in community, health, and education centers.

Creating more awareness on social media sites are another way of promoting this critical information. Even in the most rural parts of the state, most young people are on social media in some capacity. Youth are very social beings, and this is a key way to reach out to them and their families. This can also be a key way to reach out to youth not connected to a school or other community programs.

TEAM Up (Tools for Entertainment and Media) has created a useful paper entitled *Social Media Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention*[17]. Using this as a resource, we propose to create a presence for the Center for Health and Learning on various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Google Plus. CHL has very recently established a Facebook presence for the UMatter website, and we plan to use these channels to promote the many resources that are already available to students, parents, teachers, and other youth-connected professionals, but which they may not be aware. This will also be a key arena to help publicize the Vermont-specific materials and parent online portal that we have proposed to create. Additionally, social media is a convenient place to post about the various trainings that CHL currently holds and create event listings where individuals can sign up and/or invite other people as well. A remarkable phenomenon about social media is its ability to be a convening point for collaboration. There are many groups working to promote mental health wellness in Vermont but they are sometimes isolated entities. CHL hopes to foster even more partnerships between these organizations and individuals.
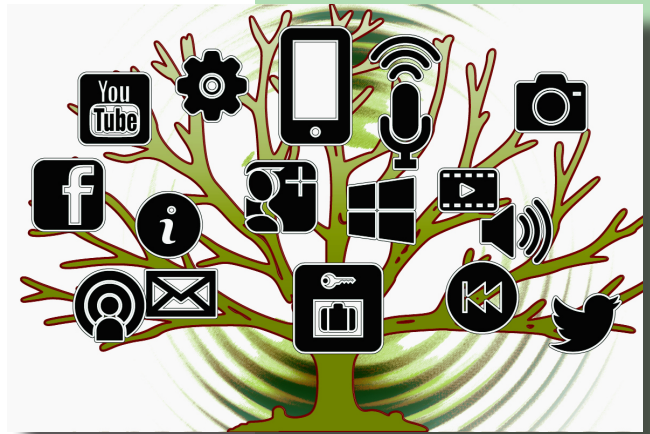
Conclusions

Implementing upstream strategies for promoting mental health wellness in youth in Vermont should be a critical joint focus of the Departments of Health, Mental Health the Agency of Education. Resources are already available to families and youth-connected professionals, but these groups may not be aware of them. An emphasis needs to be made towards educating Vermonters on a universal scale through web, print, and social media channels created specifically for Vermont. By putting more of an emphasis on health promotion for young children, we can hope to prevent in the future many of the mental health issues and high suicide rates that are currently affecting our youth today.

Summary of Upstream Strategy Recommendations

- **CREATE** an online portal dedicated to serving Vermont families and youth-connected professionals by consolidating the key information that these groups should be aware of in order to promote mental health wellness

- **ROLL OUT** a campaign to ensure that links to the portal would be found on websites of every Vermont school, early childhood agency, pediatric clinic, and other youth-serving organizations

- **DEVELOP** print materials, such as brochures and a poster promoting asset development and resilience in children and youth to be distributed to pediatric clinics, schools, and youth-connected organizations

- **CONNECT** youth and youth-serving professionals to a greater extent through the use of social media sites

- **PROMOTE** the core concepts of asset building, resiliency, coping skills, and other mental health wellness practices via the above channels

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RESOURCES

ASSETS

Carol S. Dweck (https://web.stanford.edu/dept/psychology/cgi-bin/drupalm/cdweck) – Carol is a professor of Psychology at Stanford University. Her page at Stanford states, "My work bridges developmental psychology, social psychology, and personality psychology, and examines the self-conceptions (or mindsets) people use to structure the self and guide their behavior. My research looks at the origins of these mindsets, their role in motivation and self-regulation, and their impact on achievement and interpersonal processes." She has a book and website related to Mindsets at http://mindsetonline.com/

Step-It-Up-2-Thrive (http://www.stepitup2thrive.org/) – This site provides instructions and resources to help youth envision and work towards their full potential. Step-It-Up-2-Thrive is a theory of change with four stages. The first stage is identification of youths' sparks, followed by development of a growth mindset. The third stage encourages youth self-reflection about indicators of thriving and risk factors in the way. The fourth stage builds youths' goal management skills, or what we term GPS (Goal selection, Pursuit of strategies, and Shifting gears in the face of challenge).

   List of lessons: http://www.stepitup2thrive.org/downloads/0-thriving/table_of_contents.pdf.

   "Thriving Indicators" poster: http://www.stepitup2thrive.org/downloads/0-thriving/0.5-thriving-indicators.pdf.

   "Risk Factors" poster: http://www.stepitup2thrive.org/downloads/0-thriving/0.5-thriving-indicators.pdf.

   "Road Map" poster for parents: http://www.stepitup2thrive.org/downloads/0-thriving/Parent_Roadmap.pdf.

   "Road Map" poster for youth: http://www.stepitup2thrive.org/downloads/0-thriving/0.2-youth-roadmap.pdf.

Search Institute (http://www.search-institute.org/content/40-developmental-assets-adolescents-ages-12-18) – A research-based list of 40 developmental assets, both internal and external, tailored for different age groups: ages 12 – 18; 8 – 12; 5 – 9; and 3 – 5. The Search Institute offers presentations, workshops, that highlight the importance of developing youth assets for individuals, families, and communities.

United Way of Snohomish County (http://www.uwsc.org/youthdevelopmentalassets.php) – This page has a short article about youth assets and links to articles at The Search Institute.

Inspired to Serve (http://www.inspiredtoserve.org/) – Tools and practical steps to engage in youth-led interfaith service-learning that integrates meaningful service to others with intentional learning and personal development. Service-learning is a field of practice that brings expertise, skills, and processes that complement and strengthen both interfaith engagement and asset building.

Interfaith Youth Core (http://www.ifyc.org/) – An international nonprofit building a global movement of young people committed to working with people of different religious and philosophical backgrounds to serve the common good. IFYC provides trainings for young people and their allies interested in leading interfaith youth service work around the world.

Learn and Serve America, Corporation for National and Community Service (http://www.nationalservice.gov/) – Provides direct and indirect support to K-12 schools, community groups, and higher education institutions to facilitate service-learning projects by providing grant support, training and technical assistance resources. It collects and disseminates research, effective practices, curricula, and program models.

National Youth Leadership Council (http://www.nylc.org/) – NYLC is a national leader in the service-learning field, sponsoring projects, training, resources, and a national conference to aimed at creating a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world with young people, their schools, and their communities through service-learning.

Points of Light Institute (http://www.pointsoflight.org/) – Provides research, analysis, tools, and training to support the creation and management of volunteer programs.

Youth Service America (http://www.ysa.org/) – An international nonprofit resource center that partners with thousands of organizations in more than 100 countries to expand the impact of the youth service movement with families, communities, schools, corporations, and governments. It seeks to improve communities by increasing the number and diversity of young people, ages 5-25, serving in important roles.

RESILIENCE

Big Brothers Big Sisters of America (http://www.bbbs.org/) – BBBS operates in 370 communities in the U.S. to match children with caring adult mentors.

YouthBuild U.S.A. (https://youthbuild.org/) – In YouthBuild programs, low-income young people ages 16 to 24 work full-time for 6 to 24 months toward their GEDs or high school diplomas while learning job skills by building affordable housing in their communities. Emphasis is placed on leadership development, community service, and the creation of a positive mini-community of adults and youth committed to each other's success.

California Healthy Kids Survey (http://chks.wested.org/using_results/resilience) – Developed by WestEd for the California Department of Education this site provides basic information about resiliency and why focusing on protective factors is more beneficial than eliminating risk factors. "By providing youth with caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities for meaningful participation, we meet the fundamental developmental needs that must be fulfilled if children and youth are to become happy and successful. As these needs are met, youth develop the strengths (developmental outcomes) that will benefit them throughout their lives."

"Youth Development Strategies, Concepts, and Research" (pdf) (http://chks.wested.org/resources/ryd_strategies.pdf) **–** This supplement to the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) RYDM report expands on the strategies, concepts, and research identified in the report, and provides specific resources and references for each. It is designed to assist practitioners in broadening their knowledge-base on resilience/youth development research and strategies. It provides a quick resource to the many approaches to providing youth with supports and opportunities at school and in the community. It serves as a guide for determining what course of action should be taken to meet the needs identified through the CHKS.

Youth Resiliency Institute (http://www.youthresiliencyinstitute.org/) – The Youth Resiliency Institute seeks to create a critical mass of individuals, more specifically, children and youth in Baltimore City, who are self-actualized in ways that allow them to stimulate productive, healthy, authentic lives in thriving communities. Through a creative, arts-based, Rites of Passage cultural process, The Youth Resiliency Institute offers training and an array of liberating offerings to children, youth, and adults. According to researchers, seven factors influence resiliency: Initiative, Creativity, Humor, Morality, Insight, Relationships, and Independence.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (https://www.childwelfare.gov/systemwide/mentalhealth/common/resiliency.cfm)

Bouncing Back: How Can Resilience Be Promoted in Vulnerable Children and Young People? http://www.barnardos.org.uk/bouncing_back_resilience_march09.pdf (PDF - 482 KB) Glover (2009) **–** Addresses some of the questions child welfare practitioners in the United Kingdom have about resilience in children, including how it can be defined, nurtured, and measured. The booklet also provides a summary of how resilience fits into child welfare today.

Building Resiliency in Child Abuse Organizations. Office for Victims of Crime Training and Technical Assistance Center, Office for Victims of Crime, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice (2014) https://www.ovcttac.gov/views/TrainingMaterials/dspBldgResiliencyChildAbuseOrgs_InstructorMaterials.cfm **–** Offers a training to help child-serving professionals develop their individual resiliency in order to prevent secondary traumatic stress and burnout. The training, available through three delivery options, identifies the five elements of resiliency and explores how they can be implemented through an organizational resiliency model using policies, supervisory techniques, and competency-based training.

Individual, Family, and Neighborhood Factors Distinguish Resilient From Non-Resilient Maltreated Children: A Cumulative Stressors Model Jaffee, Caspi, Moffitt, Polo-Thomas, & Taylor. Child Abuse & Neglect, 31(3), 2007. View Abstract: http://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Record?rpp=10&upp=0&m=1&w=+NATIVE%28%27an%3D%27%27cd-45537b%27%27%27%29&r=1 **–** Examines factors contributing to resiliency in children who experienced maltreatment.

Mental Health in Child Welfare: A Focus on Children and Families. National Resource Center for Family-Centered Practice and Permanency Planning**.** Best Practice/Next Practice, Summer, 2003**.**View Abstract: http://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Record?rpp=10&upp=0&m=1&w=+NATIVE%28%27an%3D%27%27cd-41594%27%27%27%29&r=1 **–** Articles addressing mental health in child welfare with a focus on resiliency.

Nurturing Adoptions: Creating Resilience After Neglect and Trauma. Gray (2007) View Abstract: http://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Record?rpp=10&upp=0&m=1&w=+NATIVE%28%27an%3D%27%27cd-45653%27%27%27%29&r=1 **–** Explores best practices for addressing traumatic stress and neglect in adopted children and examines ways to build resiliency in children and families.

Predictors of Resilience in Abused and Neglected Children Grown-Up: The Role of Individual and Neighborhood Characteristics. DuMont, Widom, & Czaja**.**Child Abuse & Neglect, 31(3), 2007 View Abstract: http://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Record?rpp=10&upp=0&m=1&w=+NATIVE%28%27an%3D%27%27cd-45537c%27%27%27%29&r=1 **–** Examines individual, family, and neighborhood level predictors of resilience in adolescence and young adulthood and describes changes in resilience over time from adolescence to young adulthood in abused and neglected children grown up.

Promoting Children's Mental, Emotional, and Behavioral Health: A Resource for Parents http://www.bocyf.org/prevention_parent_brochure.pdf (PDF - 582 KB)
Board on Children, Youth, and Families, Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education, National Research Council, Institute of Medicine, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (2009) **–** Helps parents focus on the healthy development of children from birth to adolescence and identify risk factors to prevent problems before they occur.

Resilient Outcomes in Abused and Neglected Children: Bases for Strengths-based Intervention and Prevention Policies. Trickett, Kurtz, & Pizzigati (2004).In Investing in Children, Youth, Families, and Communities: Strengths-Based Research and Policy**.** View Abstract: http://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Record?rpp=10&upp=0&m=1&w=+NATIVE%28%27an%3D%27%27cd-40378%27%27%27%29&r=1 **–** Summarizes current research on protective factors that influence adaptation among maltreated children.

Trauma Resilience Among Youth in Substitute Care Demonstrating Sexual Behavior Problems. Leon, Miller, Ragsdale, & Spacarelli**.** Child Abuse and Neglect, 32(1), 2008View Abstract: http://library.childwelfare.gov/cwig/ws/library/docs/gateway/Record?rpp=10&upp=0&m=1&w=+NATIVE%28%27an%3D%27%27cd-45896e%27%27%27%29&r=1 **–** Presents results of a study examining the relationship between several protective factors and trauma symptoms among vulnerable youth in the child welfare system.

Resilience Research Centre (http://resilienceresearch.org/) – A research group which views resilience from a socio-ecological perspective which focuses youth, the relationships around them, their communities, and the resources available to them. It also considers the interaction between the various players and the capacity of youth to negotiate for resources.

Fostering Resilience (http://www.fosteringresilience.com/7cs.php) – This site has pages for professionals, parents, and teens and focuses on "The 7 Cs: The Essential Building Blocks of Resilience" which include Competence, Confidence, Connection, Character, Contribution, Coping, and Control. The site has an exhaustive resources page (http://www.fosteringresilience.com/resources.php) with books, links, and organizations relevant to both parents and professionals.

Resiliency in Action (https://www.resiliency.com/free-articles-resources/the-foundations-of-the-resiliency-framework/) – A web site by Han Henderson, M.S.W., professor and author of five books on resiliency. The site includes a resiliency quiz, and articles such as "The Foundations of the Resilience Framework," and "The Faces of Resiliency."

Fostering Resiliency in Children and Youth: Four Basic Steps for Families, Educators, and Other Caring Adults by Nan Henderson (http://www.ccsme.org/userfiles/files/HendersonResiliencyAdolescents.pdf) – A 25-page article with and annotated bibliography and a resiliency quiz. The four steps include 1) Communicate an attitude of resiliency, 2) Focus on strengths with more zeal than you would to catalogue weaknesses, 3) Build a resiliency wheel around children, and 4) Never give up.

Resiliency In Action: Practical Ideas for Overcoming Risks and Building Strengths in Youth, Families, and Communities by Nan Henderson © 2007. Read about it on Amazon.com: http://www.amazon.com/Resiliency-Action-Practical-Overcoming-Communities/dp/0966939433

Conceptualizing Resiliency: An Interactional Perspective for Community and Youth Development by Mark A. Brennan, Child Care in Practice, Vol. 14, No. 1, January 2008, pp. 55-64 (http://masstapp.edc.org/sites/masstapp.edc.org/files/Coceptualizing%20Resiliency%20for%20Community%20and%20Youth%20Dvlpmt.pdf) – In Europe and in America there is a growing recognition of the need for theory, research, and applied programs that contribute to both community and youth resiliency. This article seeks to build on previous theory and literature to provide a conceptual framework for understanding the mechanisms for linking community and youth resiliency.

Developing Resilience in Urban Youth by Linda F. Winfield (http://ecap.crc.illinois.edu/eecearchive/books/resguide/winfield.pdf) – A 23 page article which discusses the characteristics of resilient children and how to build protective processes around them. The paper outlines a research-based definition of resilience, four major protective mechanisms that foster resilience, and examples of strategies that help to build those protective processes for students.

Reaching IN...Reaching OUT (RIRO) (http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/) – An organization which creates evidence-based programs and training for parents and professionals that teach resiliency thinking and coping skills to adults and young children under the age of 8 years so they can Reach IN to face life's challenges ... Reach OUT to other people and opportunities that encourage healthy development.

 "Turning it Around for all Youth: From Risk to Resilience" by Bonnie Benard, Resiliency Associates, Clearinghouse on Urban Education (http://resilnet.uiuc.edu/library/dig126.html) – This article focuses on positive beliefs about all students and strategies for building resilience. It includes an extensive bibliography.

Alaska Department of Health and Social Services, Division of Behavioral Health (http://dhss.alaska.gov/dbh/Pages/Prevention/programs/resiliency/default.aspx) – This page is about the Resiliency and Youth Development Program with links to national resources and services.

The Forum for Youth Investment (http://forumfyi.org/) – The Forum for Youth Investment helps adults get young people ready for life by working with state and local leaders to change the way they do business for young people. The Forum strengthens state and local partnerships, expands learning opportunities for youth, and aligns policies and resources for improved effectiveness. The Ready by 21 program helps state and local leaders change the way they do business to ensure that all young people are ready for college, work and life.

COPING SKILLS (SOCIAL SKILLS, PROBLEM SOLVING SKILLS)

Life Skills and Leadership Manual, Peace Corps, Publication Number M0098 (Life Skills and Leadership Manual, Peace Corps, Publication Number M0098 (http://files.peacecorps.gov/library/M0098.pdf) – Contains lessons for youth in four units: 1) Personal Development (Assets, Stages of Adolescence, Choosing Positive Values, Stress and Emotions), 2) Interpersonal Development (Active Listening, Positive Communication, Making Decisions, Creativity, Solving Problems, Conflict, Collaboration), 3) Goal Setting and Action Planning (SMART Goals, Setting Priorities, Managing Time), and 4) Teamwork and Leadership (Roles of Leaders and Team Members, the Project Cycle, Completing a Project).

Child and Youth Health (http://www.cyh.com/Default.aspx?p=1) – This site is maintained by the government of South Australia. The information on this site has been prepared by a team that includes qualified medical and other health and education professionals. The information is reviewed periodically and updated by a medical professional and editorial staff as required. Contains links for Pregnancy, Parenting and Child Health, Kids Health, Teen Health, and Youth Adult Health.

PBIS World (http://www.pbisworld.com/) – Positive behavior interventions and support is a structure and process for addressing behavior for improved academic outcomes. The site has dozens of pages of articles related to teaching coping skills here: http://www.pbisworld.com/tier-2/teach-coping-skills/

LiveStrong (www.livestrong.com) – Activities for Teaching Coping Skills to Youth" http://www.livestrong.com/article/129996-activities-teaching-coping-skills-youth/ This article highlights such things as healthy habits, relaxation techniques, and stress relievers.

The Helpful Counselor (www.thehelpfulcounselor.com) – A website of counseling tips and techniques by an elementary schools counselor in private practice. "18 Coping Skills: Strategies for Children and Teens" http://www.thehelpfulcounselor.com/18-coping-skills-strategies-for-children-and-teens/

The Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention Centre of British Columbia (http://youthinbc.com/) – Highlights ways of coping with stress (http://youthinbc.com/youth-issues-2/stress/coping-with-stress/) and many other mental health categories.

Psychological Hardiness

American Psychological Association "Turning Lemons into Lemonade: Hardiness Helps People Turn Stressful Circumstances into Opportunities" (http://www.apa.org/research/action/lemon.aspx) – This link contains a brief article summarizing the findings of a landmark 12-year longitudinal study by psychologist Salvatore R. Maddi, Ph.D., and colleagues at the University of Chicago.

National Center for Biotechnology Information, U.S. National Library of Medicine, "Psychological Hardiness: State of the Science" (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/10418381)

National Center for Biotechnology Information, "Workplace and personal factors associated with physical and mental health in hospital nurses in China" (http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/17470186) – From the Abstract: "Limited research exists on the workplace and personal factors that might be associated with the physical and mental health of nurses working in China. Therefore, the purposes of this study were to examine, in Chinese hospital nurses, the most frequently occurring workplace stressor, the most often used coping strategy, and the relationships that exist among workplace stressors, coping strategies, psychological hardiness, demographic characteristics, and physical and mental health."

"The Relationship of Hardiness, Gender, and Stress to Health Outcomes in Adolescents" Shepperd, James A. and Kashani, Javad H. (http://www.psych.ufl.edu/~shepperd/articles/hardiness.pdf) – From the Abstract: "The present study examined the relationship between the hardiness components of commitment, control, and challenge, and the experience of physical and psychological symptoms in a sample of 150 (75 male, 75 female) adolescents. A measure of psychosocial stress was included to permit an examination of whether the hardiness components interact with stress in predicting health outcomes."

"Emotional States and Physical Health" Salovey, Peter, et al. (http://www.wisebrain.org/papers/EmotHlth.pdf) – From the Abstract: "To explore potential mechanism linking pleasant feelings and good health, the authors considered… a) direct effects of positive affect on physiology, b) the information value of emotional experiences, c) the psychological resources engendered by positive feeling states, d) the ways mood can motivate health-relevant behaviors, and d) the elicitation of social support."

The Hardiness Institute (http://www.hardinessinstitute.com/?page_id=1195) – Website developed by Dr. Maddi which offers research (general, couples, military, etc.), training, a survey, and a blog.

"Psychological Hardiness Predicts Success in US Army Special Forces Candidates" Bartone, Paul T. et al, International Journal of Selection and Assessment, Volume 16, Number 1, March 2008 (http://www.hardiness-resilience.com/docs/IJSA-Feb2008.pdf) -- This article US Army Special Forces candidates (N¼1138) were assessed for psychological hardiness using a short form of the Dispositional Resilience Scale, and these scores were then applied to predict successful completion of the course.

Sense of Belonging

National Network for Collaboration (NNCO) (http://www.uvm.edu/extension/community/nnco/index.htm) – The goal of community collaboration is to bring individuals and members of communities, agencies and organizations together in an atmosphere of support to systematically solve existing and emerging problems that could not be solved by one group alone. To assist citizens and practitioners in their collaborative efforts, the National Network for Collaboration created a Collaboration Framework. The framework along with associated materials and practical tools are available through this interactive web-based resource.

National Network for Collaboration Training Manual (http://www.uvm.edu/extension/community/nnco/cd/index.htm) – "Strengthening Youth and Family Environments: Essentials for Success" http://www.uvm.edu/extension/community/nnco/cd/collabh2.htm

"Foster Youth's Sense of Belonging in Kinship, Network and Traditional Foster Families" by Lena Hedin © 2012, Orebro University, Orebro, Sweden (http://oru.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:458027/FULLTEXT02.pdf) – This thesis shows that foster youth can be active participants and agents in shaping their own lives, both in terms of developing and breaking relationships.

"A Pedagogy of Belonging" by Mitchell Beck and James Malley, The International Child and Youth Care Network, Issue 50, March 2003 (http://www.cyc-net.org/cyc-online/cycol-0303-belonging.html) – The psychological sense that one belongs in a classroom and school community is considered a necessary antecedent to the successful learning experience.

"Young People, Identity and Living in a Global Society" by Douglas Bourn, Development Education and Research, Issue 7, Autumn 2008, Centere for Global Education (http://www.developmenteducationreview.com/issue7-focus4?page=show) – This article outlines current debates, recent research and policy initiatives in the United Kingdom (UK) on young people and their identity, particularly in relation to the impact of globalization. It points out that for young people to make sense of their identity and develop a sense of belonging, establishing the relationship between global processes and local experiences is critical.

Reclaiming Youth International (RYI) (https://www.reclaiming.com/content/) – An organization dedicated to helping adults better serve children and youth who are in emotional pain from conflict in the family, school, community, or with self.