

## Teacher Discussion Guide

# Healthy Habits

Students will consider each component of health and wellness - **mental, physical, emotional, spiritual and social**. For each, students will identify a specific example of a healthy habit that can protect brain health, and explain how it relates to brain health. Students can refer to the [health and wellness infographic](#) for examples.

Mental Health and Wellness	
One healthy habit:	How this habit protects brain health:
Managing stress	Managing stress can help promote brain health (e.g., mindfulness, deep breathing, and regular exercise help reduce stress).
Exercising your brain	Engage in activities that challenge your brain (e.g., puzzles, reading, learning new skills, or playing musical instruments). These activities help to maintain cognitive abilities.
Getting adequate sleep	Sleep improves brain performance, mood, and health (e.g., 8-10 hours per night, avoiding screen time at night).
Physical Health and Wellness	
One healthy habit:	How this habit protects brain health:
Exercising regularly	Exercise can indirectly boost memory and thinking by improving mood and sleep, reducing stress and anxiety. Try to get at least 1 hour of exercise a day.
Eating a healthy diet	A healthy, well-balanced diet including a variety of foods can help us think, feel more alert, and improve concentration and attention span.
Limiting substance use	Limiting substance use can protect your brain health and cognitive function.

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Emotional Health and Wellness	
One healthy habit:	How this habit protects brain health:
Talking about emotions	Sharing your feelings with a trusted person can help you process your emotions and reduce stress and anxiety.
Finding an outlet	Finding an outlet (e.g., art, writing, exercise, social activities) can help you work through emotions in a positive way.
Talking to a professional	Speaking to a professional (e.g., counselor, psychologist) can allow you to work through emotions in a safe, non-judgemental environment, promoting positive mental health.
Spiritual Health and Wellness	
One healthy habit:	How this habit protects brain health:
Practicing mindfulness	Mindfulness can improve focus and memory, regulate emotions, support healthy decision-making, and reduce anxiety and stress.
Finding purpose	Volunteering or getting involved with an activity you find meaningful can give you a sense of purpose, boosting self-esteem and positive mental health.
Participating in a faith community	Being part of a faith community can provide belonging and social connection that foster mental well-being.
Social Health and Wellness	
One healthy habit:	How this habit protects brain health:
Increasing in-person interactions	Interacting with others stimulates the brain and may reduce the risk of cognitive decline as you age.
Joining a social group	Joining a social group (e.g., school club, sports team, book club) can lead to increased social connectedness, enhancing mood.
Spending time with supportive people	Spending quality time with supportive people can reduce stress and increase resilience.