



### Key indicators for Well-being Index

- Optimism
- Happiness
- Self-Esteem
- Absence of Sadness
- General Health

### Assets in Asset Index

- Adult Relationships
- Peer Relationships
- Nutrition & Sleep
- After-school Activities



## ASSETS, WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE

The MDI results help us better understand well-being and the individual assets that foster healthy development in all the environments where children spend their time. There are also two summary measures in the MDI that provide an overall picture of how children perceive their lives: The MDI Well-being Index shows how well children are thriving, and the MDI Assets Index highlights the quantity and quality of positive resources and influences present in their lives. Using these results as a signpost for action, we can impact children’s well-being by helping them build their social and emotional skills and enriching their assets.

## research

### GENERAL RESEARCH ON ASSETS, WELL-BEING, AND RESILIENCE

#### What are Assets?

Assets are resources present in children’s lives, such as supportive relationships and enriching activities. A key aspect of assets is that they are actionable – that is, assets are malleable and can be improved by outside forces in children’s contexts. Using a strength-based approach, the MDI Assets Index measures key assets that help promote children’s positive development and well-being. The four assets measured by the MDI Assets Index are *Adult Relationships*, *Peer Relationships*, *Nutrition and Sleep*, and *After-School Activities*. These assets were carefully chosen based on research that shows they promote well-being (Schonert-Reichl et al. 2013). Developing these assets has the potential to affect great change in children’s lives.

#### A Link Between Assets and Well-Being:

One of the key findings from research on the MDI, consistent across all participating jurisdictions, is that children’s self-reported well-being is related to the number of assets they perceive as being present in their lives. As the number of assets increases, a greater proportion of children report higher well-being (Gadermann et al., 2016; Guhn et al., 2012).

#### What is Resilience?

People sometimes refer to resilience as “beating the odds;” resilience means experiencing well-being and healthy development even in the face of great stress and challenges (Masten, 2018). Resilience involves many interactions, including individual characteristics, histories of children, and their environmental supports and experiences (Masten & Barnes, 2018). This means that resilience is unique to each child and context. The more assets a child has, the more likely they are to experience resilience (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020). A child’s resilience is constantly changing and developing based on the individual context each child experiences (Ungar, 2019). That is, resilience is a bidirectional, individual-context relational process in which children’s individual characteristics, such as temperament, motivation, and cognition interact with the social context (for example, families, schools, and neighborhoods). Together, these influence a child’s development (Theokas & Lerner, 2006).



## ASSETS, WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE

### AT HOME

- Ask your child about the relationships in their life that contribute to their well-being. Actively listen to them as they share their experiences. Help them identify people they can reach out to if they need more support at school or in other areas of their life (Gaderman et al., 2016; Magee et al., 2019).
- Take time to engage in activities that support your own well-being. When you experience well-being, it supports well-being and resilience in your child. (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020)
- Provide guidance, opportunity, and encouragement for your child to develop skills for initiating and maintaining healthy relationships with peers and other adults in their lives, such as self-awareness, empathy, kindness, and assertiveness (Divecha & Brackett, 2019).
- Help your family members develop a “growth mindset.” People with a growth mindset see challenges as an opportunity to grow and cultivate new strengths, which is related to their well-being (Zeng et al., 2016). Helping your children recognize and utilize their strengths is also linked to well-being (Waters et al., 2019).

### AT SCHOOL

- Provide students with lessons or units that focus on identifying assets and developing well-being and resilience. Guiding questions for lessons may include:
  - How do we know when we are doing well?
  - How can we support each other, and who can we turn to when we need support?
  - How do I take care of my body? How does it make me feel?
  - What are my hobbies and passions?
  - What can I do when things get difficult? How can I overcome challenges?
- Insights learned from discussing these questions with students can increase awareness of where children may need additional support. Such support may include providing additional lessons on a specific topic, connecting with the caregiver of a child who needs additional support, or putting caregivers in touch with professional services to help provide the needed assets in a child’s life.

### IN COMMUNITY

- Engage youth and their families in the development of services that are responsive to their needs. Provide autonomy for youth to have an active voice in decision-making about what services are meaningful and relevant for them (Ungar, 2019).
- Offer training in multicultural competence for program leaders. Programs that are culturally sensitive and provide a sense of belonging contribute to well-being in youth (Smith et al., 2017).
- Provide skill-building opportunities for youth to reach their goals. Perhaps with inclusive structures and individualized instruction (Arbour-Nicitopoulos et al., 2018).
- Evaluate whether supports across schools, communities, and home complement each other. Community organizations and agencies can work collectively towards a shared vision to best support youth and their service providers to thrive (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020).

For more resources and ideas on how to use MDI data to catalyze action, visit [discovermdi.ca](https://discovermdi.ca).

# references

\*Research studies that used MDI data

Arbour-Nicitopoulos, K. P., Grassmann, V., Orr, K., McPherson, A. C., Faulkner, G. E., & Wright, F. V. (2018). A scoping review of inclusive out-of-school time physical activity programs for children and youth with physical disabilities. *Adapted Physical Activity Quarterly*, 35(1), 111-138. doi:10.1123/apaq.2017-0012

Divecha, D., & Brackett, M. (2019). Rethinking school-based bullying prevention through the lens of social and emotional learning: A bioecological perspective. *International Journal of Bullying Prevention*, 2(2), 93-113. doi:10.1007/s42380-019-00019-5

\*Gadermann, A. M., Guhn, M., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Hymel, S., Thomson, K., & Hertzman, C. (2016). A population-based study of children's well-being and health: The relative importance of social relationships, health-related activities, and income. *Journal of Happiness Studies*, 17(5), 1847-1872. doi:10.1007/s10902-015-9673-1

\*Guhn, M., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Gadermann, A. M., Marriott, D., Pedrini, L., Hymel, S., & Hertzman, C. (2012). Well-being in middle childhood: An assets-based population-level research-to-action project. *Child Indicators Research*, 5(2), 393-418. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12187-012-9136-8>

\*Magee, C., Guhn, M., Schonert-Reichl, K. A., & Oberle, E. (2019). Mental well-being among children in foster care: The role of supportive adults. *Children and Youth Services Review*, 102, 128-134. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2019.05.005>

Masten, A. S. (2018). Resilience theory and research on children and families: Past, present, and promise. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 10(1), 12-31. doi:10.1111/jftr.12255

Masten, A., & Barnes, A. (2018). Resilience in children: Developmental perspectives. *Children*, 5(98), 1-16. doi:10.3390/children5070098

\*Schonert-Reichl, K. A., Guhn, M., Gadermann, A. M., Hymel, S., Sweiss, L., & Hertzman, C. (2013). Development and validation of the Middle Years Development Instrument (MDI): Assessing children's well-being and assets across multiple contexts. *Social Indicators Research*, 114(2), 345-369. doi:10.1007/s11205-012-0149-y

Smith, E. P., Witherspoon, D. P., & Wayne Osgood, D. (2017). Positive youth development among diverse racial-ethnic children: Quality afterschool contexts as developmental assets. *Child Development*, 88(4), 1063-1078. doi:10.1111/cdev.12870

Theokas, C., & Lerner, R. M. (2006). Observed ecological assets in families, schools, and neighborhoods: Conceptualizations, measurement, and relations with positive and negative developmental outcomes. *Applied Developmental Science*, 10(2), 61-74.

Twum-Antwi, A., Jefferies, P., & Ungar, M. (2019). Promoting child and youth resilience by strengthening home and school environments: A literature review. *International Journal of School & Educational Psychology*, 8(2), 78-89. doi:10.1080/21683603.2019.1660284

## REFERENCES CONT'D

Ungar, M. (2015). Practitioner review: Diagnosing childhood resilience - A systemic approach to the diagnosis of adaptation in adverse social and physical ecologies. *Journal of Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 56(1), 4-17. doi:10.1111/jcpp.12306

Ungar, M. (2019). Designing resilience research: Using multiple methods to investigate risk exposure, promotive and protective processes, and contextually relevant outcomes for children and youth. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 96, 104098. doi:10.1016/j.chiabu.2019.104098

Waters, L., Loton, D. J., Grace, D., Jacques-Hamilton, R., & Zyphur, M. J. (2019). Observing change over time in strength-based parenting and subjective wellbeing for pre-teens and teens. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 10. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02273

Zeng, G., Hou, H., & Peng, K. (2016). Effect of growth mindset on school engagement and psychological well-being of Chinese primary and middle school students: The mediating role of resilience. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 7. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01873