

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
- Out-of-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 on 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?

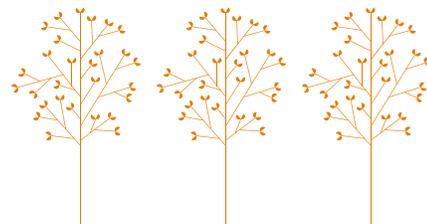
Assets are resources present in children's lives, such as supportive relationships and enriching activities. A key aspect of assets is that they are actionable – that is, assets are malleable and can be improved by outside forces in children's contexts. Using a strength-based approach, the MDI Assets 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 *Out of-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?

Resilience means experiencing well-being and healthy development even in the face of stress and challenges (Masten, 2018). It's the ability for a child to step into a situation with a sense of confidence that they can; a) figure out what they need to do and b) that they can handle what is thrown at them. A child's resilience is constantly changing and developing based on the individual context they experience (Ungar, 2019). The more assets a child has, the more likely they are to experience resilience (Twum-Antwi et al., 2020). Resilience is a dynamic process that can be acquired and strengthened across the lifespan, rather than a fixed characteristic (Feder et al., 2019.) Middle childhood and adolescence are an ideal period for resilience enhancing interventions. Children's brains are undergoing extensive reorganization in adolescence (Aoki et al., 2017) making them susceptible to the harmful effects of stress or adversity, but also malleable and receptive to resilience building interventions. This process of building resiliency within children can be cofacilitated by families, schools, and neighbourhoods (Ungar, 2019).



ASSETS, WELL-BEING & RESILIENCE

AT HOME

- Middle childhood can be an especially difficult time for many children as they struggle to meet extra academic demands and avoid new social pitfalls. They look to teachers and friends as well as to parents to make them feel safe. Reinforce empathy and help your child keep perspective. If your child is struggling help them understand that other children may be feeling similarly and help them to see beyond the current situation.
- Help your child see that change is part of life and that setting new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable. Examine what is going well and create a plan of action with your child for what is not going well (Chad-Friedman et al., 2023).
- 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

- Teach students the importance of engaging and connecting with their peers, including the skill of empathy, and listening to others. Connecting with others provides social support and strengthens resilience (Chad-Friedman et al., 2023).
- Help children recognize that making mistakes is an important part of learning. Have a conversation regarding what they can learn from difficult experiences. Doing so may help them develop a growth mindset, which can help them persevere in the face of challenges and boost their academic competence (Sarrasin et al., 2018).
- Find SEL programs that work for your classroom and school. The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (casel.org) offers a variety of [tools](#) and evidence-based programs.
- The most successful SEL programs are those implemented across all levels of the school system (Mahoney et al., 2021). Check out the CASEL guide to school wide SEL [here](#).

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.

references

*Research studies that used MDI data

Aoki, C., Romeo, R. D. & Smith, S. S. (2017) Adolescence as a critical period for developmental plasticity. *Brain Res.* 1654, 85–86. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.brainres.2016.11.026>

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. <https://doi.org/10.1123/apaq.2017-0012>

Chad-Friedman, S., Cummings, C. M., Shiffrin, N. D., Alvord, M. K., & Rich, B. A. (2023). Resilience is associated with improved emotion regulation and internalizing symptoms following transdiagnostic treatment in a diverse sample of children. *Journal of Child and Family Studies*, 32(2), 409-423. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10826-022-02424-9>

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. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s42380-019-00019-5>

Feder, A., Fred-Torres, S., Southwick, S. M., & Charney, D. S. (2019). The biology of human resilience: Opportunities for enhancing resilience across the life span. *Biological Psychiatry*, 86(6), 443-453. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.biopsych.2019.07.012>.

*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. <https://doi.org/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>

Mahoney, J. L., Weissberg, R. P., Greenberg, M. T., Dusenbury, L., Jagers, R. J., Niemi, K., Schlinger, M., Schlund, J., Shriver, T. P., VanAusdal, K., & Yoder, N. (2021). Systemic social and emotional learning: Promoting educational success for all preschool to high school students. *American Psychologist*, 76(7), 1128-1142. <https://doi.org/10.1037/amp0000701>

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. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jftr.12255>

Sarrasin, J. B., Nenciovici, L., Foisy, L. B., Allaire-Duquette, G., Riopel, M., & Masson, S. (2018). Effects of teaching the concept of neuroplasticity to induce a growth mindset on motivation, achievement, and brain activity: A meta-analysis. *Trends in Neuroscience and Education*, 12, 22-31. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tine.2018.07.003>

*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. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11205-012-0149-y>

REFERENCES CONT'D

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. <http://doi.org/10.1111/cdev.12870>

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. <http://doi.org/10.1080/21683603.2019.1660284>

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. <http://doi.org/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. <http://doi.org/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. <http://doi.org/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. <http://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2016.01873>

WEBSITE RESOURCES

The Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) - <https://casel.org>