The background features several thick, diagonal bars in yellow, blue, purple, green, and red. These bars are decorated with horizontal stripes at their ends. Overlaid on these bars are several light gray geometric shapes, including squares and circles, some of which are slightly offset or layered, creating a sense of depth and movement.

8TH GRADE SUCCESS

ACADEMIC SUCCESS
CAREER EXPLORATION
CREATING A BETTER YOU

HEY 8TH GRADERS,

Being in the eighth grade means that you are older, bigger, and smarter—and that high school is just around the corner. It also means that your schoolwork is getting harder.

For you to have a great eighth grade year, you need to remember that while friends are important, learning is the most important reason you're in school. Work hard in your classes this year and get the best grades you can. It will pay off in lots of ways!

As an eighth grader, you also want to think of things you can do this year to make you stronger, healthier, and happier. Success doesn't just mean getting good grades—it also means taking care of yourself and being your best you.

You're probably not thinking too much about your future these days, but you'll be graduating from high school before you know it. Now is the time to start thinking about what kind of career you'd like to have—and how you might prepare for it.

This book is going to help you with all of the above. So, complete the activities in this book, and then use what you learn to help you have an awesome eighth grade year!

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ACADEMIC SUCCESS

To be a good student, you need to be organized. You also need to manage your time well, study smart, be a good test taker, and more.

This section will give you some tips on how you can get good grades, and be the best student you can be!



How are your grades?

Put a check mark by the statement that best describes how you feel about your grades.

- I am happy with the grades I get.
- I'd like to improve my grades a little.
- I'd like to improve my grades a lot.

If you're happy with your grades, congratulations. The tips in this section may help you get even better grades. If you'd like to improve your grades, this booklet can definitely help you do that!

8th Grade Skills Assessment

Put a check mark in the column that best describes how you think you're doing in each area.

	Very Good	Good	Needs Improvement
Organization	_____	_____	_____
Time management	_____	_____	_____
Attendance	_____	_____	_____
Homework	_____	_____	_____
Class participation	_____	_____	_____
Taking notes	_____	_____	_____
Reading to learn	_____	_____	_____
Preparing for tests	_____	_____	_____
Taking tests	_____	_____	_____

Which two of these areas do you need to improve the most?

1. _____ 2. _____

ORGANIZATION



Being organized makes your life run smoother, saves you time, and makes you feel like you're "on top of things."

Having good organizational skills will help you succeed this year—and beyond.

Organize your schoolwork.

Organizing your schoolwork is easy when you have the right tools. Go through this list of organization essentials and check off the ones you have and use regularly.

- Student planner
- Supplies for your study area (paper, pencils, pens, calculator, etc.)
- Pocket folder for each class
- Spiral or 3-ring notebooks for class notes
- Phone number for at least one person in each class

What is something you can do to keep your schoolwork more organized?

Organize your papers.

Whether you use folders, notebooks, or binders, the important thing is that you have a system for organizing your papers—and that you have a specific place for each paper. Throw out any papers you don't need, and put those you want to save in a file at home.

What system do you use to keep your papers organized? How well does it work?

Keep your notes and handouts organized.

Three-ring notebooks work well because you can easily insert handouts, and if you're absent, you can copy a classmate's notes and insert them where they belong. If you keep a 3-hole punch in your notebook, you can put handouts in with your notes as soon as you get them.

What can you do to be more organized this year?

TIME MANAGEMENT



With good time management, you have time for the things you need to do, and you still have time for the things you want to do.

Make To-Do lists.

Making a To-Do list is one of the best ways to manage your time. You feel more in control and less overwhelmed when you have everything you need to do written down. It's also very satisfying to cross things off your list when they're done. If you have a lot to do, going through the following steps will help you create a great To-Do list. Here's how to do it.

1. Each day make a list of all the things you need to do.
2. Rate each item as an A (must do today), B (should do today), or C (want to do today, but it can wait).
3. Take all of the As and rank them in order of importance (1, 2, 3...). Do the same with the Bs and Cs.
4. Rewrite your list with the As at the top (in order of importance), followed by the Bs and Cs.
5. Cross things off as they get done. At the end of each day, take the tasks that didn't get done and put them on the next day's To-Do list.

Wed	
A	1 Study for science test 2 Do math assignment 3 Get TJ's birthday gift
B	1 Do outline for paper 2 Text Maddy
C	1 Do laundry 2 Work on lab report 3 Get haircut

Try it! John has a lot to do, so he decided to make a To Do list. Help John prioritize the things he needs to do so that he's sure to get the most important things done.

1. Rate each of the eight items on John's To-Do List as an A (must do today), B (should do today), or C (want to do today, but it can wait).
2. Then rate the items in each group by adding a number after the A, B, or C. (A1, A2, etc.).

- _____ Work on my science report that's due next week
- _____ Clean out my backpack
- _____ Study for tomorrow's social studies test
- _____ Organize my music
- _____ Work on my soccer drills
- _____ Do the math assignment that's due tomorrow
- _____ Think about a topic for my English paper
- _____ Call grandma to wish her a happy birthday

Compare your ratings with those of your classmates. (There are no right answers.)

STUDY SMART

The key to success is not studying a lot. It's studying smart. Students who "study smart" find that they spend less time studying, and yet they get better grades.

Here are some ways that you can study smart.

Eliminate distractions.

Think about the things that disrupt your studying at home. Put a check mark by any of the disruptions that make it difficult for you to focus on your homework.

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> TV / Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Brothers and sisters |
| <input type="checkbox"/> People talking | <input type="checkbox"/> Friends calling/texting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pets | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

What can you do to help eliminate or avoid the distractions you checked?

Schedule a time to do homework and stick to it.

Don't put homework off until later and don't make excuses. If you have a hard time getting started, begin with something you can finish quickly or a subject you like—or motivate yourself with a reward (e.g., watch a favorite show when you're done, video game time).

What strategies can you use to help you get started on your homework?

Use memory strategies.

If you have information you need to memorize, use all of your senses.

Try it! Suppose that you need to memorize the word "escuela" (which means school) for your Spanish class.

1. Look at the word. Close your eyes, and try to see it in your mind. Repeat this 2 or 3 times.
2. Now say the word out loud (es-quāy-la).
3. Now write the word. _____



By looking at the word, saying it out loud, and writing it down, you are using your visual, auditory, and kinesthetic senses. Using all of your senses makes learning easier.

READ TO LEARN

Knowing how to read a textbook makes it easier to understand and remember what you read.

The 3 Steps to reading a textbook assignment

1. SURVEY for a quick overview

- ▶ Read the section headings and everything in **bold** and *italic* print.
- ▶ Look at pictures, graphs, and charts.
- ▶ Read the introduction, summary, and the chapter review questions.

2. READ with a purpose

Turn each section heading into a question. Keep this question in mind as you read. After you've finished reading, see if you can answer your question.

3. REVIEW to remember

As soon as you finish reading an assignment, survey the assignment again. This time, think about what you have learned. **Review is the key to remembering!**

It may take a little practice to get the Survey, Read, and Review process down, but you'll soon realize that this process doesn't mean more work, it just means better grades.

SURVEY, READ, and REVIEW this section on the Poison Dart Frog.

Poison Dart Frog



A deadly creature

Found in the **rainforests of Central and South America**, poison dart frogs are small, but they can be very deadly. Measuring only about an inch long, *their skin can secrete some of the most toxic chemicals known to man*. For example, the tiny Golden Poison Dart Frog has enough poison in its skin to kill 10 men.

These **amphibians** are called "dart frogs" because, for centuries, indigenous peoples of South America have used their toxic secretions to poison the tips of their **blow darts and arrows**. A strike from a poisoned dart tip will quickly kill the birds and monkeys they hunt.

1. SURVEY

Underline the six words and phrases in **bold** and *italic* print.

2. READ

Turn the section heading, "A deadly creature," into a question. _____

Read the entire text.

Can you answer your question?

3. REVIEW

Go back over the **bold** and *italic* words again and think about what they mean.

NOTETAKING

Tests usually cover material that's been presented in class. It is, therefore, important to have good notes to study from.

Check the boxes that best describe you.

1. My notes are neat and easy to read.
2. I use abbreviations and symbols to help me write faster.
3. I underline or highlight the most important information.
4. My notes help me do well on tests.
5. I keep my notes organized in a notebook or binder.

Almost Always	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Survey Results – Give yourself 2 points for each **Almost Always**, 1 point for each **Sometimes**, and 0 for each **Hardly Ever**. Your Score _____

If your score is 9-10, you probably have pretty good notetaking skills. Keep it up! If you have less than 9 points, consider the items you marked **Sometimes** or **Hardly Ever** and work on improving those notetaking strategies.

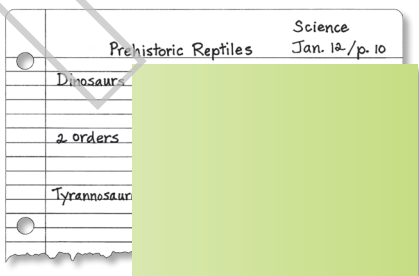
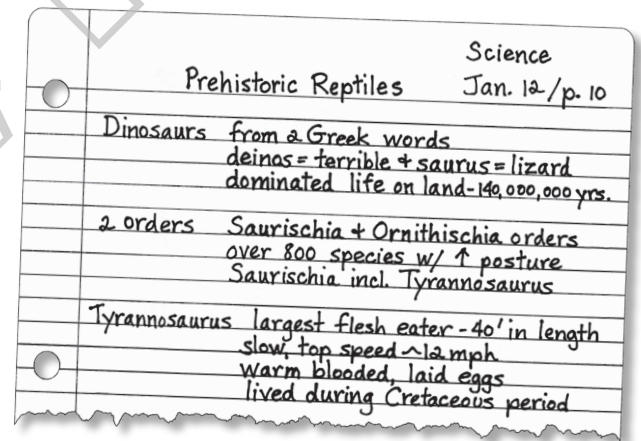
Try it! Check out Josh's notes.

Josh begins a new page for each class. At the top of each page he writes 1) the **class**, 2) **date**, 3) **page number**, and 4) **main topic**. Find these 4 items in the sample notes and draw a box around each of them.

To make his notes more readable, Josh only uses one side of the paper and he skips a line between topics. Put an X on the skipped lines.

To take notes faster, he uses numbers, abbreviations, and symbols. Circle the 17 numbers, symbols, and abbreviations in his notes.

To make his notes easier to understand, Josh leaves a wide space on the left side of each page and uses it to write in **key words** (topics, people, events, etc.). Put a star by his three key words.



Study Smart Tip!

Use key words to help you study. When Josh studies for a test, he covers up his notes and tests himself to see what he can remember about that topic, person, place, or event. Then he checks his notes to see if he was right.

TEST TAKING



To do well on tests you have to study hard and be prepared. It's also helps to be a good test-taker.

Do you think you're a good test taker?

- yes I'm OK not really

Why do you think you are or aren't a good test taker? _____

Text Anxiety

Many students don't do as well on tests as they could because of test anxiety. A little anxiety before a test can improve your concentration. But too much worry, or test anxiety, can lower your test scores. Having test anxiety is like not having the password to your computer. The information is there – you just can't get to it. When you have test anxiety, you might experience the following:

- ▶ butterflies in your stomach
- ▶ feeling sick before and/or during tests
- ▶ "blanking out" on questions you previously knew the answers
- ▶ heart pounding fast
- ▶ an inability to concentrate
- ▶ feelings of dread or worry

On a scale of 1–10, rate your test anxiety.

I feel calm and confident before tests. 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 I get so nervous before a test I feel sick.

If you circled 4 – 10, the following tips may help you reduce test anxiety.

- ▶ Start studying early. Cramming only increases test anxiety.
- ▶ Replace negative thinking with thoughts that are positive.
- ▶ Try these relaxation techniques:
 1. Take a deep breath. Then slowly release your breath, along with any tension.
 2. Start at the top of your head, flexing, and then relaxing each part of your body.
 3. Think of a place where you feel relaxed and calm. Close your eyes and visualize being there.

What can you do to reduce test anxiety and feel more confident when taking tests?

CLASS SUCCESS

When you get the most out of your classes, you have less to learn on your own.

How are your "class success" skills?

Check the boxes that best describe you.

1. I ask and answer questions in class.
2. I get along with all of my teachers.
3. I participate in class discussions.
4. I do all of my homework.
5. I ask for help when I need it.
6. I am respectful to my teacher and classmates.

Almost Always	Sometimes	Hardly Ever
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Survey Results – Give yourself 2 points for each **Almost Always**, 1 point for each **Sometimes**, and 0 for each **Hardly Ever**. **Your Score** _____

If your score is 11-12, you probably have pretty good classroom skills. Keep it up! If you have less than 11 points, consider the items you marked **Sometimes** or **Hardly Ever** and work on improving those class success strategies.

Participate in class. Participating makes the class more interesting, and it helps keep your mind focused. It also makes the time go a lot faster.

On a scale of 1 to 10, rate your class participation. Circle the number you've chosen.

1 ••••• 2 ••••• 3 ••••• 4 ••••• 5 ••••• 6 ••••• 7 ••••• 8 ••••• 9 ••••• 10

I never raise my hand and I don't talk unless I have to.

I always raise my hand and I'm eager to share my ideas.

If you circled 1 to 6, try to become more involved in your classes. It will pay off in lots of ways!

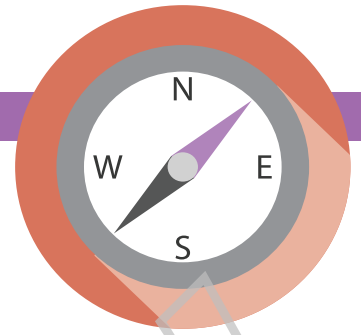
Class Success Tips



- ▶ Come to class alert and well-rested.
- ▶ Look at your teacher when he/she is talking.
- ▶ Put away anything that's not related to what you're doing in class.
- ▶ Have a positive attitude.
- ▶ Listen and take notes.

What can you do to increase your class participation and be more engaged in your classes?

CAREER EXPLORATION



You wouldn't go on a trip without knowing where you are going, or without a map or GPS providing directions. If you did, who knows where you would end up?

It's the same in the journey of life. To prepare for your future, you need to think about where you're going and how you're going to get there.

Your Career Journey

Career exploration is a personal journey that's always evolving. *Here are some things you can do to get your career journey off to a good start. These are also things we'll discuss in this section.*

Think about your interests. Your interests are simply the things you like to do. At this point in your career exploration journey, when you're just starting to think about what you'd like to do with your life, considering what you enjoy doing is a good place to start.

Think about your abilities. Your abilities are what you're "good at" or have a talent for. Of course, your talents and skills will change and develop as you grow, but considering your abilities now will help you identify which career areas to explore first.

Learn about your career options. It's important to learn about the types of career fields that are available so that you know what your options are. There might be careers you've never heard of that could be the perfect fit for you!

Learn about your education options. Almost all career fields require some kind of education or training after high school, and it's important to learn how various education options can help you prepare for a career.

Check the box that best describes where you are on your career journey.

- I have a specific career I want to pursue. It is _____.
- I have a career area/ subject I'm interested in. It is _____.
- I don't have any idea of what career area or subject I'm interested in pursuing.

YOUR INTERESTS



When you're thinking about a career, it's very important that you consider your interests. You want to make sure that the things you will do as part of your career are activities you like and enjoy.

What are your interests?

1. What two school subjects do you like the best?

2. Name two hobbies or activities you enjoy.

3. Some people enjoy working with and helping other **people**. Some would rather work with **things** like objects or tools, while others prefer working with **information** and doing desk-type activities.

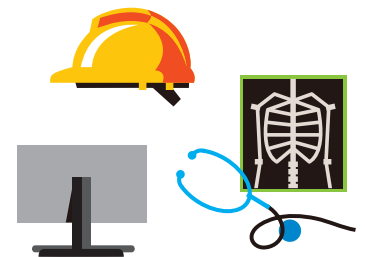
What about you?

Would you prefer a career in which you primarily work with people, things, or information?

People

Things

Information



Why did you make that choice?

4. In addition to your academic and personal interests, it's also good to think about the kind of environment you'd like to work in. Check any boxes that are true for you.

I am interested in working:

inside

in a clean, comfortable environment

mostly outside

in a lab

at a desk

where it's quiet

not at a desk

where there's a lot going on

5. Do your responses suggest any career area to you? _____

YOUR ABILITIES

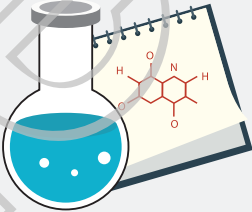
Considering your abilities, skills, and talents is very important when determining which careers will be a good match for you. You are likely to be much happier and more successful in a career that focuses on your strengths!

Abilities and Skills

Sasha is thinking about being a science teacher, but isn't sure if she'd be good at it. She wrote down the skills, abilities, and traits she thinks a good teacher should have, and she checked off the ones she feels are a good match for her. Sasha put an X next the skills she needs to improve, and then thought about what she could do to work on them.

Skills a Science Teacher Needs

- Good with people ✓
- Patient ✓
- Creative ✓
- Public Speaking ✗ Speak up in class more
- Organized ✓
- Good at science ✓
- Good at explaining things to people ✗ Tutor my sister



Try it!

Choose a career you're interested in (or choose a career from the top of the following page) and make a list of the traits, skills, and abilities you believe are necessary for that career—like Sasha did above. Check off the ones you have, and put an X next to the ones you don't have yet. Beside the ones with an X, write down something you can do to help develop it.

LEARN ABOUT CAREERS

Exploring your career options is important because the perfect career for you just might be one you've never considered. Below are some of the most popular careers.

Circle three or more careers you would like to learn more about.

- | | | | |
|------------------|---------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| Accountant | Computer programmer | Musician | Reporter |
| Actor/actress | Dental hygienist | Nurse | Salesperson |
| Architect | Dentist | Paramedic | Secretary |
| Artist | Electrician | Pharmacist | Social worker |
| Athletic trainer | Engineer | Photographer | Stock Broker |
| Biologist | Fashion designer | Physical therapist | Systems analyst |
| Broadcaster | Firefighter | Physician | Teacher |
| Carpenter | Flight attendant | Police officer | Truck driver |
| Chemist | Lawyer | Politician | Veterinarian |
| Chiropractor | Medical technician | Psychologist | Writer |

Choose one of the careers you circled and go to www.bls.gov/ooh. Read about that career and write a short paragraph about what you learn.

Fast growing career fields

When considering a career, it's important to think about the job outlook. You need to know how easy it will be to find a job in that career field. Why do you think each of these career fields is growing?

Healthcare _____

STEM Careers _____

Green Careers _____

Three careers you probably wouldn't want to have are pet food taster, worm picker, and armpit sniffer.

YUCK!

EDUCATION OPTIONS

You can't explore your career options without also considering your post-high school education choices. Careers and education go hand in hand.

Most people prepare for their career by 1) going to a two-year college; 2) going to a four-year college; 3) joining the military; 4) going to a career or trade school; 5) getting an apprenticeship.

Read each of the following statements and put the correct letter (A - E) in the blanks.

A. 2-Year College B. 4-Year College C. Military D. Career/Trade School E. Apprenticeship

- _____ 1. Attending this school for a year generally costs less than half of what it costs to attend a four-year college for a year.
- _____ 2. Some programs take one or two years to complete; others can be completed in a matter of weeks.
- _____ 3. Most of their programs are for students interested in construction or manufacturing.
- _____ 4. Students take about half their courses in their major (the subject they study in depth).
- _____ 5. They provide free job training in over 2,000 job specialties.
- _____ 6. To save money, many students start here and then transfer to a four-year college.
- _____ 7. These schools are privately owned and in business to make a profit. Their costs vary greatly, and they can be expensive.
- _____ 8. After 8-12 weeks of basic training, individuals typically go to Advance Individual Training where they receive training for a specific job.
- _____ 9. To provide students with a well-rounded education, all students are required to take general education courses (English, math, science, etc.).
- _____ 10. Here you learn a skilled trade through class instruction and on-the-job training.

Answers are below.

Which of these educational options do you think you might consider?

- 2-Year College 4-Year College Career/Trade School Military Apprenticeship

1. A 2. D 3. E 4. B 5. C 6. A 7. D 8. C 9. B 10. E

LOOKING AHEAD TO HIGH SCHOOL

You will soon be in high school, and in high school you get to choose many of your own courses. It's important that you choose courses that will help prepare you for college, and for your chosen career field.

Here's an example of a student who wishes she had done things differently.

"During high school, I mostly picked the same courses my friends were taking, and courses that didn't look too hard. I'm a senior now, and I recently decided that I want to be a nurse. Nursing will be the perfect career for me, but I haven't taken the courses I need to get into our community college's nursing program.

If I'd have thought about this earlier, I could have taken more math and science courses. I feel like I just wasted a lot of my time in high school." Maria

Thinking ahead to next year

Do you have a career field or subject area you'd like to pursue? _____

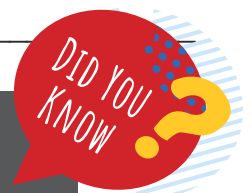
If you haven't decided on a career or career field yet, which of the following career areas do you think you'd be most interested in pursuing?

- Business Healthcare Education Tech/Computers
 Human Services Skilled Trade The Arts

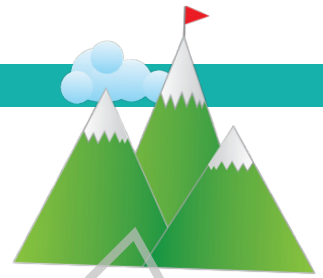
What kinds of courses should you take in high school to help you prepare for this career area?

Are there any activities in your school or community that might help you learn more, and prepare for this career area?

"US News" lists physician's assistant and software developer as the two best jobs in the U.S.



CREATING A BETTER YOU



Are you a positive person, or do you have a hard time looking on the bright side of things? Do you keep going when things get hard, or do you often get discouraged and quit?

Everyone has things they'd like to improve about themselves. Part of being a successful student (and person) means always learning, growing, and working on those parts of you that will make you happier, healthier, and more resilient. After all, success doesn't just mean getting good grades and the career of your dreams. It also means taking care of yourself and being your best you!

In this section you'll learn about ways to work on **you**, including building a growth mindset, developing social-emotional skills, setting goals, being smart with technology, and taking care of your mental health.

Check the box that best describes you.

- | Yes | No | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you generally have a positive approach to learning new things? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you regularly set academic and personal goals? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you try to limit the amount of time you spend online? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Are you generally able to control your emotions and behaviors? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Do you have healthy ways to deal with stress? |

Give yourself 2 points for every **Yes** answer. **Your Total** _____

The higher your score, the closer you are to being your best you. Regardless of your score, this section is sure to give you some ideas on how you can create a better you.

To create a better you, what's one thing you'd like to work on improving? _____

What can you do this year to improve this one thing? _____

BUILDING A GROWTH MINDSET

Sometimes your successes, failures, talents, and shortcomings are defined by how you look at them—and by the mindset you have.

Fixed Mindset vs. Growth Mindset

If you have a **fixed mindset**, you believe that you either are or aren't good at something. You also believe that there are limits to what you can accomplish.

If you have a **growth mindset**, you believe that with effort, you can develop and improve your skills and abilities. You also believe that there's no limit to what you can accomplish.

Try it!

For each of the following situations, write down a negative **fixed** mindset way to look at it. Then write down a positive **growth** mindset way to look at it. The first one is done for you.

1. You didn't get the grade you wanted on your math test.

Fixed Mindset

I'm just not good at math.

Growth Mindset

I'll ask for help and do better on the next test.

2. You want to try out for the track team, but you've never been on a track team before.

Fixed Mindset

Growth Mindset

3. You bought a drum set and you've practiced a lot, but you think you still sound terrible.

Fixed Mindset

Growth Mindset

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL LEARNING



Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) is the process of developing social-emotional skills—like coping with feelings, getting along with others, decision making, and more.

Why is SEL important?

Social-Emotional Learning is important because it enhances your ability to succeed in school, in a career, and in life. Developing SEL skills will help you be happier and healthier, do better in school, and have a brighter future.

SEL can be complicated and cover a lot of areas, but here you'll learn about one SEL skill that will help you succeed in 8th grade, and beyond: responsible decision-making.

Responsible Decision-Making

As you grow and are given more freedom and responsibility, it's important that you make smart choices. It's also important that you recognize how your actions affect yourself and others.

To be a responsible decision-maker, you need to do the following:

- ▶ Understand the consequences of your actions.
"If I'm late for practice, I'm in big trouble."
- ▶ Know how your actions affect your well-being and the well-being of others—and respond accordingly.
"This post will upset some people, and I don't want to do that. I'm not sharing it."
- ▶ Know what behavior is considered to be appropriate in different situations.
"Whenever I'm around my parents' friends, I'm expected to be on my best behavior."
- ▶ Be confident in doing what's right, even when it's hard or unpopular.
"I have friends that vape. They want me to try it, but I'll never do that."

Choose one of the above skills and write about a time you demonstrated that skill.

Peer Pressure

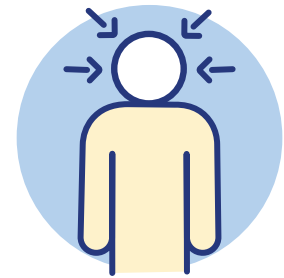
Whether you realize it or not, your peers are often a big influence on who you are—and who you will become. This is why it's so important to be aware of the influence your peers have on you.

- ▶ **Unspoken (or indirect) peer pressure.** This is one of the biggest ways young people are influenced by others. When we see lots of our peers liking or disliking something, acting in a particular way, or doing something for fun, we naturally tend to follow suit. It's human nature. Wearing the same type of clothes, or choosing to drink at a party just because everyone else is drinking are examples of unspoken peer pressure. It's really the feeling of "wanting to fit in."
- ▶ **Spoken (or direct) peer pressure.** Spoken peer pressure is when someone (usually a friend or peer) directly tells you, or tries to convince you, to do something. It can be a friend offering you a cigarette or a peer trying to convince you to do something you wouldn't normally do. Spoken peer pressure can be hard to deal with. You can feel put on the spot, and/or be worried that you'll look "uncool" if you don't join in.
- ▶ **Positive peer pressure.** People often think of peer pressure as something that's negative, but peer pressure can also be positive. For example, if a lot of your friends are good students you might be influenced to work hard in your classes, or a friend might convince you to get some exercise and go jogging with him.

Think about it!

Read each scenario and mark it with a **U** if you think it's an example of Unspoken Peer Pressure, an **S** if you think it's Spoken Peer Pressure, and a **P** if you think it shows Positive Peer Pressure.

- _____ 1. Wanting the same shoes as your favorite singer
- _____ 2. A classmate pressuring you to let her cheat off of you
- _____ 3. A friend offering you a beer
- _____ 4. A friend encouraging you to take an advanced class
- _____ 5. Drinking at a party because everyone else is
- _____ 6. A friend encouraging you to try out for the basketball team



Answers at the bottom of the page.

Dealing with negative peer pressure

If you're pressured to do something you know you shouldn't do, often a simple, "Nah, I'm good," is enough. If you feel more comfortable giving a reason, you can say something like, "No thanks, I don't like the way that makes me feel." Regularly reflect on who you are and who you want to be. Make a promise to yourself to stick to your values, even when it gets hard—and to always think for yourself.

1. U 2. S 3. S 4. P 5. U 6. P

BEING TECH SMART

Technology and social media are a part of your life and they are influencing you, whether you are aware of it or not.

Perhaps the way you dress is influenced by the images you see online. Perhaps your posts are influenced by what your friends are posting. Perhaps all the negative news and the violence you see in movies and video games is affecting your mood, or how you view the future. No one knows, except you, how you are being influenced by technology and social media.

Read and answer the following questions honestly.

Yes No

- Have you ever wanted something because someone online had it?
- Have you ever felt bad about yourself because you compared your life to someone's life you saw online?
- Have you ever shared or believed something you saw online that turned out to be false?
- Are the things you say online often influenced by what others are saying?



If you answered **Yes** to any of the above, try to reflect on how the internet and social media is shaping you as a person, and if all those influences are positive. What can you do to minimize the negative influences you see online?

Create healthy tech habits.

To know if you have healthy or unhealthy habits, ask yourself if what you are doing online is making you feel better, or worse. Less stressed, or more. Closer to others, or more alone. If what you're doing isn't making your life better, maybe it's time to make some changes.

Start by setting some ground rules for yourself. Allow yourself to only use technology for a set amount of time, at specific times of the day, or only after all of your responsibilities (chores, homework, etc.) are taken care of. That way, technology becomes kind of a reward.

COPING WITH CHANGE

Changes in our lives, like starting new classes or moving on to high school, can be scary. But change is a part of life. The tips here will help you learn how to cope with change, and thrive!

Tips for coping with change

- ▶ **Understand that feeling discomfort in a new situation is normal.** Ignoring or pushing away your discomfort often makes you feel worse. Allow yourself to feel, and acknowledge, any apprehensions or fears you may have.
- ▶ **Figure out exactly what is making you uncomfortable.** You might find that you can't identify a specific fear, in which case, you might realize that there's really nothing to be afraid of. If there is something specific that's bothering you, then think of ways that you can deal with the situation or change it in some way.
- ▶ **Find a new normal.** Establish new routines and find comfort in things that are new. For example, if you've just moved to a new area, try taking a walk around your new neighborhood every day. If you're in a new class, get to know someone you sit by.
- ▶ **Think about all the changes in your life.** From the new look of your favorite social media app to dealing with new teachers, you experience change all the time, and you've always adapted. Have confidence in your ability to cope with change!

Think about it!

Think about a change you had to deal with (or one you're dealing with now) and answer the following questions.

What was the change? What about this change was difficult to deal with?

What did you do to help you deal with the change?

TAKING CARE OF YOUR MENTAL HEALTH

Mental health refers to a person's emotional and psychological well-being. While your mental health can be impacted by some things you can't control, you can control how well you look after your mental health.

Why take care of your mental health?

Mental health affects how you feel day to day. When you're feeling calm, happy, and healthy, you get more joy out of life. On the other hand, if you're feeling sad, angry, or anxious, regular day-to-day life can be a struggle.

Mental health affects your success. Whether it's success in school, your career, or achieving a goal you've set, you're more likely to succeed when you're in a good place mentally.

Wellness

You take care of your physical health by eating healthy, exercising, and going to the doctor. But wellness means more than taking care of your physical health. It also means taking care of your mental health, and taking time for mindfulness and relaxation. It's doing things that help you stay calm, happy, and healthy.

Think about the things that help you stay calm and happy. Maybe it's listening to soft music, taking a walk, or working on a hobby. Or maybe it's meditating, doing yoga, or journaling.

Schedule your wellness activities.

To keep you feeling your best, schedule at least one physical or mental wellness activity every day for a week. Write your daily wellness activities in the boxes below. Also write down the approximate times you plan to do them.

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

Saturday

Sunday

Eighth grade can be stressful. You're getting ready for high school and you probably have a lot on your mind. It's perfectly normal to



What makes you feel stressed out or overwhelmed?

When you're feeling overwhelmed or stressed out, it's important to have strategies that help you to cope and feel more on top of things. Here are some tips that might help.

Take deep breaths. When you're feeling stressed out or overwhelmed, stop, breathe in deeply, count to four, and exhale. Do this for two minutes.

Take a time out. Do something that has nothing to do with school, work, or any of your obligations—read a book, listen to music, go for a walk, or take a hot bath.

Learn to say no. Don't be afraid to turn down requests and say no to invitations.

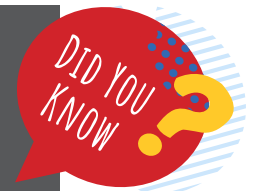
Look at all you're doing. You may have taken on more than you can handle. If this is the case, look for activities or obligations you can eliminate, shorten, or postpone.

Get organized. Sometimes things feel chaotic because our space feels chaotic. Take time to clean and organize your living space, study area, and backpack.

What are you going to do next time you feel stressed out or overwhelmed?

Meditation is a great way to improve your mental health and help you feel more relaxed and calm. And the best part? Anyone can meditate.

You can meditate by sitting quietly and listening to your breathing, or by going for a walk, taking some deep breaths, and noticing what you see, feel, and hear. You can also try a guided meditation app, like *Calm*.

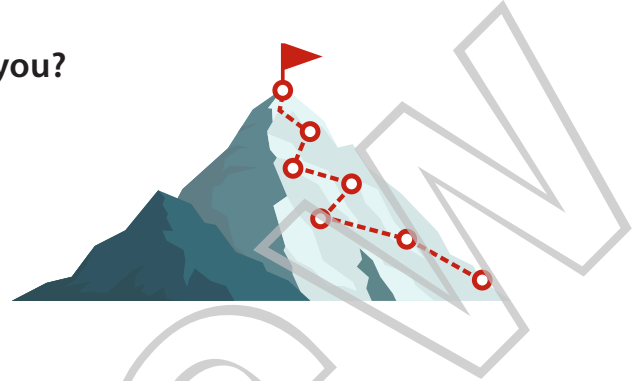


WRAPPING UP

We've covered a lot in this activity book, and you've done a lot of work to complete it. Great job! Here we'll reflect a little on what you've learned—and look ahead to the future!

Which section was the most helpful for you?

- Academic Success
- Career Exploration
- Creating a Better You



How was this section helpful?

Which of these three topics would you like to learn more about?

Write down three things you learned from completing this activity book.

Your teachers and counselor are here to help you succeed. Do you need help with anything now?

“Successful and unsuccessful people do not vary greatly in their abilities. They vary in their desires to reach their potential.” John Maxwell

ALL ABOUT YOU

Your favorite place to be

Things you enjoy doing with your family

Something you enjoy doing with your friends

Something you like to do by yourself

Things you are thankful for

Something that makes you sad or angry

Things that makes you happy

Three words you'd use to describe yourself

The best things about 8th grade



8TH GRADE SUCCESS

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