



Military children experience frequent moves, school changes, family separations, and even traumatic life events, which may impact their academic, behavioral health, and social development.

The [Military Child Well-being Toolkit](#) provides resources and tools for parents to help their military children navigate the unique challenges they face each day.

## Challenges

The Military Child Education Coalition<sup>®</sup> [Military Kids Now 2020 Survey Summary Report](#) highlights the academic and social-emotional challenges military-connected students experience. The survey includes student, parent, and educator perspectives and recommendations for support.

Students' social-emotional concerns include making friends and feeling accepted at their new school and community. They may deal with a parent deployment (and redeployment), or even loss which could be loss of a family member, or friends with each transition.

## Well-being

[Well-being](#) can be described as feeling good, functioning well, and viewing life positively. It often includes the physical, social, emotional, psychological, and developmental aspects of life. Well-being includes our physical health, stress management, and mental health.

## Physical Health

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - "Regular physical activity can help children and adolescents improve cardiorespiratory fitness, build strong bones and muscles, control weight, reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression, and reduce the risk of developing health conditions later in life."

### Physical Health Strategies

- Exercise – team sports, family activities, the goal is to move every day.
  - [Family Fitness Pledge](#) – Helps get all family members moving.
- Healthy eating – include children in meal planning; use family meals to connect.
- Getting enough sleep – Remember children need 8-12 hours depending on age.

## Stress Management

Stress is a normal reaction to everyday pressures and can be short-term or chronic. It is important to teach children to listen to their bodies, prepare them to deal with mistakes, and model how to handle stress by managing your stress.

### Stress Management Strategies

- [Teen Stress Management Plan](#) helps teens problem-solve, manage emotions, and maintain a healthy lifestyle.
- Impact of parent stress – reflect on how you manage stress as a parent.
  - [Holmes-Rahe Life Stress Inventory](#) for Adults

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## Mental Health

Mental Health includes our emotional, psychological, and social well-being. It helps determine how we handle stress, relate to others, and make choices. According to the [2023-MTES-Highlights.pdf \(militaryfamily.org\)](#), sponsored by the National Military Family Association and Bloom: Empowering the Military Teen, military youth struggling with their mental health:

- Most teens (53%) indicated they had moderate levels of well-being.
- Only 7% of respondents reported having high levels of mental well-being.
- Troublingly, 40% scored low on mental well-being.

### Mental Health Strategies

- Talk to your child about mental health – [Helping Kids Dare to Share](#) tip sheet
- Seek support:
  - Primary care physicians, school counselors, school social workers
  - Military Family Life Counselors and [Military OneSource](#) (non-medical)
  - [The Jason Foundation](#) - behavioral health tools designed for parents.
  - Seek immediate support if you are worried a child may be having suicidal thoughts or considering harming themselves or others; do not wait
    - Dial 911 or contact your child's doctor
    - [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#) at 988

## Emotional Intelligence

Emotional Intelligence (EI) is defined as the ability to manage one's feelings and emotions and react positively with other people.

Five areas of emotional intelligence competencies: Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Social Skills, Responsible Decision-making

Students who learn how to manage their feelings and emotions are likely to (Elias and Tobias, 2018):

- Communicate clearly and assertively.
- Resolve conflicts creatively.
- Handle stress.
- Act with integrity in all areas of their lives.

**Self-Awareness** - The ability to understand one's own emotions, thoughts, and values and how they influence behavior across contexts.

When military-connected children understand the process of how they think, they will be better able to understand and label their feelings and manage emotions and reactions.

### Self-Awareness Strategies

- [Self-Talk, True Talk Worksheet](#)
- [Emotional Vocabulary Quiz](#)
- [Feeling Zones](#)
- [The Feelings Wheel](#)



**Self-Management** - The ability to effectively manage one's emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in different situations and to achieve goals and aspirations. Self-awareness helps military-connected children regulate and control their emotions, delay gratification, minimize impulses, manage stress, and increase motivation through goals.

### Self-Management Strategies

- [Coping Through the Levels of Anger Printable](#)
- [SMART Goals](#)
- [SNAP Problem-solving](#)

**Mindfulness** - The ability to be fully present, aware of where we are and what we're doing, and not overly reactive or overwhelmed by what's going on around us. Being mindful may help military-connected children approach everyday life in a way that makes living more enjoyable and less stressful.

### Mindfulness Strategies

- [Journaling and Writing](#) including expressive writing, best possible self, and gratitude journaling
- [Breathe to Thrive](#) - movement and visualization exercises
- [Four Square and Belly Breathing](#)

## MCEC WEBINARS AND PODCASTS

- Mental Health and Well-Being for Military Children  
<https://youtu.be/Dx2VPuIBw-Y?si=0DJOlX-0ROK7xPbY>
- Mental/Behavior Health Challenges for Military-Connected Youth: Building Your Personal and Community-Based Toolbox of Resources with SME Lisa Howard  
<https://youtu.be/Zxfvk-L8bDU?si=rNHylA78EI-cQEQR>
- Student Well-being and Emotional Intelligence  
<https://youtu.be/YqZxrGKgx4o?si=86A5CZd3QgdPRFla>
- Supporting Military Children at Risk for Suicide with Dr. Leskin  
<https://youtu.be/YqZxrGKgx4o?si=86A5CZd3QgdPRFla>
- Help your Military-Connected Child Navigate Stress  
<https://youtu.be/89FebNX1uLI?si=QW9NWida3Gs2Q7pS>
- Developing Resilience Through Mindfulness  
<https://youtu.be/ZYyyGVkZXjc?si=QM4xhsPiFugCrXfD>
- Podcast: An Open Talk About PTSD and Mental Health  
<https://podcasts.apple.com/us/podcast/an-open-talk-about-ptsd-and-mental-health/id1386801038?i=1000654808546>

## VIDEOS

- Social Emotional Learning: Self-Awareness for Kids. It's Elementary SEL (2021)  
[https://youtu.be/2yWgddTi5g0?si=aFTGHPY\\_CmL9Ybh2](https://youtu.be/2yWgddTi5g0?si=aFTGHPY_CmL9Ybh2)
- Social Emotional Learning: Self-Management. Ohio Broadcast Educational Media Commission (2019) <https://youtu.be/kHHZEuXLell?si=vmw-hl4IAkrVqUIT>
- 4-7-8 Breathing Technique. Weill (2015)  
<https://youtu.be/gz4G31LGyog>

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**MCEC Resources**



**MCEC Website**



**MCEC Military Student Consultant** – personalized support for military families



References available upon request.

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