RECOMMENDED TEXTS FOR K-6 LESSONS
EARLY STAGE ONE

Required:
Fairness
• ‘Eleanor Won’t Share’ by Julie Gassman
Gratitude
• ‘The Thankful Book’ by Todd Parr

Optional:
Creativity
• ‘Harold and the Purple Crayon’ by Crockett Johnson
• What Do You Do With An Idea? by Kobi Yamada
Bravery
• I Can Do It’ by Pat Thomas and Lesley Harker
• ‘Brave as Can be: A Book of Courage’ by Jo Witek and Christine Roussey
• ‘The Three Billy Goats Gruff’ by Paul Galdone
• ‘Ripple’s Effect’ by Shawn Achor & Amy Blankson
Love
• ‘The Invisible String’ by Patrice Karst
• ‘Guess How Much I Love You?’ by Sam McBratney
• ‘I Love You to the Moon and Back’ by Amelia Hepworth
Self-Regulation
• ‘Mad Isn’t Bad: A Child’s Book About Anger’ by Emily Menendez & Michaelene Mundy
• ‘When I Feel Angry’ by Cornelia Maude Spelman
• ‘Sitting Still Like a Frog: Mindfulness Exercises for Kids’ by Eline Snel (book and CD)
• ‘Angry Octopus A Relaxation Story’ by Lori Lite
Reflection
• ‘The Gruffalo’ by Julia Donaldson
ORIGINAL STAGE 1

**Required:**

**Humour**
- ‘Walter the Farting Dog’ by William Kotzwinkle & Glen Murray

**Fairness**
- ‘Share and Take Turns’ by Cheri Meiners

**Optional:**

**Introduction**
- ‘Oh the Places You’ll Go’ by Dr Seuss

**Kindness**
- ‘Have You Filled a Bucket Today?’ by Carol McCloud

**Humour**
- ‘Wacky Wednesday’ by Dr Suess

**Curiosity**
- ‘Imagine’ by Alison Lester

ORIGINAL STAGE 2

**Required:**

**Introduction**
- ‘Rosie Revere Engineer’ by Andrea Beaty

**Perseverance**
- ‘My Fantastic Elastic Brain’ by JoAnn Deak

**Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence**
- ‘The Lorax’ by Dr Seuss
Optional:

Perseverance
- ‘Rosie Revere Engineer’ by Andrea Beaty

Social Intelligence
- ‘Molly and Mae’ by Danny Parker

Humility
- ‘The Tortoise and the Hare’ Aesop’s fables
- ‘Humble Pie’ by Jennifer Donnelly

**ORIGINAL STAGE 3**

Required

Open-Mindedness
- ‘If the World Were Blind’ by Karen Gedig Burnett

Optional:

Authenticity
- ‘The Honest to Goodness Truth’ by Patricia McKissack

Kindness
- ‘Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness’ by Carol McCloud

Hope
- ‘The Heart in the Bottle by Oliver Jeffers’
RECOMMENDED TEXTS FOR NEW LESSONS

NEW STAGE 1

Required

Curiosity
Edward the Emu by Sheena Knowles

Kindness
• Be Kind by Pat Zletlow Miller and Jen Hill

Fairness
• Pig the Pug by Aaron Blabey

Forgiveness
• Molly and Mae by Danny Parker

Optional

Kindness
• Twelve Days of Kindness by Cori Brooke and Fiona Burrows

Humour
• How (not) to Annoy Dad by Dave Hughes

Reflection
• Ten Rules of Being a Super Hero by De Pilutti
NEW STAGE 2

**Required**

**Introduction**
- The Watcher - Jane Goodall’s Life With the Chimps by Jeanette Winter

**Perseverance**
- The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires

**Humility**
- The Tower: a story of Humility by Richard Evans

**Social Intelligence**
- I Am Human - A Book of Empathy by Susan Verde

**Spirituality**
- A Faith Like Mine: A Celebration of the World’s Religions, Seen Through the Eyes of Children by Laura Buller

**Optional**

**Social Intelligence**
- We’re all Wonders by R.J Palacio

**Humility**
- Everyone Knows What A Dragon Looks Like by Jay Williams

**Spirituality**
- The Three Questions by Jon Muth
NEW STAGE 3

Required

Kindness
- Shelter by Celine Claire

Hope
- Mind Your Mind: How to Master Your Thoughts and Feelings and Be Happy by Julie Johansen and Leigh Hay.

Optional

Perspective
- The Sandwich Swap by Queen Rania Al Abdullah

Authenticity
- A Bad Case of Stripes by David Shannon

Kindness
- Good People Everywhere by Lynea Gillen

Leadership
- Penguin’s Hidden Talent by Alex Latimer

Prudence
- Parachute by Danny Parker
RESOURCES - HOW TO USE THE CHARACTER STRENGTH CARDS

Ask students or staff to:

- Choose a CS card that applies to them and explain why
- Choose a CS card that applies to someone else and explain why they Choose it
- Choose a CS card that they would like to learn more about
- Choose a CS card that is a strength they would like to develop. How can they have more of this in their daily life? Can they use a signature strength to help develop a lesser strength? How can they use this strength in a novel way? What is a SMART goal they can set around this strength?
- Choose a CS card that can help them with a challenge. Maybe one they have used before during difficult times. What would it look and feel like to use this strength? For example, if students are struggling with learning something new, ask them to Choose which strength would help - Perseverance to not give up; Kindness and bravery to allow themselves to make mistakes; Teamwork to encourage seeking help from others
- Choose a CS card to focus on for the week, individually as a class, or as a school. Try to spot this strength in others and themself
- Choose a CS card that they are grateful for
- Choose a card that someone they admire demonstrates. How do they show this strength? How could they demonstrate this strength themself?

In the classroom:

- Story writing: Choose some CS cards and write a story about them, or about characters displaying these strengths
- Charades: Choose some CS cards and act them out in a team for the class to guess
- Strength Spotting: Choose the CS cards that they spotted in a text or in other class members

In the home:

- Choose the CS cards that most represent them. What are their family members’ character strengths? Do students have some strengths that are the same as their family members?
- Choose a CS card that most reminds them of particular family members
- Choose a CS card to focus on as a family for the week. What novel ways could they use this strength?
RESOURCES – RELAXATION TECHNIQUES

Strong Minds aims to equip children with tools for wellbeing. This includes learning about character strengths and relaxation techniques. The former involves identifying your signature (top) strengths, using them regularly, knowing how to grow a strength, spotting strengths in others, and practicing kindness and gratitude. The latter includes learning belly breathing, practicing visualisations, and mindfulness. Relaxation activities aim to calm and regenerate students so as they are better equipped for learning, and more able to manage their emotions. Teachers can explain this to students using the following:

“In life we need tools to help us do things. For example, if you want to build a house you need the tools of a hammer and a saw to cut the wood and nail it in place. People also need tools to keep their mind healthy. In this program some of the wellbeing tools you may learn are:

1. How to identify and grow a strength
2. Relaxation tools, such as: belly breathing; mindfulness and visualisations.

You can put these tools into your imaginary toolbox in your mind. Then when you are stressed or too excited, you can use these tools to feel better.”

Please note: This should not replace professional assistance, if there are any concerns regarding a student’s wellbeing the school counselor should be notified.

The following exercises are either taken from lessons throughout the program, or are stand alone activities. They can all be used at any time the teacher feels is appropriate. It is recommended that a daily relaxation practice is implemented. This could be from the list below or from the free mindfulness app “Smiling Mind.”

BELLY BREATHING RATIONALE

Belly (Diaphragmatic) Breathing is one of the most beneficial relaxation strategies to learn. It stimulates the cortex – the part of the brain required to feel calm and make logical rational decisions. It involves breathing from the diaphragm. This movement of the diaphragm presses on the vagus nerve –which runs up the spine and into the cortex. Conversely when we are stressed the limbic system in the brain is activated causing us to fight, flee or freeze. When it is activated, for example at an auction, or for some students when they are asked a question in front of their peers, they cannot think clearly and rationally. Belly breathing can calm the limbic system.
It is best taught initially lying down with students hands or a small pillow on their belly, eyes closed. Once this is mastered they can practice it sitting, then standing with eyes open. Thus making it transferable to a real life situation. Eventually students should be able to do it quietly so as they can do it discreetly in stressful situations.

It is important that teachers practice belly breathing themselves before teaching it.

**Activities below are scripted for ease of use. They should be read in a quiet slow calm voice.**

**EARLY STAGE ONE**

**BELLY BREATHING**

This exercise can be taught with students placing either their hands or a soft toy or small pillow on their belly.

“When we are worried we take little breaths in our chest (demonstrate). To help us relax we can learn to take deep breathes from our belly (demonstrate taking a slow deep breath in through your nose as your tummy expands and out through your mouth, as your tummy contracts). See as I breathe in my tummy blows up like a balloon and as I breathe out my tummy goes down like a balloon deflating. You can do this sitting, lying or standing, today we are going to practice it lying. Lie down with your hands on your belly so as when you breathe you can feel your tummy rise and fall like a balloon. We are going to be breathing in through our nose and out through our mouth. Let’s practice - Take a slow breath in through your nose, then out through your mouth. Now try this with your eyes closed (if comfortable) so as it is easier to focus. Breathe slowly in through your nose, and out through your mouth. Next time we do this we are going to feel our belly blow up like a balloon when we breathe in and go back down as we breathe out. With your hands on your belly, breathe slowly in through your nose (belly rises) and slowly out through your mouth (belly falls). Again breathe slowly in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Keep going and feel your belly fill up as you breathe in and go back down as you breathe out. We are going to breathe in to the count of three and out to the count of three. So breathe in through your nose, two, three and slowly out through your mouth, two, three. Relax your shoulders. In, two, three, and out two, three. In as your belly fills up with air and out as it falls back down. In, two, three and out, two, three. Your breaths in should be quiet, not like a dog sniffing! In through your nose, two three, and out through your mouth, two, three.” Repeat 3 more times, then have a quick break – students can have a stretch or roll up in a ball. Commence belly breathing again, breathing in and out to the count of three, ten times. To get the relaxation benefits of this technique it should be conducted for a minimum of two minutes, that is, two sets of ten in and out breaths.
Remind students that they can practice belly breathing anywhere— in bed, watching TV, or standing in line at school. The more they practice it the better they will be able to use it when they are upset or worried.
– From Self-Regulation lesson.

**BELLY BREATHING SITTING**

“Sit comfortably cross legged on the floor. It is important that you sit up tall so as your diaphragm can work properly. But with your shoulders and body relaxed. Place your hands on your tummy to feel it rise and fall, like a balloon when you breathe. Now close your eyes, if comfortable. We are going to take some slow, deep, quiet breathes in through our nose and out through our mouth. We will breathe in to the count of three and out to the count of three, I will count for you. Let’s begin, Take a slow breath in, two, three, then slowly out, two, three. Again in through your nose, two, three, and out through your mouth, two, three. Again in, two, three, and slowly out, two, three. In, two, three. Out, two, three’ Repeat six times. Allow the students a stretching break then repeat belly breathing in and out for 10 breaths. If possible ask the students to count to three in their heads. If this is too difficult continue to count for them. Remind students that this is good to practice when they are calm so they know how to do it when they are cranky, excited etc.

**SAVOURING**

Savouring helps us to enjoy things more and to be more grateful for them.

Teachers would need to be mindful of food allergies before conducting this exercise. Traditionally it is done with a saltana however this is very sticky and students with sensory issues may find it too overwhelming.

“Pretend you are aliens from another planet. Close your eyes and hold out your hand. I am going to give you each something that you have never seen before (hand out one grape, or small piece of chocolate to each student). Open your eyes and look at it. What does it look like (remember you are an alien)? Smell it, what does it smell like? Squeeze it gently, what does it feel like? Put it in your mouth and slowly bite it (don’t eat it), what does it taste like? Does it taste better than usual? Do you appreciate it more than if you gulped down a handful of these?”
– From Gratitude lesson.
STAGE ONE

BELLY BREATHING

This exercise can be taught with students placing either their hands or a soft toy or small pillow on their belly.

Tell students that they are going to learn one of the most important exercises to use to calm down, called Belly Breathing.

“When we are worried we take little breaths in our chest (demonstrate). To help us relax we can learn to take deep breaths from our belly (demonstrate taking a slow deep breath in through your nose as your tummy expands and out through your mouth, as your tummy contracts). See as I breathe in my tummy blows up like a balloon and as I breathe out my tummy goes down like a balloon deflating. You can do this sitting, lying or standing, today we are going to practice it lying. Lie down with your hands on your belly so as when you breathe you can feel your tummy rise and fall like a balloon. Close you eyes (if comfortable) so as it is easier to focus. Take a slow breath in through your nose, feel your belly expand like a balloon blowing up. Breathe slowly out through your mouth and feel your belly go back down, like the balloon deflating. Again breathe slowly in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Keep going and feel your belly fill up as you breathe in and go back down as you breathe out. We are going to breathe in to the count of three and out to the count of three. So breathe in through your nose, two, three and slowly out through your mouth, two, three. Relax your shoulders. Again in as your belly blows up, two, three and out as your belly falls, two, three. In through your nose, two three, and out through your mouth, two, three.” Repeat 5 more times, then have a quick break – students can have a stretch or roll up in a ball. Commence belly breathing again, breathing in and out to the count of three, ten times. To get the relaxation benefits of this technique it should be conducted for a minimum of two minutes, that is, two sets of ten in and out breaths to the count of three.

Remind students that they can practice belly breathing anywhere– in bed, watching TV, or standing in line at school. The more they practice it the better they will be able to use it when they are upset or worried.

– From Energy lesson.
STATUE/RAG DOLL
Statue/rag doll technique - releases muscle tension: Ask students to tense up all their muscles and pretend they are a statue. Hold for ten seconds. Then, ask students to relax all their muscles and pretend they are a floppy rag doll and relax for ten seconds.
– From Energy Extension Activities.

LOVING KINDNESS MEDITATION
Teach the students a relaxing activity that they can use as a way to be kind to themselves at home. You will need a gentle bell/chime (nothing too startling). These can be found on meditation apps or use a Tibetan Singing Bowl.
Read this slowly. “Lie down and close your eyes (if comfortable). Breathe slowly in and out. In through your nose to the count of three, then out through your mouth to the count of three. Breathe in, two, three, and out, two, three. Again in, two, three, and out, two, three. As you breathe slowly in and out we are going to do a Loving Kindness Meditation. This means we are going to think kind thoughts to relax. I will guide you. Keep breathing slowly in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. As you do this think about sending yourself kind thoughts. (Pause) Think about what your strengths are – are you curious, full of energy, kind, grateful, fair, loving, brave, creative or do you have other strengths? (Pause) Now we are going to think about someone else. Think about someone that you care about, it might be a family member, a teacher, a pet, or a character from a book or TV. Someone that makes you feel good inside when you think about them. (Pause) As you breathe slowly in and out think about sending love and kindness to them. Think about capturing all your love and kindness into a rock and giving it to them. In your mind say to them: ‘May you be happy and peaceful, (Pause) and filled with love and kindness.’ (Pause) Now take two more deep breaths in and out. (Pause) When I chime my bell we are going to finish. You are going to wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch your arms up above your head, and slowly open your eyes.”
– From Kindness Extension Activities.

HAPPY MEMORY VISUALISATION
Lead the students through a visualisation activity: Read this slowly.
“Lie down and close your eyes (if comfortable). Recall a happy memory. It might be a holiday, fun with friends, or playing with a pet (Pause). Use all your senses (Pause). Think about what you can see in your happy memory (Pause). What can you hear (Pause). What you can feel (Pause). What you can smell (Pause). Step inside it and relive it (Pause). Store this in your memory box (in your mind) to help you smile when feeling down” (Fox Eades, 2010).
– From Humour lesson.
STAGE TWO

MINDFUL LISTENING

Explain to students that they are going to do a calming mindful listening exercise. This is when they give all their attention to listening, which improves their capacity to listen. Being a good listener helps build relationships. Explain that you will make a sound (demonstrate hitting: a Tibetan singing bowl – these sounds are available on meditation apps.; or a rain stick; or a triangle). Students will sit with their eyes closed listening intently and when they can no longer hear the sound put their hands on their head.
- From Social Intelligence lesson.

MINDFUL STRETCH

Mindful Stretch - Stretching Tree: Read this in a slow calm voice.

“We are going to do an activity that can be used to calm and relax you, or to wake you up and rejuvenate you. To get the most benefit from this activity you need to do it mindfully. That means that you focus all your attention on what you are doing, and do the actions slowly. Everyone stand in silence with plenty of space around you, and we will begin. Slowly sweep your arms up from the side of your body, palms facing forward stretching up to the sky. Think of yourself as a beautiful tree growing really high aiming for the clouds. Hold this stretch on tippy toes and feel the stretch in your back. Slowly lower your arms parallel to your shoulders, stretching your arms away from your body, like branches of the tree. Hold this stretch. Now slowly lower your arms down beside your body. Notice how your body feels. Give your arms and legs a little shake before we do this again. This time as you raise your arms you will take a slow deep breath in through your nose imagining revitalizing energy coming into the tree. Then as you lower your arms you will breathe slowly out through your mouth, feeling calm washing over you. This breathing is the same as you do in the belly breathing exercise (p188). Lets begin. Slowly breathe in and sweep your arms up from the side of your body, palms facing forward stretching up to the sky. Imagine energy coming into your body, waking it up. Hold this stretch on tippy toes and feel the stretch in your back. As you breathe out picture your body relaxing, slowly lower your arms parallel to your shoulders, stretching your arms away from your body, like branches of the tree. Now slowly lower your arms down beside your body, feeling calmness wash over the tree. Notice how your body feels.” Repeat again if student would like to.
“Remember that you can use this as a relaxation strategy when you are stressed, or a rejuvenation strategy when you feel a bit sleepy or low on energy. It gets your blood flowing and wakes the body up, plus focusing on the stretch and breath calms your mind. You may like to do it first thing in the morning when you wake up.
- From Appreciation of Beauty and Excellence lesson.

FLOATING CLOUD VISUALISATION

Read this to students in a slow calm voice.

“We are going to do a relaxation activity. It is a visualization which means we imagine something relaxing. I’m going to talk you through it, so it is important that you pay close attention to what I am saying. To begin you need to lie down quietly and close your eyes. Now I’d like you to imagine yourself lying on a cloud floating through the sky. As you do this slowly breathe in through your nose to the count of three and out through your mouth to the count of three, just like we do in belly breathing. So slowly breathe in through your nose, two, three, and now slowly out through your mouth two, three. Breathe in, two, three and slowly out, two, three. Continue breathing like this. As you breathe slowly feel your body sink into the cloud. With each out breath feel yourself melt into the cloud. (Pause). Feel the sun warming and relaxing your body. With your eyes closed use your imagination to look around you – think in your mind about what you can see. Birds? Clouds? Sunshine? (Pause to allow students to take at least three deep breaths). Continue to breathe in slowly through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. Think about what you can hear in the sky. Wind blowing? Trees swaying? (Pause). Think about what you can smell. Flowers? (Pause). Noticed how relaxed your body is. (Pause). Each time you breathe out notice your body relax like a rag doll, sinking into the cloud. (Pause). Notice what you are telling yourself eg. ‘I’m relaxed, I’m calm.’ (Pause). When I ring the bell we will finish our visualisation. You will wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch your arms up above your head, slowly open your eyes and slowly sit up.’

Tell the students that they can think about this place when they are feeling stressed. This visualisation with the slow breathing will help to calm them. This is most effective if it includes all the senses. This is a good activity to practice in bed before going to sleep, you can imagine that your bed is a cloud.

Have a cloud on the ceiling of the classroom or wall to remind the students of the visualisation.

BELLY BREATHING

Refer to Stage One explanation above.
STAGE THREE

MINI-BREAK

Mini-break with calm belly breathing. Read this slowly.

“Sit up straight, shoulders relaxed, eyes closed (if comfortable). Focus your attention on yourself. Notice how you are feeling in your body (tense/relaxed/neutral). Observe yourself without judgment. Take some slow deep breaths in through your nose, and out through your mouth. Breathe in, two, three and out two, three. Again slowly in, two three, and slowly out, two, three. With each out breath relax your body, let it go loose like a rag doll, say in your head ‘relax’. Focus on your breath, the feeling of it coming in through your nose and out of your mouth, the sound of it. Continue to breathe slowly in, two, three, and out, two, three. Notice any thoughts that you have and picture them as clouds floating away. Watch those thoughts float away and focus on how relaxed you feel breathing slowly. (Continue for 2 rounds of 10 breaths in and out. Breathing in slowly to the count of three and out slowly to the count of three). Now I’d like you to wiggle your fingers and toes, stretch your arms up high above you and out to the sides, and down. Then slowly open your eyes.“

-From Authenticity lesson.

KINDNESS VISUALISATION

Guide the students through a Kindness Visualisation with belly breathing. Read this slowly.

“We are going to do a relaxation activity. Lie on your back with space around you so as you are not touching anyone. Close your eyes if comfortable- it will be easier for you to focus with your eyes shut. Focus your attention on your breath. Take some slow deep breaths in through your nose to the count of three, and out through your mouth to the count of three, as you did in the mini-break exercise. Breathe in, two, three, and slowly out, two, three. Again breathe slowly in through your nose, and out through your mouth. Picture your belly filling up with air as you breathe in and deflating as you breathe out. Feel your body relax with each out breath.”

“As you continue to breathe in and out slowly with your eyes closed, you are going to use your imagination to imagine being kind, this is called a kindness visualisation. I’ll talk you through it. First, I’d like you to visualise, or imagine yourself being kind to someone – a friend, teacher or family member. You might be able to think of a time before when you have been kind or imagine yourself being kind in the future. (Pause) Think about what you are doing. Are you hugging someone who is sad? Are you picking up something someone has dropped? Are you holding
a door open for someone? Are you helping carry the groceries inside? Are you saying something kind to someone? (Pause) Think about how you are feeling being kind. (Pause).”

“Now we are going to think about being kind to ourselves. Think about how you could be kind to yourself. Some examples might be: Praising yourself for trying something new (being brave) or for trying hard at something (showing the strength perseverance). Or forgiving yourself for making a mistake, remembering that we all make mistakes and this is how we learn.

Or smiling and recalling your strengths and how unique and valuable you are. (Pause) Think about how good it is to be kind to yourself. It is important to do this throughout your life. Now you are going to finish the visualisation by wiggling your fingers and toes, stretching your arms up above your head, and slowly opening your eyes. Remember that you can do this belly breathing and kind visualisation anytime to help you relax.”

- From Kindness lesson.

**COLOUR VISUALISATION**

Read this slowly.

“Lie down, with your eyes closed (if comfortable). Take some slow deep breaths in through your nose to the count of three, then out through your mouth. Breathe in, two, three, then slowly out, two, three. As you focus on your breath imagine your belly blowing up like a balloon as you breathe in and deflating as you breathe out. Place your hands on your belly, fingertips touching. As you breathe in slowly your belly expands and your fingertips separate. As you breathe out your belly contracts and your fingertips touch again. Take two more of these calm belly breaths in through your nose and slowly out through your mouth. (Pause) Now whilst you continue to breathe calmly we are going to do a visualisation. Unlike the kindness visualisation we have done previously this is a colour visualisation. Imagine your favourite colour. A safe peaceful colour. Picture it in your mind. Imagine that you are breathing it in with each slow deep breath. And as you breathe out it washes over you, this safe peaceful colour. Continue to breathe in slowly this favourite colour and breathe out slowly as it washes over you. (Pause for students to take a few more breaths). You are now going to finish the visualisation by wiggling your fingers and toes, listening to the sounds around you, stretching your arms up high, opening your eyes and slowly sitting up.”
SELF-TALK

Helpful self-talk lesson: Explain to students that one thing that can stop them from achieving their goals is ‘self-talk’. Self-talk’ is the unhelpful thoughts that they all sometimes have. Often they are not aware of their unhelpful thoughts as they seem automatic. Therefore, their self-talk is sometimes referred to as Automatic Negative Thoughts (ANTS). They can become more aware of their ANTS when they notice a change in their mood/how they are feeling. They may think that the way they feel is because of something that has happened. However, their feelings are formed by how they think about the event, not the event itself. We can think more optimistically, be more hopeful, if our thoughts are helpful and realistic. Show and discuss Appendix D p.139 in Stage 3.
– From Hope lesson.

BELLY BREATHING

Refer to Stage One explanation above.