

Five to Thrive—Framework for Family and Community Support that Helps Teens Learn to Thrive

Key Concepts of Five to Thrive:

- **Cognitive and Social-Emotional Competence:** Acquiring the skills and attitudes that teens need to form their independent identity, one that reflects their personal passions and values. That identity, supported by these skills and mindsets, enables teens to pursue a productive, responsible, and satisfying adulthood. It allows them to become their best self, not what others expect of them. The self-management skills help them work in professional teams and build strong personal bonds.
- [Concrete Support in Times of Need:](#) Understanding the importance of asking for help and advocating for oneself; designing our interactions to provide opportunities for skill development and to promote healthy growth. Consistently finding available professional and emotional support as challenges develop, not after problems set in.
- [Knowledge of Adolescent Development:](#) Breaking down the recent complex research that sheds light on the common challenges teens and their families face. Learning when to use developmentally and contextually appropriate best practices at home and at school. Helping teens understand the physiological changes that add extra stress to these years. Learning to ride the waves as an adventure in growth, rather than a trial of hormones, out-of-sync emotional and rational judgment, and conflicts.
- [Social Connections:](#) Having healthy, sustained relationships with people, institutions, the community, and a force greater than oneself. A village of peer and adult resources outside the immediate family that sees every Knight graduate with the personal and professional social capital and networks to chase their dreams.
- [Youth Resilience:](#) Managing stress and functioning well when faced with challenges or adversity. Helping teens and families find and support positive risk-taking. Courting opportunities to fail gently and learn to bounce back. From these experiences come the personal growth and inner-strength that allows students to make positive change from every challenge ahead of them. Allows them to stand strong in a competitive and challenging adult world.

Key Elements of Cognitive & Emotional Competencies

Youth need nurturing adult support, positive peer relationships, and wholesome experiences in order to develop the cognitive and social-emotional competence that will help them navigate their transition to a positive and productive adult life.

Categories of cognitive and social-emotional competence:

- Self-regulation and executive functions,
- Social cognition,
- Possible selves, and
- Character strengths.

Individual Competencies & Definitions

Metacognition—Thinking about thinking—begins to develop in middle childhood. As abstract thinking emerges in adolescence, teens become self-aware and use that ability to analyze and evaluate their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviors.

Self-regulation—The effort and skill to control and coordinate thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. That control allows teens to adapt and to alter their behavior to achieve a desired outcome.

Executive functions—A broad number of interrelated cognitive processes that contribute to self-regulation and that influence both cognitive processes (e.g., learning new subject matter) and social-emotional behaviors (e.g., delaying gratification).

Behavioral self-regulation—Staying on task even in the face of distractions.

Cognitive flexibility—Seeing alternate solutions to problems; shifting perspective; moving from one situation to another.

Cognitive self-regulation—Exercising control over thinking; planning and thinking ahead; making adjustments as necessary; identifying and challenging unhealthy thinking.

Consequential thinking—Considering the outcomes of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions before acting.

Emotional control—Modulating emotional responses by bringing rational thought to bear on feelings.

Inhibition—Stopping one's own behavior at the appropriate time, including stopping actions and thoughts.

Initiation—Beginning a task or activity and independently generating ideas, responses, or problem-solving strategies.

Planning and organization—Having a goal and using reasoning to achieve it; the ability to manage current and future-oriented task demands; imposing order.

Problem solving—Understanding what is needed to solve the problem; developing and executing a plan; evaluating the adequacy of the attempted solution.

Prospective memory—Holding in mind an intention to carry out an action at a future time.

Selective attention—Focusing on a particular object, while simultaneously ignoring irrelevant information that is also occurring.

Self-monitoring—Monitoring one’s own performance and measuring it against some standard of what is needed or expected.

Self-talk—Reflecting; instructing oneself; self-questioning; and doing so with compassion.

Social-emotional—Exercising control over reactions to positive and negative situations; delaying self-regulation gratification; labeling one’s and others’ emotions accurately; expressing emotions in healthy ways; taking ownership of emotions.

Visual imagery—Imagining the image of attaining one’s goal.

Working memory—Following instructions sequentially and holding information in mind while engaging in another activity.

Social cognition—the cognitive processes involved in the perception of others, the norms of the social world, and the self.

Personal agency—Taking responsibility for one’s self and one’s decisions and having confidence to overcome obstacles.

Perspective taking—Taking the viewpoint—thoughts, beliefs, or feelings—of another person.

Self-awareness—Understanding one’s developmental history and current needs.

Self-compassion—Being kind to oneself when confronted with personal failings and suffering.

Self-concept—Having stable ideas about oneself.

Self-efficacy —Having realistic beliefs about one’s capabilities.

Self-esteem—Feelings about oneself.

Self-improvement—Committing to and preparing to achieve productive goals and mastery.

Theory of mind—Thinking about the minds and mental states of others; that is, their beliefs, desires, and intentions.

Factors That Influence Possible Selves

Positive and negative ideas about possible future-selves for teens are influenced by the individual and their environment. Individual factors include youths’ own values and aspirations, as well as their perceived strengths, weaknesses, failures, successes, and sense of control over their future. Possible selves are also shaped by social contexts and experiences, such as:

- family environment, including privileged or adverse circumstances;
- what significant others believe one should be;
- whether a possible self is positively or negatively valued by significant others;
- peer group norms and expectations;
- educational and training experiences;
- role models;

- media images:
- culture;
- socioeconomic circumstances;
- stereotypes (i.e., attributes believed by many to be characteristic of a group) and messages about what it means to be a member of a particular group (e.g., racial, ethnic, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or family status);
- socio-political ideologies (e.g., racism, sexism, heterosexism).

Character Strengths

Remember these facts about character strengths:

- Related to both a current sense of well-being and a future orientation,
- Influenced by social contexts and experiences,
- Can be cultivated over a lifetime, and
- Emerge as a result of developmental processes (e.g., brain maturation) and interactions with the environment—not by being told how to behave.

Character Strength Definitions

- **Curiosity**—Taking an interest in ongoing experience for its own sake; exploring and discovering.
- **Gratitude**—Being aware of and thankful for the good things that happen; taking time to express thanks.
- **Grit**—A passionate commitment to a single mission and dedication to achieve it.
- **Optimism**—Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it.
- **Self-control**—Restraint of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions Social intelligence Being aware of the motives and feelings of other people and oneself.
- **Zest**—Approaching life with excitement and energy; feeling alive and activated.