

DESTRESS MONDAY

**Guide to Promoting Mindfulness in Children
with Developmental Disabilities**

Healthy  **Monday** **Syracuse**[®]

Lerner Center for Public Health Promotion
at Syracuse University

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What is Healthy Monday?¹

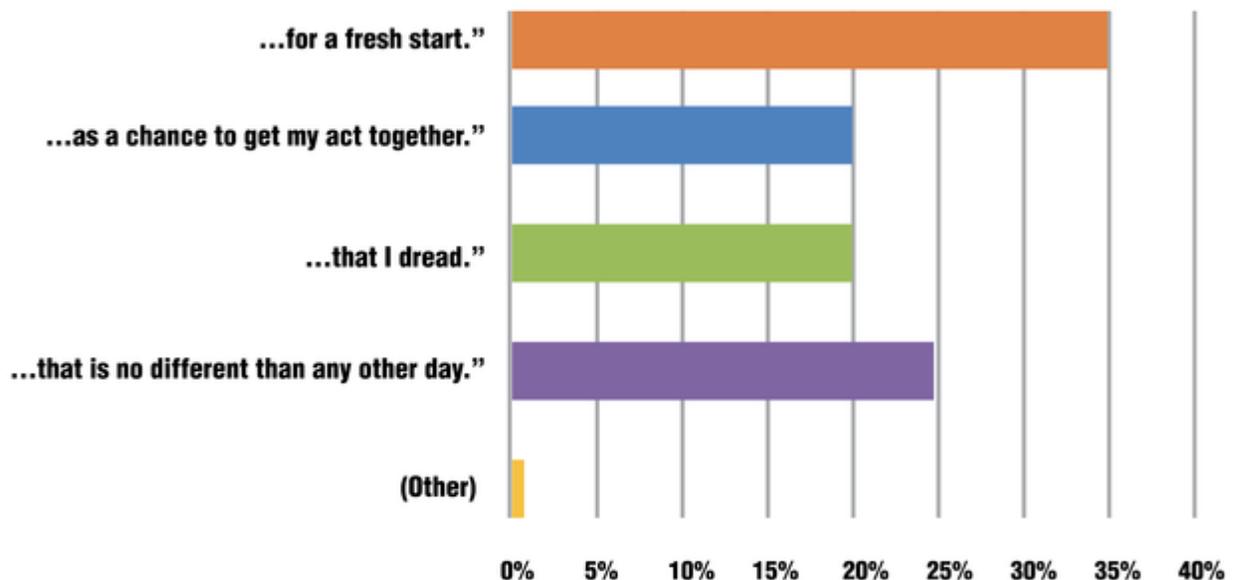
Healthy Monday is a national initiative to stop the spread of chronic, preventable disease by offering a weekly prompt to help individuals and organizations start & sustain healthy behaviors.

The Monday Effect:²

In western culture, Monday is the start of the traditional work and school week. Starting healthy behaviors at the beginning of the week has the potential to reduce negative health events.

Monday is a fresh start.

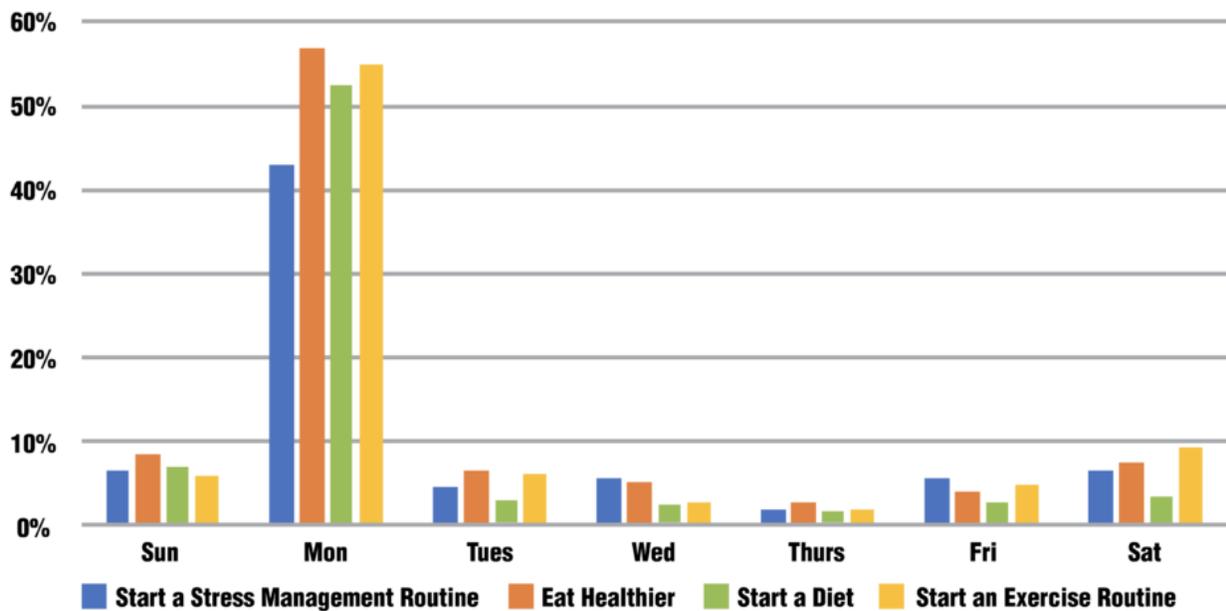
"I see Monday as a day..."



People are more likely to start a healthy behavior on Monday compared to any other day of the week.

There's an upsurge of healthy intentions on Mondays.

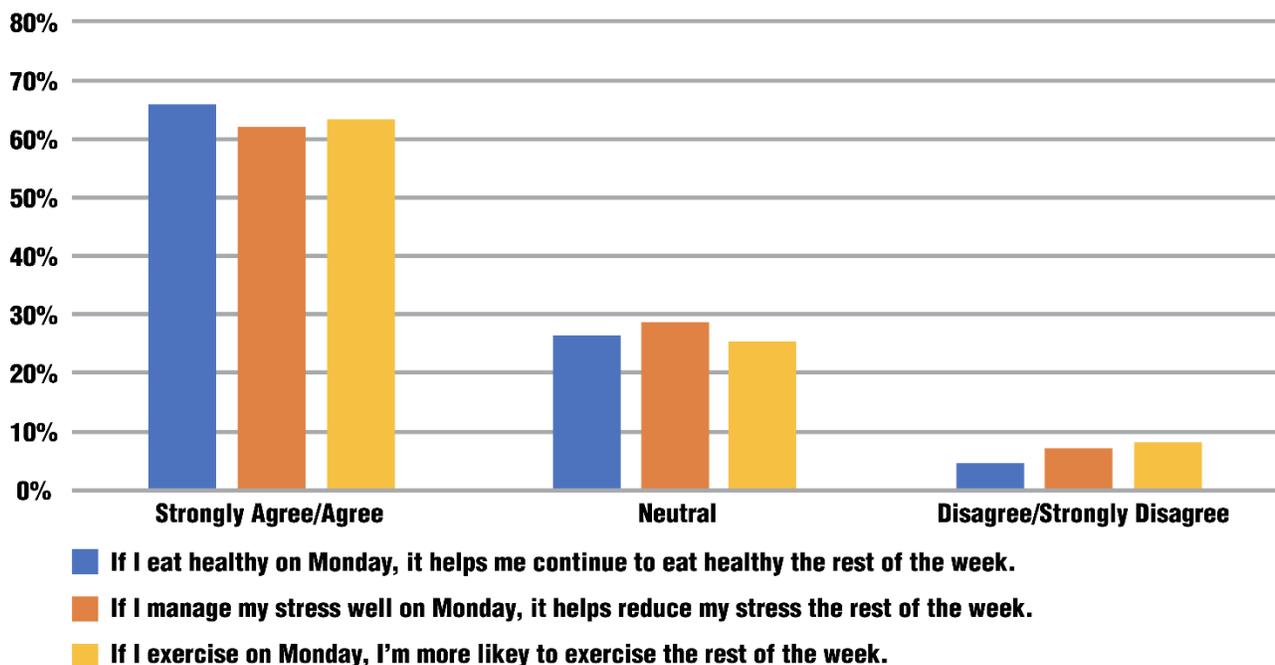
What day of the week are you most likely to...?



And those who start a healthy behavior on Monday are more likely to continue that behavior throughout the week...

Monday helps people sustain healthy behaviors.

Does Monday affect your intentions for the rest of the week?



...which creates sustainable, healthy lifestyle changes.

Chronic Disease:³

Chronic disease is the leading cause of death and disability in the U.S.:

- ✓ **6 in 10 adults have a chronic disease**
- ✓ **4 in 10 adults have two or more chronic diseases**

This costs the US \$3.3 trillion in annual health care costs.



Chronic disease is preventable and modifiable. Some lifestyle risks are: tobacco use, poor diet/nutrition, lack of physical activity, and excessive alcohol use.

Health is more than Your Behavior⁴

It's important to note that multiple different factors play into the health of a person, factors beyond what a person eats, drinks, and how often they exercise. These are the social determinants of health, the structures in which people live, work, age, and play. The big five social determinants of health are: neighborhood and built environment, economic stability, education, social and community context, and health /health care. Kids are susceptible to all of these factors and have no control over them because they do not have the authority to decide the environment in which they grow up. All of these factors, and many more, affect the development and overall health of those living in these conditions.



The Healthy Monday Campaigns

Move it Monday encourages a healthy start to the week via physical activity and exercise for people of all abilities (moveitmonday.org).

MOVE IT MONDAY!



The **Monday Mile** is a one-mile route mapped out with directional signage to encourage physical activity at the community level. Most of the Monday Mile routes are accessible (lernercenter.syr.edu).

Good for your health and the health of the planet.

Promotes eating more plant-based foods on Monday. **Meatless Monday** provides recipes and information to help people start their week healthy and meat free (meatlessmonday.com).



Quit & Stay Quit Monday uses Mondays as a tool to help quit smoking tobacco and to stay quit. Through various resources, people are supported throughout their quit journey (iquitmonday.org).

DESTRESS MONDAY

(destressmonday.org)

- ✓ Uses Monday as a tool to start fresh mentally and emotionally.
 - ✓ Supports a positive perspective for the week.
- ✓ Offers tips and guides to complete the *DeStress Monday Refresh* and reduce stress through evidence based activities.

DO THE MONDAY REFRESH!



BREATHE

Focus on your breathing to settle your mind.



BE MINDFUL

Let go of thoughts about the past and worries about the future. Be in the moment.



SHIFT TO THE POSITIVE

Detach from any harmful feelings and redirect your thinking to be positive.



GET MOVING

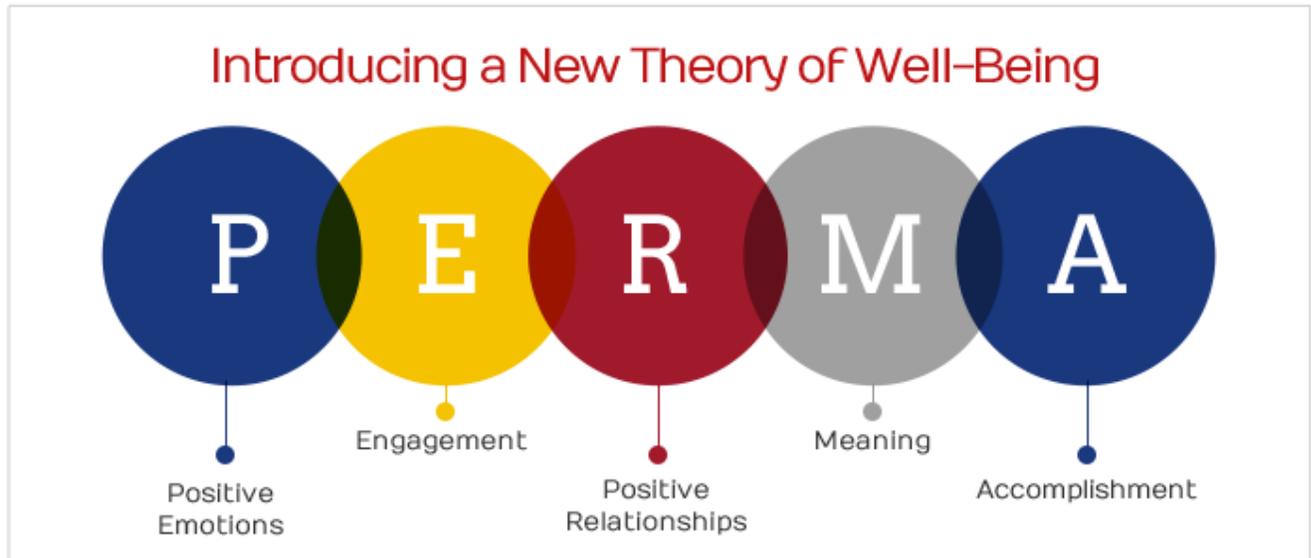
Improve your mental well-being with exercises like walking, jogging, cycling, and yoga.

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The Science Behind *DeStress Monday*³



Positive Psychology is the study of strengths that allow individuals and communities to thrive. DeStress Monday's philosophy is based on Positive Psychology and the belief that people want fulfilling lives that are meaningful, bring out what is best in themselves, and enhance all their experiences.³

DeStress Monday uses evidence-based positive psychology practices to improve the mental and emotional wellbeing of individuals and communities. According to the PERMA™ Theory of Wellbeing, positive emotions (P) and engagement in daily activities (E) are two pathways to increase one's overall wellbeing. Experiencing positive emotions involves making peace with the past, enjoying the present, and being hopeful toward the future. Being engaged in your day to day includes practicing mindfulness and managing daily stressors.³ DeStress Monday offers support for those to start the week off with a grounded and positive mindset.

What are Developmental Disabilities?^{5,6}

A developmental disability is defined as, “a group of conditions due to an impairment in physical, learning, language, or behavioral areas.”

Developmental disabilities affect one in six children in the United States. Some of the developmental disabilities that are common in the United States include but are not limited to: Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), Autism Spectrum Disorder, Cerebral Palsy, hearing loss, and intellectual disabilities. Individuals that have an intellectual disability have a wide variety of health needs that may require special attention from specific medical providers or education specialists. One area that individuals with developmental disabilities might need to have specialized care in is mental health.

Children who have a developmental disability are more likely to experience a secondary diagnosis of a mental health disorder. On average 26.1% of children that have a developmental disability exhibit clinical levels of behavioral problems. As a result of the various behavioral problems children can have they may struggle in areas like academics and living independently in the community as they age.

How *DeStress Monday* can be used to help children with developmental disabilities^{6,7}

Research has shown that mindfulness based interventions (MBIs) can help to reduce the amount of adverse and aggressive behaviors demonstrated by children who have developmental disabilities. Mindfulness is defined as, “the ability to direct the attention to experience as it unfolds, moment by moment, with open-minded curiosity and acceptance.”

MBIs have proven helpful for children who display aggressive behaviors. One of the ways that mindfulness has been shown to help decrease the frequency of aggressive behaviors is through increasing the child’s awareness of themselves. In order to increase a child’s awareness of themselves the child is taught to focus and pay attention to different sensations, thoughts, and emotions within their bodies. They learn to notice, name, and describe their feelings. By doing this, the child becomes more aware of how their mind operates, which can give them a better understanding of their experience in a world that can be over stimulating and triggering.

Through the use of MBIs children are able to self-correct some of their maladaptive behaviors. Mindfulness also helps children practice self-control in stressful moments. Children are able to cultivate their own constructive ways to deal with their potentially negative situations or emotions with minimal assistance from adults, eventually improving their independence and autonomy as they grow up.

Forming the habit of completing an MBI on Monday will give children a sense of calm to begin their week in a positive way. Beginning these interventions on Monday may lead to a long-lasting mindfulness practice, which will improve children’s emotional regulation and overall psychological wellbeing.

Ways to Promote Mindfulness in Youth

Activity 1: Breathing Ball

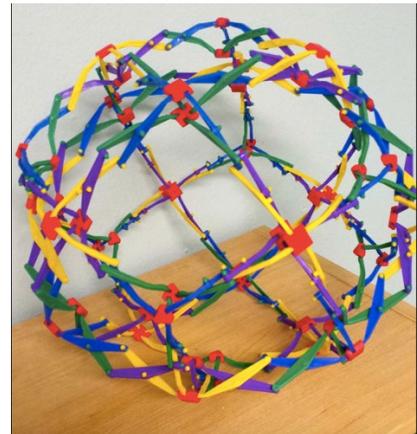
A visual aid/ interactive activity can make it easier to engage in mindfulness practices, especially for younger children. A breathing ball can act as a model for children to follow when focusing on their breath. The objective of this activity is to have the children match their breathing to the movement of the ball. Note: breathing balls can be found on Amazon.

- 1) Start by pulling the ball apart and at the same time have the child breathe in slowly.
- 2) Once the ball is expanded all the way, have the child hold their breath for 2-3 seconds.
- 3) Slowly contract the ball while instructing the child to slowly breathe out.
- 4) Repeat as necessary.

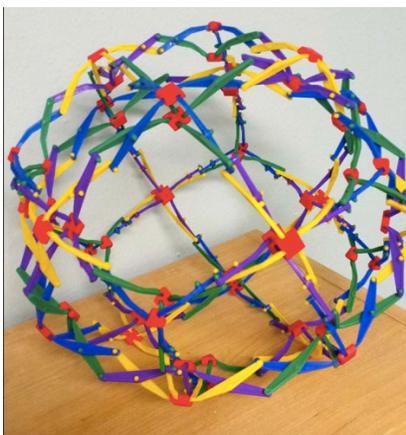
Breathing Ball Demonstration:



1. Child breaths in while you slowly expand ball.



2. Once ball is fully expanded, have child hold breath for 2-3 seconds.



3. Slowly start to contract ball and instruct child to exhale.



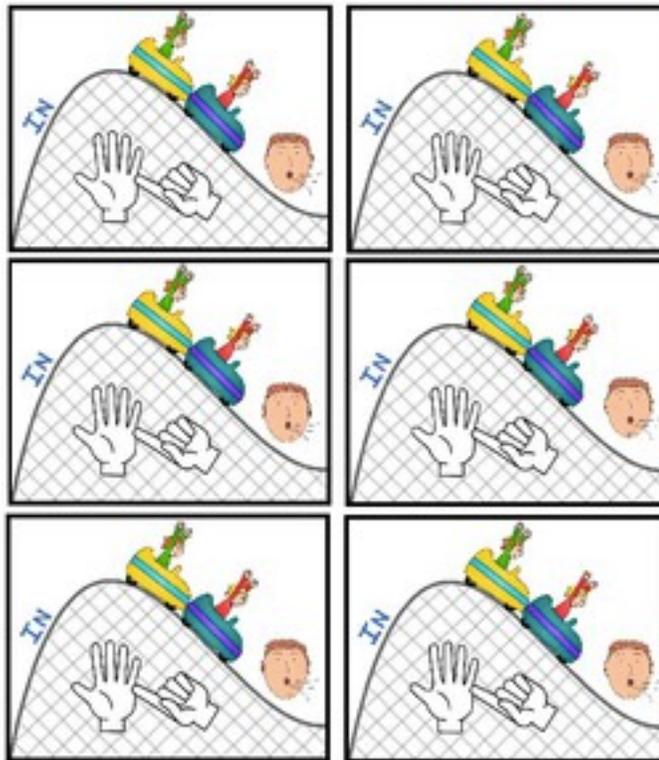
4. Child continues to exhale until ball is back to starting size.

Activity 2: Roller Coaster

This activity focuses on deep breathing and the mind-body connection.

- 1) Start by having children raise one hand and put up all five fingers.
- 2) Using a finger from the other hand, have them start tracing the opposite hand at the wrist.
- 3) As they work their way up to the thumb have them breathe in.
- 4) At the top of the thumb have them hold their breath for 2-3 seconds.
- 5) Trace down the other side of their thumb while breathing out.
- 6) Continue this pattern all the way around the hand until they get to the pinky.
- 7) Repeat as necessary.

roller coaster BREATHING



Activity 3: Rocks & Socks

This activity allows children a safer and more appropriate way of releasing tension and anger.

- 1) Children will start by making rocks with their hands. To do this they will make fists and squeeze them as hard and tight as they can while breathing in.
- 2) Then have them relax their hand and the rest of their body like a floppy sock. During this time instruct the child to blow out all of the air from their lungs and relax their whole body like floppy sock or noodle.
- 3) Repeat as necessary.



Clench fists to make “rocks” and take a deep breath in.



Hold breath and fists for two or three seconds.



Child exhales all the air from lungs & relaxes whole body like a floppy sock.

Activity 4: Sensing the Senses

In this activity, children will be engaging with their environment and giving their full attention to the things that are happening around them.

1. Children remain still and in a relaxed position.
2. Children take three deep breaths to settle down.
3. Have them name 5 different things they can see, 4 things they can touch (i.e. their feet on the ground, their shirt on their back, etc.), 3 things they can hear, 2 things they can smell, and 1 thing they can taste.

The 5-4-3-2-1 Coping Technique

Ease your state of mind in stressful moments.

Acknowledge **5** things that you can see around you.



Acknowledge **4** things that you can touch around you.



Acknowledge **3** things that you can hear around you.

Acknowledge **1** thing that you can taste around you.



Acknowledge **2** things that you can smell around you.



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Activity 5: Breathing Buddies

In this activity children will be focusing on deep breathing with a visual aid.

- 1) Have children lay down on their back with their hands at their sides.
 - 2) Give them each one small toy that can fit on their stomachs.
 - 3) While laying on their back with their hands at their sides, tell them to take big, deep belly breaths.
 - 4) As they are breathing in and out have them watch the toy go up and down.
 - 5) During this time, you could play some relaxing music or read a calm story quietly.
- Remember to encourage the children to continue breathing and focusing on their toy.



Activity 6: A Mindful Bite

In this activity children will take time to eat a snack, while paying attention to the smell, feel, taste, and texture of the food.

- 1) Give the children a small snack and instruct not to touch it.
- 2) Start a timer for 60-90 seconds.
- 3) Ask them to start by feeling and smelling the piece of food and notice their responses.
- 4) Then have them put the snack in their mouth and take their time as they notice what that feels like in their mouth.
- 5) After that tell them to take *small, slow* bites of the food and notice what the snack taste like and how the texture changes as they eat it.
- 6) After the timer sounds, reflect on the experience as a group.



Activity 7: Play with Playdoh

In this activity children will be able to engage with multiple senses and boost creativity and play, which can serve as an outlet for stress.

- 1) Children will need a container of Playdoh.
- 2) Have them start by opening the container and noticing how Playdoh smells.
- 3) Ask them to roll the Playdoh like a log, smash it in their hands, rub it between their fingers, etc. to demonstrate the different sensations of the Playdoh in their hands.
- 4) Children can free play with Playdoh, but remind them to notice the different textures and sensations in their hands. For example, children can notice temperature changes in the Playdoh.



Activity 8: Nature Walk

In this activity children will be able to be active and release energy in a safe and productive way while engaging in a mindfulness practice.

- 1) During this activity walk around either outside or inside.
- 2) Ask them about the different things that they can hear, see, smell, and touch.
- 3) Bring their attention to the feeling of their feet on the ground, the wind as they move, the sun on their skin, etc.
- 4) Ask them different questions about these things and have them take note about all of their surroundings.



End Notes

1. For more information on the Healthy Monday Campaign and the Monday Effect, visit <https://www.mondaycampaigns.org/>.
2. CDC. (2019). *About Chronic Diseases*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/index.htm>
3. University of Pennsylvania Positive Psychology Center. (2019). *Positive Psychology*. Retrieved from Positive Psychology Center: <https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/>
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7. Singh, S., Soamya, & Ramnath. (2016). Effects of mindfulness therapy in managing aggression and conduct problem of adolescents with ADHD symptoms. *Indian Journal of Health and Wellbeing*, 7(5), 483-487.

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