Work2BeWell Monthly Newsletter

October 2026

When you hear "self-care," what comes to mind? Getting enough sleep? Taking a break? Spending time with friends? Those things matter, but caring for your whole self goes even deeper.

It means paying attention to what your **mind, body, and brain** need. It means noticing when you're running on empty and when you're starting to build. It means finding healthy ways to cope, surrounding yourself with people who support you, and learning information that helps you make choices that protect both who you are today and who you are becoming.

It also doesn't have to mean making huge changes. Sometimes caring for yourself looks like asking for help, taking a break, getting outside, laughing with friends, or finally getting enough rest. It's all the little things that add up and asking **"What do I need right now?"** The more we understand ourselves, our emotions, and our needs, the better equipped we are to make choices that care for our whole selves, including our minds, bodies, relationships, and developing brains.

This October, as we are focused on "Caring for Your Whole Self," we hope you'll think beyond the usual definition of self-care. Check in with yourself. Learn about your brain. Be thoughtful about who you need. Connect with people who make you feel supported. And remember that taking care of your whole self is something you practice one choice at a time.

How Are You #WorkingZeRest?

"Your mind is just as powerful as your body. Take care of it."

— Simone Biles

American artistic gymnast
7 Olympic medals & 32 World Championship medals, most decorated gymnast in history

Olympic champion Simone Biles reminds us that caring for ourselves isn't just about taking care of our bodies. Our minds deserve that same attention. Caring for your whole self means recognizing when you're struggling, mentally, emotionally, and socially, and knowing that taking care of yourself is a strength.

Mental Health Tip for September: Create Your "Big Three"

When you're feeling overwhelmed, don't automatically ask, "How do I make me feeling go away?" Instead, ask "What part of me needs some care right now?"

1. Mind: Do I need a break or less screen time?
2. Emotions: Do I need to talk to someone?
3. Body: Do I need to eat, drink water, or sleep?
4. Connection: Do I need time with someone who makes me feel supported?
5. Joy: When was the last time I did something jointly because I enjoy it?

Choose one small thing you can do for yourself today. Spending time with friends, creating, laughing, laughing, expressing emotions, and belonging is a group are all parts of caring for your whole self.

What You'll Need for October

Featured Curriculum Resource:
Substance Use Part 1 "Understanding Substance Use and Your Brain"

Our brains are pretty incredible, and during the teen years, they're still growing, changing, and building connections that help with decision-making, impulse control, planning, and self-control. That makes understanding how different substances affect the brain an important and important part of caring for your whole self.

Work2BeWell's **Understanding Substance Use and Your Brain** module delves a judgement-free look at caffeine, alcohol, nicotine, marijuana, prescription medications, fake pills, and illegal drugs. Rather than simply telling students what to do or not to do, it explores how substances interact with the brain and why teens may turn to them in the first place, including stress, anxiety, loneliness, curiosity, pressure, or a desire to fit in.

Most importantly, the conversation doesn't stop with substances. Teens explore protective factors that support healthy brains, like sleep, friendships, good sleep, activities they enjoy, positive coping skills, and access to mental health resources. Students also learn the **Hungry, Angry, Lonely, Tired** as a simple check-in to recognize what they might really need before making a decision.

Caring for your whole self means caring for the brain that helps you learn, connect, cope, dream, and make decisions every day. **The more we understand our brains and our needs, the better prepared you are to make choices that support both who you are now and who you're becoming.**

Click Here to Access:
[W2BW's Understanding Substance Use and Your Brain]

Featured Tuttle/Well Podcast:
"Applications, Expectations, and Talking Care of Yourself"

College application season can bring excitement about the future, but it can also come with deadlines, decisions, comparisons, and pressure to have everything figured out. In this episode, Work2BeWell Founder and NSAC members Audrey from California, Silke from Massachusetts, and Aldi from North Carolina.

In this episode, NSAC students talk about managing expectations, making plans for themselves, and finding realistic ways to practice self-care during a busy season. Because planning for your future is important, but so is taking care of yourself along the way.

[Episode 164: Applications, Expectations, and Talking Care of Yourself]

Interested in listening more? Here are some past TSRN episodes that have woven in the topics we've been NSAC approaching it from a different angle:

[Ep 156: Offline and in the Moment - Creating a Healthier Relationship with Social Media]
[Ep 148: Listen to Yourself - Using Music to Cope with Stress and Depression]
[Ep 139: Nature's Reset]
[Ep 126: Managing Financial Stress]
[Ep 82: Mindfulness and Mental Fitness]
[Ep 62: Learn to Say Yourself]

Each TSRN episode opens the door to meaningful conversations amongst peers and with trusted adults in their lives and beyond. Through open, honest conversations, we help students connect with one another and work on developing the stigma around mental health.

Want to easily find episodes to accompany lesson plans and activities? Check out the ready-to-go list of the TSRN Episodes Categorized by W2BW Curriculums for a great resource for Counseling Offices and Wellness Rooms!

From Our Program Director

"What's Your Why? Helps Us Turn $15,000 into $30,000!"

At Work2BeWell, we've been inspired by a simple philosophy shared by **Scott Backovich and the Emotie Program Elite + Art.** It's a reminder that we should always strive to give more than we ask of others, and that idea resonates deeply with who we are. Throughout the year, we give free curriculum, resources, and support to schools and districts, and we're proud to have those conversations about mental health and wellness. Now, we're asking our community to help us keep giving. This fall, a generous donor will **match every dollar donated to Work2BeWell, up to $15,000**. That means your gift can go twice as far. Our goal is to raise $30,000 by the end of October to unlock another $15,000, fueling our community's generosity. And **$10,000 to support youth mental health.** Since all of, 100% of every dollar raised goes directly toward creating and sharing FREE, clinically vetted, heart-centered resources.

This campaign is also about something bigger **our "WHY,"** my own "why" goes back to my middle school years when I experienced the loss of my father to suicide. I was fortunate to have a strong support system around me, including a couple of incredible teachers who helped me process it. Today, the Eternal Flame outside Downtacher, surrounded by the names of hundreds of schools that have raised funds, sends a powerful message to every young person who sees it **you are not alone.** That same belief has shaped with me. My why is to be a servant leader who inspires, connects, and empowers others so they have toward their own why.

That's what we are building through Work2BeWell a community that reminds young people they matter, that helps them find their purpose, and that gives them the tools they need to protect their mental health, support one another, and create spaces of connection and belonging where teens see **seen, heard, and valued.** So this October, we invite you to think about **your "why."** Maybe it's a student who changed your life, a moment that shaped you, or simply a belief that every young person deserves support and connection. Whatever your "why," **this is the moment to make it go twice as far.**

Sent with Flame of the original Downtacher Eternal Flame

$51,290

The list of the Downtacher Flame from other Sure Foundation Academy Schools

DONATE TODAY — HELP US UNLOCK THE FULL $15,000 MATCH

Kelli Stilwell (Work2BeWell) and Kimberly Backovich (Emotie Program) are both 2026 graduates at the national and international levels. She served as Executive Director of the Oregon Association of Student Councils (OASC) from 2020-2021 as part her years teaching math and leadership prior to her role at OASC. She studied math education at Montana State University (Go Bobcats!) and earned her master's in Curriculum & Instruction from Western Oregon University. Kelli is a proud mom of two daughters, Kaylee (a senior at Sherwood HS in 2026) and Ava (a proud co-curious walking alongside them on this next and grow the work. Give Work2BeWell by promoting time with friends and family and enjoying long walks with her fur buddy, Tucker.

Check Out W2BW Wellness Wear Today!

Partner Organization

Song for Charlie

"Caring for Your Whole Self... Knowledge Is Part of Self-Care"

Caring for your whole self means more than getting enough sleep, managing stress, or taking time to recharge. It also means having accurate information to make choices that protect your health and knowing healthier ways to cope when life feels overwhelming.

That's why Song for Charlie aligns so naturally with the month's theme and with Work2BeWell. Founded in memory of Charlie Holtzclaw, Song for Charlie is dedicated to preventing youth nicotine use, and the risks of self-medication, while encouraging healthier ways to manage stress and anxiety. Like W2BW, they believe young people can be part of the solution by learning, talking openly, and sharing trusted information with their peers.

Their message reminds us that caring for whole selves includes caring for our developing brains, and that starts with understanding what's really going on. Learning about vaping is not the only anytime. **Knowledge, connection, and healthy coping are all forms of self-care.**

Interested in learning more? Watch for our new podcast featuring Song for Charlie, which will be released later this month. Check it out.

> "Caring for your whole self includes having the knowledge and support to make informed choices about your health. In this special episode, Dr. Robin Henderson is joined by NSAC members Aldi from North Carolina, Silke from Massachusetts, and Audrey from California from Song for Charlie, to talk about their passion for prevention, access to peer education, and why these conversations matter in every community.
>
> Together, they explore how teens can share trusted information, support their friends, use healthy coping strategies, and turn awareness into action. Because caring for your whole self means having the tools and understanding the choices that affect your well-being, and knowing when to reach out for support.

Explore Song for Charlie

A Word from NSAC...
W2BW's National Student Advisory Council

"Protecting the Developing Brain: Rethinking Nicotine Prevention"

When we talk about caring for our whole selves, we often think about sleep, exercise, stress, or mental health. But there is another part of ourselves that deserves just as much attention: our developing brains.

Adolescence is a period of extraordinary neurological change. The brain is still developing the systems involved in decision-making, learning, reward, and self-control. That matters when we consider nicotine. What may begin as curiosity, stress relief, or something as simple as wanting to fit in can become a difficult cycle to break.

But prevention cannot stop at telling young people, "Just don't vaper." That message overlooks the reasons someone might want to vape for nicotine in the first place. If a student is using nicotine to manage stress, boredom, pressure, or anxiety, removing the substance without addressing the underlying need leaves the problem unresolved.

Evidence-based prevention should therefore give young people more than warnings. It should help them understand how nicotine affects the developing brain, recognize the influences that shape our choices, and build healthier ways to cope before dependence takes hold.

Caring for our whole selves means caring for our future selves, too. Protecting the developing brain is not about fear or shame. It is about giving young people the knowledge, support, and healthy coping strategies they need to make informed decisions while their brains, and their lives, are still developing.

Manasvi Sharma (she/her) is a junior at Lynbrook High School in San Jose, California, and a new member of the Work2BeWell Advisory Team. She is passionate about adolescent mental health, public health, and making mental health education more accessible through research and youth advocacy. As the founder of The Mind Initiative, she has worked to bring mental health conversations into classrooms and communities, including a stress museum that empowered students to explore and reduce stigma. Through Work2BeWell, she hopes to support peers in mental health resources, elevate teen voices, and help build supportive school communities. Manasvi (Work2BeWell) by reading, exploring new coffee shops, traveling, and spending time with her friends, family, and pet turtle.

Club Spotlight

Lake Braddock Mental Health Campaign
Burke, Virginia
"Caring for Your Whole Self, Together"

For the **Lake Braddock Mental Health Campaign**, caring for your whole self doesn't have to happen alone. The student-led club at Lake Braddock Secondary School creates opportunities throughout the year for students to connect, have fun, and make conversations about mental health feel more comfortable and approachable.

Club advocate **Cora Gagle** shared that the group hosts an event every month, including a fun run, paint and sip activities, and one of their favorites, **Cookies and Conversation painting event.** Last year, the event drew a great turnout while giving students an opportunity to learn more about mental health and ways to support someone who may be struggling. It's a great example of how caring for yourself can also mean building connection, conversation, and simply taking time to do something fun with others.

Cora says the club's impact continues to grow as more students hear about it and want to get involved. "We are making change slowly and it's not going unnoticed." Her hope for the club is that it continues to help students across their large school community.

This October, the Lake Braddock Mental Health Campaign reminds us that caring for your whole self can start with something as simple as showing up for a friend, checking in, and creating a space where it's okay to talk about how we're really doing.

Check out this W2BW One Pager for a fun way to incorporate a pumpkin carving and painting activity into a mental health connection opportunity.

Want your club to be featured? Send your info and pictures to support@work2bewell.com!

Testimonials For W2BW

Mental health struggles are something I've dealt with since elementary school, though for a long time I didn't have the words to describe it. I remember feeling like I was the only one x while to learn that caring for my whole self meant caring for my mind, not just my body. Work2BeWell was the first program I ever found that I found Work2BeWell at a leadership development camp — an organization that specifically created for students to learn about mental health and how to care for themselves. The following year, I applied for the National Student Advisory Council.

Being part of W2BW gave me the chance to work alongside young leaders across the country who are passionate about making mental health support more accessible for people our age. Work2BeWell has one of the largest and most diverse libraries of mental health resources out there, and every piece is clinically vetted, so I know I'm sharing something trustworthy when I post a friend toward it.

Work2BeWell didn't just give me a program, it gave me a community and mission I believe in, one that reminded me my value extends beyond my mental health, not just my achievements."

Mason Grose (he/him) is a recent graduate from Touche Lake High School in Touchi, Washington, where he served his diploma Washington, an Associate of Arts degree in June 2026.

Mason's advocacy work is rooted in personal experience — often being people in his community to locate, he committed himself to developing and sharing free, high-quality resources, especially for schools and teams. He served on Work2BeWell's Activation Team as a Peer Mentor, helping young people navigate the year, helping bring mental health awareness, and resources to students across the country, and the globe.

Mason is now studying Aeronautical Engineering at Arizona State University and participates in Air Transportation Management at Arizona State University, where he's also earning a Certificate in Leadership and Management from the ASU Public Service Academy's Next Generation Service Corps and Watts College of Public Service. He's passionate about mental health and shares his own journey with wellness on Instagram at @masongrose_com.

Caring for Your Whole Self Starts with Your Voice

Taking care of your whole self means paying attention to what works for you, and your feedback can help us do the same! If you've participated in a Work2BeWell module, we'd love to hear about your experience.

Your input helps us understand what was helpful, what could be improved, and how our resources can better support teens and the adults who work with them. Taking just a few minutes to complete the [Work2BeWell Module Feedback Survey] helps us continue to improve and ensure our resources continue to be part of what you need.

Care for yourself. Share your voice. Help us care for others, too.

Dates / Location	Event
October 11 Oregon	Girl Scouts of Oregon and Southwest Washington
October 13 Virtual/Zoom	W2BW Club Network Meet-Up #1
November 2 Georgia	Gwinnett Student Leadership Team (GSLT) Training
November 8-9 Seaside, Oregon	Oregon Association of Student Councils Fall Conference
November 18-19 Virtual	National Conference on Student Life (College)

How are you using W2BW resources to make a difference in your school or community? Have they helped you start conversations, plan events, or bring people together around mental health? We'd love to hear how you're making an impact!

Share your story with us at the link/scan QR or upcoming newsletter or on social media!

WORK2BEWELL