



*ESSEX COUNTY OFFICE OF  
PUBLIC HEALTH  
MANAGEMENT*

# **HEALTHY MONDAY'S TOOL KIT: DECEMBER 2025**



900 Bloomfield Avenue  
Verona, NJ 07044



Happy  
*Holidays*



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## **WHAT IS THE HEALTHY MONDAY CAMPAIGN?**

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The Healthy Monday Campaign is a public health initiative that encourages individuals and organizations to commit to healthy behaviors each Monday, helping to prevent chronic diseases and promote long-term wellness.

In Essex County, Healthy Monday will focus on children and their parents by providing a weekly toolkit with topics tailored to their needs. Each month will highlight a new theme that is relevant to children's health and well-being.

As the year comes to a close, December's Healthy Monday focuses on finding balance — enjoying the holiday season mindfully, protecting your mental and physical health, and preparing to step into the new year with renewed energy and purpose.

# LESSON 01:

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Taking care of your mind and body is one of the most important lifelong skills you can learn, no matter your age. Your mind helps you think, learn, and understand the world, while your body gives you the energy to move, play, and grow. When both are supported, you feel more balanced, confident, and ready to take on whatever the day brings. This week reminds us that being healthy isn't just about what we eat or how much we move — it's also about understanding our feelings, taking breaks when we need them, and practicing habits that help us stay grounded.

Everyone experiences moments when things feel overwhelming — younger students may feel frustrated or have trouble focusing, while older students may face stress from schoolwork, friendships, or responsibilities. These feelings are completely normal, and recognizing them is the first step toward taking care of yourself. Simple actions like stretching, drinking water, breathing deeply, or talking to someone you trust can help reset your body and calm your thoughts. Learning how to care for yourself early helps you handle challenges more confidently as you grow.

Taking care of your mind and body is not a one-time task — it's something you practice little by little. Each Monday is a chance to check in with yourself and think about what you need. Maybe it's more sleep, more kindness, more movement, or more quiet time. When you take a moment to listen to your body and your feelings, you begin building a strong foundation for a healthy, happier version of you.

# Mindful Monday

Being mindful means paying close attention to your thoughts and feelings, as well as others.

## 5-Finger Breathing Activity



1. Hold out one hand, palm out and fingers spread.
2. Using the pointer finger of your other hand, trace the side of the fingers in the stretched out hand.
3. Breathe in as you trace up.
4. Hold your breath for a second.
5. Breathe out as you trace down.
6. Repeat for each finger.



**Tip:**

**Try this when you feel wiggly, upset, or nervous.  
it helps your body and brain feel calm!**



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The Board of County Commissioners  
The Essex County Office of Public Health Management  
*Putting Essex County's Health First*





# TAKE A PAUSE: START YOUR WEEK WITH INTENTION

**Before the week gets hectic, take a moment to slow down. Mindfulness helps you feel calmer, think clearly, and manage stress – especially during the holiday season.**

Life gets loud – schoolwork, sports, activities, family expectations, and the holiday rush. Taking just a few minutes to pause can help you feel more in control of your emotions and your day.

This Monday, try a simple grounding practice called “60-Second Reset”. It’s a stress-relief tool you can use anywhere: before a test, after school, or anytime you feel overwhelmed.

## 60-Second Reset

**A simple mindfulness exercise:**

- Sit still
- Put both feet on the floor
- Close your eyes
- Inhale slowly / exhale fully
- Focus on one sound in the room
- Stay with the sound for one minute

**Perfect before starting class, homework, or studying.**

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# LESSON 02:

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Life moves fast, and everyone — from the youngest students to the oldest — needs time to pause and recharge. When your body or mind starts feeling tired, stressed, or overwhelmed, it's a sign that you may need a moment to reset. Taking a break isn't being lazy — it's giving your brain and body the chance to rest so you can come back stronger. This week focuses on understanding what your body is telling you and finding healthy ways to refresh your energy.

Younger students might notice they need a reset when they start to feel fidgety, irritated, or worn out. Older students may feel mentally drained, stressed about schoolwork, or disconnected from their routines. These feelings are signals that your mind and body need attention. A few slow breaths, a short walk, stretching your arms, listening to calming music, or stepping away from screens for a moment can make a big difference. Even small, simple breaks can help you refocus and feel better.

Resetting isn't just something you do once — it's a habit that helps you stay balanced throughout the week. When you learn how to recharge, you build resilience and become better at handling challenges. This Monday, try giving yourself permission to rest, reset, and restore your energy. Taking care of yourself in these small ways helps you feel lighter, clearer, and more ready for whatever comes next.

# GET THAT ENERGY OUT SNOWFLAKE STYLE

When you move, your body wakes up, your brain gets stronger, and your feelings get brighter! Even small movements – like stretching, jumping, or dancing – can help you feel better and ready to learn.

This Monday, try our fun “Holiday Wiggle Break” to get your energy out in a healthy way!



## HOLIDAY WIGGLE BREAK

Steps:

1. Stand up tall with some space around you.
2. Wiggle your arms like candy canes! 
3. Jump softly like snowflakes falling.
4. Twist your body like a twinkling holiday light.
5. Finish with a big stretch and a smile!



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# Stress Happens. Staying Balanced Is a Skill

## Find Peace Within

School, friends, activities... life gets busy fast. It's normal to feel overwhelmed sometimes, but you don't have to stay stuck in stress-mode.

This week, Healthy Monday is all about learning quick, real, and useful ways to recharge, reset, and take care of your mind.



## What Stress Looks Like in Teens

Stress doesn't always show up as panic. Sometimes it looks like...

- Feeling tired even after sleeping
- Losing focus in class
- Getting irritated quickly
- Headaches or tension
- Wanting to isolate from friends
- Feeling unmotivated

### Micro-Break Challenge

**Every hour today, pause for 30 seconds. Drop your shoulders. Unclench your jaw. Inhale for 4 seconds, exhale for 6 seconds. It's a reset for your nervous system.**



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# LESSON 03:

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Healthy habits are the small everyday actions that make a big difference in how you feel. They help your body stay strong, your mind stay calm, and your days run more smoothly. Younger students begin learning that things like drinking water, eating fruits and vegetables, and taking short movement breaks help them grow and feel energized. Older students start understanding how habits build long-term routines that support focus, mood, and overall well-being. No matter your age, healthy habits help you feel your best from the inside out.

You don't need all-new routines or major lifestyle changes. Healthy habits work best when they are small, easy, and realistic. This might look like adding a piece of fruit to your lunch, drinking water before your first class, setting aside a few minutes to stretch, or taking a break from screens when you need it. These habits gently support your body, help you stay alert, and keep your mind clear. Over time, these little choices grow into patterns that help you stay healthy and balanced.

This week is all about discovering which habits help you feel good. Pay attention to how certain choices make you feel — more relaxed, more energized, more focused. Every small step you take is progress, and every good habit you build is an investment in your future. A healthier you starts with one simple choice each Monday.



# BUILD A DAY THAT THAT FEELS AMAZING!

You can brighten your whole day by adding healthy habits! These small choices help your body stay strong and your mind stay calm.

## Try a Happy Habit Today:

- **Sip Before You Zip:** Drink water before you head to class.
- **Rainbow Snack:** Pick a colorful snack like berries or baby carrots.
- **Move & Groove:** Wiggle, dance, or stretch for 1 minute.
- **Brain Break:** Close your eyes and imagine your favorite place.
- **Kind Choice:** Do something helpful for someone.



**Monday Mission:**  
Circle ONE habit to try. Can you keep it up all week?



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# HABIT RESET: UPGRADE YOUR WEEK.

## HABIT BOOSTS

**HYDRATE FIRST:  
DRINK WATER BEFORE  
YOUR FIRST CLASS.**



**FEED YOUR BRAIN:  
ADD ONE NUTRIENT-RICH  
FOOD TODAY.**



**MOVE FOR YOUR MOOD:  
TAKE A 10-MINUTE WALK  
OR STRETCH.**



**LIMIT THE NOISE:  
SET A 30-MINUTE PHONE  
PAUSE**



**TRY THIS TODAY:**

**PICK THE ONE HABIT THAT FEELS EASIEST – THEN STICK WITH IT.  
PROGRESS BEATS PERFECTION.**

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# LESSON 04:

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As the month comes to an end, it's important to pause and recognize all the growth you've made — whether it was learning something new, being kinder to yourself, staying positive during challenges, or simply showing up. Wins come in all sizes. Younger students learn that celebrating themselves helps build confidence and encourages them to keep trying. Older students gain a deeper understanding of how self-reflection can help them manage stress, make better choices, and develop emotional strength. No matter your age, acknowledging your successes helps you see how far you've come.

Protecting your peace means choosing what makes you feel safe, calm, and supported. For some, this might mean taking a break when emotions feel too big. For others, it might mean stepping away from drama, choosing friends who make you feel good about yourself, or finding quiet time to rest. Younger children may protect their peace by asking for help, using calming strategies, or choosing kindness. Older students might do it by creating boundaries, letting go of unhealthy habits, or focusing on people who encourage their growth.

This week encourages you to honor your progress and take care of your well-being. Reflecting on your journey helps you see your strengths, and protecting your peace helps you continue growing in healthy ways. Be proud of yourself — the little steps you've taken each week add up to meaningful change.

# Choose Kindness, Spread Smiles!



*Kindness can turn an ordinary day into a great one!  
When you help others feel good, your heart feels brighter too.*

## Why Kindness Matters

- It builds friendships
- It makes your classroom happier
- It helps everyone feel safe and cared for



## Ways You Can Spread Joy

- Share a smile
- Let someone go first in line
- Help pick up supplies
- Say something positive
- Invite someone to play



## **A small kindness pledge**

I promise to try one joyful act today!



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# Take a Moment: You've Grown This Month.

## Three Spots to Reflect

- *A win you're proud of*
- *Something you handled better than before*
- *Something you want to let go of*

As the month ends, look back at the moments you pushed through, learned, or grew — even if they didn't feel big. Your progress matters.

## Peace Practices:

- *Take five minutes to breathe*  
.....
- *Focus on people who support you*  
.....
- *Celebrate your effort, not just results*  
.....

## Monday Action Step

*Set one boundary that protects your energy — like stepping away from drama, taking a break, or saying 'no' to something that drains you.*



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