

Emotional Muscle Part Two

> Welcome to Emotional Muscle Part Two: How to Grow Resilient School-Age Kids and Become Stronger Parents. My name is Melanie Ordonez and I'm one of the moderators today. Along with my colleague, Jeannie Kuehler. I'd like to introduce our speaker and as I do that, I'm going to pull up a poll question that Wilfred would like you to answer. As I am talking about him, you can answer this poll question please. Let me put it where you can see a little bit better. So Wilfred is a licensed professional counselor and he provides complex case management for Magellan Healthcare. He is trained in for neurodevelopment and childhood psychology and has extensive history of providing therapeutic treatment for children and families who have experienced traumatic events. I will also say Wilfred is not just professionally to talk about the subject, but he actually personally has experience in this because he has four children. Three in elementary school and one middle school child. I think this is probably something that enters near and dear to his heart. This subject. Without further ado, I am going to hand it over to Wilfred.

Thank you Melanie and you are right. Having four children all in this age group makes what we will be talking about today, very close to my heart. And it's pretty real. Having to go through it every single day. Hopefully we can have a good discussion and get through some pretty important aspects of this period of development. That can be both really joyful and rewarding, but also challenging. So one of the things we wanted to do with our poll question, is to get a sense of how each of you on this webinar you know interact with the children in your life. It looks like we have a lot of parents here. Almost 90% of our participants are parents. Which of course is fantastic because you guys are the ones who are most important in driving the development of your child to making them into a really great and wonderful adult but of course, even with that, we also have a lot of other types of caregivers. And other types of roles we fill in children's life. We have foster parents here. We have a lot of aunts and uncles. Which is wonderful. I know growing up, my and Senecal's were really important in my life. Grandparents, godparents, coaches, mentors and other people. And I think having the opportunity, especially for coaches and mentors -- to be here, this really important. Because we want every person that comes in contact with a child, to be able to influence them in a positive way and add to that network of support that each of us need. Going forward. As Melanie said, this is a part two. Back in August, I believe, I presented on emotional muscle. It was part one. We went through the early stages of development up until preschool age. Which is such an important part of development. I think it gets a lot of attention. But I think what we learned from presenting on that, there were a lot of people who were saying, hey I have a school-age child I have a teenager. And I want to hear about that too. We are so excited to be able to present this part two on school-aged Children both elementary, middle school and high school. Wilfred we have had a power couple of people asking about part when. I want to make sure it is out on your website. If you are not sure what your website is, call your HR department and ask them for that. And go on to the learning center there and you will find part one along with the slides. You can hear the first part of this.

Thank you Melanie. I made a note for myself to mention that. It's in the on-demand learning section part one is on the learning center now so they can find it right there. Under webinars.

So the three objectives we have for our time today, is one, defined what emotional muscle is and what I mean by that. And how it pertains to resilience. We will talk a little bit about what resilience means because that might not be a familiar term to everyone. Two, describe why it's essential for kids and teens to build that emotional muscle. And three, learn ways to help kids and teens develop emotional muscle and bounce back from difficulties.

[pause]

Let's go to the next slide. I'm going to have you do that Melanie. So what do we mean by emotional muscle? I think everyone has a concept of what our physical muscles mean and what they do for us. How we grow them and how we build them. We all need to develop an exercise for physical muscles for health and well-being. Without building those muscles, they kind of atrophy. And we are to strong as we maybe were or could be. You can think about if you've ever had an injury and were in a cast. My daughter just had surgery on her feet and she was in leg cast for about six weeks. Even in you know, that amount of time, it still has taken her a pretty long time to get back to where she was and be able to walk as well as she did before that surgery. When people are in good physical shape they are less tired at the end of the day. Were more able to take on tougher challenges. You know when you are thinking about lifting weights, you are able to lift heavier things. Emotional muscle's make the ordinary and actions of daily life smooth. We want to be able to not only have the stamina to get through our days and to get through difficulties, but we also want to have the strength to get through it hopefully easier than we would otherwise. Emotional muscle's promote happiness and sturdiness in the face of all life's challenges. We know the things that come up. Whether those

are small challenges throughout the day or larger, more traumatic events. Whether that's the loss of a family member or, or a job or for children you know -- a friend moving away. Or not making a team or an activity that they like to do. Or even something more traumatic like a significant injury, accident or abuse. When we have the strong emotional muscles, we are able to weather those difficulties, those traumas. In a much better way. And have a much better chance to get back to some semblance of normalcy. After those types of events. And just like our physical muscles, emotional muscles come from training and practice. Just like you would exercise if you wanted to get stronger. If you wanted to get better at something, he would practice. We do that with our emotional muscles. Or we can do that with our emotional muscles in the same way we can with our physical ones.

[pause]

So first off we will talk about school-aged Children. When I talk about this and talking about elementary school. We are from kindergarten to fifth grade. That's kind of what is what we focused on during this time. In each of the sections, I'm going to focus on two emotional muscles that we really want to focus on in building during this time period. How parents can help build those muscles. And a little bit of fourth those or what that looks like. And kind of what benefits those half. When we talk about children, and parents, ultimately this is something that's done in relationship. And of course just like we talked about in the beginning, it doesn't just have to be a parent. Anyone in a child's life has the ability to influence them in a positive way. And help them grow those muscles. When we think about coaches and tutors, you know they are working on those physical muscles or those intellectual muscles. But they also have the ability to influence children positively in growing their emotional capacity as well. The two things we look at when we are thinking about elementary school children is competence and integrity. Competence is something that's really important during this stage. Kind of builds off something that happens in that later toddler and childhood stage. Which we call mastery. Being able to do something well. Like learning a skill and being able to perform it. Now competence is what I see is kind of the second stage of mastery. Is not only like being able to do a skill, but also having some confidence doing this as well. You see this a lot in children of this age. When they are playing sports, when they are playing musical instrument. When they are in an activity. You can see kind of the pride they take in being able to do this well. And we really want to support that. Because as children grow, they are doing more and more things on their own. When they are little, you know we do as parents a lot of things for them. We have to to take a very active role in self-care, in schooling, in relationships with other people. Parents and other adults have to kind of direct those things. But as they get older, as they get into the stage of life, they are spending more time in school. Their spinning more time out of the house. More time with other people whether friends, or coaches or teachers picked. Their ability to have confidence in going out and doing those things on their own, is so important. The second emotional muscle we want to talk about his integrity. This means them having a sense of responsibility. A sense of you know belief and value. And you see this is important for kids this age too. But really focus on the rules of the game. Whether something is fair or not. If they see something happening to someone else that is wrong, they know and they want to do something about it. They want to point that out to the teacher. Or otherwise. A big part of what is happening here, is they are taking all of those things that you as an adult in their life have tried to show them. All those times when you said, no. Don't do that. Or don't go there, that is dangerous. Or make sure you go brush your teeth or make sure you go take a bath. All those things you spent so much time repeating. And I know you know how frustrating and difficult that can be. Having to feel like you are repeating something over and over again. But what you are doing in that time, it's you are teaching them how to think about themselves. What the take from that is they internalize that voice. And at this age, they have the ability to start -- instead of having you tell them to do something -- start to internalize that until themselves, ultimately they are hearing your voice inside their head. That's not to say this always happens. Or that it always happens well. It's a challenge. And this is still very much a learning period for them. And so when it doesn't happen, when they are not brushing their teeth every night. When they are going and saying they are going to do their homework in the room and they end up playing on the Xbox. Knowing this is still a process they are going through. This is something they are learning. So how we as parents or other adults in their lives, help, us by expanding the resources. And the range of social participation they have. Being able to be out in the world playing sports, being in activities, developing things they are good at and that are important -- important to them. Is extremely helpful. We want to be able to support that in a really helpful and positive way. I know sometimes we can go a little overboard with this. Right? You know over scheduling activities every night. We have basketball and orchestra and tutoring and it can get kind of overwhelming. So we want to do it in a thoughtful way. But having those opportunities to be out in the world where they have the opportunity to engage with other children. Be looked after and supported by trusted adults. And begin to build up that sense of competence that we want to see. That is really important. The second thing we can help with his reinforcing self leadership. Now this is kind of a

growth stage for parents. Because we are moving from a time in life when we are very much the leaders. We are the ones telling children what to do and where to go. Because they are not quite there yet. By reinforcing the self leadership, we are giving them the tools and giving them the skills they can take into these later stages of development where they very much are going to be out in the world on their own. So how do we do this? We do this by not necessarily like directing and commanding. But giving them to think about what they need to do. Asking those questions. When we get home from school, what are the things you need to do to be ready for tomorrow? Rather than a soon as we get home, from school, go sit at the ticket kitchen table and do your homework. We want them to start listening to be internalized parent voice they have been developing all this time. And by them going too far on the other side, of telling them what to do and how to do it, we kind of silence that because they don't need to listen to the internal voice when they have the external voice coming at them all the time. So what these things look like, what these emotional muscles look like, in children is communicating values. We want them to talk about and think about what's important to them. One of the things that I think is wonderful that's being taught in school right now, is the idea of mindset. Especially growth mindset. The ability to say, you know I not I can't do something. But I can do something or I can't do something yet. It teaches us even when something is hard, we keep working and we can get there. So having them asking them and having them be able to talk about and think about, what's important to them in terms of police and dies. This can be really important if you are or have a faith you subscribed to. Whether those things you hold as a family that is important to you and them and that you want to carry on into their future life. Being able to show pride and express confidence. Obviously, we want this to be done in a healthy way. But being able to feel proud of what you have done. Working hard at practice for soccer or getting a good grade on a test. Something that was hard to do. Being able to reinforce that his parents and help them realize when they have worked hard. Because sometimes and a lot of times we do, when we see a child struggling, our response is to get down on them. Point out the flaws. But when we can point out how they have worked hard and what they have accomplished, even for them when it might not be completely clear that's that something that is so helpful. Developing personal friendships and activities. This is something that goes along with developing an activity schedule. A lot of children's activities are based around organized sports. And school. But I think a lot of times the things kids miss, is having time to build relationships. A lot of times that can't happen when you are in practice and you are having to be moving, moving, moving all the time. You don't have the ability to just sit and be in relationship and talk and joke and do those things that build those. In the fourth developing close family relationships and opportunities for connection as family. Another thing that can get lost in the hustle and bustle of modern life. Having the time spent with family. Because as they go into these next stages, they are going to be spending more and more time independent of the family. And if we don't build that close and strong relationship now, it's going to be harder to do it later on. Because in these next stages the drive is going to be towards independence. So when you have those times where they say, I just want to cuddle with you mom or dad. Or can I sleep in your bed? And your first instinct is to say no your 11 years old. You could go sleep in your bed. Before we have those automatic responses, to kind of push away, think about like what is it they are looking for? They are kind of looking for those opportunities for connection. While it may not be you can sleep in my bed all night, let's have some time to sit and read together or talk about those things that are important to us as a family. To help build that sense of connection. All right. Let's go to the next slide. The next thing we will talk about some group we refer to as tweens. We can also talk about those middle school years from six grade to eighth grade. On this can definitely be a challenging time. Both for kids and for parents and the relationship between the two. I kind of think about this is what I would call the second individuation. The first time you see it is like those toddler years. The terrible twos and threes. In a lot of ways, these preteen years, these years really mirror that. They are moving into a world where they want to do more things on their own. And they are kind of expected to do more things on their own. But they can't quite do it on their own. You know they still need a lot of help. And so they are taught caught in this conflict between wanting to be separate and wanting to be independent but yet, still really meeting and dependent on parents for support. The two emotional muscles we think about and focus upon during this time is individuation. That process of beginning to separate. Beginning of growing up. And two, self acceptance. This is originally a really difficult time for children in the sense. One of the ways we kind of think about these years, is moving sort of more so away from parents and family and towards friendships. Right? Children's friendships. They start to become in a lot of ways, even more important to them than parents. Which as a parent is hard to hear. We spent so much time taking care of them and supporting them. And to know you know they would rather go hang out with their friends or spend time on their phone than you know sitting around with your own will -- dear old mom and dad. It is a loss. It really is. One of the things that does, go from this relationship where they felt like this unconditional love. Someone who has always been there for them. Would always care about them no matter how mean they were or crazy they were, mom and dad and aunts and uncles and grandparents are

always going to be there for you. We kind of learned or hopefully learn this. Been to a relationship where acceptance is really dependent on you know how you act. What clothes you wear. How you smell. What activities you participate in. Bullying during this time is such a huge issue because -- they are trying to figure out like who do I belong with? This is a whole new world. And I had to figure out who I belong with and how I like make connections with those people. It's a very confusing and very difficult time, time to navigate for kids. So just like if we think about going back to the first individuation during toddlerhood. One of the most important things we can provide for a child during that time, is a secure base to come back to. When we think about going out into the world, no you have a safe place to come back to, makes going out that much more confidence in being able to do that. If you don't have that base, it becomes very anxiety provoking to go out into the world and do anything. So being able to provide that as a parent for your child. To make home feel like a place where I can be accepted. And I can feel loved and connected and that it's a safe place. For me. It's so important. And we do that by really working on and trying to develop that relationship with our child. To get really interested in the things they are interested in. So you are growing now, you becoming more of an adolescent. I want to know about you in this new way. Because they don't feel so alienated. So when their whole life becomes tick-tock and you see them doing strange dances in front of their front, instead of saying like, what the heck are you doing? The interested. I sometimes go on tick-tock and it's pretty funny. And you will see like parents who are doing these crazy dance moves with their kids. And you are like my first, what the heck are they trying to do? You are a 50-year-old man. But the more you think about it, like how precious is that that father wanted to put aside all this self-doubt and silliness and do something with his child. That was important to them. That such a cool thing. The second way we can help is by reinforcing accurate self-awareness. Things like body image. Things like how smart you are. How attractive you are. All these things that are important to kids at this point. Because again, those are the things that are meaningful in terms of relating to and connecting to their peers. It can get really skewed. Especially around body image. A lot of times this is the period where we see things like eating disorders. We see those develop. So any opportunity we have to provide an accurate understanding and awareness of who you are and what's important. And even how you look. When a child says like, it's a pimple or their body starts changing. That's really a scary thing. And being able to provide an accurate understanding that one, you are not the only one going through this. This is something I as a parent went through. And this was really hard for me. But once I was able to look back and got a little distance from it, I realized in a, I wasn't as ugly or fat or those it's one as big as they seemed at that time. Because having that accurate self-awareness of who you are and what you look like, is something that's really important going forward. So the things we want to do to help as parents to help develop and ourselves, practicing the art of letting go. This is the initial stages. When we think about involvement, we think about learning. Are not quite there to letting go but we are getting there. It's hard to believe. But they are going to be adults at some point in the future. And we need to begin to prepare ourselves. Finding those small opportunities to practice letting go. Giving them a little space. Giving them a little independence in safe ways to begin to develop both their confidence and your confidence. In reaching those stages of independence. This also develops trust. It's really hard to trust a child in this age. They oftentimes seem like really out of control. But the more we can do that, the more we can develop that trust through learning, the better prepared we will be for future stages. Becoming comfortable with your child sexuality. This is the really challenging time for parents. Having to talk about sex with your child. Having to talk about their bodies. When they are really self-conscious. How that's happening and what they look like and you are very self-conscious about like how this impacts your relationship. Especially with the child of the opposite sex. Like how comfortable you are in that relationship changing. So doing the work you need to do for yourself to get comfortable with that. Because they are really going to need you to this period. Not only to provide the guidance and education. But to provide that acceptance and accurate awareness of what their body is and what it means to them. And of course setting realistic and appropriate limits. We don't want to be can treat be controlled. Also we don't want to just let them out and not really be aware of what's going to happen them to them. This is a time again where they need to go out there and develop trust and develop their independence. But they are still learning what is risky and what safe. We need to be able to provide those boundaries. And appropriate limits in order for them to get through this stage of development without being traumatized or injured or getting into something whether that's drugs, tobacco or alcohol or sexuality. We know those things can have long-lasting impacts on their lives. So the last page we will talk about is adolescence. The high school years. Which again, you know create their own challenges. Every stage has its challenges. Every stage is different. It's funny, it's interesting that elementary school and middle school and high school typically are school districts in all different buildings. Right? Ice to joke the middle school building is kind of like quarantine for kids. Because of how crazy puberty makes everybody. We just need to put them in totally separate building. So high school. That age group or period where they really are becoming independent. Whether that is in their studies. Driving and getting jobs.

Having significant relationships. Both friendships and romantic relationships. Getting ready to go off to college. All those things are really big life tasks. And this is their opportunity to kind of take all those things that you have given them that you have helped develop in them over the years. And kind of put them into place. And because of this, they are going to be spending more and more time outside of the home. More and more time with their friends. So finding a way to do that in a safe way that maintains the connection to the relationship you have with them. Is really important. The second big emotional muscle is that of identity. They are figuring out who they are going to be as adults. And if you know teenagers, that can look a lot of different ways. They spend a lot of time experimenting in who they are, what they are going to look like, what's important to them. And so you see a kid who you know has died black and blue hair freshman year. And by senior year, they are like on the debate team and planning to go to law school. They are trying all these things out. And right now it's a really confusing time. Especially in regards to identity. You know with gender, sexuality, politics, finding out like who you are has become really important. And you can feel like if I don't identify the right way or if I don't respect other people's identities, that I could be making a really big mistake. So it feels like the stakes are really high. So how do we help support our teens as parents during this time? One is setting appropriate boundaries. Again, just like those middle school years where they are kind of beginning to practice independence. We want to do this in a realistic and understanding way. We don't want to be too far on either end. And this is why something like this becomes really individualized. Knowing that, knowing your child and what they are capable of and what they are anxious about. That becomes really important. Because that's what's going to guide you in terms of what is okay for them to take on their own. Are they the type of kid who was able to like call up their Doctor and schedule their medical appointment and go to the medical appointment? Or, are they somebody who is terrified of doing something like that? Are they somebody who can go out and get a job and do that? Or are they somebody who generally holds back and spins more time doing the things that relate to school, activities and sports? Having a blanket structure for boundaries and guidelines, is it so helpful at this time. You need to be able to know your child. The second thing and this is really important, in terms of identity, being curious versus critical. It's very easy as a parent to react with criticism. Where we see some of them doing something that doesn't seem to fit with how we see them and how we see ourselves. Oftentimes, we don't spend the time really thinking about why this? Why the blue hair? Why are you using different pronouns now when it seemed like you were playing with your American girl dolls just a couple of years ago? Those are the questions we need to ask them to be curious about why? Why is this important to you? And doing it in a nonjudgmental way. Because teenagers are really quick to pick up on that. Really quick to pick up on judgment and quick to pick up on criticism. Because it's so important to them. It's so important to know where they stand with other people. Especially with friends. They are really sensitive to judgment and criticism. So being able to be as nonjudgmental even though in your head you might be screaming to say, how many or tell me more about, what made you think about this? Why is this important to you? Being able to provide that avenue for communication is so important. And you will really create a opportunity to build that relationship going into adulthood. Where they are pretty much separate from you. You want to be able to maintain that relationship, maintain the closeness, even though you don't know what everything is that's going on in their lives. So embrace their individuality of the children. We want and know this is important to them to develop their own identity and own individuality. So we want to embrace that and supported. Even if it might be a little off to us. We know that's part of them. And that's part of them learning who they are. Distinguishing assertion from aggression. This can be hard for teens to figure out. When they respond by yelling or slamming doors, it's fairly easy for us as parents and adults to take that as an affront. They are attacking me. They are pushing back at me. But a lot of times, it's not an attack. It's an assertion -- it's an assertion of their independence and who they are and what their needs are. That because they haven't really learned how to control that yet, they oftentimes have it come out as aggression. During this time, we need to hold onto those feelings of love we develop over those years. It can be really hard. Being able to hold onto that even when it feels like they don't care about me. They don't care about our family. To know they are still your child and you are still important to them. Modeling how to manage emotions through managing her own emotion. By being careful about how we react. To hold onto and manage our own anger. And recognizing we need to build a new relationship with them. And they have become an independent person. That is going to require building a new relationship with them as a young adult. In so doing all those things that we do to build relationship. Being curious. Spending time together. Getting interested in what they like and doing that with them. Those can be great opportunities to build that new relationship and to build a more secure connection with them going into adulthood. So that's kind of what we want to talk about in terms of those emotional muscles during the stages. Now why this is important, is because when we look at how we get through difficult times, spending time developing those muscles are going to help us bounce back. When bad things happen. Whether that's our child or us. If we think about you know, when we experience stress. When we experience trauma -- those

are obviously really difficult times. And we think about our muscles metaphor, when you have an injury -- is going to be a period of healing that needs to happen. Is oftentimes a period of regression. Kind of going back. When we think about how we heal from that, I think thinking about in terms of physical therapy is useful. Because what we do during physical therapy, we kind of go backward. We go backward to provide development support in order to get back to where we were. So if you think about like it's something happens to your adolescent. Your high school teen -- they have a loss. They have an injury. Something terrible happened to them. They are not going to need the same kind of support you had been giving them to that point. You will need to take a step back. And maybe revisiting what they needed or what was helpful for them and that earlier stage. In that middle school stage. Because especially when you are out in the world developing your independence, when traumatic things happen, it can make you really afraid. So being able to provide those safe supports that you gave them when they were first entering into the world -- builds that confidence again. Creates those opportunities for them to get back to building those emotional muscles and get back on that developmental track. I think that's a really important thing to think about in terms of resilience. We don't necessarily automatically bounce back. Sometimes it takes a little work. We do that by relying on and building back those emotional muscles. Let's stop there. We might have a couple of minutes for questions.

First of all 15 I do have a question we think about asking. Just wanting to find out from people, what's one thing he will do to build your relationship with your school age child? Elementary, middle school, high school -- what something you are going to do differently with them after hearing what Wilfred had to say today? If you could put your answer, type your answer here and click on the icon to the right, that will broadcast your responses. We have people think they are going to listen more. They are going to spend more time with them.

I like that one

Being nonjudgmental. That's tough as a parent. We have our own ways and values we have. It can be very difficult. Let's see. Cuddle more.

, More. Not being so critical. Boundaries. I think that can be a really hard one. Because oftentimes parents don't know what is the right thing to do. And that's why it is important to get to know your child well. No like what causes them worry and anxiety. And maybe maybe where they may be going too far. Being a little too confident in being able to provide those supportive boundaries were needed.

Absolutely. A lot of people are talking about communicating more, giving space when needed. Someone said they are going to do tick-tock with their child. I think that's great. I want to thank everyone for answering that. I think that's wonderful when people can commit to what they are going to be. So they are not just thinking I want to commend you for that. Are not just taking information, you are digesting it and determining what you are going to do and what you learn today. So give yourself a pat on the back for that.

We have time for maybe one question? Let me let everyone know,

If you want more information information on this topic or other health and wellness topics please feel free to contact your EAP. Your EAP program is here to help you and your family members. Everyone's going through a daily juggle and may hit a wall where they struggle. We are here to help

Someone submitted to the Q&A, we have a 17-year-old daughter, only child. Spends time in her room she rarely engages with us. To we accept this behavior is developing independence? It helps the it hurts that we don't communicate much anymore. I think a lot of people relate to this and they have had this expense with her child. It's really important to kind of I think that was a good question. Is this her asserting her independence? Or is this something else? And I think when we see a child, especially during the stage, spending a lot of time alone and allied of time isolated -- that's when we kind of want to. And think about like, what might be going on here? Outside of just like normal teenage moodiness? Is she in her room because that's where her computer is and she's spending a lot of time with her friends? Because she doesn't have a whole lot of other opportunities? Where she spending that time because she feels alone and isolated? Were ashamed? And doesn't have a lot of confidence to go out into the world? It could be that is something that I think what's really telling is that you are feeling really separated and disconnected from her. And I think the more opportunities you have two find out how to make inroads with her. What is something you can do together? Might take some digging to find that. Everything to maybe consider, if she's having a hard time talking with you. Maybe finding a counselor. Maybe using those EAP benefits to find a counselor she can talk to that's going to be a neutral third-party. That can kind of give you and also give you as parents something to look at doing in terms of helping her move forward.

Thank you so much Wilfred. And fortunately we have hit the top of the are. I know people have questioned. I want to encourage you to do what Wilfred said. Call us and get your questions answered. You can talk to a consultant. If you don't know the number, please call HR. You can reach us on the web. We are here 24 seven. Holidays it doesn't matter, we are here for you. If you didn't your question answered, please call in. I

want to remind you to fill out the closing poll. Is please rate your overall satisfaction today. Very satisfied, satisfied, this upside, or very dishonest like click on the button next your answer for it will broadcast the results to us so again just click on the button next to your response. I want to thank you all for joining today. And I want to let you know, we will have this recording on your member website in about two to three weeks. Thank you for attending and have a wonderful rest of your day.

[Event Concluded]