

# The Heroes Circle®

**The Heroes Circle is a global healing and wellness initiative inspired by the children of Kids Kicking Cancer.**

The Heroes Circle has three program arms.

1. Pain and stress management for very sick children,
2. Inspiring healing and well-being in adults (Adult Resilience Initiative)
3. Creating resilience and support for otherwise healthy children (Childhood Resilience Initiative)

This manual is focused upon the school-based Childhood Resilience Initiative.

The Heroes Circle mantra, **Power Peace Purpose**, captures our approach to children who are experiencing stress:

## **Power**

Most children don't feel like they have a lot of power. They are often told what to do and when to do it. That sense of powerlessness is sharpened in children who have experienced illness or other traumatic events. The Heroes Circle helps children recognize and connect to their own power, using it to take control when they feel stressed or overwhelmed.

## **Peace**

Using the Heroes Circle self-regulating techniques, children are better able to banish self-defeating thoughts, focus on their healing and learning, or navigate tough social situations to bring themselves back to a place of calm control.

## **Purpose**

The Heroes Circle participants are given the purpose of helping other children who may be in hospitals across the world. They are also trained to use their techniques to teach their family, friends, and community. Teaching others reinforces what the children have learned and helps them put their own difficulties into perspective. When we ask children what their purpose is, they reply, "TO TEACH THE WORLD!"

**The Heroes Circle is a project of Kids Kicking Cancer.** For more than twenty years, Kids Kicking Cancer has helped children manage the trauma of chronic illness, transforming them from victims to victors.

Kids Kicking Cancer was founded by Rabbi Elimelech Goldberg. After having lost his first child to leukemia at a very young age, Rabbi Goldberg sought to create a program to better serve children suffering from life-threatening illnesses. His training as a martial arts black belt and experience as a clinical assistant professor of pediatrics led to the creation of Kids Kicking Cancer.

The children of Kids Kicking Cancer are given tools that empower them to take control of negative emotions like pain, fear, and anger. Our goal is to use these same tools to empower schoolchildren to take control of their stress.

# The Heroes Circle®

## **The Heroes Circle is unique among school-based social and emotional learning (SEL) programs.**

Using the power of martial arts to teach meditative breathing, mindfulness, and movement, The Heroes Circle program engages children's imagination while teaching them how to work through overwhelming emotions. This powerful method helps children learn to regulate the limbic system while encouraging them to teach others and gain purpose in their lives and in the lives of very sick children around the world.

The Heroes Circle is a highly regarded, evidence-based program. Using MRI data, this program has been shown to decrease activity in the pain matrix of the brain. A highly stimulated pain matrix inhibits a child's ability to focus and learn. This curriculum is specifically built to address the effects of stressful situations, thereby improving a child's ability to self-regulate and learn.

**This program has been proven effective.** In fact, longitudinal survey data indicated that many of the children who participated in the Heroes Circle were still using the Breath Brake as a method for managing stress nearly five months after classroom instruction ended.

**Our goal was to create a program that would also empower individuals at all levels of the school community. That empowerment extends to teachers, principals and administrators, and district-level administration.**

**For teachers,** we've made The Heroes Circle program easy to navigate and to integrate into the classroom setting. Standards-based lesson plans help teachers connect The Heroes Circle to their content and area of expertise. The program includes extensive training for teachers and a self-care module, designed to ensure that teachers have all the tools they need to successfully implement The Heroes Circle curriculum. The program also includes extensions and modifications for the classroom and beyond, moving the ideas and techniques to the school at large.

**For school principals and administrators,** we've included features that integrate smoothly with Title I, social and community welfare, and other existing school resources. This program can complement a range of school cultures while positively impacting student-to-student relationships.

**To support district-level learning goals,** The Heroes Circle program emphasizes educational standards like the Common Core, and has demonstrated a positive impact on behavior, test scores, and grades. When students feel empowered and in control of their learning, the impact is evident at all levels.