

It's difficult to be successful without a foundation of social and emotional wellness. I'm lucky to have a large support system of friends and adults who are good role models in my life. However, as we get older, much of our wellness is based upon choices we make everyday. We become responsible for maintaining our own wellness, surrounding ourselves with good people, making healthy choices, and responsible decisions.

I've always been a relaxed person and I tend to make friends easily. I honestly try to treat people right, so I feel I do a good job of managing relationships with people. One small example is my high school parking lot at the end of the day. There's always a traffic jam. Most people cut the line and go ahead of others without letting them pass or merge. I always let someone go ahead of me, trying to set an example for others to do the same. I hold doors for people and try to help out when needed. Small acts of kindness that help everyone get home faster or through the door more easily can really make a difference in someone's day.

I'm grateful to have positive role models in my life that provide me with great examples of what I should strive to be in my life. From my swim team to my scout troop, I have adults I can go to for help and advice. I've grown to know coaches, teachers, engineers, doctors, and scientists that are all respected leaders in my community. I earned my Eagle Scout Award with the help of adults I have known since elementary school. They've guided and taught me many skills I will be able to use in my life like financial management, citizenship, first aid, and personal fitness. I've learned how to deal with people and work together in difficult situations. For example, my sister and I were the captains of our swim team and as you can imagine, we didn't agree on everything. Learning to compromise is what made us an effective team.

Another part of my social and emotional well-being that I'm proud of is my decision-making. I'm an empathetic person and although I know the importance of looking out for yourself, I make decisions to help those around me. Prior to my junior year swim season, a good friend of mine and I hoped to be team co-captains. However, our new coach initiated a rule restricting the number of male captains to just one. We nominated each other, and I ended up winning. While I would have enjoyed being captain again, I chose not to run so that I could support him. I helped him write and rehearse his speech, and though he didn't win, I stand by my decision to help him. It was disappointing that he didn't win because he is a good guy who just got nervous when presenting his speech.

One part of maintaining social health and happiness is self management. Making responsible decisions and time management are imperative to having success in your life. Throughout my life and especially during high school I've had to learn how to manage my time. I've worked through twice daily swim practices, scouts, schoolwork, a social life, chores, time for family and relaxation. Balancing all of this can be a challenge sometimes and occasionally I feel overwhelmed. My ability to stay calm under pressure has been very helpful to me. For example, in my regional swim competition, I tied another swimmer in a race and had to do a one-on-one swim-off race in front of the whole pool. I maintained my composure and finished my swim .3 seconds before my opponent. This was a great experience because it taught me the value of staying calm and focused under pressure.

Being aware of and managing the different aspects of social and emotional wellness have helped me be successful so far but I think we all struggle sometimes. When I first moved to Alaska at the beginning of fourth grade, I was nervous about meeting new people and I still remember when someone asked me to play tag at recess on my first day. That invitation made such a difference to me and the next thing I knew I was laughing and making friends. I hope I do a good job of paying attention to people and their feelings so I can support friends and family when they need it, just like I did on the first day of school.