

What Your Colleagues Are Saying . . .

“If you care for kids in any capacity, pick up this book right now. It’s innovative, humane, solution oriented, and both powerful and incredibly practical.”

Anya Kamenetz

Author of *The Stolen Year*

“*Whole Child, Whole Life* is a book that speaks to the ‘wholeness’ not just of children, but to those of us who love, care for, and educate them. Practical strategies, interwoven with moving personal narratives, make this a must-read for anyone looking to expand their compassion, competency, and knowledge about what it takes to positively impact a future generation.”

Gina Warner

CEO, National Afterschool Association

“Momentum for expanding social, emotional, mental, and physical health and development has grown to an all-time high across the country. No one can argue that this is one of the most critical fields in public education. *Whole Child, Whole Life* is an excellent ‘go-to’ resource for school districts that are committed to creating and sustaining social emotional learning programs as part of their strategic plans on behalf of the students who are learning and growing in their communities.”

Daniel A. Domenech

Executive Director, AASA, The School Superintendents Association

“*Whole Child, Whole Life* is a vivid and thoughtful recipe for adults interested in supporting children to realize their potential and achieve success. Krauss boldly describes the ways and means people and systems can utilize to personalize child development, meet children where they are and give them what they need to flourish, to become both resilient and accomplished. This is an incredibly useful manual for caring adults who want to help our children thrive in these challenging times.”

Paul Reville

Professor, Harvard Graduate School of Education and Founding Director, EdRedesign
former Massachusetts Secretary of Education

“In *Whole Child, Whole Life*, Stephanie Malia Krauss has created a blueprint and set of strategies for what adults (parents, teachers, coaches, neighbors, etc.) can do to help children thrive in a rapidly changing world. This book is chockful of insights, practices, and everyday strategies to support the needs of children from basic survival needs to nurturing their relationships, sense of belonging, and spiritual development. There are practical ideas here that will help any adult to help support the growth and flourishing of children and youth, and our communities.”

Mark Greenberg

Emeritus Professor, Penn State University
Founding Director, Edna Bennett Pierce Prevention Research Center
Board Chair, CREATE

“Stephanie Malia Krauss demonstrates her grasp of the youth mental health crisis we face today and provides the guidance we need to cope with it. This compelling new work is for everyone who cares about young people—not just professionals—and I’m so grateful she has contributed to our understanding with such focus and compassion.”

Chuck Ingolia

President and CEO, National Council for Mental Wellbeing

“Are you someone who is raising or educating children and youth? If so, open this book. The words, charts, and drawings on these pages wonderfully capture the complexity about what we know works to support kids in today’s world and helpfully convey how we grownups might try to do better—for them.”

Gregg Behr

Co-author of *When You Wonder, You’re Learning: Mister Rogers’ Enduring Lessons for Raising Creative, Curious, Caring Kids*
Executive Director, The Grable Foundation

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WHOLE CHILD. WHOLE LIFE

10 WAYS TO HELP KIDS
LIVE, LEARN, & THRIVE

STEPHANIE MALIA KRAUSS

ILLUSTRATIONS BY
MANUEL S. HERRERA

 CORWIN

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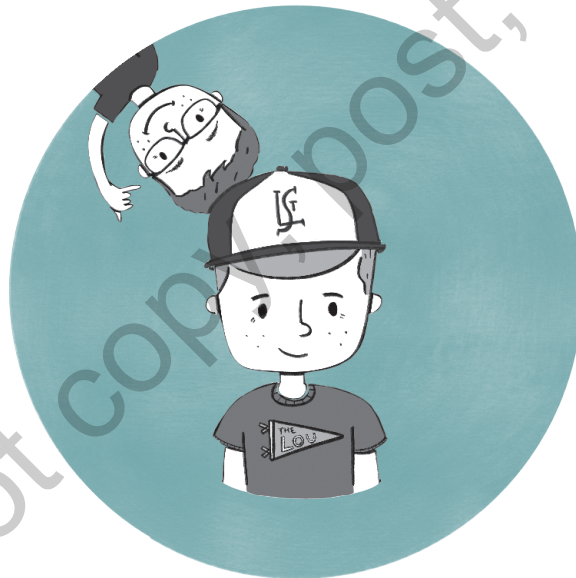
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Preface

Written by Justice Hi'ilani Krauss (age 11) with contributions from Harrison Drew Koali'i Krauss (age 9)



JUSTICE AND KOA

Hi. My name is Justice Krauss and I'm a sixth-grade student. Most people would start a preface by talking about how long they've known the author of the book, but I've known Stephanie my entire life. Literally. She's my mom.

I've also known this world my entire life. I was born into it! This world is different from the one most adults grew up in. Kids have to deal with school shootings, a huge mental health crisis, changing weather like snow in Texas, and tons of war. And that's our normal! We need people who understand that. We need people who respect what we're going through. People who listen to kids and take us seriously. We have ideas and dreams, and we deserve to be heard and respected as much as adults.

The people in my life who have understood this the most are caring, want to know what I have to say, and they share my belief that things are hard and we can make them better. These people want me to feel great and be great.

One of the biggest examples of this is my former teacher, Mrs. Dawson, who I had for third and fifth grade (yes, she was my teacher twice). Mrs. Dawson is the type of teacher every kid should be able to have. She made me want to go to school, feel welcome, and like I belonged. With her, I knew I mattered, and I was wanted. Because of who she was and how she treated me, I became a better student and person.

Then there's Coach Mike, my counselor. He pulled me out of an emotional ditch, which you'll learn about in the chapter on the brain and body. He is someone I can talk to and trust to help me when I'm having a hard time with OCD, or with life in general.

I also have a church community. They've always been there for me, even when I didn't want to go to services. Now I look forward to going because they are like my family. I know they love me and I know they will be there for me no matter what.

Lastly, there's my mom. She's someone I can trust with anything because I know she won't judge me. If I have something on my mind, I go to her first. She makes sure I am healthy, happy, and safe. I know she loves and supports me always. She is the one who wrote this book, and she really does practice what she preaches.

Every night before we go to sleep, this is the prayer my mom prays over me and my brother:

May the Lord bless you and keep you safe from all harm.

May He cause His face to shine upon you.

Blessing your physical development, spiritual development, emotional development, and cognitive development.

May He wake you up safe and sound, full of joy and good health in the morning.

Amen.

I know this prayer is actually her promise. She's said it every night since I was born. When I hear her pray, I also hear her saying she will do whatever she can to make my life a good one.

I'm positive that it's hard to be a grown-up right now. The world is weird for all of us, not just kids. I hope you can be a person who helps everybody be well, and I hope you have people in your life who can help you be your best self too.

My mom thought that a book about kids and what they need should start with the perspective of a child. So you got me. Enjoy the book, and please do what my mom suggests.

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To the adults who love my kids—their teachers, coaches, counselors, faith leaders, neighbors, family, and friends. Every day you bring the principles and practices of this book to life. Thank you for everything.

—Stephanie Malia Krauss

To my two sons, Gray and Hudson. Thank you for always being true to who you are and accepting to those around you. You each inspire me to continue being my true self and to be empathetic toward others. I love you both.

—Manuel S. Herrera

Introduction

This is a challenging time to be young. Kids are growing up amid pandemics and other health scares, economic crises, extreme weather, divided politics, violence, extremism, and more. Global problems are personal and proximate. Fear for the future and worry for the present is palpable. Young people must keep living and learning during historic firsts at times when we are struggling to cope ourselves.

During this time, we continue to teach, coach, counsel, and care for kids. We try our best to protect their childhoods—to do whatever it takes for them to go to school, do sports, play music, create art, hang with friends, fall in and out of love, and become good humans.

The hope of this book is to help you in that work. This book is for people like me who care for and about children, from little ones to teens, across learning and life. Maybe you do this for free, out of love or obligation. Maybe you get paid. Perhaps both.

Think of this as an education book for more than educators and a youth development book for more than youth workers. It's a book that a whole team or an entire community can read and discuss together. Too often, I walk into a bookstore and go to the parenting section for a resource on substance abuse or spiritual development and to the education section for books about learning styles and disabilities. At conferences, professionals are separated by sessions and tracks. If I want to learn about mental health, I go to a session for counselors, but if I need help with social emotional learning, I attend one for teachers.

Then I look at my kids and their everyday experiences. For them, these distinctions are arbitrary. My older son relies on the collective support of his family, teachers, therapist, pediatrician, church leaders, coaches, and camp counselors. My younger son learns and grows during his 4 hours of afterschool programming, like he does during 6 hours at school. His teacher is also his YMCA summer camp director, and the teacher down

the hall was his soccer coach. We should all be cross-trained in ways we can support the boys' health, learning, and development.

Reflecting this reality, I have written *Whole Child, Whole Life* with kids at the center, making sure that it is relevant for any adult who cares for them. The following chapters connect us with the questions and concerns we share: Will the kids be ok? What do they need? What can I do?

The genesis of this book is a long time coming. It braids together what I've learned as an educator, social worker, and parent. It has roots in my childhood with moments of feeling unknown and unable to imagine a life beyond the one I felt trapped in. It took the deep investment of a mighty group of adults to set me on a (very unconventional) course for the life I have today.

My childhood taught me that feeling *whole* and *well* were states of being I had to work for. At the same time, there were people and environments where that was easy, even effortless. These were the places where and people with whom I was safe, supported, and knew I belonged. Like magic, they could bring me to life and inspire me to learn no matter what else was going on.

I'm a lifelong student of that art, science, and mystery—what I think of as the *alchemy* of working with children. For years, I pursued and practiced it on the frontlines with kids. Then, when my kids were little, I left my work in schools and tried to implement it in policy, philanthropy, and program design. As I moved farther from the frontlines, my own children were getting older and starting school. As I worked to make education more student centered and policies more child friendly, I was also raising two very different humans in troubling times.

When the first terrifying wave of COVID-19 shut down society, my household—like so many others—suddenly became a homeschool. I was finishing my first book on what kids need to “make it” in the future. During my pandemic-forced book tour from my basement, I did virtual speaking engagements with educators and counselors across the United States. Every time, I saw my own fears reflected in their pixelated faces. When I would finish speaking, someone would ask a version of the same question: “Now that we know what kids need to be ready, can you tell us what they need to be well?”

I felt that question in my bones. As a mom, I would doomscroll the news and panic about what life would be like for my kids. I was desperate for practices to help them thrive now (well-being) and in the future (well-becoming). I needed these practices to be durable and able to weather whatever the world would throw at us next.

I started looking for a book with all that information in one place, knowing that if I found it, I would read it and give it to every adult spending time with my kids. All of us were doing our best, but most of us felt like we were missing the mark.

I couldn't find the book, so I wrote it. I reached out to more than 50 scholars and experts, asking if they would contribute their stories and wisdom. I dug into research and trends on learning, human development, resilience, thriving, longevity, mental health, and more.

I wrote as fast as I could because while I wrote, a youth mental health crisis went from a slow heat to a rolling boil. Before finishing the first chapter, America's pediatricians and the U.S. Surgeon General declared youth mental health a crisis of epidemic proportions.¹ My interviews backed that up. In 2022, I spoke to dozens of parents and mental health professionals who each expressed alarm. More kids were depressed, anxious, and suicidal. Emergency rooms were full and kids in crisis were being turned away. Child psychiatrists were refusing health insurance, and waiting lists were years long. There weren't enough therapists to meet demands. Educators saw it too. Problem behaviors in class were on the rise and students were struggling more intensely and frequently than before—quicker to anger, act out, or withdraw. Teachers couldn't tell what was due to the pandemic and what was a more serious problem.

This book attends to these mental health and behavioral concerns by focusing on prevention, protection, and preparation. I hope I've addressed many of your concerns, because this is information I have needed personally, as a parent and youth advocate.

Whole Child, Whole Life aims to be both timely and timeless. It's full of principles and practices that have always been good for kids but are urgently needed now. The book is organized to be read cover-to-cover or as a guidebook where you can focus on one chapter at a time. Many of the tables and figures utilize concepts from researchers, and I recommend checking out the original source materials, found in the endnotes. These studies and reports take on a level of depth and detail that isn't covered here.

This is a book about wholeness, which means it covers a lot of ground. In Part I, we learn who kids are, from the profiles of what they look like and where they live to the parts of their personality that bring them into high definition. In Part II, we explore the 10 practices to help kids thrive. These chapters take on what can help or hurt kids, grounding you in science, story, and strategies. Part III explores what thriving looks like in real time.

In writing this book, I have seen how the same practices that are good for kids are good for adults. To that end, I hope this book will be supportive to your own well-being. As you read, be open to what this means for you, and remember it's all connected. Young people will be better if the adults in their lives are taking care of themselves.

At the end of every chapter in Part I there are key takeaways and reflection questions you can use individually or in a group. The 10 whole life practices in Part II include “Try Now” sections with tips and tools to use right away. Many of these were suggested by field leaders, and as a result, I have found myself not only writing this book, but using these techniques with my own children.

If you are an expert in a particular practice, you might feel like my treatment is too light. Where experts get narrow, this book is intended to be expansive, offering a comprehensive look at what kids will experience and how we can support them. I have deliberately left out words and acronyms that might be confusing, divisive, or only meaningful for some professions. Kids' lives are at stake, and we don't have time to get caught up in jargon. As you'll see in the acknowledgments, a bunch of scholars generously reviewed some of the more complex concepts and trickier topics to make sure the language was accessible and actionable while remaining factual.

This is a book about the relationships we have with kids in the systems and settings where they spend time. It is not a book about how to make those systems work better for kids or how to get rid of systems that cause harm. Systems change can extend and enhance well-being and thriving beyond what happens in a single setting or with one person. It is a charge we must take on together. This book, however, attends to the immediate and interactional work we take on individually.

As you read, I hope you will highlight, dog-ear, and take notes in the margins. My favorite books have stains, folds, and annotations. Use Manuel's illustrations to remember and synthesize key points. As you'll read in “About the Illustrations,” the three characters who journey with us across the book—Kai, Riley, and Marcos—were developed by Manuel and me, using the concepts from the chapters.

May this book provide you with whatever you need to bring your best self into the spaces and relationships you share with children. Today's young people are wonderfully wired and growing up in complicated times. They need us to put these practices into play every day so they can live their best lives.

About the Illustrations



KAI



RILEY



MARCOS

This book is a collaborative effort between the author, Stephanie Malia Krauss, and internationally recognized illustrator, Manuel S. Herrera. Together, Stephanie and Manuel used the *Whole Child, Whole Life* framework—the five parts of a whole child portrait, 10 whole life practices, and five dimensions of wholeness/thriving—to develop the stories of three fictional characters, Kai, Riley, and Marcos.

Throughout the chapters, illustrations of the kids are used to visualize key concepts. Illustrations at the beginning of each chapter serve as a visual summary, while figures illustrate specific concepts. At the end, Manuel—a renowned sketchnote artist—has provided a two-page spread of the entire *Whole Child, Whole Life* framework.

Kai, Riley, and Marcos are fictional kids from different backgrounds and life stages. They are meant to remind readers that thriving should be possible for any child, anywhere.

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