



Centre of Excellence for
MENTAL HEALTH

To Our colleagues throughout Quebec

From The Lester B. Pearson School Board, SSD



What is Resilience?

It is estimated that up to 90% of us will experience at least one traumatic event during our lives (Norris & Sloane, 2007). No two people respond to traumatic events in exactly the same manner. **Resilience** refers to the idea of bouncing back after encountering difficulties or stress, the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, and even significant sources of stress. Healthy adaptation to stress depends on the individual's ability to cope and available resources.

What makes people resilient?

Research has shown that resilient individuals tend to use similar coping strategies when confronted with stress. Southwick & Charney (2013) uncovered 10 coping mechanisms that proved to be effective when dealing with stress and trauma, which they have termed as 'resilience factors'.

Can We Learn to Become More Resilience?

The Model of Neuroplasticity

When cells in the brain are actively used, they transmit their messages more efficiently and form more connections with other cells. When brain cells are not used, they die and are pruned away. This is the 'use it or lose it' phenomenon. We each have to some degree the power to change the structure and function of our brains. **The key is activity** and virtually anyone can become more stress-resilient. We can accomplish this by:

- Learning to harness stress, so that it can serve as a catalyst to develop greater strength.
- Increase our optimism through learning a set of cognitive skills. This is coined '**learned optimism**', by developing a more hopeful view of life and future. We can teach ourselves and students to increase positive and refute negative thinking.

Help Build Resilience in our Students & Buffer Against Stress!

When children and adolescents are faced with stressful life events or threatened by adversity, schools serve as an important context for promoting resilience. This can be accomplished through various strategies:

1. Integrate social-emotional learning and problem-solving within the curriculum
2. Provide basic needs for nutrition and health care
3. Enhance motivation and self-efficacy through role modeling, scaffolding, individualized goal setting, intrinsic rewards, and guided mastery experiences.
4. Generate opportunities for nurturing specific talents or work skills to help promote motivation and competence, and connect with potential mentors
5. Build relationships with competent and caring adults. Teachers play a particularly important role, as they provide the emotional security that comes with attachment bonds. They also influence the motivation to achieve and contribute to the self-confidence and self-efficacy of students. Two important research studies highlight this:
 - a. Theron & Engelbrecht (2012) asked disadvantaged adolescents to write a narrative about how teachers helped them do well during a difficult time in their lives. The teens described the following ways: providing basic needs & caring; a mentoring role; providing knowledge and guidance; a refuge, advocacy, and belief in the adolescent.
 - b. Bernard (2003) describes **turnaround teachers** as those that promote resilience by providing a student with *caring and support, high expectations and opportunities for participation and contribution*.

For more information: http://fosteringresilience.com/7cs_professionals.php

The Practice of Resilience in Schools

- Check out The Giraffe Project at <http://www.giraffe.org/> to promote courageous compassion and active citizenship
- Resilience guide for parents and teachers: <http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience.aspx>
- School-wide methods for fostering resiliency: <http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/schoolresiliency.pdf>
- Bolstering Resilience in Students: Teachers as Protective Factors: http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/literacynumeracy/inspire/research/ww_bolstering_students.pdf
- Parenting Resilient Children at home and at school: <http://www.psychologyfoundation.org/pdf/publications/ResilienceChildrenBooklet.pdf>



If you have found this postcard to be helpful and informative, please share it with colleagues.
Dissemination of information about mental health is the first step toward promoting better mental health!

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