



Para Professional Learning Bundle

Topic: Building Resiliency

Time: 1 Hour

TOPIC INTRO

Building resiliency is a life long skill that will help children succeed in all aspects of life. Kids in our program deal with “tough” situations everyday through social interactions in our program. Your understanding of resiliency will help students learn to build resiliency.

Bundle Resources:

Article: What is Resilience and Why is important to bounce back? (25 Minute Read)

Youtube Video: Building Resiliency in after school programs (5 Minute Watch)

Podcast: Building Resiliency (15 Minute Listen)

Article: Resilience in Children: Strategies to Strengthen you Kids (15 Minute Read)

Article #1

What is it ?

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YOUTUBE Video

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Article #2

Building Resiliency

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ARTICLE#1

What is Resilience and Why is It Important to Bounce Back?

One of the most popular topics in [positive psychology](#)—both in the field itself and in mainstream discussion of positive psychological concepts—is resilience.

To some, resilience is a sort of “miracle drug” personality trait, something that can heal all wounds and right all wrongs.

While resilience may not be the end-all and be-all of personality traits, it’s such a hot topic for good reason: it is a wonderful trait to have, it is related to a plethora of positive outcomes, and—perhaps most important of all—it can be improved.

Read on to learn more about resilience and why it deserves every bit of the attention it gets.

What is Resilience? A Definition

Psychology Today describes it this way:

“Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back stronger than ever. Rather than letting failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes.”

In a nutshell, resilience can be defined as the ability – and tendency – to “*bounce back*.”

What’s the Meaning of Bouncing Back?

“*Bouncing back*” is what we do when we face disappointment, defeat, and failure, but instead of wallowing or letting things keep us down, we get back up and continue on with our lives.

According to the APA Help Center, it’s “the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress” (APA, n.d.).

You might say someone bounces back when they experience a traumatic car accident and sustain serious injuries, but stay positive and [optimistic](#) through a long physical therapy journey.

Resilience and Mental Toughness: What's the Difference?

Aside from the term “bouncing back,” there are many more similar concepts that resilience is often associated with. For instance, resilience is frequently used interchangeably with “mental toughness.”

So what is mental toughness? Mental toughness is “a personality trait which determines in large part how individuals deal with stress, pressure and challenge irrespective of circumstances” (Strycharczyk, 2015). It's part hardiness (**optimism** and predisposition towards challenge and risk), part **confidence**, and it is what allows people to take whatever comes in stride, with a focus on what they can **learn and gain** from the experience.

While the association with resilience is understandable, it's also easy to see where they differ: resilience is what helps people recover from a setback, but mental toughness can help people avoid experiencing a setback in the first place.

As Doug Strycharczyk puts it, “*All mentally tough individuals are resilient, but not all resilient individuals are mentally tough*” (2015).

Those who are mentally tough are not only able to bounce back, they are more likely to see hardship as a welcome challenge and greet it with a smile.

Resilience vs. Grit

Another commonly used synonym for resilience is grit, but is grit really a synonym for resilience?

According to Professor Guy Claxton's Building Learning Power organization, grit is not just a synonym for resilience:

“Grit is a more recent import, much researched by Angela Duckworth, and is defined as the tendency to sustain interest and effort towards long term goals. It is associated with self control and deferring short term gratification” (n.d.).

Resilience is more narrowly defined, although it is related to the same experiences, skills, and competencies. One simple way to think about the differences between resilience and grit is that resilience more often refers to the ability to bounce back from short-term struggles, while grit is the tendency to stick with something long-term, no matter how difficult it is or how many roadblocks you face.

It's great to have both resilience and grit, but it's clear that they refer to two different traits.

Mental Endurance: Yet Another Synonym?

Another construct that is similar to resilience is mental endurance. Mental endurance refers to the mental or inner strength that we use to deal with our challenges.

It requires willpower, self-discipline, and perseverance to develop and maintain mental endurance (Sasson, n.d.). Although it is not specific to “bouncing back” from trauma or adversity, it is related in the sense that both traits help us deal with difficulty in our lives.

What is the Meaning of Fortitude?

Finally, there’s fortitude—yet another word that is often used in tandem with or in lieu of “resilience.”

[Merriam-Webster’s dictionary](#) defines fortitude as “*strength of mind that enables a person to encounter danger or bear pain or adversity with courage.*”

This shares some obvious similarities with the other constructs mentioned above, namely mental toughness and mental endurance. All three are rooted in this idea of inner strength, a reserve of mental power that we can draw upon to get us through the most difficult times.

The Psychology of Mental Strength

Although you might read about resilience (and all of the many, many traits related to it) and think that it applies to only the most inspiring, impressive, and awesome among us, resilience is surprisingly common. As the APA Help Center’s piece on resilience states, “*Research has shown that resilience is ordinary, not extraordinary. People commonly demonstrate resilience.*”

Resilience isn’t about floating through life on a breeze, or skating by all of life’s many challenges unscathed; rather, it’s about experiencing all of the negative, difficult, and distressing events that life throws at you and staying on task, optimistic, and high-functioning. In fact, developing resilience basically *requires* [emotional distress](#). If we never ran into disappointment in the first place, we would never learn how to deal with it.

When you think about it in those terms, it’s easy to see that we all display some pretty impressive resilience. Some of us are more resilient than others, but we have all been knocked down, defeated, and despondent at some point in our lives; however, we kept going—and here we are today, stronger and more experienced.

Demonstrating Resilience as an Individual

So what does it look like to demonstrate resilience?

The APA outlines a number of factors that contribute to and act as markers of resilience, including:

- The capacity to make realistic plans and take steps to carry them out.
- A positive view of yourself and confidence in your strengths and abilities.
- Skills in communication and problem-solving.
- The capacity to manage strong feelings and impulses (n.d.).

Author and resilience expert Glenn Schiraldi (2017) provides even more examples and characteristics of resilient people, listing strengths, traits, and coping mechanisms that are highly correlated with resilience:

1. Sense of autonomy (having appropriate separation or independence from family dysfunction; being self-sufficient; being determined to be different—perhaps leaving an abusive home; being self-protecting; having goals to build a better life)
2. Calm under pressure (equanimity, the ability to regulate stress levels)
3. Rational thought process
4. Self-esteem
5. Optimism
6. Happiness and emotional intelligence
7. Meaning and purpose (believing your life matters)
8. Humor
9. Altruism (learned helpfulness), love, and compassion

In addition, these characteristics are also mentioned by Glenn Schiraldi:

10. Character (integrity, moral strength)
11. Curiosity (which is related to focus and interested engagement)
12. Balance (engagement in a wide range of activities, such as hobbies, educational pursuits, jobs, social and cultural pastimes)
13. Sociability and social competence (getting along, using bonding skills, being willing to seek out and commit to relationships, enjoying interdependence)
14. Adaptability (having persistence, confidence, and flexibility; accepting what can't be controlled; using creative problem-solving skills and active coping strategies)
15. Intrinsic religious faith
16. A long view of suffering
17. Good health habits (getting sufficient sleep, nutrition, and exercise; not using alcohol or other substances immoderately; not using tobacco at all; maintaining good personal appearance and hygiene)

To summarize, if a person has awareness (both of the self and of the environment around them), they manage their feelings effectively, keep a handle on their thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, and understand that life has its inevitable ups and downs.

Why is Being Resilient so Important?

You hear a lot about growing and developing resilience – both in ourselves and in children – for good reason.

Therapist and counselor Joshua Miles lists a few of the wide range of reasons that resilience is a great trait to have:

- Greater resilience leads to improved learning and academic achievement.
- Resilience is related to lower absences from work or school due to sickness.
- It contributes to reduced risk-taking behaviors including excessive drinking, smoking, and use of drugs.
- Those with greater resilience tend to be more involved in the community and/or family activities.
- Higher resilience is related to a lower rate of mortality and increased physical health (2015).

The Effects of Psychological Strength on Overall Health

Although every point in that list is a good reason to pay attention to resilience, the last one may be most important of all. Resilience has a powerful impact on our health (and vice versa, in some ways). A recent review of the research on resilience suggested that resilience leads or contributes to many different positive health outcomes, including:

- The experience of more positive emotions and better regulation of negative emotions
- Less depressive symptoms
- Greater resistance to stress
- Better coping with stress, through enhanced problem-solving, a positive orientation, and re-evaluation of stressors
- Successful aging and improved sense of well-being despite age-related challenges
- Better recovery after a spinal cord injury
- Better management of PTSD symptoms (Khosla, 2017).

Further, resilience experts Harry Mills and Mark Dombeck point to research that resilience boosts immune system functioning. Resilient people are able to better manage negative emotions and experience more positive emotions, which leads to objectively good health outcomes like more immune system cells and better immune functioning in cancer patients, and more favorable mortality rates in marrow transplant patients (n.d.).

Growing Mentally Strong as a Person

Since we know that being resilient is such a helpful trait to have, the next logical question is: How do we develop it?

Luckily, resilience is not an immutable, “*you have it or you don’t*” sort of trait. There may be a genetic component to a person’s base level of resilience, but you are always able to improve upon the resilience you have.

This add-on resilience is often referred to as “self-learned resilience.”

How Self-Learned Resilience Works

Self-learned resilience, as the name implies, is the resilience that you build up in yourself through concerted effort. It is the result of being aware of the opportunities for self-development and the courage to take advantage of them.

There are many ways to build up your own reserve of self-learned resilience. Below are just a few ways to go about it from three different sources.

From Dr. Carine Nzodom on using a loss or stressful event to grow:

1. Allow yourself to feel a wide range of emotions.
2. Identify your support system and let them be there for you.
3. Process your emotions with the help of a therapist.
4. Be mindful of your wellness and self-care.
5. Get some rest or try to get an adequate amount of sleep.
6. Try your best to maintain a routine.

Write From VeryWell Mind author Kendra Cherry:

1. Find a sense of purpose in your life, which will help boost you up on difficult days.
2. Build positive beliefs in your abilities to help you increase your self-esteem.
3. Develop a strong social network of people who support you and who you can confide in.
4. Embrace change as the inevitability that it is, and be ready for it.
5. Be optimistic—you don’t need to ignore your problems, just understand that it’s all temporary and that you have what it takes to make it through.
6. Nurture yourself with healthy, positive self-care—get enough sleep, eat well, and exercise.
7. Develop your problem-solving skills through strategies like making a list of potential ways to solve your current problem.
8. Establish reasonable goals by brainstorming solutions and breaking them down into manageable steps.
9. Take action to solve problems rather than waiting for the problem to solve itself. about your experience and share it with others (2017).

And remember: Keep working on your skills and don't get discouraged if it takes a while to get to the level of resilience you desire (2018).

From Kira M. Newman at the University of California at Berkeley's Greater Good Science Center:

1. Change the narrative by free writing about the issue or deciding to focus on the positives.
2. Face your fears and challenge yourself; expose yourself to things that scare you in increasingly larger doses.
3. Practice self-compassion; try to be mindful, remind yourself that you're not alone, and be kind to yourself.

Meditate and practice mindfulness; the [Body Scan](#) is a good way to work on your meditation and mindfulness skills.

1. Cultivate forgiveness by letting go of grudges and letting *yourself* off the hook (2016).

Raising Children to Be Resilient

If you're a parent or a dedicated teacher or another important adult in a child's life, you might be wondering what you can do now to help your child grow up with resilience.

The American Psychological Association has some [excellent tips and techniques](#) on encouraging resilience in the children in your life. Give these ideas a try:

1. Help your child make connections with others to help them build empathy, grow their support network, and encourage resilience.
2. Encourage your child to help others, which can help them feel empowered.
3. Maintain a daily routine to give young children a sense of safety and structure in their lives, and encourage them to develop their own routines.
4. Take a break, and teach your child how to take a break; show him or her that excessive worrying is unproductive and can be harmful, and encourage him or her to set aside what they are worried about at least once in a while.
5. Teach your child self-care, including eating healthy, exercising, getting a good amount of sleep, and having downtime to just relax and have fun.
6. Help your child set reasonable goals and move toward them, one step at a time; this will help him or her to focus on what they have accomplished rather than what they *haven't* accomplished.
7. Nurture a positive self-view in your child by reminding him or her of the ways he or she has successfully handled difficulties and hardships in the past, and connect their past success with their future potential.
8. Help your child keep things in perspective and encourage a long-term view—especially when he or she is stuck on something negative right now.
9. Look for opportunities for self-discovery for your child, and show him or her how to do the same.

Last but not the least, teach your child to accept that change is an inevitable part of living, and that we can always replace goals that have become unattainable with new, more relevant goals (APA Help Center, n.d.).

Resilience Training

Besides self-learned resilience and teaching resilience to kids, you might want to take it even further and sign up for a course. A highly recommended course is the [Realizing Resilience Master-class](#) which will improve your own resilience skills, but also equip you to coach others in resilience.

Complete with 6 modules and a certificate upon completion, this course will help you be an excellent teacher, parent, coach or even a great friend, able to bounce back despite the challenges in life.

A Take-Home Message

You probably already knew that resilience is an important trait to have, but this piece stressed another important concept: that you have the power to build your own resilience (and to help the children in your life develop resilience).

We so often forget about how much power we have over our lives and our circumstances. I hope this piece has reminded you that you do indeed have the power to improve your resilience and build your competence and confidence in yourself.

What are your thoughts on resilience? Do you think any of the related concepts are more important to develop? Are you not convinced that resilience is as vital as everyone says? What do you do to build your own resilience? Let us know in the comments section below!

Thanks for reading!

Article #2

Resilience in Children: Strategies to Strengthen Your Kids

Help your child build resilience in the face of obstacles including bullying, moving, divorce, and anxiety with these tips from an expert

Article by: Katie Hurley, LCSW

All children are capable of working through challenges and coping with stress. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress, adversity, failure, challenges, or even trauma. It's not something that kids either have or don't have; it's a skill that kids develop as they grow.

Resilient kids are more likely to take healthy risks because they don't fear falling short of expectations. They are curious, brave, and trusting of their instincts. They know their limits and they push themselves to step outside of their comfort zones. This helps them reach for their long-term goals and it helps them solve problems independently.

Stress and Resilience

All kids encounter stress of varying degrees as they grow. Despite their best efforts, parents can't protect kids from obstacles. Kids get sick, move to new neighborhoods, encounter bullies and cyberbullies, take tests, cope with grief, lose friends, and deal with divorce, to name a few. These obstacles might seem small in the eyes of an adult, but they feel large and all-consuming to kids.

Resilience helps kids navigate these stressful situations. When kids have the skills and the confidence to confront and work through their problems, they learn that they have what it takes to confront difficult issues. The more they bounce back on their own, the more they internalize the message that they are strong and capable.

Strategies to Build Resilience

Parents can help kids build resilience and confront uncertainty by teaching them to solve problems independently. While the gut reaction of the parent might be to jump in and help so that the child avoids dealing with discomfort, this actually weakens resilience. Kids need to experience discomfort so that they can learn to work through it and develop their own problem-solving skills. Without this skill-set in place, kids will experience anxiety and shut down in the face of adversity.

Build a Strong Emotional Connection

Spend one-on-one time with your kids: Kids develop coping skills within the context of caring relationships, so it's important to spend one-on-one time with them. This means you need to put down the smart phone and focus on your child. When kids know they have the unconditional support of a parent, family member, or even a teacher, they feel empowered to seek guidance and make attempts to work through difficult situations. Positive connections allow adults to model coping and problem-solving skills to children.

Promote Healthy Risk-Taking

In a world where playgrounds are made “safe” with bouncy floor materials and helicopter parenting, it’s important to encourage kids to take healthy risks. What’s a healthy risk? Something that pushes a child to go outside of their comfort zone, but results in very little harm if they are unsuccessful. Examples include trying a new sport, participating in the school play, or striking up a conversation with a shy peer. When kids avoid risk, they internalize the message that they aren’t strong enough to handle challenges. When kids embrace risks, they learn to push themselves.

Resist the Urge to Fix It and Ask Questions Instead

When kids come to parents to solve their problems, the natural response is to lecture or explain. A better strategy is to ask questions. By bouncing the problem back to the child with questions, the parent helps the child think through the issue and come up with solutions.

Teach Problem-Solving Skills

The goal is not to promote rugged self-reliance. We all need help sometimes, and it’s important for kids to know they have help. By brainstorming solutions *with* kids, parents engage in the process of solving problems. Encourage kids to come up with a list of ideas and weigh the pros and cons of each one.

Label Emotions

When stress kicks in, emotions run hot. Teach your kids that all feelings are important and that labeling their feelings can help them make sense of what they’re experiencing. Tell them it’s okay to feel anxious, sad, jealous, etc. and reassure them that bad feelings usually pass.

Demonstrate Coping Skills

Deep breathing exercises help kids relax and calm themselves when they experience stress or frustration. This enables them to remain calm and process the situation clearly.

Embrace Mistakes—Theirs and Yours

Failure avoiders lack resilience. In fact, failure avoiders tend to be highly anxious kids. When parents focus on end results, kids get caught up in the pass/fail cycle. They either succeed or they don't. This causes risk avoidance. Embracing mistakes (your own included) helps promote a growth mindset and gives kids the message that mistakes help them learn. It can be helpful to talk about a mistake you made and how you recovered from it.

Promote the Bright Side—Every Experience Has One

Optimism and resiliency go hand in hand. Some kids may appear more naturally optimistic than others, but optimism can be nurtured. If you have a mini pessimist on your hands, acknowledge the feelings that lead to pessimistic thinking and teach your child to reframe his thoughts to find the positive.

Model Resiliency

The best way to teach resilience is to model it. We all encounter stressful situations. Use coping and calming strategies. Deep breathing can be an effective way to work through stress. Always label your emotions and talk through your problem-solving process.

Go Outside

Exercise helps strengthen the brain and make it more resilient to stress and adversity. While team sports are the most popular method of consistent exercise for kids, all kids really need is time spent outdoors engaging in a physical activity. If team sports don't appeal to your child, encourage them or introduce them to bicycling, playing tag, or even just swinging at the playground. These are all great ways for kids to engage in free play that also builds resilience.

Resilience helps kids navigate the obstacles they encounter as they grow. It's not possible to avoid stress, but being resilient is one of the best ways to cope with it.