

What is resilience?

Resilience is the capacity to maintain or re-establish our mental health and wellbeing in the face of significant changes or challenges. Resilience impacts our thoughts, emotions, behaviours and social interactions. This includes how well we are able to respond in a particular situation and control our emotions.

Our experience of resilience is influenced by a range of factors including biological (e.g. temperament), psychological (e.g. beliefs about our self) and environmental (e.g. the world in which we live). What is regarded as resilient behaviour changes over time and is dependent on a person's developmental age and stage. For example, resilient behaviour in a primary school aged child might include being able to cope with new situations or change to their routines, such as transitioning to the next grade; while resilient behaviour in a four year old child might include being able to cope with a change to their daily routine, such as having a different educator for the day.

Why is resilience important?

Challenges and adversities are part of life. Our capacity to effectively cope is important for maintaining our mental health and wellbeing throughout life.

Resolving personal problems and challenging events provides opportunities for new experiences, to accept challenges, cope with negative emotions and work towards our goals. Through building and developing our resilience, we may be better able to cope with life's challenges and adversities.

Amongst children and young people, resilience can lead to greater academic achievements, positive relationships and social competence and socially appropriate behaviour. It may also reduce our risk of mental health problems and improve our mental health outcomes in the future.

What can teachers and educators do?

Teachers and educators can promote and support children's resilience by:

- establishing meaningful relationships;
- creating safe and supportive environments;
- providing children with individual attention;
- supporting children to achieve their goals;
- helping children to develop their problem-solving and coping skills;
- modelling appropriate responses to different situations through their thinking, emotions, behaviours and interactions with others;
- providing and enforcing clear and consistent guidelines and boundaries for behaviour;
- allowing children to express a wide range of emotions;
- helping children to identify and label their feelings; and
- providing opportunities for success.

When teachers and educators implement strategies in their day-to-day practice that promotes resilience, they are helping children and young people to be in a better position to think and act abstractly, reflectively and flexibly throughout life.

Further Information

Cefai, C. (2008). *Promoting resilience in the classroom: a guide to developing pupil's emotional and cognitive skills*. Philadelphia, PA: Jessica Kingsley Publishings.

Earvolino-Ramirez, M. (2007). Resilience: A Concept Analysis. *Nursing Forum*, 42, 2, pp. 73-82.

ResilienceNet: www.resilnet.uiuc.edu

Response Ability (2014). Promoting Resilience Fact Sheet www.responseability.org/promotingresilience