

Building Resilience in Young People

What is Resilience?

Resilience is essentially the successful adaptation in the presence of risk or adversity (Garmezy, 1986; Luthar, 2003; Olsson, Bond, Burns, Vella-Brodrick, & Sawyer, 2003). Resilience does not mean you are immune to stressful situations rather that you can overcome and deal with them.

There are numerous examples of young people and adults who have “overcome the odds” of negative effects of risks. These people would be considered resilient. Rather than a single influence or factor, resilience is the outcome of a process that takes into account both the level of risk exposure and the presence of protective factors.

These protective factors are often internal strategies and resources that come from within the individual, although these come naturally to some people, they are skills that can be taught and and developed.

Research shows that the ability to navigate, overcome and recover from adversity is the key ingredient for happiness, success, engagement and achievement.

Why is Resilience so Important for Young People?

Resilience helps young people gain skills for life that help them deal with, and manage challenging situations and circumstances that are unfortunately unavoidable in life. These can include managing unexpected change, going through transitions, dealing with daily hassles or a range of stressors.

Resilience also helps young people to cope with unexpected traumatic events, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The ability to deal with uncertainty, change and ambiguity are key skills. Learning skills for resilience during adolescence can make a real change to a young person’s outcomes and success in life.

Resilience is the distinct ability to recover from difficult events rather than an invulnerability to stress.

Resilience is a dynamic learning process that combines several internal mechanisms and strategies that individuals utilise when faced with challenges or adversity. Our approach helps young people learn skills that develop these components of resilience.

What are the Main Components of Resilience?

- **Optimism** – a sense of a positive future, a tendency to find positive meaning in experiences, and a belief in one’s ability to impact positively on one’s environment and situation. To be able to choose to look on the brighter side of life.
- **Emotional awareness and control** – the ability to understand how you feel and how to control the feelings that you express so that they remain appropriate for a given situation. This includes

the ability to develop and experience positive emotions that are essential for wellbeing during times of challenge and adversity.

- **Impulse control and self-regulation** – the ability not to rush into making decisions or take action without thinking. The ability to sit back and look at things in a thoughtful way before acting. The ability to slow your reactions down and not act or react on impulse.
- **Empathy and connection** – the ability to notice and correctly interpret the needs and wants of other people. To be able to put yourself in another person's shoes and understand that you are not alone in your challenge. The ability to connect with others and have positive relationships despite adversity or challenge. The ability to reach out and ask for help when needed and help others when required.
- **Self-efficacy** – confidence and belief in your ability to solve problems and achieve goals for yourself. The belief that you can be who you want to be and do what you want to do.
- **Flexible and accurate thinking** – the ability to think about a challenge or adversity in helpful ways. Including being able to think things through proactively and finding multiple solutions to a problem.

How to Build Resilience in Young People

Promoting and building resilience in young people is key to our model of early prevention at Worth-it. Our targeted [online resilience workshops for young people](#) and [resilience coaching for young people](#) as well as our [coach training for staff to support pupils](#) addresses and offers tools and techniques to develop these key components of resilience in the young people you work with:

- **Optimism** – encouraging young people to help themselves and to think positively about themselves and their situations. It also helps young people recognise their strengths, feel good and notice the things that are going well in their lives.
- **Emotional awareness and control** – young people gain an understanding of their feelings and how to effectively manage and express a range of feelings in a healthy and positive way. Encouraging them to experience positive emotions is essential for wellbeing, especially during times of challenge and adversity.
- **Impulse control and self-regulation** – young people can sometimes find it hard to understand or control their reactions to situations which can often be unhelpful and impulsive. Our training encourages young people to pause, think and act differently (positively) to these same situations.
- **Empathy and connection** – we know that when young people feel supported and confident in themselves, they like to make a difference to help other young people. Evidence shows that if young people are connected to their school and peers in equal measure it helps protect against mental health problems developing in the future.
- **Self-efficacy** – we provide techniques that help young people develop as individuals, grow in confidence and nurture essential skills, tools and knowledge for life and its potential barriers.
- **Flexible and accurate thinking** – we encourage students to learn several different thinking skills that they can use to manage situations, challenge negative and unhelpful thinking, and better understand themselves and others. We support them to use these thinking skills to become more self-aware and have self-belief in their abilities.

Evidence tells us that these [strategies essential for resilience can be developed through coaching young people](#). We provide packages of coaching support to schools and organisations who work with young people. [Training in how to coach young people](#) and applied within your school by developing our [whole school approach to wellbeing and resilience](#).