Everyone experiences change or stress as part of daily living. Resilience is the ability to work through life’s difficulties, thrive and reach our full potential.
Building Resilience

What is Resilience?
Everyone experiences stress or challenges as part of life. Resilience is being able to work through life’s difficulties, thrive and reach your full potential.\(^5\) It is about accepting that life is not always perfect but finding ways to deal with and work through your challenges and recover afterwards.

How can you build resilience?
Building resilience is a process where you develop skills to cope with and work through challenges and recover from the challenges in a positive way afterward. Building resilience is something that you can learn at any time in your life. It is never too early or too late to learn and practice being resilient.

Some resilience skills are:
- being aware of your feelings and being able to control them appropriately
- being able to think of solutions to challenges you have
- thinking positively
- knowing what you are good at
- knowing when and how to get support from others

Resilience will not make life perfect, but it will give you the skills to work through challenges and recover positively afterwards.

Additional Resources
Resources are hyperlinked. If printing activity guide, please review resources online.

Websites
English:
- The Road to Resilience
- Reaching In, Reaching Out
- Resilience (birth to age 6)
- Resilience in Children
- How to Deal with Stress
- Emotional Intelligence

French:
- La résilience (de la naissance à six ans)
- La résilience chez les jeunes enfants
- Comment gérer le stress?
- La résilience ou l’art de rebondir!
- Intelligence émotionnelle

Videos
English:
- Mindfulness: Youth Voices
- The Single Most Important Thing You Can Do for Your Stress

French:
- Mindfulness: Youth Voices (French subtitles)
- La gestion du stress

Activity 1: Reacting to Problems

Goal
- To understand how negative and positive thoughts affect you (SELF-TALK).
- To understand how positive thoughts help you become more resilient.
- To understand that thoughts, feelings and actions are interconnected.

Messages
- There are many different ways of looking at the same situation
- Thoughts, feelings and actions are interconnected.
- Changing how we think can help us to overcome challenges.

Time
- 15-20 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
- Video: Building Resilience
- One Reacting to Problems: Self-Talk Can Change a Lot worksheet for each person (page 28).
- Poster or overhead projection of Change One and You Can Change Them All sheet.
- Flip chart paper and markers

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience
2. Divide into groups of 2-4 participants.
3. Give participants the Reacting to Situations worksheet.
4. Explain to the participants “Self-talk is the way we think about situations. These thoughts can be positive (e.g. “life isn’t perfect, but some things I can change”) or negative They are doing it on purpose). Our thoughts, feelings and actions can all affect each other. For example, our thoughts affect our feelings which affect our actions. Our actions can also change our feelings and thoughts. If we can change the way we think about a situation, we may feel and act differently
5. Give each group a sample scenario.
6. Using the scenarios, ask groups to complete the worksheet. Ensuring that they give examples of both positive and negative thoughts feelings and actions.
7. Ask each group to share their ideas with the larger group for discussion.

Potential Scenarios
- Due to work priorities, you need to work later tonight.
- You receive a call from your child’s teacher about an incident at school.
- On social media, your friends’ posts document the great time they’re having and you’re doing chores.
- You didn’t get a promotion at work again.
- You need to be in three places at once.

Adapted from: CHEO and the Child and Youth Network of Eastern Ontario. (2016) Healthy Transitions: Promoting Resilience and Mental Health in Young Adolescence
How you think can change how you feel and act. Positive self-talk is a skill you can practice.
Sample Worksheet Responses

Reacting to problems: self-talk can change a lot

Negative Self Talk Situation:

Positive Self Talk Situation:

Activity 2: How Resilient Am I?\(^7\)

Goal
- To understand more about how resilient you are.

Messages
- Resilience is a set of skills we can learn anytime.
- You can increase your resilience. This will help you cope with challenges and recover better afterwards.

Time
- 15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

Supplies
- Video: Building Resilience
- One “How Resilient Am I” quiz for each participant (page 30)

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience
2. Give each participant a copy of the “How Resilient Am I” quiz (page 30).
3. Ask each participant to do the quiz and add up their score.
4. Read the scoring section under the quiz.
5. Ask if anyone wants to share their thoughts about the quiz. (Did anything surprise you?)

Possible Participants’ Answers
- Some participants will be surprised by how resilient they are. Other participants will be surprised that they are not as resilient as they thought.
- Reassure participants that this is only one quiz. It gives an indication of their resilience and helps them to start thinking about learning more resilience skills or continuing to practice already existing skills.
- If they are concerned, it is a good idea to promote in a respectful way that they talk to a health care professional.

---

\(^7\) Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health; Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Public Health Association; Mental Illness Caregivers Association; Military Family Services. (2016). Mental Health Caregiver Guide: A guide for caregivers of persons living with mental illness or experiencing mental health challenges. ON: Ottawa Public Health.
How Resilient Am I?

Check either “AGREE” or “DISAGREE” to each statement and add up the number of checks you have for “AGREE” and “DISAGREE”. Do not feel frustrated if you have many “DISAGREE” boxes.

Build on your strengths and come back to the checklist in a few weeks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RESILIENCE</th>
<th>AGREE</th>
<th>DISAGREE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When life gets tough, I reach out to friends and family.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I believe that I can learn from difficult times.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When I am under stress, I will try to lead a normal life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When life gets busy or stressful, I still take time for myself.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a great support network.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After a stressful event, I can let go and move forward.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I cope well with change.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to live in the moment and appreciate the good things in life.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTALS**

**Scoring**

**AGREE**
If you answered “AGREE” to 5 or more of the statements, your resilience is good. The higher the number of agrees, the more resilience you have and feel that even though life can have tough time, it is important to keep perspective.

**DISAGREE**
If you answered “DISAGREE” to 5 or more of the statements; your resilience may be low. The higher the number of disagrees, the less resilience you have at this time. Start working on a plan to improve your resilience. For the items you identified as “disagree”, think about ways that you can work to change this. Building your resilience is a process, and it is important to look at ways you can change the “disagrees” to “agrees” over time. It can take work and time but keep at it!
**Activity 3: Make a Resilience Action Plan**

**Goal**
- To plan ways for you to increase your resilience.

**Messages**
- Resilience is a set of skills you can learn and build on over time. You can start building resilience anytime.
- You can increase your resilience with practice. This will help you cope with challenges and recover positively afterwards.

**Time**
- 15 minutes (depending on the size of the group)

**Supplies**
- Video: Building Resilience
- Flip chart paper and markers
- One Resilience Action Plan for each participant (page 32)
- Pens

**Facilitator Steps**
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience.
2. Give one “Resilience Action Plan” to each participant (page 32).
3. Say to the participants “In the video there are ideas about building resilience. Do you remember any of them?”
4. Write answers on flip chart paper.
5. Ask participants to think of one challenge they are facing and to answer each of the questions.

**Possible Participants’ Answers**

**What helped me in the past?**
- Eating healthy, getting enough sleep and doing something that I enjoy.
- Being okay with not doing everything perfectly.
- Knowing my strengths.

**What tools and support do I have in my life to help build my resilience?**
- Asking friends, family or counselor for help.
- Spending time with family and friends.
- Getting help from a community support agency.

**What new thing can I try to help me overcome my challenge and recover?**
- Practicing deep breathing and mindfulness (found in next activity).
- Being active and listening to music.
- Thankful for the good things in my life.
- Letting my kids have challenges and supporting them as they learn to deal with their struggles.

Let participants know that the Resilience Action Plan is for them to take away and look at whenever they feel they need ideas to help with a challenge.
Resilience Action Plan

What is one challenge I am facing today?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

How do I feel?
☐ Angry
☐ Frustrated
☐ Sad
☐ Anxious
☐ Confused
☐ Other (write down the feeling)

What can I do to help cope with my feelings?
☐ Get together with friends and family.
☐ Talk to a mental health professional.
☐ Get out and be active.
☐ Breathe deeply and meditate.
☐ Listen to music.
☐ Other (write own ideas)

What helped me cope or get through a tough time in the past?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What tools and support do I have in my life to help build my resilience?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

What new thing can I try to help overcome challenges and recover?
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________

I will put my plan into action on: __________________________

Adapted from: Ottawa Public Health; Canadian Mental Health Association; Canadian Public Health Association; Mental Illness Caregivers Association; Military Family Services. (2016). Mental Health Caregiver Guide: A guide for caregivers of persons living with mental illness or experiencing mental health challenges. ON: Ottawa Public Health.

Activity 4: Add To Your Resilience

Goal
• To learn two practical ways to increase your resilience: “Deep Breathing” and “Mindfulness”.

Messages
• Deep breathing and mindfulness help ease stress.8
• These skills can help you become more resilient.

Time
• 10-20 minutes for deep breathing and mindfulness exercise

Supplies
• Video: Building Resilience
• “Take Time to Breathe Deeply” script (below)

Facilitator Steps
1. Watch the video: Building Resilience.
2. Make the room as comfortable as possible (e.g. turn down the lights or play relaxing music)
3. Read the “Take Time to Breathe” script (below).
4. Ask participants how the activity made them feel.

Possible Participants’ Answers
• Some participants might find these activities difficult. Remind participants that it takes time and practice to learn new skills.
• Feelings after the activity participants may feel relaxed, calm, quiet, and less stressed. Other participants may not feel any different and some may feel more stressed because they couldn’t stop their thoughts from wandering. This is normal and improves with practice.

“Take Time to Breathe Deeply” Script
• Sit comfortably, with your knees bent and your shoulders, head and neck relaxed.
• Place one hand on your upper chest and the other just below your rib cage. This will allow you to feel your diaphragm move as you breathe.
• Inhale through your nose. The hand below your rib cage should move out. The hand on your chest should stay as still as possible.
• Tighten your stomach muscles, letting them fall inward as you exhale through your mouth. The hand on your upper chest should stay as still as possible.
• Practice deep breathing for about 15-30 seconds. Explain that deep breathing can be used any time they need a short break. This is a good way to take a “time out” from a situation and relax.


8 Madhav Goyal, MD, MPH; Sonal Singh, MD, MPH; Erica M. S. Sibinga, MD, MHS; Neda F. Gould, PhD; Anastasia Rowland-Seymour, MD; Ritu Sharma, BSc; Zackary Berger, MD, PhD; Dana Sleicher, MS, MPH; David D. Maron, MHS; Hasan M. Shihab, MBChB, MPH; Padmini D. Ranasinghe, MD, MPH; Shauna Linn, BA; Shonali Saha, MD; Eric B. Bass, MD, MPH; Jennifer A. (2014) MJAMA Intern Med. 174(3):357-368. doi:10.1001/jamainternmed.2013.13018 Published online January 6, 2014.editation. Programs for Psychological Stress and Well-being: A Systematic Review and Meta-analysis.
“Mindfulness” means bringing your thoughts to **what you** are doing **when** you are doing it. It focuses your mind on the things you are feeling and thinking **right now**. Mindfulness helps build resilience and reduces stress.