

The BOUNCE BACK! Classroom Resiliency ® Program

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Young people have always needed coping skills to deal with life's challenges, but there is an ever-increasing body of evidence from many different disciplines that suggests that the world of today's young people is different from that of previous generations in four significant ways.

- Young people are more likely nowadays to encounter a greater range of difficult circumstances, negative events and down times than previous generations. Some examples are:-
- They are less well equipped and well situated than previous generations to cope well with these challenges and down times;
- In response to such stressors, they are more likely than in previous generations to turn to maladaptive strategies such as truancy, overusing drugs and alcohol, behaving in an anti social way, and suicide;
- There is a relative epidemic of depression amongst young people that was not apparent in previous generations. However caused, depression itself can also become one of the hardships that a young person has to deal with.

That's the bad news. The good news is that research has now been able to identify the most significant coping skills and protective life circumstances which help young people to become more resilient. The study of resilience is emerging as a powerful tool in our ongoing battle to prevent youth depression, suicide, self-harm, violence and problematic substance abuse.

Schools can make a major contribution to the development of resilience in students. Next to families, schools are the most effective places in which resilience can be developed. Most coping skills can be taught at school and integrated into the contemporary curriculum. Many of the protective environmental processes can be put into place at school with not too much reorganisation. The BOUNCE BACK! Resiliency Program has been developed as a school-based curriculum program, which is literature-based and integrated with all KLAS, and which is designed to teach students how to become more resilient. The program also provides guidelines for establishing protective school and classroom environments that foster resilience .

Environments that promote resilience	Personal skills and attitudes that empower young people to act resiliently
<p>School Connectedness A sense of belonging to a good school Meaningful participation & contribution Opportunities for strengths to be affirmed Opportunities for taking initiative Prosocial, collaborative school culture Physical and psychological safety at school Strong school rules about bullying & violence</p> <p>Peer Connectedness Classroom cohesion & sense of belonging Cooperative learning activities Peer support strategies Pro social peer groups</p> <p>Teacher Connectedness Limited number of teachers. Teacher knowledge of students Teacher warmth and availability High expectations, academic support & differentiated curriculum Cooperative & pro social classroom culture Clear consistent boundaries</p> <p>Positive Family-school Links Family involvement with school programs Strong teacher-family relationships</p> <p>Family Connectedness Expression of warmth and affection Good communication and shared activities Positive approach to solving family problems Family loyalty, affirmation, and support Individual responsibilities Pro social and shared family values Warm relationship with at least one parent</p> <p>One caring adult outside the family Availability and interest in student Expresses unconditional positive regard</p> <p>Community-connectedness Awareness of and access to support services Voluntary community service Involvement in prosocial clubs and teams Community norms against anti-social behaviour Strong cultural identity and pride</p> <p>Religious involvement Participation in spiritual communities with shared values</p>	<p>Helpful and positive thinking skills and attitudes Optimistic thinking Having a sense of purpose and future Normalising instead of personalising Evidence-based thinking Using humour appropriately</p> <p>Skills and beliefs related to resourcefulness and adaptivity Having an orientation towards success Skills for setting, planning & achieving realistic goals Decision-making skills Problem solving skills Creativity, flexibility and adaptivity Holding a belief that effort will pay off Organisational skills Skills to enable adaptive distancing from distressing and unalterable situations</p> <p>Social skills Having a belief that relationships matter Group social skills Friendship skills Conflict management skills Help seeking skills and preparedness to self-disclose</p> <p>Emotional Literacy Skills for recognising and managing own emotions Skills for reading, predicting and responding empathically to others' emotions</p> <p>Healthy self esteem: A sense of personal competence A pro social personal value system Feeling competent in several areas of one's life Courage Realistic and positive self-knowledge Skills of self reflection Age-appropriate level of independence Self discipline –skills for delaying gratification and managing impulses</p> <p>McGrath, H. & Noble, T.,2003, <i>The BOUNCE BACK Resiliency® Program</i>, Pearson Education: Copyright</p>

The contents of the BOUNCE BACK! Classroom Resiliency ® Program

There are five books in this program. These are:-

- 1. Teacher Handbook: The BOUNCE BACK! A Classroom Resiliency ® Program**
This book outlines the theory behind the program and contains a collection of generic resources and classroom activities are the basis of many of the activities in the three teacher resource books.
- 2. Teacher Resource Book: Level One: Junior Primary: The BOUNCE BACK! Resiliency ® Program**
This book is suitable for students in the first three years of primary schooling ie students aged approximately five to seven years)
- 3. Teacher Resource Book: Level Two: Middle Primary: The BOUNCE BACK! Classroom Resiliency ® Program**
This book is suitable for students in the third and fourth years of primary schooling ie students aged approximately eight to ten years.
- 4. Teacher Resource Book: Level Three: Upper Primary/Junior Secondary: The BOUNCE BACK! Classroom Resiliency ® Program**
This book is suitable for students in the fifth and sixth years of primary schooling and the first two years of junior secondary ie students aged approximately eleven to fourteen years.
- 5. Teaching Your Child to BOUNCE BACK!: A Parent handbook (Not available until February 2004)**
This book offers strategies for parents and explains the BOUNCE BACK! program so that parents can work with the school in supporting their initiatives.

Each Teacher Resource Book contains ten classroom units of work at the appropriate level.

1. Core Values
2. Elasticity
3. People Bouncing Back
4. Courage
5. Looking on the Bright Side
6. Emotions
7. Relationships
8. Humour
9. Bullying
10. Being Successful (STAR! In the Junior Primary book, CHAMP! in the Middle Primary book and WINNERS! in the Upper Primary and Junior Secondary book)

Unit One: Core Values

Having a basic prosocial value system ie a 'moral map' which guides behaviour is linked to the development of resilience. Acting on these prosocial beliefs can increase a

student's sense of being a decent, successful and worthwhile person. The unit focuses on activities to teach young people how to behave in ways that reflect the following values:-

- Integrity: being honest, fair, responsible, and loyal;
- Support: supporting and caring for other people;
- Cooperation: cooperating with others;
- Acceptance of difference: Accepting, respecting, living with and finding the positive side of differences in others;
- Respect: respecting the rights of others, and acknowledging your own rights and responsibilities to others;
- Friendliness: being friendly and socially responsible, and including others in games and conversations.

Unit Two: Elasticity

This unit introduces the scientific concept of physical resilience or 'bouncing back' as a lead-in to the psychological concept of human resilience. The focus is on:-

- Investigating and experimenting with elastic forces (eg rubber bands, balls bouncing,) and stretching (eg fabrics, skin);
- 'Elastic' animals (eg kangaroos and springboks);
- Springs: how they work and their uses;
- Inflatables: where they are and what they are used for (eg tyres; balloons).

Unit Three: People Bouncing Back

This unit introduces the concept of human resilience, or the capacity of people to bounce back after experiencing hard times. In the Lower teacher resource book, students are introduced to the main acronym of BOUNCE! In the Middle primary and Upper primary/Junior secondary Teacher Resource books they are introduced to the acronym of BOUNCE BACK! Each acronym acts as a coat hanger for specific coping skills. The focus in the unit is on:-

- How 'nature' bounces back (eg bush regeneration; skin repair; the immune system);
- People who have 'bounced back' after hard times or hardship (eg Helen Keller);
- The BOUNCE BACK! acronym and ways of learning the acronym to mastery;
- Using helpful thinking (eg not overgeneralising, not trying to 'mind read', not jumping to conclusions, looking for evidence and using reality checks such as getting another opinion, testing things out or looking for more information);
- 'Normalising' negative events rather than 'personalising' them;
- Talking to trusted people in order to get not only a reality check on thinking and perceptions but also assistance with problem solving;
- Developing skills in taking responsibility or having a 'fair' view of why something went wrong.

Unit Four: Courage

In this unit, courage is not presented as the absence of fear or distress. It is defined as the capacity to face threatening or difficult situations that cause fear or distress, without being overwhelmed by those feelings. Being courageous is an important life skill that can help young people be more resilient when faced with adversity. The focus in the unit is on:-

- Understanding the differences between everyday courage, courage in response to misfortune, heroism, thrill seeking, professional risk taking, personal goal seeking and foolhardiness;

- Understanding that fear is relative ie what makes one person scared may not make another person scared;
- Developing the skills and perceptions that lead to being more courageous.

Unit Five: The Bright Side

Optimism has been described as the ‘velcro’ construct of resilience, to which everything else sticks. Being optimistic can empower students and help them to get on top of challenges and manage life’s difficulties. Optimism is also a contributing factor to getting along well with others and having good physical health. In contrast pessimism is linked to a sense of hopelessness and despair and, eventually, depression. The focus in this unit is on:-

- Positive tracking, ie focusing on the positive aspects of a negative situation, however small;
- Positive conversion of negative events and mistakes into opportunities to learn;
- Accepting that bad times are temporary and don’t have to spoil other parts of your life;
- Giving yourself a ‘pat on the back’ every time you do something well, no matter how small; Finding hope in difficult times;
- Having confidence in your own ability to solve problems and take positive actions.

Unit Six: Emotions

Accurately recognising and naming their emotions helps students to understand and manage their lives and relationships more effectively and less stressfully. This unit incorporates activities that help young people to identify and understand their feelings and to understand how their thoughts affect their feelings and their behaviour. The focus of this unit on emotions is on activities based around the following:-

- Understanding that feelings don’t just ‘happen’ to you and that you can change your thinking and behaviour to manage them;
- Recognising and accurately naming one’s emotion;
- Skills for managing anger and other negative emotions such as sadness worry, disappointment, and embarrassment;
- Recognising the feelings and intentions of others;
- Responding with empathy to the feelings of others;
- Recognising and enjoying one’s own positive emotions eg happiness, pride, & excitement;
- Learning how to use positive self talk and low key emotional language so that you can interpret situations more realistically and helpfully.

Unit Seven: Relationships

Most of human pain is generated from relationship concerns. Being connected to peers is one of the most significant protective environmental factors that promote resilience.. Students with close relationships cope better with stressors such as failure, bereavement, relationship break ups, embarrassment, and illness. Developing satisfying friendships with others and a degree of peer acceptance are also related to healthier self esteem, superior learning outcomes, fewer behaviour problems at school, greater emotional wellbeing and leadership skills. It makes sense to teach young people how to improve their relationships with others. It also makes sense to establish school communities and class learning strategies that foster the development of strong and positive interpersonal

relationships between students. The focus in this Relationships unit is on activities which:-

- help students to understand and manage shyness and social anxiety and rejection
- develop skills for making and keeping friends;
- develop skills for getting along well with others and being accepted;
- teach skills for managing conflict;

As well, games and cooperative learning activities are used throughout the whole program as a way of providing students with opportunities to practise social skills.

Unit Eight: Humour

Humour is one of the processes of optimism that significantly contributes to personal resilience. The focus in this unit is on:-

- Activities that develop an understanding of the processes and styles of humour;
- Activities that highlight how humour can be used to assist with coping with hard times as well as with supporting others;
- Activities to help students to differentiate between helpful and harmful humour that
- Five minute humorous activities that can be used as a stress break in class.

Unit Nine: Success

The skills of setting and achieving goals, problem solving and being resourceful have been shown to contribute to resilience. Similarly, having a healthy self esteem based on a realistic self knowledge, and developing the skills of self discipline and self management are factors that contribute strongly to resilience. The activities in this unit help students to develop an understanding that the most effective path to a positive sense of self is one based on mastery and competence and the successful achievement of what is important to them. The focus in each unit is on activities that :-

- teach students how to identify their own relative strengths and weaknesses, and to use this self knowledge to help them be successful across many areas of their life. There is a particular stress on collecting evidence for these conclusions about oneself, not just hoping or making unwarranted, unrealistic and deflated or inflated assumptions;
- develop skills of self discipline and self management (eg time management; organisational skills; memory skills);
- teach the skills and processes of achieving goals ie setting goals; making a plan; taking sensible risks; persisting in the face of obstacles; problem solving and being resourceful when things are challenging or when something goes wrong;
- challenge students to use their initiative and hence understand the real-life 'rocky up-and-down' process of goal achievement ;
- help students understand the concept of 'psychological flow', a positive outcome that occurs when they are immersed in an activity that offers them a challenge and fully absorbs their attention in a positive way.

Unit Ten: Bullying

Current research on the outcomes of school bullying illustrates the devastating long term effects of bullying for all involved. This includes the students participating in the bullying, those who are being bullied, and the many students and teachers who feel distressed and unable to stop the mistreatment and injustice that is occurring. In the unit of work on bullying the focus is on:-

- Making bullying uncool through activities that demonstrate the similarities between bullying, and child abuse, terrorism, and historical incidents of oppression and persecution. Examples are drawn from the Holocaust, racial hatred and persecution, sledging in sport and the social mobbing processes such as those used by the Klu Klux Klan and seen in soccer riots;
- Investigating the legal and workplace issues related to bullying;
- Activities that portray bullying as cowardice and those who bully as 'social predators';
- Strategies for understanding and managing peer pressure to take part in harassment or stand by and do nothing about it;
- Teaching the skills and attitudes that enable bystanders to support those who are being mistreated;
- Activities that teach students the escalating skills needed to respond to being eg not attracting attention, identifying situations that contain danger, outsmarting, 'maintaining face', escaping, being assertive and asking for teacher support in dealing with the situation.

When things go wrong for you, or you get ‘knocked down’ by what happens in your life, you can decide to BOUNCE BACK! and be yourself again

Bad times don’t last. Things always get better.

Other people can help if you talk to them. Get a reality check.

Unhelpful thinking makes you feel more upset.

Nobody is perfect-not you and not others.

Concentrate on the positives (no matter how small) and use laughter

Everybody experiences sadness, changes, hurt, failure, rejection, and setbacks sometimes. It’s a normal part of life. Try not to personalise it.

Blame fairly –how much of what happened was because of you, because of others and because of bad luck or circumstances?

Accept the things you can’t change (but try to change what you can first)

Catastrophising exaggerates uncomfortable feelings. Don’t believe the worst possible picture.

Keep things in perspective. It’s only part of your life.

Presenter’s Publications

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