

Introducing Resilience

Resilience for Youth - Introductory Lesson

Resilience definition:

Resilience is the ability to bounce back when you have every reason to shut down – but you fight on! Resilient people have both tapped and untapped reserves, enabling them to overcome and thrive as they face the setbacks, challenges, and fears of daily life.



Vocabulary

- Resilience
- Bounce back
- Shut down
- Perseverance
- Setbacks
- Thrive
- Relational Resilience
- Street Resilience
- Resource Resilience
- Rock Bottom Resilience

Secondary Concepts:

- We all have some resilience inside of us, and we are all capable of increasing our resilience.
- Success is different from resilience. While resilience can often lead to success, successful people don't always know how to access resilience.
- Becoming strong in the four sources of resilience can help us thrive in the face of difficult challenges in life.

Personalize your Lesson:

- How do you personally define resilience?
- Who are your "resilience heroes"?
- Looking at the definitions of the four sources of resilience, which do you feel you are strongest in? Which do you feel you are weakest in?
- Which source of resilience do you feel most of your students will identify the strongest with?

Getting Started

Directions

If this is your first day of class, start out this lesson with a warm-up or get-to-know-you activity that gets students out of their chairs and helps them feel engaged. Introduce yourself as the teacher in a way that will help students relate to you. Don't forget that in each Resilience Breakthrough class, it's important to play music and greet students by name as they enter and leave your classroom each day. Your relationship with them is a key to success in this course.

Lesson Plan: Introducing Resilience

Discussion Point 1: What is resilience?

Directions

Divide students into groups of 3. Together with their group, have students brainstorm a definition of the word "resilience." Bring the groups back together to share with the class the definitions they came up with. If your class is small enough, you might even make an attempt to combine the small group definitions to form a "class definition" of the word.

Now tell students that we're going to look at another definition of resilience that will help us grow our resilience as we go through the rest of the class this semester. You may want to put this on a poster board, PowerPoint slide, or somewhere else prominent for students to see. The definition is as follows:

Resilience is the ability to bounce back when you have every reason to shut down – but you fight on! Resilient people have both tapped and untapped reserves, enabling them to overcome and thrive as they face the setbacks, challenges, and fears of daily life.

Point 2: Why is resilience important?

Discussion

Ask and discuss the following with students:

- Based on this definition and the ones we've come up with today, do you think resilience is important? Why or why not?
- What do you think are some benefits that people who are resilient might experience?

Directions

After a brief discussion, give students the following benefits of resilience. Have students think about any benefits that apply to them:

- Resilient people recover faster from challenges.
- Resilient people have more energy and focus when things go wrong.
- Resilient people can persevere -- They keep going in the face of difficulties, failure, and other challenges.
- Resilient people are better at solving problems.
- Resilient people grow and learn from their problems, instead of letting their problems pull them down into depression and despair.

Discussion

Ask and discuss the following:

- Do any of these characteristics sound like you? Which ones?

Congratulate students and point out that they all already have resilience inside of them.

Ask and discuss the following:

- Are there any of these characteristics that you would like to be better at? Which ones?

Explain that the good news is, we can all develop more resilience. We can start practicing today to use our challenges as fuel, and over the course of this class we'll be looking at some specific ways that we can become really good at it.

Point 3: Resilience examples

Directions

Look at some examples with students of people who are really good at using challenges as fuel. You can use video or other resources to share their stories. These people might include the following:

- Michael Jordan, who was cut from his highschool basketball team and went on to become the greatest player to ever play the game.
- Bethany Hamilton, who became a great surfer despite losing her arm in a shark attack.
- Richard Branson, who has dyslexia and was a bad student, but who used his charismatic personality to become a world business leader as the founder of a giant record company and an airline.
- Oprah Winfrey, who had a troubling childhood but worked hard in school and in life to become one of the most successful and influential people in the world.
- Thomas Edison, who failed 10,000 times before creating the light bulb, but he didn't see it that way. Instead he said, "I have not failed. I've just found 10,000 ways that don't work." He saw his failures as a 10,000-step process.

Discussion

Ask and discuss the following:

- Can you think of anyone else who is really good at this?

Have students share their own insights on resilient people in their life, the media, or history. Write several of the students' examples on the board.

Take a few of the names on the board and discuss which of the "resilience outcomes" from our list that these individuals have experienced.

Point 4: Success vs. Resilience

Discussion

Ask and discuss the following:

- Would you rather be successful or resilient? Why? (You might have the "success" students go to one side of the room and the "resilience" students go to the other as a way of expressing their opinion, then have both sides explain why they chose the way they did.)
- Think about the outcomes of resilience and the definitions that we came up with earlier. With those in mind, how do you think resilience might be different than success?

Explain that success and resilience are actually two very different concepts. Success can come and go and is very fleeting. It can also be defined by your social environment. Society sometimes defines success as being rich, athletic, smart, popular, or beautiful, and we won't all always have those things. In fact, a lot of life is spent tripping and falling. We can't always be super at everything or perfect at anything.

Explain that what we CAN be is resilient. We can bounce back and be resilient regardless of what kind of success we're having at that moment in life. Often resilience does lead us to success in certain areas of life, but more importantly, it helps us keep trying during difficult moments where we may not be as successful as we'd like.

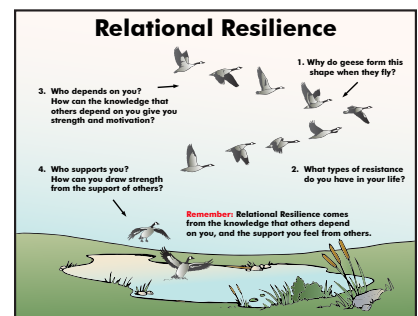
Point 5: The Four Sources of Resilience

Discussion

Tell students that there are four sources of resilience that we'll be looking at as we go through this class. As you go through each one, have students think about whether they are strong or weak in that particular source.

Source #1: Relational Resilience

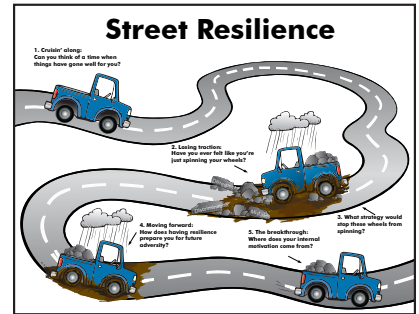
Explain that Relational Resilience means that you use your relationships as a reason to be resilient. You don't give up on things because you know there are people who depend on you and people who support you.



Provide an example of the things you do every day because there are people who depend on you. It could be coming into work each day because your students need you, or working hard because you're supporting a family. You might illustrate your example on a PowerPoint slide. Ask students if they can think of additional examples, from their own lives or from the media.

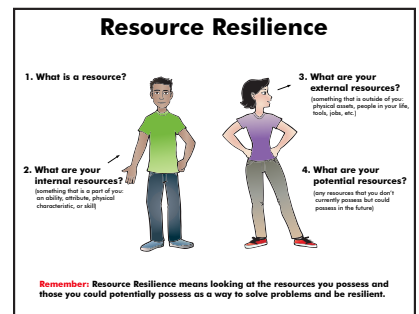
Source #2: Street Resilience

Explain that Street Resilience means that you take pain that comes from things like discrimination and mistakes and use it as fuel toward a cause. Provide your own example or one from the media of someone who has done this. Examples include Malala Yousafzai, Martin Luther King Jr., Rosa Parks, etc. Illustrate your example with a video or PowerPoint slide. Ask students if they can think of additional examples, from their own lives or from the media.



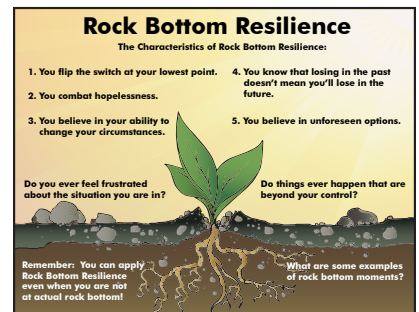
Source #3: Resource Resilience

Explain that Resource Resilience means that you increase your resilience by recognizing and utilizing the resources around you. Provide your own example or one from the media of someone who has done this. Examples include Stephen Hawking, Helen Keller, strong political leaders, etc. Illustrate your example with a video or PowerPoint slide. Ask students if they can think of additional examples, from their own lives or from the media.



Source #4: Rock Bottom Resilience

Explain that Rock Bottom Resilience means that you believe in your ability to change your circumstances even when things seem hopeless. Provide your own example or one from the media of someone who has done this. Examples include Robert Downey Jr. and Oprah Winfrey. Illustrate your example with a video or PowerPoint slide. Ask students if they can think of additional examples, from their own lives or from the media.



Discussion

Ask and discuss the following:

- Looking at these four sources, who thinks they are strongest in Relational Resilience? Why?
- Who feels they are strongest in Street Resilience? Why?
- Who feels they are strongest in Resources Resilience? Why?
- Who feels they are strongest in Rock Bottom Resilience? Why?

Instead of having students raise their hand, you might assign a corner of the room for each of the four sources and have students go to the corner they feel they are strongest in. Have a discussion about why they chose the source they did. You may also complete this exercise for the source students feel they are weakest in.

The Match and the Campfire

Show the slide with the match and the campfire.

Ask your students: have any of you ever played with matches before? What happens when you try to light a match and there is a slight breeze? Or you might say... to put out the match what do you normally do? (usually your students will say that they blow the match out like a candle on a birthday cake)



Advanced the slide animation in your PowerPoint so that that match lights and then goes out with a slight breeze.

Say to your students: let's compare this match to a campfire. Advance the slide animation so that the campfire appears. Then say: have any of you ever been around a campfire before? What would happen if you blow on the campfire? Will it go out like a match? (students will usually recognize from their experience that it is impossible to blow out the campfire with your breath. In fact blowing on a campfire will usually cause the opposite to happen, the campfire will get bigger!)

So what is the difference between the campfire and the match? Why will the match go out easily with a little wind, but the campfire will get bigger with a little wind? (Allow students time to think about and respond your question.) Hopefully they will recognize that the main difference is the amount of fuel for the match is much smaller than the amount of fuel for the campfire. Point out to your students that the fuel for the match is just a little stick of wood but the fuel for the campfire consists of these four logs. Advance the slide so that the four sources of resilience appear on the logs.

Say to your students: If you think of the fire in this picture as something that represents our resilience or our ability to be resilient, and the wind or breeze represents moments when we are experiencing a challenge or something difficult (adversity), then we can see that one of the keys for us to be resilient is to be like the campfire and increase our resilience fuel.

Another thing that you might to discuss with your students about this picture of the campfire is the fact that if you had a campfire with only one log, how well would that burn? If you have ever observe this in your own life you may want to share with your students what normally will happen. (in most cases a single log will burn for a brief period of time and then go out. Usually you need at least two logs or more together so they can draw off of each other and continue to burn brightly). This is kind of like the way most of us will naturally tap into one of the four sources of resilience when we are struggling but people who are truly able to withstand big challenges and difficult situations we'll have to tap into more than just one source. Just like a campfire is stringer with more sources of fuel, we can increase our resilience by finding ways to tap into other sources of resilience fuel. As we go through this program we are going to talk about and focus on how each of us can tap into multiple sources of resilience and find ways to not give up and have the

motivation to keep going when things get hard.

Say to your students: let's just summarize this one more time, the fire represents our resilience and the key to making a fire be strong is increasing our resilience fuel represented by the logs. But this is very important, there is one more thing in this picture that is critical for us to have resilience. Do any of you see it? (Give your students a moment to look at the picture and see if they notice what you're referencing.) If you don't get a response point to the wind, and say, it's the wind! You cannot be resilient if you don't experience challenges in your life. If you think about it each time you have a challenge or something difficult that you have to deal with, it's an opportunity for you to demonstrate your resilience! For me this is very powerful to think about because it helps me to look at my challenges differently. Challenges can sometimes be very difficult but if we can see them as an opportunity to demonstrate our resilience we are creating a mindset that will help us to be resilient and not give up in those moments!

As an optional homework assignment, have students come up with a person from history or the media who is/was strong in the source they feel they are strong in. They should learn about the person's background, obstacles they faced in life, and the source they accessed.