

Encouraging Resilience in Children at Schools

We have all been there: IT IS THE EXAM DAY, and all we hear in our classroom is “I’ll never be able to do pass this!” with heaps of frustration in the voice. We have met students who are so afraid of failure that they refuse to try anything new. There are also kids who are seldom discouraged. They perceive that even if today was tough, tomorrow will be a brand new day.

As we all know, every child is capable of doing **one** thing extraordinarily. The potential for happiness is there in all of them, and it will have different meaning for different kids. We cannot predict the challenges that will come their way. What we can do is give them the skills so these challenges are never able to break them. We can nurture **resilience**.

Resilience is the ability to be able to bounce back from stress, face challenges, tragedies, trauma or adversity. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, more adaptable to extend their reach into the world. Resiliency comes from kids’ beliefs and attitudes about themselves and what happens to them. Fortunately, these internal factors—humour, inner direction, optimism and flexibility are traits that we can build or strengthen. This is how it may be done.



Encouraging Resilience in children

1. Try to keep your students' perspective in place

To teachers, exams might not be a big deal, however, that might not be the case for the students. Keeping perspective isn't about minimizing the problem or insisting that it could be worse: It's about looking at the problem with a different perspective. Help your student think about other exams that are coming up, the time when they spoke confidently or the right way of presenting in class. Make them realize that this is only one event amongst many. Then, plan ways to face this problem alone if it comes up in the future.

2. Grab the chance

We tend to do injustice to kids when we step ahead of time, and not let them experience making mistakes. For instance, when a parent corrects a child's homework errors before he turns it in or tells a secret move/ shortcut to win a game. Children learn more when we allow them to make mistakes. It's all in how we teach them to handle it. Focus on your kids' effort or creativity. A huge mistake could show a lot of creativity even if the outcome is a disaster.

3. Let's cool down a bit

Of course, the best time to teach cool-down tricks to kids is before they get upset. Telling them everything can be sorted out, not immediately but over a period of time. You can try a cool-down corner in your classroom with heavy pillows, interesting books and calming music. Teach older kids to take deep breaths and count till ten or distract themselves by reading/ writing until they've calmed down a little.

4. Relationship web

Relationships are key to being resilient. Quality should be given precedence to quantity. You can make students create a relationship-web that shows how the kids are all connected to their family and one another. Then, use this relationship web to figure out where and how you can build new emotional connections. Another way is to pair up kids and have them teach one another something they know, share a book they read or explain a favourite hobby.

5. Enhance the ability

Every student is good at something. In particular, students may struggle when they don't see the affiliation between their strengths transfer across situations— for instance, a student can express his/her thought on a paper but have no idea how to explain it to others. Make sure you motivate them by leaving compliments and positive notes on their desks, to make them pleasantly surprised. Even better, use their strengths in classroom projects—for example during an EVS project, ask a curious child to create a list of different types of plants in his/her neighbourhood.

6. Give options- A lot of them!

Choices give kids power and self-reliance and it makes them responsible for the decisions they take. Plus, it makes them live with their own decisions, however minor. Giving kids choices around how to complete an assignment is enough. You can provide a list of choices that students can make with each assignment. For younger students, this could be a limited list of options (answering questions out of order, choosing to skim a passage before reading it. For older kids, this could be a discussion about different ways to approach a project.

7. Checkpoint-Progress

Setting and achieving goals builds the practice of self-monitoring and helps students see the results of their hard work. The trick isn't in setting goals but in sticking with them. Help students set big goals, and identify a few steps along the way. Then, make them think and reflect after each small step about what helped them get there and what they want to keep or stop doing.

And above all else...

Let them know they are loved unconditionally. This will give them a solid foundation to come back to when the world starts to feel wibbly-wobbly. Eventually, they are going to learn that they can give that solid foundation to themselves. A big part of resilience is building belief system. It's the most effective factor they will ever believe in.

About the Author



Purnima Manchanda is the Associate Faculty- English at ITEI. She believes that life skills engaged with education leads to empowerment. She is an effective communicator and an aspiring development practitioner with a master's degree in Development Communication and Extension. She strongly holds the value like integrity and receptivity. She tries to exhibit her creative side in her work, especially in her trainings. She is a self-motivated person who loves to take challenging assignments and wants to make an impact on people's lives.

Please note: The views and opinions expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect or represent the views and opinions held by the Tech Mahindra Foundation.