



Building
RESILIENCE
for International
Students



SUPPORTING
DISCUSSIONS
WITH STUDENTS



Building Resilience

Supporting Discussions with Students

Overview

This document is for educators, school counsellors, international student program staff, and other adults supporting international students' well-being. It is an accompaniment to the *Building Resilience* worksheet for students and is meant to facilitate discussions with students.

Resilience is the ability to bounce back from challenges or adversity. It is also the ability to adapt to difficult circumstances and still thrive. Resilient students are more likely to flourish, do well in school and less likely to suffer from mental health problems.

A person's resilience is determined by the interaction of personal traits, family traits, and the traits of their physical and social environments and their experiences in those environments. However, those traits do not define a person's destiny. While a student may have some unchangeable risk factors that undermine their resilience, increasing protective factors can help them adapt and become more resilient.

Programs can foster resilience by ensuring students have strong relationships with adults, building their sense of efficacy and strengthening their executive function and self-regulation skills. These skills, which are included in BC's curriculum, help you plan, juggle multiple tasks, respond flexibly to your environment, and deal with new situations. Adolescence is a crucial time for building them.

By working collaboratively with their school and district colleagues, program staff can help international students build their resilience and thrive in school and life.

KEY POINTS

- *Resilience is the ability to bounce back from adversity.*
- *Personal, family and environmental factors shape how resilient someone is. By reducing risk factors and increasing protective factors, resilience can be improved.*
- *Strong adult-student relationships, a sense of self-efficacy and well-developed self-regulation and executive function skills are protective factors that contribute to students' resilience. Those same factors are at the heart of the BC curriculum, in its focus on belonging and in its core competencies.*
- *Resilience can be situation-specific, with students managing some types of challenges exceptionally well and others less well. For example, a student might be more resilient when dealing with academic issues but be significantly less resilient when managing friendship problems.*
- *Cultural differences can mean that some international students might be more open to some resilience-building strategies than others. For example, some cultures place high importance on marks and grades and students may not want to take academic risks, fearing they might fail. Draw on your cultural knowledge as you walk through the worksheet with a student.*
- *Teachers and international student program staff are not mental health professionals. However, they play a crucial role in recognizing changes in students and noticing when they are not bouncing back from challenges. Their ongoing support can make a big difference in developing a student's resilience.*

Building Skills to Increase Resilience

The table below outlines some of the executive function and self-regulation skills that contribute to building resilience.

SKILLS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO BUILDING RESILIENCE

- *Problem-solving*
- *Positive coping skills*
- *Goal-setting*
- *Flexible thinking*
- *Ability to resist impulsive behaviour*
- *Planning and time management*
- *Monitoring and regulating behaviour*
- *Learning from failure*
- *Adjusting to new circumstances*

→ Using the Building Resilience Worksheet

Use the student-focused *Building Resilience* worksheet alongside this document to support collaborative discussions with students struggling to bounce back from adversity. This document will help you identify the student's trusted adults, introduce resilience-building strategies, and help identify growth opportunities. The recommended resources provide additional information on resilience, classroom strategies and hands-on student learning materials. The student worksheet offers discussion points and encourages students to make plans that help develop their resilience.

Working through the worksheet can be done in one sitting or over time, and it is not necessary to follow any particular order.


Checking in with their classroom teachers before meeting with the student will give you a more complete picture of the student's resilience. The teachers' assessment of the student's ability to handle disappointment, set goals, plan and complete complex assignments, persevere through challenges, be flexible in the face of change and regulate their behaviour will provide insights for your conversation with the student.

Make sure to check in on the student at a later date to continue the discussion and see how they are progressing on their plans.

The Worksheet

Make Connections

MAKE CONNECTIONS



Making and maintaining strong connections with friends, family, and other adults strengthens your resilience. Having strong connections makes it easier to reach out to people when you need help, encouragement, or support.

Building Resilience

Being resilient means that you can bounce back from stress and challenging situations. You're not born with resilience. It's something you develop over time by facing challenges and learning from your experiences. Protective factors, like positive relationships, increase your resilience. Risk factors, like long-lasting stress, decrease it. The more protective factors you have, the more resilient you are.

HOW TO BUILD RESILIENCE	TIPS	YOUR PLAN
<p>MAKE CONNECTIONS</p> <p> Making and maintaining strong connections with friends, family, and other adults strengthens your resilience. Having strong connections makes it easier to reach out to people when you need help, encouragement, or support.</p>	<p>Does your local support network include one or more adults? If not, think about a teacher or other adult you might build a connection with.</p>	<p><i>Think I can, then...</i></p>
<p>TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF</p> <p> Getting far yourself helps you stay balanced and deal with stressful times — and be able to enjoy fun. Make time for physical activity, sleep, good food and friends, and activities you enjoy.</p>	<p>Don't let self-care get squeezed out. Build physical activity into your day. Eat healthy. Get enough sleep. Keep your schedule.</p>	<p><i>After I'm eating for myself...</i></p>
<p>MOVE TOWARD YOUR GOALS</p> <p> Setting goals and making progress toward them helps you build the resilience to persevere in the face of challenges. Break large goals into smaller, achievable pieces and acknowledge your accomplishments as the way to the larger goals.</p>	<p>Go ahead and try to do something or change one thing you "should" do. Think about what you actually want to yourself and set goals or record that too.</p>	<p><i>After I'm...</i></p>
<p>LEAD TOWARD RESILIENCE</p> <p> When you feel overwhelmed, remember that difficult times will end eventually, and things will change. Keep yourself that you've made it through tough times before, and you can get through what you are going now. Show that you have what it takes.</p>	<p>Ask yourself if this will my back, or see how other people handled it? Do you have any skills or strengths that you can use to help you get through this?</p>	<p><i>Remember to do myself...</i></p>
<p>CHALLENGE YOUR BELIEFS</p> <p> You often hear the most about yourself when you just challenge yourself. Set a challenge for yourself to overcome or push for more support for the challenges life gives you. After facing a difficult situation, think about what you have learned.</p>	<p>Ask yourself about where things went wrong. What could you have done differently? Ask feedback and listen to it with an open mind.</p>	<p><i>What I think of differently...</i></p>

RESILIENCE WORKSHEET FOR STUDENTS

Students who can name two adults other than their parents who care about them are more resilient and have better academic and life outcomes. Establishing local adult connections is particularly important for international students who are far from home. *Trusted adults* can be adults from school or homestay parents. The trusted adult's role is to make themselves available to the student, be interested in their life and success, actively listen to their concerns, model positive self-talk and other strategies for dealing with challenges, and advocate for them, where appropriate.

Discussion Points


- Having trusted adults in your life — who you can rely on and who care about you — can help you become more resilient.
- Discuss who the student's trusted adults are.

Actions

- Encourage the student to identify their trusted adults.
- If they can't identify any trusted adults, brainstorm about adults they might like to get to know better.
- Consider whether you want to suggest yourself as a trusted adult.

Take Care of Yourself

TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF



Caring for yourself helps you stay balanced and deal with stressful times — and so does having fun. Make time for physical activity, plenty of sleep, good food and friends, and activities you enjoy.

Building Resilience

Being resilient means that you can bounce back from stress and challenging situations. You're not born with resilience. It's something you develop over time by facing challenges and learning from your experiences. Protective factors, like positive relationships, increase your resilience. Risk factors, like long-lasting stress, decrease it. The more protective factors you have, the more resilient you are.

WAYS TO BUILD RESILIENCE	TIPS	YOUR PLAN
MAKE CONNECTIONS  Building and maintaining strong connections with friends, family, and other adults strengthens your resilience. Being strong connections makes it easier to reach out to people when you need help, encouragement, or support.	Give your best support network (family or friends) a call or text. Ask them if you could visit or spend time with them. If not, think about a resilience or other club you might build a connection with.	_____ _____ _____
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF  Caring for yourself helps you stay balanced and deal with stressful times — and so does having fun. Make time for physical activity, plenty of sleep, good food and friends, and activities you enjoy.	Don't let self-care get overlooked. Schedule self-care, such as walking, reading, or spending time with your family. Set work, school, and regular routines into your schedule.	_____ _____ _____
MOVE TOWARDS YOUR GOALS  Setting goals and making progress toward them helps you build the resilience to persevere in the face of challenges. Break large goals into smaller, achievable parts and acknowledge your accomplishments on the way to the larger goal.	Goals aren't only for schoolwork or things you think you "should" do. Think about what you actually want for yourself and set goals around that too.	_____ _____ _____
KEEP FRIENDS IN RESPECTIVE  When you feel overwhelmed, remember that difficult times will not last forever, and things will change. Remind yourself that you've made it through tough times before, and you can get through what you are facing now. Know that the future can be better.	Ask yourself if this is all my fault. Or are there other factors involved? Will this problem last forever, or is it temporary? Does it affect my whole life or just part of it?	_____ _____ _____
SPECIAL + UNUSUAL EXPERIENCES  You often learn the most about yourself when you feel challenged. Challenge yourself to continue to grow by more prepared for the challenges life gives you. After living a difficult situation, think about what you have learned.	Ask yourself about where things went wrong. What could you have done differently? Ask feedback and learn to walk with open mind.	_____ _____ _____

RESILIENCE WORKSHEET FOR STUDENTS

Discussion Points

- Being healthy and caring for yourself contributes to your resilience.
- Physical Activity
 - Being physically active lifts your mood and reduces stress.
 - Health Canada recommends that teens get at least 60 minutes of moderate-to-vigorous physical activity daily, with vigorous physical activities and muscle and bone-strengthening activities on at least three days per week.
 - Reflect on the student's current activity level.
- Sleep
 - Not getting enough sleep can make it difficult to concentrate, think clearly or make decisions.
 - Students 14–17 years old need 8 to 10 hours of uninterrupted sleep per night, with consistent bed and wake-up times.
 - Reflect on the student's sleep habits, including the amount of sleep, bed and waking times, sleep disruptions and whether technology interferes with their sleep.

• Healthy Eating

- Maintaining a healthy diet with a healthy breakfast helps you maintain focus at school and handle stress better.
- Reflect on the student's eating habits, including skipping meals, overeating or filling up on junk food.
- Friends and Fun
 - Hobbies, interests, time with friends and other activities can help students relax, take a break and recharge their batteries.

Actions

Based on the discussion, encourage the student to identify ways they are taking care of themselves, and several specific things they want to improve.

Move Towards Your Goals

MOVE TOWARDS YOUR GOALS



Setting goals and making progress toward them helps you build the resilience to persist in the face of challenges. Break large goals into smaller, achievable pieces and acknowledge your accomplishments on the way to the larger goals.

Building Resilience

Being resilient means that you can bounce back from stress and challenging situations. You're not born with resilience. It's something you develop over time by facing challenges and learning from your experiences. Protective factors, like positive relationships, increase your resilience. Risk factors, like long-lasting stress, decrease it. The more protective factors you have, the more resilient you are.

WAYS TO BUILD RESILIENCE	TIPS	YOUR PLAN
MAKE CONNECTIONS Building and maintaining strong connections with friends, family, and other adults strengthens your resilience. Being strong connections makes it easier to reach out to people when you need help, encouragement, or support.	Check your trust support network (adults, peers or more adults) if not, think about a resident or other adult you might build a connection with.	_____ _____ _____
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF Caring for yourself helps you stay balanced and deal with stressful times — and it also helps you. Make time for physical activity, plenty of sleep, good food and drinks, and relaxation time every day.	Don't let self-care get overlooked. Schedule regular activity, meals with your family, time with friends and regular bedtime into your schedule.	_____ _____ _____
MOVE TOWARDS YOUR GOALS Setting goals and making progress toward them helps you build the resilience to persist in the face of challenges. Break large goals into smaller, achievable pieces and acknowledge your accomplishments on the way to the larger goals.	Goals aren't only for schoolwork or things you think you "should" do. Think about when you actually need for yourself and set goals around that too.	_____ _____ _____
BE POSITIVE When you feel overwhelmed, remember that difficult times will not last forever, and things will change. Remind yourself that you've made it through tough times before. Ask you can get through what you are facing now. Know that the future can be better.	Ask yourself: Is this all of my fault? Or are there other factors involved? Will this problem last forever, or is it temporary? Does it affect my whole life or just part of it?	_____ _____ _____
SPECIAL LEARNING EXPERIENCE You often learn the most about yourself when you face a challenge. Challenge yourself to be prepared for the challenges life gives you. After living a difficult situation, think about what you have learned.	Ask yourself about when things went wrong. What did you learn from that? (If you can't think of anything, ask feedback and learn to work on open mind.	_____ _____ _____

RESILIENCE WORKSHEET FOR STUDENTS

Discussion Points

- Learning how to make goals and then achieve them is a big step toward having the life you want. You can improve on this skill through practice.
- Discuss their experience in setting and achieving goals. What has worked well? Where do they think they could improve?
- Discuss goal-setting strategies such as starting small, making the goal specific, achievable and time-limited. (See *Dealing with Depression Online* and *Setting Goals like a Boss Infographic* in *Resources*.)

Actions

Based on the discussion, encourage the student to make a goal and a plan for how they will accomplish it. Working through the Setting Goals module of the *Dealing with Depression Online* resource might be helpful for them.

Keep Things in Perspective

KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE



When you feel overwhelmed, remember that difficult times will end eventually, and things will change. Remind yourself that you've made it through tough times before, and you can get through what you are facing now. Know that the future can be better.

Building Resilience

Being resilient means that you can bounce back from stress and challenging situations. You're not born with resilience. It's something you develop over time by facing challenges and learning from your experiences. Protective factors, like positive relationships, increase your resilience. Risk factors, like long-lasting stress, decrease it. The more protective factors you have, the more resilient you are.

WAYS TO BUILD RESILIENCE	TIPS	YOUR PLAN
MAKE CONNECTIONS Making and maintaining strong connections with friends, family, and other adults strengthens your resilience. Having strong connections makes it easier to reach out to people when you need help, encouragement, or support.	Open your heart support network. Include one or more adults if you feel about to weather or other adult you might build a connection with.	<i>Think I can, then do.</i>
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF Getting far yourself? Help you stay balanced and deal with stressful times — and be sure having fun. Make time for physical activity, sleep, good food and friends, and activities you enjoy.	Don't let self-care get squeezed out. Build physical activity, meals with your loved family, fun with friends and regular bedtime into your schedule.	<i>Maybe I'm caring for myself.</i>
MOVE TOWARD YOUR GOALS Setting goals and making progress toward them helps you build the resilience to persist in the face of challenges. Break large goals into smaller, achievable pieces and acknowledge your accomplishments on the way to the larger goal.	Goals aren't only for schoolwork or things you think you "should" do. Think about what you actually want for yourself and set goals or toward that too.	<i>I don't toward a goal.</i>
KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE When you feel overwhelmed, remember that difficult times will end eventually, and things will change. Remind yourself that you've made it through tough times before, and you can get through what you are facing now. Know that the future can be better.	Ask yourself: Is this all my fault, or are there other factors involved? Will this problem last forever, or is it temporary? Does it affect my whole life or just part of it?	<i>Remember to be hopeful.</i>
TRY NEW THINGS LEARNING EXPERIENCES This open mind that never stops yourself when you just challenge yourself. Get outside for yourself! It's important to push for more prepared for the challenges life gives you. After facing a difficult situation, think about what you have learned.	Ask yourself: About where things went wrong, what could you have done differently? Ask feedback and listen to it with an open mind.	<i>What I think is different.</i>

RESILIENCE WORKSHEET FOR STUDENTS

Discussion Points

- Emotions can influence your thoughts about a situation, and your thoughts affect your emotional reaction to it. Sometimes this can lead to a cycle of negative thoughts where you lose perspective.
- You can get a more balanced perspective by challenging your thinking with questions like:
 - What would I tell my friend if they were in this situation?
 - Will this matter in a year?
 - Am I blaming myself for something that isn't entirely in my control? How much of the responsibility is mine?
 - Am I exaggerating the situation and just expecting the worst possible thing to happen?
- Purposefully telling yourself helpful and comforting things will also help you develop a more hopeful and balanced outlook. For example:
 - I can do this. I have done it before.
 - I am stronger than I think.
 - I don't have to assume the worst.
- Discuss a time when the student (or someone else) got caught up in a cycle of negative thoughts.

Actions

Encourage the student to reflect on the negative thoughts they may have around a current goal. Have them challenge these negative thoughts and replace them with more balanced and helpful ones. (See [Resources: Realistic Thinking.](#))

Epic Fail = Epic Learning Experience

EPIC FAIL = EPIC LEARNING EXPERIENCE



You often learn the most about yourself when you fail. Challenge yourself. Set obstacles for yourself to overcome so you'll be more prepared for the challenges life gives you. After facing a difficult situation, think about what you have learned.

Building Resilience

Being resilient means that you can bounce back from stress and challenging situations. You're not born with resilience. It's something you develop over time by facing challenges and learning from your experiences. Protective factors, like positive relationships, increase your resilience. Risk factors, like long-lasting stress, decrease it. The more protective factors you have, the more resilient you are.

WAYS TO BUILD RESILIENCE	TIPS	YOUR PLAN
MAINTAIN CONNECTIONS Making and maintaining strong connections with friends, family, and other adults strengthens your resilience. Having strong connections makes it easier to reach out to people when you need help, encouragement, or support.	Give your most support person(s) a call or text or meet with them. If you don't have a support person, ask a friend or family member if you might build a connection with them.	_____ _____ _____
TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF Caring for yourself helps you stay balanced and deal with stressful times — and it makes being you. Make time for physical activity, plenty of sleep, good food and drinks, and activities you enjoy.	Don't let self-care get stressed out. Build physical activity, meals with your family, and regular bedtime into your schedule.	_____ _____ _____
MOVE TOWARD YOUR GOALS Setting goals and making progress toward them helps you build the resilience to persist in the face of challenges. Break large goals into smaller, achievable goals and acknowledge your accomplishments on the way to the larger goals.	Goals aren't only for achievement or things you think you "should" do. Think about what you actually want for yourself and set goals around that too.	_____ _____ _____
KEEP THINGS IN PERSPECTIVE When you feel overwhelmed, remember that difficult times will end eventually, and things will change. Remind yourself that you've made it through tough times before, and you can get through what you are living now. Know that the future can be better.	Ask yourself: Is this all my fault, or are there other factors involved? Will this problem last forever, or is it temporary? Does it affect my whole life or just part of it?	_____ _____ _____
EPIC FAIL = EPIC LEARNING EXPERIENCE You often learn the most about yourself when you fail. Challenge yourself. Set obstacles for yourself to overcome so you'll be more prepared for the challenges life gives you. After facing a difficult situation, think about what you have learned.	Ask yourself about where things went wrong. What could you have done differently? And how could you have been more resilient?	_____ _____ _____

Discussion Points

- Understanding why you have failed at something helps prevent it from happening again.
- Seeking feedback from others on what went wrong and listening to it with an open mind can help you learn.
- Consider the factors that might have contributed to the failure — a lack of planning, time management, not understanding the material, or not asking for help when you needed it. Thinking this through can help identify skills that could help you be more successful next time.

Actions

Encourage the student to reflect on a recent failure and what they learned from it.

Follow-up Actions

After the discussion with the student, consider your next steps.

Work with teachers, other staff members and homestay parents to intentionally foster adult relationships with students who were unable to identify two trusted adults. Simple practices such as *2 x 10* can help. (See *Resources: Relationship-building*.)

For less-resilient students:

- Provide opportunities to learn and develop the skills that support resilience, such as problem-solving, goal-setting and time management. (See *Resources: Skill-building*.) Work with classroom teachers to build on and reinforce these skills.
- Have regular check-ins to see how the student is doing and to provide support. Look for changes in executive function and resilience skills and progress on their worksheet plans and related skill-building activities.

Program-wide Strategies to Build Resilience

Resilient students thrive, do well in school and are less likely to suffer from mental health problems. Consider how your program might include effective strategies that foster resilience in all international students. Those strategies include:

- Ensuring that all students have a sense of belonging, social connections, and strong connections to caring adults. Designing your program to nurture strong student-adult connections fosters resilience and encourages students to reach out for help when they need it.
- Building executive function and self-regulation skills in all students. Opportunities to learn and practice executive function and self-regulation skills increase students' resilience, with the most significant benefit accruing to the least resilient students.

Thoughtfully including these strategies in your program will help your international students be successful and achieve their goals.

Resources

Self-Care

Canada's Food Guide Snapshot

Health Canada

A 2-page visual snapshot of Canada's Food Guide in 30+ languages, with additional detail in English.

Getting a Good Night's Sleep

Anxiety Canada

Provides tips on improving sleep habits using simple language that is accessible for international students.

Guided Mindfulness Meditations

Kelty Mental Health

A collection of mindfulness practices, including body scans, guided breathing meditations, and other simple exercises to calm your mind.

Relationship-building

2 x 10

School Mental Health Ontario

This practice helps build rapport and a relationship between an adult and a student and lets the student see they are genuinely cared about as a person.

Skill-building for Students

Enhancing and Practicing Executive Function Skills with Children from Infancy to Adolescence

Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University

This 3-page document provides strategies, activities and study skills that help students develop their executive function and self-regulation skills.

Promoting Self-Regulation in Adolescents and Young Adults: A Practice Brief

Murray and Rosanbalm for U.S. HHS

This brief provides an overview of self-regulation for teens and strategies for practitioners.

Resilience Classroom Resources

ReachOut Schools

This Australian website includes resilience-related lesson plans and classroom activities.

Goal Setting

Dealing with Depression Online

Bilsker, Gilbert et al., Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health & Addiction/PHSA

This website includes interactive skill-building modules on realistic thinking, problem-solving, and goal-setting — valuable for all students.

Set Goals Like a Boss Infographic

ReachOut Schools

This infographic provides a quick visual overview of goal-setting for teens.

Realistic Thinking

Dealing with Depression Online

See additional information above in *Goal Setting*.

How to Challenge Negative Thoughts

ReachOut.com

This web article provides practical advice for students on how to challenge negative thoughts. The challenging questions are particularly useful.

Thinking Right

Anxiety Canada

A series of brief articles on using realistic thinking techniques to challenge negative thoughts. *Thinking Traps*, *Thinking Right Tools*, and the [three related tools](#) are particularly helpful for students.

Other Specific Skills

Learning from Failure

Algonquin College

This one-page document provides reflective questions to help students learn from failure.

Essential Study Skills: Time Management

Algonquin College

Although this website targets university students, its clear, sound strategies for improving time management skills are also suitable for secondary students. It includes quizzes, tips and tools.

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