



Resource Guide Building Resilience Discussion Questions

1. In the documentary, John Deasy, a school superintendent, says, "We know that students who are known well by at least one adult are less likely to disappear from school and be more engaged." Do you agree or disagree? What kinds of adults is he talking about? How do you know if a teacher or some other adult cares about you? How does that make you feel?
2. What talents did Gina Keane's teacher see in her? How did her teacher's encouragement keep her focused on staying in school?
3. Gina Keane says, "Without a high school diploma you're nothing in life." What does that mean for your self-esteem? How does a high school diploma impact you financially? Career-wise? How does being able to set a goal for yourself keep you resilient?
4. What are the two surprising facts researchers have found about children and resiliency? Comment on these two findings.
5. How do parents and other adults make sure children do not lose their resiliency? Who has done this for you? How?



Resource Guide Building Resilience Mini Fact Sheet

According to the study *Fostering Resiliency in Kids* by Bonnie Bernard (1991), resilient children have the following attributes in common:

- **Social competence.** They are comfortable being with, talking with, playing with, and initiating activities with others. They have a sense of humor and can laugh at themselves as well as situations, and they are flexible and adapt well to change.
- **Problem-solving skills.** They can think through challenges and find solutions
- **Autonomy.** They are independent and feel control over their situations and/or environment
- **Sense of Purpose and Future.** They can set plan and set goals and are generally optimistic in the way they view the world.

Experts agree that in order to learn and/or retain their resiliency, children need a sense of:

- **Skills.** They need to know what they do well and how to celebrate and improve their skills.
- **Being Needed.** They must feel a part of a positive, loving, accepting social group, found in their families, schools, and communities.
- **Community.** They need to belong and contribute to their communities.
- **Control.** They must be able to say, "I am in charge of my future. I know how to ask for help to get there and where to find training and education. I will work hard to reach my goals."
- **Role Models.** Adults must be positive, focused, flexible, organized and proactive.

When we teach children to build relationships with family, friends, teachers, co-workers and other community members, we help them understand how they fit in. By building these social relationships, children learn their own value, and in so doing, the seeds of hope and resiliency are planted.



Resource Guide Building Resilience Mini Tip Sheet for Parents

What Parents Should Know

Experts say all children are born resilient, but it takes several environmental factors to ensure that they maintain that resiliency. These factors include:

- Caring and support
- Clear and consistent expectations and goals
- Participation in home and community life.

There are both risk factors and protective factors concerning resiliency, defined as follows:

- **Protective Factors** are defined as general characteristics that “protect” a person from unnecessary risky behaviors. They include such factors as a strong and positive home life, clear expectations from parents and family, strong parent involvement and support in student activities, and bonds with athletic, school, or religious organizations.
- **Risk Factors** are defined as the general characteristics that tend to undermine stability in a person’s life. They include such factors as substance abuse within the home, lack of support or indifference from parents, extreme levels of stress in the home or school setting, perceptions of an approval of drugs and alcohol from family, school, or friends, and no or limited connections with athletic, art, music, or other school/community groups.

What Parents Can Do

Parents can help build resiliency skills in children by working on their own skills. The Nemours Foundation suggests developing the following attitudes and behaviors:

- Think of change as challenging, not problematic
- Learn to see problems as temporary; problems are opportunities for finding solutions, not barriers that stop all progress
- Learn how to set achievable goals and work toward them with optimism and persistence
- Solve problems as they come up, when they are manageable
- Seek to improve relationships with family, friends, colleagues and neighbors.
- Keep commitments
- Find familiar and new ways to have fun and relax.

When we can identify a challenge, focus on the process of meeting it, get ourselves organized to face it, and be positive and flexible in our approach to the challenge, then we are truly resilient and ready to teach our children how to be resilient, as well.



Resource Guide

Building Resilience

Lesson Plan: Resilient Heroes

Project

Students will examine the life of a famous or historical person in terms of the Seven Resiliencies, adapted from Project Resilience.

Objectives

Students will understand the Seven Resiliencies, select and research the life of a famous historical person and analyze his or her accomplishments in terms of the Seven Resiliencies and apply the Seven Resiliencies to their own lives.

Materials

- *The Seven Resiliencies* handout
- *Resiliency Worksheet*
- Access to research tools (media center, Internet, etc.)
- Paper, pens, pencils

Procedure

1. Distribute and discuss *The Seven Resiliencies* handout. Ask students for examples of how a person shows the strengths on the list.
2. Ask the class: *We often think of heroes as people who show great resilience. Can you think of anybody in history, anyone famous, or even anyone you know who has shown great resilience in the face of great challenges? Keep a list of student responses on the board.* You might offer the following additional examples: Gloria Estefan, Oprah Winfrey, Lance Armstrong, Helen Keller, Annie Sullivan, President Teddy Roosevelt, Thomas Edison, Harriet Tubman.
3. Ask students to select a name from the list, or identify another hero to study.
4. Distribute the Resiliency Worksheet and explain: *Use this worksheet to analyze your selected person's life and accomplishments in terms of the Seven Resiliencies. Consider the following questions: How did he/she demonstrate some of the resiliencies? Did he/she have many of the strengths? Which was strongest? What did this person do or say to illustrate, or prove to you, that he or she demonstrated a resiliency?*
5. Allow time for students to use research materials to locate information. When they have completed their worksheets, gather as a class and share.
6. When everyone has had a chance to share, have them write a response to the following question: *Which of the Seven Resiliencies do you think you have? How have you demonstrated any or all of them in your life?* (Note: This can be a journal or homework assignment.) Decide if this will be shared with others or not.
7. Wrap up the activity by asking: *How are we all resilient at one time or another? How can we keep ourselves resilient so we can feel like we are secure throughout life?*

Evaluation

- Did students understand the Seven Resiliencies?
- Did each student complete the assignment on a famous person?
- Did each student describe his/her own resiliencies?



THE SEVEN RESILIENCIES

(Adapted from Project Resilience by Steven and Sybil Wolin)

The following seven attributes describe ways you can show resiliency when facing challenges. Keep in mind that you—like most people—may show some, but not all, of these attributes/strengths when faced with difficult situations.

INSIGHT

Having *insight* means asking questions of yourself, even when the questions are difficult. If you answer honestly, you can learn and move forward. Having insight helps you understand the problem and how to best solve it. Insight helps you analyze the situation from as many perspectives as you can.

INDEPENDENCE

Showing *independence* means keeping a healthy distance between yourself and other people so you can think things through and do what is best for you. It also means knowing how to step away from people who seem to cause trouble or make things worse by their words or actions.

RELATIONSHIPS

Building *relationships* means finding connections with people that are healthy for both of you and keeping those relationships growing.

INITIATIVE

Taking the *initiative* means taking control of the problem and working to solve it. It means asking questions of yourself and answering them as honestly as you can, so you can move past a sticky situation. Sometimes people who take initiative become the leader in activities and teamwork.

CREATIVITY

Using *creativity* requires that you use your imagination or resourcefulness to express your feelings, thoughts and plans in some unique way. Remember that when you make something happen, it shows resiliency of spirit and a positive attitude.

HUMOR

Humor is the ability to find something funny in a situation, even when things seem really bad. Humor often gives you the perspective needed to relieve tension and make the situation better.

MORALITY

Being a person of *morality* means knowing the difference between right and wrong and being willing to choose and stand up for what is right.

Source: *Project Resilience*



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NAME _____ DATE _____

RESILIENCY WORKSHEET

Name of famous "hero" _____

In the boxes below, describe how your chosen "hero" demonstrates or demonstrated any of the seven resiliencies listed.

Insight

Independence

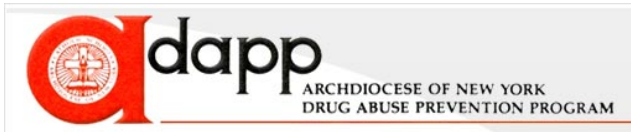
Relationships

Initiative

Creativity

Humor

Morality



Connect with Kids

Building Resilience Information Resources

Administration for Children and Families <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/>

Connect with Kids www.connectwithkids.com

Kids Health, www.kidshealth.org

Lessons for Living www.lessons4living.com

National Clearing House on Families and Youth <http://ncfy.acf.hhs.gov/>

Resiliency in Action, www.resiliency.com

"Fostering Resiliency in Kids: Protective Factors in Family, School and Community" by Bonnie Benard, M.S.W., West Ed, www.WestEd.org

Youth Violence Prevention, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, www.cdc.gov