

Strategies to Help Build Resiliency

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In the words of one teacher, "Long after students may have forgot what you tried to teach them, they will remember how you treated them." Whatever your approach to teaching and discipline, remember to treat your students with respect and compassion. -Anonymous

Calm down (basket, strategies, fidgets)- Create a basket for the classroom or individual baskets for students with fidgets inside. Fidgets are self-regulation tools to help with focus, attention, calming, and active listening. Fidgets can be bought online or can be homemade. Some examples may include, stress balls (playdough inside a balloon), weighted animal (rice or beans sewn inside a stuffed animal), I Spy bottle (plastic water bottle filled with rice and different colored items), oil/water bottle (fill a plastic bottle with half water, half oil, food coloring, and glitter), coloring sheets, journal, massager, etc.

Establish a Worry Place (Buron & Myles, 2013): This is a place a child can go to where she does not have to talk or answer questions. It is a calm spot, possibly equipped with paper and drawing materials, photo albums, jigsaw puzzles, or soft snuggly items. Teaching a child to use a worry place is a form of self-management, which is an evidence-based practice (National Autism Center, 2009)

Create a Pensieve (Buron & Myles, 2013): In the Harry Potter series (J.K. Rowling), there is a very wise wizard named Albus Dumbledore. Dumbledore has a tremendous amount of responsibility and knows a lot of things. Sometimes he gets overwhelmed with thoughts and memories, so he puts them into a shallow stone basin called a pensieve. Using this strategy is in line with the evidence-based practice of self-management (National Autism Center, 2009) as it teaches the child to put some worries on the back burner until he has time to work things out. Start by making a pensieve out of a small shoebox for the highly anxious child you lie or are working with. Make a slot in the top and have the child decorate the outside. On 3x5 note cards, have the child write down worrisome thoughts, with your assistance as needed. Prompt the child to put the cards into the pensieve and let him know that you will revisit them later when you can help him work on one worry at a time.

Time out/Cool Down time (nonpunitive): While it is important to stick to routines, endlessly worrying can be counter-productive. A calm zone is a place where students can voluntarily move when they feel themselves getting out of control. This safe space is an area separate from where students may be sent for time outs. Children can choose to go there, without penalty (Wolpow et al., p. 89, 2016)

Positive/Negative ratio- 10:1 (teacher must give 10 positive statements to every negative statement said to the student).

Compliment cards: Make it a habit to leave sticky notes with compliments on your students' desks. Plan out a delivery schedule that will make it feel random to keep them pleasantly surprised (builds compliments).

Choice boards: 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.

Would You Rather (Cleaver, 2015)? - Playing "Would You Rather?" shows students how different people approach the same situation and takes them through the decision-making process. (Here is one [list of WYR questions](http://www.conversationstarters.com/wouldyouratherquestions.htm):
<http://www.conversationstarters.com/wouldyouratherquestions.htm>)

Create connections- Relationships are key to resiliency, and it's not the number but the quality that counts. In addition to the emotional benefits, the best way to learn how to deal with minor stresses is to have it modeled by peers.

What You Can Do (Cleaver, 2015):

- Spin a web: Create a web that shows how the kids are all connected to one another. Then, use that web to figure out where and how you can build new connections.
 - Peer mentoring: Instead of doing show-and-tell or another presentation, pair kids up and have them teach one another something they know, share a book they read or explain a favorite hobby.
 - Establish a check-in person with the student. This person may be a previous teacher or an adult that would be able to motivate, encourage and maintain a positive relationship with the student.
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Connect with characters (Cleaver, 2015)- Books are a great jumping-off point for talking about resiliency. For example, *Chester's Way* and *Sheila Rae, the Brave* by Kevin Henkes, novels like *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen, and biographies provide a lot to talk about when it comes to resiliency. Focus on control: During discussion, focus on the choices the character made. This helps students understand that how we handle situations is within our control. And ask: What other choices could the character have made? And how would it have changed the outcome?

Encourage constant progress (Cleaver, 2015)- 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.

- Stair steps: Have students set big goals, and identify a few steps along the way. Then, have students reflect after each step about what helped them get there and what they want to keep, or stop, doing.
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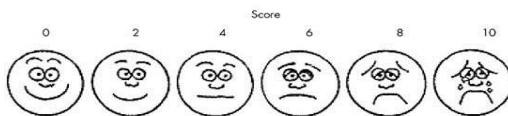
Positive binder/book (build self-esteem)- Create a binder for the student that includes anything positive pertaining to the student. Examples include, kind notes from others, school work that shows growth or proficiency, goals student has met or is improving on, pictures or artwork given to the student from others, etc.

Preferential seating- Seating arrangements can improve feelings of safety (Wolpow et al., p. 84, 2016). Have student sit where he/she feels most comfortable while being able to maintain focus on learning tasks.

Preferred job/duty: Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. For older students, have them apply for the job and once they get the job they will be paid with incentives or tangible items.

Stamp Card: Card for student to have that allows them to earn stamps from the teacher for positive actions (behavior and/or academic). This visual card allows the student to see their accomplishment and helps them monitor their behavior/emotions. The teacher can set up a system that the student can earn a bigger incentive once the student reaches the goal number set of stamps in a set time period.

Social/Emotional Rating Scale: Use this scale to help monitor how effective the strategies in use are for your student. Have private conversations daily or throughout the day in order to better understand your student and his/her needs.



- 0- I'm feeling good and I don't have any worries
 - 2- I'm feeling alright and I am ready to learn
 - 4- I'm feeling a little funny and I may need to talk
 - 6- I'm having a rough time and I may need a break
 - 8- I'm feeling pretty down and it's hard to focus on my work
 - 10- There's no way I can focus on my work. I can't stand how I feel and I'm very worried and concerned
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Fancy Fridays and Photo/Positive Scrapbooks (Wolpow et al., p. 92, 2016)

Fancy Fridays (Craig, 2008, p.125) is an activity geared for early elementary aged students. On these days, the teacher and a select group of children have lunch together. Rather than go to the school cafeteria an area of the room is set up like a restaurant. A tablecloth, napkins, and silverware adorn the table. Teachers and other adults help model appropriate behavior and conversation. Children attend Fancy Fridays on a rotating basis. No one is excluded. Teachers at all levels can have classroom photos taken of themselves with individual students while working together. These can be dated and stored in a scrapbook (digital or paper). Later on,

teachers can use this book to help students review the history of their relationship with the teacher and others. When so doing, teachers can help students notice how they were able to reconnect despite disagreements or misunderstandings (Craig, 2008, p.84). Teacher and student could also look through the binder/scrapbook to review and talk about the positive praise notes the student has earned.

Progressive Muscle Relaxation (PMR) and Yoga (Wolpow et al., p. 100, 2016)

PMR-Through a series of two steps we learn to relax our body. This physical relaxation can also result in emotional calm.

PMR games:

Stuffed Animal Breathing: Children lie on floor with a small stuffed animal on their or his stomach. Teach the student to get the animal to rise and fall with each breath.

Robot/Rag Doll: Children walk stiffly like a robot, then melt like a rag doll.

Spaghetti: Children move arms or legs like uncooked spaghetti, then like cooked spaghetti.

Bridges: Children raise and lower arms as in the game London Bridges breathing in as arms go up, and out as arms go down.

Giraffe/Turtle: Children pretend to be giraffes reaching for leaves on the highest branch of a tree, then pretend they are turtles pulling their arms, legs and heads into their shells.

Caterpillar/Butterfly: Children move like a caterpillar still in the cocoon, then spread their wings to fly. Doorway stretch: Then push with both arms against a doorframe. Hold for a count of ten. Then release. Notice the difference between how muscles feel during pushing and releasing.

Yoga- When students practice yoga, for that period of time they can be free from thought and anxiety. They are allowed to express themselves through slow methodical and intentional movement, stretching and strengthening muscles that have shortened during this stressful time. Yoga also helps students alleviate headache and back pain, as well as calming the nervous system. After a yoga practice, students have a sense of peace and ease, and have developed strategies on how to cope in their everyday lives.

Personal Journals (Wolpow et al., p. 121, 2016)

Students can be encouraged to keep personal journals, or diaries, in which they recount the events in their lives.

Worry Lock-Box (Wolpow et al., p. 121, 2016)

1. In the left column describe the event(s) about which you are worried. Go into as much detail

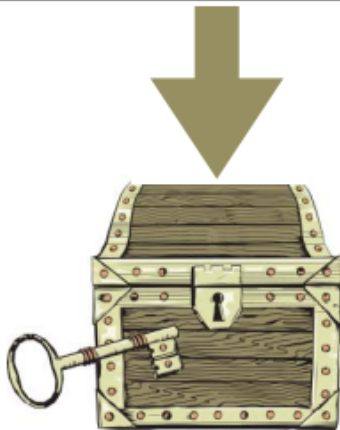
as you can. Don't be afraid to fill the box.

2. In the middle column write down the feelings you experience when you reflect on that event. Do you feel threatened, insecure, confused, etc. The language of feelings activity from earlier in this chapter might be helpful here.

3. In the right column write down anything you might be able to do about this tomorrow.

4. Place your journal in a box. Lock it. Don't unlock it until the next morning. (The imaginary box provided next may be used in lieu of a real box.)

Event(s)	Feeling(s)	What Can Be Done Tomorrow



Dialogue Journals (Wolpow et al., p. 122, 2016)

Dialogue journals provide students and their teachers with opportunities to write back and forth in a journal format.

Using Photographs to Teach Imagery (Buron & Myles, 2013): The concept of imagery can be difficult for young children to understand because it involves making a shift from a negative thought to a positive thought by imagining something positive in their heads. Photos can be used to assist children in “conjuring up” such positive images. It is also helpful to use concrete language when working with children, such as “replace the worry thought” and “find the calming thought” rather than “imagine that...” I recommend the use of a small photo album with photos of things the child loves. Focus on the things that tend to be calming (family pet, child's bed, stuffed animal, a family vacation, or the child participating in a calming activity like swimming) rather than things that tend to be alerting (video games or other types of games, TV programs,

etc.). As the child looks at the photos depicting known positive events, he is encouraged simultaneously to take slow, deep breaths. This is a type of relaxation and a form of teaching self-management, which is an evidence-based practice (National Autism Center, 2009).

The Vocabulary of Feelings (Wolpow et al., p. 96, 2016)

With training, most people become highly competent in using language to describe what they are thinking. Surprisingly, however, when asked to express how we feel, many of us are at a loss for words. That includes most teachers.

We are trained to use words to describe levels of thinking (e.g., Bloom) but rarely do we receive training in the levels of feeling (e.g., Krathwohl) (Krathwohl, Bloom & Masia, 1964). However, we can't address our feelings unless we can identify and name them. Neither can our students. Once you are attuned to your feelings and those of your students, model what you are learning. For example:

- When reading a story out loud to elementary students, pause and ask: How do you think this character feels? What do you think she is thinking? How are her feelings affecting how she acts?
 - Craig (2008) suggests that we can share personal stories and “sports cast” how we are feeling (p. 113).
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How to assess resiliency (Sagor, 1996):

Likewise, assessing the efficacy of resilience-building interventions shouldn't require expensive, time-consuming evaluations. This is because the best source of data on student attitudes is close at hand: the students themselves. While specific evaluation strategies will differ by teacher and context, a simple strategy will illustrate how easily data can be assembled.

Teachers could use a checklist, like the one illustrated in Figure 3, as part of their plan book. By filling it out weekly, teachers can keep track of their perceptions of how targeted kids are feeling about class activities. Then, on Friday, they can confirm their perceptions by talking with the students. This simple procedure can turn assessing the development of resiliency into an almost routine classroom ritual.

Figure 3. Teacher's Checklist for Assessing Resiliency

FIGURE 3

Teacher's Checklist for Assessing Resiliency

Name	Competence	Belonging	Usefulness	Potency
Jimmy Jameson	Seemed to show real pride in his ceramics project. ✓		Seemed to feel really needed in tutoring of 2nd grade buddy. ✓	
Jennifer Jensen		Was engaged all week ✓ in social studies. Appreciated in her group. ✓		Fulfilled her behavioral contract with a 100%. She took credit for this achievement. ✓

✓ indicates that student concurred with the teacher's perceptions.

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