CROSSROADS

Learning Context:
MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Theme:
BUILDING RESILIENCE
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Activity Theme 1: ACKNOWLEDGING ACHIEVEMENTS AND SUCCESSES

→ Focus Area:
   Resilience

→ Content Focus:
   • Building Resilience

→ Outcomes:
   5.2 Assess personal strengths and skills required to achieve a positive outcome in a range of challenging and changing situations.

→ Skills:
   Skills for increasing personal confidence and abilities to assume control, take responsibility, make a difference, or bring about change - building accurate self-concept and self-confidence, creating self-awareness skills, including awareness of rights, influences, values, attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses, setting goals, self-evaluation and self-monitoring skills, resilience.

WHY

Acknowledging our achievements and successes increases our positive emotions. Cultivating these emotions on a regular basis increases our resilience. Creating memories around our important achievements allows us to have something to remember in times of self doubt. During these times we can use these achievements to give ourselves reinforcement of what we can actually achieve.
HOW

• Whole group
• Small group
• Individual activities
• Offline + online

Equipment required:

• Post-it notes
• Access to the internet and laptop/tablet/phone
• Online access to the resilience self test
• 3, 2, 1 Ideas worksheet
• Boosting success through character strengths worksheet
• Recording my achievements big and small worksheet

Teacher Further Learning:

• ReachOut.com – Building resiliency in young people

WHAT

→ WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the ability of an individual to face particular difficulties (like abusive situations, living in poor conditions and having a non-supportive family) and not develop problem/risk behaviours. It describes the capacity of a person to respond in a positive way to the risks, stresses and diversities of life (www.health.gov.au).

3,2,1 BRAINWRITING: WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

• Students work in groups of 3.
• Each group completes the 3, 2, 1 Ideas worksheet.
  - Each student in the group is to think of two ideas around the definition of resilience. These can be words they associate with resilience or examples of being resilient.
  - Apply a 1-minute time limit for each student to complete these two ideas. After the time limit pass on to the next student in their group.
  - Students continue the exercise until all 3 students have completed the worksheet.
• Conduct a whole group discussion to invite each group’s ideas and develop a group definition with a list of examples of being resilient.

HOW RESILIENT ARE YOU?

• Individually, students complete the resilience self test http://stress.about.com/library/resilience/bl_resilience_quiz.htm
• Students pair up to discuss the following questions.
  - Were your results what you expected?
  - What resilience skills are you good at?
  - What resilience skills do you need to work on?
  - What are some ways to improve these resilience skills?

ACKNOWLEDGING ACHIEVEMENTS GROUP DISCUSSION:
• How do we celebrate our achievements?
  - Record 5 headings on a board or online space (as indicated in the table below).
  - Each student uses 5 post-it notes, one for each heading.
    - at school
    - at home
    - in the community (sport/clubs)
    - with our friends
    - by ourselves
  - Students use the post its to record as many ways they can think of to celebrate achievements in these settings.
  - As a group, explore the range of responses.

RECORDING YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS
→ Teacher note:
  - Students complete Recording my achievements big and small worksheet.

SUCCESSES — WHAT STRENGTHS HELP US TO BE SUCCESSFUL?
The following activities build on previous learning and understanding of personal strengths.
• If students have not explored previous content in this learning context, ask students to complete the VIA Character Strength test or use the Crossroads activity Identifying strengths, skills and strategies to build understanding. http://www.learning.schools.nsw.edu.au/crossroads/files/2014/11/FinalIdentifying-strengths-skills-and-strategies-1sw3q8e.pdf

WHAT STRENGTHS ASSIST US IN BEING SUCCESSFUL?
• As a group or prior to the lesson, students watch the clip The Science of character https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U3nT2KDAG0c and complete the following questions individually.
  - List two famous people from history who have also identified character strengths as important components of a meaningful life.
  - How can you shape other peoples' character strengths?
  - Which part of the brain controls our thoughts and actions?
    • Executive system
    • Pre-frontal cortex
    • Self-regulation
    • Focus centre
    • Grey matter
  - Discuss as a group.
7 CHARACTER STRENGTHS FOR SUCCESS

- Explain to students that Positive Psychologists have discovered that 7 of the 24 character strengths are linked with academic success and life satisfaction. These character strengths are listed below:
  - Grit
  - Social intelligence
  - Optimism
  - Gratitude
  - Zest
  - Self control
  - Curiosity

- Students complete the *Boosting success through character strengths worksheet*.
- Students work in small groups of 3 and share their answers from the worksheet on how they could further develop these character strengths.
- Create a class list of ideas on how to develop these characters strengths and display in classroom or in school hallway for other students to see.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Idea 1</th>
<th>Idea 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Positive Psychologists have discovered that 7 of the 24 character strengths are linked with academic success and life satisfaction. For each character strength below, investigate its definition and write it in the table below. Read through how to develop each strength and then list an additional way to develop this strength in the last column of the table.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Character Strength</th>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Example of how to develop this strength</th>
<th>What else could you do to develop this strength?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>GRIT</td>
<td></td>
<td>Read an inspiring quote or poem each week to boost your perseverance!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SOCIAL INTELLIGENCE</td>
<td></td>
<td>Watch your favourite TV show with the sound muted and write down your feelings as you watch it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPTIMISM</td>
<td></td>
<td>List all the bad things that have happened to you and for each list two positives.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GRATITUDE</td>
<td></td>
<td>Notice how many times you say ‘thanks’ and consider how much you mean it.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ZEST</td>
<td></td>
<td>Improve your sleep hygiene by getting to bed to have at least 8 hours sleep!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SELF CONTROL</td>
<td></td>
<td>Monitor and eliminate distractions when you are completing your homework (e.g. phone, tablet, computer).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CURIOSITY</td>
<td></td>
<td>Expand your knowledge in an area of interest through reading books, magazines, journals TV, radio or online for 30mins three times per week.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recording my achievements big and small

Keeping a notebook of all your achievements, big and small, helps to increase daily motivation, improve future planning and build resilience.

Set aside 5 minutes every week to record the achievements you have made. You may like to think about achievements relating to:

- Personal goals (Short and Long Term)
- School work
- Friendships
- Family relationships.

Below is an example. You may like to buy a notebook to record your achievements or use this worksheet as a template. It’s up to you.

Tips:
- Write down your achievements for the week.
- Focus on aspects of your life that are important to you, not what you think others think are important.
- Focus on progress towards your goals, not the end result you are aiming for. Small steps!
- Reflect at the end of the month. What could you do more of? What could you improve on?
- Repeat.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MY ACHIEVEMENTS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 1: My achievements this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Focus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 2: My achievements this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Focus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 3: My achievements this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Focus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WEEK 4: My achievements this week.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Area of Focus:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detail:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Activity Theme 2: ACKNOWLEDGING CONTROLLABLE FACTORS & EMPATHY

- **Focus Area:** Resilience

- **Content Focus:**
  - Building Resilience

- **Outcomes:**
  5.1 Plan for challenging and changing situations and understand the benefits of adapting to current and future challenges.
  4.3 Show respect for the ideas, feelings and contributions of others in various contexts.

- **Skills:**
  Skills for increasing personal confidence and abilities to assume control, take responsibility, make a difference, or bring about change — building accurate self-concept and self-confidence, creating self-awareness skills, including awareness of rights, influences, values, attitudes, strengths, and weaknesses, setting goals, self-evaluation and self-monitoring skills, resilience.

  Empathy building — ability to listen, understand another’s needs and circumstances and express that understanding.

**WHY**

Having external and environmental resources that can be drawn upon during challenging and changing situations are a vital component of learning to be resilient. Having these resources increases our personal confidence in being able to go through life’s ups and downs. In addition, empathy (understanding other people’s feelings / emotions / experiences) assists resilience through developing strong and supportive relationships and is particularly helpful when people are experiencing tough times.
HOW

• Whole group
• Small group
• Individual activities
• Offline

Equipment required:

• Butchers paper (7 sheets)
• Pens/ textas
• Controllable factors for resilience information sheet

WHAT

A. ACKNOWLEDGING CONTROLLABLE FACTORS

→ Teacher background information:

For further information about each factor, access the Centre for Confidence at: [http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/pp/overview.php?p=c2lkPTUmdGlkPTAmaWQ9MTEz](http://www.centreforconfidence.co.uk/pp/overview.php?p=c2lkPTUmdGlkPTAmaWQ9MTEz)

Explain to students there are varying controllable factors which influence resilience.

GRAFITTI WALK

• Create seven graffiti sheets (e.g. seven pieces of butchers paper around the room or seven online spaces, each with one of the seven controllable factors for resilience recorded on of the space)

• Controllable factors:
  1. Impulse Control
  2. Emotional Awareness and Self regulation
  3. Optimism
  4. Flexible and Accurate thinking
  5. Empathy
  6. Connecting and Reaching Out
  7. Self Efficacy

• Students work in small groups. Allocate two minutes for each group to work with each controllable factor graffiti sheet. In two minutes, groups discuss and record as much as they know about each factor, including examples of when they or someone they know has displayed or used each factor.

• Once each group has completed all seven graffiti sheets, each group decides upon the three most interesting pieces of information recorded on the last sheet they wrote on.

• Groups present their information to the class.
PAIR DISCUSSION

- Students work with the *Controllable factors for resilience information sheet*.
- Students highlight which factors for resilience they are strongest at and record reasons why.
- Students circle the factors they need to work on and how they plan to practice it.
- Invite students to form pairs and share their answers.
- Where students are comfortable with their partner and know their partner well, ask each student to use a different coloured pen to indicate on their partner’s sheet each resilience factor(s) they believe their partner uses the most. Provide examples of the partner’s actions where possible.
- Invite students to form small groups of 4-6 to discuss/share their responses where appropriate.

FOCUSED ACTIVITIES — TWO CONTROLLABLE FACTORS FOR RESILIENCE

1. **Optimism**

   - As a group, discuss students understanding of optimism. Record and display responses from students on a visible space online or offline.

→ **Note:**

Explain to students that being optimistic is all about being hopeful and positive of the future. When working on boosting our optimism, we don’t have to pretend we are happy and hopeful all the time, but we do need to make a conscious effort to work on being more hopeful and optimistic.

Focusing on the positive things during each day is a great way to boost our optimistic thoughts and increase our resilience.

   - Individually, students record three positive things that have happened in their previous week and explain why they happened, why they are positive and/or how they can make them happen again.

→ **Note:**

Explain to students how surrounding ourselves with positive and optimistic people ignites positivity and boosts optimism.

   - Individually, students record the people in their lives that help boost their optimism.
   - Students form pairs to brainstorm and record characteristics of people who are less likely to boost your optimism.
   - Discuss as a whole group to identify common characteristics across the group.
   - Ask students:
     - What about these characteristics impacts on an individual’s or group’s optimism?
     - How could a young person reduce the impact of these characteristics on their optimism?
     - What could a young person do in the next few days to spend more time with the people who boost their optimism?
     - To what extent does media impact on our ability to be optimistic?
- In pairs, ask students to brainstorm and record media (TV, movies, games, web sites, apps, other forms of media) that they believe impact both positively and negatively on their sense of optimism and positive thoughts. The following prompts will trigger ideas for students:

  • On TV I watch _________________________________________________.
  • After watching ______________________________ I feel _____________________________.
  • I like to read/ play _________________________________________________.
  • After reading/ playing ______________________________ I feel _____________________________.
  • I find out about what is happening in the news by _________________________________.
  • After reading/watching/listening to the news I feel _____________________________.

- Individually, ask students to reflect on two things they could switch to boost positivity and optimism?

- Extension activity — Research 3 Apps (Android and/or iOS) suitable for young people aged 14-17 that aim to boost optimism. Evaluate the effectiveness of each app in terms of boosting optimism and building the skills of young people to think positively.

2. Connecting and Reaching Out

→ Note:

Remind the group that connecting and reaching out is about taking risks and connecting with others. Connecting with others boosts our resilience as we draw upon their knowledge and skills and we extend our understanding of others and how they get through tough times and everyday life.

- In small groups students discuss their thoughts on the following questions.
  - What does it mean to belong to a community or a group?
  - In what ways do newcomers boost and enrich our community?
  - What are some barriers to newcomers in our community/group?
  - What do newcomers need and want from a community? (e.g. health, housing, shopping, sports clubs, friends)
  - What things do we do to actively connect new people to a community/group?
  - List examples of groups/communities you belong to or which are in the community you live in/ attend school.

- Invite students to report back to the whole group.

B. EMPATHY

GROUP DISCUSSION

- Individually, students record on a post-it note (online or offline) their ideas and thoughts of empathy.

- Display the post it notes for other students to explore and discuss as a whole group.

- If students are dominating discussions or students are reluctant to volunteer an answer, use the Fairness Jar strategy (from Activity ‘What is engagement?’ in Theme 1, Owning Yourself) http://www.learning.schools.nsw.edu.au/crossroads/support-materials/teaching-and-learning-resources/mental-health-and-wellbeing-resources/
CIRCLE CHAT: ARE YOU EMPATHETIC?

- Individually, students silently reflect on and think about the following questions — Are you empathetic?
- Questions: Are you empathetic?
  1. Do you think about how others feel?
  2. Do you listen well to others by making eye contact and not interrupting?
  3. Do you try to understand different people's opinions/points of view?
  4. Are you conscious to not make a habit of making fun of people, as you understand what it would feel like to be in their shoes?
  5. Do you listen to others in an attempt to understand what they are going through?
  6. Do you understand that people may have a different reaction to situations and may not react like you do?
- Use a Circle chat to invite students to share their responses with members of the group.

→ Circle chat:
  - Students' stand in two concentric circles, facing a partner.
  - Teacher reads out the empathetic statements one by one and students take turns to share their responses with their partner. Students should explain their answers by giving examples.
  - After 45 seconds, the teacher calls out “switch” and the outside circle moves one step to their right to meet their next partner.
  - Continue sharing until each student has spoken with at least 6 different students/all 6 questions are discussed.

STUDENT PAIR DISCUSSION: PRACTICING EMPATHY

- Students work in groups of 3 and label themselves student A, student B and student C.
- Students complete the following activity beginning with student A as the speaker, student B as the empathetic listener and student C as the observer.
  - Describe an embarrassing story, moment or a situation where they were scared or sad.
  OR
  - Choose a fictional character to describe a situation where they have gone through an embarrassing moment/where the character was sad or scared.

→ Teacher note:

Newly released movies or cartoons are a good starting point to prompt ideas for students. When running this activity search for the latest movie releases for providing prompts for characters/movie scenes for students

- Students swap roles and repeat activity until all students have adopted each role.
- Draw a Y chart to facilitate a whole group discussion. As a whole group, discuss the following questions:
  - What did empathy look like/sound like/feel like in your discussion?
  - When would people use empathy the most?
  - How could a young person practice more empathy?
Controllable Factors that Contribute to Resilience

- Optimism
  - Being realistic and hopeful
- Self-Efficacy
  - Confidence in your ability to solve problems
- Connecting & Reaching Out
  - Taking risks and connecting with others
- Emotional Awareness + Self Regulation
  - Identifying what you are feeling and controlling your feelings
- Impulse Control
  - Thinking before acting on decisions
- Flexible Thinking
  - Seeing problems from many viewpoints
- Empathy
  - Reading and understanding others' emotions
- Optimism
  - Being realistic and hopeful of the future

Information based on the work of Dr. Karen Reivich and Andrew Shatte (The Resilience Factor, 2002)
Activity Theme 3: OVERCOMING ADVERSITY & ACCEPTING SUPPORT

→ Focus Area:
  Resilience

→ Content Focus:
  • Building Resilience

→ Outcomes:
  4.2 Demonstrate the ability to vary the ways they relate to people as situations change.
  7.1 Identify appropriate sources of support.

→ Skills:
  Decision-making and problem solving skills – information gathering skills, evaluating consequences of actions for self and others, determining alternative solutions to problems, analysis skills regarding the influence of values and of attitudes about self and others on motivation and behaviour.

WHY
The difficult or adverse times in our lives help us appreciate when things go smoothly. Adversity is a part of our everyday lives. When we respond positively to challenges, our coping skills, strengths, character and perseverance emerge to get us through the tough times, move forward and move on. This takes practice.

HOW
• Whole group
• Small group
• Individual activities
• Offline + online
Equipment required:

- Butchers paper
- Pens/textas
- Post-it notes
- Standard index or speech cards OR A5 sheets of paper (one per student)
- Access to the internet and laptop/tablet/phone
- Online access to:
  - http://au.reachout.com/building-better-coping-skills
  - http://au.reachout.com/all-about-gratitude#what
  - http://www.education.com/worksheets/mandalas/
- Where to go for help worksheet
- Building my coping skills worksheet

WHAT

A. OVERCOMING ADVERSITY

CLASS BRAINSTORM:

- What is adversity?
- What are ways we overcome adversity or get through tough times?
- What strengths, skills and strategies can we use to overcome adversity?
- Students use the Building better coping skills fact sheet from ReachOut.com http://au.reachout.com/building-better-coping-skills to identify three strategies a young person could use to overcome adversity or get through tough times.
  - Students use the Building my coping skills worksheet to reflect on the coping strategies they could use to overcome adversity and who they could seek help from.

JIGSAW: USING GRATITUDE AS A COPING SKILL

Students use the All about Gratitude Fact Sheet from ReachOut.com http://au.reachout.com/all-about-gratitude#what

- Working in groups of 4, each student is numbered 1-4.
- All students with number 1, group together. All students with number 2 group together etc.
- Each group is assigned one of the 4 sections from the fact sheet (listed below) to summarise their allocated section with one piece of butchers paper and pens/textas.
  - Group 1: What does gratitude mean? and What is gratitude?
  - Group 2: Benefits of gratitude
  - Group 3: Ways to increase gratitude
  - Group 4: What are the sorts of things I would be thankful for?
- Each group has 6 minutes to summarise the information.
- Each student records the summary as shared in the group (so they can share with their original group).
- Students re-group to their original groups where each student takes it in turn to share their section of the factsheet.
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION

• Students work in the same groups and discuss the questions below:
  1. Where do we see most gratitude here at school?
  2. How is this gratitude expressed?
  3. What could we do from tomorrow to have more gratitude expressed here at school?
• Share/discuss answers as a whole group.

CREATING A HASSLE FREE ZONE THROUGH MINDFULNESS

→ Teacher notes:

Getting away from noise and distractions and honing in on a little ‘me time’ is a great way for people to build up their personal toolkit for overcoming adversity. One method of creating a hassle free zone is using mindfulness strategies such as mindful colouring.

• Students investigate (online) mindful colouring using the following questions as prompts for information:
  1. What is mindful colouring?
  2. How does it improve our coping skills or boost our resilience?
  3. What are some alternative strategies to mindful colouring?
• Students complete a mindful colouring exercise (20-30mins). For this exercise, students will need to work in complete silence and be provided with textas or pencils to colour in with. Free colouring templates are available from online sites such as http://www.education.com/worksheets/mandalas/
• As a group, discuss the questions below:
  - What emotions did you feel when completing the colouring in?
  - What did you think about?
  - Did your thoughts pass through your mind or were you fixated on your thoughts?
  - What else could you do that would assist you in practicing mindfulness?

B. ACCEPTING SUPPORT

GROUP ‘BRAINSWARM’

A ‘brainswarm’ is a brainstorm conducted in silence with post it notes. In brainswarming there is no critiquing of ideas, dominant voices or a reluctance to contribute. Students write their thoughts on post it notes over a period of 3 minutes. Students place each of their post it notes on the board so there is a collection of ideas.

• Students work together to move and place similar ideas together in themes on a designated space, such as a board.
  - Brainswarm 1: Why is support helpful for resilience?
  - Brainswarm 2: What concerns might young people have about accepting support/help?
• Discuss collective theme ideas as a group.
  - What was the most common idea the group came up with?
  - Are young people more willing to seek help online or offline? Give reasons.
  - How can we make seeking help easier for young people?
• Individually students complete the Where to go for help worksheet.
CONNECTING WITH OTHERS: SMALL GROUP WORK

- Connecting with others provides young people with greater opportunities for accepting and seeking help by building a network of people they can turn to during tough times.

→ **Teacher preparation:**

Search online for a series of famous quotes about the importance of connecting with others appropriate for senior students. Place quotes on standard 3” X 5” index cards (or A5 paper). Make two cards/sheets for each quote.

- Students are allocated or randomly select a card/sheet.

- Students read the card/sheet silently to themselves.

- Inform students that there is another student in the room with the same card and that their challenge is to find that student (If there is an odd number of students, teachers can take a card/sheet).

- Students are to find the student with the same card/sheet as they have. As a pair, discuss;
  - What does the quote mean to them?
  - How could this quote be used to encourage a young person to make connections with the intention to accept and seek help?
1. Create a mind map of all the support places/people/organisations you can think of that are available to assist young people going through a tough time.

2. Using your mind map place your ideas under these categories below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home</th>
<th>School</th>
<th>In the local community</th>
<th>At sport/activity clubs</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>

3. Choose one category from the above table and write a short scenario of a 16 year old requiring support.

   Points to be covered:
   • Why the young person needs support.
   • What coping strategies has the young person used themselves?
   • What type of support is required?
   • What are the first steps to take in seeking this support?
   • How could a friend also help this person?
   • How much (if anything) will support cost?
   • Is an appointment required?
Building my coping skills

4. Why are positive coping strategies useful?
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________________

5. Finding the right coping strategy.
Using the information you find on ReachOut.com, choose three strategies you would consider trying as ways of overcoming adversity/getting though tough times.

Strategy One: ____________________________________________________________
What is it all about? ______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Strategy Two: ____________________________________________________________
What is it all about? ________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Strategy Three: __________________________________________________________
What is it all about? ________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

6. Investigate what to do if you need further help.
Who can you talk to? ______________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Who can you ask for help — at home or at school? __________________________
______________________________________________________________________________
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