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Skills To Help Students Build Resilience

Resilience—the ability to adapt through adversity—is like a muscle: the more you exercise it, the stronger the muscle becomes. Building children’s capacity for resilience is essential to their health and well-being, according to research. During a session at the American Psychological Association’s annual conference, experts shared five skills educators can use to help their students become more resilient.

1. Encourage students to be kind to themselves

When something bad happens, encourage students to go easy on themselves. Remind them to take care of their basic needs, such as getting enough sleep, eating properly, taking breaks, and doing something they enjoy. Adults in a school building can also model this strategy; for instance, if there’s a troubling event that affects the whole school, such as a flood or wildfire, educators can talk about what steps they are taking to be kind to themselves.



2. Show them how to stick to routines

Having a routine helps ground children with confidence and a calm demeanor. During times of distress or transition, the routine might need to be a little flexible, but it’s still important to have some structure and consistency. Schools can help by maintaining familiar classroom environments and routines, providing stability and a sense of safety for the students.



3. Tell kids to talk more with friends and adults

Encourage students to talk with their friends, family members, or other trusted adults about what they’re going through. Show them how to get connected to their communities, whether through clubs, sports, or other activities. Schools can help by providing opportunities for students to connect with each other.



4. Take small steps toward bigger goals

Hard times can make young people feel a loss of control for the direction of their lives. Remind them that even in hard times, they can move toward goals one small step at a time. Help them focus on things they can control, or even things out of their control that they can do something about. This could look like helping students focus on specific tasks or breaking down big assignments to more manageable chunks.



5. Emphasize the value of helping others

Encourage students to help someone else. This can provide a sense of empowerment and accomplishment and might help them get their minds off the problems that are bothering them. Schools can provide opportunities for students to volunteer in their communities or at school by helping other students in their classes or in the grades below them.

