

DRUG PROOFING YOUR KIDS



*A Resource for parents
and teachers*

RESILIENCE

Resilience is important to us:

- ✓ to be happy
- ✓ to survive
- ✓ to be successful
- ✓ to deal with the hard times of life
- ✓ to positively influence others

“When things go wrong, being resilient is like a person who has a bungee rope around them to bounce back when things get tough and to maintain their idea of who they are.”

Professor Andrew Fuller

Resilience is managing complex issues of difficulty, duress, trauma or disappointment with:

- Well-developed problem-solving skills
- Persistence of will
- Founded on hope

What does that rope look like?

Family – is it working well?

- Feeling loved by your family – Child is affirmed, encouraged and disciplined
- Feeling your family respects your decisions – e.g. allowing for age appropriate autonomy
- Family structure is sound and extended
- Family heritage and values system are positive
- Family foundation of hope is articulated and understood

Education - is it working well?

- School and teachers are a great resource. The school is focused on ensuring a positive and enriching experience – not just academics
- Students feel respected by teachers. Having adults who listen and believe in them
- Getting right feedback as well as input

Community – you're part of one and it's good

- Positive peer connectedness generates a sense of belonging and being part of something bigger
- The crucial element is why they are accepted. Successful community is reliant on acceptance of the person not their performance or skill e.g. communities of faith

Core foundations

- Sense of meaning, purpose, value and direction – needs to be reliable, strong, tried and tested. Enables a sense of having something bigger than you – bigger than circumstances, emotions, set-backs and disappointment

Three needs of young people

(1) The Need to Belong

This is fundamental to all of us, but particularly teens as they wrestle with who they are. Teens are naturally drawn to their peers and seek their acceptance. Rejection from their peers can have significant immediate and long term consequences (e.g. mental health)



The drive to belong and the fear of rejection makes young people very vulnerable to peer pressure. A level headed 13 year old girl might never consider drinking, but when faced with being excluded socially by her classmates, may easily give in to the pressure.

One way we resist peer pressure is to not look to be popular but to find someone (just one person is enough) that we can trust and enjoy.

(2) The Need to Try New Things

This is called 'individuation' and is a normal part of adolescent development, as you move from childhood toward independence in adulthood. This involves risk taking and pushing boundaries.

Teens will start to make independent decisions apart from their parents. Teens will test themselves – physically (especially guys) and mentally. Teens will test their parental values against other values to affirm their own.

This is an area where boundaries are extremely valuable if they are clear, consistent and applicable. They need to be modelled and discussed. High expectations and appropriate encouragement are also vital factors.

(3) The Need to be Grown Up

Although they often act like toddlers, teenagers long to be accepted as grown up. The desire to be 'grown up' makes teens vulnerable to culturally driven rites of passage. In many cultures there are celebrated 'rites of passage' – ceremonial recognition that they have moved into adulthood. Our culture often has poor markers for initiating and is driven by media and marketing forces linked with sports and celebrities.

Cultural rites that communicate responsibility, well-developed autonomous decisions and the opportunity to meaningfully participate are crucial elements.

Rites of passage:

Lessons for maturity

The following conclusion in lessons for maturity was taken from a study conducted by Richard Rohr – Study of Initiation Rites.

- Life is hard
- Life is a gift – don't waste it
- You are not the most important person
- You are not in control
- Life is not just about you

In contrast, our popular culture teaches...

- Life should be easy
- You can stay young forever
- You are what is most important
- Above all else, you must stay in control
- Life is mostly about you being happy

The above lessons reinforced in our western culture, unfortunately, do not build character and help people become resilient. The principles outlined in Richard Rohr's study encourages people to understand that through the challenging times of life one can develop resilience and make a significant contribution to society.

Tips on educating young people on drugs and alcohol

(1) Start teaching them early

When they are young you can read the instructions out loud to children before giving them medicine. This sends a simple message that it is important to follow instructions when taking medications. Point out that medications and drugs can be dangerous when used inappropriately.

(2) Build ongoing dialogue

Build an ongoing dialogue and keep the lines of communication open - if you wait until you find out your child is taking drugs to talk to them then it is likely to lead to frustration, anger and a breakdown in communication. Watch out for everyday opportunities where you can naturally raise the topic of drugs, keeping the conversation age appropriate.

(3) Don't push it

If a child makes it clear they do not want to talk about drugs and there is not an urgency to do so, then respect the child's wishes and wait for a time when they are more receptive. Just reassure the child you are always available to talk whenever they want to.

(4) Give an 'out'

Social pressures are more likely to influence young people when it comes to experimenting with drugs than anything else. Give your teenagers an 'out' by discussing ways in which they can say no to drugs while they are out socially and still look 'cool'. They include things like, *"I'm training for a big game and need to be as fit as possible"* or *"maybe later, I've already had a few."*

(5) Get perspective

Peer pressure also plays its part. Many teenagers think that everyone gets drunk and takes drugs. However it is important to point out to young people that although statistics say 10% of young people are binge drinking, 90% are not. Peers only become more influential than parents if there is a breakdown in communication so maintain a positive, caring and open relationship.

Parent Tool Kit

1. Sit down and ask yourself: *“What are we doing well?”* and *“What do we need to add / improve / focus upon?”*
2. Encourage analysis of influences (e.g. the media – generate filters to separate the good and the bad).
3. Spend time together – have a specific family time (e.g. Sunday afternoon).
4. Search for a foundation in life – begin by asking first order questions; consistently communicate it.
5. Ask older people of their experiences – include patriarchs.
6. Draw from the positives of a conventional small community where we teach young people to:
 - (a) respect elders – spend time with them, seek counsel, etc.
 - (b) give responsibility to them towards younger children – be a role model, give counsel, etc.
7. Draw from the existing wider community – what groups can you get involved in?
8. Give positive messages about who (not what) they are – their soul opposed to their image
9. Teach empathy – ask *“how would you feel if...?”*
10. What is life about? Fulfillment or happiness? What is the difference? Discuss.
11. Finally, share experiences of how you bounced back through some tough times.



Philosophy for Parenting

- 1) My children are a precious gift, not an inconvenience. I have the privilege of shaping them into mature positive contributing adults.
- 2) This requires time, not money. Children spell love T.I.M.E. – I will give them both quality and quantity time.
- 3) My marriage and our home is predominantly about family and its needs – not about ‘me’ and my needs
- 4) Our family will have strong reference points and values
- 5) Our family will have a clear and well thought through worldview on which to base our values and hope

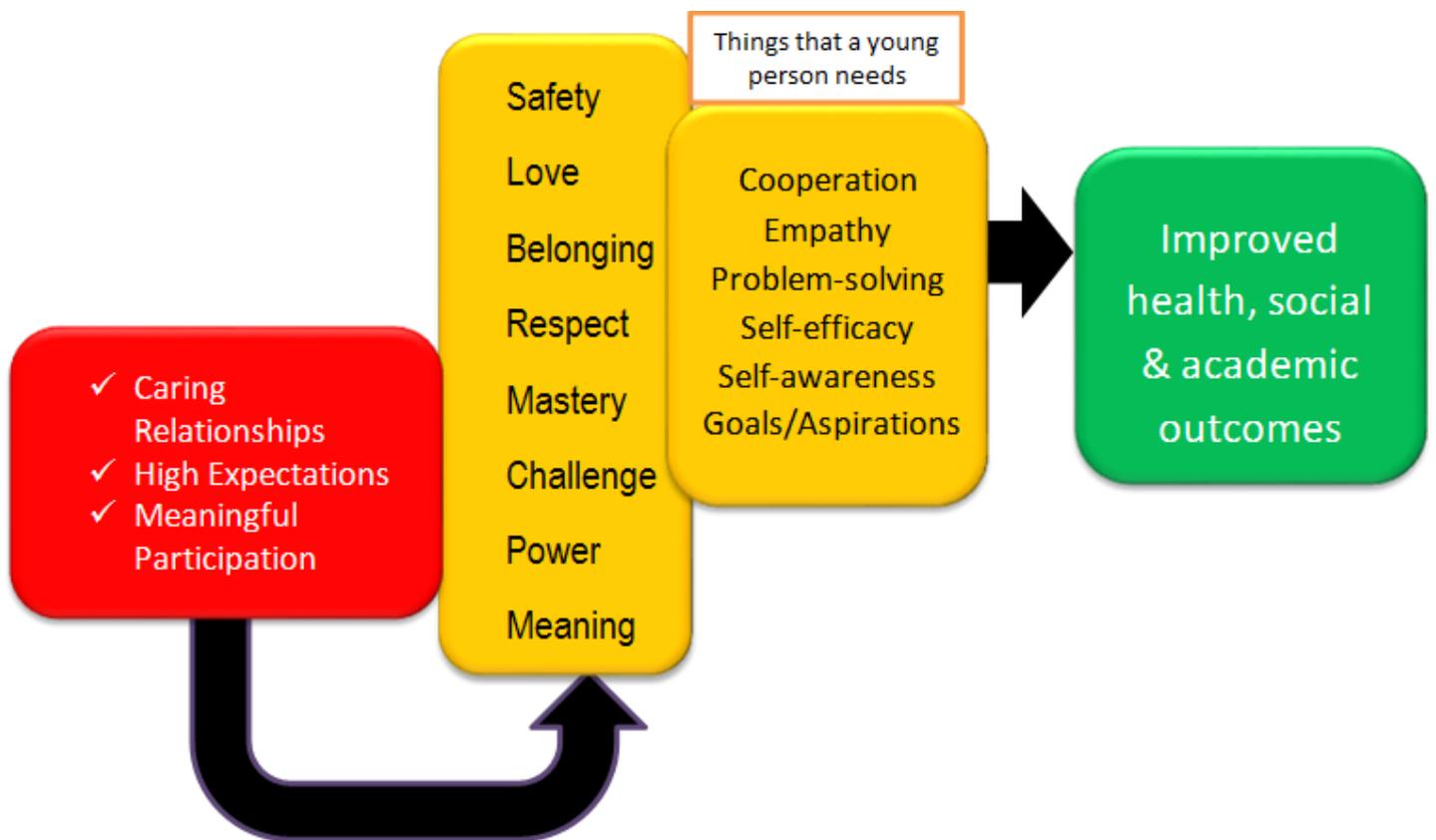
Key Steps to Prevention

- 1) Be sensitive to the stress in your children's lives, help them cope and for them to find solutions
- 2) Understand when and why your children are bored and help relieve their boredom
- 3) Have boundaries – e.g. limit the amount of money your children have to spend and monitor how that money is spent
- 4) Know who your children's friends are
- 5) Be engaged in your children's lives: help them with their homework, attend their sports events, participate in activities together, and talk to them about issues like drugs and alcohol

Resiliency in Action

Things that can build on protective factors and minimise risk factors (Burton) are:

- **Caring Relationships**
(compassion, understanding, respect and interest)
- **High Expectation messages**
(firm guidance, structure and challenge, focus on strengths and assets rather than negatives)
- **Opportunities for meaningful participation**
(opportunities for valued responsibilities, making decisions, giving voice and being heard, contributing one's talents to the community)



Therefore, the language of resiliency is:

- I have ... caring relationships
- I am ... high expectation messages
- I can ... meaningful participation

Parent Checklist

- I listen to my children and take an interest in their thoughts and opinions. I have gathered specific information about each of my children. I know their favourite things.
- I am aware of what they are scared of, what makes them laugh and what is special about their personality
- I don't sweat the small stuff but choose my battles carefully
- I know what to expect from my child's age group. I am aware of what is normal developmentally
- I feel the atmosphere in our home is warm, relaxed and positive
- We regularly do fun things together
- I take time to enrich my own life
- I give physical affection to my children
- As parents we spend time on our relationship
- We are developing a family culture of regular traditions
- We support each other in our parenting
- I have communicated our family rules
- There is some structure and routine in our home
- I speak encouraging words to my children
- I am careful to follow through on my words
- I allow my children to learn from consequences rather than my anger
- I give my children opportunities to solve their own problems
- I set time aside to talk to my children about their day – what they have liked and what they have found hard
- We eat meals together regularly each week with the television off