



Supporting pupil’s social, emotional and mental health following Covid-19

What is resilience?

Resilience is defined as:

“The capacity to spring back, rebound, successfully adapt in the face of adversity, and develop social, academic and vocational competence despite exposure to severe stress or simply the stress that is inherent in today’s world.”

(Henderson & Milstein, 2003. p7).

Resilience is a ‘dynamic’ and ‘ecological’ phenomenon, and an individual’s potential for resilience is a product of complex interactions between personal attributes and environmental circumstances ¹

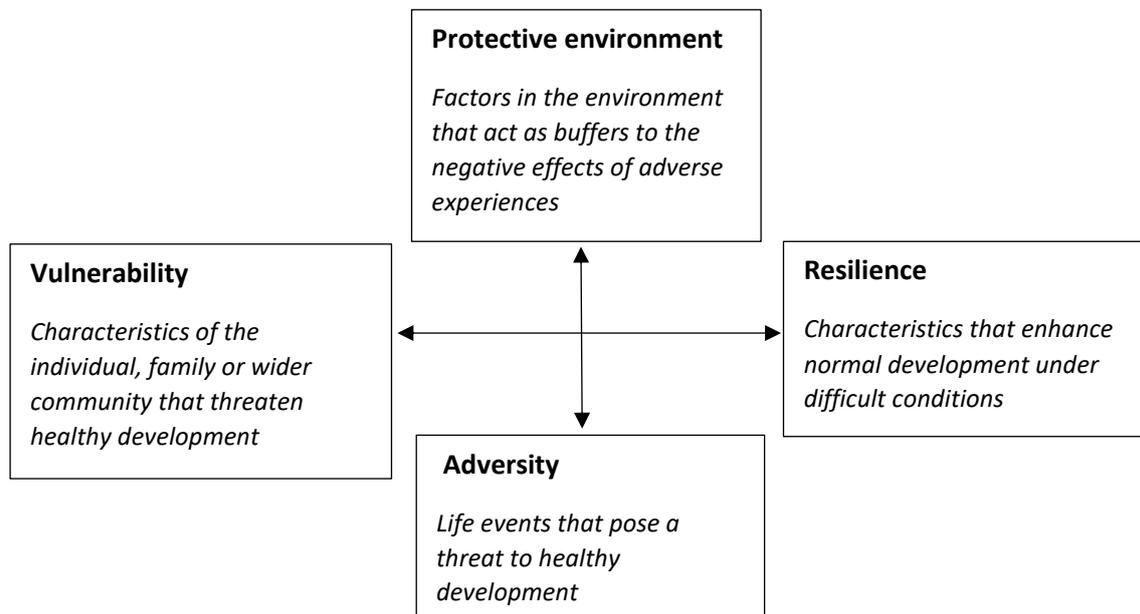


Figure 1. Framework for the assessment of resilience factors¹

This framework has the potential to be applied to the Covid-19 pandemic, as this may be considered a life event that poses a threat (Adversity). Some children and young people may be more vulnerable than others in terms of both their individual needs and family circumstances. In planning the transition back to school, it may be beneficial to

¹ Daniel, B. & Wassell, S. (2002). *Adolescence: Assessing and promoting resilience in vulnerable children 3*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

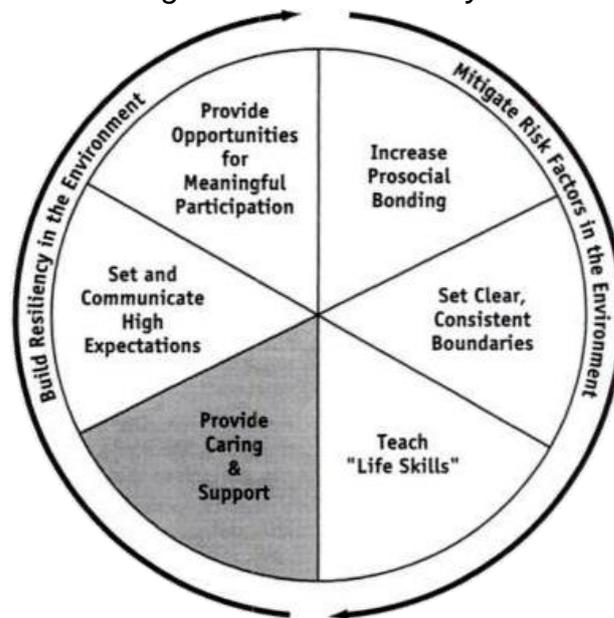


consider the risk factors and protective factors when considering how to support resilience in children and young people.

The Resiliency Wheel

The Resiliency Wheel was developed by Henderson and Milstein (2003; Figure 2). This is a framework that was developed to give guidance to schools with regards to how to support resilience in children and young people. There are two sides to the wheel; 'Mitigating risk', and 'Building resilience.' This means that the focus is not only on reducing the impact of risk, but also preparing children and young people so that future risks have less impact on them. The Resiliency Wheel illustrates six 'Resiliency building conditions'; increasing pro-social bonding, setting clear and consistent boundaries, teaching life skills, providing caring and support, setting and communicating high expectations, and providing opportunities for meaningful participation.

Figure 2: The Resiliency Wheel²



² Henderson, N. & Milstein, M. (2003). *Resiliency in Schools: Making it happen for students and educators*. Updated edition. Corwin Press Inc.



Build resilience

Henderson & Milstein (2003) distinguish between factors that reduce the impact of risk and those that build resilience in children and young people. Actions that support the development of resilience in children and young people are:

- (a) Provision of care and support, to support a sense of belonging,
- (b) High expectations and acknowledging pupils' strengths and their potential.
- (c) Opportunities for meaningful participation, which includes involving children and young people in planning and goal setting, in addition to learning activities that are seen as meaningful and relevant.

Mitigate risk factors

Henderson and Milstein (2003) outline general actions in schools that mitigate risk:

- (a) increase prosocial bonding
- (b) clear expectations and boundaries so that young people have a clear idea about what is going to happen and how to behave
- (c) teaching important life skills such as problem-solving and conflict resolution, as well as emotion regulation.

The Centre for Childhood Resilience³ – reports that focusing on three key principles can help children cope with a range of stressors, including the situation around Covid-19.

Creating a safe environment- providing a physically *and* emotionally safe space in which children can feel comfortable seeking information and understanding what is expected for them and others.

- Meeting basic physiological needs (thirst, hunger, sleep, movement and warmth) as well as attending to their emotional needs helps to create a safe environment.
- Routines and predictability matter for all children and help put them at ease.
- Adults can help by translating information in ways that children can understand.
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³ <https://childhoodresilience.org/resources-1>



- Involving children in the creation of a new daily routine may help increase their sense of control in an uncertain situation.

Building relationships and connectedness - providing opportunities and activities for children to enjoy time with peers, staff and to feel a sense of community and belonging.

- Fostering positive relationships with peers.
- Fostering positive relationships with staff.
- Include time to communicate, share feelings, and enjoy shared activities.
- Linking to community groups or efforts, children can enhance their sense of helpfulness and power during uncertainty.

Supporting and teaching emotion regulation - acknowledging that all of us (adults and children) are experiencing many complex feelings and helping them learn and use age-appropriate ways to express those feelings safely.

- Normalising feelings and assuring children that ALL feelings are okay will help to manage unexpected and challenging emotions. Focusing on ways to normalise reactions and practice coping methods will be helpful.
- Develop understanding of thoughts feelings and behaviours and how they are linked.