



# Conewago Valley School District Counselors' Corner

April 2018

## Building Resilience

### What is Resilience?

**“If you have lemons, make lemonade”**

**-Dale Carnegie**

This phrase has been around since 1915 and is used to describe overcoming obstacles in life.

It is the hope of everyone at Conewago Valley School District that our students will have no obstacles during school or anywhere else in life. However, it is also our duty to prepare our students for the real world. The truth is, our students will face obstacles. They may face a non-preferred task, or have a bad day where everything seems to go wrong. When life has us feeling down, we hope our students will be able to be **resilient** and overcome any obstacle they may face.

To put it simply, **resilience is the ability to overcome a difficulty or obstacle in our way.** There is a vast range of obstacles that people face on a daily basis. Some obstacles will be minor and will be overcome easily, and some obstacles go beyond what any human should ever have to endure. Whatever comes our way, we need to be prepared to deal with obstacles. We need to make lemonade when we get handed lemons.

### Why Is Resilience Important?

It has been said that “perception is reality” meaning; how we experience the world can differ from person to person, even sibling to sibling. Studies on resilience are done on twins because twins usually experience similar situations and are as close to an control/experimental group as you can find in a “natural environment”. For example, when a mom says that her twin daughters are not allowed to stay out past 10:00pm, what makes one twin listen to mom, and one twin say mom is the “worst mom ever”? Perception (among many other variables)

Perception is based on a thought process. Changing our thought process can change the way we react to obstacles. In the example in the previous paragraph (the twins reacting to their mother’s rule), the twins thoughts, feelings, and behaviors all interact in a matter of seconds to create their unique reaction to that situation.

Besides helping our children to change their perceptions, we can also listen and acknowledge their obstacles, no matter how small they may seem to us. It may seem trivial when a kindergarten student is upset that her friend is playing with someone else (It actually may be trivial in the larger sense) but not to that kindergarten student. Listening to our students’ troubles can help them get into a good frame of mind in order to help them learn and grow.

## Ways to Build Resilience

The American Psychological Association (APA) has a guide for helping school aged students (pre-k-12th grade) build resilience. These are tips for building resilience in children and teens, but there is more information for students in different age groups. These are edited for length so please check out the website link in the resources section.

### **1. Make connections**

Teach your child how to make friends, including the skill of empathy, or feeling another's pain. Encourage your child to be a friend in order to get friends.

### **2. Help your child by having him or her help others**

Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others.

### **3. Maintain a daily routine**

Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives. Encourage your child to develop his or her own routines.

### **4. Take a break**

While it is important to stick to routines, endlessly worrying can be counter-productive. Teach your child how to focus on something besides what's worrying him.

### **5. Teach your child self-care**

Make yourself a good example, and teach your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise and rest.

### **6. Move toward your goals**

Teach your child to set reasonable goals and then to move toward them one step at a time.

### **7. Nurture a positive self-view**

Help your child remember ways that he or she has successfully handled hardships in the past and then help him understand that these past challenges help him build the strength to handle future challenges.

### **8. Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook**

Even when your child is facing very painful events, help him look at the situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective.

### **9. Look for opportunities for self-discovery**

Tough times are often the times when children learn the most about themselves. Help your child take a look at how whatever he is facing can teach him "what he is made of."

### **10. Accept that change is part of living**

Change often can be scary for children and teens. Help your child see that change is part of life and new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable.

### **Adults Can Practice Resilience Too!**

According to Dr. Cal Crow, here are a few ways that adults can help build more resilience. The better we are with resilience the more likely we pass our traits on to our children.

- Get a proper amount of sleep
- Exercise
- Practice thinking about your thinking (Metacognition or introspection)
- Practice thinking positive thoughts
- Try to learn from mistakes and failures
- Set specific and achievable goals
- Have confidence in yourself

## Resources:

<https://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/resilience.htm>

<http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/resilience.aspx>

## Contact Information:

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