



# Promoting Positive Mental Health and Wellbeing in Teenagers: A Partnership Approach

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# Mental Health

‘Mental health influences how we think and feel about ourselves and others, as well as how we interpret events.

It affects our capacity to learn, to communicate and to form, sustain and end relationships. It also influences our ability to cope with change, transition and life events, such as having a baby, moving house, or experiencing bereavement.’

*(Friedli 2004)*



What do we mean by promoting positive mental health?

Building Resilience: The Tigger Effect!





# What is Resilience?

- Emotional wellbeing against the odds
- The ability to bounce back
- Adaptability in the face of adversity





# Growing up in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: do kids today have it easy?

- Video
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xe1a1wHxTy0>



# Growing up in the 21<sup>st</sup> century: do kids today have it easy?

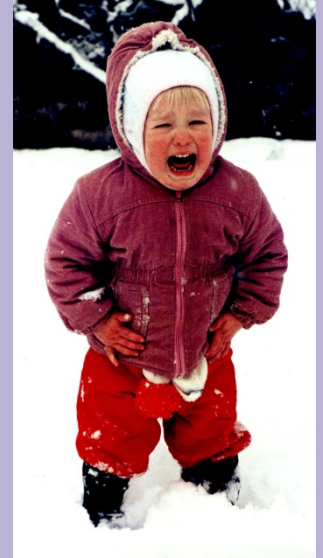
- Studies show that people are not as happy as they used to be.
- Young people seem to be finding it more difficult to 'bounce back' from set backs.
- Is modern society eroding young people's resilience?





# The Erosion of Resilience

- The cotton wool effect
- Treating young people like infants
- The belief that negative emotions are wrong
- Lack of understanding about the importance of negative feelings
- High academic expectation and all or nothing thinking





# The Erosion of Resilience

- Social media
- Celebrity culture
- Sense of entitlement
- The need to be perfect
- Too much choice







# When young people lack resilience...

- Mental health difficulties often occur where there is a lack of resilience.
- What is a mental health difficulty?

*Mental disorders comprise a broad range of problems, with different symptoms. However, they are generally characterized by some combination of abnormal thoughts, emotions, behaviour and relationships with others.*

*WHO, 2013*



# What can be done to help young people build resilience?

- A partnership approach to building resilience

‘...Contexts such as home, community, schools and classrooms have been shown to provide protection to children and young people at risk and to direct their development towards positive and healthy pathways (Schoon 2006)’.

Key messages we must deliver to build resilience...



# Building Resilience

## Hold high expectations

- o Young people are capable
- o We need to challenge them
- o We should expect that young people will achieve their goals
- o People reach goals at different times but most will get there





# Building Resilience

## People are not born smart

- Encourage young people to see intelligence and ability as something they need to work at
- People are not born smart
- ALL of the most successful people in life will have had to overcome failure
- Use role models to illustrate this





# Building Resilience

Failure can be the key to success



**FAILED!**  
**PLEASE TRY AGAIN**

- Encourage young people to view failure in a different way
- Failure is a learning opportunity
- You are a role model. Talk about the failures you have overcome



# Building Resilience

## Normalise don't personalise

- After a negative experience it is common for young people to think that this type of thing **ONLY** happens to them
- Encourage young people to view these setbacks as normal – everybody experiences them
- And help them not to think that this is something which reflects badly on them





# Building Resilience

## Bad feelings are normal



- It is human nature to experience negative emotions
- Bad feelings are normal
- Learning anything worthwhile requires some frustration



# Building Resilience

## Bad feelings don't last

- When young people encounter negative experiences they make think that they will **ALWAYS** feel that way
- Research shows that bad feelings don't last
- Remember to remind young people that these feelings will pass







# Building Resilience

Don't over worry or over protect



- Life is full of ups and downs
- If you protect young people from them they will not cope when they meet setbacks and will not be able to assess risk
- Allow young people to make mistakes
- Overprotection only makes young people more vulnerable and anxious



# Building Resilience

## Perfection doesn't exist



- Everyone has flaws, even the most accomplished people
- There is no standard for perfection
- It is much more important that people try to do their best, rather than be the best



# Building Resilience

One size does not fit all



Not all children will respond to one way of building resilience. This is why it is important to foster **many different ways** for children to **bounce back**



# Teenagers...

## Help - I don't understand!



# Childhood development

## Key messages

- change is to be expected
- everyone is different
- warning signs are cumulative
- issues lasting a long time is a warning sign
- exploring identities is positive

**Taken from American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry**



# Changes in adolescence

- struggle with sense of identity
- feeling awkward or strange about one's self and one's body
- moodiness
- improved ability to use speech to express one's self
- less overt affection shown to parents, with occasional rudeness
- tendency to return to childish behaviour, particularly when stressed
- mostly interested in present, with limited thoughts of the future



# Changes in adolescence (cont.)

- increased interest in sex
- concerns regarding physical and sexual attractiveness to others
- frequently changing relationships
- rule and limit testing
- capacity for abstract thought
- development of ideals and selection of role models



# Things to be concerned about

- marked decline in school performance
- marked changes in sleeping and/or eating habits
- extreme difficulties in concentrating that get in the way at school or at home
- sexual risk-taking
- severe mood swings
- strong worries or anxieties that get in the way of daily life, such as at school or socialising





## Things to be concerned about (cont.)

- repeated use of alcohol and/or drugs
- persistent nightmares
- threats of self harm or harm to others
- frequent outbursts of anger, aggression
- aggressive or non-aggressive consistent violation of rights of others; opposition to authority, truancy, thefts, or vandalism
- strange thoughts, beliefs, feelings, or unusual behaviours



# So, what can I do?

- Prioritise fostering open, trusting, respectful dialogue with your child.
- Keep the channels of communication open.
- Don't rush to judge – try to put yourself in their shoes. Remember what they're going through and what might be motivating their behaviour.
- Negotiate boundaries. Give them choice – use the small stuff to bargain with the big stuff.
- Choose your battles (and the timing of them) wisely.



# Mind your language

- Try to stop asking “why?”
- Try “I’ve noticed..”
- Try “I’m wondering..”
- Try “I understand..”
- Try “What can I do to help?”



# What do you want them to know?

- That you care and you love them. No matter what.
- That you want to help them to work out how to be a happy, responsible young adult.
- That you want to have a trusting, respectful relationship – even although it's hard sometimes.
- That they can ask or tell you anything and you'll support them.
- That you won't judge them.
- That making mistakes is human. And working out how to learn from them and move on is mature.
- That you're in it together, but you're in charge so sometimes you'll have to respectfully pull rank.



# Role of Pupil Support

How do we support pupils to be resilient?



# Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC)

- For children, young people and their families:
- They will feel confident about the help they are getting
- They understand what is happening and why
- They have been listened to carefully and their wishes have been heard and understood
- They are appropriately involved in discussions and decisions that affect them
- They can rely on appropriate help being available as soon as possible
- They will have experienced a more streamlined and co-ordinated response from practitioners



# Positive Relationships and Ethos

- Important role of all teachers
- Pupil Support open door policy
- Weekly contact in PSE
- Individual interviews
- Review meetings/Transition support
- PS role in supporting parents
- Encourage partnership working



## Partner Agencies

We work closely with a range of other professionals:

- JST/Youth Counsellor/Social Work/Educational Psychology/CAMHS
- These are linked through our Staged Intervention Procedures and Joint Support Team meetings
- Committed to Getting it Right for Every Child
- Trained in Child Protection procedures





# Curriculum Input in PSE

- We teach our own case load – weekly contact
- Materials are age and stage appropriate
- Open format of learning encourages wider discussion
- Cover a range of topics relevant to supporting positive mental health



# PSE Topics

- Relationships
- Sexuality
- Sexual health
- Alcohol
- Drugs
- Exam stress
- Anti-bullying
- Self-Esteem
- Depression
- Self Harm
- Suicide
- Mental health myths
- Body Image/Role of media
- Equality



# Resilient parents foster resilient children

- It is important to reflect on your own personal coping skills
- You can develop these
- Remember you cannot control what happens to you or your child but you can control your attitude to it

I don't know  
anything  
My friend  
s died  
Argu  
with  
Family  
worries  
HOUSE  
No  
Money  
Job

**Altered  
Thinking**

**Altered  
Feelings**

**Altered  
Behaviour**

**Altered  
Physical  
Feelings**



# Building resilience in your thought process





# Common 'Thinking Errors'

- Negative glasses
- Snowballing/Catastrophising
- Mind-reading
- Over-generalising



$$2 + 2 = 5$$



# Challenging negative thoughts

- Identify the thinking error
- What is the evidence FOR and AGAINST this thought
- What would your best friend say to you?
- What would be a more helpful thought?



# When life throws a challenge...

- Park the problem
- Reframe the problem
- Try to see a different perspective
- STOP > RELAX > POSITIVE SELF-TALK
- Implement “prevention strategies”: physical activity, relaxation, social support system, positive self-statements, holiday, etc.

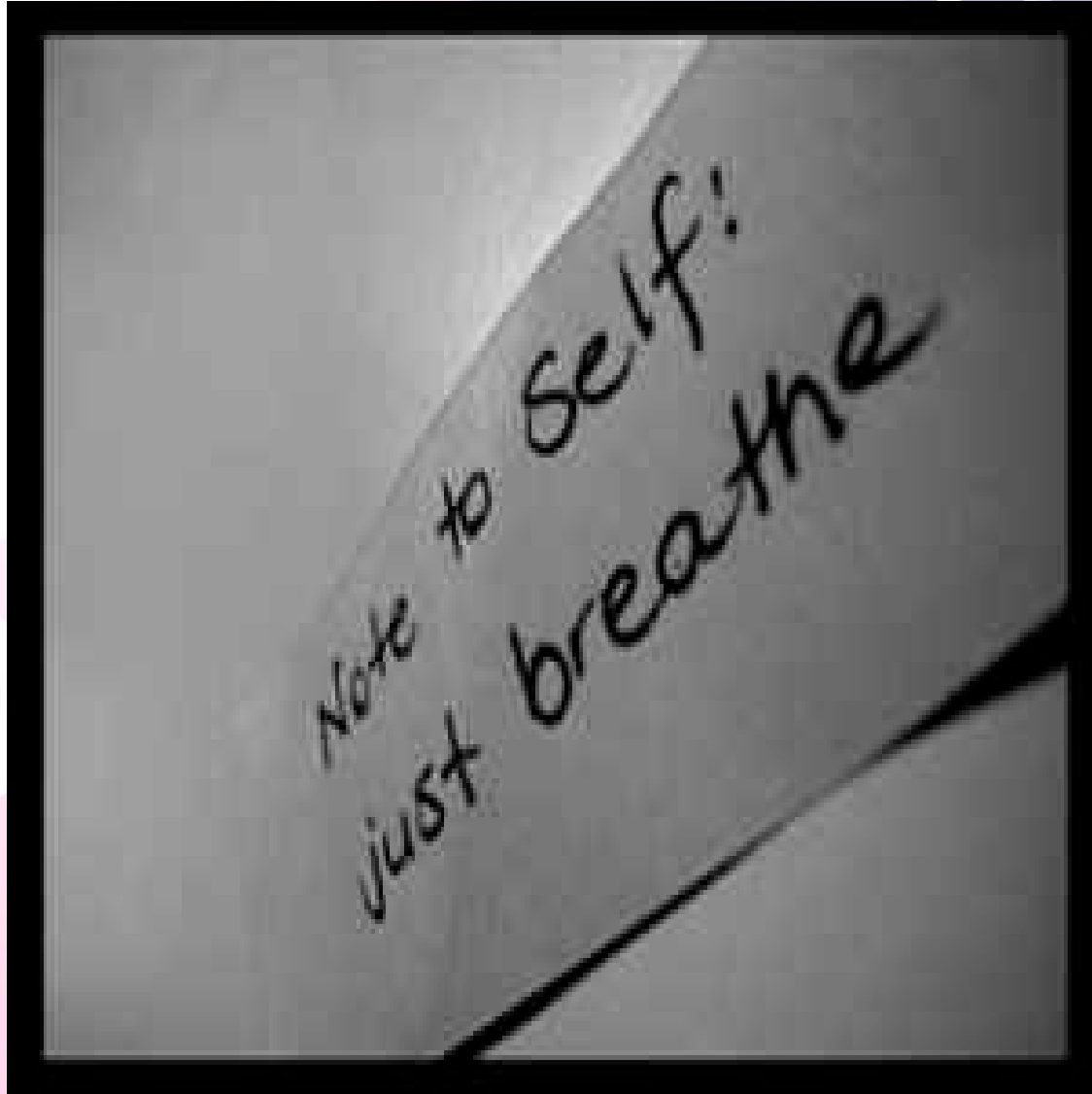






# Self-Help

- Diary – feelings and challenging thoughts
- Note the positives in your day
- Relaxation Activities / Techniques
- Talk to Someone
- Take Control
- Healthy eating
- Exercise
- Sleep





# Useful websites

- [www.glasgowsteps.com](http://www.glasgowsteps.com)
- [www.lltff.com](http://www.lltff.com)
- <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/expertadvice/youthinfo.aspx>
- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.youngscotlandinmind.org.uk](http://www.youngscotlandinmind.org.uk)
- <http://www.depressioninteenagers.co.uk/>
- <http://www.healthscotland.com/uploads/documents/27-TalkingAboutSelfHarm.pdf>
- [www.fosteringresilience.com](http://www.fosteringresilience.com)
- *Building Resilience in Teens*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition The American Academy of Paediatrics



Thank you for listening