



Building Strength-Based Resilience in Post-secondary Students

Resilience is the ability to overcome life challenges and bounce back from the experience faster and stronger. Post secondary students reported feeling burnt out, overloaded, depressed and not having sufficient time with friends and family, resulting in increased levels of academic stress and mental distress. It is important to equip students with the capacity to adapt skillfully and cope with stressors unique to postsecondary life by building their resilience.



George Mason University Center for the Advancement of Wellbeing (2016)

The Resilience Theory

Resilient individuals thrive in the face of adversity and flourish despite physical, emotional, and environmental stressors in life. In her Broaden and Build Theory, Barbara Frederickson stated that cultivating positive feelings helps us develop and grow our repertoire of social, intellectual, and physical skills. Resilience in young adulthood is determined by a combination of risk and protective factors.

Risk Factors

- Low self-esteem
- Difficult temperament: inflexibility, with drawal, poor concentration
- Poor social skills: communication and problem solving skills
- High academic pressure
- Emotional and/or social loss of close relationships with friends and family

Protective Factors

- Positive self-image
- Problem-solving skills
- Self-regulation
- Adaptability
- Faith/ understanding one's purpose in life
- Positive outlook
- Skills and talents that are valued by self and community
- General acceptance by others

Why focus on Resilience?

The rise of Positive Psychology movement has led to a strength-based therapeutic modality that focuses on individuals' character strengths. The premise behind a strength based approach is using our internal strengths to build emotional resources that we can tap into as leverage in times of difficulty.

What is your Strength?

Find out what your strengths are by taking the free VIA Character Strength survey at <https://www.viacharacter.org>



Resilience Training

An effective resilience training fosters the development of:

- An internal locus of **control**: believing that you are in control of your life
- A good sense of **self-esteem**: believing that you have value and are worthy
- A good sense of **self-efficacy**: believing that you can do what you set your mind to
- **Self-awareness** and **emotion regulation**: understanding and managing your own emotions
- **Optimism** and **hope**: engaging in life and looking forward to the challenges it brings
- **Positive emotions**: cultivating a sense of positivity, well-being, and meaning in life
- **Gratitude** and **appreciation**: being appreciative of what you have and practicing gratitude regularly
- **SMART goals**: setting goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound
- A **flexible** and adaptable attitude: keeping your thinking from becoming rigid or inflexible
- A positive, optimistic **explanatory style**: choosing to see the glass as half-full rather than half-empty

The Strengths-Based Resilience (SBR) Program

SBR is designed for any students who have mental health challenges. It is a structured program delivered in group setting by a trained facilitator, incorporating exercise, mindfulness, relaxation, and skill practice. The program is developed by Dr. Tayyab Rashid from the University of Toronto Scarborough in collaboration with the Toronto District School Board and the Shoniker Clinic of the Rouge Valley Health System.

The Flourish Program

Flourish is a non-clinical early intervention program on resilience. Students complete a free confidential online assessment to identify their signature strengths. Workshops are offered on how to use their strengths to manage stress and improve well-being. Flourish Ambassadors with lived experience who have gone through the SBR Training is also available to provide peer support

The Penn Resilience Program (PRP)

PRP is an evidence-based training programs that have been demonstrated to build resilience, well-being, and optimism. It is developed by Dr. Karen Reivich from the Penn Positive Psychology Center. It has modules to help students develop self awareness, self regulation, mental agility, strengths of character, connection, and optimism.

Watch the Webinar

To learn more about the Strengths-Based Resilience (SBR) program, please watch the Building Strength-Based Resilience in Students webinar at <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/webinars/building-strengths-based-resilience-in-students/>

Credit for this webinar and content go to Dr. Tayyab Rashid, the clinical psychologist at the Health & Wellness Centre, and an associate faculty at the University of Toronto Scarborough (UTSC).