

Module 6: Building resilience and self-confidence in teenagers

Objectives:

- Help parents foster emotional resilience and self-confidence in their children.
- Provide strategies for coping with bullying and peer pressure.

Summary of content:

- Parents will learn what resilience and what strategies they can use to foster teen resilience.
- Parents will be guided to help their teen recognize and manage their emotions, such as anger, frustration, or sadness.
- Parents will be guided to work with their children to set realistic, achievable goals in managing peer pressure, such as refusing unsafe or unhealthy behavior.
- Promote positive role models and positive peer influence.

Lesson 1. Supporting teen resilience

As parents, it's important to understand that resilience is not just about being tough, but it's the ability to adapt and recover from challenges, setbacks, and adversity. For children and teens, resilience is what helps them cope with difficult situations, whether it's facing bullying, academic struggles, or personal issues. Resilience allows children in general to bounce back from negative experiences and continue to grow stronger, both emotionally and mentally (Fraccaro, 2014).

In a particular way, resilience plays a crucial role when children experience bullying. Rather than allowing these negative experiences to define them, resilient children can learn how to deal with the hurt, seek support, and find healthy ways to move forward. Studies shows that by fostering resilience, you can empower your child to face adversity with strength and perseverance (Cahill et al., 2014).

A great example of resilience in the context of bullying can be the following situation: a teen who is being teased about their appearance decides to calmly walk away from the situation instead of reacting with anger or sadness. Later, they talk to a trusted teacher about the bullying and seek support from friends who uplift them. They also remind themselves of their strengths and practice self-compassion, refusing to let the bully's words define their self-worth. This demonstrates resilience by showing emotional control, seeking help, and maintaining a positive self-image despite the negativity.

Below are some effective ways to foster resilience:

Provide unconditional support

Unconditional support means being there for your teen. When teens feel that you love and support them, they're more likely to bounce back from challenges.

- **Practical tips:**
 - Listen actively when your teen shares their struggles.

- Reassure them that it's okay to fail and make mistakes, and that these setbacks are part of learning and growing.
- Avoid judgment or criticism when your teen is going through tough times. Instead, offer encouragement and positivity.

Encourage effective problem-solving

Theorists argue that problem-solving ability in young children is facilitated when the child has the opportunity to experiment with problems in a free-play atmosphere (Thompson & Hixson, 1984). Instead of immediately providing solutions to every problem your teen faces, guide them through the process of problem-solving. Help them break down the issue, explore options, and make decisions. Problem-solving skills are a key component of resilience. When teens learn how to handle challenges on their own, they feel more empowered and capable of dealing with future adversity.

- **Practical tips:**
 - Ask open-ended questions like, "What do you think we can do about this?" or "What are some possible solutions?"
 - Teach them how to weigh risks and make thoughtful decisions rather than reacting impulsively.

Encourage positive self-esteem

Positive self-esteem means that teens believe in their worth, skills, and abilities. Encouraging self-esteem involves helping your teen recognize their strengths and achievements, while also teaching them to be kind to themselves during times of failure or struggle. Self-esteem is a part of our personality and in order to raise it we need to have a sense of personal worth coming from those life challenges that demonstrate our success (Mineev et al., 2018). A teen with healthy self-esteem is more resilient because they view setbacks as temporary and manageable, rather than as reflections of their self-worth.

- **Practical tips:**
 - Acknowledge their efforts, not just their successes.
 - Encourage your teen to engage in activities that they enjoy and that help them feel good about themselves, whether it's sports, art, music, or volunteering.
 - Help them reframe negative self-talk by guiding them to focus on their strengths. For example, instead of saying, "I can't do this," encourage them to say, "Even if it's tough, I can handle it."

Encouraging children to participate in hobbies or groups they enjoy is a powerful way to build their self-esteem and foster healthy friendships.

You can start by understanding what your child enjoys doing in their free time. Whether it's drawing, playing a sport, coding, or even volunteering, the key is to help them find activities that resonate with their unique passions. When children are involved in activities they genuinely enjoy, they're more likely to stick with them, gain confidence, and develop a sense of accomplishment (Bungay & Vella-Burrows, 2013). Observe what your child is naturally drawn

to, and have conversations about their likes and dislikes. Ask open-ended questions: “What do you love doing when you have free time?” or “Is there something new you’d like to try?”

Group activities like sports teams, music ensembles, drama clubs, or community volunteer work offer children the opportunity to make friends, learn teamwork, and develop social skills. You can look for local clubs, teams, or classes that match your child’s interests, and help them get involved. If your child is shy or hesitant about joining a new group, consider helping them reach out to a friend or family member who can attend with them for a few sessions to ease the transition. You can also encourage your child to invite a friend along to a new activity or even join a sibling in a group activity to make them feel more comfortable.

Activity after Lesson 1: Consider your child’s current challenges and strengths. What challenges might they face? How do they respond to tough situations? What resilience skills (like problem-solving, optimism) can you encourage? Note a few ways you can help your child build resilience.

Lesson 2: Strengthening children’s confidence and resilience

For this lesson the main objective will be to equip you with tools to help your children build resilience and confidence, with a focus on coping strategies for bullying and peer pressure. It is important for you to learn how to support your child’s emotional well-being and help them practice self-reflection, develop a positive self-image, and celebrate personal achievements.

According to the theory of self-awareness, also referred to as objective self-awareness theory, a person’s attention at any given moment can either be directed inward, toward themselves, or outward, toward the external environment. When attention is self-directed, or in a state of objective self-awareness, a person’s consciousness is focused solely on themselves. This inward focus leads them to reflect on their thoughts, personal history, physical body, or other personal attributes (Gerace et al., 2017). Self-reflection encourages children to understand their emotional reactions, recognize their strengths, and identify areas they can improve on.

Self-confidence is a crucial aspect of personality in everyday life. Individuals who are confident trust in their abilities and maintain realistic expectations. Even if these expectations are not met, they remain optimistic and are able to accept outcomes. Confidence reflects a mental or psychological state in which a person has a strong sense of self-assurance, empowering them to take action. In contrast, people who lack confidence tend to have a negative self-view and doubt their abilities, often becoming withdrawn (Sarkowi & Faizatul, 2023). According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, in 2019 it was stated that 41% of students who reported being bullied at school indicated that they think the bullying would happen again, data that can show the fact that lacking confidence can be one of the main reasons why bullying in school still happens to this day.

You and educators of your children are expected to help develop self-confidence in children with proper stimulation to increase their self-confidence. In practice, many young

students still lack self-confidence, particularly in early childhood. Observations show that a significant number of young children depend on their parents during school activities. This suggests that fostering children's independence could be more effective, as they tend to rely heavily on parental involvement in their tasks (Sarkowi & Faizatul, 2023).

The need to build self-confidence in children stems from several common issues: some students struggle to socialize at school, others are hesitant to share their work with classmates, some prefer to be alone, and many still rely on their parents. Enhancing children's self-confidence is crucial to equip them with the skills they need to face future challenges independently (Sarkowi & Faizatul, 2023).

Self-reflection is important for children as it enhances emotional awareness, which is essential for building resilience. When children take time to think about their day, they become more in touch with their emotions, gaining insights into what they feel and why. This process is especially valuable in helping them understand their reactions to challenging experiences, such as bullying or peer pressure. By recognizing these feelings, children can experience a reduction in anxiety and feel a greater sense of control over their responses.

Additionally, self-reflection promotes empathy. When children reflect on their interactions, they begin to see situations from others' perspectives, which helps them approach conflicts or misunderstandings with calmness and compassion. This skill not only aids in managing difficult interactions but also nurtures healthier relationships.

Lastly, self-reflection plays a significant role in building confidence. When children focus on their own strengths and successes, they develop a more positive self-image. This strengthened sense of self equips them to face challenges with greater resilience and self-assurance. Altogether, these self-reflective practices help children develop the emotional skills necessary to navigate life's difficulties with resilience and confidence.

- **Purpose of a journal:**

Journaling is a tool for children to safely express their thoughts and feelings. It's private, allowing them to process experiences without fear of judgment. Writing things down helps to clarify thoughts, manage emotions, and provide perspective on their day-to-day lives.

- **Journal format ideas for your child:**

- **Gratitude entries:** Encourage your children to write down three things they are grateful for each day. This fosters positive thinking and helps counterbalance negative feelings from bullying or peer pressure.
- **Daily highlights:** Have children focus on a "highlight of the day," such as an accomplishment, a fun moment, or a compliment they received. This reinforces the positive aspects of their day.
- **Affirmation statements:** Encourage them to write one positive thing about themselves each day, like "I am brave" or "I am a good friend." This builds self-confidence over time.
- **Mood tracking:** Let them rate their mood each day with a color, emoji, or number, which can help parents and children understand emotional patterns and triggers.

- **Tips for parents on encouraging journaling:**
 - **Set a routine:** You can help your child make journaling a daily habit, perhaps at bedtime or after school.
 - **Provide a comfortable space:** A quiet, comfortable area and a dedicated journal can make the activity feel special and meaningful.
 - **No pressure:** You have to remind yourself to keep it low-pressure; it's okay if a child only writes a sentence or draws a picture. The goal is regular reflection, not perfect entries.

Celebrating children's achievements is essential for building their confidence, as it reinforces a positive self-image and helps them feel valued for their unique qualities and efforts. When you acknowledge your child's accomplishments, it sends a message of appreciation and respect, boosting the child's self-esteem. Additionally, celebrating both big successes and small efforts, such as trying a new activity or showing kindness, promotes a growth mindset. This teaches children that growth and effort are as valuable as results, which is key for developing resilience.

Moreover, celebrating achievements strengthens the bond between parent and child. Positive reinforcement fosters a sense of support and security, which is particularly beneficial if the child is facing challenges like bullying. Feeling encouraged and safe within the family builds the emotional foundation children need to face difficulties with confidence and perseverance.

- **Ways parents can celebrate achievements:**
 - **Verbal praise:** Simple acknowledgments like "I'm proud of you for trying your best" or "That was very thoughtful of you" make a big impact on children.
 - **Special time together:** When a child reaches a milestone, you can spend dedicated time with them, such as a "mini-celebration" where they choose a fun activity together.
 - **Achievements board:** Creating a family board or space on the fridge where achievements are highlighted can give children a tangible reminder of their accomplishments.

Self-reflection, journaling, and celebrating achievements play a powerful role in building resilience and helping children cope with bullying. Regular practices of self-reflection and journaling foster emotional strength by making children more aware of their feelings and reactions. This emotional awareness enhances their resilience, allowing them to approach challenges like bullying with a calmer, more balanced mindset.

Focusing on positive affirmations and personal achievements also provides a healthy counterbalance to any negative experiences. When children regularly acknowledge their strengths and accomplishments, they are less likely to internalize negative comments or hurtful actions from others. This focus on positivity strengthens their self-concept and reduces the emotional impact of bullying.

Additionally, these practices encourage more positive peer interactions. When children feel confident and secure in themselves, they are less driven by a need to conform or seek validation from others, which can help reduce the pressures of fitting in. This authentic sense of self fosters resilience, helping them navigate peer dynamics with confidence and self-assurance.

In conclusion, small daily habits such as journaling, reflecting, and celebrating achievements can significantly strengthen children's emotional resilience. Encouraging self-reflection and positivity helps children focus on their strengths, allowing them to approach negative experiences with greater confidence. Parental support is key; when you actively recognize your child's efforts and encourage growth, children feel empowered and secure, better equipped to face challenges like bullying.

Activity after lesson 2: Each evening, parents write down one positive action their child took that day, then share it with their child as specific praise, reflecting afterward on how it felt for both of them.

Lesson 3. Empowering teens to navigate peer pressure

Peer pressure in schools refers to the influence that peers exert on one another to conform to certain behaviors, attitudes, or decisions. This can include positive influences, such as encouraging healthy habits, or negative influences, such as persuading someone to engage in unsafe or unhealthy activities.

For **positive peer pressure** we have the following example: A group of friends encourages a teen to join the school's debate team, praising their speaking skills and reassuring them that they'll excel. This support motivates the teen to try something new, boosting their confidence and helping them develop valuable skills. For **negative peer pressure** we can think about the following situation: A teen feels pressured by their friends to skip class and hang out at a nearby park. Despite knowing it's wrong, the teen agrees because they fear being excluded or judged by the group.

Studies have shown that adolescents who are part of peer groups that accept or encourage bullying are more likely to engage in such behavior themselves. Peer groups can have a significant influence on adolescent behavior and can also affect adult behavior. This influence may stem from a desire for group acceptance, an effort to improve one's social status, or a wish to conform to the values and norms of the group (Ibimiluyi, 2023).

In their quest for identity, teenagers seek to break away from parental control, influences, and protection. However, this independence often brings feelings of uncertainty, prompting them to seek validation and support from their peers. As adolescents engage more with their peers, they become more vulnerable to peer pressure and are at greater risk of encountering problematic behaviors. The influence between nondeviant and deviant peers depends on the level of susceptibility to peer pressure. Peer pressure has been recognized as a key factor in many behavioral issues among youth (Chan & Chan, 2013).

An experiment done at Temple University by psychologists Jason Chein and Lawrence Steinberg tested if teenagers are more likely to take risks when surrounded by peers. The results showed that, compared to adults, teens were more likely to be vulnerable to making risky choices when they had company (Albert et al., 2013).

Ways teens can manage peer pressure

1. **Learn to say no:** We encourage you to teach your children to assertively refuse behaviors or actions they're uncomfortable with, using phrases like "No, I'm not okay with that."
2. **Choose supportive friends:** Encourage your children to surround themselves with friends who respect their values and don't pressure them into negative behaviors.
3. **Practice decision-making:** Help your children think through potential scenarios and decide in advance how they will respond to peer pressure.
4. **Focus on goals and values:** When teens have a clear sense of their goals and personal values, they are less likely to be swayed by peer pressure.
5. **Seek trusted adults:** Remind your children that they can always talk to parents, teachers, or counselors for advice and support when dealing with peer pressure.

How parents can teach their teens about managing peer pressure

1. **Open communication:** Create a safe space for teens to share their experiences without fear of judgment, so they feel comfortable discussing peer pressure.
2. **Model assertive behavior:** Demonstrate your children how to say no respectfully and stand by personal values, showing teens that it's okay to set boundaries.
3. **Role-playing scenarios:** Practice potential situations with your children, like how to handle being pressured to try harmful activities, so they feel prepared.
4. **Highlight real-life examples:** Share stories of individuals who resisted peer pressure and achieved positive outcomes to inspire confidence in saying no.
5. **Teach problem-solving skills:** Help your child learn to weigh the consequences of their actions and make decisions aligned with their values.

Activity after lesson 3: Role-play a scenario where your child is pressured by friends to do something unsafe, with you acting as the peer; afterward, discuss how your child felt and brainstorm ways to respond confidently.

Lesson 4: Encouraging positive role models and peer influence

Positive role models play a critical role in helping teens navigate challenges at school, such as bullying, peer pressure, or academic struggles. By observing individuals who demonstrate resilience, kindness, and integrity, teens can learn how to approach difficult situations constructively. For instance, a role model who stands up for others or handles conflict calmly can inspire your child to act with courage and composure.

Role models also provide teens with a clear example of how to make ethical and responsible decisions. During challenging times, teens often feel uncertain about how to

respond, and having a positive figure to emulate can guide them toward productive choices. Furthermore, role models who encourage perseverance can help teens stay motivated when facing setbacks, whether it's failing a test or dealing with social rejection. Seeing someone they admire overcome adversity fosters a sense of hope and empowers teens to believe they can do the same.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics, 46% of bullied students report notifying an adult at school about the incident. This is why in difficult school environments it is important to have positive role models, because they serve as anchors, showing teens the value of patience, empathy, and strength. This influence not only helps your child resolve immediate challenges but also equips them with life skills they can carry into adulthood.

How parents can promote positive role models

1. **Encourage exposure to inspiring individuals:** Parents can introduce teens to people who embody positive values, such as teachers, coaches, family members, or community leaders.
2. **Discuss media role models:** Help teens critically analyze celebrities or public figures, emphasizing qualities like kindness, perseverance, and integrity.

For example, the actress Jessica Alba spoke about responsible social media use: <https://people.com/jessica-alba-not-posting-thirst-traps-why-i-daughter-has-social-media-instagram-teen-accounts-exclusive-8713672>

Michelle Obama, as a role model for empathy: <https://www.afr.com/work-and-careers/leaders/rock-star-role-model-empath-in-chief-michelle-obama-s-life-lessons-20221128-p5c1xh>

3. **Model positive behavior:** You can act as role models by demonstrating empathy, honesty, and resilience in your daily lives.
4. **Foster connections with mentors:** Encourage teens to build relationships with mentors who can provide guidance and encouragement, such as school counselors or older peers.

Teens benefit most from role models who exemplify respect (treat others with kindness and fairness), show leadership (lead by example and stand up for what is right), value hard work (inspire teens to pursue their goals and overcome challenges), promote inclusivity (encourage acceptance and celebrate diversity among peers)

Positive peer influence has a profound impact on a teen's behavior, choices, and overall well-being, especially during formative school years. When surrounded by friends who encourage good habits and respect shared values, teens are more likely to adopt healthy behaviors. For example, teens in positive peer groups might feel inspired to work hard academically, participate in extracurricular activities, or engage in acts of kindness.

This influence is particularly powerful because it reinforces a sense of belonging and acceptance, which is essential for emotional development. Positive peer interactions help boost confidence and self-esteem, showing teens that they can be valued for who they truly are. Teens who experience supportive friendships are also better equipped to resist negative influences, such as pressure to engage in risky behaviors.

In addition, positive peer influence creates a ripple effect within the school environment. When teens choose kindness, cooperation, and inclusivity, it sets the tone for healthier and more uplifting social dynamics. By fostering these positive connections, teens not only support each other but also contribute to a stronger, more compassionate school community.

How to foster positive peer influence

1. **Encourage group activities:** Guide teens toward clubs, sports, or volunteer opportunities where they can meet like-minded peers.
2. **Talk about friendship qualities:** Discuss the traits of a good friend, such as trustworthiness and respect.
3. **Celebrate positive friendships:** Recognize and praise teens for maintaining supportive and healthy relationships.
4. **Address negative influences early:** Help teens recognize and distance themselves from toxic friendships.

Activity after lesson 4: Ask your teen to write down three qualities they admire in a role model, then discuss how they can apply those traits in their own life or friendships.

References

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