

Reflections on Resilience

Sara Truebridge and Bonnie Benard

Resilience begins with beliefs.

If you believe in the capacity of all individuals to demonstrate resilience, you won't give up on them. Your actions, words, and behaviors will project that message and will awaken and foster resilience in your students.



Resilience is a process, not a trait. It involves how we interact and negotiate with ourselves, others, and our world; how we navigate through the resources that help us thrive; and how we move on a positive trajectory of success and health in the midst of adversity, trauma, and everyday stress.

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Everyone, regardless of age or circumstances, has the capacity for resilience. It just needs to be tapped.

The three major protective factors that help us mitigate adversity

and nourish personal strength are caring relationships, high expectations, and opportunities to participate and contribute.



Resilience isn't just for people from high-risk environments;

affluent communities can be high-risk for some. The stress incurred from family, peer, and self-imposed pressures to perform and excel academically and socially contributes to an increase in high-risk behaviors among youth in affluent communities.

Resilience isn't a program or curriculum.

It's not a quick-fix product that schools can buy. Resilience is more influenced by how a teacher teaches than by what a teacher teaches.



Resilient people identify themselves as survivors rather than victims.

They acknowledge that life comes with challenges and setbacks, which they can overcome.

Resilience is not just for remediation or intervention.

It incorporates a shift from a problem-based deficit model to a strengths-based one. This model of resilience is positive, protective, and preventive.



One person's support can be crucial in developing another's resilience.

You can say something to a student or believe in that student in a way that can change his or her life forever.



Challenging life experiences can be opportunities for growth and change. Our perseverance through tough times can make us stronger.

Most people make it despite exposure to severe risk. Close to 70 percent of youth from high-risk environments overcome adversity and achieve good outcomes.

Source: From Werner, E., & Smith, R. (2001). *Journey from childhood to midlife: Risk, resilience, and recovery*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

Video Bonus

Watch Sara Truebridge's session from the 2013 Whole Child Virtual Conference at <http://bcove.me/mb87diyw>.

Sara Truebridge (resiliencest@gmail.com) is an education consultant on resilience who has collaborated on the documentary film *Race to Nowhere* (2009). She is the author of the forthcoming book, *Resilience: It Begins with Beliefs* (Teachers College Press). **Bonnie Benard**, a researcher in the field of resilience and youth development, recently retired as a senior program associate at WestEd. She is the author of *Resiliency: What We Have Learned* (WestEd, 2004).