

National Conference 4th July 2025

Sebda

Promoting the social and emotional well being of children and young people

Their Future isn't Over:

Positive Psychology for Resilience & Mental Health

with
Dr Rob Long

Their Future isn't Over:

1

Risk V
Protective
Factors

2

Emotions
Positive & Negative

3

Protective Factors.
Resilience & Belonging

3a

NEURODIVERSITY

4

Positive Psychology.
History & Core
principles

5

Seligman's
PERMA Model

6

Hope for the
Journey

Their Future isn't Over:

1

Risk V
Protective
Factors

The opposite of a **retrospective** study is a **prospective** study. Retrospective studies analyse past data, while prospective studies follow participants forward in time to observe future Outcomes.

Their Future isn't Over:

Casualties

*Retrospective
analysis*

Mental Health
Problems

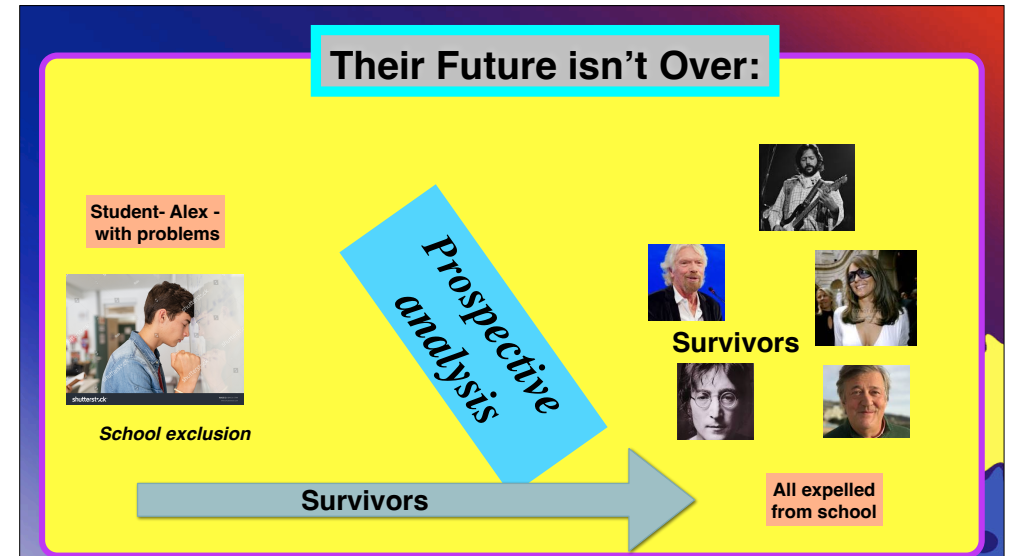
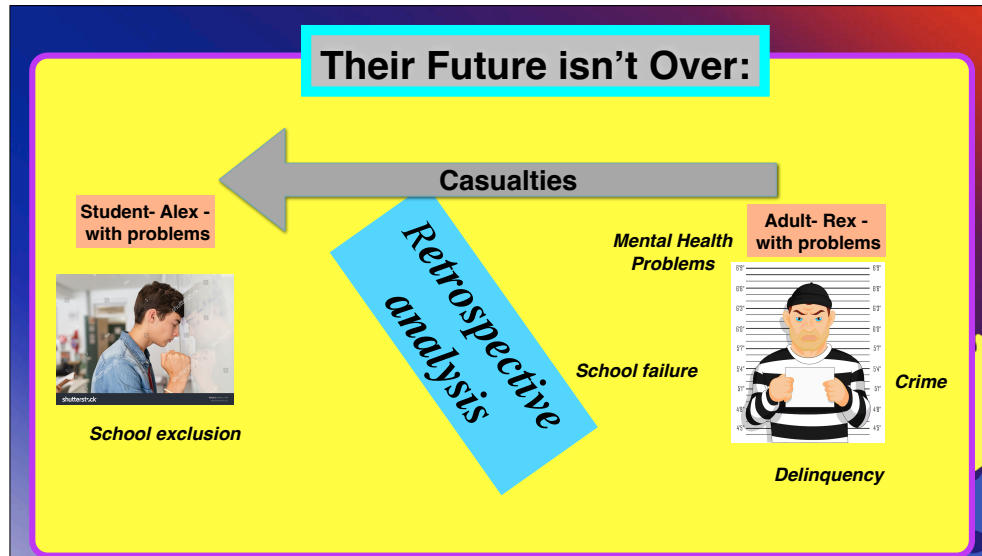
Adult- Rex -
with problems



Crime

School failure

Delinquency



489 children with a combination of risk factors

THE RISK FACTORS

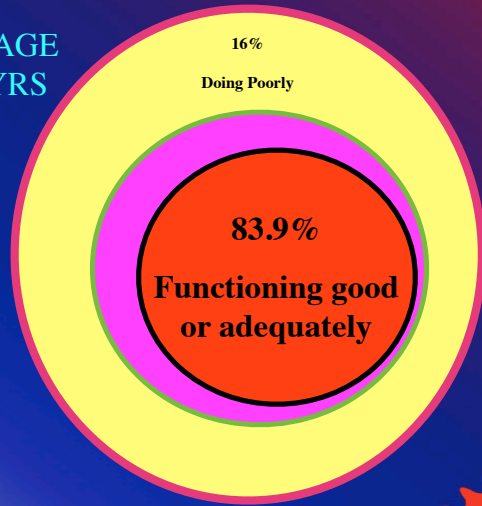
- Birth complications
- Under resourced home lives
- Educationally poor background
- Alcoholic parents
- Mentally ill parents

In Journeys from childhood to midlife
Werner & Smith (2001)

THE RISK FACTORS

- Birth complications
- Discordant & impoverished home lives
- Educationally poor background
- Alcoholic parents
- Mentally ill parents

BY AGE
40YRS



Conclusion

“Their very existence had challenged the prevailing myth that being a member of a “high risk” group meant being doomed to be one of life’s losers.”

In Journeys from childhood to midlife
Werner & Smith 2001 P167

Retrospective Analysis

Examines the lives of the “causalities”,
not the lives of the “survivors.”

“Nothing is inevitable until it happens”
A.J.P. Taylor

Their Future isn't Over:



Emotions
Positive & Negative

EMOTIONS

Emotions are biological responses to environmental events

Emotions evolved to give us
an adaptive advantage

To:

avoid danger

find food

reproduce

ACTION

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well being of children and young people

Functional analysis of emotions

Innate - hard wired

Anxiety	Signals potential danger
Anger	Signals potential threat
Disgust	Signals harmful/toxic
Sadness	Signals loss
Happiness	Signals something is valued

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ANIMALS live in an: Immediate-return environment

Emotions drive actions which instantly deliver clear
and immediate outcomes



- A lion appears across the plain
- The zebra feels stress
- The zebra runs away
- The stress is relieved.



- A storm rumbles in the distance
- you worry about finding shelter
- you find shelter
- your anxiety is relieved.

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BUT WE
Have emotions and feelings

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HUMANS live in a Delayed-return environment

actions do not always deliver clear and immediate outcomes

Unlike the animals, humans live in what researchers call a Delayed Return Environment.

Most of the choices
we make today will not benefit us immediately.
If you do a good job at work today, you'll get a pay rise
in a few weeks.

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HUMANS live in a Delayed-return environment

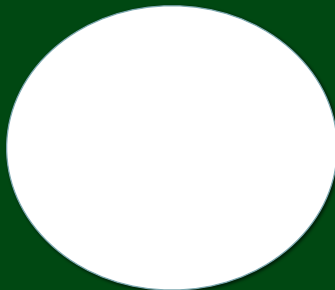
actions do not always deliver clear and immediate outcomes

- We have a job interview
- I don't know what to wear
- Should I have had a hair cut?
- What if my train is late?
- Will I find the venue?
- What questions will they ask
- Our thoughts make us anxious
- before the event.

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Promoting the social and emotional
well being of children and young people

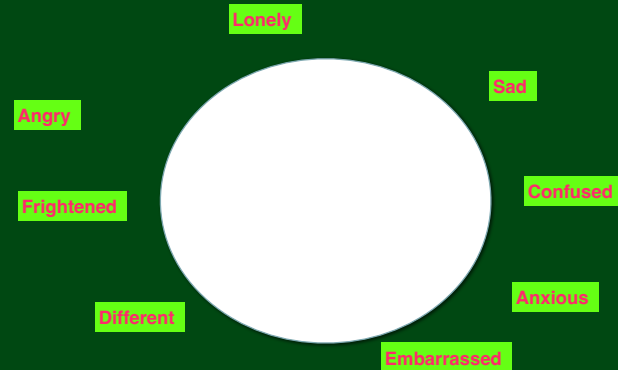
What does it feel like to be excluded?



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Promoting the social and emotional
well being of children and young people

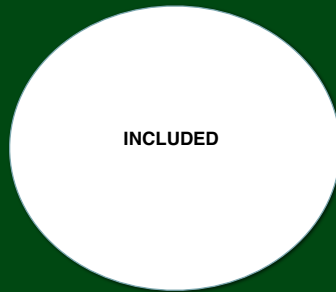
What does it feel like to be excluded?



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Promoting the social and emotional
well being of children and young people

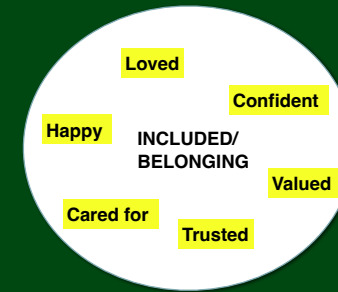
What does it feel like to be included?



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Promoting the social and emotional well being of children and young people

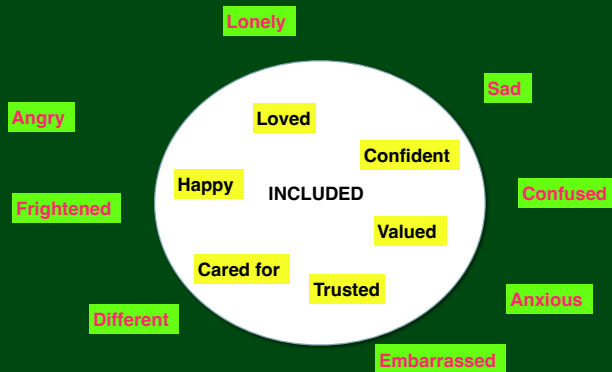
What does it feel like to be included?



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What does it feel like to be included/excluded?



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So
Negative Emotions help us Survive!

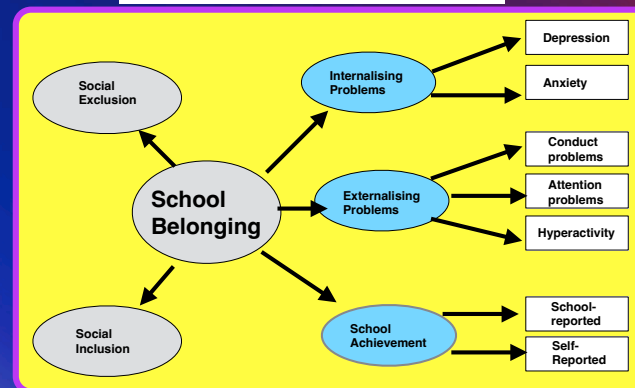
So
Positive Emotions help us Thrive!

Their Future isn't Over:

3

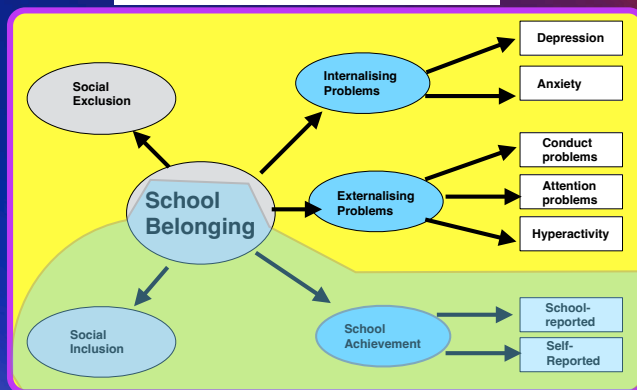
Protective Factors
Belonging & Resilience

Predictive Power of School Belonging *achievement and mental health*



Ref. G. Arslan Educational & Child Psychology, Vol. 36 No.4 Dec. 2019 P 22 - 33

Predictive Power of School Belonging *achievement and mental health*



Ref. G. Arslan Educational & Child Psychology, Vol. 36 No.4 Dec. 2019 P 22 - 33

Self

Child/Young Person
RELATIONAL
IDENTITY

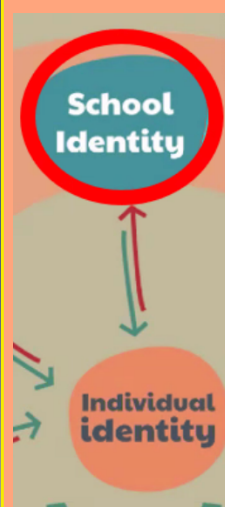
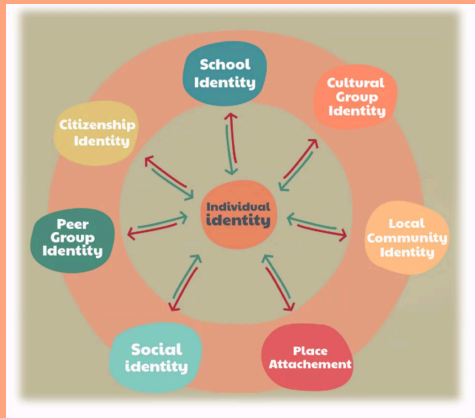
Adults

Peers

Bath
University

Improving Wellbeing in Schools with Connected Belonging

<https://blogs.bath.ac.uk/education/2023/07/13/knowledge-exchange-improving-wellbeing-in-schools-with-connected-belonging/>



This might be achieved by:

- ▶ explicitly valuing collaboration rather than competition,
- ▶ reflection rather than correctness, and
- ▶ class or group achievements as opposed to individual successes,
- ▶ or rewarding actions that benefit the whole school community such as kindness, helping and teamwork.



Some example of activities schools could run to promote peer identities are

- ▶ using peer wellbeing mentors
- ▶ emphasising group-work activities
- ▶ 'circle time' or social and emotional learning programmes that promote healthy relationships

RESILIENCE

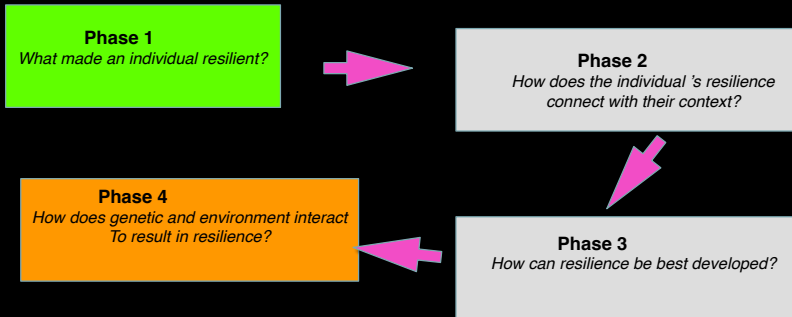
“the dynamic process that leads to positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity”.

Luthar, Cicchetti & Becker 2000

In Journeys from childhood to midlife

Werner & Smith 2001 P3

THE STUDY OF RESILIENCE



BOWLBY'S
ENVIRONMENTAL EVOLUTIONARY ADAPTEDNESS

Key Resilience Factors

To develop resilience, research indicates that young people need:

- At least one parent/carer or another supportive adult in their family or social world
- To be socially integrated
- Good educational experiences
- Opportunities to take control/make choices

Assessment of children and adolescents should always explore strengths as well as weakness.

assessing strengths could be considered a positive intervention in its own right

(Poston and Hanson 2010).

Chapter 6
Assessment of Character Strengths in Children and Adolescents
Tayyab Rashid, Afroz Anjum, Carolyn Lennox, Denise Quinlan, Ryan M. Niemiec,
Donna Mayerson, and Fahim Kazemi

Strength-spotting interventions - benefits:

**increased self-efficacy,
competence
optimism**

Research indicates that these practices not only enhance resilience but also:

help cultivate a positive outlook by training the brain to focus on what there is instead of what is not

students can cultivate a resilient mindset, leading to greater effectiveness in overcoming challenges.

Step 1. Think of a challenge

Resilience Activity

To begin, think about a recent situation when you faced a challenge but overcame it. This can be anything from a tricky test to a disagreement with a friend.

Choose one challenge that stands out to you, and write about it in the space below.

For example, maybe you were panicked and nervous about talking in front of the class, but you still did it, or you struggled to complete a challenging school project on time but finished it by the deadline.

Describe what happened, why it was so challenging, and what you did to overcome it.

Step 2. Spot your strengths

Think about the strengths that helped you overcome this challenge. Remember, strengths are things you naturally do well and can help you handle difficult situations; they're like superpowers.

Picture yourself in the challenging moment you wrote about in Step 1; what strengths helped you overcome it? Check out the list of strengths in Appendix A and circle the ones you think helped you in this situation.

Once you've circled your strengths, reflect on how you used them to overcome this specific challenge. Write your thoughts in the space below.

Strengths

Appendix A

Appendix A: Strengths

Imagination I am creative, have a good imagination, and come up with cool ideas.	Wonder I am curious and ask lots of questions to learn new things.	Careful I think things through before doing something.	Love of Learning I get excited about learning and getting better at things.	Gives Good Advice I am understanding, give good suggestions, and am helpful to others.	Bravery I am brave and face challenges even while feeling scared.
Always Keep Trying I work hard and don't give up, even when things are tough.	Honesty I tell the truth and keep promises.	Positive Attitude I have lots of energy and am enthusiastic about things.	Love I am kind, friendly, and caring to everyone around me.	Kindness I do nice things for others and show I care.	Understanding Others I am good at knowing how others feel and helping them when they're sad.
Teamwork I am a team player and help out my friends.	Fairness I treat everyone the same and am fair to everyone.	Leading the Way I help others and am a good role model.	Forgiving I give people another chance and don't stay mad at them.	Humility I don't brag about things even if I'm really good at them.	Planning Ahead I am careful and plan things out before doing them.
Self-Control I can do the right thing even when I really want to do something else.	Seeing Beauty I enjoy the beauty in nature and the things around me.	Gratitude I say thank you and am grateful for all the fun and good in my life, even the smallest things.	Hopeful I believe good things will happen in the future.	Being Funny I am playful and make others smile and laugh.	Feeling Important I know I matter to other people and myself.

Step 3. Letter to future self

Now that you have identified a challenge and the strengths that helped you overcome it, it's time to write a letter to your future self.

In your letter, describe what you've learned about your strengths and your ability to overcome challenges. Remember to keep your message encouraging, kind, and positive. You can use the Letter Template (Appendix B) as a guide.

Your letter will not be shared with others; it is for you to read in the future when you need reminding that you can overcome challenges by using your strengths. You can look at this letter in the future when you feel like you can't do something or face a new challenge.

You can write your letter directly on this template or use the prompts as a guide.

Begin with any greeting you like, something like "Dear Future Me." Then, write about what you've learned today about yourself and your strengths. You can think about the following questions to help you:

- What strengths did you discover?
- Did you identify any unexpected strengths?
- What strengths are you most proud of?
- Which do you appreciate most?
- How have these strengths helped you overcome other challenges in the past?

Appendix B

Dear Future Me,

Today, I learned about strengths. You're kind and a good friend because you like helping others. These strengths have helped you before when you felt sad or scared, and they will help you again in the future.

You're amazing when you use your strengths! Keep being kind, positive, and brave. Even when things are tough, believe in your abilities. It might not seem like a big deal, but your strengths have helped you through challenges before and will again in the future. When the going gets tough, these strengths will be your best tools.

I have big dreams for the future! I want to become a doctor and help people who are sick so that they can enjoy life next to their friends and family. My kindness and bravery will help me reach my goal.

I know there will be challenges ahead, which can be scary, but it's OK. I know you will use your strengths to help you overcome tough times. Don't forget that your superpowers are always there to help!

With love,
[Your Name]

Step 4. Reflection

Now that you have spent some time reflecting on your strengths and how they helped you overcome a challenge,

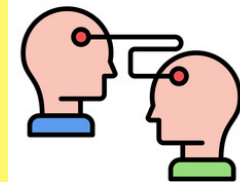
Please take a few minutes to think about the questions below. Your group can share their answers.

1. What did you learn about strengths today?
2. What did you learn about your strengths today?
3. What have you learned about your ability to overcome challenges?
4. Do you feel more confident about facing new challenges? Why or why not?
5. Share a strength you spotted in yourself during the activity. What other challenges has this strength helped you overcome?
6. Why is it important to know your strengths, particularly when facing challenges?
7. How did it feel to write a letter to your future self?
8. How might your future self benefit from reading this letter?

Mentalising

Mentalising refers to the human capacity to understand behaviour - one's own and others - in terms of underlying mental states like thoughts, feelings and intentions.

It involves imagining what someone else might be thinking or feeling, and recognising how those mental states influence actions. This ability is crucial for social interactions, emotional regulation, and forming meaningful relationships



Mentalisation Based Therapy is designed to improve emotional regulation, strengthen relationships and increase resilience.

Freud
al Centre for
en and Families



'What's this child thinking? And what are they feeling?'

Mentalising - thinking about thinking

Can I reflect on my own thoughts, mind read myself?

Can I see myself as others see me?

Can I adjust the direction of my thinking?

Can I be curious about what others are thinking?

Can I hold other people's mind in my mind?

Can I identify emotions and what causes them?

Background **THEORY OF MIND**

The theory of mind is a concept in psychology that refers how someone ascribes mental states - such as beliefs, intentions, desires, and emotions - to both oneself and others.

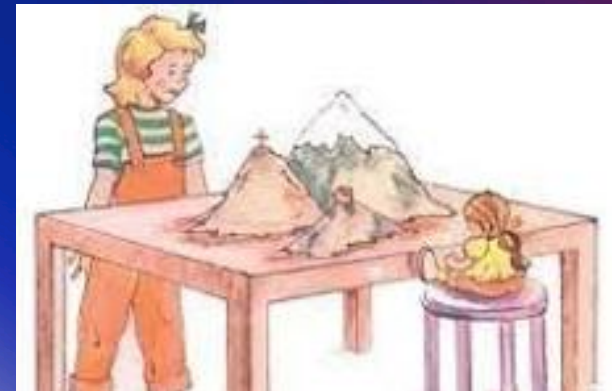
DEFINITION

Premack & Woodruff (1978), the founders of the concept, explain theory of mind: "...one infers states that are not directly observable and one uses these states anticipatorily, to predict the behavior of others as well as one's own. These inferences, which amount to a theory of mind, are, to our knowledge, universal in human adults." (p. 525).

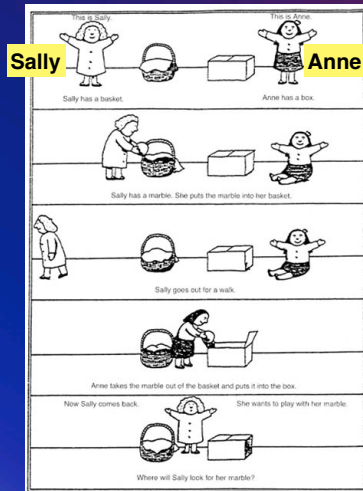
COMPONENTS

- **Perception:** Perceptiveness can include the ability to identify facial expressions, body language, and other social cues that signal a person's emotional state.
- **Perspective-taking:** Perspective-taking refers to the capacity to put yourself in someone else's shoes. It involves looking at a situation from another person's point of view.

HELPFULPROFESSOR.COM



Sally - Anne Test - Daniel Dennett



Mentalising at home



Father about son

Why is he behaving like this?
Why is he not talking?
Is it because he can't see his friends?

Father about himself

Why does his behaviour annoy me so much?
Why do I feel so angry when he's like this?

1.

Prementalising mode at home

When tempers rise, an individual's ability to mentalist become impaired.



Adolescents have developmental tasks of:

Autonomy
Identity

Relationships can overwhelm them

Prementalising mode at home

2.



The 'switch point model'
Explicit, conscious prefrontal control switches to automatic and implicit processes in sub cortex areas.
Mentalising is deactivated and evolutionary protective functions take over, namely fight and or flight.

Prementalising mode at home

3.



**For adolescents confrontations with parents/carers cause high emotional arousal.
Attacking (Verbally), fleeing or freezing happens.**

Prementalising mode at home



Home can become a battle ground. Where failure by one Person triggers loss of mentalisation in all other members.

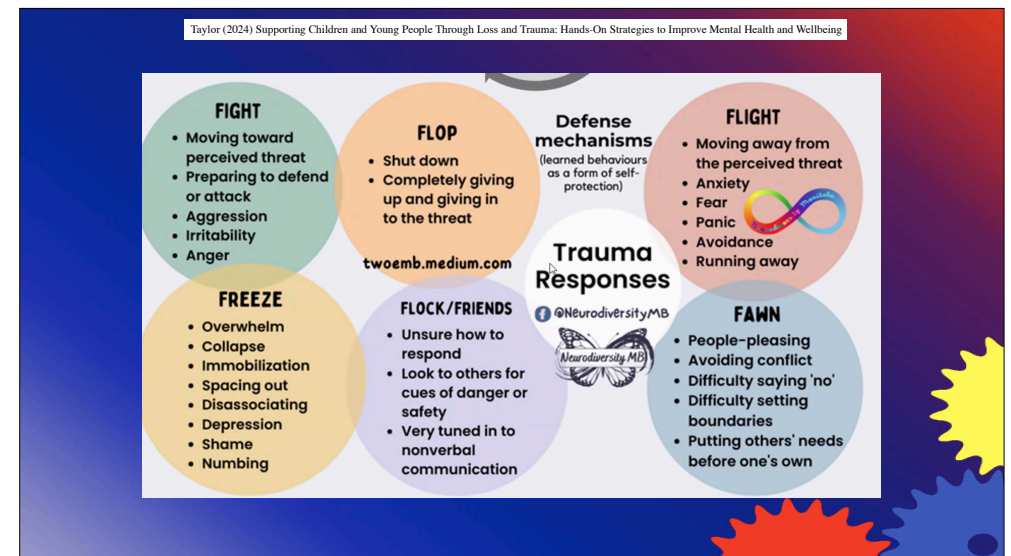
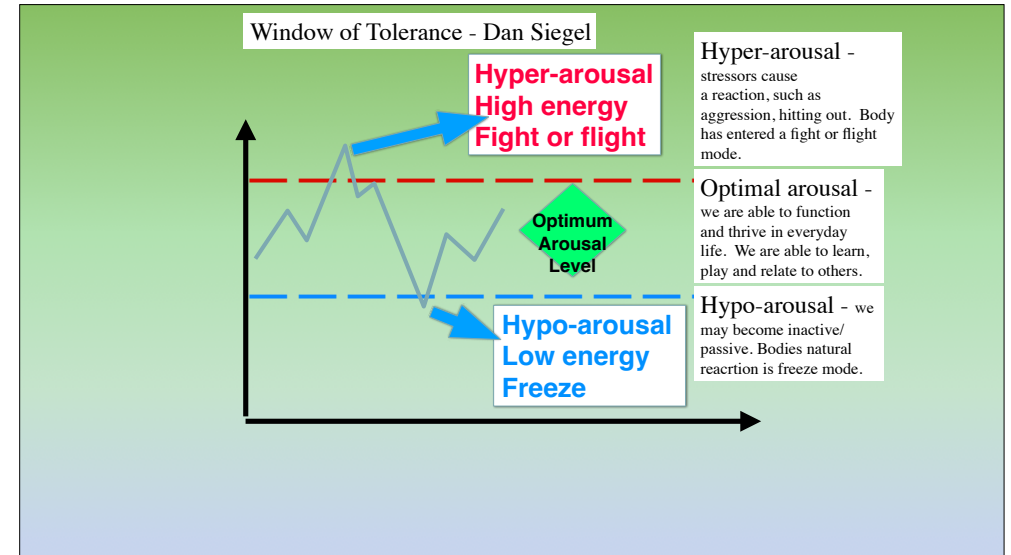
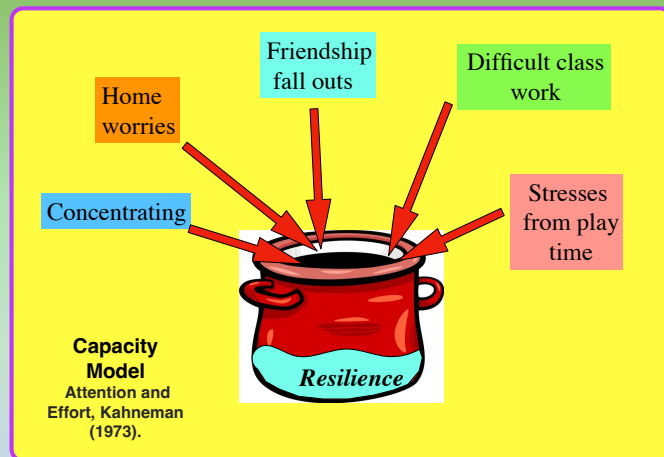
Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging experiences.

Class room Stresses


The more stressors a student faces the more resilience is tested and wears away.

Students who face additional challenges are more likely to be in, or close to being hyper vigilant, as compared to peers whose resilience is is tested less.

There fight/flight responses means they may be seen as problem students not students having reduced resilience/coping abilities.



ICAL SUPPORT SUGGESTIONS to develop the ability to be soothed and



WHAT TO PUT IN A CALM DOWN BOX

Items that provide proprioceptive support

- Weighted lap cushion or weighted stuffed animal
- Weighted vest or pressure vest
- Stretchy resistance bands
- Sensory tunnel
- Mini massager
- Body sock
- Small blanket

Items to squeeze & keep hands busy

- Ridges like Tangle Jr. or puffer ball
- Bubble's Cube
- Play dough or silly putty
- Pipe cleaners
- Stress balls
- Bubble wrap
- Bag of tissue paper to rip
- Scissors or fabric scraps
- Spinning top

Items to support breathing & relaxation


- Bottle of bubbles
- Pinwheels
- Straws and cotton balls or pom poms

Items for olfactory sensory support

- Calming essential oil spray
- Smelling bottles
- Scratch and sniff stickers

Items to get kids moving

- Book of yoga poses or yoga activity cards
- Slipping rope



Items for auditory sensory support

- Noise Cancelling headphones
- MP3 player with music
- Audiobooks

Items for oral motor sensory support

- Chew toy or chew necklace
- Chewing gum, hard candies, or lollipops
- Snacks with a variety of textures
- Whistle, harmonica, party blowers, or similar
- Rescue Remedy Spray

Items that give kids a brain break

- Puzzle
- Books to read
- Blank notebook and writing utensils
- Colouring books
- Scratch art doodle pad
- Small chalk board, Magna-Doodle, Etch-a-Sketch, or Boogie Board
- Activity books
- Photo album

Items to visually calm

- Visual calm down cards
- Sensory bottle or calm down jar
- Light up toys
- Flashlight
- Plastic snow globe
- Kaleidoscope
- Hourglass
- Eye mask

What do I do for self-care?

- Get plenty of sleep
- Enjoy sunshine
- Cook
- Write or draw (what I want)
- Talk to myself
- Cuddle cats
- Walk or bike (up in a park)
- Tidy
- Read
- Read about people who lives are more complicated
- Garden
- Get a hug
- Talk to select people

Psychological Resilience

The ability to cope with increased levels of stress and function adequately in difficult circumstances

How mentalisation improves resilience

Emotional regulation allows CYP to understand causes and consequences of their emotions & manage them more effectively

Self-awareness allows CYP to appreciate their strengths and weaknesses making them better able to cope with challenges

Stronger relationships Mentalisation encourages empathy and understanding, leading to better communication and conflict resolution

Mentalising - How to develop

Teach the Hand Brain thinking brain & alarm brain
Dan Siegel Youtube

MINDFULNESS MEDITATION & NEUROSCIENCE

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CG-IP1EBQ>

"FLIPPING YOUR LID"



FIGURE 4
Dan Siegel's Brain-Hand Flipper from Siegel & Hertzell (2003),
Parenting from the inside out, P.173

78

Smoke Detector Principal



Students with poor
emotional regulation
will be more susceptible to fight/flight.

transformbehaviour.co.uk

Mentalising - How to develop

Teach the Hand Brain thinking brain & alarm brain
Dan Siegel Youtube

Develop an 'attention muscle'

Develop an 'attention muscle'

Mindfulness:

Pay attention to your present moment experiences, such as your breath, bodily sensations, or thoughts, without judgment.

Learn a new skill:

Learning a new skill, like playing a musical instrument or a new language, can improve cognitive function and focus.

Practice attentive listening:

Actively listen to others, try to understand their perspectives, and resist the urge to interrupt or formulate your response while they are speaking.

Mentalising - How to develop

Teach the Hand Brain thinking brain & alarm brain
Dan Seigel Youtube

Develop an 'attention muscle'

Thought bubbles
red v green thoughts



Thought bubbles red v green thoughts



Representing Mental States:
Thought bubbles, often seen in comics and cartoons, are used
to show what someone is thinking or feeling.

Mentalising - How to develop

Teach the Hand Brain thinking brain & alarm brain
Dan Seigel Youtube

Develop an 'attention muscle'

Thought bubbles
red v green thoughts

House of thoughts.

House of thoughts

- **Purpose:**
The House of Thoughts is a narrative device, often read aloud by a teacher, or parent, to introduce the core idea of mentalising. It helps individuals understand the difference between simply reacting to situations (non-mentalising) and understanding the thoughts and feelings behind actions and behaviours (mentalising).
- **Structure:**
The "house" represents a person's mind, and the "rooms" within the house symbolise different mental states like emotions, beliefs, desires, and intentions.
- **Activity:**
Individuals can be encouraged to create their own versions of the House of Thoughts, either through writing or drawing, to personalise the concept and explore their own mental landscape.

Mantra

**CONNECT BEFORE
YOU CORRECT**

Bananarama Principle
It ain't what you do.
It's the way that you do it.
That counts.

**"How an approach is implemented is important
as the approach itself"**

(Higgins, 2018)

3a

NEURODIVERSITY

Some researchers described autism as a human variant with extreme advantages.

Instead of seeing autism as a disorder that needs fixing, they see autism as a human characteristic, like having brown hair or being left-handed.

Being neurodiverse simply means having a brain that's wired differently.

KEY TERMS

Neurodivergent

Individuals who differ neuro-cognitively from each other

Neurotypical

Describe individuals with typical neurological development or functioning. It is not used to describe individuals who have autism or other developmental differences.

Person-first language

'A person with autism' ✓

Identity-first language

'An autistic person'

Biodiversity

Refers to the variety of plants, animals and microorganisms that live somewhere. Different flowers, different birds. One is not better than another. They are just different.

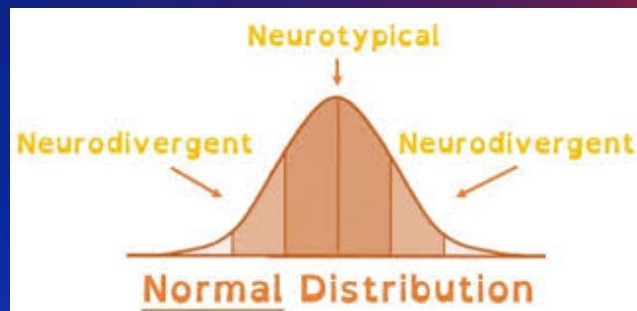
With neurodiversity, brains differ in how they process information.

There are no 'normal brains.'

They are all unique and equal.

"Neurodiversity may be every bit as crucial for the human race as biodiversity is for life in general. Who can say what form of wiring will be best at any given moment?"¹

- Harvey Blume, *The Atlantic* 1998



The bell curve, or normal distribution, is a statistical concept that describes how traits like height, intelligence, and many other characteristics are distributed in a population. The middle of the bell curve represents the average or most common range, while the ends represent less common variations. When applied to neurodiversity, the bell curve suggests that most people fall within an average range of neurological functioning, with neurodivergent individuals at the ends.



Canaries in a coal mine – 'are early warning systems'. Canaries have a sensitive respiratory systems, so the carbon monoxide gas in the mines poisoned the canary quickly. This gave miners time to get out of the mine and save themselves.

What if

'The child who deviates, who refuses to behave like everybody else, may be telling us – loudly, visibly and memorably – that the arrangements of our schools are harmful to human beings. Something toxic is in the air, and these children refuse to inhale it.' (Shalaby, 2017, p.xxxiii)

Classroom Stresses

Resilience is the process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging experiences.

The more stressors a child faces the more resilience is tested and wears away.

ND children, are more likely to experience chronic stress or are closer to being hyper-vigilant, in comparison to peers whose resilience is less tested.

Their coping responses (e.g. stimming) means they may be seen as problem children, not children who are having problems coping.



Stresses for Neurodivergent learners

The effects of negative experiences – Survival Mode

Children who have negative and traumatic experiences in school, such as those previously described, are often left in 'survival mode'. This is where these stressful situations trigger the body's stress responses to try to keep us safe, until we can get back to our 'window of tolerance' (Siegal).

These survival modes have been defined as:
Fight, Freeze, Fight, Fawn and Flood



Their Future isn't Over:

4

Positive Psychology.
History & Core
principles

Who was Maslow?

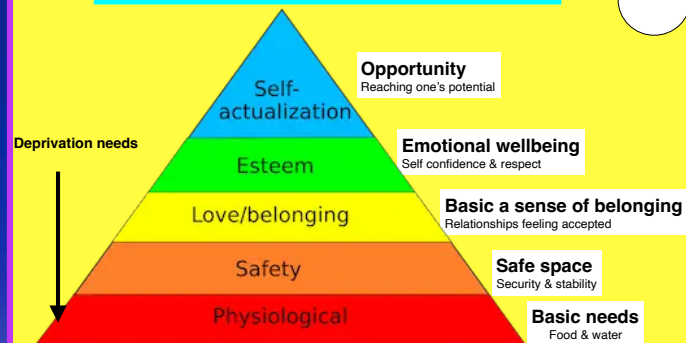


*"One can choose to go back toward safety,
or
forward toward growth.*

*Growth must be chosen again and again;
fear must be overcome again and again."*

– Abraham Maslow

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Positive Psychology

1

Positive Psychology
a brief history

AFTER WORLD WAR II
PSYCHOLOGY HAD THREE AIMS

1. Treatments for mental illness VERY SUCCESSFUL

2. Enhance the lives of everyone LESS SUCCESSFUL

3. Study geniuses LESS SUCCESSFUL

Focus on pathology meant psychology became a 'victimology'

Positive Psychology

1

Positive Psychology a brief history

"The defining characteristic of pessimists is that they tend to believe that bad events will last a long time, will undermine everything they do, and are their own fault."

The optimists, who are confronted with the same hard knocks of this world, think about misfortune in the opposite way. They tend to believe that defeat is just a temporary setback or a challenge, that its causes are just confined to this one case."

— Martin Seligman, *Learned Optimism*, 1991.

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

*The study of what is right about people -
their positive attributes, psychological assets, and strengths.*

*It aims to understand and foster the factors that allow individuals,
communities, and societies to thrive."*

Kobe et al., 2011

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Promoting the social and emotional
well being of children and young people

POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

*success tomorrow
not fixing yesterday*

Martin Seligman defined Positive Psychology as:

*"a **science** of optimal human functioning that aims to discover
and promote the factors that allow individuals and
communities to thrive."*

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well being of children and young people

CORE PRINCIPLES

- Positive assumptions about human nature
- Holistic approach to promote flourishing
- Focus on research, teaching and applied work
- Evidence based ideas for the 'good life'
- Focus on non-clinical population
- Develop processes such as character strengths

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well being of children and young people

Positive Psychology (PP)

For PP if a person has a mental health problem they are at -5

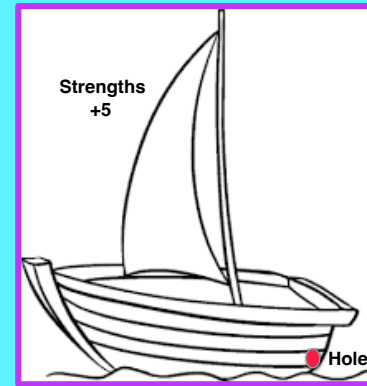
-5	0	+5
Problem	Problem Removed	Fulfilled Life

Removing the problem means they are now at 0. Where they are no longer suffering. This is the focus of the disease or deficit model.

PP aims to move from 0 to +5. +5 is where they are now flourishing, living a fulfilled life.

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Positive Psychology



Seligman



Seligman's
PERMA Model

SIGNATURE STRENGTHS are the vehicles for achieving

Strengths of :
Wisdom and Knowledge
Temperance
Courage
Humanity
Justice

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Signature Strengths According to Seligman (2002), each person possesses several signature strengths. Seligman suggests the following possible criteria for a signature strength:

- A sense of authenticity ("this is the real me").
- A feeling of excitement while displaying it.
- A rapid learning curve as themes are attached to the strength and practiced.
- Continuous learning of new ways to enact the strength.
- A sense of yearning to act in accordance with the strength.
- A feeling of inevitability in using the strength, as if one cannot be stopped or dissuaded from its display.
- Invigoration rather than exhaustion when using the strength.
- The creation and pursuit of fundamental projects that revolve around the strength.
- Intrinsic motivation to use the strength.

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**SIGNATURE STRENGTHS
are the vehicles for achieving**

Strengths of :
Wisdom and Knowledge
Temperance
Courage
Humanity
Justice

Positive emotions

Engagement

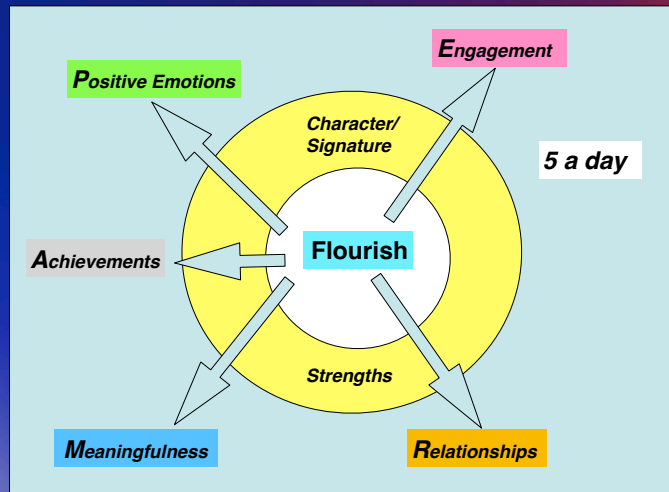
Relationships

Meaning

Accomplishments

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P

Positive emotions

Positive emotions

Fredrickson's Broaden and Build theory (2004) suggests that positive emotions broadens a persons's awareness and overtime builds an increased thought - action repertoire.

For example:

Positive emotion

Joy

Interest

Contentment

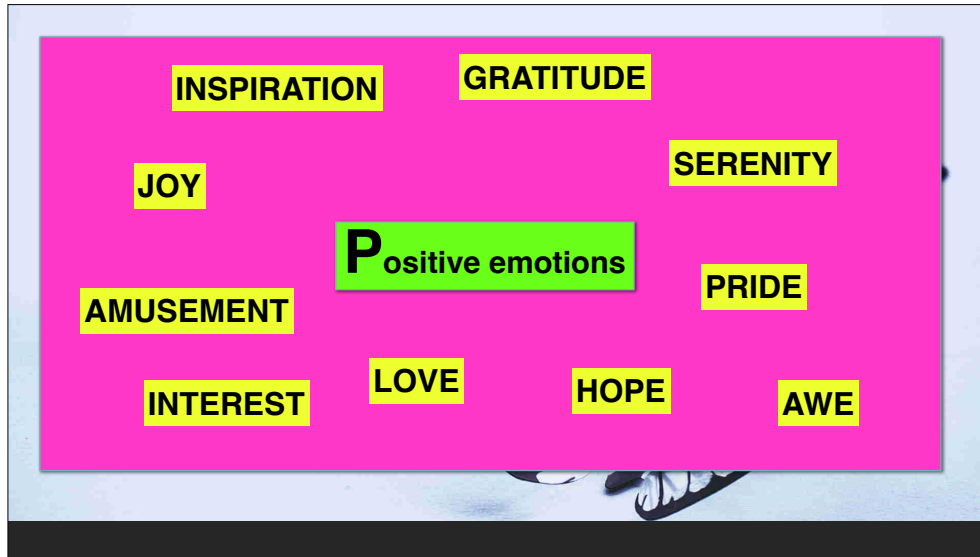
Action urge

to play

to explore

to integrate

@TransformBehav



E Engagement - flow

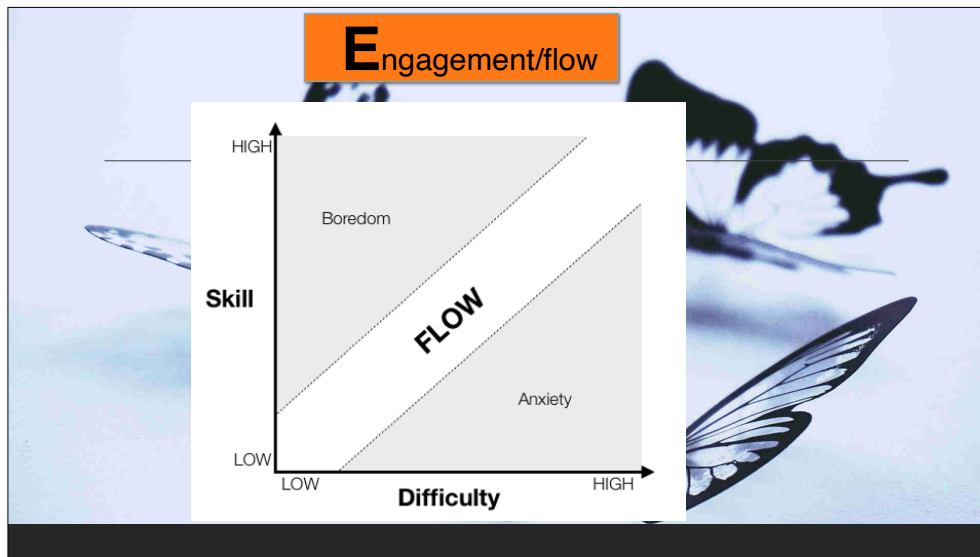
For a child it could be placing with trembling fingers that last block on a tower she has built, higher than any she has built so far; for a swimmer, it could be trying to beat his own record; for a violinist, mastering an intricate musical passage. For each person there are thousands of opportunities, challenges to expand ourselves.

Csikszentmihalyi, M., Flow. P.3

The activity must be **autotelic** - an end in itself.
Not **exotelic** - a means to an end

Teaching to help young people is an autotelic activity

Teaching to help them obtain exam success is exotelic



Positive Psychology

Activity

I am so involved in what I am doing.
I don't see myself as separate from what I am doing.

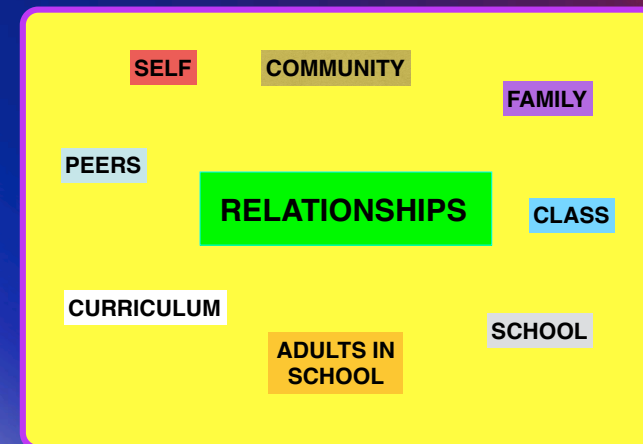
When was the last time I felt this feeling?

What was I doing?

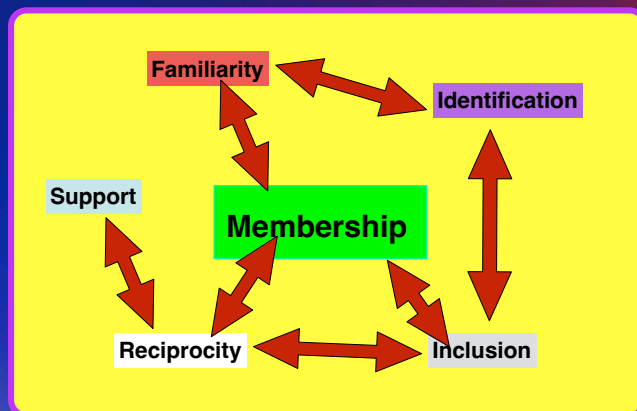
R

Relationships

Until the adolescent years our main relationships are within the family. It is in the adolescent years that a personal identity is formed. Making relationships outside of the family are especially important.



What does belonging mean to students?



Ref. E. Shaw Educational & Child Psychology.Vol. 36 No.4 Dec. 2019 P 79 - 90

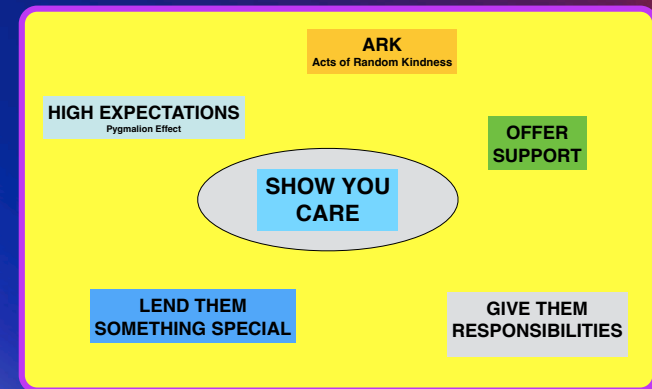
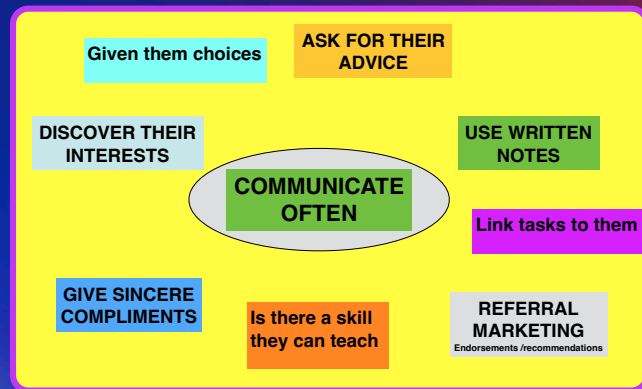
CORE PRINCIPLES

SHOW YOU
CARE

RELATIONSHIPS

COMMUNICATE
OFTEN

Rob Plevin
Connect with your students



Meaning

Being engaged in meaningful activities allows adolescents the opportunities to discover their unique talents and their identity. They are able to show “this is who I am.”

(Barber, Stone, Hunt and Eccles, 2005)

Activities such as:

- Sport
- Performing art
- Religious group
- Voluntary work

@TransformBehav

Achievement

Accomplishments

What things have you done that you think you will remember with a smile when you are older.

What would you and others say are your biggest accomplishments

What skills have you mastered recently

Can you think of a problem that you thought through and resolved?

@TransformBehav

UK

Hummingbird Project: A Positive Psychology

The Intervention for Secondary School Students (2020)

"The Hummingbird Project is amazing! Very supportive and helpful. Highly recommended." This study provides evidence that even a short 6-week Multi-component PPI, can lead to significant improvements in well-being, hope and resilience in high school students.

School of Education and Psychology, University of Bolton, Bolton, United Kingdom

School of Psychology, University of Chester, Chester, United Kingdom

Accessed at: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.02012/full>

USA

Journal of Positive Psychology

a peer-reviewed journal covering positive psychology and provides an international forum for the science of positive psychology in education and school settings.

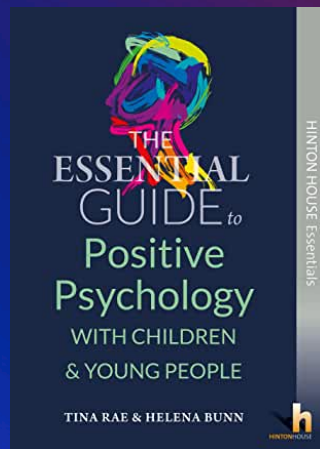
USA

Journal of Positive Psychology a peer-reviewed journal covering positive psychology and provides an international forum for the science of positive psychology in education and school settings.

Why won't it Stick? Positive Psychology and Positive Education

1. *Financial* the view that large sums of money should be spent on training staff in well-being.
2. *It's a marginal topic* well-being is seen as a distraction from real educational progress in literacy and numeracy.
3. *Either/or thinking* at some policy levels, it is seen as it's either well-being or another topic.
4. *Maverick providers* providers who deliver questionable training around the topic that claim to have impact with limited evidence.
5. *Scientism* where empiricism is seen as the only way forward and overlooks the philosophical questions which underpin why well-being should be integrated into educational experience.
6. *Not central to good governance* discussions around well-being are not the core business of exceptional governance, which is about developing effective financial and business decision-making models.
7. *The silver bullet* it can be seen to fix all the challenges in education.
8. *Social Economic Status and Culture* it is an excuse not to expect improvement of change in education.

Until researchers and practitioners address these fundamental hurdles the sustainability and impact of the positive education movement with education more broadly will be diminished.



Their Future isn't Over:

6

Hope for the Journey

Their Future isn't Over:

Why does Hope matter?

Hope is a powerful predictor of:

- mental health and wellbeing
- increased psychological resilience,
- better physical health,
- stronger relationships,
- and enhanced academic success

Their Future isn't Over:

Hope also:

- **challenges helplessness and disengagement.** *When people face challenges beyond their immediate control it's easy to become emotionally overwhelmed or stuck in inaction.*
- **is a psychological antidote—it reawakens agency, encourages small steps forward** *and helps people reframe even difficult circumstances as part of a larger, more meaningful journey.*

Their Future isn't Over:

“Hope is not the conviction that something will turn out well,
but the certainty that something is worth doing,
no matter how it turns out.”

Vaclav Havel:

Hope in Motion

ACTIVITY 1

From feeling stuck to taking meaningful action
by identifying one micro action that contributes to
the solution.

Step 1

Think of a personal challenge that makes you feel stuck.

I feel

Hope in Motion

Step 2

Pool ideas. What could you do that would contribute to a solution.

1

2

3

Hope in Motion

Step 3

Choose one action - that you will do in the next few days.

I will. *(Specific action)*. On. *Specific day/time*

I will.On

How hopeful are you that this action will help?

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9
Not very Very

How committed are you to do doing it?

1. 2. 3. 4. 5. 6. 7. 8. 9
Not very Very

ACTIVITY 2

Hope in Resume

Step 1

Think of a young person. Think of a success they have had in the past student. They earned something new. Overcome an obstacle. Showed resilience. Write down briefly what they did. The situation.

.....
.....
.....

ACTIVITY 2

Hope in Resume

Step 2 What did they achieve?

.....
.....

Step 3 What strengths did they use to succeed?

.....
.....

Hope in Resume

ACTIVITY 2

Step 4 Did they use any of these skills, if so, how?

Emotional regulation skills.....

Cognitive skills

Practical skills.

Social skills

Synder's Hope Model

Pathways

Ability to generate ways
to a set goal

Agency

Motivation to
obtain the goal

HOPE

optimism
self-efficacy
problem solving

Synder's Hope Model

Pathways

Ability to generate ways
to a set goal

A goal can be anything that an individual desires to experience,
create, obtain, carry out, or become.

Hope requires the presence of personal agency
and
pathways from the individual for the successful
pursuit of the goal.

Hope & Adolescence

Adolescence is when:

Puberty is happening

Identity is main task

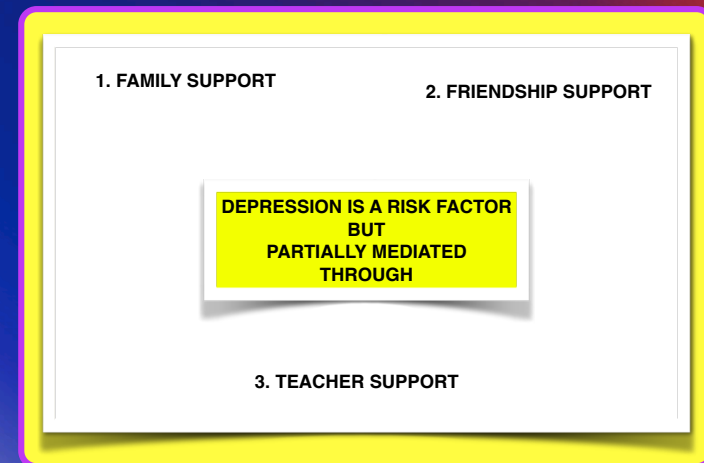
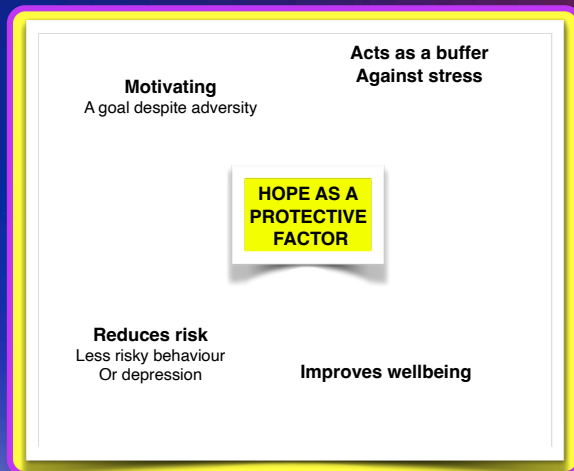
Emotional & cognitive changes take place

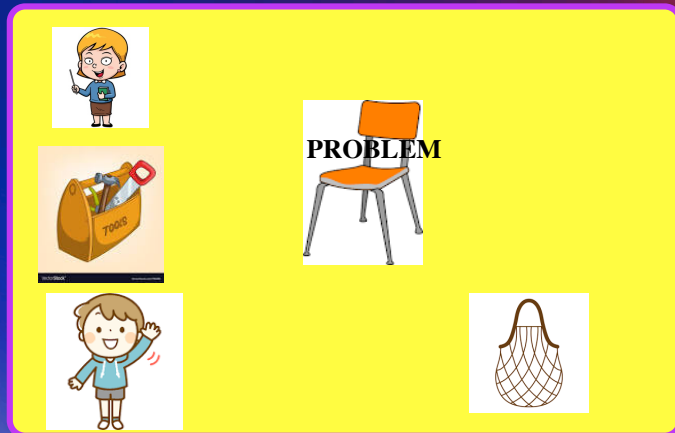
Relationships outside of the family matter more

Peer relationships matter most

Need for autonomy and independence

Hope can serve as a
protective factor for
excluded adolescents





What can be done?

Positive emotions

Engagement

Relationships

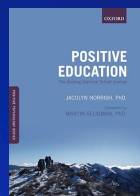
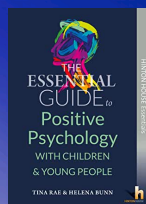
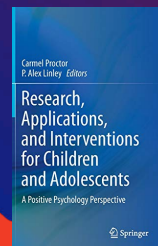
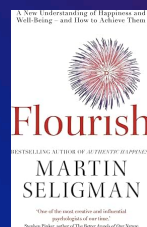
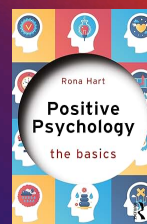
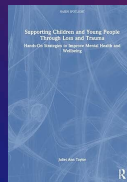
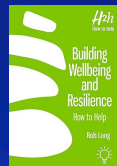
Meaningfulness

Achievement

Mentalising

Hope

Resilience



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OXFORD
BROOKES
UNIVERSITY

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties Postgraduate Diploma

with Oxford Brookes University in partnership with SEBDA

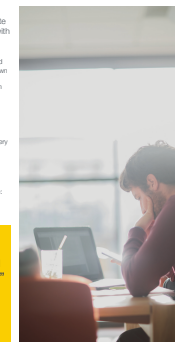
Develop your understanding and practical skills when working with children and young people with social, emotional and mental health difficulties (SEMH)

Oxford Brookes, working in partnership with SEBDA, offers a 2 year part-time Postgraduate Diploma in SEMH for professionals working with this vulnerable group.

On this course you'll have opportunities to conduct critical reflection on a range of practical, theoretical and research issues. You will relate SEMH theory to your own professional context and consider the impact on your practice. You'll also receive support and guidance from experienced practitioners in the field of SEMH.

You'll complete this course online, via distance learning. Most activities are asynchronous, meaning you can access the course irrespective of your work commitments, personal responsibilities, learning preferences or location. Course content is released every 2 weeks as structured study guides.

You'll have opportunities to meet online with fellow students and participate in online forum discussions. At the end of the first year you may choose to exit the programme with the Award of Postgraduate Certificate: Social Emotional Mental Health Difficulties.



"Last week I secured a post in a special provision for students with SEMH thanks to the work I have completed on this course."

(Recent Graduate)

Social, Emotional and Mental Health Difficulties Postgraduate Diploma

What will I study?

You will study 3 modules per year as a distance learner. In your first year you will engage with:

- Psychological understandings of SEMH
- Current legislation
- SEMH assessment
- Practical interventions
- Neuroscience research

You'll consider how the 'social model' of understanding of SEMH contrasts with the 'medical model'.

In your second year you'll explore theory and practice around issues such as trauma, anger management, self-harm, eating disorders, bereavement, anxiety, depression, emotional development, attachment theory and autistic spectrum conditions. You'll also study the ecology of SEMH difficulties and a research methods module.

Entry requirements

You'll have an undergraduate degree qualification at 2.2 or above and must be working in a relevant setting with children and/or young people, such as a:

- mainstream school
- special school
- youth club
- care or health setting

Those who do not hold a 2.2 degree may be accepted on the course following an assessment of prior experiential learning.



APPLY NOW:
www.brookes.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/social-emotional-and-mental-health-difficulties/

"I would view completion of this course to be a prerequisite for members of staff wanting to progress to the SLT of the school. It is money well spent in supporting both pupils and staff."

(Headteacher, SEMH school)

On successful completion of this course, you can apply for the MA Education with Oxford Brookes. You'll have 120 credits from this course and will need to complete a Dissertation (60 credits) in one year, to gain an MA Education qualification.

SEBDA is a national charity committed to improving provision for children and young people with social, emotional and mental health difficulties and supporting the professionals who work with them - www.sebda.org

Fees

The current fees per module are available from the website below. Being a member of SEBDA gives you £100 cashback from SEBDA on your course fees.

National Conference 4th July 2025

Key Mantras

**with
Dr Rob Long**

Sebda

Promoting the social and emotional
well being of children and young people

**Cracking knuckles
Causes arthritis**

**Eating crusts will
give you curly hair**

**Don't go outside
With wet hair -
you'll go deaf**

**GROWING UP WITH
WISE
FAMILY
SAYINGS**

**Red sky in
the morning**

**Sitting too close to the TV
Will ruin your eyes**

**A stitch in time
saves nine**

**Eating carrots
Improves your
eye sight**

**Always SAY 'Hello' to a
lone magpie**

**Rob's
Relationship
Mantras**

1.

Resistance to
change is normal

2

If you can predict it
you can prevent it

3.

FIGHT FIRE WITH
WATER

Window of Tolerance - Dan Siegel

Hyper-arousal
High energy
Fight or flight

Hyper-arousal -
stressors cause
a reaction, such as
aggression, hitting out. Body
has entered a fight or flight
mode.

Optimum
Arousal
Level

Optimal arousal -
we are able to function
and thrive in everyday
life. We are able to learn,
play and relate to others.

Hypo-arousal
Low energy
Freeze

Hypo-arousal - we
may become inactive/
passive. Bodies natural
reaction is freeze mode.

4

ANALYSE DON'T
PERSONALISE

5

CONTEXT IS DECISIVE

6

Problem free is not
problem ready

7.

CONNECT BEFORE
YOU CORRECT

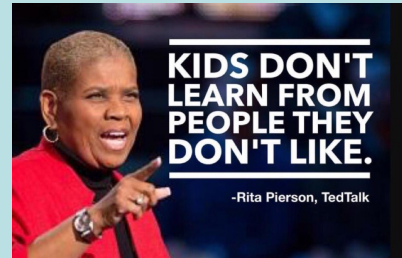
SCHOOL



HOME



'If relationships are where things have gone wrong,
then relationships are where they are most likely to be put right'
(Howe 2005)



8

Attitude is everything

“The right attitude and one arm will beat the wrong attitude and two arms every time”

ATTITUDE IS EVERYTHING
CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE AND
YOU CHANGE YOUR LIFE!

9.

**Calm when they
get it wrong
Happy when they
get it right**

“The trick is to restrict the time we spend
in the negative energy zones to necessity
and aim to get ourselves in the positive
energy zones as much as possible.”

Morris (2009)

Sebda | humanising the social and emotional
well-being of children and young people

**OXFORD
BROOKES
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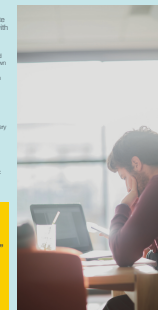
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