

**SKILLS
FOR LIFE**
S E R I E S

RESILIENCE

Sonia Suarez
Hyeri Mel Yang
Gabriela Chacon



Copyright © 2024 Inter-American Development Bank (“IDB”). This work is subject to a Creative Commons license CC BY 3.0 IGO (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/igo/legalcode>). The terms and conditions indicated in the URL link must be met and the respective recognition must be granted to the IDB.

Further to section 8 of the above license, any mediation relating to disputes arising under such license shall be conducted in accordance with the WIPO Mediation Rules. Any dispute related to the use of the works of the IDB that cannot be settled amicably shall be submitted to arbitration pursuant to the United Nations Commission on International Trade Law (UNCITRAL) rules. The use of the IDB’s name for any purpose other than for attribution, and the use of IDB’s logo shall be subject to a separate written license agreement between the IDB and the user and is not authorized as part of this license.

Note that the URL link includes terms and conditions that are an integral part of this license.

The opinions expressed in this work are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Inter-American Development Bank, its Board of Directors, or the countries they represent.



What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to positively recover from stressful, expected, or traumatic circumstances. It means being able to get good outcomes despite serious threats to adaptation or development. That is why this skill is also called stress resistance. How well people adapt to hardship and difficult or challenging life experiences depends on factors associated with the acceptance of self and life, as well as personal competence¹.

Even though there are multiple ways of characterizing resilience, the most common descriptors include the following:

- ▶ Acceptance of self and life
- ▶ Personal competence

¹, American Psychological Association, 2018; Campbell- Sills & Stein, 2007.

Acceptance of self and life

- ▶ Believing in yourself (self-confidence) and your abilities (self-reliance) and being aware of your own strengths and weaknesses.
- ▶ Valuing yourself (self-esteem), having a positive perception of yourself, and taking pride in your accomplishments.
- ▶ Self-regulating your emotions, thoughts, and behavior.
- ▶ Having a balanced view of your life and experiences.
- ▶ Adapting to change, dealing with uncertainty and stressful situations (active coping), and maintaining a sense of tranquility.
- ▶ Having a sense of belonging (cohesion) and becoming a part of a culture (adherence).
- ▶ Holding a moral compass: spiritual or religious beliefs that give life meaning.

Personal competence

- ▶ Relying on yourself more than anyone else and being able to function on your own if necessary.
- ▶ Maintaining and being determined to achieve goals.
- ▶ Managing and getting through difficult times, finding a way out, and sticking to your plans.
- ▶ Believing that you have control over the events or outcomes in your life.
- ▶ Finding effective and convenient solutions to problems.
- ▶ Keeping your spirits and courage up in the face of adversity.
- ▶ Developing and maintaining positive relationships, effective social interactions, and social networks.
- ▶ Displaying prosocial behavior (i.e., being altruistic and generous).

A background image of three children climbing a rope structure, overlaid with a semi-transparent blue filter. The children are smiling and appear to be enjoying the activity. The rope structure has yellow handholds and a red top cap.

As a 21st century citizen with resilience skill, you should be able to do the following:

- ▶ Take adverse experiences as a learning opportunity.
- ▶ Learn from your mistakes and keep trying.
- ▶ Handle and overcome tough situations.
- ▶ Be able to cope with stress and recover from setbacks.
- ▶ Keep believing in yourself and staying optimistic.
- ▶ Do meaningful things that help you feel better and give you a sense of purpose.
- ▶ Have self-respect, confidence, discipline, and courage to tackle challenges.
- ▶ Be willing to face new experiences with confidence and a positive attitude.
- ▶ Build and maintain a support network of friends and family.



Why Resilience?

People who lack resilience are more likely to feel overwhelmed, helpless, or depressed; resort to unhealthy coping strategies (such as avoidance, isolation, and self-medication); or even display suicidal behavior (Roy et al., 2007). People with lower levels of resilience have been shown to display more mental health issues in the long term, which means that resilience could also protect people from these issues and promote well-being (Wild, 2016). Resilience is needed to navigate life and to address the problems of today's world, such as forced displacement or forced migration (refugees, returnees, expellees, escapees, and internally displaced persons), global warming, and climate change. Resilience not only means bouncing back or returning to the previous condition but also embracing change and accepting a new reality.

Being able to cope with stressful situations is critical to progress and prosperity for individuals and for society as a whole. Resilience helps people recover from traumatic events such as job loss, illness, natural disasters, accidents, or death of loved ones. A resilient person has developed strategies that help them navigate the difficulties they face. Therefore, being resilient relates to other skills and behaviors such as perseverance, adaptability or flexibility to internal or external demands, transformability, purposefulness, communication, self-awareness, self-regulation, and self-esteem. Likewise, people with stronger development of socioemotional skills also display better resilience skills (Martinsone et al., 2022). Resilience has also been linked to having social resources such as family and friends to lean on; that is, those with stronger social resources tend to be more resilient (Horn & Feder, 2018).

How to develop Resilience?

Like many other 21st century skills, resilience can be learned and cultivated at any age, but the earlier it is developed the better. In fact, the earliest years lay the foundation for a wide range of resilient behaviors due to ongoing brain and physiological development. Many studies have found that a stable and positive relationship with a primary caregiver is a protective factor that helps develop resilience in children (Center on the Developing Child, 2015). This kind of relationship can help children mastering capabilities to respond and adapt to adversity (Walsh, 2015). Also, dealing with a manageable level of stress can help children to learn strategies to cope with it.

The skills or resources that underpin resilience can be developed at any age and practiced throughout life. For instance, adversity can be managed by children through play and creative processes such as art, and by adults through regular physical activity, stress-reduction methods, and programs that actively develop executive function and self-regulation skills (Center on the Developing Child, 2015). Programs that involve both mindfulness and cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) also improve resilience skills. Mindfulness training increases resilience by improving emotional detachment from upsetting situations, while CBT focuses on empowering individuals to identify and replace maladaptive patterns of thinking, emotional response, or behavior with more desirable ones (Joyce et al., 2018).

Penn Resiliency Program (PRP)

PRP is a multidimensional group intervention based on cognitive-behavioral techniques and social problem-solving skills to prevent or reduce depressive symptoms resulting from adolescents' stressors (Gillham et al., 1990). The program is designed for youth in late childhood and early adolescence between 10 and 14 years old, and it is composed of 12 weekly sessions of 90 minutes each. PRP is offered in school settings as an extracurricular program and is administered by school teachers, counselors, and other school-based leaders.

The program states that negative reactions are caused by beliefs about events rather than by the events themselves. Therefore, it promotes optimistic and flexible thinking to reduce negative consequences of such events. This is done by helping adolescents to link beliefs, feelings, and behaviors; consider the way they think, perceive, and remember information; and deconstruct nonpositive thoughts and rebuild them in a more balanced way. PRP also teaches several techniques for coping and problem-solving, including assertiveness, negotiation, decision making, and relaxation (Gillham et al., 2007).

A study conducted involving 17 evaluations of PRP found that participating students reported reduction in depressive symptoms after a one-year follow-up, compared with those not in the intervention (Brunwasser et al., 2009). Likewise, a study involving students from 185 elementary schools in Spain found that PRP was effective for reducing depression in participating students compared with their peers not in the program (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2016).

Adolescent Kit for Expression and Innovation

This kit contains tools, activities, and supplies to help adolescents from 10 to 18 years old affected by both humanitarian crises and poverty by fostering their resilience skills based upon their individual strengths. The kit can be used in different settings, including schools, by institutional leaders or any adult able to understand the materials. It was developed by UNICEF and has been implemented in different countries.

The kit provides very detailed information about ways to promote adolescents' resilience skills, other skills, and psychosocial well-being, and to make learning and positive engagement stronger. It contains (i) guidance for program implementation; (ii) an activity box with more than 90 activities to help facilitators in their work with adolescents, ranging from step-by-step guidance and instructions for activities that take 30–60 minutes, to cards, energizers, and project ideas; (iii) materials, equipment, and supplies that are low cost and easy to prepare with local resources, and (iv) digital resources through its own website, including the guidance, activity box, measurement tools, and videos to facilitate the program implementation.






A young boy with dark hair, wearing a bright green sleeveless shirt and dark shorts, is crouching on a paved path. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile. The background is a blurred green hedge and trees.

How to assess and measure Resilience?

Like many other 21st century skills, there is no unified definition of what resilience is when it comes to developing assessment instruments. Therefore, there are many instruments that operationalize resilience differently and for various target ages. Also, most of the instruments are self-reported, meaning that resilience is measured based upon individuals' opinions on related resilience factors rather than on a performance-based approach. The most popular instruments to date are the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003) and the Resilience Scale (Wagnild & Young, 1993), widely used to measure resilience in adults.

However, new research has come up with innovative assessment methods to evaluate resilience, including game-based and simulation approaches. By confronting users with situations where they experience stress (such as driving an emergency vehicle and encountering obstacles to reach their destination), researchers analyze the players' progress and extract performance indicators, which then describe the type of resilience the user exhibited (Kleitman et al., 2022).

RESOURCES:

-  Manual. [Manual de actividades que propician resiliencia](#)
-  Video. [Building Resilience](#)
-  Video. [Resilience, but what is it? Here's 5 ways to build resilience](#)
-  Website. [Guía de resiliencia: para padres y maestros](#)
-  Website. [Kit para adolescentes para el desarrollo de la resiliencia a través de la expresión y la innovación](#)

REFERENCES:

- American Psychological Association. (n.d.). Resilience. In APA dictionary of psychology. Retrieved April 19, 2018, from <https://dictionary.apa.org/resilience>
- Brunwasser, S. M., Gillham, J. E., & Kim, E. S. (2009). A meta-analytic review of the Penn Resiliency Program's effect on depressive symptoms. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 77(6), 1042-1054. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0017671>
- Campbell-Sills, L., & Stein, M. B. (2007). Psychometric analysis and refinement of the Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC): Validation of a 10-item measure of resilience. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 20(6), 1019-1028. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jts.20271>
- Center on the Developing Child. (2015). InBrief: The Science of Resilience. Harvard University. <https://developingchild.harvard.edu/resources/inbrief-the-science-of-resilience/>
- Connor, K. M. (2006). Assessment of resilience in the aftermath of trauma. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*, 67(2), 46-49. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/16602815/>
- Connor, K. M., & Davidson, J. R. T. (2003). Development of a new resilience scale: The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC). *Depression and Anxiety*, 18(2), 76-82. <https://doi.org/10.1002/da.10113>
- Gillham, J. E., Jaycox, L. H., Reivich, K.J., Seligman, M.E.P., & Silver, T. (1990) The Penn Resiliency Program [Unpublished manual]. University of Pennsylvania.
- Gillham, J. E., Reivich, K. J., Freres, D. R., Chaplin, T. M., Shatté, A. J., Samuels, B., Elkon, A. G. L., Litzinger, S., Lascher, M., Gallop, R., & Seligman, M. E. P. (2007). School-based prevention of depressive symptoms: A randomized controlled study of the effectiveness and specificity of the Penn Resiliency Program. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 75(1), 9-19. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-006X.75.1.9>
- Groot, B. (2020). Boosting our youth's resilience in the face of COVID-19: Emotion regulation is key. *Enfoque Educación*. <https://blogs.iadb.org/educacion/en/youthresilience/>
- Horn, S. R., & Feder, A. (2018). Understanding resilience and preventing and treating PTSD. *Harvard Review of Psychiatry*, 26(3), 158-174. <https://doi.org/10.1097/HRP.0000000000000194>
- Joyce, S., Shand, F., Tighe, J., Laurent, S. J., Bryant, R. A., & Harvey, S. B. (2018). Road to resilience: A systematic review and meta-analysis of resilience training programmes and interventions. *BMJ Open*, 8(6), Article e017858. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2017-017858>
- Kleitman, S., Jackson, S. A., Zhang, L. M., Blanchard, M. D., Rizvandi, N. B., & Aidman, E. (2022). Applying evidence-centered design to measure psychological resilience: The development and preliminary validation of a novel simulation-based assessment methodology. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.717568>
- Liebenberg, L., Ungar, M., & Vijver, F. V. D. (2012). Validation of the child and youth resilience measure-28 (CYRM-28) among Canadian youth. *Research on Social Work Practice*, 22(2), 219-226. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1049731511428619>
- Luthar, S. S., Cicchetti, D., & Becker, B. (2000). The construct of resilience: A critical evaluation and guidelines for future work. *Child Development*, 71(3), 543-562. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1885202>
- Martinsone, B., Stokenberga, I., Damberga, I., Supe, I., Simões, C., Lebre, P., Canha, L., Santos, M., Santos, A. C., Fonseca, A. M., Santos, D., Gaspar de Matos, M., Conte, E., Agliati, A., Cavioni, V., Gandellini, S., Crazzani, I., Ornaghi, V., & Camilleri, L. (2022). Adolescent social emotional skills, resilience and behavioral problems during the COVID-19 pandemic: A longitudinal study in three European countries. *Frontiers in Psychiatry*, 13, Article 942692. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.942692>
- Masten, A. S. (2001). Ordinary magic: Resilience processes in development. *American Psychologist*, 56(3), 227-238. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.56.3.227>
- McGrath, R. E., & Adler, A. (2022). Skills for life: A review of life skills and their measurability, malleability, and meaningfulness. *Inter-American Development Bank*. <https://publications.iadb.org/en/skills-life-review-life-skills-and-their-measurability-malleability-and-meaningfulness>
- Roy, A., Sarchiapone, M., & Carli, V. (2007). Low resilience in suicide attempters. *Archives of Suicide Research*, 11(3), 265-269. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13811110701403916>
- Satapathy, S., Dang, S., Sagar, R., & Dwivedi, S. N. (2022). Resilience in children and adolescents survived psychologically traumatic life events: A critical review of application of resilience assessment tools for clinical referral and intervention. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 23(1), 288-300. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1524838020939126>
- Sánchez-Hernández, O., Méndez Carrillo, F. X., & Garber, J. (2016). Promoción de la resiliencia en niños con sintomatología depresiva. *Anales de Psicología*, 32(3), 741-748. <https://doi.org/10.6018/analesps.32.3.261671>
- Ungar, M., & Liebenberg, L. (2011). Assessing resilience across cultures using mixed methods: Construction of the child and youth resilience measure. *Journal of Mixed Methods Research*, 5(2), 126-149. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689811400607https://doi.org/10.1177/1558689811400607>
- Wagnild, G. M., & Young, H. M. (1993). Development and psychometric evaluation of the Resilience Scale. *Journal of Nursing Measurement*, 1(2), 165-178. <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/7850498/>
- Walsh, B. (2015, March 23). The science of resilience: Why some children can thrive despite adversity. Usable Knowledge. Harvard Graduate School of Education. <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/15/03/science-resilience>
- Wild, J. (2016). An evaluation of Mind's resilience intervention for emergency workers. University of Oxford. <https://www.mind.org.uk/media-a/4866/strand-3.pdf>
- Wu, G., Feder, A., Cohen, H., Kim, J. J., Calderon, S., Charney, D. S., & Mathé, A. A. (2013). Understanding resilience. *Frontiers in Behavioral Neuroscience*, 7, Article 10. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fnbeh.2013.00010>

**WANT TO
LEARN
MORE?**

VISIT:
**SKILLS
FOR LIFE**
WEBSITE

SKILLS FOR LIFE

S E R I E S

