

The Resilient Mindset

Andrew Fuller and John Hendry

Resilient Youth's research on 160,000 young people has revealed a cluster of factors that together create the 'resilient mindset'.

The Resilient Mindset extends the concept of a growth mindset to make it more applicable for teachers and parents. The Resilient Mindset enables students to sustain a Growth Mindset and to approach challenges with greater confidence. It assists both the anxious and avoidant learner to become a resilient learner.

The modelling of Resilient Youth's data indicates that the fixed/growth dichotomy is too simple. Students are rarely one mindset or the other. It is not just a case of growth versus fixed.

The results of the research conducted by Resilient Youth identifies key actions that can be taken by teachers, parents and students to develop a Resilient Mindset.

Building a Resilient Mindset is both a cognitive and emotional process as it involves shifting students from either an anxious or an avoidant mindset.

The establishment of a Resilient Mindset increases engagement in learning, motivation and academic success. It also relates to the factor that most predicts success in life and in relationships—the ability to regulate our emotions.

The Resilient Mindset relates not only to how we see ourselves but also to how others view us as we attempt new tasks, make mistakes and learn new skills. This is why it directly relates to the cultures of schools and

classrooms. Mindsets are developed in and outside the classroom, in the corridors, on the sporting fields and at play.

Resilient Mindsets also relate to our ability to form and repair relationships. Applying the research findings we can group students into three mindsets:

Anxious
Avoidant
Resilient.

The Anxious Mindset

The anxious mindset is where students' habitually freeze in the face of new challenges. Their levels of arousal overwhelm and panic them and they shy away from new experiences and opportunities for learning. Feelings of nausea, shaking, fear and panic often accompany this state. Other students in this mindset may attempt a task but then rush through it, to get it over and done with as quickly as possible

Experiencing anxiety at these levels substantially interferes with memory functioning and thinking.

The Avoidant Mindset

Students in this mindset are escapees from the demands of school. Habitually they respond to challenges with fight or more commonly flight. They may distract, question the validity of the work or become angry, distant and incommunicative. Their level of avoidance means these students become disengaged and distracting to others. Their avoidance of their anxiety can lower the motivation of other students.

The Resilient Mindset

Shifting the appraisal of challenges that invoke anxious or avoidant responses into a Resilient Mindset requires a positive, trusting relationship between teacher and student. This is the art of great teaching.

Being able to reframe tasks, to create support that overrides fear, to have students that have a sense of success and mastery is the basis of establishing a Resilient Mindset.

The Resilient Mindset - Indicators

Anxious	Resilient	Avoidant
Reluctant to attempt challenging pieces.	Has a go and persists.	Gives up easily, shuts down.
Freezes in the face of challenges. Doesn't know where to start. Feels incapacitated.	Gets stressed but resolves it through support (while there may be times of freeze or fight/flight, the eventual strategy is tend, mend and befriend).	Flight. When confronted with a challenge, avoids, procrastinates or distracts.
Sees mistakes as personal failings.	Sees mistakes as necessary to learning.	Sees mistakes as not worth replicating.
May blame self for difficulties. Feels ashamed and worries.	Doesn't use blame/shame.	May blame others for difficulties. Feels ashamed and avoids it.
Energy is focused on pleasing people.	Energy can shift appropriately.	Energy is overly focused on escaping.
Concentration is often focused on other people and their judgements.	Concentration can flexibly shift between focused and diffuse; externally focused and internally reflective.	Concentration is wariness. Vigilant
Sleep is often lessened through worry.	Sleeps well.	May sleep too long or be up playing computer games.
Resilience fragile and dependent on social support.	Resilience is robust enough to overcome challenges and upsets. Resilience is present in the absence of social approval.	Resilience may appear good but be fragile in crises due to an inability to rely on others.
Decision making- seeks out others' input, worries about what others might do.	Decision making – can make independent decisions and can seek the input of other when useful.	Overly self-reliant on making decisions alone. Reluctant to seek help from others.
Feedback –seeks reassurance and may feel helpless.	Feedback-seeks feedback in order to improve.	Avoids feedback and may feel judged and threatened.

If you would like to book a workshop on the strategies staff can use to create the Resilient Mindset, please contact Andrew Fuller at www.andrewfuller.com.au or Resilient Youth at www.resiliencyouth.org.au