



The Resilience and Wellbeing Toolbox: Creating character and competence through life's ups and downs.

By Madhavi Nawana Parker (2020) Routledge, London.

Madhavi Nawana Parker's latest offering helps build young people's resilience and wellbeing using practical, evidence based 'done for you' lessons and strategies you can apply immediately, without consuming more time than you have.

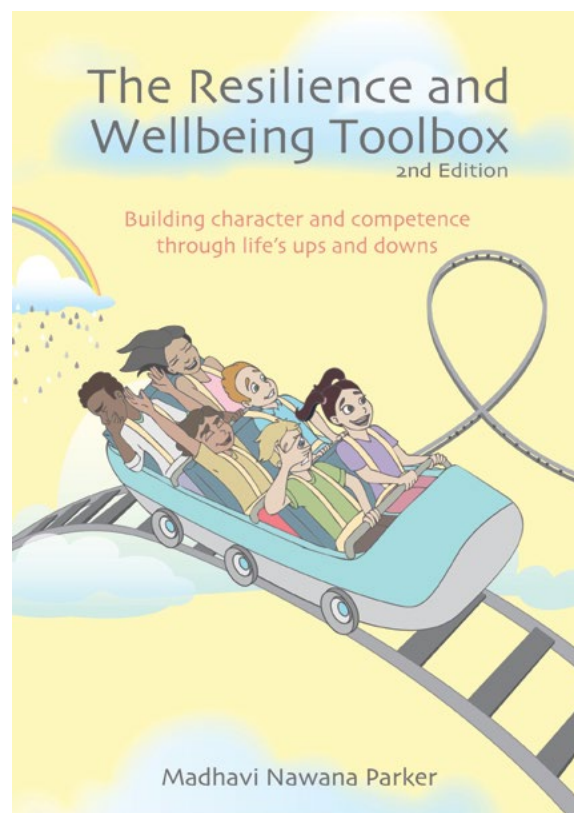
Schools and allied health care centres around the world are using this brand spanking new and updated version to lift the mood in their classrooms and create foundations for life skills that serve both immediately and well into their future.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS FROM INSIDE THE BOOK

Why resilience?

When the first edition was written in 2016, it was becoming clear there was a global pattern of children's resilience decreasing and changing. Schools and families were reporting a reduction in their child's frustration tolerance, ability to regulate their emotions and skill set for bouncing back from adversity in a reasonable amount of time. This research is what drove the decision to write this book in a search for answers and solutions.

Resilience is a crucial life skill. Resilient children can be easier to get along with, because of their more even temperament, psychological flexibility and ability to get on with things without kicking up more of a fuss than is necessary or constructive.



What is resilience?

Resilience is mentally and emotionally coping with and adapting to challenges in helpful, constructive ways in order to return to a healthy state of wellbeing in a reasonable amount of time.

What isn't resilience?

Never getting upset or worried when something goes wrong and being happy, confident and calm all the time.

Who can teach resilience and wellbeing?

Anyone who cares about the mental health and wellbeing of the next generation and has the strengths and skills to guide a young person towards their potential. It helps if you are also willing to develop your own resilience and wellbeing and learn alongside the young person. The tools in this book are applicable to the adults who teach it too.

What you need to know about resilience before you teach it.

Children can be resilient one moment and the next minute, unbuckle and unravel into a pit of emotional chaos. This doesn't make someone outright 'resilient' or 'not resilient.'

Resilience is a lifelong process, growing with time, practice, encouragement, brain maturity and exposure to enough (but not too much) challenge and adversity that is supported compassionately and wisely.

There are many factors like personality, temperament, developmental factors, interacting with genetic predispositions and environment that effect where you sit on the resilience spectrum. In one family, you can have siblings sitting on opposite points on the resilience scale. Don't blame yourself for your less resilient child or student. At the same time, don't get tempted to applaud yourself for your more resilient ones either!

Instead, look at your child / student's personality and support them from where they're at, for who they are. Because of their age, limited life experience and 'still under construction' brains, most toddlers, pre-schoolers, children and teenagers aren't consistently or predominantly resilient (yet). This doesn't necessary reflect how resilient they will be as adults, so try not to get ahead of yourself.

When will a child or student 'get more resilient'?

Your hard work to support a child's resilience, may not show itself until the child is older and has reached a point of brain maturation that allows them to act more resiliently. For some, (sorry folks) this may well be around the time they move out of home or leave the school you've been supporting them in.

Here are three ways you can help a young person build resilience.

- 1. Try and avoid making resilience sound easy or minimise a child's problems.** If something feels big to them – that's because it is big to them. A child's perception and experience of a difficulty is often perceived in a magnified way, because of their developing brain. The thinking and rationalising part of their brain is still growing, so emotions tend to take over quickly and be felt deeply. When they are upset about something, no matter how small it might seem to you, it can help to say something like, 'it looks like you're having a hard time,' and 'I can see this is hard for you.' These words reassure a child you acknowledge their experience is tough for them and that you care about that. Be careful not to over empathise though – just genuinely show you take their feelings seriously. Resilience grows from having a space for all your feelings and not being made to feel like something is wrong with you, for having them.
- 2. Help children develop confidence through competence.** Children need to know they can do things on their own and that they are coping for their age. While it can be tempting to do everything for our children as an expression of love and support, the message that can emerge is 'you're not good enough on your own – you need someone else to be truly competent.' While this is partially true, as we all need people in our lives who care about us and are willing to help when we need it, helping more than is necessary is not helpful for resilience. Try and avoid doing too many things that they can do for themselves. What skills they might be ready to build? Tidying up? Organising their school materials? Being a monitor in the class? Asking for help themselves instead of asking you to tell the teacher / parent they are struggling? Making their own lunches? Preparing meals? Look at the child's age, personality and developmental abilities and help them build confidence through competence.

3. Encourage healthy risk taking. Taking healthy risks is about being willing to give something a go without a guarantee of success. No one likes to fail or see things didn't turn out as planned. Everything feels much better when you succeed. What can happen to many children is, through fear of failure, some great opportunities get avoided altogether. Being willing to take risks that aren't guaranteed success is an important part of building resilience and wellbeing because it allows a child to practice courage and vulnerability which help you be more confident through the ups and downs of life.

Healthy risks look different for everyone. Think about the child, your family / class and follow your gut to look into ways they can step a little more out of their comfort zone, with your loving and empathic support to move closer towards becoming braver and more confident.

Summary

Remember that being rushed into resilience doesn't work and nor does a 'toughen up, sink or swim' approach. Resilience takes time, growing through day to day experiences that allow children to see they are loved and supported through adversity, yet capable and competent to go the distance themselves. The most important thing is that you are patient with them and patient with yourself, remembering that no one, gets it right all the time.

Madhavi Nawana Parker, Director of Positive Minds Australia is a widely published author of resilience, wellbeing, confidence and social emotional intelligence books, articles and programs. Madhavi and her team, help children, teenagers, families and schools build crucial life skills by focusing on strengths, skill building and growth. Madhavi is known for her empathic understanding towards parents, educators and young people, working tirelessly through her writing, public speaking and counselling, to improve mental health, resilience and wellbeing.



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Madhavi Nawana Parker's latest book, 'The Resilience and Wellbeing Toolbox: Creating character and competence through life's ups and downs' 2nd Ed (2020) is out now and available in the SPELD SA Shop <https://www.speldsa.org.au/The-Resilience-and-Wellbeing-Toolbox>

Chapters in 'The Resilience and Wellbeing Toolbox;

1. Gratitude, Optimism and Perspective
2. Character, Values & Integrity
3. Empathy and belonging
4. Problem Solving
5. Managing emotions
6. Learning through mistakes using a growth mindset
7. Persistence, motivation and self-efficacy