Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly
Health and Care Partnership

Turning the Tide

Promoting resilience and prosocial development in children and young people

Practical guidance for schools in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly

Contents

Aims and guidance

Welcome to information and resources to help promote resilience and prosocial development in children in educational settings.

Aims of the toolkit

- Increase understanding of:
  - prosocial development in children and how we can support its development
  - resilience in children and how to promote and support its development.
  - different levels of prosocial development and resilience among children when they begin school
- Support staff in schools to recognise the difficulties facing children:
  - whose prosocial development has been compromised
  - who lack resilient responses in the face of challenges
- Identify the strengths and the less well developed areas of prosocial skills in the children school staff work with.
- Provide guidance for staff working with and supporting children's prosocial development and resilience.
- Raise awareness in educational settings about what support is available locally in responding to children whose prosocial development has been compromised, or whose lack of resilience in facing challenges threatens their wellbeing and mental health.
- Help senior leaders within schools consider how to support staff who work with pupils, who lack resilience or possess poorly developed prosocial skills, ensuring that they are able to manage the feelings this work evokes.

The information contained within these pages has been put together at the request of the Cornwall children and young people's mental health implementation board. The guidance recognises the growing number of children in Cornwall and the Isles of Scilly, who need support and help in promoting their resilience and prosocial development. Teachers have described the difficulties they face in working with children and young people in schools who find it difficult to delay gratification, follow instructions, manage frustration, regulate their emotions (anxiety, shames, grief or rage) or work and play in healthy and co-operative ways with other children.

The guidance also acknowledges the work of public health in promoting resilience in children. The guidance supports the principles and information underpinning the work of local initiatives, including Trauma Informed Schools (TIS) and the work of Headstart Kernow. The guidance supports the local transformation plan for children and young people's mental health services document, which is called Turning the Tide, and the really valuable work that is already taking place across the county through the I-Thrive framework, developed by the Anna Freud Centre to improve children's mental health services.

The information and suggestions within this guidance will support and complement the policies and practices within your school, in relation to Safeguarding and working with children and young people with emotional, psychological and mental health problems.

What are prosocial skills?

Humans are social beings. We are predisposed to reach out and connect with others in loving and playful ways; however, we require sensitive and attuned responses and interactions to facilitate the development of social and emotional skills (process referred to as "serve and return").

Prosocial skills refer to all the skills that we call upon to promote healthy social connections and interactions with others. They are the skills we use to relate to others in helpful and caring ways. They represent the cornerstone of our capacity to share, help, comfort and support others. They include our ability to be calm; to notice the feelings of others; to listen; to take turns; to feel and convey concern for others; to have empathy; to put the needs of others above our own needs when required to do so. Children from all cultures have the same forms of prosocial behaviours.

Prosocial behaviours begin to develop from the beginning of life and become more elaborate over time. From birth, infants are interested in others, show concern, can turn take, find joy in interactions, show the beginnings of attunement and synchronicity of actions –especially when cared for in warm, loving and attuned relationships. Infants prefer the human voice (of particular pitch and timbre) to all other sounds; prefer the human smiling face to all visual stimulation; and particularly enjoy warm eye contact. The roots of the capacity in children to want to connect with others in loving, helpful, empathic and concerned ways is the experience of being understood, held, calmed, nurtured and attended to with empathy and attunement. It is this experience rather than formal lessons, that supports the early development of prosocial skills and resilience.

Children who start school lacking age appropriate prosocial skills are likely to find many aspects of learning and relationship building at school challenging. They are likely to need school-based strategies to support their prosocial development and resilience.

Early social and emotional development

Early nurturing interactions are vital for all aspects of development –including brain, emotional, social and cognitive development. During the past 30 years there has been a revolution in the neuroscience underpinning our understanding of healthy brain development supporting emotional wellbeing and mental health in very young children.

> "The way we communicate with children has a profound impact on how they develop. Our ability to have sensitive, reciprocal communication nurtures a child's sense of security, and these trusting relationships help children do well in many areas of their lives. Children who have positive connections in life have a source of resilience for dealing with life's challenges."
> Siegel, 2004[1]

Neuro-science of infant and early childhood social and emotional development

Early brain development

Brains are built over time, from the bottom up. Early relationships affect the quality of the architecture of the brain by establishing either a sturdy or more fragile foundation for learning, physical and emotional health and wellbeing, and the quality of relationships. Early brain development (the development and elaboration of neural pathways and connections) is stimulated in the context of loving, attuned and playful responses and interactions in safe and responsive home environments.

Importance of serve and return relationships and social brain

The human brain is a social brain. It does not exist in isolation, it connects with other brains through mirror neurons. A major ingredient in the development of the architecture of the brain and social and emotional skills is the serve and return relationship between infant or young child and parent or carer. Young children naturally reach out for interaction through babbling, facial expressions, gestures and crying. Adults respond in attuned ways with the same kind of vocalising and gesturing back at them. The process is supported by mirror neurons. In the absence of these attuned responses or if the responses are unreliable or inappropriate, the development of brain architecture and social connectedness are compromised.

Flexibility of brain decreases with age

The brain is most flexible early in life to accommodate a wide variety of interactions and stimulation. Early plasticity of the brain's development means it is easier and more effective to support the young child's developing brain architecture, than to rewire its circuitry later in life.

Cognitive, emotional and social abilities are inextricably linked throughout life

Brain functions operate in a richly co-ordinated fashion. Emotional wellbeing and social competence provide a strong foundation for emerging cognitive abilities. The emotional and physical health, social skills and cognitive-language skills that emerge in early life are all important prerequisites for success in school and later in the workplace and the community.

Toxic stress damages developing brain architecture

Scientists now know that chronic, unrelenting stress in early childhood is toxic to the developing brain, and impedes all aspect of social, emotional and cognitive development in childhood. The stresses that children may experience are described in the adverse childhood experiences research (ACES), and include harm, abuse, neglect, trauma, domestic violence and conflict, parental separation and bereavement. The impact of toxic stress can be moderated by the buffering effect of the support and help of trusted, emotionally available adults.

Prosocial development

Early prosocial development during infancy

The roots of prosocial development are established during infancy. Infants are dependent upon adults (who provide a secure base) for safe, reliable, attuned interactions to support social, emotional and cognitive development. The importance of the secure base cannot be overstated. It is a vital refuge when a child is distressed, and a secure base to support exploration and discovery. A parent or carer thinks for the infant by attunement and taking actions, which calm, soothe, understand and attend to infant's needs.

Inter-subjectivity is a vital component of prosocial development. This refers to the way in which the adult conveys to the child recognition of their mind and actions, and the child then responds to the adult's expressions and actions. This takes place in rewarding and enjoyable cycle of events. These cycles of interaction are referred to as serve and return interactions. There is a growing sense of mutual recognition and concern between infant and carers.

Infants are not able to calm and sooth themselves when distressed. They rely on their carers to recognise their distress and calm them in reliable ways. Over time and with consistency, the young child can begin to calm themselves with the support of adults (co-regulation). The importance of the role of emotion regulation in prosocial development and resilience cannot be overstated.

During early childhood, parents help young children focus, for example on games and puzzles. This is referred to as co-focusing (joint attention) – it supports the child to overcome frustrations and manage their distractibility. These focusing skills are vital in later learning. Without this vital support, children may remain distractible, shifting attention as they experience frustration, associated with later attention deficits.

Prosocial development in middle childhood years

Self-calming skills become more important in middle childhood years (between 3 and 10 years old), but children will continue to need support of trusted adults to regulate their emotions (co-regulation) at stressful and challenging times. Children with compromised history, who have not experienced secure, safe and nurturing relationships, struggle to regulate their emotions.

Important developments in how language is used during this period. There is a gradual shift from using language to keep safe or get what is needed to prioritising truth. This requires fair and trusted adults, who explain why truth is an important part of trust, to help children manage this shift. Children who have experienced harm, conflict, and trauma may live under cloud of shame and may use language to relieve this burden. They may continue to use language to:

- keep themselves safe
- get something attended to
- get something understood (including feelings that are hard to name)
- create a more palatable narrative about themselves
- or simply to shore up self-esteem

Sharing and co-operating with groups further develop during this phase. Some children need help to see that sharing is about fairness for all, and that co-operating with others is about all having fun (and not just about winning and losing). It requires the adults to be fair to all children. Children with a history of harm or trauma are likely to need help with this (they may fear that they will not get their fair share).

Children are increasingly able at this stage to manage frustrations, disappointments and control impulses. However, children with compromised histories may need help in managing their angry feelings, disappointments and frustrations. They may need help in making sense of these feelings, the triggers of these feelings, and how to manage them in healthy ways, to support positive relationships.

Children are increasingly able to understand that others may see things differently from them, and have different points of view. They are also increasingly able to understand the feelings of others and have empathic concern for them. However, empathy is not developmentally certain. Children with compromised histories need support to be aware of the viewpoint and feelings of other children.

Prosocial development in the teenage years

Adolescence is a period of significant brain growth. Brain development takes place in uneven ways during this period. The amygdala (involved in the processing of emotions) grows at a faster rate than the prefrontal cortex. There is a mismatch between the cognitive and emotional regulatory modes –this means that teenagers are left with powerful and volatile emotions unmatched by reflective and regulatory functions. Regulation of emotions becomes more challenging during teenage years.

During adolescence there is a dip in social cognition; this results in teenagers finding it harder to recognise facial expressions and the feelings of others or take the perspective of others (to step into the shoes of others). Younger teenagers rely more heavily upon their 'gut' reactions, rather than reasoning and reflection.

Adolescents become more independent of early family ties, and develop stronger peer relationships to support this, giving a sense of belonging. This can be challenging, but particularly so for those with early compromised experiences (when early fault lines re-emerge).

Adolescents may find it challenging to find a new and secure sense of identity and value system, whist managing shifting relationships with adults and figures of authority. They may become more rebellious.

During adolescence, especially later adolescent years, young people may become interested in fairness, equality and the rights of people –in local, national and international ways. They are capable of acts of great altruism, and may stand up for the rights of others. They may do this by joining in protest movements, or movements concerned with the wellbeing of others, the environment and animal kingdom.

Responding in prosocial ways

Children who respond in prosocial ways are able to:

- identify, understand and regulate their emotions
- be aware of viewpoint and feelings of others
- recognise others' feelings and have empathy for them
- manage disappointment and frustration and delay gratification when required to do so
- share, co-operate with, and help other children
- take turns and follow instructions
- put the needs of others first when required to do so
- reflect upon feelings, friendships and situations
- develop skills to manage conflict and differences in relationships
- respond flexibly to changing circumstances
- enjoy exploration and tolerate not knowing as part of discovery and the process of learning
- develop and enjoy positive relationship with peers and teachers
- develop good coping, problem solving and life skills
- have a capacity for thinking and reflection

Prosocial development factors

Research evidence[2] stated that prosocial development is positively linked to the following factors:

1. Secure attachment to parents; who themselves have secure attachment history.
2. Authoritative not authoritarian parents, carers or teachers.
3. Parents, carers or teachers who avoid strict punishment but instead rely on gentle, firm and reasoned control.
4. Parents, carers or teachers who offer reasoning and explanations to family and school decisions and holding boundaries.
5. Parents, carers or teachers who are sensitive and warm to children and support reflection, reasoning and thinking.
6. Parents, carers or teachers who support the regulations of emotions.
7. Parents, carers or teachers who can see the world from child's viewpoint; convey understanding and acceptance of their experience.
8. Parents, carers or teachers who are well attuned to children.

How to promote prosocial development in children

- Don't use rewards and consequences to promote prosocial values and behaviour; see them as good in their own right.
- Be aware of child's capacity for empathy and sympathy.
- Heighten the child's awareness of the emotions of others.
- Point out consequences of actions and the impact on others.
- Be supportive and sensitive to the child's needs.
- Support child's skill to manage and regulate their own emotions.
- Support coping and problem solving skills.
- Minimise punishment; maximise support and encouragement.
- Support opportunities to give and support others, and contribute to community wellbeing.
- Help children develop a sense of themselves as prosocial: kind, helpful, thoughtful children, able to share and take turns.

What is resilience in children?

Resilience in children refers to their capacity to adapt well to adversity, threats and challenges, and maintain a sense of hope and optimism. Put simply, it refers to the ability to be OK in the face of challenges or hardships. It is not an inherent characteristic of a child, but something that is embedded in relationships. Just like the development of prosocial skills, the recurrent theme in resilience research is the child's helpful connections with supportive people.

> "The single most common factor for children who develop resilience is at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive parent, caregiver, or other adult. These relationships provide the personalised responsiveness, scaffolding, and protection that buffer children from developmental disruption. They also build key capacities – such as the ability to plan, monitor and regulate feelings and behaviour – that enable children to respond adaptively to adversity and thrive. This combination of supportive relationships, adaptive skill building, and positive experiences is the foundation of resilience."
> Harvard Child Development Centre

Resilience is built over time, in the context of loving and supportive relationships. It can be seen in terms of the child's ability to keep in balance the contradictory forces of stress (including adversity or challenge) and protective factors (including supportive relationships with trusted adults, and coping with the challenges), whilst remaining hopeful and optimistic.

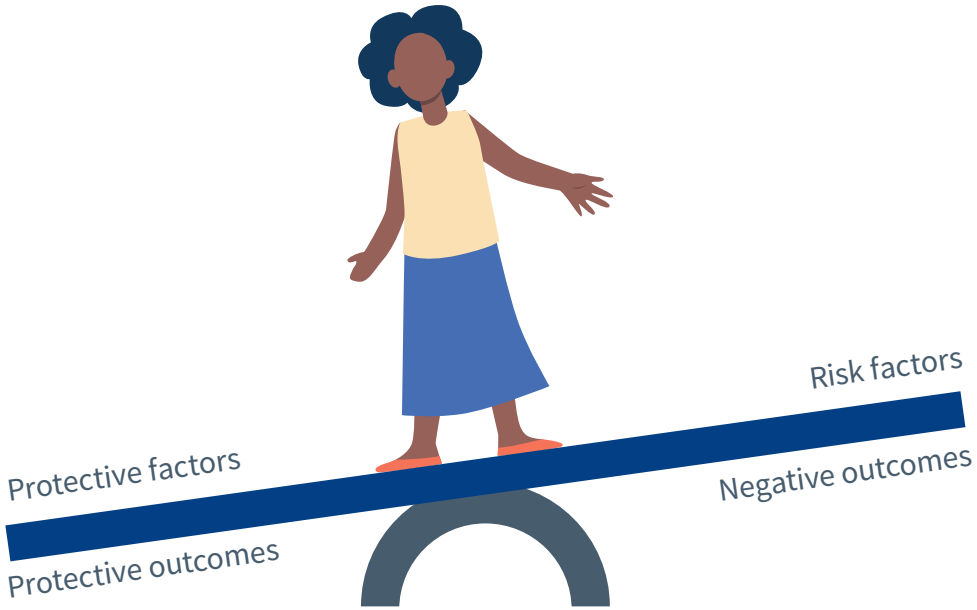
Fortunately, most of us have powerful stress-protecting shields in the form of protective carers, families, friends and trusted adults. Stable and responsive relationships in early life help protect children from the potential harm that excessive stress can cause; and throughout life they provide the buffering and hope that are necessary for resilience.

In order to support children's prosocial development and resilience, the adults around them, at home and at school, need to call upon their calm problem solving and self-regulating skills. During challenging times, it is vital to ensure that adults have enough support to face challenges and process their own experiences. Supportive, trusting relationships are also at the heart of adults' capacity to manage challenges, as well as have the resources to support the children around them.

Resilience can be understood in terms of the child's capacity, with the support of loving, safe, reliable and supportive adults, to find balance between positive and supportive factors and adverse ones.

Protective factors and skills that support resilience in children

- Strong, loving, supportive emotional connections and relationships; a safe and stable environment, where stress is reduced
- Ability to trust helpful adults and seek support when needed; a safe harbour when challenges feel too great.
- Access to adults who model and promote resilience including a calm and flexible, problem solving approach.
- A sense of self-efficacy and control; having problem solving and life skills and capacity for reflection.
- Capacity to name, regulate and manage emotions (with the help and support of trusted adults).
- Capacity to have a go, even if this risks not getting it right initially (with help of trusted adults).
- Capacity to embrace new experiences in flexible ways; opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills (with support).
- Possess a range of coping skills, be realistic and able to set goals and targets that can be met.
- Capacity to be hopeful and see the bright side of things –optimism and resilience go hand in hand.
- See wonder in the natural world and enjoy being outdoors, including being active outdoors.



Protective factors:
- warm supportive parenting
- coping skills
- stable environment
- positive experiences

Risk factors
- adversities

Risk and adversity

Adversity includes challenges that threaten to overwhelm the child; they include:

- bullying
- exam pressures
- health threats to the child or family or friends
- environmental threats and disasters; threats to public health and wellbeing
- threats to family wellbeing including economic threats and displacement

It also includes adverse childhood experiences (ACES)[3]. There are a number of factors that have adverse effects upon children - these include:

- physical, emotional and sexual harm to children
- trauma
- parental conflict and domestic violence
- parental drug and alcohol misuse; parental mental health problems
- marked poverty and deprivation
- bereavement or parental separation

With 3 or more ACES children are:

- 3 times as likely to experience academic failure
- 5 times more likely to have attendance problems at school
- 6 times as likely to have behavioural problems

With 4 Aces or more ACES:

- over 50% had learning problems
- 32 times more likely to have behavioural problems (in comparison with a child with no ACES)

The neuroscience of stress explains why harm and significant threats can lead to biological disruptions that can have lasting impact, unless protective factors mitigate the impact. Some degree of manageable challenge can be good for children, but extensive stress that continues over time, and which cannot be managed, is toxic to the architecture of the child's developing brain. It also compromises resilience and the development of prosocial skills.

Research indicates that protective factors can ensure that children overcome adversity. 6 decades of research conclude that children's resilience depends more upon their supportive connections with caring adults than their own inherent qualities.

Protective factors in resilience

Community factors

- Supportive and loving extended family members, friends and neighbours.
- Living in a safe neighbourhood.
- Family connected in supportive ways to local community.
- Strong supportive local connections.
- Feeling part of supportive groups and activities in local community.
- Safe school environment.
- Positive and supportive relationship with school.
- Availability of trusted, emotionally available adults in school and other community settings.
- Not overwhelmed by poverty, exclusion, deprivation or prejudice.
- Access to the natural world, the outdoors and outdoor activities.

Individual factors

- Emotion regulation.
- Self-esteem and self-efficacy.
- Empathy.
- Social and communication skills.
- Effective life and coping skills.
- Ability to set realistic goals.
- Realistic appraisal of challenges.
- Ability to reflect upon self and events.
- Sense of humour and optimism.
- Ability to name and describe feelings.
- Perception that one has some control and influence over life.
- Ability to trust emotionally available adults.
- Ability to access safe harbour when needed.
- Ability to seek help and comfort from others when needed.

Family factors

- Warm, loving, attuned and supportive parents and carers.
- Low levels of family stress and stable family environment.
- Parents or carers who support emotion regulation, can prioritise the needs of children and can delay gratification, manage disappointment and frustration.
- Families that can reflect upon themselves and events.
- Families who hold boundaries in firm, but loving ways (authoritative parenting) and are able to offer explanations for actions and decisions.
- Absence of high risk factors such as domestic violence; drug and alcohol misuse; parental poor mental health; harm to children; trauma.

Resilient children are able to:

- Seek help and support from trusted adults when needed.
- Describe, understand and regulate their emotions (with help when needed).
- Manage challenges, frustration and disappointment.
- Be persistent especially in the face of obstacles.
- Meet the challenges of learning, playing and relationships.
- Problem solve and take actions to deal with the challenges.
- Know when to stop, rest and replenish resources.
- Have a sense of independence, self-efficacy, and worth.
- Form and enjoy positive relationships.
- Have a sense of purpose and goals.
- Be hopeful and optimistic (have a belief that things will turn out alright).
- Feel gratitude about the good things in life and supportive relationships.

Building resilience

Resilient relationships and resilience in children develop from the beginning of life –and continue to develop throughout childhood (and life).

Family relationships, extended families, the local community, and school staff all play a key role in supporting resilience in children. They do this in part by the quality of their relationships with children, but also by the support they give in helping children develop self-regulating skills, problem solving and coping skills, and an optimistic outlook. They also do so by providing a 'safe haven' when required.

How to build resilience in children

- Build strong emotional, social connections and attunement.
- Develop facilitating relationship to support children's problem solving, flexibility and a sense of self-efficacy.
- Help children to identify, describe and regulate their emotions; help children reflect upon emotions and situations.
- Support children's growing independence, self efficacy and problem solving.
- Build children's confidence by taking on manageable challenges.
- Promote optimism, playfulness and seeing the lighter side of things.
- Promote and demonstrate coping skills. Give children ideas of how to cope with challenges; model coping with challenges.
- Help children face disappointments, frustrations and delay gratification, when required to do so.
- Make sure children get enough sleep, plenty of outside exercise and a chance to connect with the outside natural world.

Connect before you correct[4]. It is helpful to children to connect with them, name their struggles before correcting them. This is less shaming and improves connection and understanding of struggles.

You can also help children to enjoy the process of discovery and learning, rather than focus on getting the answers right. This helps children understand that making errors is part of the process of discovery and learning

Why some children lack resilient responses and prosocial skills

Factors that compromise resilience and prosocial development in children

- Early challenges, for example health threats to child or family member; bereavement or parental divorce or separation.
- Early experiences of harm, abuse, trauma, domestic violence, family conflict.
- Parental mental health problems; parental drug and alcohol misuse.
- Lack of parental support in identifying, calming and regulating emotions such as distress, anxiety, rage, sadness and grief.
- Lack of parental support in developing social understanding and social skills, coping and problem solving skills.
- Lack of parental help in prioritising truth in communication.
- Deficits in play and educational opportunities for social understanding and coping and life skills development.
- Poverty; deprivation; disadvantage or inequality.
- Prejudice; bullying or discrimination.
- Cultural and social values, which do not support prosocial development and may actively undermine development of resilience.

Spotting the warning signs of lack of prosocial skills and resilient responses

- Frequent dysregulated emotional states, including rage, distress, sadness, anxiety and fear.
- Struggles with friendships and relationships; frequent conflict or isolated.
- Difficulty in managing frustration and disappointment.
- Difficulty in trusting other children and the adults in school; difficulty in accessing safe havens.
- Uses language in less mature and defensive ways to shore up low self-esteem and anxiety; difficulty in prioritising truth.
- Difficulty in sharing and turn taking.
- Struggles to engage with the process of learning, for example fear of getting things wrong; can't tolerate not knowing; lacks flexibility.
- Easily overwhelmed with feelings of shame, for example fear of getting it wrong in front of others in the class.
- Marked difficulties in organising work and planning.
- Highly distractible and finds it very hard to concentrate or stay on task without much help and support.

The impact of poorly developed prosocial skills on resilience in children

Development area	Impact of compromised development
Emotional development	• Poor emotion identification and regulation and frequent dysregulated and distressed states. • Difficulty in connecting with feelings, naming them, understanding and reflecting on them. • Difficulty in managing disappointment and frustration; overwhelmed when things go wrong. • Experiencing high levels of negative emotions, for example shame, rage, fear, grief, sadness and anxiety. • Readily overwhelmed by hurdles and challenges; unable or unwilling to face manageable challenges.
Social development	• Insecure attachment strategies (avoidant or ambivalent). • More volatile relationships; disconnected; lonely; lack of friends. • Preoccupied with a sense of injustice and unfairness. • Friendships problems; difficulty in sharing and turn taking. • Not able to trust or seek help from adults. • Difficulty in seeing things from other points of view. • Poor capacity for empathic understanding; impaired sense of concern for others. • Not able to trust others enough to prioritise truth telling; difficulty in respecting the belongings of others. • Harm to self or others; conflict with others; damage to property.
Cognitive and educational development	• Impaired capacity for thinking, reflection. • Concentration and organisational difficulties. • Difficulty in persisting in face of challenges and staying on task. • Difficulty in initiating work and working on one's own. • Fear of not knowing, and taking risks in learning, which comprises trying new things. • Fear of not getting things right or making mistakes, which compromises learning. • Failing to connect with the process of learning. • Limited coping and problem solving skills; lack of flexibility.

Supporting vulnerable children using PACE approach

The PACE approach is an evidence-based reparative approach to support vulnerable children. The PACE approach helps children to connect with trusted adults and other children in healthy and supportive ways. It enables adults to support children to regulate and reflect upon their emotions, develop social awareness and understanding and promote healthy life and problem solving skills.

The PACE framework stresses the importance of avoiding approaches, which lead children to experience debilitating shame. The PACE approach mirrors key elements of early relationships (and therapeutic ones), by emphasising attunement, intersubjectivity, calming and emotion regulation through an approach, which draws upon:

- playfulness
- acceptance
- curiosity
- empathy

Playfulness and joy are at the heart of all healthy relationships. Acceptance is achieved by recognising the nature of the child's struggles and accepting their difficulties, as key step in supporting them. Curiosity is a state of mind, which conveys an interest in and a desire to connect with the child's struggles. Empathy underpins the quality of connection with the child.

The PACE approach underscores the importance of connecting with the child, seeing their struggles from their point of view, and conveying that something is understood and will be attended to as vital ways of supporting resilience and self-esteem.

What do you notice	What can you do?
Child becomes distressed, worried or angry in the face of everyday social and learning challenges at school	• Be a trusted adult –in this way the child has a 'secure base' to go to when distressed. • Tune into child's struggles, name them, as first step to convey understanding. • Support emotion regulation by being calm and helping child to become calmer (co-regulation). • Help the child make sense of feelings; notice and describe the struggles for the child. • Help child to reflect on themselves, situations and relationships when they are calmer. • Support coping and problem solving skills; encourage flexibility. • Be aware child may be overwhelmed by feelings of shame when struggling with learning. • When child fears not knowing, or getting it wrong, focus on the process of learning and how that can be enjoyed. Help the child see that 'not knowing' is simply part of discovery and learning.
Child struggles to manage friendships or working with children at school	• Name and describe the child's struggles in empathic ways. • Help child work with other children, for example plan activities that require children to share with each other and help each other to reach a common goal (an example could be a treasure hunt) • When child struggles to manage conflict, help the child to see things from other points of view; help the child understand how our actions affect other people. • Help children understand how others feel . For example do you know why that boy is crying? What has happened? How would you feel if this happened to you? What would make him feel better? • Praise child when helpful, share, take turns and listen to others; convey he or she is a kind child.
Child who normally struggles manages social or learning situation well	• Notice and praise children when they do something kind and helpful to others. • Help them to see how their actions helped other children. • Notice and praise when children share, taker turns, and listen to others. • Notice and praise when children show concern for others and stand up for them. • Remind children when they do something kind and helpful, it is because they are kind and helpful children (so that it becomes part of who they are). • Encourage children to be helpful without tangible rewards for this. In this way we encourage that kindness and helpfulness are just good in their own right.

Promoting resilience in schools

Do

- Differentiate support for children who lack resilience and prosocial skills.
- Recognise child may have limited prosocial skills, low self esteem and resilience and may need help to develop them.
- Support child to play and work with other children with turn taking skills and sharing.
- Be calm, notice and name the child's difficulties.
- Help child put their struggles into words, by noticing their struggles and describing them.
- Help the child make connections - "I notice when x happens you get cross".
- Support coping and problem solving.
- Help child become or stay calm, using co-regulation skills - they can think and reflect when they are calm.
- Connect with the child and convey struggles are understood, before correcting - connect before correct.
- Set manageable challenges - use scaffolding to support learning; have realistic expectations (learning and social) child may feel shame if facing tasks they fear they can't do.
- Help children have a go.
- Routines help child's world feels predictable and safe.
- Recognise the child's strengths; make sure there are opportunities for praise and having fun.
- Make sure there are opportunities to be active and connect with the outside and natural world.

Don't

- Expect child to manage things (social and learning), which they fear are beyond them –debilitating shame is a common emotion among children who lack resilience.
- Focus on bad behaviour, rather than the feelings and relationship that underpin the child's struggles.
- Ask children 'why did you do that', when they are struggling, because children are likely to become defensive or simply say 'don't know'. Instead help describe their struggle.
- Point out the child's mistakes in front of other children if avoidable (this increases anxiety and shame).
- Insist a child looks at you when correcting mistakes (mirror neurons enhance sense of failure and shame).
- Assume child is resilient or can manage tasks normally expected of age group (child may lack resilience or have marked pockets of immature prosocial development).
- Assume child possesses age appropriate social skills, for example understand the importance of using language to convey truth or the ability to see the point of view of others, as they may have experienced early compromised development in these areas.

Possible conversation prompts and helpful things to say

Notice a child is struggling to get on with other children

- I noticed when you were with (another child) you got cross and argued.
- I know sometimes things feel unfair. I can help you calm down then you can tell me what was hard?
- Shall we work out together what we can do to sort things out?
- I know sometimes it is hard to wait your turn, if it feels you never get your turn.
- I wonder what it was like for them?
- Perhaps you can play with…. Because I have noticed sometimes you play happily together.
- Shall we think together about what went wrong so we can find a way forward?

Child becomes very dysregulated (distressed; angry or anxious)

- Oh my goodness I can see you are really (upset, angry or worried), that must be hard for you.
- No wonder you got upset, it's hard for you to manage.
- I understand that is what you find really hard.
- I have noticed it is very hard for you when (...) happens. It leads you to feel very upset (angry or worried).
- Let us try and calm down together first, and then we can work out what happened and try together to sort it out
- Let's think together about what we can do to sort things out…..Shall we try this…? (make suggestions), it usually helps you to calm down.
- Help me understand from your point of view, once you feel calmer.
- Lets try and work out how to sort things out. I am here to be alongside you and will help sort it out

Child who struggles with relationships is helpful

- I noticed how helpful you were to (name), well done you! You are a helpful and kind child.
- I noticed that you listened to (name child) when she was having difficulty, and then you helped her sort it out. Well done!
- I noticed that you shared with the other children what you had, well done, because I know that isn't easy, when you fear you haven't got enough.
- I noticed when you were able to let others go first, you are getting so good at waiting now. Well done!

Child really struggles to engage with learning task

"I noticed that when you do (name the task), and you find it hard, you get cross and want to give up. Can I help you work it out? Sometimes not understanding something is just the first step in finding out more –especially if I help you work it out."

"Sometimes we think we are the only ones who don't know how to do something, and that makes us feel not good about ourselves, but most people don't know when they start –but they like finding out, so they get help and work it out –and that can be interesting and even fun!"

Supporting coping and problem solving strategies

"I noticed that when you couldn't work out the problem, you got really cross, and starting interfering with other children's work. I understand it is hard when you think you can't do the work. Let's try and sort it out together…can you try doing it this way or this way? Does that help?"

"It helps when sorting things out to be calm first –we think better. Let's do this first to calm down, and then we will sort things out."

"Last time this was hard you did this (name it) and it helped –maybe try that again?"

"When we can't see a way of sorting something, sometimes it helps to think of as many solutions as possible –shall we try that? Can you write a list of possible ways to manage this? Then we can try them out?"

Speaking with parents

"I have noticed your sondaughter struggles with learning –when he/she thinks they can't do it. It makes them distressed or cross and they want to give up. I have tried this way forward and it helps. Maybe try it at home too."

"At school we are helping children develop their social skills and understanding. I have an advice leaflet, would you like it to understand how we do this at school, and how you can support at home?"

"I have noticed in some settings your child really struggles. This is what we are doing to support that. Here is our advice leaflet, so you know how we are doing this. You might find it helpful at home too?"

Ongoing support

"I noticed that you find some things at school difficult (name them). I will be alongside you and help you manage these. We will work out ways together to help you stay calm and work out how to sort things out. We can more support, if we think that will be helpful."

Things to remember

It might be easy to imagine that it takes something extraordinary to thrive against the odds. But in reality, what we need to build resilience is everyday loving connections, attunement and support from caring adults.

Resilience, far from being exceptional, is common among children and families. Ann Masters[5] referred to this finding as, “the ordinary magic of resilience”.

Human brains are malleable; this malleability is greatest in early childhood. So the earlier we start strengthening the child’s prosocial skills and ability to cope with challenges the better. It is possible to do this as we get older, but it is more difficult.

Human resilience is an ongoing process supported by supportive relationships; it is neither a fixed point nor inherent quality.

Learning to cope with manageable challenges and threats to our wellbeing is critical for the development of resilience.

Resilience can fluctuate over time and different circumstances; a child may struggle in one domain but adapt well in others. Children may be more or less resilient at different points in time.

I-Thrive framework pathways of care and support

The I-Thrive framework supports mental health pathways across all levels of care, support and treatment. From the provision of advice and guidance (getting advice and guidance), to early intervention in schools and community (getting help), to highly specialist CAMHS (getting more help) and managing risk across all agencies of care and support (managing risk and crises). This includes Headstart Kernow, Trauma Informed Schools, educational psychology services, video interaction guidance; MHSTs, school nurses and many third Sector agencies, such as Young People Cornwall; Penhaligon's Friends; Forest School; CLEAR; and the WAVE Project. Support in schools or in the community can be accessed via the early help hub or Bloom. BLOOM mental health networks across the county provide advice and guidance for schools and other agencies and support onward referral to CAMHS and other agencies when appropriate. CAPS and MHSTs provide strong links between schools and CAMHS.

- Access to advice and guidance on websites.
- Educational psychology telephone helplines.
- Headstart and Trauma Informed Schools advice.
- Local help advice and phone helplines: Young People Cornwall, parent carer and domestic violence.
- Public health advice.

- Educational psychology, Headstart and Trauma Informed Schools support.
- IAPT, MHST and council psychology and therapy services
- Local BLOOM.
- Primary mental health.
- Video interaction guidance.
- Voluntary sector.

- Agencies working together to identify and manage risks.
- Develop safety planning and share intelligence (safeguarding).
- MARU for safeguarding concerns.
- Proactively identify hidden risks for vulnerable children and families.
- Social care, health, education, drug and alcohol services and domestic violence services to work together.

- CAPS.
- In-patient CAMHS.
- Specialist CAMHS and council psychology and therapy services.

References and information

References

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2. Eisenberg, N. 1989: The roots of prosocial behaviour in children
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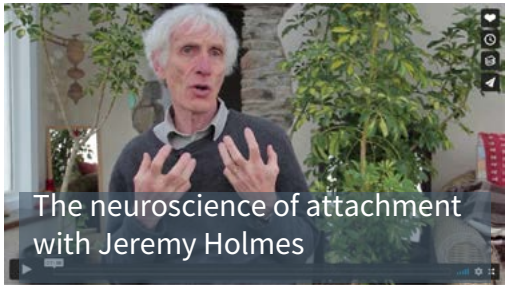
4. Hughes, D. 2017: Building the bonds of attachment: Awakening love in deeply troubled children (3rd edition)
5. Masters, A (2001) Ordinary Magic: Resilience Processes

Videos



Useful websites

- Mind Your Way
- Young People Cornwall
- Headstart Kernow: Very helpful information on building emotional resilience for parents, carers and young people.
- Trauma Informed Schools: Very useful website full of very helpful information and background.
- Anna Freud Centre: Very useful resources to support children's wellbeing and resilience.
- Harvard Child Development Centre: Very useful website full of helpful videos and information sheets.
- Young Minds: Very useful information cite with helpful information for parents and children on building resilience.
- Bright Horizons: Useful information and resources about resilience in children.
- Child and adolescent mental health information services: Helpful information on raising resilient children.
- National Child Traumatic Stress Network: Helpful information on resilience in children.
- Partnership for Children: Provides lots of resources on activities supporting resilience building in children.
- Parent Zone: Lots of resources for parents and carers to support resilience in children.
- PACE website: Helpful website to understand the PACE approach.

Appendix 1: PACE model

What is PACE?

PACE is a way of thinking, feeling, communicating and behaving that aims to make the child feel safe. It is based upon how parents connect with their very young infants. As with young toddlers, when children feel safe they can begin to explore, learn and develop new relationships. With PACE, the troubled child can start to look at himself and let others start to see him, or get closer emotionally. He can start to trust.

Playfulness

A playful, warm and spontaneous way of interacting with the child to support them to feel safe with you and promote trust.

When children are connected with you in this way, they are freer to open up, laugh, play, and share their true feelings with you. It is about creating an atmosphere of lightness and interest when you communicate. It means learning how to use a light tone with your voice, like you might use when story telling, rather than an irritated or lecturing tone. It's about having fun, and expressing a sense of joy. It is similar to parent-infant interactions when both parent and infant are delighting in being with each other and getting to know each other. Both are feeling safe and relaxed. Neither feels judged nor criticised.

Having a playful stance isn't about being funny or making joke, it is about helping children be more open to and experience what is positive and playful in their life.

A troubled child may have given up on the idea of having good times and doesn't want to experience and share fun or enjoyment. A playful stance can allow closeness but without the scary parts.

Playfulness allows children to cope with positive feelings. It also gives hope. If you can help the child discover his own emerging sense of humour, this can help him wonder a little more about his life and why he behaves in the ways that he does. When children laugh, they become less defensive or withdrawn and more reflective. A playful stance adds elements of fun and enjoyment in day-to-day life and can also diffuse a tense situation.

Acceptance

This refers to the importance of accepting the child's intentions, thoughts, feelings and inner life, without judgment or criticism. As a result, the child builds trust that you will never be shaming or critical. It includes acknowledging the feelings fuelling the child's presenting behaviour (you can be firm on behaviour while at the same time accepting the feelings that triggered the behaviour).

Acceptance is at the core of the child's sense of safety. Acceptance is about actively communicating to the child that you accept the wishes, feelings, thoughts, urges, motives and perceptions that are underneath the outward behaviour. It is about accepting, without judgment or evaluation, her inner life. The child's inner life simply is; it is not right or wrong. Accepting the child's intentions does not imply accepting behaviour, which may be hurtful or harmful to another person or to self.

Curiosity

Curiosity, without judgment, is how we help children become aware of their inner life, reflect upon the reasons for their behaviour, and then communicate these reasons to others. Curiosity is wondering about the meaning behind the behaviour for the child.

Curiosity lets the child know that the adults want to understand. Children often know that their behaviour is not appropriate, but may not understand why they did things, or are reluctant to talk about the reasons. With curiosity the adults convey their intention to understand why and to help the child with that understanding. The adult's intention is to connect with and understand the child, not to lecture or convey that the child's inner life is wrong in some way. Curiosity involves a quiet, accepting tone that conveys the desire to understand the child:

- "What do you think was going on?
- What do you think that was about?"
- "I wonder what…?"

You say this without anticipating an answer or response from a child. This is different from asking the child, "Why did you do that?" with the expectation of a reply. It is not interpretation or fact gathering –you are not a detective; it's just about getting to know the child and letting her know that. Being curious can, for example, include an attitude of being sad, rather than angry, when the child makes a mistake.

A light, curious tone and stance can connect with a child in a way that judgement cannot. It may be helpful to make informed guesses about what the child is struggling with or feeling, as this helps the child put things into words –if you do this it is important to check with the child that your guess feels right, or let you know if you have missed something. Curiosity lets the child stay open and engaged in conversations, and enables them to reflect upon their own inner life. It is a key way that we connect with children.

Empathy

This refers to the adult's capacity to connect with the emotions of the child, and finding words to convey that understanding to the child. Empathy conveys to the child that s/he is no longer alone with her painful feelings and stories of distress. Empathy lets the child feel the adult's compassion for her. It represents the adult's willingness and ability to connect with the child's feelings, and convey to the child an understanding of how hard things are for the child. In this way the adult communicates that the child is not alone with difficult feelings. The adult is also communicating strength, care and commitment that sharing the child's distress will not be too much.

The impact of communication using the principles of PACE

PACE focuses on the whole child, not simply the behaviour. It helps children to be more secure with adults and reflect upon themselves, their thoughts, feelings and behaviour, building the skills that are so necessary for maintaining a successful and satisfying life. The child discovers that they are doing the best that they can, and are not bad or lazy or selfish.

Through PACE, children can feel safer, and then are freer to explore and discover. They learn to trust adults more, and that adults can provide a safe harbour when they are distressed. When children experience adults doing the best they can to understand them, they feel connected and safe. This frees them up to explore with adults their feelings, thoughts and behaviours, and with them work out new and healthier ways of relating to others, problem solving and learning. For adults, using the PACE approach most of the time can reduce the level of conflict, defensiveness and withdrawal that tends to be present in the lives of troubled children. Using PACE enables the adult to see the strengths and positive features that lie underneath more negative and challenging behaviour. It promotes a more compassionate approach to vulnerable children, who challenge us.

Appendix 2: Parents help sheet

Paying attention to	What can be done?
The different ways you can promote your child's empathy and prosocial behaviours	• Be a good role model and show a range of prosocial behaviours, such as sharing; helping; showing kindness; offering comfort; turn taking; showing fairness. • Express warmth sensitivity and kindness to you child. • Help you child identify how they are feeling and how other children are feeling in everyday situations or in storybooks and films: How do you think that child is feeling? How would you feel if this happened to you? What could you do to make her feel better?. • Help your child become aware of situations where they could help other children.
Help your child take part in events that support prosocial behaviour	• Help the children in your family to share with each other and see things from each other's point of view. Give child opportunities to support local community and give to others. • Plan activities that ask your child to share with other children so that they can achieve a common goal, or where playing together makes the play more enjoyable and fun. • Help your child resolve conflict when it occurs when playing with other children. Help them see things from everybody's point of view; help child understand the impact of actions on other children, as well as understanding the impact of children's actions on their feelings.
How you can support prosocial behaviours	• Praise your child's prosocial behaviours – such as acts of kindness, sharing, turn taking. • Comment upon how your child's behaviour helped others, and how proud you are of your child. • Help your child trust and learn the importance of prioritizing truth when communicating with others; help your child see different points of view; help your child develop empathy with others. • Let you children know that they are kind and thoughtful people –not just children who do kind and thoughtful things. Make it clear you see this as the kind of child they are, so they internalise the sense of kindness to others, and it then becomes who they are (their identity). • Try not to give tangible rewards for acts of sharing and kindness. Encourage children to be kind and thoughtful and able to share with others, because it is a good thing to do –not just to get rewards. Help them understand it is a kinder and more satisfying way of being with friends.

Appendix 3: ways to build resilience in children

Resilience needs relationships, not rugged self-reliance
Warm, safe and supportive relationships help children manage challenges, regulate their emotions, connect in helpful ways with other children, trust adults and seek help when they need to, and have a sense of themselves as competent and able to solve problems

Increase children's exposure to people who help and care about them
All opportunities to help children build loving and supportive connections with other children and adults support their resilience. Praise, joy and recognition of children's efforts and achievements are very helpful to them.

Let them know its OK to ask for help
Let children know it is fine to ask for help, and that part of being strong is knowing that you can trust people to help you. Use 'safe havens'.

Build their executive functioning
It is important to help children become calm and reflect upon relationships and events. The capacity to think and reflect –for mentalisation –is a vital component of resilience.

Encourage mindfulness practice
Just like reflective capacity and thinking, mindfulness supports calming functions in the brain, and supports connections between the thinking parts of the brain (prefrontal cortex and the amygdala - part of the brain associated with strong emotions and impulsivity).

Exercise
Supports resilience because it produces neurochemicals in the brain that calms the brain at times of stress. It also releases chemicals that engender a sense of wellbeing.

Build feelings of competence and a sense of mastery
You can do this by reminding children of all the times they managed things well; reminding them of the things that they are good at and what strengths they possess. Praise them for having a go at things. Recognise their efforts and encourage them to find solutions.

Nurture optimism
An optimistic outlook is a key characteristic of resilient children. Helping children focus on what is still there, not what is lost; help them reframe so they see the good things in events, situations and relationships. This does not mean you invalidate their feelings –acknowledge those, whilst helping them see different viewpoints.

Teach them how to re-frame
Help children view challenges and disappointments as less threatening; help them find new opportunities, whilst acknowledging their feelings. These skills are valuable in managing challenges.

Model resiliency
Let children see how you manage disappointments and challenges in healthy ways. Explain how you manage them and find hopeful ways forward. Help them see that facing challenges is part of life, - they can be overcome.

Face fear with love and support

Children can view challenges in rather black and white ways – either face it full on or avoid it. Children need help to find the middle ground to gradually deal with challenges, with the help and encouragement of trusted adults, and gain some control. It is about taking on challenges in ways that feel manageable and possible, with support.

Encourage children to face challenges

Children develop resources when they face challenges; they discover their capacity to shape events, find new solutions, and become independent.

Don't rush to rescue children

It is important to support children to find solutions and face challenges – in this way they discover their capacity to manage things and find solutions. "It is in the space between falling and standing back up again that children learn to find their feet". Obviously there will be occasions when we need to pick children up –just not every time!

Meet children where they are

Resilience is not about 'never falling over', but rather about how children can get back up again. In supporting children we need to accept where they are and the feelings they experience and support them in finding ways forward. Reflecting upon feelings, making sense of them is part of this process.

Nurture a flexible mind-set

Children need to recognise that things and people can change. They are not stuck in places they can't move from; or challenges they can never deal with.

Let them know that you trust their capacity to cope

It is important to convey to children that you trust that they will cope in time and with helpful support. Your belief in them and that things will be OK conveys an important hopeful message.

Build their problem solving skills and toolbox

Help children face challenges by supporting problem solving skills, - thinking about what worked before; breaking the challenge down into manageable pieces; what would someone they know do? How many ideas can they come up with that might be helpful to them? Recognise how good their ideas are.

Make time for creativity and play

Problem solving is a creative process. Give children opportunities for creative play –they will draw upon these skills when facing challenges.

Let children express themselves and listen to them

Rather than solving children's problems, be a sounding board for them and encourage them to think about solutions. As they talk, their mind is processing, planning and strengthening. You can facilitate their thinking, but let them find and own their solutions. Be a safe sounding board to try out ideas.

Support children to make sense of things

When helping children make sense of things and face difficulties, it is helpful to think about how? Use the PACE approach, such as "I wonder…..." and "no wonder you felt like that…". In this way you support them to accept the difficulties and find new ways forward.

Appendix 4: Roles and responsibilities in school

CEO, head teacher or head of school group

Play a central role in developing positive emotional wellbeing and mental health strategies in schools. Recognize the need to develop whole school awareness of mental health and emotional health issues, including importance of prosocial development and resilience among children.

Make sure that policies and procedures in relation to supporting prosocial development and resilience among children are supported by advice and guidance, and that policies and procedures reflect the whole school approach to emotional health and wellbeing.

Making sure prosocial development and resilience training is a priority for staff alongside other mandatory training. The support for training is crucial to enable staff to feel confident in supporting young people in effective, non-judgemental and respectful ways.

•Ensure staff, parents and pupils are aware of their roles and responsibilities when implementing the Safeguarding Policy across the school.

Ensure that all designated staff receive training regarding supporting resilience and are fully confident with the procedures to follow.

Provide practical and emotional support for key staff dealing with children who lack prosocial skills and resilience.

Develop systems for gaining the views of students and parents.

Trust board or Governing Body

Provide pupils with open access to information about lack of resilience and details of who to go to for help and support. Decide, in collaboration with the school's senior leadership team, how awareness and understanding of prosocial development and resilience in children can be promoted throughout the school.

Consider issues of parental consent and whether parents, carers or guardians should be invited to learn more about lack of resilience in children.

Be proactive in developing support plans and interventions for pupils who lack resilience or have poorly developed prosocial skills, which are non stigmatizing. Encourage pupils to go to a key worker at times of emotional distress.

All staff and teachers

- Make it known to pupils that you are available to listen to them.
- Remain calm, respectful, sensitive and non-judgemental at times of student distress.
- Do not adopt a dismissive or belittling attitude in relation to the reasons for a student's distress.
- Encourage pupils to be open with you and assure them that they can get the help they need, if they are able to talk.
- Do not make promises you can't keep, especially regarding issues of confidentiality.
- Discuss and promote healthy coping mechanisms and suggest ways in which pupils can be empowered to make positive changes in their lives.
- Attend training and use evidence-based interventions (such as PACE approach) to support development of prosocial skills and resilience in children.
- Connect and build attuned relationships with students

Designated key staff member(s)

Implement the safeguarding policy, communicate with each other and report back to the head teacher at each stage of the process. Maintain up-to-date records of pupils experiencing difficulties in relation to their lack of resilience and prosocial skills development.

Communicate with the head teacher and other key staff on a regular basis and keep them informed of all incidents and developments.

Monitor the help, support and progress of the students in your care and maintain communication with them. Be fully confident in the understanding of prosocial development and resilience in children, and how to promote this in schools.

Inform the pupil's parents if appropriate and liaise with them as to how best manage the situation.

Be aware of when it is essential for other professional bodies to be informed, such as social services, school nurse, educational psychologists, school linked mental health workers, GP, primary mental health team and CAMHS

School pupils

Access to leaflets and guidance about prosocial development and resilience. When talking to family, teachers or friends about lack of prosocial skills and resilience, focus on the emotional reasons behind distress and not just on the struggles and difficulties.

Discuss additional support the child or young person needs while going through emotional distress.

Be aware that teachers and designated staff are there to help. The more pupils talk to them, the better able they will be to give the support and help needed.

As with all cases where safety is at risk, and a teacher is concerned in a serious way about safety or wellbeing, he/she may have to break confidentiality for the pupil's own safety.

Parents

- Find out about development of prosocial skills and resilience and support their child (leaflet provided).
- If their child lacks prosocial skills and resilience, parents should work closely with the school and take an active role in deciding the best course of action.
- Keep the school informed of any incidents outside of school that they feel the school should know about.
- Take care of themselves and seek the emotional support they need in supporting their child's difficulties.

“A child’s resilience depends mostly on their loving connections to other people, rather than their own inherent qualities”

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To get this information in another format:

If you would like this information in another format or language please email:
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