

Building the Path to Resilience

Use: This lesson plan could be used in school, afterschool or youth club settings. Table and chairs set up in squared pattern would be ideal. Recommended students: 10-20.

Goals: The purpose of this lesson is to have youth:

- Examine ideas and facts about the effects of stress
- Expand their ideas around the concept of courage
- Understand that taking small steps toward goals can help them feel empowered
- Broaden their idea of who to seek for resources and support in times of stress

Timeframe: 45 – 60 minutes

Target Age: middle school age to adult

Activity

In this lesson, youth learn about the many different levels of stress and how their response can not only be a choice, but an important part of their resilience. Adolescents can build assets that will protect and promote their ability to improve their personal health and well-being.

Procedure:

Supplies:

- ✓ Card stock
- ✓ 2" x 4" labels
- ✓ 3" x 5" file cards
- ✓ Colored pencils
- ✓ Wizard of Oz posters (Appendix A)

Before lesson begins, cut out two sets of the Wizard of Oz quote cards (Appendix A) and use one for each student as place card for seating arrangement. Shuffle the corresponding cards and distribute to youth. Have youth sit at table by corresponding card to randomize group.

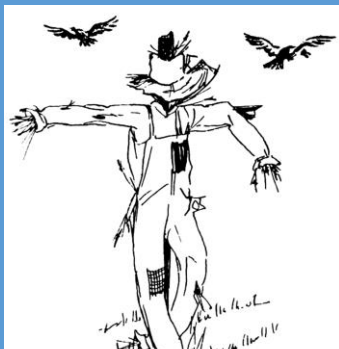
MY PATH TO RESILIENCE

Caution! Frequent Tornadoes



Ease of teaching tip:

Be sure to tell youth their art is not going to be judged. This is only for their own expression and they do not have to share with others unless they choose.



Ask youth who has seen the movie, *The Wizard of Oz*? For those who haven't, explain this is a movie about a young girl who is swept away to a magical land in a tornado and embarks on a quest to see the Wizard who can help her return home.

Help youth think about how at the beginning of the movie, Dorothy was intent on running away from the stress in her life, which was around losing her dog.

Continue leading a discussion around healthy stress vs. unhealthy stress levels. Ask youth if they know examples of what healthy stress is for a middle school youth. If youth do not mention the ideas below suggest some of these examples.

- Normal everyday stress – short lived or usually tolerable. Could be a test or quiz, an argument with a friend or family member. Your body reacts with brief increases in heart rate and mild elevations in stress hormone levels.
- More serious or longer lasting stress – could be loss of a loved one, a serious injury, or a natural disaster. Stronger reaction on brain and other organs.
- Toxic stress – frequent and prolonged without hope or end in sight. Can have heightened negative reaction with stress-related diseases.

Give a definition of resilience: *the ability to spring back from difficulty or toughness*. Tell them you are going to guide them in an activity that will help them learn about their own resilience.

FIRST: Have youth take a sheet of card stock 8 ½ x 11" and divide into 4 equal sections. Have them draw their version of tornadoes in the first box, explaining to them to think of something they know is coming "at them" in their future. Encourage them to draw a picture or add words to explain their particular stress situation. (Example: trying out for a sports team)

SECOND, share the picture and movie quote about the Scare Crow (Appendix A). Have the youth use their brain and think of a very small step that could be a planned reaction to the stress they know or think is coming. It may look like:



Goal: Try out for team

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youth who feel they have
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ing with a caring adult through school, afterschool or community resources.

When: Tomorrow during homeroom

Encourage them to write their small step reaction goal, step and date in the next box.

THIRD, share the picture of the Cowardly Lion. Have the youth think of a time they had to be courageous. Help them expand their idea of what courage can be. In Middle School it may be walking down a hallway where they know someone is standing who may make fun of them. Sometimes courage is just getting out of bed and trying again. Have them draw a picture or icon of a time they had to be courageous.

FOURTH, and finally, share the picture of the Tin Man’s quote about heart. Ask the youth to think about their best friend. Then ask them to think about their friend’s best attributes. OR, ask them to think about the attributes (qualities) they would want their friend to have. Generally, they will respond with things like funny, attractive, good listener. Have them list these in the fourth box. Then explain, as humans, we generally seek others like us, or conversely, opposites attract. Have them think of their friends as resources and if they can depend on them during times of stress. Ask to think if their friends hold them accountable and make them be better at courage and good decision making. Finally, get them to list at least one caring adult they can depend on.

Reflection/Discussion Questions: Do you choose to react to stressful times in your life like Dorothy or the Wizard? Both had their lives suddenly disrupted by a stressful event (a tornado) and the Wizard chose to make it appear he was in control of the Wicked Witch so he could control the community of Oz. However, it was all smoke and

mirrors! While Dorothy Gale followed a path and gathered up resources of support along the way – only to discover she had the power all along.

Do you see how this activity can be your map along the road to resilience during times of stress in your life?

Do you think it is harder for today's Middle School youth to stand up and be courageous about your ideas than in the past?

Do you agree with the statement we can't change other people's behavior, only our own?

Do you think you need to look for more positive people in your life that can be support in bad times as well as good?

Ask to think if their friends hold them accountable and make them be better at courage and good decision making.

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Background:

There are many stress events in a middle school aged child's life. Learning how to cope effectively with stress can enhance a child's positive identify by helping them feel more control over their destiny. The essential skills of critical thinking, planning, and decision-making are needed for cognitive and social-emotional competence and can result in lifelong repercussions.

Youth will learn that it is helpful to know when stress is overwhelming what their choices of reaction can be. The lesson will also assist with identifying internal and external assets to help youth with situations beyond their control.