

SESSION

1.2

Resilience and Being Proactive



PURPOSE

Research has shown that a person's ability to believe in his or her effectiveness and to take the initiative contributes significantly to his or her ability to be flexible and rebound from life's hardships. This session provides a concrete demonstration of the concept of resilience, illustrating why it is important, then focuses on how being proactive rather than reactive or passive is an integral part of being resilient.



GOALS

- To explain and discuss the concept of resilience
- To introduce the concept of self-talk
- To introduce the protective factor of being proactive rather than reactive or passive
- To help group members understand that their actions can influence what happens to them
- To practice a relaxation/self-regulation technique



MATERIALS

Chalkboard or dry erase board and marker

Program Notebooks (brought by group members)

Individual Points Charts

Name Cube

One rubber band per member (extra for those that might snap!)

One bouncy ball, preferably one that also stretches (a “Hi-Bounce Stretch Ball” may be purchased through a novelty catalog)

A small object that when dropped will not break or bounce

Toys and games for free play

Copies of the following:

Resilience Builder Assignment 1.2

Parent Letter 1.2

*Before the session, create a **Steps in Being Proactive** poster.*



PROCEDURE

Individual Greeting

Conduct the individual greetings as described in Session 1.1.

Review Success Journal and Resilience Builder Assignment

The Resilience Builder Assignment from the last session identifies the group member’s individual goal for the sessions in this unit.

1. Throw the Name Cube to identify the first speaker, who states his or her goal. Ask: “How could reaching your goal help you with making friends and getting along better with others?”
2. Listen for negatively stated goals (“I won’t scream when I’m upset”) and help the participant restate as a positive goal (“When I’m upset, I’ll use my relaxation strategies to calm down.”) Ask, “Who can help you with your efforts to reach your goal? What can they do?”
3. Ask, “Please read to the group the efforts you made toward your goal, or another success you had, from your Success Journal.” Be sure to offer genuine praise for attempts as well as successes. If a group member has not written in the Success Journal, encourage him

or her to tell the group about a positive interaction or attempt to work on the goal, and then have the member record it in the journal.

The goal is for the group members to begin to think about what goes right instead of what all too often occurs: focusing on the problems or failures. Be sure to remark how difficult it is to remember some of the positives since we often focus on the negatives.

4. When each group member finishes speaking, ask him or her to throw the Name Cube to determine the next speaker.
5. Continue until each participant has had a chance to describe homework efforts and progress toward success.

Record each group member's goal on his or her Points Chart and assign one point for bringing in the notebook, one point for identifying a goal, one point for discussing it, and one point for the first Success Journal entry. At the end of the session, you can award a point for cooperating during the session.

Discuss Resilience

1. Write "Resilience" on the board. Take a rubber band and slowly stretch it to the max, saying, "This is what happens when we are stretched, stressed, or challenged." Then slowly return the rubber band to the normal position and say, "This is how we get ourselves back to a calmer state. It's not an instant process; it might take some time. See how flexible the rubber band is when it's back to its normal state. This is called resilience."
2. Hand out rubber bands, one per group member, and let them stretch and return the bands to the normal state. Ask, "What is something that stresses you and makes you stretch out of shape? What has to happen for you to come back to normal? (*Encourage and acknowledge responses.*) Show me with the rubber band how you get stressed and how you come back to normal."
3. Collect the rubber bands. Next demonstrate the concept of bouncing back. Drop the small object that does not bounce. Then bounce the ball. Explain:

Imagine that feeling upset or stressed is like dropping the ball. What you want to happen next is that you bounce back to normal. (*If you are using a stretchy ball*) But the ball stretches and moves, and we have to work it to get it back to its round shape so that it can bounce well. So it takes effort and flexibility. (*Referring to the hard object*) This other object just stays there and doesn't move. One is active, like the rubber band. The other is passive—it just sits there.

As time permits, you can have the group members demonstrate this as well, but we suggest giving a ball to just one member at a time.

Discuss Being Proactive and Self-Talk

1. Ask the group whether they are aware that while they are awake, they are always thinking. Let the group know that *self-talk* refers to the things that we say to ourselves, usually in our own minds—the private conversation we have with ourselves. Sometimes the talk can be negative, and sometimes it can be positive.
2. On the board, write the headings “Proactive Responses,” “Reactive Responses,” and “Passive Responses” in three columns. Say:

Suppose you find out that you failed a math test. It may be tempting to ignore the problem or pretend it isn't a problem. That would be a *passive response*. Or you might immediately throw the test out and blame the teacher, or say to yourself, “I'm stupid!” or “I can't do math!” That kind of negative self-talk and behavior would be a *reactive response*. Bouncing back, on the other hand, means *being proactive*. That means you plan actions to make the situation better and stick with the specific problem—one bad math test—rather than blowing the single bad grade way out of proportion and telling yourself, “I can't do school.” For example, you might use positive self-talk and tell yourself, “I didn't do well on *this* math test. So before the next test, I'll study more and ask my teacher or Mom and Dad for help with what I don't understand.” This kind of positive behavior is a *proactive response*.

3. Refer the group to the Steps in Being Proactive poster. Explain that these are steps you can take when faced with a challenge or problem.

Steps in Being Proactive

1. Acknowledge the problem.
 2. Keep perspective that you're having a specific problem.
 3. Keep in mind that the problem won't last forever.
 4. Come up with a plan to make the situation better.
 5. Act on your plan.
4. Next encourage the group to generate the different types of statements or behaviors one might make in response to two or three problem scenarios (proactive, passive, reactive).

Three problem scenarios and sample responses are provided on the Proactive, Reactive, and Passive Statements or Behaviors chart on page 81. You may use these or any other situations the group finds challenging (for example, your

mom asks you to turn off your video game or you keep missing baskets during practice).

5. Explain:

How might you respond proactively, reactively, or passively? For instance, you can be passive and do and say nothing. You can react in a negative way by telling yourself, “I can’t do it” or by getting physical. Or you can tell yourself, “I can do something proactive,” then come up with a plan.

If you wish, after obtaining responses, you can have the group members write their names on the board to enhance their involvement and ownership of the proactive solutions they have generated.

6. Summarize the following idea:

Even when you’re not faced with a problem, getting good results depends on initiating or taking action. For example, you might want to get together with friends, so you take action—you call them or ask them at school if they would like to come over. It might also mean that you take action and help someone. For example, if you are good at math, you might offer to help a classmate, or you could volunteer to help a teacher when you notice that something needs to be done.

Free Play/Behavioral Rehearsal

Provide the group with a selection of age-appropriate toys, games, or other activities to choose from that encourage joint play and follow the procedure described in Session 1.1 for choosing play partners and facilitating free play.



Relaxation/Self-Regulation

1. This session’s relaxation component introduces progressive muscle relaxation, focusing on only a few muscle groups. Tell participants to get into a comfortable position in their seats and close their eyes. Read the following script slowly:
 - ▶ Take a deep breath in through your nose and hold it until the count of five: 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5. Slowly, very slowly breathe out through your mouth.
 - ▶ We are going to tense different muscle groups. I want you to pay attention to the difference in how the muscles feel when they are tight and tense versus when they are loose and relaxed.
 - ▶ Start by making a tight fist with your right hand. Hold it until it almost hurts. Tighter, tighter, hold it, hold it. Now slowly relax. Notice how it feels. You might feel tingling or coolness or warmth, or something else.

- ▶ Now we are going to tighten the left fist. Pretend you are squeezing something really, really hard. Hold it, hold it, hold it. Now slowly let the fist go back to its normal position. Notice the way it feels when it's tense and when it's relaxed.
 - ▶ Bring your shoulders up and hold them tight. Slowly relax.
 - ▶ Now move down to your stomach. Pretend someone just punched you in the stomach. That hurts. Tighten as much as you can. Slowly let go. Notice how it feels to relax those stomach muscles.
 - ▶ Now we will blow up your stomach as if someone is pumping air into it. Hold it, then slowly relax and let go.
 - ▶ Now shake your head a little (*pause*), wiggle your fingers (*pause*), and slowly open your eyes.
2. Ask, "How did that feel? What part of your body was the most tense? What were the sensations you had when you relaxed the muscles?"

Generalization: Resilience Builder Assignment

Distribute copies of the Resilience Builder Assignment. Ask if there are any questions and discuss as needed.

Parent Component

Give each group member a copy of the parent letter for the session. Have participants place it and the Resilience Builder Assignment in the appropriate sections of their notebooks.

Proactive, Reactive, and Passive Statements or Behaviors

Scenario 1: I had to write an essay and got a poor grade on it.

Proactive Responses

I can ask for help.
I can practice writing.

I have good ideas.

I can take more time.

I'll ask the teacher what part of it was a problem so I can work on that specifically.

Reactive Responses

Rip up the paper.
Get angry and take it out on someone else by being mean.

Tell the teacher it's not fair.

Say to myself, "I give up."

Say to myself, "I'm just not good at this and can never be good at it."

Passive Responses

There's nothing I can do.
No action.
Go to sleep.
I can't do that.
Shrug my shoulders and leave the class.

Scenario 2: Someone talks to you in a mean way. He or she also tells you that you talk too loud, which your parents also tell you.

Proactive Responses

Walk away but think about what was said.

Tell the person in a firm voice that you don't appreciate the mean talk.

Say, "Sorry if I talk too loud. I'll work on it, but you are being mean about it."

Reactive Responses

Hit.

Deny the correct part of what was said. You didn't do it.

Yell.

Passive Responses

Don't deal with it.

Look down.

Stand firm. Hold your head up and shoulders back.

Scenario 3: You worked on a project that was hard to do and got frustrated.

Proactive Responses

Calm down. Take deep breaths.

Ask for help.

Say to yourself, "If at first you don't succeed, try and try again."

Say to yourself, "I'm not going to let the obstacle get in my way."

Say to yourself, "It may be hard, but I'm still going to try."

Reactive Responses

Get mad at the teacher, the other kids, or myself.

Complain.

Lose control and slam down the pencil, etc.

Take it out on someone else and get mean.

Tell yourself you're not able to do this work.

Passive Responses

Give up and stop working on it.

RESILIENCE BUILDER ASSIGNMENT 1.2

Proactive, Reactive, or Passive?

Name _____ Date _____

Describe two situations you faced during the past two weeks. For each situation, write two possible proactive, reactive, and passive statements or behaviors. Circle what you actually did, said, or thought.

Situation 1

Proactive Responses

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Reactive Responses

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Passive Responses

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Situation 2

Proactive Responses

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Reactive Responses

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

Passive Responses

- 1. _____
- 2. _____

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RESILIENCE BUILDER PARENT LETTER 1.2

Resilience and Being Proactive

Dear Parents:

The Resilience Builder Program is based on the notion that resilience can be fostered in children and teens facing all kinds of stress, from being rejected by a friend and left out of parties to academic struggles to parental illness and divorce. What is *resilience*? It is defined broadly as skills, attributes, and abilities that enable individuals to adapt well to hardships, difficulties, and challenges. Children seem to understand the meaning best with this analogy: Stress placed on a rubber band might stretch it to the breaking point; ideally, however, it will have the flexibility to withstand the stretching and slowly return to its original size and shape. Learning to make an active effort and be flexible is fundamental to building resilience skills.

An emerging body of research on resilience has identified a number of protective factors that change a person's response to challenges like having a learning difference, anxiety, or environmental adversity and that increase the chance of a positive outcome. This program organizes these protective factors into six categories: proactive orientation, self-regulation, connections and attachments, achievements and talents, community ties, and proactive parenting. We incorporate all these factors into activities throughout the sessions.

Today's session focuses on defining resilience and being proactive. A person's ability to take the initiative, believe in his or her effectiveness, and think realistically but positively contributes significantly to resilience. For example, children who can learn to compromise in their relationships with others are more apt to develop successful friendships. Students who are proactive—who aren't afraid to seek out a teacher and ask for extra help—are more likely to turn a failing grade into an A or a B. Being proactive means setting goals, planning and problem solving, thinking optimistically, and building a more positive sense of self.

Listening to what we say to ourselves and others provides a clue as to whether we are being proactive, being reactive, or being passive. Things we say to ourselves are called our "self-talk." For example, if we are told that our video play has been reduced to half the usual time, our thinking and self-talk would be positive and proactive if we ask ourselves, "What are my choices for how to best use the time available?" On the other hand, our self-talk would be negative and reactive if we say, "That's terrible! I'll get back at you for taking my time away!" If our self-talk is negative, we might also react passively by saying, "I can't do anything fun in that time" and then just give up. A proactive approach involves taking responsibility and ownership for our thoughts, feelings, and actions so that we can work on changing them.

Resilience Builder Assignment: Proactive, Reactive, or Passive?

Group members are asked to describe two situations they faced during the past two weeks and to provide two examples each of proactive statements or behaviors, reactive statements or behaviors, and passive statements or behaviors. Please discuss this assignment with your child and help him or her generate responses if necessary. Please also practice a relaxation exercise this week with your child.

Sincerely,

Program Leader