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**MODULE THREE**

**Self-esteem and resilience**

**Contents**

* Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
* Self-esteem
* Defining resilience
* Risk and protective factors
* Building resilience

**Overview**

The module will give participants an understanding of resilience, the elements that build and maintain resilience, and the personal, family, school and community risk and protective factors for young people.

**Duration**

This module will take approximately 55 to 75 minutes to complete.

**Learning outcomes**

By the end of this session participants will have an understanding of how to encourage good self-esteem. They will also understand more about the important role mentoring plays in building resilience in young people.

**Resources**

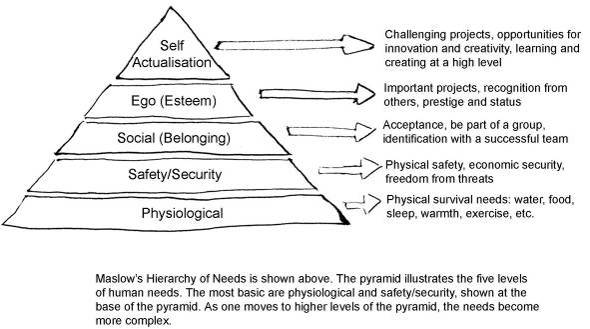
* Handout 3.1 - Maslow’s hierarchy of needs
* Handout 3.2 - Self-esteem
* Handout 3.3 - Resilience
* Handout 3.4 - Building resilience

**Running sheet**

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| **Topic** | **Activity** | **Duration (approx.)** |
| **Overview** | *The module will give participants an understanding of resilience, the elements that build and maintain resilience, and the personal, family, school and community risk and protective factors for young people.* | 2 mins |
| **Maslow’s hierarchy of needs** | * Introduce and discuss ‘Maslow’s hierarchy of needs’ (Handout 3.1) | 5 mins |
| **Self-esteem** | * Discuss self-esteem   *People’s thoughts and feelings about themselves fluctuate depending on daily experiences. Self-esteem goes beyond situational ‘ups and downs’, and good self-esteem mitigates the daily fluctuations in our well-being.*  *Self-esteem evolves throughout our lives as we build an image of ourselves through our experiences and relationships.*   * **Brainstorm session:** What are some of the consequences of low self-esteem? * Provide handout and discuss additional consequences. Introduce strategies for building self-esteem (Handout 3.2) | 15 mins |
| **Defining resilience** | * Introduce the concept of resilience   *‘Resilience is the happy knack of being able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life. Even when hardships and adversity arise it is as if the person has an elastic rope around them that helps them to rebound when things get low and to maintain their sense of who they are as a person.’*  *(Andrew Fuller, psychologist)* | 2 mins |
| **Risk and protective factors** | ***Activity: Identifying protective factors (Handout 3.3)***  This activity gives participants an opportunity to reflect on how mentoring can provide protective factors to young people.  Ask participants to break into pairs and identify which protective factors they believe mentoring could contribute to.  Ask pairs to feed back their findings. The following areas are protective factors that mentoring can influence:   * cultures of co-operation * stability and connection * a good relationship with an adult outside the family * opportunities for meaningful contribution * having someone outside your family who believes in you * feeling loved and respected * warm relationship with at least one person * developing a talent and zest for life. | 15 mins |
| **Building resilience** | * Present quotes from resilience researchers:   *‘… Most of all, self-esteem and self-efficacy were promoted through supportive relationships. The resilient youngsters in our study all had at least one person in their lives who accepted them.’ (Prof. Emmy Werner)*  *‘One factor helping at-risk children beat the heavy odds against them was the presence in their lives of a charismatic adult – a person with whom they identify and from whom they gather support.’ (Dr Julius Segal)*  *Research tells us that having a positive adult role-model in their lives greatly increases the resilience of young people.* | 15 mins |
|  | * **Brainstorm session:** How can you help build the resilience of the young person you are mentoring? * Discuss responses with reference to handout on building resilience (Handout 3.4)   ***[Optional] Activity: How mentors can help build resilience***  This activity aims to provide participants with an opportunity to explore ways to support resilience in young people.  **Scenario:** *James is 16 years old and feeling overwhelmed by school and his chaotic home life.*  *He has always wanted to be a vet, but says he doesn’t really like studying and doesn’t get good marks. He often says he feels ‘dumb’ and ‘useless’ and isn’t very positive about his schoolmates or school.*  *He’s thinking of leaving school to get a job to earn some cash, but doesn’t really know what do next.*  *How would you help build James’ resilience?* | [20 mins] |

HANDOUT 3.1

Maslow’s hierarchy of needs



Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs[[1]](#footnote-1) is generally accepted as a fundamental part of the field of human-resource development. It also helps explain the idea of self-esteem.

Maslow believed that people meet their needs in ascending order from the most basic need for survival. For example, a person usually meets their physiological needs (food, sleep) before their needs for belonging and self-esteem.

The hierarchy helps explain why some young people are not ready to engage in a mentoring relationship. They may remain at the two lowest levels because survival is their number-one priority, or because their safety and security needs are not being met.

Mentors and program staff need to be aware that if a young person is homeless or involved in an abusive relationship, they may not be able to engage as easily in a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring offers support to young people as they move into the top sections of the hierarchy, particularly when considering a sense of belonging and self-esteem.

HANDOUT 3.2

Self-esteem

People’s thoughts and feelings about themselves fluctuate depending on daily experiences, like how others treat them and what happens at school or work. These factors all temporarily affect our well-being and may result in a range of feelings from anger to joy and from frustration to elation.

Self-esteem goes beyond situational ‘ups and downs’. Good self-esteem mitigates the daily fluctuations in our well-being. For people with poor or low self-esteem these ups and downs can make all the difference in the world.

**Where does self-esteem come from?**

Self-esteem develops and evolves throughout life as we build an image of ourselves through our experiences and relationships. 

Childhood experiences play a crucial role in shaping self-esteem. Successes and failures, and how young people are treated by family, teachers, peers and others all contribute to people’s evolving self-esteem.

**Consequences of low self-esteem**

Low self-esteem can have devastating consequences, such as:

* anxiety, stress, loneliness and increased likelihood of depression
* problems with friends and relationships
* impaired academic and job performance
* under-achievement and increased vulnerability to drug and alcohol misuse
* a downward spiral of lower self-esteem, and non-productive or self-destructive behaviour.

**Strategies for building self-esteem**

* **Avoiding ‘shoulds’.** Concentrate on doing what is possible and what feels right instead of paying attention to the ‘shoulds’ of others.
* **Respecting personal needs.** Self-care is about identifying longer-term fulfilment, not just immediate gratification. By respecting personal needs, individuals can increase self-worth and well-being.
* **Setting achievable goals** and working step by step to get there.
* **Engaging in positive self-talk.** Try to stay positive and don’t allow the ‘inner critic’ to take over. Telling yourself that you are ok and you can succeed can be very powerful.
* **Experiencing success** by doing things that stretch but don’t overwhelm your abilities.
* **Taking chances.** New experiences are learning experiences; mistakes are part of the process. Feel good about trying something new.
* **Solving problems.** Face rather than avoid problems. Identify ways to solve or cope with challenges.
* **Making decisions.** Practise making decisions and trust yourself to deal with the consequences.
* **Developing skills.** Know what you can and can’t do. Assess the skills you need; learn and practise those.
* **Emphasising your strengths.** Focus on what you can do rather than what you cannot. Live comfortably with limitations, and consider what strengths to develop next.
* **Relying on your own opinion of yourself.** Listen to feedback from others, but don’t rely on it. Apply your own values to making decisions about what is right for you.[[2]](#footnote-2)
* **Find opportunities to help others.** This can help put your own life and struggles in perspective. Helping others can make you feel you are have a positive impact on the world around you.

HANDOUT 3.3

Resilience

*‘Resilience is the happy knack of being able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life. Even when hardships and adversity arise it is as if the person has an elastic rope around them that helps them to rebound when things get low and to maintain their sense of who they are as a person.’*

(Andrew Fuller, *From Surviving to Thriving*)

**Risk and protective factors for young people**

Risk factors are elements of a young person’s life that can prevent them from being able to bounce back. They exist in all areas of young people’s lives – community, school, family, and within the individual themselves.

The more risk factors present in a young person’s life, the greater the risk of developing problems like substance misuse, delinquent behaviour, dropping out of education, unwanted pregnancy and violence.

Protective (or resilience) factors are key to young people being able to navigate through life’s challenges. Access to protective factors can lessen the impact of risk factors in a person’s life. Protective factors are like a safety net that prevents young people from falling hard.

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| **Level** | **Risk factors** | **Protective factors[[3]](#footnote-3)** |
| **Community** | Availability of drugs | Cultures of co-operation |
|  | Media portrayals of violence | Stability and connection |
|  | Transitions and mobility | Good relationship with an adult outside the family |
|  | Low neighbourhood attachment and community disorganisation | Opportunities for meaningful contribution |
|  | Poverty |  |
| **School** | Detachment from school | A sense of belonging and fitting in |
|  | Academic failure, especially in the middle years | Positive achievements and evaluations at school |
|  | Early and persistent antisocial behaviour | Having someone outside your family who believes in you |
|  | Low parental interest in education | Attendance at preschool |
| **Family** | History of problem alcohol or drug use | A sense of connectedness to family |
|  | Inappropriate family management | Feeling loved and respected |
|  | Family conflict | Proactive problem solving and minimal conflict during infancy |
|  | Alcohol/drugs interfere with family rituals | Maintenance of family rituals |
|  | Harsh or inconsistent parenting | Warm relationship with at least one person |
|  | Marital instability or conflict | Absence of divorce in adolescence |
|  | Favourable parental attitudes towards risk-taking behaviours | A ‘good fit’ between parents and child |
| **Individual and peer** | Constitutional factors, alienation, rebelliousness, novelty seeking | Temperament and activity level, social responsively autonomous |
|  | Seeing peers taking drugs |  |
|  | Friends with problem behaviour | Developed a talent and zest for life |
|  | Positive attitude to problem behaviour | Work success during adolescence |
|  | Early initiation of the problem behaviour | High intelligence (when not paired with sensitive temperament) |

HANDOUT 3.4

Building resilience

*‘…Most of all, self-esteem and self-efficacy were promoted through supportive relationships. The resilient youngsters in our study all had at least one person in their lives who accepted them.’*

*(Prof. Emmy Werner)[[4]](#footnote-4)*

*‘One factor helping at-risk children [young people with many risk factors in their lives] beat the heavy odds against them was the presence in their lives of a charismatic adult – a person with whom they identify and from whom they gather support.’*

*(Dr Julius Segal)[[5]](#footnote-5)*

Research tells us that having a positive adult role-model in their lives greatly increases the resilience of young people.

**Strategies that build resilience**

* Help the young person set realistic goals and take small steps to achieve them.
* Be a positive person and compliment the young person (without overdoing it).
* Encourage them to identify and spend more time with optimistic people; i.e. people who do positive things, play sport, environment groups.
* Help them recognise the good things around them.
* Admit that sometimes there are things you can’t do yet, but show that you still try.
* Encourage and join them in exercising, learning new skills and being active.
* Role model how you accept your mistakes and apologise when it is appropriate.
* Take time to reflect on and celebrate even small achievements.
* Try new things together and keep an open mind.

1. Maslow, A.H., 1943. ‘A Theory of Human Motivation’, *Psychological Review*, 50(4):370-96. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Adapted from the *Gippsland Mentoring Alliance Training Package*, Trafalgar, Victoria: Gippsland Mentoring Alliance. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Hawkins, J.D., Catalano, R.F. and Miller, J., 1992. ‘Risk and Protective Factors for Alcohol and Other Drug Problems in Adolescence and Early Adulthood: Implications for Substance Abuse Prevention,’ *Psychological Bulletin*, 112(1):64-105. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Werner, Emmy E., and Smith, Ruth E., 1992. *Overcoming the Odds: High Risk Children form Birth to Adulthood*, Ithica, NY: Cornell University Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Segal, J., 1988. ‘Teachers Have Enormous Power in Affecting a Child's Self-Esteem,’ *The Brown University Child Behaviour and Development Newsletter*, 4:1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)