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EVIDENCE-BASED RESILIENCY SKILLS: BUILDING A TOOL KIT

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WHAT IS RESILIENCY?

“The process and outcome of successfully adapting to different or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands.”
- Resiliency skills are not static or fixed – they can be cultivated and practiced.

(adapted from APA Dictionary of Psychology)

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IT'S EVERYWHERE!

Programs – Mayo Clinic, Harvard, Stanford, UC-Berkeley (Greater Good Science Center)

Podcasts – The Science of Happiness, Building Resilience, The Big Life Kids podcast

Books – Hardwiring Happiness (Rick Hanson), 10% Happier (Dan Harris)


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WORLD HAPPINESS REPORT 2024

- United States fell in the happiness rankings, from 15th to 23rd place
- Falling out of the top 20 for the first time
- Happiness has especially fallen for the young (<30 years) – 62nd place
- For those 60 and older, the US ranks 10th

(Gallup, Oxford Wellbeing Centre, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network & WHR's editorial board)




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RESILIENCY SKILLS (NOT EXHAUSTIVE)

- Social connection
- Sense of purpose
- Self-care
- Gratitude
- Self-compassion
- Emotional expression
- Helping others
- Emotional regulation
- Mindfulness
- Growth mindset
- Curiosity
- Awe



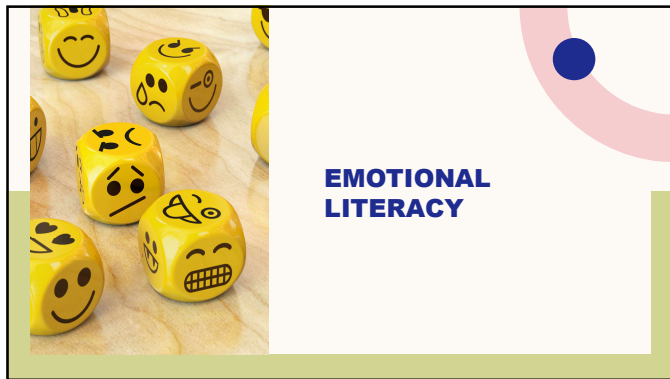
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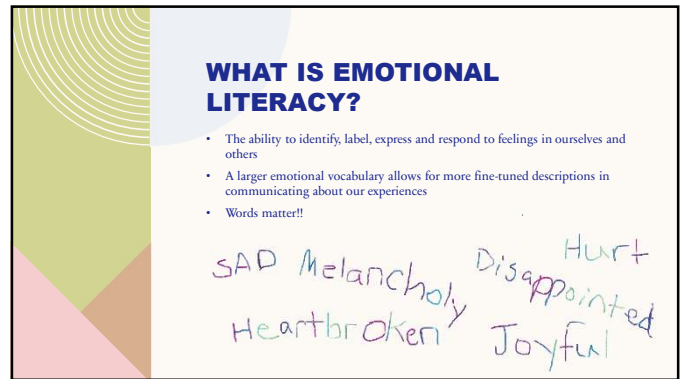
RESILIENCY SKILLS

- Emotional Literacy
- Breathwork
- Self-Compassion

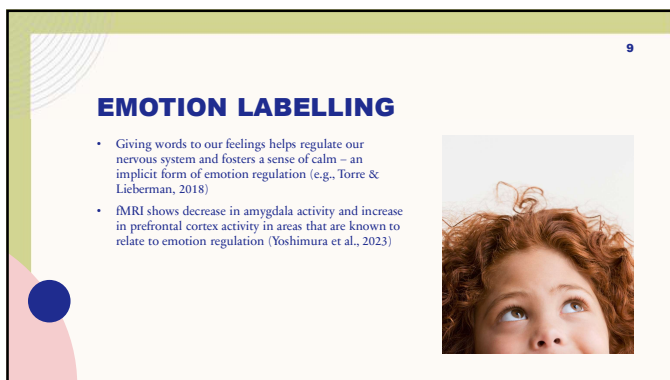
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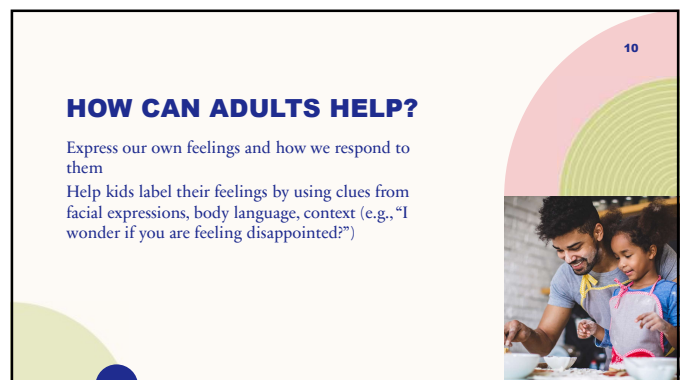
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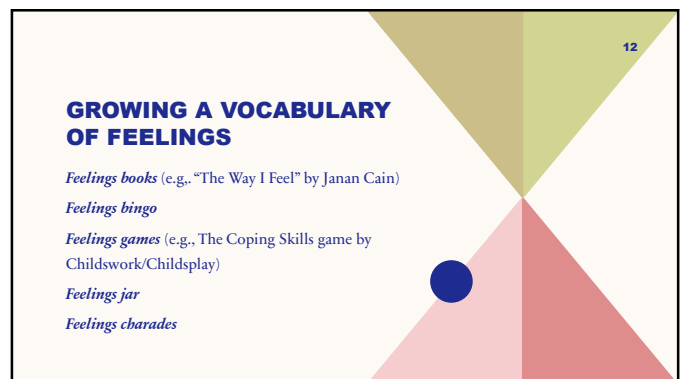
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WORKING WITH FEELINGS

Feelings give us messages that motivate future behavior (e.g., fear, guilt, joy)

Feelings can be big or small

Feelings can seem layered and contradictory – help kids to unpack them!

All feelings are important and okay – no “bad” feelings. It’s what we do with them that counts.



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WORKING WITH FEELINGS

- Label the emotion
- Feel the body sensations
 - Body scan
 - Notice sensations with curiosity and compassion
- Express/release in a healthy way
 - Journal/letter
 - Empty chair
 - Assertive communication
 - Physical activity



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BREATH WORK

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BREATH WORK

The practice of attending to and controlling the breath through simple exercises that can improve health and well-being.

- Reduced blood pressure (e.g., Pingali et al., 2023)
- Regulate heart rate (e.g., Chaitanya et al., 2022)
- Improve mood (e.g., Streeter et al., 2017)
- Lower cortisol level (e.g., Xiao Ma et al, 2017)
- Feelings of relaxation and well-being (e.g., Zaccaro et al, 2018)

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STANFORD PROJECT ON ADAPTATION AND RESILIENCE IN KIDS (SPARK LAB)

Randomized field experiment of deep breathing intervention in 342 children (mean age=7.48) in a naturalistic setting

“Intention-to-treat” design

- 46% female
- 53% Asian
- 26% White
- 21% Other race/ethnicity

(Obradovic, et al., 2021)



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RESULTS

Relative to baseline, respiratory sinus arrhythmia increased and heart rate decreased in the group that was exposed to the deep breathing intervention

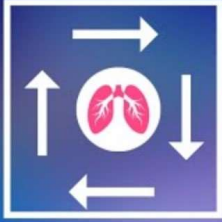
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**BREATH WORK
EXAMPLES FOR KIDS
AND TEENS**

Soup Breathing (smell the soup, cool the soup)
5-Finger breathing
Belly breathing (hand on chest and belly)
Box breathing
6 breaths per minute (4 counts in, 6 counts out)

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BOX BREATHING EXERCISE




**NAVY
SEAL
METHOD**

REDUCE ANXIETY & STRESS

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WHO USES BREATH WORK?



- Athletes (e.g., J.J. McCarthy, LeBron James)
- Navy Seals
- Actors (Oprah Winfrey, Jennifer Aniston)
- Musical Artists (Alicia Keys, Camila Cabello)

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SOMATIC EXERCISES

Movements that tap into the mind-body connection to release tension and enhance well-being (e.g., yoga and tai chi).

Decrease blood pressure and improve heart rate variability.

Cathartic movement: shake it out; audible sighs

Expanding the visual field

Selfhug

Mindful walking


Joyful movement

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TIPS FOR BREATH WORK

- Practice when calm (especially when building the skill)
- Practice together
- Practice daily
- Praise the effort
- Make it fun
- Ask the child what they noticed
- Monitor for any adverse side effects (e.g., dizziness) and adjust practice as needed

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SELF-COMPASSION

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WHAT IS SELF-COMPASSION?

Giving yourself the same compassion and kindness you would give to a friend who is struggling or feeling badly about themselves (Neff, 2023).

- According to Kristin Neff, consists of three components:
 - Self-kindness vs. self-judgment
 - Common humanity vs. isolation
 - Mindfulness vs. overidentification

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SELF-COMPASSION VS SELF-ESTEEM

<p>Self-Esteem</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves social comparisons and self-evaluation • Creates distance from others • Strongly tied to external factors, like performance and grades 	<p>Self-Compassion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involves kindness and compassion • Creates connection to others through our shared humanity • More associated with intrinsic motivation
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SELF-COMPASSION

Giving warmth and kindness to ourselves the same way we would to a dear friend who is suffering.

Connecting to our body and mind – not just an intellectual exercise.

Can be given to our younger selves, too.



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BENEFITS OF SELF-COMPASSION

Lower levels of emotional distress (e.g., depression, anxiety, stress) in adolescents with higher self-compassion (meta-analysis by Marsh et al., 2018).

Higher vagally mediated heart rate variability (vmHRV) in a social stress test (Luo et al., 2018)

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SELF-COMPASSION PRACTICES

- Self-compassion letter
- Self-compassion-focused mindfulness
- Express gratitude to the self
- Positive affirmations
- Person diagram

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INNER EXPLORER (BAKOSH & HOULIHAN, 2011)

- -Example of MBSR program for kids
- -Pre-recorded sessions distilling MBSR into 10-minute daily sessions
- -Used in 3000 schools, reaching greater than 2 million students – many in under-resourced communities
- -Studies show decreased behavior problems, improved grades and reduction in teacher stress

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