

USING A 'GROWTH MINDSET' APPROACH TO DEVELOP RESILIENCE AND A POSITIVE MINDSET THROUGH OUTDOOR LEARNING

Explore the importance of and methods for building resilience and a 'Growth Mindset' in participants through outdoor learning programmes

Why 'Growth Mindset' should be considered in outdoor learning

- Full of opportunities to repeatedly fail and try again
- Full of perceived risk and fear
- Full of opportunities for younger participants to be more responsible and independent
- No tests to pass, no targets to meet, so the pressure is different
- Different from the normal experience; plays to different strengths
- Requires the use of multiple senses and different ways of thinking; can be very accessible
- Has the time and space to build reflection in and make it a key part of the session

Growing branches of my brain tree through the outdoors

Our brain is the structure which supports everything we do – directing our thoughts, feelings, and actions. The brain is a complex organ which is continually growing in line with our experiences, making us all unique. The brain's growth is achieved through two main processes: neurogenesis (growth of brain tissue) and neuroplasticity (re-wiring of brain tissue). This means when we learn, many billions of brain cells which resemble the branches of a tree are strengthened and pruned, depending on how each one is used. Both processes of growth and re-wiring are stimulated by exciting, real-life adventures which take place in outdoor spaces. They are also activated just by nature itself which helps us relax and regenerate our energy.



Dr. John Allan, Inspiring Learning

Outdoor Adventure Education (OAE) resilience, and 21st century skills

Exposing young people to authentic challenges in natural settings is recognised as important to the development of a range of measurable socio-emotional skill sets, health benefits essential for their normative growth and education (Bowler et al., 2010; Gill, 2010; van den Berg et al., 2015). For the most part, research has established that natural environments (i) enhance the impact of physical activity by increasing motivation, enabling emotional regulation, brain growth, recovery capability and protection from disease, and (ii) possess unique qualities unrelated to physical activity, such as restorative capabilities and stress-reduction (J. Allan et al., 2020; Brymer et al., 2021; Nejade et al., 2022; Stevenson et al., 2018). Although few studies have examined the explicit impact of OAE experiences on adolescent resilience, research suggests an apparent fit between the stated goals of OAE and experiences that may build resilience in young people.

'Building resilience and well-being for post-covid_adolescents through outdoor adventure'
John Allan, Adele Doran, Ruan Jones, Sarah Farrell

My Resilience Tight-Rope

Dr. John Allan, Inspiring Learning

2. My resilience tight-rope

Resilience can be represented as a tight-rope we walk along throughout our lives. Developing a thicker rope will help us to maintain our balance as we face challenges which may unsettle us. Our ropes are made up of strands of skills that protect us from stress and promote learning. These strands can be developed by actively facing challenges and not being afraid to try something new. Sometimes this can mean getting it wrong and falling off our ropes. Getting back onto your rope and being more able to cope with future challenges is made easier if your rope is thicker.

Strands of my resilience tight-rope

The five strands of your resilience rope need to be developed equally to create a tight-rope that helps us to balance. Each of these strands reflect skills which can be learned.



Adaptability

This pink strand of resilience is concerned with your ability to change your behaviours when faced with new challenges and using past learning for facing future tasks.

Knowing Yourself

The red strand of resilience is the extent to which you can trust your own feelings and actions. This means being able to take the lead in problem solving, remaining focused and coping with stress.

Being Responsible

This blue strand of resilience reflects how much you feel in control of what you do. This means setting and achieving personal goals and being able to ask for help.

Sense of Belonging

This green strand relates to understanding your place in the wider world and connection to others. This includes being in tune with inner senses and beliefs of what you feel is right and wrong.

Getting Better

This yellow strand is about getting better and having pride in your achievements. This includes enjoying challenges and giving your best efforts.

Achieving balance

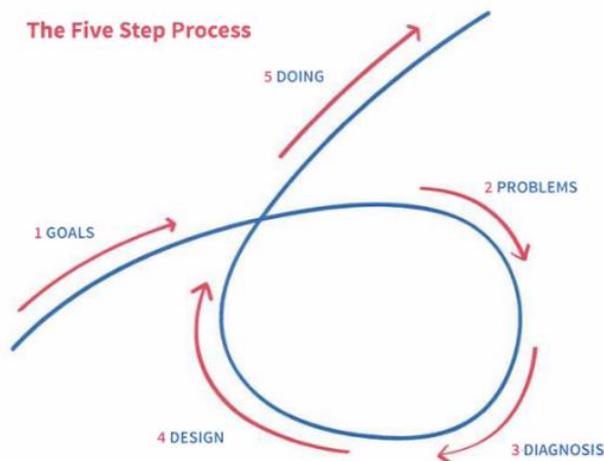
A thick rope of resilience is developed through hard work and effort. This means appreciating your successes when overcoming challenges and also learning through failure. In general terms, resilience is gained by experiencing a balance of approximately **three** positive emotional experiences (e.g. fun, interest, pride) which provide confidence, to **one** negative feeling (e.g. nervousness) which motivates us to get stronger.



3. Reflection - My Five Step cycle for better balance

The Five Step process helps you to achieve better balance on your tightrope by reflecting upon your experiences. The process relates to coming across a knot in your rope and includes setting a goal to move forward on your rope, dealing with set-backs, making plans and then achieving your goals. Later in the booklet you will use the Five Steps process to reflect on your experiences over the next few weeks.

This video may help understand each stage of the process: www.youtube.com/watch?v=ryD8lfSEGio



SOLD's Adaptation for Young People: Our Rope of Resilience

Adaptability

Use what I know to help me
Change the plan if I need to
Solve problems if they happen
Match my behaviour to the situation

Knowing Yourself

Trust my feelings
Understand my strengths and weaknesses
Know what I need to stay focused
Know how to cope with intense feelings

Being Responsible

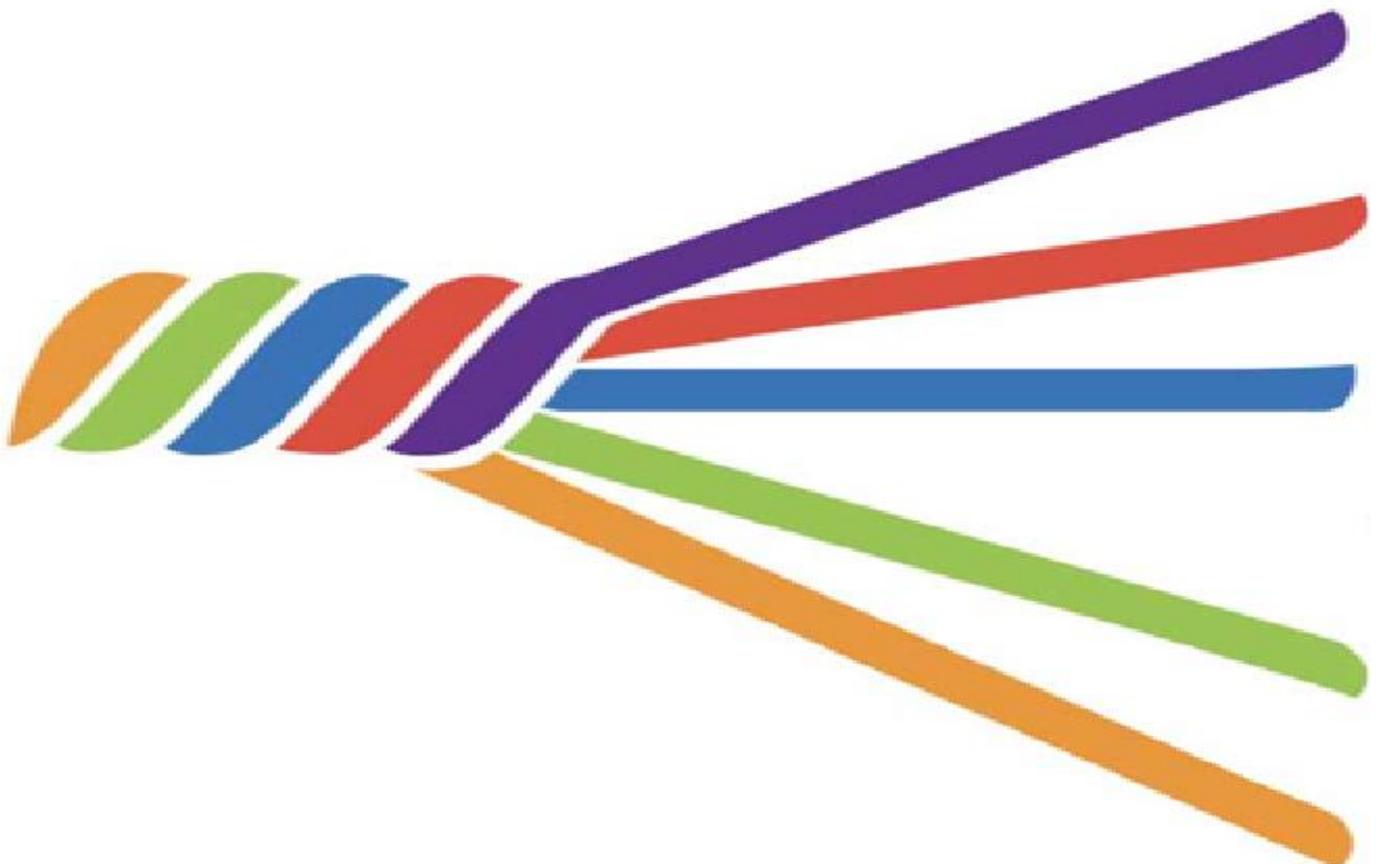
Have control of my actions and behaviour
Accept responsibility for my actions
Set realistic goals for myself
Ask for help when I need it

Sense of Belonging

Know how and where I fit into the team
Be able to express what I feel constructively
Understand my own beliefs of right and wrong
Feel like part of the community

Getting Better

Try my best with all my goals
Give each challenge my best effort
Recognise what I have achieved
Feel pride in what I achieved



How to bring 'Growth Mindset' into a SOLD activity session

Timings 1 session / 3 hours Introduction = 15 minutes Activity = 2 hours Review = 45 minutes	
Additional Equipment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Tracking' rope with 5 strands, matching the colours in the Inspiring Learning document • Paracord of the same 5 colours, enough for each participant to have one of each and long enough to make a bracelet / keyring • A3, colour laminate of the 'blank' rope on page 3 • Permanent marker 	
Plan	
Introduction	<p>Pose the question: <i>"What does 'being resilient' mean?"</i> Accept and discuss any and all answers the group give, expanding where needed to ensure all understand the word 'resilience'.</p> <p>Set the Scene: By the end of the session, we will have developed our resilience and will each make a rope to remind us of what we have learnt. Our rope will have 5 strands to it, each one representing a different aspect of being resilient.</p> <p>Explain the Task: In my hand, I have got a 5 stranded tracking rope that we will use to keep track of when we are resilient and why during our activity; each time we face and / or overcome a challenge, we'll tie a knot in the matching strand to remind ourselves of what happened. At the end, we'll have a chance to talk about each knot / event.</p> <p>Pose the question: <i>"What do you think each of the 5 strands represents?"</i> Accept & discuss any and all answers the group give but gently steer the conversation towards the 5 aspects in the image on page 2 and / or grid on page 3. Record their 'final answers' on the blank rope picture.</p>
Activity	<p>Deliver activity as per SOP giving verbal prompts & praise throughout to highlight when they need to be / are being resilient. In between each element / climb / task / marker / challenge / skill / game etc, carry out a mini review with the group.</p> <p>Mini-Review: Ask them to share any challenges they faced and how they overcame them. For each thing they share, refer them back to the picture they edited in the introduction, and get them to tie a knot in the relevant strand of the practice rope <i>E.g.: during the team task our first plan didn't work, so we came up with a new one = adaptability. Tie a knot in the purple strand.</i></p>
Review	<p>Pack away as appropriate / needed.</p> <p>Recap: Remind the person next to you what challenge each of the knots in our practice rope represents.</p> <p>Set the Task: In pairs or threes, pick one of the challenges you faced or overcame during our session. Make a silent freeze frame of that event. Prepare 'sound captions' to go with it for each person in the freeze frame (a sound caption is a short statement / quote / phrase that gives the POV of that person in the freeze frame). <i>NB: while the participants are preparing their freeze frame, set the group leader(s) their task, detailed below.</i></p> <p>Share the Task: Each pair or three sets up their freeze frame. The rest of the group have to work out which challenge they are representing. If they are struggling to ID it, instructor to tap someone in the freeze frame on the shoulder; that is their cue to say their 'sound caption'.</p> <p>Recap: Recap what each strand of the rope represents, and how those 5 things combine to build someone who is resilient. Recap the events of the sessions, highlighting how the group made progress with each strand of their rope.</p> <p>Pose the questions: <i>"When you look at your own personal rope, what will it remind of you of?"</i> Discuss and share with the person next to them.</p> <p><i>"How will remembering that help you in the future?"</i> Discuss and share with the person next to them.</p> <p>Set & Share the Task: Your teacher / adult / leader is now going to show you some of their freeze frames, but these will be of things that might happen in the future. Your task is to guess what the scenario is, and how what you have learnt about resilience will help you succeed if you ever find yourself in that situation.</p> <p>Set the Task: Each participant gets one of each colour strand to make their own personal rope of resilience to take home and make. The group should also be given the laminate sheet with their strands written on to take with them back to school / club etc. <i>NB: making the ropes could take ages... don't let them start unless you have at least 20 minutes for them to finish!</i></p>

Further Thinking

There are many ways to break down each strand, and hundreds of questions you could ask your participants to get them thinking about them.

Using the five questions below, one for each strand, ponder what task / challenge / activity you could set up to facilitate deeper exploration and thinking in your participants.

What support makes it easy for me to adapt my mindset?

How does my perception of myself match what others think of me?

What is my understanding of cause, blame and responsibility?

How can I positively impact my own sense of belonging?

What is it about 'Type 2 Fun' that makes people feel good?

AQA Resilience Units

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