



**Empowering Adults to Help  
Students Succeed:**

**Building Adult Resilience**

# Today's Objectives

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**Objectives:** Participants will learn about:

- What it means to be dysregulated.
- Add resilience skills to your toolbox.
- How to better develop self-regulation skills in challenging moments.

# Recognizing and Interrupting Negative Self-Talk

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# We All Make Mistakes!

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- We all make mistakes, but how we use self-talk can make a huge difference regarding how we learn from our mistakes and move forward so we can “do better” the next time.
- This strategy is not meant to release people from being accountable, but rather to acknowledge that we are all humans and every mistake is an opportunity for growth.
- Too often, we are our own worst critics. Interrupting negative self-talk is a strategy to help you build your own resilience and can help to set you up for growth.
- Additionally, this is a strategy you can share with young people.
- Turn and Talk: What about this resonates with you?

# Emotional Regulation

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- Emotional regulation describes the ability to respond to emotional experiences in healthy ways (Cornell University).
- People who learn to regulate their emotions appropriately use coping mechanisms to keep themselves in check and manage their stress.
- They can also separate themselves from the stressful situation and work backward to understand the events that led to the initial emotional experience.
- Research suggests that people with strong emotional regulation skills have reduced levels of depression and stress-related physical illnesses (2014).
- Emotional dysregulation is often misunderstood. It's easy for those who don't deal with it to wonder why others can't simply "control their emotions" or "keep it together."

# Emotional Dysregulation

## Signs of Emotional Dysregulation



Overly intense emotions



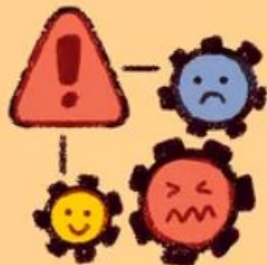
Impulsive behavior



Lack of emotional awareness



Trouble making decisions



Inability to manage behavior



Avoids difficult emotions

## Other Potential Behaviors:

- Avoidance Behaviors
  - Playing video games
  - Shopping
  - Sleeping
- Drug/Alcohol Abuse
- Checking Out/Shutting Down
- Self-Harm
- Increase in Risky Behaviors

# Cortisol

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## You want to avoid Cortisol Flooding.

- Escalation Zone!
- Cortisol is released by adrenal glands, increases heart rate, and blood pressure.
- Prefrontal cortex is intentionally “impaired” so you can handle threats.
- Your body is preparing for action (fight, flight, or freeze).
- These chemicals must pass through your body, be absorbed into tissue, and be released before your body returns to normal.
- This process takes about 18-20 minutes. Wait it out!

# “Do Over” Reflection

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Think of a specific time you were in an escalated conflict with an individual and were dysregulated.

*What pushed your button(s), and what was happening that made you feel triggered?*

For example:

- Was it something the other person did or said?
- Did it have to do with the context of your life?
- Were you having a bad day?
- Does it remind you of an experience in your past?
- Did it challenge one of your values?

**Dig deep to reflect on why you were triggered and where this trigger comes from.**

Write about this experience and your trigger(s). Explicitly state your trigger(s).



# Building Your Resilience Toolkit

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- Being aware of *and practicing* coping strategies helps put them into action when they are most needed.
- It takes practice!
- Knowing vs. doing

**Resilience:** “An ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.”

- Merriam Webster Dictionary

# 1. Three Good Things

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Dr. Bryan Sexton's Research (Duke)

- Dr. Bryan Sexton researched what people can do when they are under stress to increase resilience.
- Three Good Things is his number one go-to.

# Three Good Things

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## *The What*

- This research engaged thousands of nurses.
- Results showed that nurses who had high burnout and depression significantly improved after 15 days.
- Positive impacts last for months.
- Do it for 15 days; that's it!

## *The How*

- Reflect on your day.
- Make a list of three good things and your role in them. Write it out; don't type it.
- Can be brief and simple. For example, "I went for a lovely walk."
- Keep it up for 15 days!
- Try to do it before bed for improved sleep.

## 2. Acts of Kindness

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- Can boost feelings of confidence, control, happiness, and optimism.
- May also encourage others to repeat the good deeds they've experienced themselves, contributing to a more positive community, which is a key contributor to a healthier, longer life.
- Kindness can also increase energy, lifespan, pleasure, serotonin (the “feel-good” chemical), and oxytocin (the “love” or “cuddle” hormone), which can lower blood pressure and improve heart health.
- Reduces pain: Regions of the brain that react to painful stimulation appear to be instantly deactivated by the experience of giving.
- Being kind can boost happiness in as little as three days.

# Acts of Kindness - Possibilities

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- While driving, make room for the car that wants to enter your lane.
- Give a genuine compliment to a family member, friend, or colleague.
- Let go of a grudge and tell that person you forgive them (unless telling them makes it worse).
- Be there for a friend having a tough time. Don't try to fix it; just listen.
- Leave your mail carrier a thank-you note.
- Overtip your delivery person.

## 3. Gratitude Letter

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- Gratitude can disconnect us from toxic, negative emotions.
- Writing a letter helps to “shift our attention,” so that our focus is on positive emotions. It’s more than just “thank you.”
- Expressing gratitude benefits us even if we don’t explicitly share it with someone.
- This practice can increase happiness and positive mood; improve physical health, sleep, and energy levels; encourage the development of patience, humility, and wisdom; and help to increase resilience.
- Additionally, it can help reduce inflammation and stress, increase optimism, and change your brain to have a more positive outlook.

## 4. Signature Strengths

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- This free survey identifies your top personality character strengths — it takes about 10 minutes. (<http://www.viacharacter.org>)
  - It includes actionable tips to apply your strengths to find greater well-being.
- Living from our strengths has been shown to increase happiness, improve the quality of relationships, and alleviate stress.
- Each day, think of one thing you could do that expresses one of your strengths.

A version for young people (ages 8-17) is available and can help them emotionally and as they think about careers that connect to their strengths, which is linked to hope.

# Signature Strengths - Glimpse of Carly



## 1. Honesty

COURAGE

Speaking the truth but more broadly presenting oneself in a genuine way and acting in a sincere way; being without pretense; taking responsibility for one's feelings and actions.



## 2. Leadership

JUSTICE

Encouraging a group of which one is a member to get things done and at the same time maintain good relations within the group; organizing group activities and seeing that they happen.



## 3. Teamwork

JUSTICE

Working well as a member of a group or team; being loyal to the group; doing one's share.



## 4. Hope

TRANSCENDENCE

Expecting the best in the future and working to achieve it; believing that a good future is something that can be brought about.



## 5. Kindness

HUMANITY

Doing favors and good deeds for others; helping them; taking care of them.



# 5. Journaling

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Journaling can improve cognitive function, strengthen immune system responses and help counteract many negative effects of stress.

## Kinds of Journals:

- 1. Gratitude Journal:** Keep a daily gratitude journal where you list three or more aspects of each day for which you are grateful (think Three Good Things).
- 2. Emotional Release:** Write about your emotional responses to events throughout the day as a way of coping with stress.
- 3. Bullet or Personal Planning Journal:** Track what you need to do each day, goals you have, memories you create, and trap other things you don't want to forget.
- 4. "Do Over" Reflective Journal.**

# “In the Moment” Strategies

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“In the Moment”

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- **Paced Breathing**
  - **Box Breathing:** Inhale for a count of four, hold for a count of four, exhale for a count of four, and hold for a count of four, then begin again.
  - **4-7-8 Breathing:** Inhale for a count of four, hold for a count of seven, then exhale for a count of eight. Try to make a “whooshing” sound as you exhale.
  - **Belly breathing:** Place a hand on your chest and a hand on your belly. As you inhale, try to make the hand on your belly move out with the breath you take. Try to keep the hand on your chest still so that your breaths go deep into your belly.
- **Grounding in your senses:** Name five things you can see, four things you can hear, three things you can feel, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.

# “In the Moment” Strategies

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- Slowly, count to ten, or 100.
- If possible, “tap out.”
- Stay present. Staying conscious of your thoughts, feelings, and actions can help you stay in control.
- Identify your emotion(s) so they are less likely to take you over without your permission. This helps to keep control.
  - “I’m hurt and confused that they treated me like that.”
- Get a drink of water.
- Eat something. Protein can help in the long run; carbs in the short run.
- Get a good hug. If that’s not an option, press your back into a corner and wrap your arms around yourself so you feel pressure around your torso.
- Alternately tense and relax your body.
- Practice positive self-talk: “I can handle this. I am okay.”

# “In the Moment” Strategies

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- Create space. Pause and slow down the moment between the trigger and the response.
- Focus on a sensation:
  - Take a cold shower.
  - Hold an ice cube in one hand.
  - Press your tongue to the back of your teeth.
  - Wash your hands and stop to feel the water and soap.

Experiment with what works for you. Remember, this all takes practice.

The ability to identify when you are becoming dysregulated so you can respond in a healthy way takes effort, but is worth the energy.

# Personal Improvement Plan (PIP)

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PIPs are used to identify triggers and to help develop a plan for how to mitigate the situation in order to achieve more positive outcomes in future difficult situations.

## Part A - Sources and Behaviors

- Sources of Triggers
- Describe MY specific behavior when this happens
- Developing a hypothesis

## Part B - Strategies

- Strategies to build resilience
- Strategies to try “in the moment”
- Reinforcement strategies to keep me coming back

# Develop a Personal Improvement Plan (PIP)

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## Reflect and share:

- What seems hard and/or easy about using a PIP?
- What excites you or makes you anxious about this process?

Commit to trying 1-2 coping strategies during difficult moments.

Remember, you have to practice a strategy in order for it to become routine.

There are loads of coping strategies; it sometimes takes experimenting to find one or some that best suit you. Check out the additional resources in your resource package.

This takes practice; give yourself grace.

**THANK YOU!**

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**Data shared in this training represents data available in 2023.**

