

Building resilience in adolescents

While building resilience is a powerful tool, it is essential to recognise when professional help may be necessary



MINDTALK

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ADOLESCENCE is a critical transitional phase in human development marked by significant psychological and emotional changes. During these formative years, adolescents develop their identity, self-esteem, and emotional regulation while navigating the complexities of social pressures, academic demands, and increasingly pervasive social media influences.

This phase can be both exciting and challenging, making the development of resilience - a critical skill for coping with life's adversities - essential for maintaining mental well-being. This resilience helps them manage current stresses and prepares them for future difficulties, reducing the risk of mental health issues and enhancing overall life success.

According to global estimates from the World Health Organisation (WHO), approximately one in seven (14 per cent) of 10 to 19-year-olds experience mental health conditions. These conditions often go unrecognised and untreated.

Specific data on adolescent mental health disorders include:

- Anxiety disorders affect an estimated 3.6 per cent of 10-14 year-olds and 4.6 per cent of 15-19 year-olds globally.
- Depression is estimated to occur in 1.1 per cent of adolescents aged 10-14 years and 2.8 per cent of 15-19-year-olds.
- Behavioural disorders affect 3.6 per cent of 10-14-year-olds and 2.4 per cent of 15-19-year-olds.
- Suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among 15-19 year-olds globally.
- The recently released Adolescent Health Survey 2022 reported that one in four Malaysian adolescents reported symptoms of depression.

It's important to note that 50 per cent of mental health conditions start by age 14, which makes early identification and timely intervention crucial.

ROLE OF PARENTS AND COMMUNITY

Parents and caregivers play a fundamental role in supporting adolescent mental health.



Creating a supportive home environment is essential for adolescents. This includes maintaining open lines of communication, being approachable, and actively listening to adolescents' concerns.

Recognising signs of mental health issues and providing timely intervention is also essential. Parents can model resilience by demonstrating healthy coping strategies and maintaining a positive attitude, which can influence their adolescent's approach to challenges.

Schools and community programmes can offer valuable resources for promoting mental health and resilience. Many schools, local health clinics, and NGOs provide counselling services, peer support groups, and extracurricular activities that can support adolescents' well-being.

Community programmes, such as youth organisations and mental health workshops, can provide additional support and resources. Encouraging adolescents to take advantage of these resources can help them build resilience and access the support they need.

A healthy lifestyle contributes significantly to mental well-being and resilience.

Encouraging adolescents to maintain a balanced diet, exercise regularly, and ensure adequate sleep can positively impact their mood and stress levels.

Physical activity, for example, is known to release endorphins, which can improve mood and reduce anxiety. By fostering these healthy habits, adolescents can better manage stress and build resilience.

WHEN TO SEEK PROFESSIONAL HELP

While building resilience is a powerful tool, it is essential to recognise when professional help may be necessary. If an adolescent exhibits persistent signs of mental health issues such as severe anxiety, depression, or significant changes in behaviour, seeking professional intervention is crucial.

Mental health professionals can provide tailored support and treatment options to address specific needs. Building resilience in adolescents is crucial for their mental health during their teenage years.

Effective strategies outlined here will help teens navigate challenges and build confidence, setting them up for a healthier future. - THE HEALTH

Effective strategies for building resilience

Healthy coping mechanisms

Teaching adolescents effective coping mechanisms is essential for building resilience. Techniques like mindfulness, journaling, and relaxation exercises can help manage stress and emotions. Mindfulness practices, such as meditation and deep-breathing exercises, help adolescents stay grounded and present, reducing feelings of anxiety. Journaling permits teens to express their thoughts and feelings, providing a beneficial outlet for emotional expression. These practices should be integrated into their daily lives, including between hectic academic classroom sessions.

Positive self-talk

Encouraging positive self-talk is another vital strategy for building

resilience. Adolescents often struggle with negative self-perceptions and self-criticism. Teaching them to change negative thoughts with positive affirmations can improve self-esteem and emotional resilience. Teens can develop a more optimistic and constructive mindset by focusing on their strengths and accomplishments rather than their shortcomings.

Goal-setting and problem-solving

Goal-setting and problem-solving skills are also critical aspects of resilience. Helping adolescents set realistic goals provides them with a sense of purpose and direction. Additionally, teaching them problem-solving skills enables them to tackle challenges systematically and confidently. Encouraging teens to break down

more significant problems into smaller, manageable tasks can make them feel more in control and less overwhelmed.

Social support and relationships

Strong social support networks play a significant role in building resilience. Positive relationships with family, friends, and mentors provide emotional support and encouragement. Encouraging adolescents to cultivate healthy relationships and seek support from trusted individuals can help them feel less isolated and more supported during challenging times. Open communication with parents and caregivers fosters a supportive environment where teens feel comfortable discussing their concerns and seeking help.