Sustaining and Developing Resilience in Schools

Resilience matters and can be influenced. ... Resilience – and psychological fitness in a broader sense – can also be learned, and enhanced.'

Sinking and Swimming, Young Foundation, 2009

There are few professions which call for such high emotional investment as that demanded of teaching. Not only do teachers and school leaders require physical energy, they also daily draw on their own reserves of hope, courage, optimism, patience and compassion as they interact with students, parents and colleagues. Many in the profession are so focused on the needs of others that they forget to look after their own needs, often with damaging results. Recent market research found that 60% of teachers have sought specialist support to cope with work-related emotional and mental health issues.[1] Absence from work is costly to the individual and the school.

Everyone in schools is under pressure. How we deal with that pressure can make the difference between flourishing and floundering. Becoming more resilient helps individuals to avoid the damage caused by the effects of chronic stress. Growing resilience means becoming consciously competent: doing more of what sustains resilience, less of what undermines it, and understanding how and why we might work against our own best interests in this area. Most people can see the wisdom of building resilience. Often they don't know how to start, or make the assumption that resilience is fixed that you're born with: you either have or you don't.

Resilience **can** be developed. You can find exercises and support online; you can read about it. If you want to take action today, you may like to keep a log. Notice when you are feeling at your most resilient. Make a note of what led to that feeling, thinking particularly about your physical energy, sense of control, and connection with what you most value. Then notice when you feel at your least resilient, focusing on the same things. That will give you an insight into what helps and what hinders you in maintaining your resilience, so you have an idea of what builds your energy.

If you want to take it further, there are different types of interventions which can help, from one-off sessions to help develop understanding, through 1: 1 coaching for individuals, to programmes where you can learn with a group of like-minded individuals. *For further details visit www.chrysalisleadershipdevelopment.com or email Julia@chrysalisleadershipdevelopment.com*

Benefits to schools
more resilient staff; increased energy for productive working in the classroom; less absenteeism and greater consistency for students; increased capacity for dealing with challenging issues; less reliance on leaders to absorb stresses of others; a more resilient culture.

Benefits to individuals
increased knowledge of their own triggers for building and undermining resilience; access to research and writing about resilience; increased understanding of the connection between emotional resilience, health and well-being; improved strategies to support work/life balance; support for dealing with unproductive habits of thinking and behaviour.

[1] Figures from the *Teacher Support Network*