Enhancing Resilience 1: Communication, Changes and Challenges
The classroom materials have been designed for junior secondary school students and are particularly useful for new groups.

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mixers and team building games for Health,
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Use this booklet in conjunction with
CommunityMatters, which gives a cultural and social context to enhancing resilience.
The MindMatters materials
MindMatters resources

SchoolMatters: Mapping and Managing Mental Health in Schools
This overarching document provides schools with a framework and planning tools to assist them with possible structures, strategies, partnerships and curriculum programs to promote and protect the mental health of all members of the school community.

CommunityMatters: Working with Diversity for Wellbeing
This booklet explores community, culture and identity and suggests strategies for managing the wellbeing needs of diverse groups of students, particularly those who feel marginalised for social reasons, within the contexts of school and broader communities.

Educating for Life: A Guide for School-Based Responses to Preventing Self-Harm and Suicide
This guide outlines the policies, processes and practices that contribute to a comprehensive approach to suicide prevention.

Enhancing Resilience 1: Communication, Changes and Challenges
The curriculum units are designed to enhance resilience via the promotion of communication, participation, positive self-regard, teamwork and a sense of belonging and connectedness to school. They are particularly useful with new groups.

Creating connections
Activities for the Home Group, Personal Development, Pastoral Care or core curriculum teacher, focussing on issues of communication, codes of behaviour and team work.

Games collection
A collection of interactive games designed to promote communication, cooperation and teambuilding. Suitable for use within each of the key learning areas.

Friendship and belonging
Activities for the English class exploring the challenge of making and maintaining friendships.

People, identity and culture
Activities for the Study of Society class exploring personal and social identity, and addressing issues of belonging and culture.

Enhancing Resilience 2: Stress and Coping
This booklet guides schools in their focus on enhancing the resilience and connectedness of their students. It is targeted at middle to senior secondary students and deals with the importance
of providing ongoing opportunities for participation and communication, creating a positive school culture, friendly relationships, and valuing school and community. Two booklets, designed for use in Health, Pastoral Care or Religious Education, address issues of coping with stress and challenge, help-seeking, peer support, stress-management, and goal setting.

**Coping**
Activities for Health or Pastoral Care in which students identify some of the stresses and challenges young people have to deal with, and explore the range of emotions commonly associated with feelings of stress. They examine a range of coping strategies and consider ways of dealing with a range of challenging circumstances.

**Stressbusters**
Activities for Health or Pastoral Care in which students explore the role and effect of supportive groups, the role of trust and courage in help-seeking behaviour, and explore conflict resolution and stress-management techniques.

**A Whole School Approach to Dealing with Bullying and Harassment**
This booklet guides schools in their attempts to take a whole school approach to dealing with bullying and harassment. A comprehensive check list to guide policy and practice is included. Three curriculum units, targeted at junior secondary school students, are provided for use in the Health, English and Drama class. The Health unit is also suitable for Personal Development and Pastoral Care classes. It is anticipated that schools would choose one of the units for use with a particular class.

**Facing facts: a whole school approach to dealing with bullying and harassment for use in the Health class**
Students define and give examples of different types of bullying and harassment, and consider the effects of bullying on victims, perpetrators and onlookers. They identify common barriers to seeking help or taking protective action. They are equipped to research bullying in their own school and use interactive exercises to develop help-seeking and assertiveness.

**Giving voice: a whole school approach to dealing with bullying and harassment for use in the English class**
Students explore the language of bullying, and look at forms of bullying perpetuated at different levels of society. They use group work and participatory exercises to read, write and discuss poetry, stories and newspaper items, exploring the effects of bullying and possibilities for protective action.

**Defining moments: a whole school approach to dealing with bullying and harassment for use in the Drama class**
Students explore the body language of status and power, identify and enact common human responses to messages of welcome or rejection. They also use a range of dramatic devices to depict and examine the stories and experiences of oppression, and prepare a performance piece around the theme of bullying.
Understanding Mental Illnesses

This document provides an overview of the issues a school may face in relation to mental illness among students, staff and families. It includes a curriculum unit, aimed at middle to senior secondary students, that intends to increase students’ understanding of mental illness, reduce the stigma associated with mental health problems, and increase help-seeking behaviour. A video accompanies this curriculum unit, and this is also relevant for considering mental illness and stigma with any school audience.

Loss and Grief

Issues of loss and grief have been linked to depression, and traditionally such issues have been under-explored in schools. This document provides an overview of school practices relevant to dealing with death and loss within the school, including a sequence of lessons for junior, middle and senior secondary school students.

MindMatters is available from:

Curriculum Corporation
PO Box 177
Carlton South VIC 3053
Australia
Tel 03 9207 9600
Fax 03 9639 1616
Email sales: sales@curriculum.edu.au

Or download from the MindMatters website:

http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters

MindMatters Website:
www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters

The website contains background information, a diary of events, case studies, a chat line, an annotated bibliography, PDF copies of all the booklets, links to other sites, state-by-state information on professional development programs, curriculum ideas referenced to curriculum frameworks and stories of how schools are implementing MindMatters.
It is intended that the classroom program will be taught as part of a comprehensive whole school approach to mental health promotion as outlined in the SchoolMatters and Educating for Life booklets. As part of a whole school approach, professional development and collegial support should be available to the classroom teacher.

It is recommended that teachers use, or encompass, the whole unit of work to enhance student awareness, knowledge and skills. Using one or two sessions from the start of each unit is likely to raise awareness, but allow insufficient time for skill-development. Teachers should read the introductory section of the booklet that outlines some of the key concepts and research relevant to the issues covered in the classroom program.

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**KEY**

**SESSION**
A session includes a series of activities that may extend over a number of lessons. Time taken to complete any activity can vary greatly from class to class. Teachers may wish to modify activities to suit the needs of their class.

**INTENTION**
The intention identifies the knowledge and skills to work towards in the session.

**RESOURCES**
A list of the resources required for the session.

**HOW TO**
In the ‘How to’ section, a step-by-step approach is used to model how the session might be run.

**SAMPLE QUESTIONS**
Sample questions are provided as a guide to class discussion.

**TEACHER TIPS**
Assistance and advice is provided for the teacher in the form of teacher tips in boxes in the left column.

**TEACHER TALK**
This text provides information to be provided to the class, or background information for the teacher.

**Classroom resources:**
- activity sheets are provided as masters
- information sheets are provided as masters
- overhead transparency masters
A whole school approach to enhancing resilience

Resilience – the capacity to cope with change and challenge, and to bounce back during difficult times.

In recent years there has been a great deal of interest in the ways young people cope with the circumstances they confront in their lives. Schools are very much aware that just as physical illness can affect a student’s performance or capacity to concentrate and engage in study, so too can a challenging personal or family situation, relationship problem or mental health problem.

Schools committed to the welfare and learning of their students are addressing the questions:

- How can we provide a safe and supportive environment in which all students can maximise their learning?
- How can we remain accessible and responsive to their needs?
- How can we assist our students to develop their ability and skills to cope with challenge and stress?
- How can we identify those students in particular need of assistance or support?
- How can we support students who are dealing with experiences of trauma or dislocation?

The conceptual model underpinning MindMatters is that of the Health Promoting Schools. This model entails a focus on the interconnecting domains of curriculum, school ethos and partnership (see diagram on page 18). Often when using schools as a setting for health promotion or intervention, only the domain of curriculum is targeted, forgetting the impact of school ethos and environment, and the power and potential support to be generated through partnerships with parents, community and service providers. For further material on a whole school approach see the SchoolMatters booklet.

Rationale

A whole school approach to enhancing resilience entails:

- a shift from a focus on ‘fixing’ individuals to that of creating healthy systems
- a shift from problems-based needs assessment to a belief in human potential for development, learning and wellbeing
- an acknowledgment that the ‘health of the helper’ is critical.*

The Health Promoting Schools framework

Taking a whole school approach to enhancing resilience acknowledges those students with particular needs and seeks to provide for them. In addition it seeks to promote and provide a safe and supportive environment, and an ethos conducive to mental health and learning. The World Health Organisation model of a comprehensive school mental health program is a useful guide in considering the place of school-based efforts.

Understanding effective coping: What does the research say?

‘Coping is what one does: it is the cognitive and behavioural strategies that are used to deal with the demands of everyday living.’*

A number of factors have been demonstrated to contribute to an individual’s capacity to cope. Some of these protective factors are outside the reach of the school. However, a number can be enhanced via positive school programs, and by the quality of relationships and opportunities for participation provided by the school.

**Protective factors**

- **Handling the demands of school**
  Young people who feel they can handle the demands placed on them by school are less likely to feel depressed.

- **Belief in own ability to cope**
  Young people who believe in their own abilities and capacity to deal with challenging circumstances are better able to cope. Belief in one’s own capacity to cope can be learned from the responses given by others.

- **Sense of control**
  People who believe they have some control over important factors in their lives feel more able to deal with the challenges they face. Those who blame others for their failures and see themselves as helpless or powerless tend to cope less effectively.

- **Individual disposition**
  Factors such as temperament, high self-esteem, internal locus of control and autonomy contribute to effective coping and resilience.

- **Family circumstances**
  The presence or absence of a supportive family environment, including warmth, cohesiveness, closeness, order and organisation, contributes to emotional wellbeing and the capacity to cope.

- **Support, belonging and role-models**
  The availability of support systems in the form of individuals or groups who provide positive models for identification can be a significant factor affecting the young person’s capacity to deal with challenging circumstances. A caring teacher may be a key support or role-model for a student.

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Students at risk of alienation from the school

Research has shown that a sense of connectedness to the school is a protective factor for young people. An examination of some of the key factors in those experiencing alienation from the school can give valuable pointers for school-based action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dimensions of student alienation*</th>
<th>Pointers for school-based action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Powerlessness:** students experience low expectations of controlling their lives and of achieving goals | • provide opportunities to involve students in setting goals  
• structure for choice and responsibility within the classroom and within broader school life  
• work with individuals to set high but attainable goals  
• support students in working towards their goals |
| **Meaninglessness:** students experience a lack of connectedness between present and future, and are unclear on the connection between what is taught and their future roles in society | • teacher to highlight relevance and purpose of tasks  
• need for practical learning  
• involvement in real work and community service  
• promotion of optimistic habits of thought |
| **Normlessness:** students perceive a conflict between school norms and peer roles, and believe that socially disapproved behaviour is required to achieve goals (the achievable goal in this instance may be that of belonging to a distinct sub-group of peers) | • develop sense of belonging and attachment to the school via involvement in school activities  
• structure opportunities for involvement with key adults  
• generate opportunities to be recognised and valued  
• positive role-models |
| **Social estrangement:** these students are not integrated into a friendship network, and suffer lack of involvement and association with others in social context, and experience loneliness or stigma | • provide safe environment free of harassment  
• develop opportunities for students to participate with and develop connections with others  
• design classroom activities to promote participation and support  
• provide safe and welcoming places  
• run special interest groups  
• provide key adult as mentor  
• build opportunities for peer support |

**Gender differences in coping strategies***

Extensive research work done in the area of adolescent coping has demonstrated that boys and girls tend to use different coping strategies. Boys are more likely to try to manage by themselves and girls are more likely to turn to friends for support.

Adolescent girls are more likely to report stressful events than boys are, and the events girls perceive to be stressful are associated with interpersonal and family relationships. Girls show a greater reliance on the approval of others, are more likely to expect the worst, to blame themselves, or to engage in wishful thinking. However, they also use more strategies for seeking help and emotional support than boys do. Girls are also more likely to be dependent on family and teachers for emotional support and more likely to respond to expectations held for them.

Girls tend to feel dissatisfied with their body shape and perceive themselves more negatively and pessimistically than boys do, and their self-image is more directly related to self-perceived popularity. Boys are more likely to ventilate their feelings, act out, or use denial, but are also more likely to use humour. In addition, boys are overly represented in the suicide, homicide, accident, and substance abuse statistics.

**Help-seeking**

The *MindMatters* classroom units each place an emphasis on developing help-seeking skills. They aim to debunk the myths that asking for help is a sign of weakness, or that referring friends is a breach of loyalty. A help-seeking focus also involves raising teachers’ awareness of the invisible barriers to help-seeking.

**Barriers to help-seeking:**

- lack of trust in others
- fear of burdening others
- fear that the situation may be made worse if known
- fear that others can cause worsening of the problem
- shame
- embarrassment
- guilt
- belief that one should be able to cope on one’s own
- lack of knowledge about available support
- lack of access to support services
- culturally inappropriate services.

Given that any or a combination of these factors may stop a young person from seeking help, teachers may need to be vigilant in passing on concerns about students. Schools should set up clear pathways for in-house self-peer, parent or teacher referrals.

These barriers may also be at work in the staff room, stopping teachers from seeking peer support, or in the parent community, holding them away from the school. Whether young people are encountering bullying, family or financial problems, substance related problems, or difficulties with school-work or deadlines, the welfare arm of the school needs to be proactive in order to build bridges over these barriers. Bridges are built with powerful invitations, and opportunities to communicate and build trust.

*Extensive use has been made of the research and literature review presented in the following work: Frydenberg, E., (1997) Adolescent Coping. Theoretical and Research Perspectives, Routledge, London.*
Key stresses which young people encounter

Young people are the best source of information about what causes them stress. The MindMatters curriculum materials incorporate activities in which the participants identify those situations that they perceive to be challenging or stressful. Those working in a pastoral capacity with students can ask about what young people find stressful or challenging. Some of these factors can be addressed in a proactive way by the school, particularly those relating to transition and assessment.

Some of the key stresses which young people face include dealing with:

- racism
- transition to high school
- leaving school
- school work, study and competitive assessment
- juggling demands of work, study, family and friends
- making friends, uncertainties about acceptance or belonging
- loss or change in family life due to splitting or blending of families, divorce or death
- family conflict
- conflicts with friends
- body image or changes occurring at puberty
- same or opposite sex relationships
- decisions about future study and leaving school or home
- parental unemployment, retrenchment or work stress
- their future
- financial worries
- earning money.

Those experiencing mental or physical illness require additional support in dealing with these challenges.

Using the Health Promoting Schools framework

(See diagram on page 18)

School ethos and environment

Enhancing school culture

Research suggests that the success of best practice strategies associated with positive learning and developmental outcomes in students depends on the ongoing opportunities for participation, and on the quality of relationships surrounding them.

Successful schools enhance a sense of belonging, connectedness and self-worth when they:

- build caring relationships
  – offering support, compassion, trust
- set high and achievable expectations
  – offering respect, guidance, affirmation and acknowledgment, building on strengths of each person
- provide opportunities for participation and contribution
  – responsibilities, real decision-making power, building ownership.
Positive relationships are promoted both within the classroom and via participation in school-wide activities, which build a sense of community, identity and belonging.

**Classroom climate**

The classroom climate is acknowledged to be a critical part of school culture. In *MindMatters*, the importance of every teacher being a teacher for mental health is emphasised. An anti-bullying program, for example, can be most effective when every teacher stands both as a role-model and a guardian, protecting and modelling respect for the rights and responsibilities of class members. A safe and supportive learning environment in each classroom is an integral part of the Health Promoting School. (See *MindMatters* booklet: *A Whole School Approach to Dealing with Bullying and Harassment*.)

### Classroom climate: advice to the classroom teacher

- be climate oriented versus task oriented *(attend to how students learn as well as what they learn, build in cooperative tasks, enforce the no put-downs rule, and promote inclusion and participation)*
- develop rapport *(smile, greet, talk to individuals as well as groups)*
- don’t take it personally when students misbehave
- know you can engage common sense *(be helpful, firm and consistent)*
- don’t be a doormat: practice effective discipline *(rules protect students right to learn)*
- resist labelling your students

**School partnerships**

A whole school approach to enhancing mental health entails a partnership with parents and the local community.

Understanding the challenges and utilising the strengths and resources of the community is a critical way to enrich the school’s offering. Teachers and school leaders need time to contact and to collaborate with parents, local ethnic or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community groups, health services, local leisure, arts, community service, and sporting groups.

Designing opportunities and channels for consultation and participation will also include protocols and pathways to facilitate shared care, and school-based referrals to specialist health services.

Refer to *SchoolMatters* for further guidance in this area.

**Curriculum materials**

The *MindMatters* curriculum materials utilise a range of teaching strategies. Activities structuring talk and team work provide opportunities to develop skills and confidence in communicating with others.

Interactive teaching strategies provide ongoing opportunities for:

- participation
- communication
- building relationships
- fun
- building belonging and connectedness through teamwork and shared projects.

### Community Matters

The ‘whole student’ approach (Appendix 1) transforms resilience research into a practical framework.
Philosophy and concepts behind the practice

A number of components identified in the research into effective coping have been utilised in the design of the classroom activities. The curriculum units and teaching processes have been designed to assist in teaching for as well as about mental health.

Many of the sessions utilise experiential and interactive teaching strategies to promote learning and skills development. These activities can introduce a level of fun and vitality into the classroom and, at the same time, require students to cooperate and communicate in order to address the challenges inherent in the task. The range of kinaesthetic, spatial, verbal and visual activities allow for a range of preferred learning styles and literacy levels.

Guided discussion is used to assist students to move from an experiential to a reflective mode. Discussion and processing of the activity assists students to develop concepts and language with which to further examine and share their experience. Students also move to a level of conceptualisation and awareness, which would be difficult without a concrete or experiential base.

Activities which employ the use of humour have been incorporated. Structuring opportunities for fun, engagement and humour in experiential activities can assist in reducing the tension experienced by students contained within a classroom.

Intentional use has been made of the following ‘ingredients’ identified in the research as factors effective in enhancing resilience:

- the use of optimism and positive habits of thought
- the promotion of feelings of mastery and control
- positivity – feeling good about self and culture
- the use of humour – to energise, reduce tension, and help heal anxiety
- the use of metaphor – metaphors can inhibit or promote coping (there is a direct relationship between the representations we carry in our minds and our actions: accessing images and creating new ones is one way to achieve a transformation in coping behaviour).

National curriculum framework

The curriculum units have been developed to further the appropriate outcomes of the Health, English and Studies of Society frameworks.

www.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters
Teacher professional development

A number of the resources and activities in this booklet can be used to assist the staff to look at the ways in which the school supports student and equips them to deal with challenge or adversity. Many teachers will appreciate professional development activities that allow them to sample the interactive techniques. In addition, the issue of staff stress should be considered, as a whole school approach requires consideration of the mental health of all the key players.

Importance of school practice and ethos
• Read introductory materials.
• Conduct audit in SchoolMatters.
• Use check list in introduction to A Whole School Approach to Dealing with Bullying and Harassment.

Stress and Coping
Use activities from sessions 1 and 3 in the Coping unit of Enhancing Resilience 2: Stress and Coping.

Help-seeking
Use activities from session 4 in the Coping unit of Enhancing Resilience 2: Stress and Coping, and sessions 2 and 5 in the Facing facts unit of A Whole School Approach to Dealing with Bullying and Harassment.

Gender and cultural differences
Staff can benefit from an awareness of common gender and cultural differences in the way young people cope. Sessions 1, 3 and 6 in the Coping unit can assist staff to explore this issue. Work with leaders or representatives of your local Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community or ethnic groups to gain a better understanding of the values, belief systems, strengths and needs of those groups.

Transition
The development of programs and processes to support students and their families at key times of transition (for example, moving into high school, leaving school, choosing future directions) is critical. Activities provided in the Creating connections unit in Enhancing Resilience I: Communication, Changes and Challenges can be used equally well within the staff room to promote interaction and communication.

Suicide prevention
Use the introductory material of Enhancing Resilience and read Educating for Life and SchoolMatters.

Community Matters
• Chapter 2 provides additional professional development activities.
• The ‘Action Inventory’ (Appendix 8) is a comprehensive professional development resource.
Check list of strategies to enhance resilience

In taking a whole school approach, schools need to acknowledge that support is not merely the provision of counselling or referral once the problem has occurred, and prevention is not only teaching *about* mental health or drugs or developing communication skills. Enhancing school ethos entails the greater challenge of building a healthy community in each school where there is a meaningful role for all and where positive relationships are modelled.

The provision of a supportive environment will entail the capacity to respond to both individual needs of staff, parents and students. The check list provided can be a useful tool to guide examination of policy and practice as it impacts on the mental and social wellbeing of the members of the school community.

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**CHECK LIST TO GUIDE A WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACH TO ENHANCING RESILIENCE**

**Does the school set out to build positive relationships and partnerships, and enhance school ethos via activities, which:**

- value and respect cultural diversity and needs
- incorporate the student voice
- encourage responsibility
- provide opportunities for students to experience and demonstrate autonomy and real achievement
- are positive and generous in acknowledging effort and achievement in a wide range of human endeavour
- provide opportunities for young people to extend their own personal repertoire of skills and abilities
- cater for differences in abilities and coping styles
- address patterns of student participation
- provide supportive management of the key transitions into, and out of, secondary school
- effectively deal with instances of bullying, harassment and racism
- use inclusive and interactive teaching styles
- involve students in community service
- establish clear referral systems and ensure in-house counselling/welfare staff available upon student, staff or parent referral
- liaise with the community and its services.
A whole school approach to enhancing resilience

- Lessons in specialist health areas
- Community service
- Cultural / social education
- Non-violent conflict resolution
- Counselling services
- Family support
- Social skills training
- Help-seeking and peer referral
- Comprehensive health curriculum
- Transition programs
- Stress management programs
- Curriculum teaching and learning
- Ethos and environment
- Partnerships and services
- Access to staff for help
- Awareness of individual needs
- Respect for differences
- Private areas for talking
- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Pastoral care
- Identification and referral
- Parent programs and involvement
- Peer support
- Counseling services
- Teacher / teacher, teacher / student, and parent / teacher relationships
- Community service
- Pastoral care
- Identification and referral
- Parent programs and involvement
- Comprehensive health curriculum
- Transition programs
- Stress management programs
- Curriculum teaching and learning
- Ethos and environment
- Partnerships and services
- Access to staff for help
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