

Building Resilience During Challenging Times

Schools Creatively Supporting Students

It's fair to say that while COVID-19 has affected almost every aspect of life, schools in particular have been on a roller coaster. While some schools shut, others stayed open, and some resorted to online teaching. The medical advice stated that schools were safe, and then coronavirus cases began surfacing. The situation has been complex and is evolving rapidly.

So it's quite understandable that there is apprehension about the short and long term effects on students. While the current focus is on physical health, officials are increasingly aware of the mental health fall out as well.

In the "next normal," as this period is often referred to, it is best to tread carefully and support each other as best we can. Here is some useful advice from UNICEF to support children:

1. Be calm and proactive in your conversations with children. Check in with them to see how they are doing. Their emotions will change regularly and you need to show them that's okay.
2. Engage children in creative activities to help them express and communicate negative feelings in a safe and supportive environment. This helps children find positive ways to express difficult feelings such as anger, fear or sadness.
3. As children often take their emotional cues from adults, it is important for adults to manage their own emotions well and to remain calm. Listen to children's concerns, speak kindly and reassure them.

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Given the global nature of this pandemic, international organisations have come together to support the education sector. The United Nations, UNICEF, The World Bank, World Food Programme and UNHCR have collaborated to produce a 'Framework for Opening Schools'.

I am pleased that this framework emphasises the mental health aspect. One of the recommendations is to, **"Increase provision of mental health and psychosocial support services that address stigmatisation/discrimination and support children and their families in coping with the continued uncertainties of the pandemic."**

If your school is exploring creative ways to help students be more resilient, express their feelings and to enhance their social-emotional learning skills, take a closer look at DRUMBEAT.

This evidence-based, therapeutic program is making a positive difference in schools across Australia, New Zealand and around the world.

Visit <https://holyoake.org.au/drumbeat> to learn more about DRUMBEAT and the results of independent research in WA schools. You will see that this programme can be customised to address a range of issues such as anxiety, anger, fear, sadness, bullying, overcoming challenges, resilience, leadership, trauma, life skills, team work and more.

The power of the programme is well summarised by Jessica Fredericks, a DRUMBEAT Facilitator in Florida.



She said, ***“This programme is a unique way for kids to learn resilience. They learn this, not by us telling them, but by actively doing the collaborative work required to make music. It teaches key life skills that translate into behavioural change.”***

Holyoake has trained hundreds of teachers to become DRUMBEAT Facilitators. If you are keen to become a Facilitator, you now have the option to complete this program online anytime, anywhere and at your own pace. You will find more details at <https://bit.ly/3g57hdy>.

I would like to end with a quote from Professor Rosalind Croucher, President of the Australian Human Rights Commission, who said, ***“Children are living through unprecedented times. Many children will be anxious and confused. Protecting them from the inevitable social and financial consequences of the outbreak must remain a top priority. We’re all in this together, and we need to make sure nobody is left behind, including children.”***

Stay safe and well. 



Angie Paskevicius

Angie is the CEO of Holyoake, a non-profit organisation that also operates DRUMBEAT as a social enterprise. She is a well-respected leader in the sector and a Telstra Businesswoman of the Year WA 2015. She is a passionate advocate of mental wellness and is acknowledged as a thought leader in this space.

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