



## Building Resilience in School-Aged Youth

**STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE**<sup>SM</sup>



**Children's**<sup>SM</sup>  
Healthcare of Atlanta

# Objectives

- Increase knowledge of strategies that build resilience in students .
- Recognize how awareness, identification, expression and management of feelings influence emotional development.
- Recognize how communication contributes to healthy emotional development.
- Increase confidence to normalize feelings in conversations.



**STRONG<sup>4</sup>LIFE**



Helping families raise healthy,  
safe, resilient kids.



# The Strong4Life Healthy Habits

Eat smarter,  
**drink** water

Screens away,  
go play

Get **rest** to  
be your **best**

Emotions are  
real, express  
how you feel



# Why are we here?

Eat smarter,  
drink water

Screens away,  
go play

Get **rest** to  
be your **best**

Emotions are  
real, express  
how you feel



# 1 in 5

children in the U.S. (from birth to age 17)  
has a mental, behavioral or developmental disorder.



National Alliance on Mental Illness



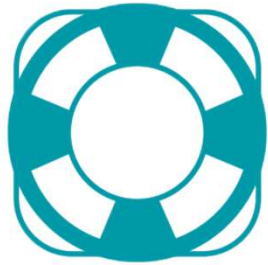
50%

of all lifetime mental health cases begin by age 14

8 to 10

years (on average) between onset of symptoms and intervention





“There comes a point where we need to stop just pulling people out of the river. We need to go upstream and find out why they’re falling in.”

– Desmond Tutu





# Resilience is the long-term goal

## Resilience

The ability to handle life's ups and downs.

Resilient students are better able to:

- Cope with challenges.
- Manage stress.
- Make healthy choices.



# SSNRs: Safe, Stable, Nurturing Relationships

## Safe Relationship

Free from physical and psychological harm

## Stable Relationship

Predictable and consistent

## Nurturing Relationship

Responsive to the needs of the child



## C.I.R.C.L.E.S.: Building blocks for resilience

**Communication**

**Independence**

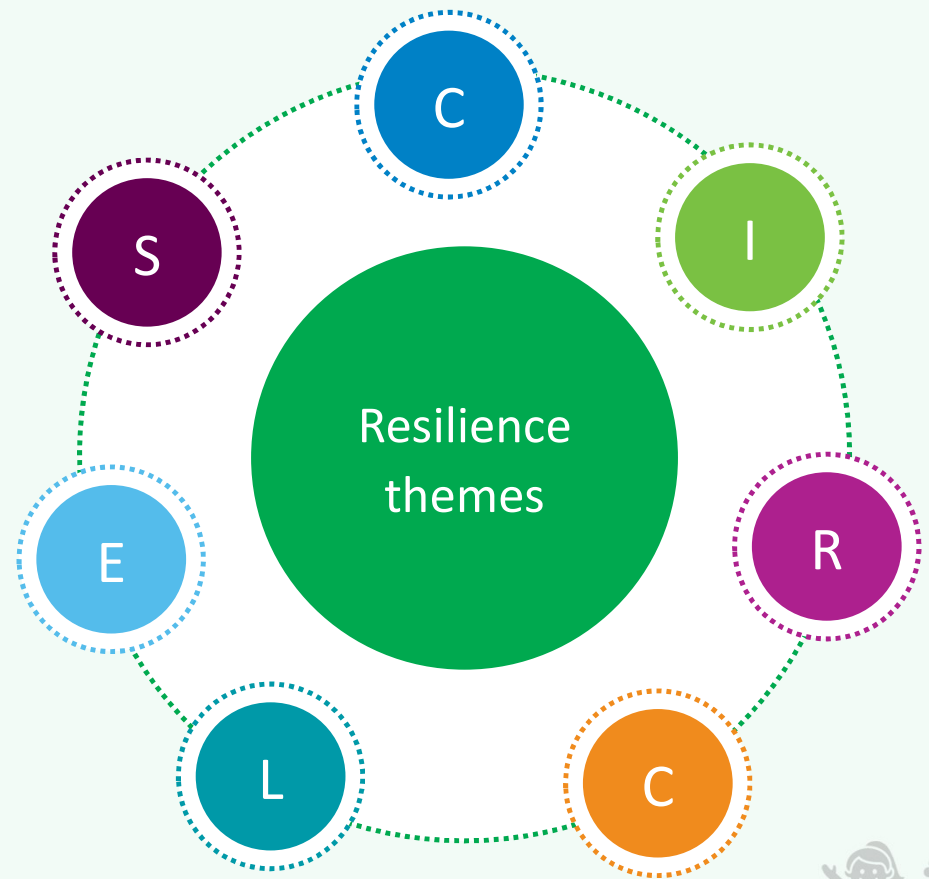
**Routines**

**Coping**

**Limits**

**Emotional expression**

**Solving problems**



# Communication

**Communication** builds resilience by teaching students how to effectively connect with others and share their needs.

- Teach communication skills.
- Create opportunities for ongoing communication.
- Use open-ended questions.



# Independence

**Independence** builds resilience by developing a student's confidence to try things on their own.

- Allow students to try things on their own.
- Allow students to make safe mistakes.
- Offer choices.



# Routines

**Routines** build resilience by creating a sense of safety and predictability.

- Create routines for practicing healthy habits.
- Create routines for communication.



# Coping

**Coping skills** build resilience by teaching students how to manage emotions.

- Teach new skills when everyone is calm.
- Practice regularly.
- Try lots of different skills.
- Model healthy coping strategies.



# Limits

**Limits** build resilience by teaching students to understand boundaries and expectations.

- Use limits to teach, rather than punish or control.
- Offer simple choices.
- Give reasonable consequences.





# Emotional expression

**Emotional expression** builds resilience by allowing students to express, process and manage their feelings.

- Help students label feelings.
- Allow all feelings.
- Validate feelings.
- Offer different options for safe expression.



# Solving problems

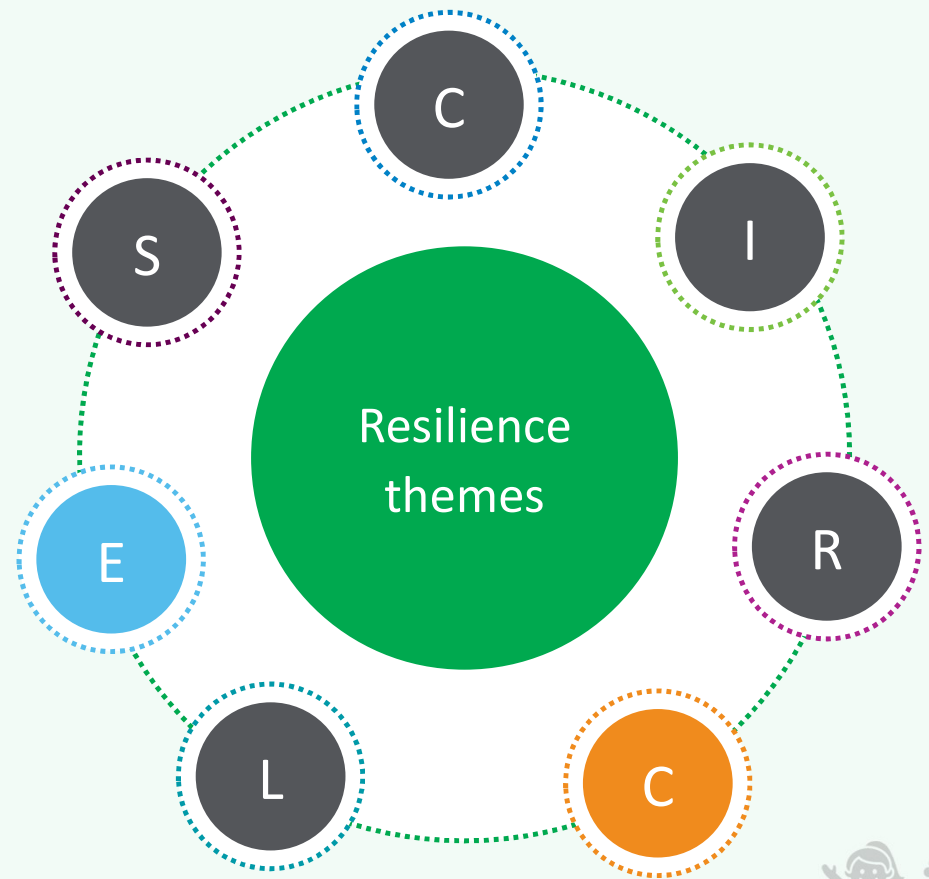
**Solving problems** builds resilience by increasing confidence to navigate future challenges.

- Provide opportunities for practice.
- Let students make mistakes.
- Use “how” instead of “why” questions.



# Supporting emotional development

1. Awareness
2. Identification and expression
3. Management



# Build awareness and normalize feelings



Everyone has  
feelings



All feelings are  
OK and normal



There are no  
bad or negative  
feelings



You can feel  
more than one  
feeling at a  
time



# Message makeover

Instead of:

“Don’t worry about that.”

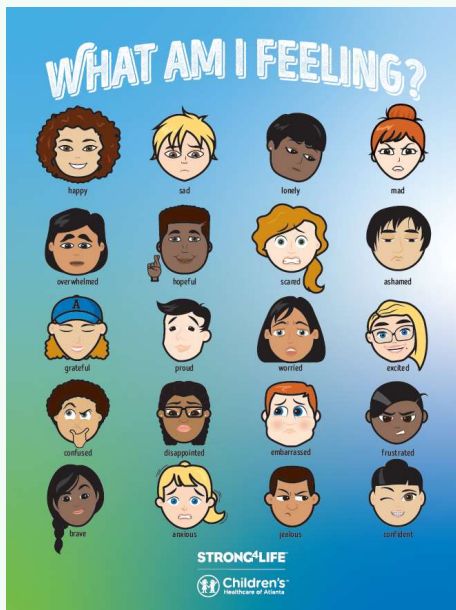


Try:

“It’s normal to feel worried.”



# Practice identifying and expressing feelings



- Teach various feeling words
- Practice identifying feelings
- Offer different options for safe expression
- Validate all feelings



# Message makeover

Instead of:

“Don’t be mad.”



Try:

“I wonder if you’re feeling frustrated. Is that right?”



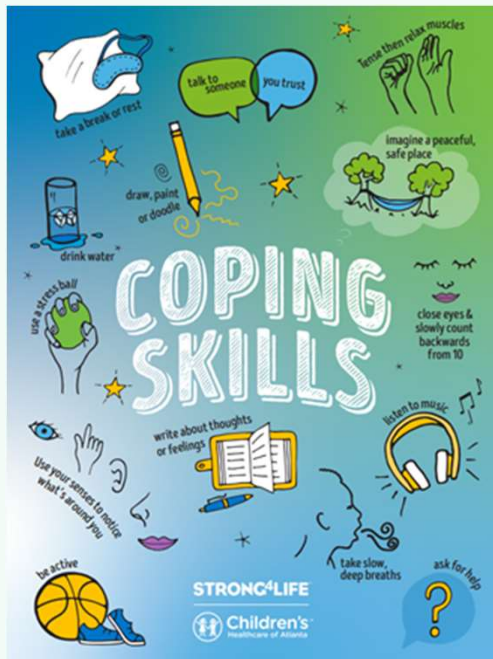
“People have said ‘don’t cry’ to other people for years and years, and all it has ever meant is ‘I’m too uncomfortable when you show feelings.’”

- Mr. Rogers





# Managing feelings



- Managing feelings is a learned skill.
- Managing feelings is a lifelong practice.
- Language: “Coping skills are things we do to feel better.”
- Help students find what works for them.



# Message makeover

Instead of:

“You need to calm down.”



Try:

“Want to try taking some deep breaths or going for a walk?”



# The brain: “flipping your lid”

Dan Siegel’s Hand Model of the Brain

## Calm

thinking,  
reasoning

problem-  
solving



## Stressed

emotions, arousal,  
fight/flight/freeze

survival mode



# Tips for managing feelings

- Teach new skills when everyone is calm.
- Practice, practice, practice.
- Be a positive role model.
- Have fun with it.
- Have realistic expectations.
- Don't give up.



# Coping skills ideas

 <b>Be active</b>	 <b>Find your calm</b>	 <b>Get creative</b>	 <b>Connect with others</b>	 <b>Shift your mindset</b>
Put on music and dance	Take some deep breaths	Color, draw or paint	Cuddle or play with your pet	Think of something positive
Build with Legos or blocks	Listen to music or sing a song	Play with Play-Doh or sand	Read a book with someone	Focus on one thing you're grateful for
Do 10 jumping jacks	Close your eyes and count to 10 or backward from 100	Play an instrument	Play a game with a friend or family member	Identify your top three strengths
Run in place for 20 seconds	Take a quiet break or rest	Make up a song	Work with someone on a puzzle	Think about something you're looking forward to
Bounce a ball or play catch	Have a drink of cold water	Write about your thoughts or feelings	Write someone a letter	Focus on the present moment
Go for a walk, run or hike	Blow bubbles	Create a dance	Share your feelings with someone you trust	Think about something that makes you laugh
Squeeze a stress ball	Think of a calm, happy place	Write a poem	Ask for help	Practice reframes ("I didn't fail; I learned")
Do yoga or stretch	Look at pictures of a favorite memory	Make up a new game	Call a friend to catch up	Focus on what is in your control

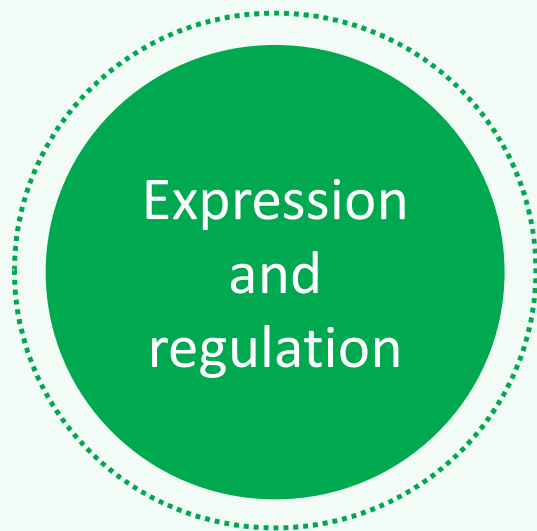
## Considerations for managing feelings



- Suggest coping skills without forcing students to try them.
- Follow the student's lead on how they feel comfortable practicing a skill.
- Remember, what works for one student doesn't always work for another.



# Barriers to expression and regulation



Trauma



Poor nutrition



Speech delay



Sensory sensitivity



Unmet needs



Skill deficit



# Warning signs

If you are unsure or have any concerns, follow up with your school's counselor, social worker or school psychologist.

- Thoughts of suicide
- Causing injury to self
- Hearing voices or seeing things that aren't there
- Frequent headaches or stomachaches, with no known medical cause
- Feeling very sad, hopeless or irritable most of the time
- Feeling overly anxious, worried or fearful
- Having frequent nightmares
- Being excessively angry and having severe, frequent tantrums
- Unable to concentrate or sit still
- Suddenly losing interest in friends or things usually enjoyed
- Fearing gaining weight, restricting food or exercising excessively
- Lacking interest in other children or having difficulty making friends
- Hurting other people or animals, damaging property or risky behaviors
- Having major changes in eating or sleeping habits
- Isolating themselves; preferring to be alone most of the time
- Regularly performing rituals out of fear that something bad might happen
- Falling behind in school





# Making referrals

## Behavioral and Mental Health Services



There are many different types of behavioral and mental health professionals, and finding a good fit for what your child or family needs can feel overwhelming. Here is an overview of different types of clinicians, types of therapy and interventions, questions to ask as you search, and things to know about therapy.

### Types of clinicians

**Licensed clinical social workers (LCSWs/LMSWs)** are master's-degreed clinicians. They can provide therapy and make diagnoses, but they cannot prescribe medication.

**Licensed professional counselors (LPCs/LAPCs)** are master's-degreed clinicians. They can provide therapy and make diagnoses, but they cannot prescribe medication.

**Licensed marriage and family therapists (LMFTs/LAMFTs)** are master's-degreed clinicians. They can provide therapy and make diagnoses, but they cannot prescribe medication.

**Psychologists** have a doctoral degree (PhD or PsyD) in psychology. They can provide therapy and diagnostic testing to measure cognitive abilities and personality characteristics, but they cannot prescribe medication. Neuropsychology is a subspecialty of psychology that assesses the relationship between the brain and behavior, and it is used to diagnose brain disorders.

**Board-certified behavior analysts® (BCBAs)** are independent clinicians with graduate-level training in applied behavior analysis (ABA).

**Psychiatric nurse practitioners (PMH-CNS-BC/PMHNP-BC)** have a master's degree or a doctorate in nursing, with a specialty in psychiatry. They can provide evaluations and make diagnoses. They can also prescribe and manage medication for behavioral and mental health conditions.

**Psychiatrists** are medical doctors (MDs) who provide evaluations and make diagnoses. They can also prescribe and manage medication for behavioral and mental health conditions.

**School-based supports**, evaluations and services may be available as well. Speak with your child's school counselor to find out more.

### Types of therapy

There are many different types of therapy and interventions. Below are some interventions that are proven to be effective based on research:

- **Play therapy** helps children freely explore, express and work through thoughts, feelings and experiences using play.
- **Art therapy** helps children explore, express and work through thoughts, feelings and experiences using art.
- **Family therapy** helps families function in more positive and constructive ways.
- **Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)** teaches skills to change behavior and to increase awareness about inaccurate, negative or unhelpful thinking patterns and how to replace them with more realistic thoughts.
- **Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TF-CBT)** helps children explore, express and work through thoughts, experiences and feelings related to traumatic events.
- **Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)** is designed to teach skills to help manage feelings, tolerate emotional discomfort and improve relationships.
- **Applied behavior analysis (ABA)** uses treatment approaches to analyze and change behavior. ABA is shown to be effective in a wide variety of areas, but it is best known as a treatment approach for individuals with intellectual disabilities and autism.

## Questions to ask when searching for behavioral and mental health services

There are many types of behavioral and mental health clinicians and services. Services vary depending on need, method of payment and clinician.

- What types of services do you provide?
- What are your payment options?
  - Do you accept insurance? If so, which plans do you accept?
  - Can I pay out of pocket?
  - Do you offer a reduced rate option?
- What type of clients do you typically see?
- How would you describe your treatment style?
- When do you offer appointments? What are the length and frequency of sessions?
- What should we expect during the first appointment?
- What is your procedure for confidentiality? Will you share information with me about my child or adolescent as part of the treatment process?

## Things to know about therapy

- ✓ Going to therapy does not always mean that you will receive a diagnosis or medication.
- ✓ Be patient. Change takes time. The length and frequency of treatment will vary based on each individual.
- ✓ Therapists are not one size fits all! If you don't feel like a clinician is right for your child or family, before or after meeting them, you can keep looking until you find the right fit.
- ✓ It's OK to ask questions! If you are unsure or uncomfortable about anything, just ask.
- ✓ In order for therapy to be successful, it needs to be a safe space for everyone. It is important that both you and your child have a space to share. Allow your child a chance to share what they think and feel, even if you don't agree.
- ✓ When working with children, caregivers need to be involved, which means participating in appointments and working on skills with the child in between sessions.

For more coping skill ideas, visit [Strong4Life.com/coping](https://www.strong4life.com/coping)

This is general information and not specific medical advice. Always consult with a doctor or healthcare professional if you have questions or concerns about the health of a child.



# Types of behavioral and mental health professionals

## Assessment and therapy services

- Psychologists (PhD, PsyD)
- Clinical social workers (LMSW/LCSW)
- Professional counselors (LAPC/LPC)
- Marriage and family therapists (LAMFT/LMFT)

## Prescription and medication monitoring

- Psychiatrists (MD)
- Psychiatric advanced practice nurses
- Primary care/Pediatricians/Family nurse practitioners

## Community supports

- Pastoral counseling
- Certified peer specialist
- School counselor
- School social worker
- School psychologist



# Common therapeutic approaches

- Play therapy
- Family therapy
- Art therapy
- Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)
- Trauma-focused cognitive behavioral therapy (TFCBT)
- Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR)
- Dialectical behavior therapy (DBT)



# Types of care



Outpatient  
counseling services



Medication  
management  
services



Intensive  
In-Home Services  
Community-Based  
Services



Intensive  
Outpatient  
Programs (IOP)  
Partial  
Hospitalization  
Programs (PHP)



Inpatient  
Programs  
Residential  
programs



# You can help your students



Build  
awareness of  
feelings



Identify and  
express  
feelings



Manage  
feelings



## Resilience training series overview

	Training	Post-Training Focus	Evaluation
	Building Resilience in School Aged Youth	Talking About Feelings	During Training: Post Training Survey
	Deeper Dive into Emotional Development	Identifying and Expression Feelings	During Training: Post Training Survey
	Building Resilience in School Staff	Coping Skills	During Training: Post Training Survey



## Post training focus area: talking about feelings

**Classroom Activities**

**School Wide  
Opportunities**

**At Home**



Coping skills posters



Feelings posters



Coping skills tip sheets





## Contact information



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