

Staff Professional Learning Module 1: School Team Mental Fitness & Resiliency

JCSH School Well-being Toolkit



Table of Contents

Module Overview	3
Part 1: School Team Mental Fitness	4
Mental Fitness Needs and Practices	5
Mental Fitness Activities	10
Part 2: School Team Resiliency	11
Resiliency Assets and Practices	12
Resiliency Activity 1: Reflecting on Resiliency Assets	14
Resiliency Activity 2: Identifying Resiliency Asset Practices	20
Resiliency Activity 3: Assessing Resiliency Asset Practices	21
Resilient Teams	22
Resiliency Activity 4: Resilient Teams	25
Resiliency Activity 5: Team Resiliency Inventory	26
Resiliency Activity 6: Resilient Team Strategies	27
Tips for Building Resilient Teams	28
Role of Leaders	30
Digging Deeper	31

Module Overview

This professional learning module provides an overview of practices that promote mental fitness and resiliency within school teams, taking a school-wide approach to staff well-being. Content within this two-part module encompasses a series of mental fitness and resiliency activities, as well as tips and strategies for building healthy and resilient school teams.

Many concepts highlighted within this professional learning module have been introduced in the student-centred well-being modules. Key concepts are revisited in this module and grounded within staff well-being perspectives, providing opportunities to expand schools' focus to encompass the well-being of all adults and students in the building.

- To recognize the basic well-being needs of school employees and team members
- To identify workplace well-being practices associated with mental fitness
- To promote and integrate the use of mental fitness practices in individual and team interactions and routines in schools
- To gain an understanding of resiliency and its relevance to healthy and effective workplace communities
- To become acquainted with resiliency strengths or assets that are related to individual and school well-being
- To identify the characteristics of resilient teams

Part 1 : School Team Mental Fitness



Mental Fitness Needs and Practices

Healthy and Effective Workplace Teams and Cultures

Schools recognize the importance of creating teams and cultures that foster the well-being of their employees. Healthy work environments are psychologically safe, promote employee well-being, and provide the basis for effective team functioning. Schools can be proactive by taking action to safeguard the well-being of employees and to implement relationship practices that ensure the creation of positive and healthy school cultures.

Research in positive psychology has identified three key conditions that are essential for building healthy and effective workplace environments. According to Deci and Ryan (2007), these conditions involve addressing core psychological well-being or mental fitness needs: Relatedness, Competency, and Autonomy-Support. Current evidence suggests that the fulfillment of mental fitness needs is associated with enhanced well-being, engagement, and team functioning in workplace and learning settings. In other words, people are more likely to be at their best when their work and learning environments embed practices that promote mental fitness in themselves and others.

Read More:

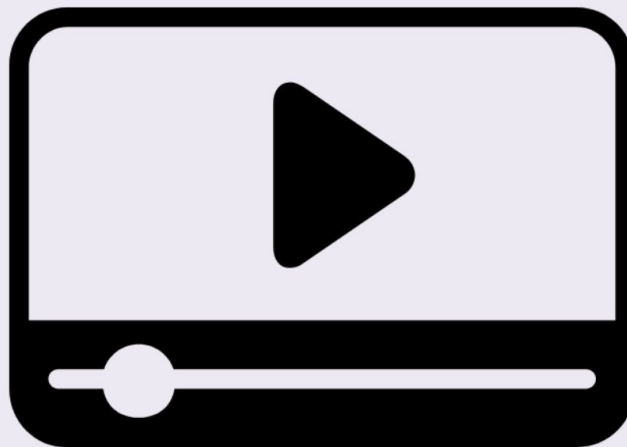
Three Conditions for
a Healthy Workplace



Relatedness: School team members who experience satisfying and supportive relationships at work are more engaged in their tasks. They tend to face fewer conflicts, are more innovative and demonstrate higher productivity.

Competency: Engaged team members feel that they have the ability to influence important educational and professional outcomes. They feel confident, loyal, empowered and valued.

Autonomy Support: Engaged team members have a sense of choice and are self-determined when completing tasks. They tend to go the extra mile, speak highly of school administrators and colleagues and make decisions confidently.



*Watch an introduction to Mental Fitness
Practices in the Workplace*

Need for Relatedness

Relatedness refers to the need for connection or closeness to family, peers and other significant individuals. Fulfillment of this need requires interaction with others, membership in groups and support and encouragement (Deci, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2007; Morrison and Peterson, 2007).

“I belong or am part of my school team; I feel included, encouraged and supported by others.”

Relatedness Practices

The first condition involves the development a sense of *relatedness* or connectedness among employees. This workplace characteristic is created when employees feel welcome and included, and people practice greeting and acknowledging one another on a daily basis. Interactions among employees include friendly exchanges that contribute to a sense of knowing others and being known. As people gain a sense of positive connectedness, they also become sensitive to each other when they experience stress. Connected employees practice checking in with one another, and provide mutual support when additional assistance may be needed to carry out or complete work-related tasks.

Download
Relatedness Practices
Checklist



Need for Competency

Competency refers to the need for recognition and using personal gifts and strengths in achieving goals. Fulfillment of this need provides individuals with a sense of personal achievement and accomplishment (Deci, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2007; Morrison and Peterson, 2007).

“I have strengths and gifts that are recognized by others. When I use them to meet goals I feel a sense of worth and accomplishment.”

Competency Practices

The development of a sense of *competency* among employees involves recognizing and valuing the strengths, skills and potential of all members of the team. Ideally, shared work goals provide opportunities for employees to be engaged in using their strengths and skills, and to recognize how their skills complement the strengths of other team members, maximizing the collective effectiveness and performance of the full team. In contrast to workplace gossip or conversations that are destructive to team relationships, developing a sense of competency in the workplace is supported by expressions of appreciation and gratitude for the strengths and contributions that all members bring to the team.

Download
Competency Practices
Checklist



Need for Autonomy Support

Autonomy support refers to the need for personal freedom to make choices or decisions. When this need is satisfied in conjunction with other need areas, freedom and choice are expressed in ways in which respect is demonstrated for self and others (Deci, 2009; Deci & Ryan, 2007; Morrison and Peterson, 2007).

“I feel hopeful because my co-workers and the school support me in being an active participant in making choices.”

Autonomy Support Practices

Critical to building healthy and effective workplaces is *autonomy support*. In contrast to over-controlling environments, this workplace characteristic is evident when people’s voice, perspectives and ideas are heard and valued in workplace routines and interactions. Practices that promote autonomy support include seeking others’ perspectives instead of just giving advice, finding opportunities to collaborate with colleagues or peers on work projects, and inviting team members to collectively build solutions or strategies for addressing emerging or existing challenges or goals.

Download
Autonomy Practices
Checklist



Mental Fitness Activities

The following mental fitness activities can be scheduled as part of regular staff meetings or professional development events throughout the course of an academic year.

Click the icons below to download each Mental Fitness Activity.

01	Being at Your Best		Discuss workplace conditions that foster flourishing.
02	Exploring Mental Fitness Practices		Discuss specific workplace practices that meet mental fitness needs.
03	Assessing Mental Fitness Practices		Assess the presence of mental fitness practices in your school.
04	Practicing Generosity		Cultivate acts of generosity in your school team.
05	Positive Emotions		Reflect on the importance of fostering positive emotions.
06	Receiving and Expressing Gratitude		Explore the importance of both receiving and expressing gratitude.

Part 2: School Team Resiliency



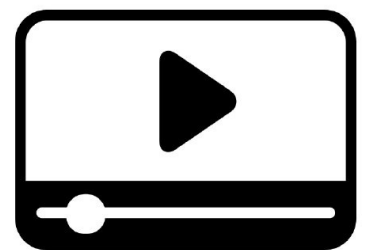
Resiliency Assets and Practices

What is Resiliency?

Resiliency may be defined as the capacity to adapt and realize positive outcomes in daily living despite challenging circumstances. Resiliency is also the ability to persist in the face of adversity and to bounce back when challenges are encountered. Resiliency refers to people's capacity to navigate and apply resources (psychological, social, cultural and physical) that sustain their well-being. Applying an ecological perspective, research has identified protective factors associated with resiliency that reflect strengths or assets not only in individuals, but also at the school team level.

Resiliency Assets

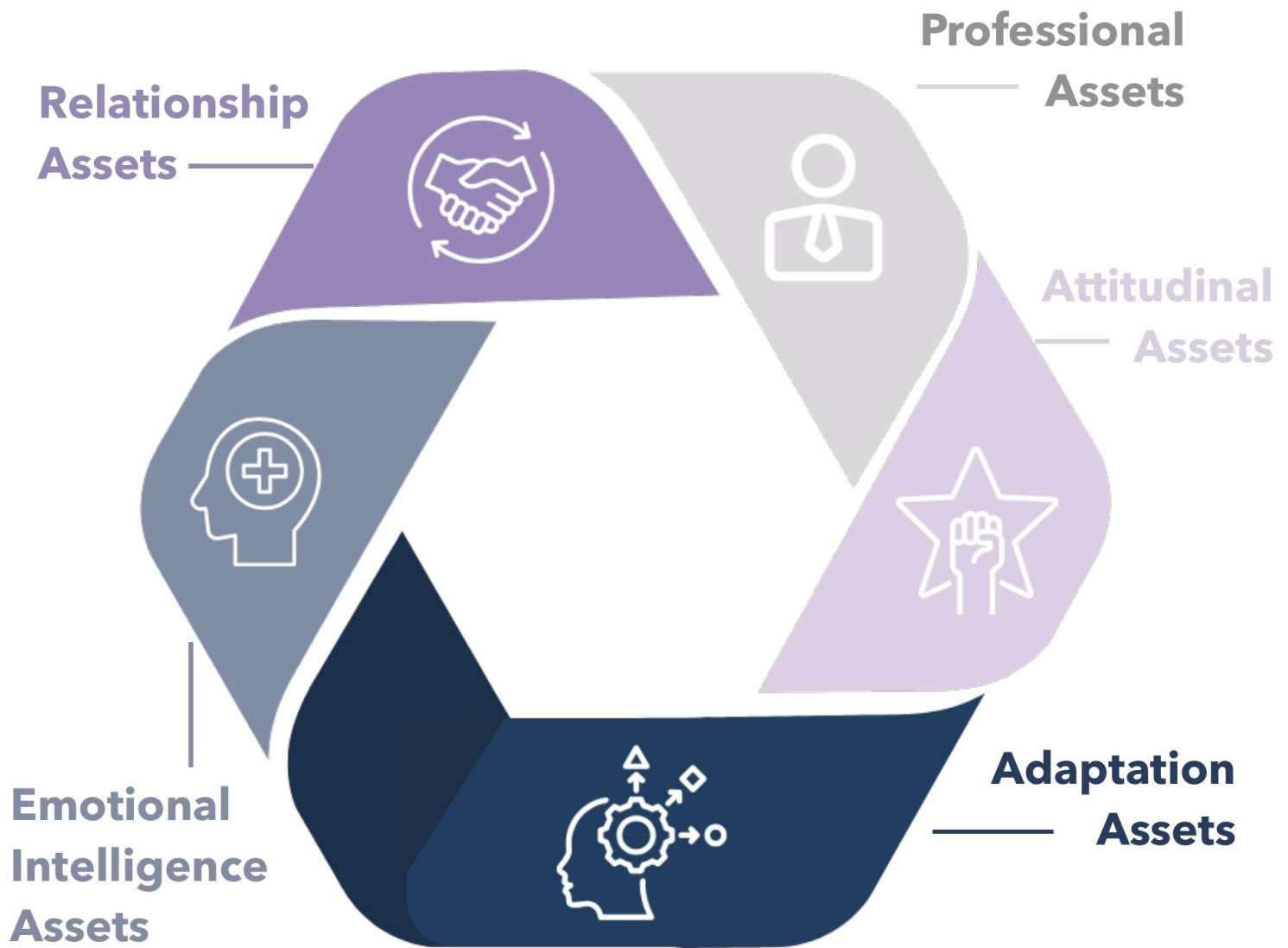
- Resiliency helps us to cope and thrive during difficult times and during periods of change or transition.
- Resiliency strengths or assets come from a combination of positive attributes we develop through our families, education, social and cultural connections, and other life experiences.
- Resiliency **asset practices** may reflect both individual and organizational strengths that facilitate empowerment, positive coping, healthy transitions and learning.



*Watch an introduction to
Resiliency Assets*

Types of Resiliency Assets

Click each asset to learn more



Resiliency Activity 1: Reflecting on Resiliency Assets

Download
Resiliency Activity 1
Handout



Download and distribute the Activity 1 handout. Have staff members quickly review the provided description of Resiliency Assets, then work in small groups to discuss the following question:

From your own experience, which resiliency assets have empowered you to positively cope and even thrive in spite of areas of challenge?

Ask staff members to share with within their groups one example of a resiliency asset that has made a difference for them.

- Caring Attitudes
- Social Support

Relationship Assets

Relationship Assets involve practices that build social networks of support and community. Relationships, social networks and connections with family, friends and colleagues are the most important resiliency assets.

Building Relationship Assets

Be other-centred: Take opportunities to be generous and kind with people, especially to those who would not be the first to return the same.

Re-solve problems: Try to see situations from another's perspective. Take steps to get a strained relationship back on track. Admit your own mistakes and apologize. Forgive the mistakes of others.

Refuse to put down others: Decide not to criticize co-workers in front of others, but rather, praise strengths publicly.

Spend time with those who build you up: Plan to take time with those who inspire you and help you to feel resilient.

Download
Relationship
Assets Checklist



Professional Assets

- Knowledge and Skills
- Learning Opportunities

Professional Assets involve building problem-solving and reasoning skills; acquiring training specific to our jobs; being supported in making decisions and taking action; knowing when to ask for help; and having a love of learning.

Building Professional Assets

Seek Essential Training and Education: Know and make plans to meet service and training standards for certification or recognition.

Ask Questions: Do not hesitate to ask questions and to seek clarification from colleagues or management personnel.

Take Advantage of Learning Opportunities: Conferences, night or weekend courses, and professional readings provide opportunities to learn and grow.

Get Involved in Community Organizations: Experience, skills and confidence can be gained through volunteering or serving on community boards.

Consult Experienced Colleagues: Talk to people who have worked in your field and who have practical wisdom.

Download
Professional
Assets Checklist



Attitudinal Assets

- Positive Disposition
- Optimism

Attitudinal Assets involve maintaining a positive disposition and sense of optimism, even in the face of difficult or challenging situations. Having a positive disposition involves seeing adversity as temporary and looking at obstacles as opportunities.

Building Attitudinal Assets

Recognize challenging situations as temporary setbacks rather than permanent conditions.

Replace conversations that assign blame with discussions of existing strengths and assets for moving forward.

Identify and act on opportunities for short-term or immediate successes, and share credit among team members.

Learn to challenge inaccurate thoughts, beliefs or interpretations.

Balance a focus on challenging circumstances with perspectives related to existing strengths, past successes, vision, hope and commitment.

Find within difficult circumstances the potential for creating new opportunities and innovative solutions or responses.

Download
Attitudinal Assets
Checklist



Emotional Intelligence Assets

- Understanding Emotions
- Positive Communication

This asset area involves the ability to understand and manage emotions.

Emotional Intelligence skills help us communicate in a positive manner and express feedback in ways that enhance communication and understanding.

Building Emotional Intelligence Assets

Be aware of emotions and how they affect you. When things seem overwhelming, take time for an emotional break and to regain perspective.

Pay attention to the feelings of others.

Listen, ask questions and reflect feelings. This demonstrates an interest in others and promotes accurate mutual understanding.

Communicate with sensitivity. Be mindful of how feelings are expressed and their impact on others. Effective communication focuses on the concern (and not the character of the person). Make “I” statements rather than “you” statements.

Download Emotional
Intelligence Assets
Checklist



Adaptation Assets

- Proactive Plans
- Joint Problem-Solving

Adaptation Assets involve practices we use to reduce stress and to work through or adjust to changing circumstances in our home or work contexts. Adaptation strategies include the development of targeted coping skills to address areas of stress and proactive strategies for adapting to changes in team relationships or routines.

Building Adaptation Assets

Identify sources of stress and take action to reduce experienced strain or stress.

Learn to break problems down into parts so you can identify the aspects over which you have some control.

Make a plan to change the things you have the power to change and to live a little more easily with the parts you cannot change.

Consult with others and apply problem-solving skills that draw on a variety of perspectives.

Clarify anticipated transitions and plan for upcoming changes.

Allot time for enjoyable recreational and relaxation activities that help replenish energy.

Adopt a balanced and healthy lifestyle, including a commitment to healthy eating and physical activity.



Resiliency Activity 2: Identifying Resiliency Asset Practices

Download
Activity 2
Handout



Resiliency Activity 2 presents a list of sample Resiliency Asset Practices.

After downloading and distributing the activity handout, hold a discussion with the team to identify the Resiliency Asset to which each practice corresponds:

- **R** (Relationship)
- **P** (Professional)
- **AT** (Attitudinal)
- **E** (Emotional Intelligence)
- **AD** (Adaptation practices)

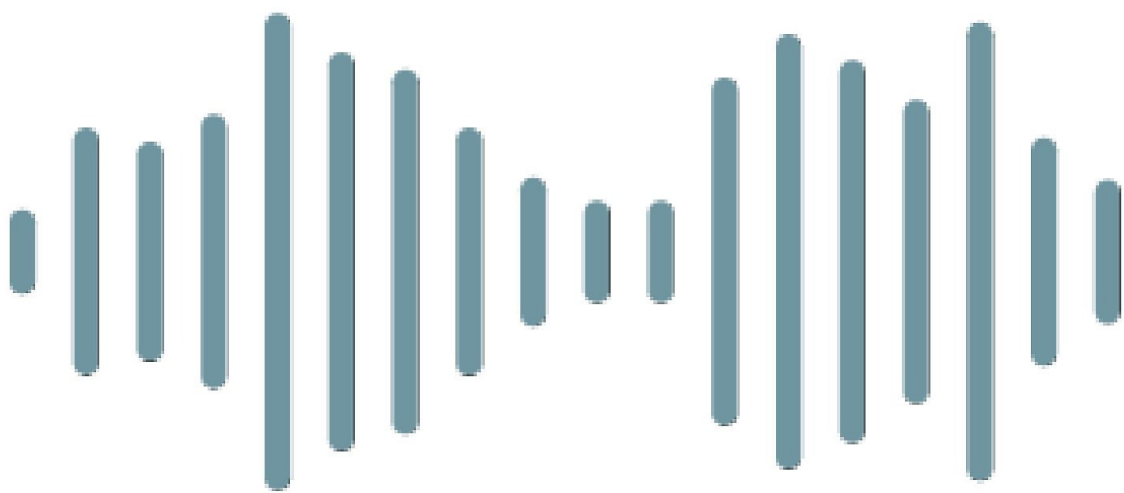
The value of the exercise is not necessarily to “get the right answer”, but to generate discussion on the types of practices that foster team resiliency. (But for those looking for an answer key, the listed practices follow and repeat the order of the assets listed above!)

Resiliency Activity 3: Assessing Resiliency Asset Practices

Download
Activity 3
Handout



Download and distribute the Activity 3 handout. Discuss with your colleagues how Resiliency Asset Practices are used in your school. Use a flip chart or the table in the Activity 3 download to record areas of school strength related to Resiliency Asset Practices as well as potential areas for development.



Resilient Teams

School teams can experience setbacks, challenges, times of transition or change, and even stressful periods or circumstances. When teams are resilient, they come through such experiences feeling stronger, having more capacity and possessing increased wisdom and readiness to face new challenges.

Resilient school teams have the potential to:

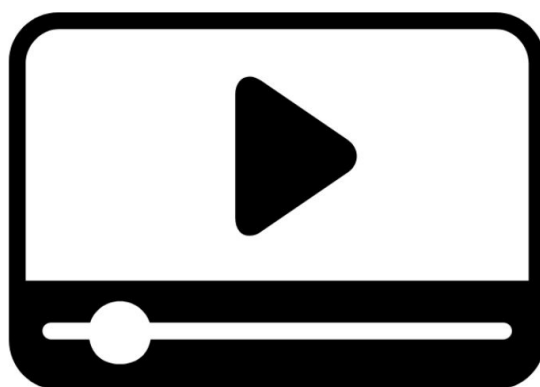
- Build on and sustain healthy relationship practices during times of change or transition
- Draw out the collective strengths of the team to support successful adaptation in difficult circumstances
- Foster problem-solving, innovation and learning in addressing emerging challenges
- Create conditions for individuals to not only cope, but to flourish and perform at their best in spite of adversity

Six Characteristics of Resilient School Teams

1. **Purpose Focused:** When team goals or directions are not clear, team members may experience increased stress and uncertainty, especially during changing or challenging circumstances. Purpose-driven teams possess a common and clear understanding of the goals and directions of the team and school. Ask each member of your school team to write on a cue card the goals of the team/school. Comparing answers may bring some informative insights about how clear the team is about its goals.
2. **Growth Oriented:** Growth-oriented teams encourage their members to take initiative and apply new skills in meeting areas of challenge. When team members make mistakes, they are supported by others as they regroup. Discussion among team members leads to lessons learned and new ways for moving forward.
3. **Positive:** Resilient teams see the positive aspects of difficult situations and opportunities for success. They are positive about the capabilities of each member to contribute to the team's goals. Team members believe in their capacity to influence the school during periods of change.
4. **Other Centred:** Being other centred involves a focus on the inclusion and well-being of others. This characteristic highlights team members' sense of trust in one another and a commitment to mutual support and caring. Team members are aware of the feelings and needs of their colleagues, and naturally extend appropriate levels of support to one another when stress or pressure increases.

5. Flexible: Resilient school teams are flexible in terms of shifting perspectives and adapting strategies for moving through periods of change or challenge. Flexibility is observed in the way that ideas are explored and elaborated in open discussion forums. Team members recognize the benefits associated with drawing on the strengths of all members in designing solutions in lieu of a siloed or isolated approach.

6. Proactive: Resilient teams are proactive in terms of embracing and planning for change. Similarly, proactive responses are developed for anticipated and emerging challenges. Team members are willing to move forward with small-step changes, monitoring their progress and re-adjusting their actions and responses as necessary. Proactive efforts include being organized, setting priorities, defining timelines and implementing workable solutions.



Watch to learn more about resilient teams

Resiliency Activity 4: Resilient Teams

Download
Activity 4
Handout



As with individuals, teams can experience setbacks, challenges, times of transition or change, and even stressful periods or circumstances. When team members are resilient, they come through such experiences feeling stronger, having more coping capacity, and possessing increased wisdom and readiness to face new challenges.

Review with a colleague the **Six Characteristics of Resilient Teams**.

As part of your conversation, identify one or two characteristics that you have seen in action during a time of change or challenge.

How did these characteristics make a positive change in the functioning or well-being of your team?

Resiliency Activity 5: Team Resiliency Inventory

Download
Activity 5
Handout



Download and distribute the Activity 5 handout.

Complete the **Team Resiliency Inventory**. Compare results and discuss answers using the following questions:

- Which of the six characteristics of resilient teams are most evident within your school or team?
- Which of the six characteristics of resilient teams may need continued or further development?
- What specific actions could be undertaken to build resilient characteristics within your team or school?



Resiliency Activity 6: Resilient Team Strategies

Download
Activity 6
Handout



Download and distribute the Activity 6 handout. Discuss with a colleague in small groups the practices highlighted under each strategy for Activity 6: Building Resilient Teams. There are eight strategies, each with corresponding practices. For each practice, indicate whether the action is:

- Often Used
- Sometimes Used
- Could be Further Developed

At the close of the activity, compile a list of practices that are often used that reflect the current strengths of your team in building resiliency.

In addition, compile a list of the practices that could be further developed and applied to expand the resiliency of your team.

Share with your team!

Tips for Building Resilient Teams

Create a Shared Sense of Team: Take time to build a shared understanding of the team's purpose and direction. When challenges are experienced, reaffirm a sense of unity among team members related to mutual goals and actions, sustaining a common focus and momentum. *Interdependent teams understand that every member adds value to the whole. Without each member, the team would be unable to achieve its shared purpose.*

Leverage Team Member Strengths: Provide opportunities for team members to get to know each other's strengths and need for support. Encourage team members to ask for help when needed, and to step up for others when required. Adapt team routines to support the use of collective strengths during pressing or stressful time periods. *A highly resilient team combines individual resiliency strengths to produce a level of resilience that is higher than that of any one individual on the team.*

Respond to Emerging Issues: Ensure that emerging issues or challenges are not ignored or passed over. Provide time at team meetings to openly discuss areas of challenge or concern. Keep discussions positive with a focus on solution-building.

Reframe Challenges: Encourage team members to become adept at picking out positives in any situation. Begin team meetings by identifying three good things (in spite of current challenges or difficulties). Invite team members together to rewrite problem statements using strength-focused vs. deficit-focused language (instead of redefining the problem, describe the direction you would like to pursue).

Stimulate Learning and Professional Growth: New challenges and points of transition often stretch teams, requiring the development of new skills and ways of interacting with each other. Consult team members on relevant areas for team professional growth and development. Engage opportunities for mentorship relationships to develop within and across teams through the sharing of expertise.

Empower Team Problem-Solving: Ongoing communication is critical for ensuring team members' awareness of key issues, changes or transitions facing their team or school. Beyond ensuring effective communication of issues, invite team members to be active participants in problem-solving or decision-making processes. Encourage team members to demonstrate their creativity and capabilities in putting proactive solutions into action.

Engage Accessible Resources: Encourage team members to carry out regular check-ins with one another. Identify and use support resources that are accessible to all team members. Identify personalized supports for individual team members when needed.

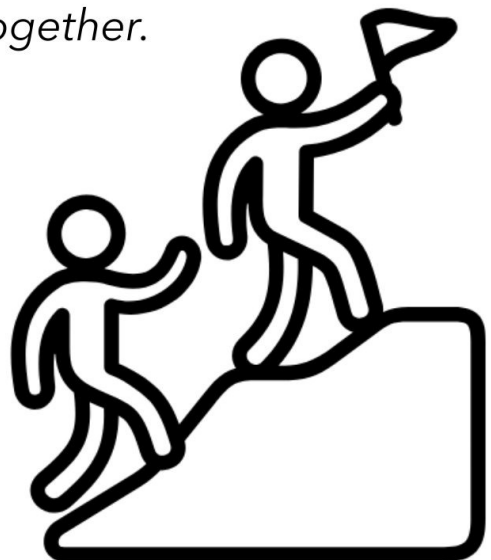
Amplify Team Progress: Create time in meetings to share ongoing progress related to projects, initiatives or set goals. Progress reports may include early successes, issues resolved, innovative strategies developed, and advances made. Take time to celebrate the completion of initial steps and milestones, and acknowledge team contributions.

Role of Leaders

- Leaders' actions and attitudes set the tone for the rest of the school team.
- When faced with challenges, leaders have the opportunity to model the practices they would like their team members to emulate.
- Leaders play a critical role in communicating information about the nature and rationale of planned changes or transitions in the school.
- Leaders who empower staff teams to be part of building solutions increase the likelihood that team members will feel more engaged and experience a greater sense of well-being.

Leading by example is an effective way to transform the way team members interact and collaborate together.

Professional Learning Module 2: Positive Leadership presents an overview of leadership practices that promote school well-being.



Digging Deeper

CMHA Positive Mental Health and Well-being
Canadian Mental Health Association



Promoting and Protecting Mental Health as
Flourishing
Corey Keyes



Workplace Mental Health
Mental Health Commission of Canada



Bouncing Back: How Workplace Resiliency can Work
for You
Psychology Foundation of Canada



Psychological Resilience of Teachers
Hasan Kavgacı



Supporting Teacher Leadership and Resilience
Money, Hassan & Rosenbaum

