

Fostering Resiliency in Youth

Resilience, the ability to adapt well to difficult or challenging life experiences, plays an important role in youth mental health and overall wellbeing (American Psychological Association). It's not just about bouncing back but also growing stronger through adversity. Building resilience helps young people develop coping skills, manage stress, and overcome challenges. Resilience is important for youth mental health as it can buffer against the effects of adversity such as trauma, depression, and anxiety. Resilient youth are less likely to turn to unhealthy coping strategies such as substance abuse or self-harm and are better equipped to handle setbacks and stressors. Research shows that resources and skills associated with resilience can be learned and practiced.

Key aspects to nurturing resilience in youth include:

- Fostering protective factors such as positive relationships and supportive environments.
- Supporting youth through difficult emotional experiences and moments of distress. Instead of sheltering kids from these experiences, it's important to help build self-confidence in their ability to cope. Caregivers can help youth face challenges as opposed to avoiding them.
- Teaching healthy coping strategies for managing stress and difficult emotions. This can include things like mindfulness, creative expression, and exercise.
- Providing opportunities for young people to engage in constructive activities, make choices and take responsibility for their actions.
- Teaching problem-solving skills. When kids and teens face difficulties, guide them through analyzing what went wrong and brainstorming ways to improve.
- Engage youth in age-appropriate volunteer work or provide them with tasks that they can assist with at home or school. Children who feel helpless can feel empowered by helping others.
- Cultivating a sense of hope and optimism by seeing themselves capable of overcoming challenges.

At the foundation of resilience is the development of a growth mindset. A growth mindset is the belief that abilities can be developed through hard work and effort. A main component of growth mindset is learning from mistakes and embracing challenges as opportunities for growth. Successfully overcoming a difficult experience or situation can have a positive effect on self-esteem and self-efficacy. Practicing growth mindset strategies can help promote resilience. Helping youth replace negative self-talk with growth oriented statements is just one strategy that can boost both growth mindset skills and resiliency. One way to teach this is through the "Power of Yet." This is a concept that encourages individuals to add the word "yet" to things they believe they cannot achieve. For example, instead of saying, "I'm not good at this," say "I'm not good at this yet." This can help reframe limitations or perceived failures into temporary

obstacles that can be overcome. Experts note that the concept of “yet” can lead to healthier mental wellbeing and improve resilience.

Building resilience can take time. Seeking professional care may be helpful when a child’s coping mechanisms are ineffective, they experience persistent emotional challenges, or their well-being is significantly impacted by challenges. Turning to a psychologist or other mental health professional for guidance can help children strengthen resilience during times of stress or trauma.



References: American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry; American Psychological Association; Mayo Clinic; National Institute of Health; Psychology Today

The Power of One Adult: Preventing Underage Substance Use

According to one study published by Harvard's Center on the Developing Child, "every child who winds up doing well has had at least one stable and committed relationship with a supportive adult." There is significant research to show that maintaining a healthy relationship with an adult can positively impact an adolescent's ability to respond resiliently to adversity, and, ultimately, a child's resilience may very well be what prevents him or her from misusing substances or engaging in other risky behaviors.



The American Psychological Association defines resilience as the "process and outcome of successfully adapting to difficult or challenging life experiences, especially through mental, emotional, and behavioral flexibility and adjustment to external and internal demands." A child or adolescent who does not have access to a trusted adult who can teach them the power of 'behavioral flexibility' through the development of healthy coping skills will be more likely to respond to adversity in unhealthy or self-destructive ways. Indeed, one study published by ScienceDirect suggests that individuals who are socially isolated or have low social support are more likely to develop a substance use disorder, and this research supports the idea that adolescents who are unmonitored and therefore perceive themselves as uncared for will turn down other avenues to cope with their struggles.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), 3 of the top 5 risk factors for adolescent substance use are 1) a family history of substance use, 2) favorable parental attitudes regarding the behavior, and 3) poor parental monitoring. Although some might be tempted to say that parents have little control over their adolescent children's behavior, the similarities between these risk factors suggest that parents play one of the largest roles in preventing youth from using substances.

According to one study conducted by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) in 2023, 10.9% of eighth graders, 19.8% of 10th graders and 31.2% of 12th graders in the United States reported illicit substance use. Although this data demonstrates an overall decline in the percentage of students using substances from previous years, other data marks a "dramatic rise in overdose deaths among teens between 2010 and 2021." Nora Volkow, director of NIDA, reminds readers that it is "crucial to continue to educate young people about the risks and harms of substance use in an open and honest way, emphasizing that illicit pills and other substances may contain deadly fentanyl."

Many students have trusted adults at school who may be educating them on the dangers of substance use, but ultimately, parents are usually the ones who have the most impact on their adolescents' long-term decisions. Indeed, Unison Health reports that youth of parents who talk about the dangers of substances are "50 percent less likely to use drugs than those who do not receive these critical messages at home." Additionally, youth who are not monitored are as many as 4 times as likely to begin using drugs. These staggering statistics show that it is crucially important for parents to continually remind their children of the harmful effects that drugs and alcohol will have on their bodies and correct any distorted beliefs that an adolescent may have about the perceived harmlessness of a particular substance.

One organization called Healthy Children gives parents suggestions for how to build a positive environment for their child to thrive. Healthy Children believes that parents should:

1. **Encourage positive friendships and interests:** Finding ways to get youth involved in music, sports or other community activities will help them feel connected and develop strong relationships with like-minded peers.
2. **Set firm boundaries:** Research shows that children whose parents make their values and expectations clear are less likely to misuse substances.
3. **Change the messaging:** Remind youth that what they hear at school or in some groups of peers may not be true or healthy at their stage of development.
4. **Make room for family time:** Ensure that family connections are strong by engaging in family activities and giving youth a comfortable place at home to open up.

Concerned parents may not know how to approach conversations about substance use with their children, and it may help to practice these strategies before trying to engage in a conversation with a youth about substance use:

1. **Find a good time:** Be sure that the child is in a calm state of mind before approaching a sensitive conversation about which he or she may become defensive.
2. **Focus on perception:** A concerned parent who wants to start a conversation about substance use may ask a child about his or her perceptions of substance use. Questions like, "When you see or hear messages about drugs, how do you know which ones are true and which ones are myths?" and "If you were with other kids who were vaping, drinking or taking drugs, how would you feel?" open the door to a more involved and helpful conversation.
3. **Avoid condemning language:** Belittling or condemning a child who opens up about their own exposure to substances will reduce the likelihood that he or she will come to the parent again.
4. **Integrate empowering prevention messages:** Encourage the child to brainstorm ways to assert control over his or her own decisions and be specific about the

behavior that is expected. Offset feelings of insecurity or personal doubt with positive commendations of their character.

Active listening is also a crucial part of healthy communication with children and adolescents. Here are some active listening tips for a parent who may be trying to communicate about substance use with a child they are concerned for:

1. Keep an open mind by maintaining a position of objectivity and resisting judgement.
2. Maintain eye contact and pay close attention to what the child says. Eliminate any unnecessary distractions.
3. Be aware of your own and the child's body language, and be aware of the difference between an open and closed gesture. Try to engage in open gestures.
4. Put yourself in their shoes, and approach the conversation from their perspective.
5. Find teaching opportunities – in either real-life situations or movies, books or TV shows – but resist lecturing.

For more information regarding a parent's role in substance use prevention, please see [Unison Health's Tips for Talking to Youth of All Ages](#).

For more information regarding conversations about substance use with adolescents, please see [NIDA's 10 Questions Teens Ask About Drugs and Health](#).

References:

American Psychological Association on Resilience: <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience>

Center for Disease Control on Risk Factors for Adolescent Substance Use: <https://www.cdc.gov/youth-behavior/risk-behaviors/substance-use-among-youth.html#:~:text=Risk%20factors%20for%20youth%20high,Poor%20parental%20monitoring>.

Harvard Center on the Developing Child on Resilience: <https://www.gse.harvard.edu/ideas/usable-knowledge/15/03/science-resilience>

Healthy Children on Drug Abuse Prevention: <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/teen/substance-abuse/Pages/Drug-Abuse-Prevention-Starts-with-Parents.aspx>

ScienceDirect on Social Support: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2352853218302268>

Summer Festivals and Celebration Happening Around the State!

Once again, excitement starts as summer nears! Most of us look forward to the lazy days of summer and having lots of fun!

Why not kick off your summer right with a free, fun family-friendly event, right here in Lincoln! Head over to Antelope Park on June 6th for an evening of outdoor fun with School Community Intervention and Prevention (SCIP) at our annual “Hop, SCIP, Jump and Run,” event. This year’s event, which is brought to you by Family Health and Wellness Center, will run from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and will feature a variety of booths and activities. A free Photo Booth, sponsored by Nebraska Mental Health Centers, will capture memories of the event. Please visit <https://scipnebraska.com/> or <https://www.facebook.com/SCIP.HELP> for more information about this event.

Here are more events happening this summer in different regions of Nebraska.

NEBRASKA COUNTY FAIRS:

Nebraska county fairs are often times the highlights of summer for communities/counties throughout Nebraska. County fairs do more than keep kids entertained during the summer...they often promote community growth and create memories that last a lifetime.



Click on the link below for more information on when and where county fairs are held around the state.

<https://www.nebraskafairs.org/printfairs.php>

Here are other festivals and celebrations families can enjoy this summer that are happening around the state. Nebraska has a rich, diverse and historic heritage full of customs and traditions that are celebrated in communities.

Region 1: Counties- Sheridan, Dawes, Sioux, Box Butte, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Banner, Cheyenne, Deuel, Garden, and Kimball

SIDNEY GOLD RUSH DAYS

What: Parade, ticket entry concerts, rodeo, food & more

When: June 13-15, 2025

Where: Sidney, Nebraska

More Information: <https://sidneygoldrushdays.org/schedule/>

POTTER CAR BOWL

What: Car & craft show, BBQ contest, vendors, music, food, Duck pin bowling & more

When: June 27-28, 2025

Where: Potter, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.lincolnhighwaycruisers.com/schedule>

FUR TRADE DAYS

What: Parade, carnival, music, vendors, softball tournament, food & more

When: July 10-13, 2025

Where: Chadron, Nebraska

More Information: <https://furtradedays.com/>

OREGON TRAIL DAYS

What: Parade, carnival, BBQ, street dance, live music, mud volleyball, kiddie parade & more

When: July 10-13, 2025

Where: Gering, Nebraska

More Information: <https://oregontraildays.com/>

ALLIANCE HERITAGE DAYS

What: Parade, carnival, vendors, food & more

When: July 15-19, 2025

Where: Alliance, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.facebook.com/AllianceHeritageDays/>

Region 2: Counties- Arthur, Chase, Dawson, Dundy, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Frontier, Gosper, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow and Thomas

BUFFALO COMMONS STORY TELLING & MUSIC FESTIVAL

What: Music, concerts, storytelling, historical tours and food

When: June 13-15, 2025

Where: McCook, Nebraska

More Information: <https://buffalocommons.org/>

NEBRASKA LAND DAYS

What: Parade, ticket entry concerts, rodeo, food & more

When: June 18-28, 2025

Where: North Platte, Nebraska

More Information: <https://nebraskalanddays.com/>

KITES & CASTLES

What: Kite flying, sandcastle building contest, concert, food, swimming, prizes & more

When: July 27, 2025

Where: Ogallala, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.facebook.com/KitesCastles/>

Region 3: Counties- Buffalo, Furnas, Harlan, Kearney, Phelps, Adams, Clay, Franklin, Nuckolls, Webster

Blaine, Custer, Garfield, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Loup, Merrick, Sherman Valley, Wheeler

WAGONS WEST CELEBRATION

What: Pioneer games, crafts, live music, treasure hunt, food & more

When: June 8, 2025

Where: Kearney, Nebraska

More Information: <https://members.kearneycoc.org/events/details/wagons-west-celebration-06-08-2025-16511>

KOOL-AID DAYS

What: Kool Aid drinking contest, Kool aid stands, giant inflatables, indoor games, face painting, music, food & more

When: August 15-17, 2025

Where: Hastings, Nebraska

More Information: <https://kool-aiddays.com/>

NEBRASKA STATE FAIR

What: Concerts, carnival, games, contests, vendors, food, music & more

When: August 22-September 1, 2025

Where: Grand Island, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.statefair.org/>

Region 4: Counties- Boone, Colfax, Cuming, Madison, Nance, Platte, Stanton, Antelope, Boyd, Brown, Cedar, Cherry, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Pierce, Rock, Burt, Dakota, Dixon, Thurston, Wayne

FABULOUS ACCORDION FESTIVAL

What: Live accordion/polka music, dance. Local art, food & more

When: May 24, 2025

Where: Ord, Nebraska

More Information: <https://chamber.ordnebraska.com/events/details/the-fabulous-accordion-festival-12140>

THE GREAT AMERICAN COMEDY FESTIVAL

What: Live magic and comedy shows

When: June 12-14, 2025

Where: Norfolk, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.greatamericancomedyfestival.com/>

WAYNE CHICKEN SHOW

What: Parade, petting zoo, inflatables, water-balloon wars, chicken dance, food, music & more

When: July 11-13, 2025

Where: Wayne, Nebraska

More Information: <https://chickenshow.com/>

PRAIRIE DAYS

What: Parade, family-friendly event, flower contest, kid tractor pull, antique show, mud volleyball, music, food & more movie in park, food & more

When: July 25-27, 2025

Where: Tilden, Nebraska

More Information: <https://visitnorfolkne.com/venue/downtown-tilden/>

COLUMBUS DAYS

What: Parade, family-friendly event, turtle races, movie in park, food & more

When: August 7-10, 2025

Where: Columbus, Nebraska

More Information: <https://thecolumbuspage.com/events/columbus-days/>

Region 5: Counties- Butler, Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Lancaster, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Polk, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, Seward, Thayer, York

MEAD DAYS

What: Street dance, sand volleyball, horseshoes, parade, 5K run & more

When: June 20-21, 2025

Where: Mead, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.facebook.com/p/Mead-Days-100064696865934/>

JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION-LINCOLN

What: Family-friendly event, activities for kids, music, dance and rap contest, health fair

When: June 21, 2025

Where: TBD

More Information: <https://malonecenter.org/malone-events/>

HOMESTEAD DAYS

What: Parade, car show, craft show, fireworks, horseshoes, family events, entertainment & more

When: June 19-22, 2025

Where: Beatrice, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.beatricechamber.com/homestead-days/>

FOURTH OF JULY SEWARD CELEBRATION

What: Grand parade, car show, craft show, fireworks, entertainment, food

When: July 4, 2025

Where: Seward, Nebraska

More Information: julyfourthseward.com

COBBLESTONE FESTIVAL

What: Parade, carnival, games, food, music & more

When: August 22-24, 2025

Where: Falls City Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.facebook.com/CobblestoneFestival/>

Region 6:

Counties- Cass, Dodge, Douglas, Sarpy, Washington

LAVISTA DAYS

What: Parade, family activities, free food cookout, fireworks & drone show

When: May 30-31, 2025

Where: La Vista, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.cityoflavista.org/987/Schedule-of-Events>

BENNINGTON DAZE

What: Parade, fireworks, music, corn-hole tournament, BBQ & more

When: June 7, 2025

Where: Bennington, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.facebook.com/benningtondaze/>

ELKHORN DAYS

What: Parade, family activities, music festival, car show, booths, food & more

When: May 29-June 1, 2025

Where: Elkhorn, Nebraska

More Information: <https://elkhorndays.org/>

OMAHA ART FAIR

What: Children's fair, performing arts, local art, mural cube, food & more;
mixture of outdoor and online activities

When: June 6-8, 2025

Where: Omaha, Nebraska

More Information: <https://omahaartfair.com/>

PAPILLION DAYS

What: Carnival, parade, market, fireworks, live entertainment

When: June 11-15, 2025

Where: Papillion, Nebraska

More Information: <https://www.papillionfoundation.org/papillion-days>