

Be You In Focus Webinar Transcript

Resilience in School Age Care

Presented by Sara Richardson, Toni Geldart, Huw Channing and Dr Jennifer Cartmel on 21 October 2020

Sara Richardson

Hello, everybody, and welcome to our In Focus webinar, Resilience in School Age Care.

Before we begin today I'd like to introduce you to our panellists: Toni, Huw and Dr Jennifer Cartmel. I'm Sara Richardson. I'm a Be You State Manager based on Kaurua country here in Adelaide. I'll now hand over to Toni to introduce herself to you.

Toni Geldart

Good afternoon. My name is Toni Geldart. I'm the Training and Development Team Lead for Camp Australia and I'm really excited to be here today.

Sara Richardson

Thanks, Toni. Welcome, Huw.

Huw Channing

Thanks Sara. My name is Huw Channing. I'm a Be You Education Consultant with experience as a primary and secondary teacher. I'm also currently doing some study in the positive psychology and wellbeing space.

Sara Richardson

Thanks, Huw. Finally we have Dr Jennifer Cartmel joining us today.

Dr Jennifer Cartmel

Greetings everyone. I work for Griffith University in the School of Human Services and Social Work with a particular focus on children. I have had the pleasure of being the person who got to write the *My Time Our Place* Framework for the Australian government over 10 years ago. Now, I'm very passionate about the school age care sector.

Sara Richardson

We'll see our panellists later in the webinar. We are really excited to hear their perspectives and their take on resilience in school age care. Before we get into the webinar, we'll just talk a bit about the online space today and a little bit about Be You. Be You is a national initiative led by Beyond Blue, in partnership with Early Childhood Australia and headspace, and it's funded by the Australian Government.

The vision is really aspirational, that every early learning community is positive, inclusive, and resilient, and a place where every child, young person, educator and family can achieve their best possible mental health.

It's a collaborative learning community for educators, and with a real focus on mental health literacy of educators, which fits in with what we will be doing today – starting a conversation about mental health, particularly focusing on resilience in the school age care context.

I'd like to let you know, there's another opportunity coming up soon on the 19th of November where we are having a school age care leadership forum *Leading wellbeing with Be You in School Age Care*. We encourage you to register today and join us online.

As we start today, I'd like to acknowledge that I'm meeting with you on the lands of the Kaurana people. I'd like to pay my respects to Kaurana Elders past, present, and those emerging.

I'd also like to acknowledge the continuing connection to country, land, sky and waterways that Aboriginal people hold. As we meet today across Australia, you might like to acknowledge where you're meeting us from today in the chat box.

Be You draws on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, doing and being. You can access these ways using our Always Be You resources. The symbols on your screen today are articulated a bit more in the Always Be You resources, and they tell the story about making sure that while we're in this space and talking about some things that might bring up feelings for you, that we need to make sure that we make safe and also acknowledge that we are all going to learn many ways. Make sure that you take care of yourselves and each other today. Only share with confidentiality and what feels safe for you. Seek help if you need to. It's really important as we have conversations about mental health that we do take care of ourselves.

The other thing we need to do before we get started today is make sure that we are all familiar with this online space. Today we are using GoTo Webinar. There will be opportunity for you to ask questions. Amanda and Renee are working in the background to respond to your questions and also, perhaps, sharing your responses more broadly with the rest of the team. I'd like to acknowledge our staff who are working in the background alongside Amanda and Renee: Steph, Dino and Maria.

If you are having some technical difficulties today, there will be numbers in the chat box for you to contact. There will be links to resources and references available throughout the webinar, but they'll also be available in a downloadable handout. Remember, you can access a copy of this webinar recording and the any of the resources later on so you are able to continue this conversation back in your service and community. You will also have the opportunity to participate in polls throughout the webinar.

We really encourage you to join in the polls and have your say. Use the question and answer box to ask questions and have a conversation, a bit like a chat function. We're going to make the attendee list public so you can see who else is joining now. If you've got any questions about the online space that I haven't covered, please put them in the questions box and someone from the team will get back to you.

We are going to get started today with a poll and find out what you already know about resilience.

What does resilience mean to you?

While we're having this conversation about resilience, it's really important that we are clear about what we're talking about. Different people will have different understandings.

One of the things I was thinking about coming into this is having these conversations with the children that come to your service and encouraging them to understand what resilience means. You can select any or all of the responses available in the poll.

If resilience means something different to you, we encourage you to share this in the chat box. Resilience doesn't just sit with a person. We can have a resilient service or a resilient community.

That language gets used quite a lot, especially this year following the bushfires, COVID-19 and people who have experienced really significant things, the resilience shown is some pretty amazing. Let's finish the poll now and have a look at the results.

There's a fairly strong representation for all responses, but a stand out is about the capacity to recover and the process of coping well in any situation. Keep an ear out for whether you're going to hear those things from the presenters today as we hear from and focus on different perspectives. Today's focus includes hearing from Toni on how school age care programs can support resilience, listening to Huw explain what mental health looks like for children aged 4 to 12 years old, and finally Dr Jennifer Cartmel will finish off today with the bigger picture of where resilience fits in with school age care and with the framework that we are using.

Let's now hand over to Toni to talk to us about what this looks for Camp Australia. Over to you, Toni.

Toni Geldart

Thank you, Sara. Before I share how school age care programs support resilience, I would like to give you a brief overview of who we are and what we do. Camp Australia is a national outside school hours care provider. We have 606 services delivering before, after and holiday care for children and families. We have 3200 educators and we've had over 61,000 children attend services this calendar year already.

It is very important for us to take a very concerted approach as an organisation to help children and educators with resilience and here are just two reasons why.

Current external research indicates one in seven children between 4 and 17 has been assessed as having a mental health disorder. An internal survey with our educators returned a finding that the number one workplace challenge was behaviour management.

When children are in a resilient mindset, they feel safe, they are ready to learn and they want to have fun. We want all children excited and engaged when they come to our services. I'm really excited to share with you our approach.

Camp Australia's approach begins with our Care Program. Care is an evidence based approach, which helps all children to be included in outside school hours care.

This is an inclusive program for all children and families, but it's also aimed to support children with additional needs.

There are four key principles that underpin the program: collaborate, adapt, resolve and early intervention.

These four key principles give us a clear and straightforward plan to help overcome possible barriers that might be faced by children and families with additional needs when attending outside school hours care.

We know the positive impacts of an inclusive program and how important it is to have that for our communities and families. We sought advice and support from industry professionals.

We partnered with leading child psychologist Andrew Fuller who helped us develop the behaviour management training *Resilient Mindset*. We partnered with KU who manage a range of inclusion support services, including the government funded support program, and also Premium Health who we've had a longstanding relationship with that assisted us to develop autism training. A key aspect of the program was the *Resilient Mindset* course, and that's what I would like to share with you today.

To look further into how Camp Australia supports resilience, I would like to take you through the Resilient Mindset Learning Experience.

Educators working with children must understand that children operate and perform at their best when they're at the healthiest, that their body is an information system and that all behaviour is communication.

When your body is calm and resilient, it regulates and balances your blood pressure, heart rate, blood sugar, and hormones. Throughout the day, your nervous system activates and calms you in accordance with your needs and demands of your environment.

On the slide here, you can see the course modules and outcomes for the *Resilient Mindset* course; I'm going to take you three through those modules now.

Let's start by looking at module one, The Resilient Mindset module. Educators working in before and after school care are involved in calming and regulating children's behaviour.

Behaviour, as we know, is a form of communication and learning how to read that communication enables us to help children to feel calm, settled and happy.

To identify the resilient mindset we really needed to explore the other two mindsets which are the anxious mindset and the avoidant mindset. Understanding what these look like in children help guide educators to implement supportive practices at the right time.

Module two is about understanding the brain.

Brain chemistry has a lot to do with how we are feeling. Therefore, understanding the brain and how it relates to behaviour was essential for us to share with our educators.

This module focuses on the two main feelings, or the two main messages that we get from the brain – feeling safe, which is resilience, and then feeling fear, which is your avoidant and your anxious feelings.

We wanted to assist our educators in understanding the brain functions and how this impacts behaviour, then in turn with that realisation, we could really provide ways to lessen the time that children are fearful or stressed and really increase that time that they feel safe.

The third module is about the CPR approach to relationships.

In before and after school care, we're in the business of forming and reforming relationships with children, educators and parents.

Setting a consistent culture in our organisation around how we approach and create relationships builds the capacity of the educators to have confidence when engaging in new relationships.

Confidence and calmness in communication supports resilience. In this module, we look at constructive and deconstructive conversations. We share case studies as well as highlight some practical strategies for educators.

The final module focuses on the RESOLVE method. RESOLVE is our seven step framework that provides the strategies for de-escalating and regulating children that are outside the resilient mindset.

The most resilient children will have times where they're challenged and where they might have feelings of frustration. They might find themselves on a continuum from mild annoyance to really angry. When an educator uses their knowledge and experience to identify the way that the child's feeling, we're able to use the RESOLVE method to lessen the stress and fear the child is feelings. To give you are really small insight into this method, the R stands for respond with respect, which is our initial response to a child that is heightened.

The Care Program and the Resilient Mindset course have impacted us greatly since we since it launched in our organisation.

I now wanted to share with you how this approach has impacted our children, families, educators and us as an organisation.

For our children, educators now have an understanding of resilience and they have a framework that's going to help them guide practices. That means that we're able to provide environments that are inclusive for all children.

We have 430 inclusion support educators available to help children with special needs.

The children now have really confident educators who can support them when they need it the most.

For our families, results from internal surveys are showing increased satisfaction, and over 1100 parents have engaged in the program directly.

For our educators, we've had over 1800 educators complete the course, which is brilliant, and most of all, the language of resilience has become a shared understanding.

We've seen increased awareness and inclusion throughout services in practices and in their educational programs.

Pre and post survey results have shown a 49% increase in staff understanding of what a resilient mindset is and how it can affect a child's mood and a 35% increase in educator confidence when managing children's behaviour.

As an organisation, this course being evidenced based and developed with experts, with the high rates of completion, has ensured that we are inclusion ready.

We have a national team of training specialists that are resilient mindset subject matter experts.

We continue to be a safe child organisation and we've seen a reduction of incidents.

The Care Program itself has been recently recognised in the Australian Business Awards, winning the Business Innovation category.

It has been recognised as it shows the considerable efforts that we've gone to as an organisation, but more importantly, how this program is supporting children and families all over the country.

That concludes my presentation today. Thank you for taking the time to hear about how we, a national school age care provider, support resilience for children and families.

Sara Richardson

Thanks so much, Toni. It's great to hear about what Camp Australia are doing in this space. Thank you so much for sharing.

We will now move on and hear from Huw. As he mentioned before, Huw works for headspace, who are one of the partners along with Early Childhood Australia and Beyond Blue in delivering the Be You initiative. Huw is going to help us answer the question: what does mental health look like for children aged 4 to 12? Over to you, Huw.

Huw Channing

Thanks, Sara. As I said earlier, my name is Huw and I'm a Be You Education Consultant based in South Australia. I work with the headspace Schools division and we typically are tasked to work with primary and secondary schools, hence the allocation for me to talk about this specific age range, because it does cover a few different services.

As a preface to what I'm going to talk about today, most of the information that I've compiled for this presentation is actually taken from the Be You website, namely the Mentally Healthy Communities and the Learning Resilience domains.

To answer the question of what does mental health look like for 4 to 12 year olds, we're going to have a bit of a look at what kind of influences are actually occurring during this period of a young person's life, how that might actually influence their mental health and subsequently what that might look like. On the screen we have an image of a mental health trajectory taken from the Be You website. In the middle, that blue arrow is where we assume most young people and children will sit in regards to their mental health. The green line at the top is positive or optimum mental health. The red arrows that run along the top are actually things that might cause that green line to move down to that blue. When we're looking at potential negative effects on mental health, the red line would be more of a negative mental health trajectory but the green arrows along that trajectory would push the negatives up to that blue space.

The pink square shows where we'll be looking at in terms of an age range for 4 to 12 year olds, and what kind of things are influencing their mental health. Some positive things that will have a positive impact on a young person or a child's mental health in this age range would be positive parenting, mentally healthy learning communities – and that goes for all learning services, in particular, school age care – their academic achievement in their services, strong social connections and relationships which are experienced in these spaces and at home, and also a healthy body image. We go into the rest a bit later in life.

Some potential things that can have a negative influence on mental health, as we can see on this trajectory, would be poor parental or carer health, neighbourhood disadvantage or perhaps a low socioeconomic status, social exclusion – which might be experienced for a number of reasons in any sort of service, and potentially bullying at the higher age range of this bracket.

As we saw on that graph, we assume most people will kind of sit along that blue arrow and that they will have both positive and negative mental health experiences, which will cause them to fall somewhere in that space. With that in mind, most children and young people experience a positive developmental trajectory, but sometimes they can experience developmental, physical, or mental health issues for a range of reasons.

Children's development of mental health is influenced by many different things, and I think it's really important to acknowledge that in answering this question there is probably not a clear answer and that everyone's a different individual and has different factors influencing their mental health and overall health. Some well-known and logical influences include what's on the screen now. The first one we're looking at is childhood experiences. With childhood experiences, there are attachment styles theory, meaning that young people are children that have really secure and close attachments and relationships to key people in their lives, such as their parents, carers and, in this space, educators. If they have really secure and trusting relationships with these people, it helps with them developing coping mechanisms and overall their resilience and ability to regulate themselves. If they don't have the secure attachment style with those key adults in their life, they learn different ways of coping with their emotional regulation, which might not necessarily be healthy.

It's probably also important to say that non-family relationships through learning services and in school aged care environments are really important during this stage, and that can be the young people and children as well as key adults in this space. The next one we'll look at is brain development. I think we all know that going up to the age of 12 there's a lot that's going on with brain development. During this time, in the first eight years, executive functioning, such as decision making and the capacity to experience, regulate and express emotion, is actually being developed. It's really important that the influencers during this time are positive to help with that development of their brain.

It's also where a child starts to form close and secure relationships, like what we just talked about, and to explore and learn about themselves and their own world.

It's actually a time where children have the greatest opportunities to develop neural pathways for learning and mental health and wellbeing and actually set up positive strategies to be resilient in their life. These early years are also when they are most vulnerable to negative experiences. There are a lot of research that actually shows that trauma and negative experiences overall during these first eight years can have a big influence on a child's ability in many different ways, but particularly in their ability to be resilient and their ability to self-regulate. The final influence is change. In going into adolescence, young people go through complex biological, cognitive, and social changes.

This is a normal part of their development. These, as well as stressful life events, can impact on mental health and wellbeing, as we understand. There are positive changes and there are negative changes. It's important to say with these three big concepts are that they will be inter-related. An example of this would be that negative childhood experiences can influence brain development and these negative childhood experiences influencing brain development can subsequently then influence the young person's ability to deal with change and in turn, be resilient.

A common language and one of the tools that we use through Be You is the mental health continuum. We use this tool with many types of different learning services, but it's a really wonderful tool for mental health literacy and also educating both educators and young people and children about their mental health. As you can see, it's a continuum, but what we like to say is that children and young people, and everyone, for that matter, actually shifts back and forth along this continuum. We can assume that most people sit at the positive mental health end of this continuum but it's also okay to let young people, and anyone for that matter, know that they can actually shift up and down this continuum and it's constantly changing.

Just because you are in that flourishing range doesn't mean that you might not move down into struggling or severely impacting everyday activities. And, on the flip side of that, if you are in that yellow or that red space and not going so well, it doesn't mean that with good management and with support around you, you can't then move up to flourishing and going okay. On top of that, with good management and good mechanisms, people that might often be in those yellow and red zones, can actually find themselves in the blue and green space.

This is a tool that we use a lot with a lot of schools and learning services. Development and context matters in this situation. Like we previously described, relationships, change and brain development will all impact a child's development and all of those influences will subsequently have an impact on where they sit on this continuum.

As an example of the kind of work that we do with Be You and working with primary and secondary schools is that we actually use the mental health continuum alongside the BETLS observation tool as a policy for supporting children and students with mental health. We have heard of some schools that put this or a similar infographic up on the walls in their classroom or in their staff room and actually use it to help students, young people and staff identify where they might be sitting in regards to this continuum.

Be You Consultants can help you improve your understanding of the resources and tools that we have, such as the Mental Health Continuum, and we have a range of other resources which can help you to better facilitate wellbeing within your setting. I believe that's all for me. Sara, back to you.

Sara Richardson

Thank you so much, Huw. I've got lots going on in my head about what you've spoken about. The synergies between what you and Toni both mentioned are really interesting. I don't come from a health background, so using the language of mental health has been uncomfortable and different for me. I've used social emotional development, wellbeing, or resilience and those kinds of words, but actually using the words mental health is really critical so thank you for sharing that. Thank you also for re-introducing some of Be You's tools and resources, including Consultant support which is such a great opportunity for learning communities to have.

I now have the pleasure of introducing Dr Jennifer Cartmel, who, as you heard before, described herself as a passionate school age care person who's even to the point of doing research and PhDs in in the school age care space. It's such a privilege to have her here to help continue this conversation from another perspective. We're really pleased to have you here and look forward to hearing your perspective about resilience in school age care.

Dr Jennifer Cartmel

Thanks, Sara, I'd like to acknowledge the lands on which we're meeting today. Griffith University has a strong focus on remembering First Nations people. I'd like to reflect what Sara started with, acknowledging the traditional custodians of the land and really pay respect to elders, past and present and emerging leaders in this area and think about how important the knowledge that are Indigenous and First Nations people bring to our understanding about resilience as well.

Moving into my presentation, I'm going to remind you about the *My Time Our Place* Framework. When I was asked to speak about resilience I thought, in actual fact the framework is actually about resilience in school age care services. If you look through the framework and read more deeply about what it says, resilience pops up a lot. Even if it doesn't pop up in its own right as a word, a lot of the material that Huw spoke about in a deeper understanding and the language around what we use when we talk about resilience is reflected in that space.

The framework can't be implemented without having educators being self-aware in their personal state of resilience. I think having that continuum on the wall in a service is a great idea for this reason. So many of Be You's resources are useful in this space. The framework was written as a frame, and that's exactly what it is. It's like the scaffold. I often say to people, you really need to know the first part of the framework and the back part, where all the examples are in relation to the outcomes. I sometimes use these examples to rewrite my own. I want to challenge you as services who are working with the school age care sector to actually write your own examples of ways in which you can support building resilient children and communities through the work you do. We know that children who are in school age care may spend as much time in school age care as they do in school and we have such a responsibility to support resilience in this space.

If you look at our outcomes, particularly the first outcome, it reminds us about how children need a strong sense of identity. Children need to feel really safe and they need to develop that sense of autonomy. This is done through interacting with each other. It's through talking and listening to each other that we actually get a sense of who and what we are. Knowing this is really important to our own mental health and wellbeing.

The term resilience is used in this outcome much more compared to other outcomes.

Just as Huw spoke about the changes in childhood, etcetera, the outcomes are so inter-connected which is why holistic practice is so important? I.e. thinking about all aspects of development, just as we think about all aspects of children's lives. The connection between the home, the school, and the school age care environment,

I actually looked at the mental health trajectory that Huw showed earlier. Instead of inserting parent, I would insert school age care and school age care services into that trajectory. The role we play in children's lives is so important. Often it's in the school age care service where our staff ratios are perhaps a little bit smaller, where children get to engage with children of all ages and with adults in a different way, and without lower adult child ratios. This is where we often get to examine in more depth some of those things that are really important to building resilience, such as having a strong sense of identity.

It's through the interactions that children have that they become so aware, through their own identity and understanding of others along with the empathy that is required to actually cohesively come together with resilience. The second outcome is around being connected and contributing to the world. When you have a sense of belonging, you have a much healthier state. Belonging to the school age care team and your community is really important. This outcome reminds us that we really need to respond to diversity with respect. This is a really reciprocal process.

The diversity applies to other people just as much as it may apply to the individual which again supports the development of resilience, because you are socially responsible and tied into this. There is also a respect for the environment. We know that being resilient is not only just being connected to our own personal state of being; it's also linked to our physical environment. The health and wellbeing of our physical environment is really important to how we feel individually. It's really important for children to be connected and contribute to their world.

This outcome really highlights for us how important it is to acknowledge just being in a secure space. I sometimes think about the services that have to pack away at the end of each day and that sense of stability around where we are in our school age care services that is really important if we're going to have resilient children and resilient communities. That leads onto the third outcome which is having a strong sense of wellbeing. Resilience pops up in our framework here all the time in this particular outcome where we're actually helping children to acknowledge their own health, physical health, social health, and their own wellbeing. We're helping children to develop on a day-to-day basis that ability to cope with stresses and challenges that makes us resilience.

As I prepared for my presentation today, I couldn't help but think about how important these outcomes are in driving us to think really deeply about resilience, but also how much more information we need to flesh out in our framework, such as the material about the neuroscience and how children develop, and all the work Camp Australia have done with their resilient framework to make sure that educators are knowledgeable in these areas. That deeper level of understanding actually allows you to put into place strategies to support and create environments that will allow children to have this strong sense of wellbeing.

The next outcome is around being confident and involved learners. Children have the disposition to be curious and to cooperate with others. They are so much more confident and so they can take on that sense of problem solving that is so important in taking all the hurdles that life brings about for them. How do I find my hat? Have I put my bag in the same place every afternoon? How am I going to react and engage with these older children? Will I get them to share the ball with me? Will they include me in their game? It's about giving children the confidence to actually go out and do things really taps into our sense of who we are and to our ability to cope under pressure.

When you arrive to and leave school every morning and afternoon and go into that new environment, you might be there with 20 or 30 children or with 250 other children, who all have different dispositions coming at you. It can be quite challenging. As staff working in school age care we often think of what the children will be like this afternoon and how we will interact with them. The individual child is doing the same as they look across the sea of faces that they're going to be mixing with. We're constantly being challenged to be part of that school age care program and community every afternoon so being resilient is really important in that space.

The skill and the knowledge that we learn and practice in our school age care environment are so transferable into life in general. Sometimes school age care is a great place for us to practice who we are and how we are with other people. A sense of being to belong is really, really important.

Having educators that are able to help children describe, discuss and articulate how they feel by using a common language around their emotional, social and physical wellbeing is so important and that is linked in to that sense of resilience. That comes to the fifth outcome, which is that sense of communication and being able to be effective communicators. As I said to you, the framework is just that scaffold, but we need a whole lot of other knowledge, understandings and vocabulary that we can use to describe how we are feeling with each other that helps us make meaning of the situations in which we are in.

It helps us to build trusting relationships with adults in this space and with the other children in the space. The ability to listen and to talk to other people really helps us to become self-aware and to establish our own self-identity, which kind of brings us back to that first outcome looking at that strong sense of identity. You can see why I passionately said the framework is all about resilience and we need to fill in some of the knowledge and the deeper understandings about children's mental health and wellbeing. Some of the resources that Be You have provided for us really help us to be more intentional around how we use our strategies, to actually plan out programs and to actually interact with children and their family.

One of the things that are really important to me in this space comes from the neuroscience work of Doctor Bruce Perry. I draw on neuroscience because it's linked to mental health, of course, and helps us prepare the physical and social environment when operating outside school hours care. On the screen you will see these six ideas for thinking about how we prepare our learning environments to make it a really stable, secure and safe place for children to be. When we're thinking about the kinds of experiences that we provide are we making sure that it's relevant and age appropriate?

Is that sense of predictability there? Can children find the crayons or resources they want every day? Is there a pattern to our day? Is there a secure routine that children know to follow? This repetitive state allows security and builds relational experiences which is really rewarding.

The next slide speaks about what I always think about when it comes to preparing a high quality school age care environment that allows these outcomes to be enacted in a really meaningful way. Does this environment feel safe?

Do I feel safe physically and emotionally? Because if I do, I'm going to engage with the adults and the educators and I'm going to engage with other children. When I do that, I'm going to have that really strong sense of success. When I have that sense of success and that sense of belonging, I'm going to have really good relationships that I'm going to look forward to every day. That's a really lovely thing about school age care. You're there together for maybe a seven or a six year period with those same educators, with those same children, in that same space which is a little bit different to a school classroom where you might change every year. I know there are some schools that don't do that, but in school age care, you've got that predictability to build those long term relationships.

When you feel safe, you engage. When you've got really good relationships, you can take on any kind of challenge that people throw at you. I really implore you to think about that neuro-sequential model when you're building in this space in which you're going to support children with resilience. The other thing I wanted to say is, don't forget about yourselves. That sense of building your own self-awareness, building your own resilience as a staff team and building your knowledge is really important because if you're going to be able to appropriately support your children, you're going to need a resilient framework for yourself. One of the ways that I've found to do this is on the next slide.

I know those of you who are enacting the framework for school age care every day will know that critical reflection is so important. It's actually the opportunity to engage in critical thinking and critical conversation that allows you to transform your practice and actually do high quality practice. I use the COCR model, where you deconstruct, describe what's happening, confront, say how you think about it and how you feel about it and look to theorise. The really lovely thing when you theorise about resilience is that you can draw on all the Be You resources to actually stimulate your conversations and then allow yourself to think differently or think otherwise about how your practices might be every day during vacation, morning and afternoon care. I've put a conversation in the downloadable resource that you might like to use with your staff teams to talk about resilience using this reflective model.

It's so important that you are reflecting all the time through your critical reflection, thinking about how you're providing your environments, how you're engaging with your relationships and building your relationship with children considering multiple perspectives. Sometimes this means going through the space of the unthinkable. Oh my gosh, we've never done that before. I wonder what that would mean if we did that? I wonder how that would differently support our children and our families, what benefits are there for the children and for the rest of the staff team? I'm really challenging you to actually go back and look at the framework, look at those examples and type out your own examples of what the children and educators do with a strong, mindful intentionality. Think about resilience and I'm sure you'll find that you will really build a really strong, supportive community in your school age care services.49:19

Thanks, Sara. Back to you.

Sara Richardson

Thank you so much, Dr Jennifer Cartmel.

I'm sitting here nodding my head away as you were talking, thinking of all the bits that were resonating with me as you were speaking, and I'm sure that other people experienced that, too. Thank you so much for your input. We're going to do a couple of things to finish up now, so we'll ask Huw and Toni to join us back on screen now as well as we think about one thing that we might take away from today. Let's start with Toni. Do you have one take away from today?

Toni Geldart

Absolutely. Look, Dr Jennifer Cartmel just shed some incredible links from the framework to resilience, as did Huw looking at the mental health continuum. For me, today has shown how important this conversation is to have. As educators and providers we need to make sure that this is in the forefront of what we are doing and we focus on this because we can really make a difference in the children's day – not just for the children, but for the families as well.

It's a conversation that we need to keep having and those recognitions of where children are on the continuum is extremely important.

Sara Richardson

Thanks, Toni.

Huw, what is your take away from today?

Huw Channing

I definitely have a lot of things to take away, but I think actually having a better understanding about how well placed school age care settings are to promote resilience and wellbeing has been really great for me. We had a good conversation about this in the lead up to actually doing this presentation, but the amount of time that children and young people spend in these settings is such a large period of time. The educators and carers in these settings are really well placed to monitor that wellbeing and also promote it and help children and young people with that understanding of resilience. It's really important that we do have a common and consistent language and approach to wellbeing across these settings.

Whether that's the early childhood, school age care or going into primary and secondary school, it's important that everyone is familiar with what the process is going to be and how to talk about that across all of those settings. It's been really great to learn about that and to hear from Toni and Dr Jennifer Cartmel about their respective initiatives was really cool.

Sara Richardson

Thanks, Huw. Now to Dr Jennifer Cartmel.

Dr Jennifer Cartmel

My take away is that we can't rely on our knowledge or the knowledge of the past. When I wrote the framework – and it was nearly 10 years ago – there wasn't necessarily a lot of resources around, particularly around children's brain development and the mental health and wellbeing of children 4 to 12 years. We often used to think that it's really important to focus on that birth to five years area.

Now we know that our neural pathways are changing up until we're 28 or so. The Be You resources are so up to date with that information. We really need to draw on resources to help build our knowledge so that when we do reflect on our practices, we have relevant, contemporary knowledge to use and think about in our practices. Sometimes it may reinforce that what we are doing is really good, but it also may give us the opportunity to act a little differently in the best interests of the children in our care.

That mental health trajectory is gold. I just told everybody they should have it tattooed on their hand just to remind people that both those positive and negative influences are so strong. Even if that's the only thing you do in your school age care services, just reflect on how do you, as a service, really build that strong mental health trajectory for children through those characteristics. If we think about that a little bit more closely, we are really going to make a difference to the future of our Australian children.

Sara Richardson

There is another really useful tool called the Risk and Protective Factors framework which sits in the Be You resources as well, which articulates that really well and identifies a bit more clearly some of those things we have spoken about today so have a look out for that because I think that will help with that whole notion of trajectory too.

We are going to do one more poll now as we keep talking. We want to hear from you all about which parts of Be You would you like to see contextualised to school age care.

While you're filling that, we will answer a question that has come in from the audience from Lorenzo. I think this is particularly for you, Dr Jennifer Cartmel, about the notion of language. Where do we get support that guides educators to learn about language? Dr Jennifer Cartmel, do you want to respond to this question first?

Dr Jennifer Cartmel

Yes. I spoke about using the conversation process and I would use that process along with the Be You resources that follows a particular concept and unpack it with your staff. You can actually talk about the language that's used to describe mental health and wellbeing and by having those conversations with your staff; you're actually sharing the knowledge, the terms, the language that's used. I would then invite the school to have a conversation around what kind of language is appropriate to use. I would be having those conversations with the children in particular because the more children can tap into their own mental health and wellbeing and you give them the language and the words to describe how the feeling, they are recognising they're happy or when they are feeling really anxious. By giving them the opportunity and the language to use you're actually building a community of people who are speaking that language, but you just need to have the time to make sure that you do clarify with each other that when you are using language and terminology, people understand it in a similar way. This is just done through having a conversation and listening to each other.

Sara Richardson

Thank you for that, Dr Jennifer Cartmel. I might get Toni to respond to this question as well, but just before we do that, we have the results of the poll in now. It looks like everybody wants a bit of everything, but the highest is professional learning, tools and guides, and fact sheets. Thank you everyone for your feedback, that's really helpful to know. If there are any comments you would like to make about the Be You resources, we are undertaking a project this year to explore what Be You looks like for school age care in particular so we encourage you to contact us with any feedback you may have. Toni, have you got anything else you would like to add around language?

Toni Geldart

To learn the language, you just have to be a part of the conversation and reach out to the experts. There is so much online. Be You have some really great resources. You just need to start. Once you start talking about it with your teams and including language in your meetings and in everyday conversations, it just starts to become the normal which is exactly what it needs to be.

Sara Richardson

That's great advice, thanks Toni. I think sometimes we over complicate things. If we talk about what we do and what's important and we continue to do that, it's all that we really need to do. Perhaps my take away comes from Dr Jennifer Cartmel when she said to think the unthinkable. I love being in that space. Sometimes we don't allow ourselves to go there.

Dr Jennifer Cartmel

One of the unthinkable for me is that people don't think about just how important school age care is. There's a perception that children are there for just a short period of time yet they are spending such a significant part of their childhood in this space. I think it's appropriate that we do spend a little bit more time investing in making sure our knowledge base we provide to educators supports them in doing a really good job.



Sara Richardson

Thank you everyone. We are going to pause the conversation because we're going to stay online and keep the webinar open for a Q&A panel. There will be opportunity for you to unmute yourself or send some questions to any of the panel members in the chat. I'd really like to thank our panellists, and also thank everybody else for joining us today.

END TRANSCRIPT