

# The Resilience Doughnut

## Building Resilience in Children and Young People

By Lyn Worsley and Ruth Fordyce

Many factors in a child's life contribute to their development, including parents, family, teachers, friends and their local community. Past research has tended to focus on risk factors in the lives of young people who have become involved in health risk behaviours. In other words, efforts have been directed towards trying to understand why certain young people are not resilient. While this notion is popular with professionals working individually with young people, it is not always useful for parents trying to raise their child effectively or lawyers trying to advocate the best interest for the child in a separation battle. Nor does it help the average teacher or school principal who wants to see their students cope with pressures inside and outside of school.

More recently, research has focused on young people who *are* resilient, despite the adversities they are facing. Australia psychologist Andrew Fuller defines resilience as “the happy knack of being able to bungy jump through the pitfalls of life”. A number of researchers have found that there are common qualities amongst those individuals who are able to ‘bungy jump’ through their pitfalls and keep thriving. By drawing on such research, clinical psychologist Lyn Worsley has developed a simple and practical resilience-building tool that can be easily used by anyone, including young people themselves. It is called the Resilience Doughnut and is outlined in her book, “The Resilience Doughnut: The Secret of Strong Kids”.

The Resilience Doughnut has two parts:

1. **The hole in the middle** represents the person’s key beliefs that develop as they build the tools and resources they need to face the world. These beliefs are concerned with three areas:

- their awareness of those who support them (*who I have*).
- how they view themselves (*who I am*)
- the degree of confidence they have in their own abilities (*what I can do*)

Research indicates that young people who have strong positive beliefs in each of these areas are more likely to be resilient.

2. **The doughnut** is comprised of seven sections, each section representing an external factor in the person’s life. When reviewing the research, Lyn found that these seven factors repeatedly showed up in the lives of resilient people.

The seven factors are:

- *The Parent Factor*: characteristics of strong and effective parenting.
- *The Skill Factor*: evidence of self-competence.
- *The Family and Identity Factor*: where family identity and connectedness is evident.
- *The Education Factor*: experience of connections and relationships during the learning process.
- *The Peer Factor*: where social and moral development is enhanced through interactions with peers.



- *The Community Factor*: where the morals and values of the local community are transferred and the young person is supported.
- *The Money Factor*: where the young person develops the ability to give as well as take from society through employment and purposeful spending.

These seven factors each have the potential to enhance the positive beliefs within the person and thus to help the individual to develop resilience. Interestingly, across the various research projects, most of the resilient individuals had only some, and not all, of these seven factors working well in their life. It seems that their ability to focus on the factors that were strong was a key aspect of their resilient mindset.

Lyn has designed a simple scoring method which enables individuals to score the strength of each factor in the Resilience Doughnut. These scores are then used to identify the three strongest factors, from which the individual gains messages that build or enhance their resilience. Once the strength factors are established, creativity can begin! Because the factors are external to the individual, they can be considered, enhanced and utilised in a range of practical ways. Lyn encourages people to think of ways they can use their strength factors in every day life, and work to make them even stronger. In particular, it is the interaction of the three external protective factors that will inevitably strengthen resilience. Lyn's book outlines a number of suggestions for how to enhance each factor, as well as case studies which demonstrate how to get the three strength factors to interact. The Resilience Doughnut Online Game is also a creative and simple way for young people themselves to score the Resilience Doughnut, identify their strengths and gain feedback about putting their strengths to work!

Because the Resilience Doughnut is simple and effective to use, new ways of building resilience in children and adolescents can be discovered and applied in many different contexts. Teachers, students, parents, caring professionals or individuals who want to become more resilient in the face of adversity, would all find the Resilience Doughnut relevant, helpful and simple to use. The Resilience Doughnut is fun and creative and, at the very least, the process of working with the Resilience Doughnut has the potential to strengthen the human spirit and build a sense of hope and optimism.

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Lyn and Ruth can be booked to present on the Resilience Doughnut or to run interactive workshops. They are also conducting 2-day Accredited Training workshops in Sydney and in regional areas, for those who would like to be further trained in this model, and equipped to teach others. There is also a range of creative Resilience Doughnut resources which can be used when working with children or adolescents. Visit [www.theresiliencedoughnut.com.au](http://www.theresiliencedoughnut.com.au) for more information.