

Resilient Futures: An Individual and System-Level Approach to Improve the Well-Being and Resilience of Disadvantaged Young Australians

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Young people living with disadvantage are at elevated risk of a range of negative life outcomes, including social exclusion, impaired health and well-being, and low educational or vocational participation. In this context, the Resilient Futures program was conceptualized and developed as a strength-focused and positive psychology intervention whose design was underpinned by a broad interdisciplinary range of scientific evidence. The program utilizes an ecological framework that sought to target key proximal and distal factors associated with youth social exclusion, disengagement, and disadvantage. The target participant group was 850 disadvantaged young South Australians (aged 16 to 21) drawn from a number of educational, mental health, and youth justice agencies who were project partners in codesigning and supporting the implementation. The intervention was designed to build well-being and resilience skills through explicit (direct teaching) and implicit (mentoring, case management) teaching methods, supported by system-focused methods that build the capacity of service providers. This article describes the iterative development of the Resilient Futures program, including a significant early program reorientation toward the use of a nonprescriptive and flexible delivery method. This pivot was guided by the implementation science literature, and underpinned by an intentional practice model and approach that was operationalized at both the program design and service delivery layers of the program. We summarize key challenges in delivering a well-being and resilience program across multiple sites for a disadvantaged cohort, and the methods the project team developed to bring focus to implementation quality and rigor. Preliminary qualitative evidence supporting the effectiveness of the program is also provided.

What is the significance of this article for the general public?

Delivering mental health interventions to young people is challenging and complex. For the last 2 years, the Well-being and Resilience Centre has delivered a large-scale evidence-based program called Resilient Futures to build resilience in some of the most disadvantaged young people in South Australia. This article serves as an innovative case study of how the science of well-being and resilience can be translated into practice but also outlines the challenges faced in delivering this project and the new methodologies developed to overcome them.

Keywords: resilience, well-being, Resilient Futures, positive youth development, intentional practice

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Adolescence is a time of both vulnerability and opportunity. Although most young Australians aged between 12 and 25 live successful and fulfilling lives, there is a disadvantaged cohort of young people who are not faring as well (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2011). This article brings focus to “disadvantaged young people” and defines this cohort as individuals presenting with one or more risk factor (e.g., a mental health disorder, educational disengagement, youth justice involvement, poverty) that has the potential to severely impact on their capacity to reach their potential. To illustrate Australian data, in 2016, 13% of young people aged from 15 to 24 lived in poverty (Australian Council of Social Service, 2016). One in four young people aged 16 to 24 experienced a mental health disorder within a 12-month period (AIHW, 2011). One in 477 young people aged 10 to 17 were on a youth justice supervision order on any given day in 2015, and in 2016 more than 40% of this group were Aboriginal (AIHW, 2017). Disadvantage can also be both triggered and perpetuated through school disengagement. As young people transition into high school, there is up to a 7% decline in school attendance rates within the period Year 7 (age 13) to Year 10 (age 15) (Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, 2013), with approximately 20% of Australian youth not completing Year 12 (age 17) or an equivalent educational milestone (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). For young people with backgrounds of disadvantage, school and education remain key protective factors to reduce disadvantage and improve whole-of-life outcomes (McNeely & Falci, 2004).

This article describes the development of the Resilient Futures program: a positive psychology or strength-focused intervention designed to build well-being and resilience skills through explicit (direct teaching) and implicit (mentoring, case management) teaching strategies, supported by system-focused methods to build the capacity of service providers. A core focus of the program is to reduce youth disadvantage by strengthening engagement with educational systems. The article has been organized to detail the iterative nature of the program’s development, including the theoretical and implementation evidence that underpinned its design and key pivot. To do this, the article provides an

overview of scientific evidence underpinning the program’s design. This is followed by a description of a first iteration Resilient Futures program (Version 1.0). The article articulates the implementation challenges associated with a complex multisite intervention and the novel methodologies that the project team developed to bring focus to program rigor and fidelity. The program’s current and stabilized logic model (Version 2.0) is then provided, followed by emergent qualitative outcome data.

A Scientifically Informed Starting Point

This section summarizes the scientific underpinnings that informed the design of the Resilient Futures program. A key rationale for the program was that negative developmental trajectories initiated in childhood and adolescence can have long-term social effects (Tremblay, 2010). Young people living with disadvantage, with histories of offending, school disengagement or mental health problems are at much higher risk of developing psychological or behavioral disturbances in adulthood and becoming disengaged from work, social institutions, and society (Finn & Zimmer, 2012; Henry, Knight, & Thornberry, 2012). The social problems caused by young people’s social exclusion and disengagement with school and society are both extensive and compounding. Therefore, the development of evidence-informed interventions (e.g., the Resilient Futures program) for this cohort remains of key interest to various stakeholders, such as researchers, policymakers, and program developers.

The first iteration of the Resilient Futures program was informed by the educational, youth development, positive psychology, and developmental and clinical psychology literature. Specific focus was brought to scientific insights and suggestions regarding how to address various issues related to young people’s social exclusion and disengagement. Key evidence considered within this program development period is briefly summarized.

In the area of education there is overwhelming evidence that a young person’s engagement with school and education is a significant protective factor which lowers the risk of future negative outcomes such as poor health and substance use (Gruber & Machamer, 2000; Li et al., 2011; Martin et al., 2015). In particular, educa-

tion is an evidence-based protective factor for reducing the risk of future offending (Sallybanks, 2013). Educational engagement can be fostered by increasing a young person's aspirations for educational, vocational, or life accomplishment (Martin et al., 2015), and by strengthening self-efficacy, which has been identified as a central moderator of educational outcomes, notably for young people with at-risk backgrounds (Schunk, 1991). The Resilient Futures program brought strong attention to both self-efficacy and aspirations as key points of intervention focus (e.g., short-term outcomes).

The youth development literature has brought increasing focus to strengths-based approaches on the basis of the belief that the true capacities and potential of young people were being underestimated through historical models and research focusing on youth deficits (Damon, 2004). North American developmental scientists have integrated both positive psychology and youth development concepts in a research and practice movement titled "positive youth development" (Damon, 2004; Gestsdottir & Lerner, 2008; Larson, 2000; Lerner, Dowling, & Anderson, 2003; Lerner et al., 2005; Park, 2004). This approach explains optimal adolescent development as being a function of the "combined role of characteristics of the person and ecological assets in the family, school, or community settings" (Lerner, Lerner, von Eye, Bowers, & Lewin-Bizan, 2011, p. 1107). Such an approach has coincided with the broader psychological movement toward positive psychology (Jarden & Jarden, 2016; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

The broader developmental psychology literature has suggested understanding resilience, well-being, and educational engagement within an ecological framework (Bronfenbrenner & Ceci, 1994; Ungar, Ghazinour, & Richter, 2013). That is, risk and protective factors may exist within a young person's own world (e.g., proximal factors like skills, values, cognitive capacity) or the multiple systems or distal factors supporting a young person (e.g., family, community, peers, media). Variations in offending, educational engagement, and well-being outcomes are dependent on the interaction between both proximal and distal factors (Lerner et al., 2005; Lerner et al., 2011). For example, growing a young person's social-emotional competencies (e.g., self-awareness, resilience

skills) or developmental resources for resilience and well-being can manifest in meaningful behavioral outcomes (Durlak, Weissberg, Dymnicki, Taylor, & Schellinger, 2011). The Resilient Futures program sought to understand youth disadvantage through an ecological lens, but, consistent with its positive psychology roots, provided a strong content focus for targeting social and emotional competencies associated with resilience, well-being, and educational engagement.

Contextual Considerations Within Early Program Design

The Resilient Futures program also considered a range of other proximal and distal factors within its design and implementation. These factors included developmental functioning, trauma history, socioeconomic advantage and disadvantage, and social exclusion, each of which is briefly outlined.

Young people from disadvantaged backgrounds present with higher rates of relational trauma and abuse, and this can manifest as emotional regulation problems, which can have neuro-developmental antecedents (Perry, 2001). Developmental trauma can manifest with pervasive symptoms that include depression, various medical illnesses and developmental delays, and a variety of impulsive, oppositional, and self-destructive behaviors (Font & Berger, 2015; Perry, 2001). Despite this, the transition through adolescence is a time of substantial neurological growth and reorganization (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006). On the basis of this evidence, interventions provided to young people with backgrounds of trauma need to be mapped to their neuro-developmental level (Perry, 2006) and conducted in a trauma-informed manner (Wall, Higgins, & Hunter, 2016). The later brings a content focus to the role of supporting adult relationships to foster growth and healing in young people. Trauma-informed practice (or science) was a key design and implementation consideration of the Resilient Futures program.

There are also a range of sociological determinants and distal factors associated with youth disadvantage and disengagement. One important factor is social inclusion. Socioeconomic disadvantage, often represented by low household income and associated exclusion from so-

cial and community participation, plays a key role in understanding the patterns of disadvantage seen in young people (Martin et al., 2015). By drawing on the concept of social exclusion, the Resilient Futures program sought a more nuanced understanding of disadvantage by emphasizing deprivation in a range of domains such as joblessness, low educational outcomes, low income, lack of access to services and social groups, and poor physical and mental health (Tsakoglou & Papadopoulos, 2002). This provided a core rationale to integrate the program within broader systems (e.g., school, case management) supporting young people.

Collectively, this evidence, drawn from the psychological, sociological, and health literature, provided the underpinning knowledge base to inform the design of the Resilient Futures program as a strength-focused intervention to address proximal and distal antecedents of disadvantage. By doing so, it aimed to increase social inclusion, participation and engagement of South Australian young people.

The Resilient Futures Program

The Resilient Futures program has been delivered under two key iterations (Versions 1 and 2). They are considered in turn, along with the implementation challenges that led to the program pivot.

The Resilient Futures Program (Version 1.0)

In early 2015, the Resilient Futures program was conceptualized to increase the educational participation, well-being, and life prospects of young South Australians at risk of negative future outcomes (or disadvantage). The program was developed by the South Australian Health and Medical Research Institute's (SAHMRI) Well-being and Resilience Centre with AUD1.2m philanthropic funding from the Wyatt Trust (www.wyatt.org.au) and the James and Dinna Ramsay Foundation (www.jdrfoundation.com.au).

The broad objectives of the Resilient Futures program were twofold: the first was to measure and build the resilience and well-being of 850 disadvantaged young people aged 16 to 21 by providing well-being and resilience skills training, reinforced through ongoing mentoring and

access to online tools and resources; the second was to invest in the skills and knowledge of youth workers and educators with a systems view to improving the professional practice of building well-being and resilience skills in young people and bringing a focus to addressing key distal and proximal factors associated with social exclusion and disadvantage. The initial intended outcomes of the Resilient Futures program were as follows:

- to strengthen youth engagement in educational and vocational pathways;
- to build social and emotional competencies (cognitive-behavioral skills) as effective problem-solving, coping, communication, and self-regulation skills when dealing with adversity; and
- to strengthen aspirations, self-confidence, and self-efficacy to overcome socioeconomic disadvantage and increase social participation.

With these broad objectives and intended outcomes as guides, the Resilient Futures program (Version 1.0) was initially operationalized through three program pillars: (1) explicitly delivered resilience skills training, (2) skills embedding and consolidation (mentoring, online support), and (3) key strategic delivery partnerships. Each of these mechanisms comprised several components, which are described in more detail in the following text.

Explicitly delivered resilience skills training. Pillar 1 included the explicit delivery of well-being and resilience skills, which involved content adapted from the 49 North program (<https://4-9-north.com/>). The 49 North program is based on best-practice positive psychology (Hone, Jarden, & Schofield, 2015; Parks & Schueller, 2014) and cognitive-behavioral therapy (Beck, 1995) and developed with reference to the Comprehensive Soldier and Family Fitness program delivered at scale within the U.S. Army (Harms, Krasikova, & Vanhove, 2013). The 49 North program teaches 10 specific skills designed to enhance resilience and well-being, which bring a content focus to effective problem solving, adaptability, positive coping, self-regulation, and social support. The 10 adapted Resilient Futures skills are summarized in Table 1.

At the point of initial development, the TechWerks' skill of "meaning making," which is a skill that teaches individuals how to cognitively

Table 1

Summary of the 49 North Skills Adapted for the Resilient Futures Program

Skill	Description
1. Growth mindsets	This cognitive skill encourages individuals to believe that their most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work.
2. Event-thought-reaction connections	This skill increases individual awareness of how thoughts drive reactions to events, and is used to determine if thoughts and reactions are helping individuals work towards their goals, act upon their values, improve their performance and strengthen their relationships.
3. What's most important	This skill increases individual awareness of what influences unproductive reactions (emotional and/or physical) that may interfere with performance, goals or relationships.
4. Balance your thinking	This skill helps individuals cognitively appraise situations in an accurate manner that is based upon evidence.
5. Cultivating gratitude	This skill seeks to build optimism, positive emotions and resilience by bringing ongoing attention to gratitude as a cognitive process.
6. Mindfulness	This skill teaches individuals to regulate their attention in a focused, open and nonjudgmental manner.
7. Interpersonal problem solving	This skill teaches individuals the elements to address interpersonal problems in a respectful manner with healthy and productive emotional expression, and use of compromise.
8. Active constructive responding	This skill increases awareness of communication patterns and responses that maintain, strengthen, and cultivate important relationships.
9. Capitalizing on strengths	This skill increases awareness of an individual's and others' personal strengths, and how to apply strengths across all life domains.
10. Values-based goals	This skill increases individuals' awareness of their values, and how to translate these values into actions and goals.

appraise challenges and failures in a healthy and productive way through a focus on meaning, was replaced with the skill of “growth mindset.” This is a construct developed by psychologist Carol Dweck (2012) and is associated with stronger educational and life outcomes in young people (Yeager & Dweck, 2012), thus was seen as a necessary addition.

The 49 North program was designed to be delivered as a 5-day “train-the-trainer” program, where individuals complete the explicit skills training in the first 2.5 days and then participate in an additional 2.5 days of training to practice teaching the skills within their own organizations. The program draws upon the work of Martin Seligman and others, whose research has shown that resilience, well-being, and positive emotional states can be measured and learnt through skill-building interventions (e.g., Beck, 1976; Emmons, 2007; Kabat-Zinn, 2004; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000; Seligman, 2002). Seligman conceptualizes optimal well-being as having five key elements—positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment—captured by the acronym PERMA (Seligman, 2012), and

this model is incorporated into the 49 North program.

With reference to the literature base noted earlier, the 49 North program content was adapted to meet the needs of the Resilient Futures program participant group. Adaptations evolved through an iterative (or ongoing) code-sign process that included consultation with all project partners and experts in child development and trauma. Specifically, the original skills content was focused on higher order meta-cognitive processes, and, given that abstract reasoning skills are likely to be underdeveloped in the target group for Resilient Futures (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006), the material was operationalized in concrete terms. Adaptations were also based on trauma-informed constructs (Australian Childhood Foundation, 2012) that included a stronger content focus on self-regulation, which is a higher order skill associated with well-being and thriving states in adolescents (Lerner, Lerner, Bowers, et al., 2011) and a recommended intervention point for trauma-informed positive psychology interventions (Brunzell, Stokes, & Waters, 2016). The adapted 10 skills were operationalized in a

manual as “anchor points” (or teaching outcomes to be brought into focus within explicit program delivery). The manual also included many suggested program activities for program facilitators.

Skills embedding and consolidation. Pillar 2 involved the embedding and consolidation of the 49 North skills. The program proposed a working theoretical framework for skill development and expression. That is, the primary intent of the explicit skills delivery approach was to raise awareness and knowledge of each skill element, providing the foundation for skill acquisition and expression to occur through mentoring and coaching support. When the young person started to internalize and value the skill across a range of settings, it was hypothesized that the conditions were present for the skill to be internalized as a mindset shift.

This internalization process was enabled through embedded mentoring and coaching for all participants within the Resilient Futures program. Structured and ongoing relationships between significant adults and young people through mentoring, coaching, or case management approaches were used to support the skill acquisition process through modeling, priming and cueing, rehearsal, reflection, and practice. Specifically, adults supported young people to further explore and operationalize the Resilient Futures program material into their lives. These empirically based mentoring practices also brought attention to proximal and distal factors of socioeconomic disadvantage and represent evidence-based and higher impact mentoring approaches (DuBois, Holloway, Valentine, & Cooper, 2002).

The consolidation and embedding process was also facilitated through online support and a web-based platform. These program elements were applied to strengthen the skill internalization process through the process of cueing and priming across a diverse range of settings. The web-based platform served as an accessible, comfortable, and potentially anonymous site for young people who might otherwise choose to avoid more formal services (Oh, Jorm, & Wright, 2009). The platform extends the reach of the Resilient Futures program by providing participants with a site to continue their engagement with the Resilient Futures program content, provide access to extension content on

well-being and resilience skills, and establish contact with their mentors.

Key strategic delivery partnerships. The SAHMRI Well-being and Resilience Centre identified key agencies to collaboratively partner with in the delivery of the Resilient Futures program. Partners were chosen primarily based on their long-term engagement with vulnerable young people in disadvantaged communities, and their commitment to structured adult-to-young-person relationships through mentoring, coaching or case engagement approaches. In addition, evidence of an organizational commitment to learning, improving systems of professional practice, innovation, stable management, and staff groups were also considered important, as was a willingness to co-invest in the program. On this basis, the following seven initial partners were chosen:

- three alternative schools that focused on reconnecting disengaged learners to education through accredited and nonaccredited learning using well-being strategies,
- a youth agency that provided case management and learning to disengaged learners and young people in custodial care,
- an international aid agency that focused on youth justice and custodial care,
- a specialist mental health provider, and
- a therapeutic care agency specializing in residential services for young people who have been removed from their families.

These partnerships, drawn from multiple sites across education, mental health, and youth justice service providers, provided the basis to deliver the first iteration of Resilient Futures (Version 1.0).

In this version, the skills teaching methodology drew heavily on the explicit precision skills delivery approach articulated in the 49 North manual. The trainers' manual for the Resilient Futures (Version 1.0) program included a highly scripted eight-session program that integrated additional resources and activities that were nuanced to the participant cohort (e.g., it included audio-visual media). The Resilient Futures program started by delivering this prototype to three participant groups via two partner agencies in early 2016 before being incrementally rolled out to all seven partners across 2016.

The first iteration of the Resilient Futures program met with mixed success. Partner feedback reported that the teaching methodology

achieved high engagement with young people from cohorts having stronger associations with mainstream schools. However, the program did not gain traction as a viable methodology for the most disengaged learners, which is the primary target group for the Resilient Futures program. Partners universally reported that the adapted skills and the prescriptive teaching methodology, mapped to a traditional classroom pedagogical approach, did not engage the participant cohort. Partner feedback indicated that the Resilient Futures program was not manifesting the desired program outcomes.

A key insight and outcome from this piloting was that program partners started to develop a range of different delivery models and made significant content adaptations nuanced to their contexts (specific youth needs and organizational setting). Adaptation occurs frequently in the implementation of many evidence-based programs conducted in real-world settings, where practitioners adapt program procedures, dosage, content, and target groups to their contextual setting (Moore, Bumbarger, & Cooper, 2013). The Resilient Futures program management team supported and monitored this adaptation process. Key changes included partners integrating skills content into (a) accredited and nonaccredited programs; (b) one-on-one and group therapeutic or clinical settings; and (c) project-based delivery models that included integrating content within the visual arts, performance, photography, film-making, and gaming. Through this process, the Resilient Futures program organically adapted as a model comprised of core components (e.g., core skill outcomes) that were supported by a dynamic teaching delivery method that included a constellation of adaptable teaching or learning elements.

The need for these adaptations highlighted the shortcomings of delivering a prescriptive well-being and resilience skills intervention across a heterogeneous participant group, and across education, mental health and youth justice sites. As such, there was an identified need to apply a flexible teaching and service delivery methodology that could support multisite application, and respond to the needs of the heterogeneous participant cohort. However, with flexibility, concerns were raised about program fidelity, which refers to the degree to which the program is delivered to a high standard and in a consistent manner for all participants. Program

fidelity is strongly associated with higher program impact (Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Lipsey, 2009), and best-practice program implementation considerations (Blase, Van Dyke, Fixsen, & Bailey, 2012). As often occurs within large-scale and highly applied interventions (Malti, Noam, Beelmann, & Sommer, 2016), the project team sought a balance between implementation fidelity and partner agency flexibility in the delivery of the program. Within the Resilient Futures program, this was operationalized as a process that enabled partner agencies to flexibly adapt the program to the unique characteristics of the agency and its young people, while ensuring fidelity to the content and rigor with regard to the teaching method. The implementation methodology of “intentional practice” was identified as a core mechanism to uphold rigor and fidelity, but at the same time support flexibility and innovation in service delivery. It was this aspect of intentional practice that was introduced as a key program addition and pivot underpinning Resilient Futures (Version 2.0).

Infusing the Implementation Approach of Intentional Practice (Resilient Futures 2.0)

Developed with reference to the implementation science literature (e.g., Blase et al., 2012; Durlak & DuPre, 2008; Lipsey, 2009), intentional practice is a methodology which seeks to bring ongoing mindful awareness to the intent of an intervention, including the desired outcomes (“what”) and the processes or mechanisms (“how”) by which they are achieved (Raymond, 2016b). The modeling of intentional practice was developed through a review of clinical, forensic and educational interventions, and the identification of program features associated with higher impact outcomes (see Raymond, 2018). The intentional practice approach can be operationalized through the following key questions:

1. What is the intent, energy, or purpose driving the intervention?
2. What outcome is at the focus of the intervention?
3. How, or by which method or practice, is this outcome being achieved?

These questions can be operationalized at multiple levels, including institutional (e.g., strategic intent), program development (e.g., logic modeling), and at the individual or moment-to-moment practice layer (e.g., as a clinical, teaching or program facilitation method). A model of intentional practice, titled the Life Buoyancy Model (Raymond, 2018), operationalizes the above questions, and supports its application across all three layers. This modeling was conceptualized and organized with reference to the program logic literature (Cooksy, Gill, & Kelly, 2001), which is a method to describe the relationship between program components, processes and outcomes. The model's categories were also labeled and defined with reference to the positive psychology literature (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). Importantly, the model operationalizes a "growth-focused" intent to intervention design and planning. That is, the core intent or purpose of interventions are to "grow" or "build" the capacity of individuals for improved well-being and engagement outcomes (Raymond, 2016a). This growth-focused orientation operationalizes positive psychology constructs into the intervention's practice philosophy and teaching methodology (Wood, & Tarrier, 2010). The expansion and reorientation of the Resilient Futures program (Version 2.0) was underpinned by this growth-focused intentional practice methodology, as applied at both the program design and service delivery levels, both of which are reviewed in turn.

First, at the program design level, growth-focused intentional practice has been operationalized across several Australian therapeutic and well-being programs (Raymond, 2016a, 2018; Raymond & Lappin, 2016, 2017). Within the reorientation of the Resilient Futures program, a program logic model was developed to articulate a hierarchy of short-, medium-, and long-term outcomes, which were categorized against the domains of youth, agency, and agency system. An article has been submitted detailing the scientific evidence underpinning the program logic modeling as a method to support the design and implementation of complex positive psychology programs, including the Resilient Futures program (Raymond, Iasiello, Kelly, & Jarden, 2018). The logic model also articulates the key program components. This program logic model is depicted in Table 2 and is the

current implementation model of the Resilient Futures program.¹

Second, at the facilitation and program delivery layer (or moment-to-moment service provision), the reorientation of the Resilient Futures program identified the need for a flexible teaching and facilitation method to teach resilience skills, which could be supported across multiple sites (e.g., education, mental health, youth justice) and be individually tailored and contextualized to a heterogeneous participant cohort. The teaching methodology had to be inclusive of explicit or classroom-based teaching, as well as more implicit-based methods, which include mentoring and coaching, case management and project-based learning. The later includes side-by-side reflective conversations and goal-planning discussions between adults and young people, where the 10 Resilient Futures' skills were embedded within the communication, and individually operationalized for the young person's situation and needs. The reorientation sought to bring strong attention to program fidelity, but with a framework of high contextual adaptation and flexibility (Malti et al., 2016). Given that the learning content could not be manualized or prescriptively defined, the intentional practice method was applied to bring rigor and fidelity to the teaching methodology.

As noted by Malti et al. (2016), contextually robust programs clearly define both their fixed and flexible features. Through the reorientation, the 10 resilience skills were isolated as fixed outcomes. However, to enable these outcomes to be operationalized across all contexts, each of the 10 skills was deconstructed and broken down into specific "anchor points" or building blocks that could be brought to focus through explicit or implicit learning activities. These anchor points represent the immediate focus or "growth intent" of the intervention that program facilitators, mentors, coaches and agency staff bring to awareness during their delivery and then map to specific learning activities. Figure 1 presents the six anchor points or building blocks for the adapted resilience skill of "growth mindset."

¹ Table 2 provides a summary of the program logic model. Further and fuller operational definitions of all outcomes and program components are detailed in Raymond et al. (2018).

Table 2
Resilient Futures Program Logic Model

Program components ("how")	Hierarchy of outcomes ("what")		
	Short	Medium	Long
Explicit learning of RF-10 skills Implicit learning of RF-10 skills Intentional adult mentoring and coaching Intentional goal exploration and action Well-being measurement and feedback Online platform	Awareness RF-10 skills, well-being, PERMA, and how it can be strengthened Skills Expression of RF-10 skill anchor points (including through goal setting) with adult support Mindset Positive value orientation to well-being, resilience and RF-10 skills Resources Engagement with adult support and self-accessing information on well-being and RF-10 skills	Youth RF-10 skills are behaviorally expressed across multiple domains of life Accurate self-awareness of well-being and how to modify personal well-being Improved engagement with agency staff and vocational-educational processes	RF-10 skills are valued and integrated into personal identity (mindset) Improved well-being, resilience, and mental health outcomes Improved vocational and educational outcomes
49 North training Intentional practice training Contextualization workshop Community of reflective practice Well-being measurement and feedback Access to online resources	Awareness RF-10 skills, intentional practice, trauma-informed practice, and how to apply RF-10 skills to context Skills To employ intentionally delivered implicit and explicit learning processes mapped to RF-10 skills Mindset Positive value orientation to well-being, resilience, RF-10 skills, intentional practice and program Resources Engagement with WRC staff and self-accessing information on RF-10 skills and intentional practice	Agency staff RF-10 skills are behaviorally expressed across multiple domains of life Employ intentionally delivered implicit and explicit learning across all support roles Relationships with youth are strengthened through connection to program and content	RF-10 skills are valued and integrated into personal and professional identity Higher quality and impact practice outcomes Improved well-being, resilience and job satisfaction

Table 2 (continued)

Program components ("how")	Hierarchy of outcomes ("what")		
	Short	Medium	Long
Critical mass of trained staff	Awareness How to intentionally embed well-being and resilience constructs across systems and culture Skills To intentionally embed well-being and resilience constructs across systems Mindset Positive value orientation to Resilient Futures program and the embedding of well-being content Resources Engagement with WRC staff and internal development of resources/systems for program	Agency system Agency implements programs/strategies to embed well-being and resilience constructs Staff and leadership roles integrate responsibilities for well-being System reviews occur with improved implementation of Resilient Futures content	Well-being and resilience are integrated into culture and strategic planning Agency leadership and staff report high satisfaction and confidence in program Stakeholders and consumers identify agency as well-being focused
Localized planning and embedding of RF-10 skills			
Systems-approach strategy to improve agency well-being culture			
Dynamic process and outcome evaluation			
Access to online resources			

Note. *Awareness* refers to knowledge, information, insight, and self-awareness; *skills* refer to the expression of the awareness or knowledge into observed actions or behaviors; *mindset* refers to values, beliefs and thought processes; *resources* refer to the people, information, and systems that support the program's outcomes. RF-10 = the 10 skills of the Resilient Future program; PERMA = positive emotion, engagement, relationships, meaning, and accomplishment; WRC = Well-being and Resilience Centre.

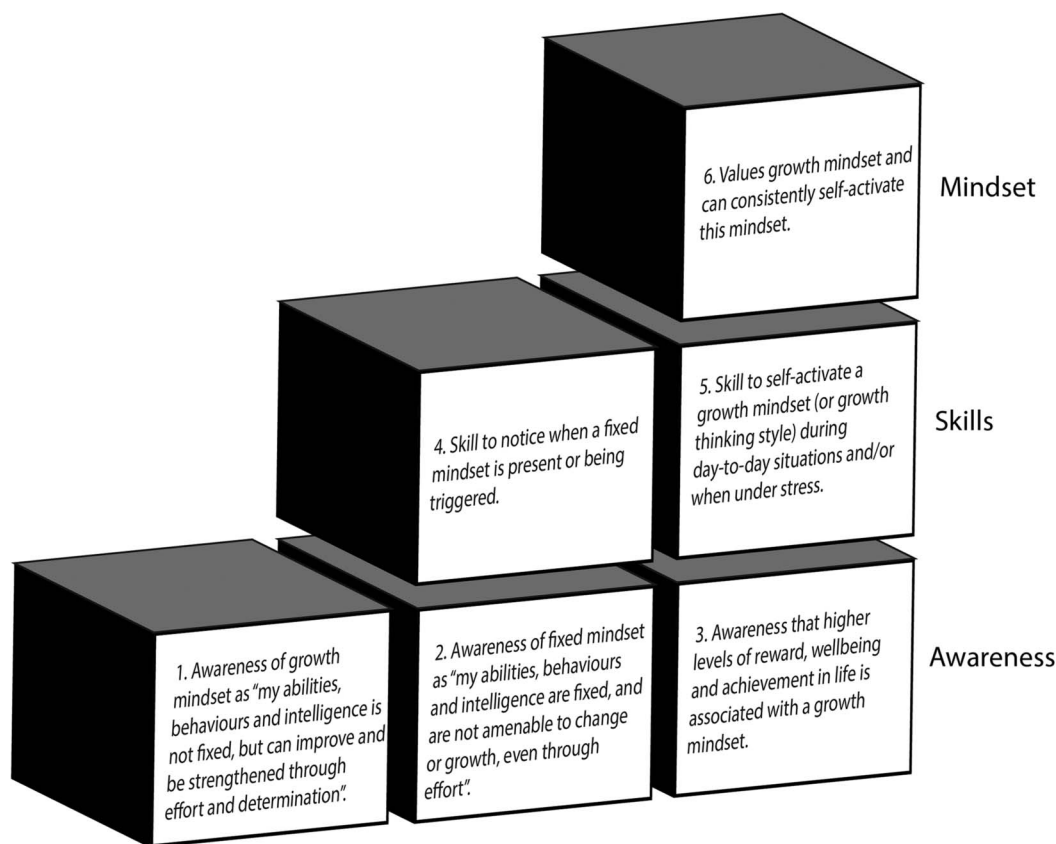


Figure 1. Resilient Futures program anchor points (or building blocks) for the skill of growth mindset.

The anchor points, being categorized as (1) awareness, (2) skills, and (3) mindsets (Raymond, 2018), collectively can be graphically represented as a building block staircase (Raymond, 2016b), which supports practitioners or facilitators to scaffold their teaching or learning content by bringing attention to each layer. The three layers are as follows:

Awareness—the skill broken down as knowledge, insight, or cognitive learning components.

Skills—the behavioral expression of skill through cognitive or behavioral actions.

Mindsets—the thinking processes, values, or beliefs that support skill use and expression.

Such anchor points provide youth workers and teachers with a flexible but stable structure

that they can populate with additional well-being and resilience resources that can be tailored to the needs and interests of the target group. The Resilient Futures program management team and partner agencies have developed many of these resources, such as content, slide packs, activities, and online resources.

The operationalization of intentional practice included the staff receiving competency-based training in intentional practice (named IMPACT Training). This training also brought a focus to trauma-informed practice, and was designed to build skills for Resilient Futures program staff to map specific growth outcomes (resilient skills anchor points) with implicit or explicit learning activities contextualized to their setting and specific youth needs (e.g., trauma, living situation). The range of possible implicit and explicit learning approaches include reflective conversations, goal setting and action planning,

project-based learning tasks and explicit teaching. These were captured in brief “growth action plans,” which represent abbreviated one-page logic models to grow the 10 Resilient Futures’ skills for individuals or groups of young people.

Current Delivery and Progress

The Resilient Futures program has been prototyped and iterated over 2 years, which has consolidated into a revised program logic model (see Table 2). At the time of writing, approximately 1,000 young people have been engaged in the program. This includes young people aged 16 to 21, with a relatively equal gender split. This has been from seven referral or partner agencies. In terms of implementation, more than 50 youth workers, teachers, mentors, and case managers have undertaken the 5-day 49 North “train-the-trainer” program, and an additional 35 have attended the 2.5-day direct training. Each partner agency also participated in a 1-day contextualization workshop to ensure that the Resilient Futures program content was tailored to the unique context of each agency and the needs of the young people from that service. An additional 45 youth workers, educators, and mentors have undertaken the competency-based training in intentional practice (IMPACT Training) as part of Version 2.0 of the Resilient Futures program.

We are applying an implementation strategy where partner agencies and Resilient Futures project staff are formulating individual implementation plans, based upon the broader program logic, for each agency. In other words, program components are being delivered in a staged manner in conjunction with partner needs, context and experience in the program. There are core program components which are being delivered by all partner agencies to young people. This includes implicit teaching of the 10 Resilient Futures’ skills, supported through intentional adult mentoring and coaching strategies (e.g., reflective and goal-setting conversations).

Program Review Method

Throughout the program implementation, the project team have conducted an action research methodology to review the program design and

implementation with key stakeholders and partner agencies. This has been supported through a governance committee consisting of funders and key stakeholders. External to this, the program has also undergone qualitative evaluation through a realist methodology conducted by [Community Matters \(2017\)](#). Realist evaluation aims to understand the features of programs that are associated with certain outcomes in one setting, compared to other settings or contexts ([Ranmuthugala et al., 2011](#)). The realist methodology offers significant utility in understanding the impact of novel, iterative interventions, and brings particular focus on isolating how change occurs, for whom, and in which circumstances, thereby providing a foundation to scale out interventions to new contexts ([Westthorp, 2014](#)). Realist methodologies bring focus to both program outcomes and processes to support the gradual development and refinement of a program theory through recurrent rounds of evaluation. In the initial evaluation round, interviews were conducted with staff and managers ($n = 18$) from Resilient Futures partner organizations that were involved in the delivery of the project. In each agency, at least one manager was interviewed ([Community Matters, 2017](#)). Interviews were transcribed and then subject to “realist qualitative analysis.” This methodology includes the isolation of outcome data that is “disaggregated” (or separated out) as mapped to subgroups or contextual factors identified within a starting program theory ([Westthorp, 2014](#)). In other words, outcome and contextual data is linked, separately analyzed and then compared. In the current review, preliminary themes developed from this process were reviewed with the project team prior to finalization, thereby strengthening the validity of final themes.

Emerging Results

The action research methodology has identified a range of emergent findings. These findings have been externally validated and reviewed with key stakeholders and partner agencies and have been cross validated against the realist review provided by [Community Matters \(2017\)](#). Youth workers and educators have been delivering the Resilient Futures program in a manner that is both creative in content implementation (e.g., methods employed to

teach skills) and with moderate levels of fidelity specific to the core program components. However, program fidelity remains an area of focus and growth for the program. Partner agency staff have developed significant practice innovations in delivering well-being and resilience content. In turn, these practice innovations have influenced agency practice evident in recrafted job descriptions and the creation of new roles dedicated to student and staff well-being and well-being curriculum development, and the delivery of coherent and consistent key messages to young people from the staff. What is emerging is a complex project ecosystem, characterized by practice innovation (e.g., staff trying new methods or approaches to engage young people in well-being and resilience content), new well-being policies and procedures being developed, and positive systems changes (e.g., reorientation of services toward student well-being and engagement rather than educational outcomes alone) among a number of partner agencies. However, partner agencies are at different levels of embedding and implementation, thus the implementation picture is complex and is still emerging.

In addition, the action research method also identified the importance of quality monitoring processes to prevent “program drift” and the maintenance of positive program outcomes (Logan & Royse, 2010). For this reason, the Resilient Futures program is trialing learning rubrics which represent competency-based assessments for program staff and educators to observe and report on behavioral changes and well-being outcomes. By simplifying measurement and data collection processes, it is envisaged these changes will increase the likelihood that young people and partner agencies will engage in measurement and evaluation processes.

The realist qualitative evaluation has articulated a range of emergent themes that suggest that the program is meeting the desired outcomes, including increasing youth awareness and skills, influencing well-being and behavioral markers, and strengthening youth self-regulation skill capacity. These, and the following findings, are summarized from a consultancy evaluation report written by Community Matters (2017). A core outcome of the evaluation report was that the both the program and content resonated with youth, led to staff and agency changes in practice, and triggered some agencies reorienting systems toward well-

being and resilience. When asked about the Resilient Futures program, facilitators provided comments indicating that key learning content is being understood and applied by young people:

I know that I’ve gone in one day and they do not know what optimism is. The next day they know what it is, and in future programs, so they’re hanging on to some of the language . . .

. . . he now just has a few more things in his pocket to check in with himself and to balance things out before letting his anger takes over. That self-awareness is going to be crucial to him continuing on working on his anger.

. . . one of them said, “Guys, it never turns out well when we argue. Let’s just get along. Let’s not talk about that, that’s done.” And I was just like, “My god, what happened?” I’ve got students who previously couldn’t talk, or even look at people and talk, speaking up in class, giving their opinions, discussing the material . . .

These quotes provide anecdotal evidence that the Resilient Futures program is increasing young people’s capacity to apply psychological tools, language, and techniques (e.g., growth mindsets and character strengths) within day-to-day situations (e.g., self-regulation). However, key to knowledge translation, and the strongest evidence reported for young people, was that skills taught in the Resilient Futures program was expressed outside of their interactions with their providers. This suggests that “awareness” raised within the program had been consolidated into an expressed “skill”:

. . . one of the young men over there, he was really good with it and I’ve actually heard him coin the phrase “I’ll be your co-pilot,” and I thought, “Oh, wow, that’s interesting, that was really good,” and that was in his relationship . . .

Qualitative feedback also captured breadth of outcomes. Although all the facilitators reported positive outcomes for young people, they talked about specific individuals and not widespread change across all participants. Two potential explanations were provided by facilitators as to the variable levels of change. The first was “readiness to change,” with their reports that emotionally mature young people were more receptive to the program messages. The second potential explanation was provided by a key informant: a facilitator who both taught the program in a group setting and provided one-on-one mentoring for young people. This facilitator reported observing greater changes occurring through mentoring relation-

ships, with intensity of contact time appearing to be a moderator of outcomes.

An important growth focus of the Resilient Futures program is staff: youth workers and educators. As per the program logic, it was postulated that desired outcomes would be evidenced if staff (1) used the skills in their own life, (2) thought they had gained more tools for working with young people, and (3) enjoyed their work roles to a higher degree. Supporting these outcomes, individual staff members reported the following:

... in my own family, I use a lot of the skills when I'm talking to my sister and my mum, and my partner, and it's really interesting to see them kind of take hold of it ... my level of anxiety is probably lowered, not dramatizing things, actually giving things an opportunity to be a positive outcome.

... it enabled me to bring a lot more of my own personal approach to it. I think it gave me a lot more language to be able to put into what I like to do in my job, and what tools I can use.

My god, if you could see what I was going through last year, I could actually say it was the Resilient Futures 10 skills that got me through. Honestly, they were life changing ... one of the best outcomes for me was actually job satisfaction.

One common thread, reported through multiple interviews, was the importance of staff members both believing in the usefulness of the skills and applying them in their lives outside of work. These two factors were reported as improving their credibility to train, mentor, and coach young people and thereby increasing the willingness of young people to listen and engage with the teaching.

I really feel that when the kids get a sense that you know it, you live it, you feel passionately about it, then they definitely take it on board more. They go okay, well, this is obviously something that's working reasonably well for someone, and there's that genuine connection. You can kind of use the, like, "small personal examples" to say, "I had this situation, it really helped me. Do you think this could help in your situation?", and that's a really positive thing.

The review also identified a range of preliminary organizational or system level outcomes. The most commonly reported outcome was that staff had a common language and a shared set of skills to work with and support each other, and to activate client outcomes:

... what we've seen is there's been a lot of value for those of us who've been in the same office. We've

been able to reinforce the material. We've got a shared language around it. So that's really helped.

Future Directions

Although the Resilient Futures program has been prototyped and iterated over 2 years, which has consolidated into a revised program logic model (see Table 2), the project team expects that future iterations are likely. In the short term, this will be driven by a desire to expand the reach of the Resilient Futures program to supporting relationships and participants' families, and to strengthen the delivery of a more integrated "ecological model" that can target both proximal and distal factors of disadvantage and social inclusion in young people.

The project team have initiated a detailed mixed-methods evaluation of the Resilient Futures program to isolate the program components that are *core* to delivering the stated outcomes and the ones that can be *adaptive* to context. These terms are drawn from the work by Malti et al. (2016) and refer to the need of complex programs to clearly isolate and describe the components that are the "heavy lifters" or "active ingredients" in delivering program outcomes, such that future iterations have the greatest chance of being both effective and cost efficient. The Resilient Futures program aspires to develop a program model and implementation methodology that has external validity across multiple cohorts and contexts. We are optimistic that this outcome is achievable through a strong focus on research and implementation science.

Conclusion

By the nature of its target cohort, scale, and innovation, the Resilient Futures program has encountered a range of challenges in its first 2 years. This article documents an account of the iterative development of the program that is being delivered across multiple education, mental health and youth justice sites, and the novel methodologies that the project team have developed to address the challenges associated with an individual- and system-level intervention targeted to a heterogeneous and disadvantaged youth cohort. The Resilient Futures program methodology, which combines well-being and resilience interventions with an intentional implementation approach based on implementation science and positive psychology

constructs and processes, serves as an innovative case study. It details how the science of well-being and resilience can be translated into practice and can be taught and embedded at-scale across multiple sites. Preliminary evidence suggests that meaningful outcomes are being delivered.

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