Five to Thrive: Number Five

Does Your Teen Keep Sufficient Energy Coiled?

What’s the one skill you most want your student to master before graduation—the one that could help them most along their journey?

Students, of course, need a complex array of academic abilities, plus we have talked about social-emotional and cognitive skills. But, to me, one ability stands out as a key to mastering all the others.

It's resilience—the ability to rebound.

Interestingly, physics defines resilience in terms of the amount of energy stored in deformed elastic material. I like thinking of a student’s capacity for resilience in that way—how much energy does that teen have coiled inside them that will propel them forward when life pushes them back?

We used to think that we were born with a fixed amount of that energy. Now science tells us that each of us can **cultivate greater resilience throughout our lives, but we must work at it. Your teen needs coaching from you** so that they can keep filling that battery with endless energy for optimism, determination, perseverance and all the other elements of resilience.

We have the privilege at Newport to work with capable students and a strong program. Our students leave here for a variety of great opportunities. Through social media and return visits we track enough of our graduates that I feel confident in saying that **even our most capable students will feel overwhelmed at times in their first years of college and career.**

The more capabilities our students develop as Knights, the bigger the challenges they take on when they leave us. They use the skills we taught to work through those trials and the competition they face, but watching them continue to grow after they leave here, I know that it is their resilience that fuels their progress.

Just as your technology won’t work without power, **students can’t apply what they know in challenging circumstances without the resilience to persevere.** Enough resilience won’t come naturally. The more elastic energy they coil here, as Knights, the better they rebound when they leave us for a bigger stage.

How to charge their batteries?

Building up resilience is somewhat of a contradiction—you can’t build resilience without using your resilience. It takes practice to be able to call on it in times of stress.

Your student will need several resources to build their resilience battery charger:

- **Situations that generate challenges** where setbacks and even failures will occur. Remember, they must use their resilience to make it stronger.
- **Safe environments** where those setbacks won’t damage much more than their pride. Be sure that the consequences of setbacks aren’t so great that your student won’t stretch and risk.
- **Supportive adults and peers** that want them to succeed and will nurture them through the tough times. Your teens can find these relationships in our clubs and teams (and community activities). We continually teach our students and our staff how to build environments where healthy relationships flourish.
• **Your reminders** that help your student constantly assess “what went well.” Looking back consistently to see how far they have climbed fuels more progress in our teens.

**Two video resources that you might use with your teen:**

• Greg Eells at Cornell University breaks down [five key factors of resilience](#) in an entertaining 20-minute TED talk. His stories for each element can help your family **assess individual resilience and find a strategy to increase it**.

• Another TED talk, featuring young YMCA leader Kathy Meiser, details the ABC’s of Resilience. This [resilience-building strategy](#) can help you and your teen **take apart frustrations and find the best way to approach recovery** from a setback. In 15 minutes, she outlines a clear process to surface accurate perceptions about adversities, beliefs, and consequences that can empower your teen to persevere.

Perhaps most powerfully, **share with your student the big challenges and the daily struggles of your life.** Help them understand that perfection can’t be real. A good life offers a journey of interesting challenges and steady growth among supportive family, friends, and colleagues. Sharing your history can help your teen believe that disappointments don’t shatter us if we remain resilient.

*Ask Me: Please send any questions or challenges you and your student would like help with. Reply to this email to submit your requests.*

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