



Swifts Creek

P-12 SCHOOL

Courage, Joy, Kindness

NEWSLETTER

July 21st 2021 - Week 2 Term 3

Whole School Dates to Remember

5th Aug - Snow Program day 1
13th Aug - Snow Program day 2
17th Aug - Snow Program day 3
23rd Aug - Snow Program day 4
23rd-27th Aug - Book Week

Tambo Campus Dates to Remember

21st-23rd July - Year 8/9 Camp to Summit *Postponed*
28th July - Tambo Campus Athletics *Postponed*
29th July - GAT for Year 12
18th Aug - East Gippsland Athletics

Flagstaff Campus Dates to Remember

27th July - High Country Primary Schools Athletics *Postponed*

Principal's Message

Welcome to our newsletter for a very different week of learning. As we are all well aware the government has in place some very different arrangements for our school operation until next Wednesday if the numbers are good.

So thanks to those of you who have been so very good at just changing to this different program. The latest guidance from the DET does make it clear what they are expecting for students across the different year levels in terms of time each day with the remote and flexible learning.

The following are the daily minimum guidelines schools are expected to meet for students in Prep to Year 10:

For students in Prep to Grade 2, schools should provide daily learning programs that include the following as a minimum:

- *literacy activities that take a total of about 45-60 minutes*
- *numeracy activities of about 30-45 minutes*
- *additional learning areas, play-based learning and physical activity of about 30-45 minutes.*

For students in Grades 3 to 6 and Years 7 to 10, schools should provide daily learning programs that include the following as a minimum:

- *literacy: 45-60 minutes*
- *numeracy: 30-45 minutes*
- *physical activities: 30 minutes*
- *additional curriculum areas: 90 minutes.*

These time allocations by DET align with the learning programs being provided for our students. VCE students will continue their full learning program.

If students are requiring assistance in any way please contact the Home Group teacher as they will be best placed to find a solution to the issue regardless of how large or small it is.

As we get further information about the next lot of changes we will continue to inform you through the changes to the school website, emails, text messages or phone calls.

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Our psychologist has written a piece on resilience which is in today's newsletter. It follows on from her writing last year about optimism. Please take the time to read today's piece. The work on optimism and a short video can be found on our school website. The intention with these two pieces of work is to provide more information for you to help with the thinking about the thinking. We all know that it is the thinking that determines the actions we as individuals take.

At this time it is important, as it was last year, to remember the significance of our school values. It takes courage to respond well to the ongoing challenges we are being presented with; kindness, no matter how small an act, is never wasted; and joy allows us to share our success in whatever domain to sustain us as individuals and as a collective on a daily basis. When we show these values we will all succeed together in being the best we can be.



Robert Boucher

[Resilience - What is it and how can we build it?](#)

Resilience is the capacity our brain and body have to recover from challenges or difficulties. It is our psychological strength to cope with stress or thrive when there is significant change. When we talk of bouncing back or being adaptable, we are really talking about our resilience. At times of increased stress, change or worry it is our level of resilience that will dictate how well we feel able to respond to a situation and either feel capable of managing the situation or feel overwhelmed.

There is an increasing amount of research exploring what creates and builds our resilience levels and considering why some people present as very resilient and robust when faced with challenges, while others experience much lower levels of resilient responses. Understanding how resilience is created, strengthened and what we can do to increase our resilience is worth some consideration.

Current research suggests that the core of resilience rests fundamentally on relationships. Positive connections that offer us a level of unconditional acceptance, provide us with positive emotion and feedback which in turn builds or increases the capacity in certain parts of the brain. It is these positive experiences which allow our brain to develop strong neural pathways in areas required to manage stress and difficulty. If we build this capacity and connect these brain areas on a day-to-day basis, this makes them stronger and more accessible at times of high stress or challenge.

We can say confidently then that if we build strong, positive relationships and engage in optimistic interaction, this will assist our brain in creating the neural pathways required to increase our resilience at times of high need. A core player in building this resilience in the brain is our hippocampus. The hippocampus is part of our limbic system and is vital in processing input in the brain and making memories from our emotional experiences. The hippocampus has been shown to be significantly strengthened by positive connections with others, positive feedback, and relationships. This can be as simple as the feedback our brain receives from a smile, safe touch, or positive reinforcement from those around us. Hippocampal strength has been noted to be the key modulator of resilience. If our hippocampus is strong, we can access the skills and responses we need at times of stress and this increases our ability to respond well, this increases our resilience.

The other factor which has been identified as building and strengthening our hippocampus is exercise. Regular exercise has been shown to increase the size and tissue growth of the hippocampus as well as creating new neurons. So, incorporating regular exercise into your routines will build the parts of the brain required to increase your own resilience and make you more able to adapt and respond when under pressure.

The importance of low-level risk or challenge has also been noted to play a role in how we build resilience. It is thought that exposure to challenges rather than complete avoidance assists us in creating useful coping skills which in turn builds our overall level of resilience. This is especially the case when we have access to positive supports to assist us during challenges as we are receiving the positive feedback our brain needs, as well as gaining experience about how to respond when things are difficult.

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The current situation with Covid 19 and repeated lockdowns, changes and associated stress is a good example of living with low level risk and challenge and therefore offers us an opportunity to develop new neural pathways in responding at these times. If we can view these experiences as chances to build our flexibility and utilise the relationships and support around us at these times, we will be building our resilience rather than allowing ourselves to feel overwhelmed.

All this information tells us that we play an active role in how resilient we are and that we can proactively seek to increase our resilience or adaptability. We can choose what we focus our attention on and how we connect to others, and this will in turn impact on how our brain structures connect and grow. By building positive relationships and remaining optimistic in our focus we fortify relevant parts of our brain to increase our own positive ability to respond. By seeing daily challenges as opportunities to build skills rather than unmanageable difficulties, we create positive pathways in our brain that equip us to respond. By choosing our day-to-day activities to incorporate the basics of exercise, good diet, and regular sleep we further boost our brain's neural activity in the areas that promote resilience. We can choose to do this at any point across our lives from early childhood until our later years and still benefit from these choices.

Being mindful of the following points will assist in improving our resilience:

1. **Building positive relationships** with those around us and utilising these both to receive and give support. Thinking about who we choose to interact with and in what way will guide the experiences that shape our brain. Staying connected in a positive way, especially at times of stress is vital to keep our brain activated and working.
1. **Choosing to incorporate regular exercise, good diet, and stable sleep patterns** into our regular routines. This will optimise our brain function and ensure we are setting ourselves up to respond from the best possible space. While these things may seem simplistic, there is growing research indicating that these factors directly impact on the structure, size and functioning of various parts of our brain.
2. **Reframing day to day challenges into positive opportunities.** Looking for ways to focus on the positive rather than the negative shapes the learning we take from any experience and dictates if our brain grows and learns or shuts down and avoids. If we can find a positive, however small, it allows our brain to stay engaged and learn a new way to manage and respond. This can then be built upon over time.
3. **Being mindful of our belief systems** and how these play a role in our thinking and responses. We can change our belief system when we change what we focus our attention on. If our attention is focussed on being Courageous, Joyful and Kind in as many day-to-day situations as possible this again shapes our interactions with others and at the same time creates neural pathways that offer connections to stronger, more resilient responses at times of stress.

While there is much we do not yet understand about how our brains operate, it is becoming increasingly clear that our choices and focus are vitally important in positive brain development and give us more control in this than we may believe. When we feel we cannot control much of what is occurring around us at present, it is reassuring to remember that we can be courageous, joyful, and kind and know this builds our resilience.

Lauren Short

Psychologist

July 2021