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.