

Penn Resilience Programme – summary of the 18 lessons

The Penn Resilience Programme (PRP) has been developed by the University of Pennsylvania.

Lesson 1 - Introduction to the programme

Teacher and student build rapport, set the Ground Rules for a safe learning environment and the programme structure. Students are introduced to 'self talk', that is the conversations that we have in our heads when things happen.

Lesson 2 - Links between thoughts and feelings

Introduction to the 'BC' part of Activating Event (A) Belief (B) Consequence (C) or ABC model. Automatic thoughts and conversations we have in our heads or 'self talk' are linked to the feelings they provoke. For example thoughts (beliefs) about loss lead to sadness, thoughts about threat lead to anxiety, thoughts about violation of ones rights leads to anger.

Lesson 3 – Thinking Styles

Students practise the link between thoughts (beliefs) and feelings (consequences) using real life situations. Students then learn about thinking styles, the types that can make people feel bad and give up and self-fulfilling prophecies. Pessimistic interpretations (or always thoughts), (I'm stupid) bring about behaviours (not studying) that lead to future consequences (failure) that seem to confirm the initial thought.

Lesson 4 – Alternatives and Evidence

Students learn and practise how to generate alternative thoughts and test the accuracy of these using evidence. The idea is to teach students to think flexibly and not to rely on habits of pessimistic thinking. Students are taught how to challenge their beliefs and to look for evidence that supports the initial thought (I'm stupid).

Lesson 5 – The File Game

Students learn how to test the accuracy of beliefs by evaluating different evidence. This lesson reinforces the need to look for evidence rather than to rely on pessimistic thoughts (beliefs).

Lesson 6 - Putting it in perspective

Students are introduced to the concept of catastrophising (imagining the worst is going to happen) and taught how to put things into perspective. Students learn a strategy to help them recognise the most likely that will help them to cope. The goal is accuracy.

Lesson 7 - Real Time Resilience

Students learn and practise how to deal with negative thoughts (beliefs) in real time everyday situations using some tried and tested tag lines.

Lesson 8 – Review of lessons 1-7

This lesson provides an opportunity to review, reflect and practise the skills developed so far. The idea is to review and reinforce each skill by practising applying them to different real life situations.

Lesson 9 - Assertiveness

Students learn basic assertiveness skills and think about how some beliefs can hinder assertiveness. Students learn the difference between aggression, passive and assertive and the often fine line between aggression and assertiveness. They practise being assertive through role play and consider how being assertive can create better outcomes. A model is introduced to help them be more assertive.

Lesson 10 – Negotiation

Students learn and practise the concept of compromise and negotiation. The aim of this lesson is to ensure that students understand that negotiation and compromise is key to positive outcomes in real life situations.

Lesson 11 - Coping strategies

Students learn strategies that they can use to help them cope with stressful situations, particularly uncontrollable negative situations. Students learn the importance of flexible social styles, and how to control anger and sadness in social situations.

Lesson 12 – Solving dilemmas and visualised relaxation

In this lesson students discuss troublesome situations and decide which techniques are best to use in which situation. Students are introduced to and practice visualised relaxation.

Lesson 13 - Overcoming procrastination and social skills training

Students apply cognitive skills, learnt in earlier lessons, to negative thoughts about project and chores. The perfectionist child who believes my Maths paper has to be grade A* will build the task into a seemingly insurmountable problem. The consequence of such beliefs is avoidance or procrastination

Students apply cognitive skills to social situations that they may find difficult, such as meeting new people, talking to adults (in the community, or school Inspectors for example) and making new friends.

Lesson 14 – Review of lessons 9-13

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to reinforce the skills they have developed using different dilemmas and scenarios.

Lesson 15 - Decision making

Students learn a technique for helping with decision making. Indecisiveness is common for children, particularly for those who are experiencing anxiety.

Lesson 16 Social problem solving

Students are taught how to approach social interactions in a problem solving manner. They learn to gather evidence, to put the situation into perspective and to define goals and choose appropriate actions to help them reach those goals.

Lesson 17 Problem solving and review

The problem solving skill is consolidated in lesson 17. Students use different interpersonal situations from their own lives to practise problem solving. Students are also encouraged to practise all the PRP skills and strategies by applying them to a range of different situations.

Lesson 18 - Review and celebrate

Students review the concepts of the whole programme and are encouraged to use these skills in the future. This lesson is a chance to acknowledge how much the students have achieved and celebrate.