

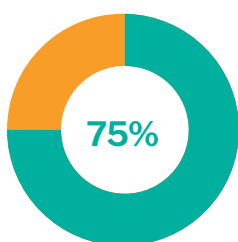


University of Melbourne Evaluation

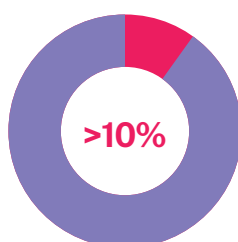
The core purpose for The Resilience Project (TRP) is to use evidence based programs to support the health and wellbeing of young people. From 2017- 2019, TRP commissioned The University of Melbourne to conduct an independent evaluation of the program and any behavioral changes achieved in relation to gratitude, empathy and mindfulness.

Why was this important?

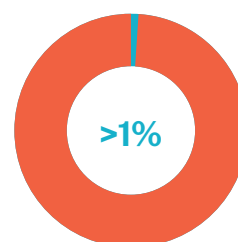
Mental health in Australia is at a crisis point and young people are suffering the most.



1 in 5 Australians suffer from mental ill health and 75% of people that develop mental ill health, have their first experience under the age of 25 years. ¹



Less than 10% of young people who required mental health support in 2019-20 received the help they needed. ²



Less than 1% of the mental health budget is going towards *preventing* mental ill health. ³

What is needed

The Productivity Commission Mental Health Report and the Victorian Mental Health Royal Commission Report both conclude that there needs to be a greater focus on prevention to help people proactively from a young age develop the life skills for positive mental health and wellbeing.

What the Resilience Project delivers

A whole school approach to teaching and embedding positive mental health strategies to help people become happier and more resilient. The holistic program works with teachers, students, parents and carers to support the wellbeing of young people and develop their future capacity to deal with adversity.

*This evaluation was conducted by researchers from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health at The University of Melbourne. The research team included Professor Lisa Gibbs, Dr Karen Block, Ms Hannah Morrice, Dr Elena Swift and Dr Lauren Carpenter. Additional investigators providing expert advice included Professor Nicola Reavley, Dr Rebecca Armstrong, Professor Andrew Mackinnon, Ms Janette Cook, Mr Derek McCormack, Professor Lou Harms and Mr Jason Gaffee. The University of Melbourne recruitment and data collection team includes: Dr Anna Barrett, Ms Kathryn Young, Mr. Edwin Kwong, Ms. Lauren Mettam, Dr. Ash Hosseini, Ms Kate Burke, and Ms Molly Harrington. It was a mixed-methods study, including student surveys (N=1046 grade 4-6 students, mean age 10.6 years) and interviews and focus groups with students, parents and teachers, 12 schools in Victoria (6 using the program, 6 not using the program)

1. Productivity Commission inquiry into Mental Health, 'Overview and Recommendations-Mental Health Draft Report', Pg 2, October 2019
2. The Royal Commission into Victorias Mental Health System, 'Fact Sheet- Infant, child and youth mental health and wellbeing services', Pg 1, Feb 2021
3. Prevention United, 'Annual Report 2019-2020' pg15

What the evaluation concluded

The information below reflects outcomes from both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the evaluation.

Gratitude

Children in The Resilience Project school program reported **significantly higher** use of gratitude strategies, than those that were not in the program.

"I feel a lot more grateful for the things I have. Before, The Resilience Project I didn't really know what I should be grateful for, but now I do"
— Grade 4

The evidence behind gratitude that informed TRP development: ¹

Practicing gratitude helps rewire the brain to scan for the world for the positives. In just 42 days, people report significantly higher levels of happiness, energy, optimism, focus and determination.

Empathy & Kindness

Teachers and students described how the program helped to create a kinder school environment.

"I've learnt its good to ask more questions to find out how people are feeling and how we can help them. Rather than just accepting the "yeah, I'm fine" when you know they're not".
— Grade 4

"I'm more kind now and I feel like I'm a lot nicer to people."
— Grade 4

"I just see the changes on some of my friends. They're more open when their upset and they talk. We're all more open. We're all happier as a class."
— Grade 6.

The evidence behind empathy and kindness that informed TRP development: ²

Every time you do something kind for someone else, your brain releases Oxytocin. Oxytocin leads to increased self esteem, confidence, positivity and happiness.

Mindfulness

Several students spoke of the benefits of practicing mindfulness regularly.

"[Mindfulness] actually calms me a lot. Before I did it, I was stressed out about homework and stuff, so every night it helps me just relax."
— Grade 6.

The evidence behind mindfulness that informed TRP development: ³

Practicing mindfulness for just 6 weeks increases children's ability to pay attention by 3 times.

Emotional Literacy

There were many accounts from teachers and students of how the program had assisted children in being able to articulate their own emotions and recognise emotions in others.

"I felt freer to share my emotions after The Resilience Project".
— Grade 4

The evidence behind emotional literacy that informed TRP development: ⁴

Children with higher emotional intelligence are better able to pay attention, are more engaged in school, have more positive relationships, and are more empathic.

Benefits of the program

The University of Melbourne evaluation Findings indicated that the program benefits arose from both the program content and the style of delivery. The variety helped many children engage with lessons and each other.

The greatest demonstrated change overall was improved student gratitude. There was also reported benefits for many students in relation to;

- emotional skills/literacy
- social relationships at school and home
- confidence and self esteem
- supportive classroom environments



"Its so great to have it as part of the curriculum, creating space to really delve into wellbeing by articulating emotions, practicing gratitude and social skills. So refreshing that we are making the time for that"
— Teacher

1. Gratitude — Source: Melanie Greenberg Ph.D, 'How Gratitude leads to a happier life', Psychology Today, 22 November, 2015.

2. Empathy — Source: Marilyn Price-Mitchell Ph.D, 'Acts of Kindness: Key to Happiness for Children & Teens', Psychology Today, 2 January, 2013.

3. Mindfulness — Source: Randima Fernando, 'Measuring the Efficacy and Sustainability of a Mindfulness-Based In-Class Intervention', Mindful Schools Research Study, pg 17.

4. Emotional Literacy — Source: Shauna L. Tominey, Elisabeth C. O'Bryon, Susan E. Rivers and Sharon Shapses, 'Teaching Emotional Intelligence in Early Childhood', National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), March 2017, pg 6