Background

This first session lays the groundwork for the following classroom sessions by providing a rationale for the beyondblue classroom program and an introduction to the concept of ‘resilience’. Students will also be involved in an activity designed to promote connectedness, and will develop and agree on a common set of classroom rules to help ensure that students feel valued and respected.

Students will form the groups that they will remain in for the program, and in which they will complete their assessment task. Research shows that heterogeneous teams are most effective for group learning. They are usually formed by having a mix of ability/achievement level, gender, and ethnicity. Heterogeneous teams provide the greatest opportunities for peer tutoring and support, improved cross-cultural and cross-gender relations and inclusion, and make classroom management easier.

The program uses an activity that randomly allocates students to groups. If through the randomised process, groups are formed that are not heterogeneous or may not work effectively, teachers may like to adjust the make up of these groups.

Learning outcomes

Students will recommend and demonstrate skills that promote a positive self-concept and resilience.

In this session, students will:
- describe what resilience means;
- identify the skills of resilience that some people use to cope with challenges and changes in their lives; and
- develop class rules that allow all students to state their views and listen to others.

Students will evaluate the influences on self-concept, self-esteem and resilience.

In this session, students will:
- identify characteristics of resilient role models and influences on their self-concept.
session outline

- Brief introduction to program
- Activity 1. Cocoa Club — forming groups
- Activity 2. Resilient role models
- Activity 3. Class rules
- Reflection
- Home tasks

Preparation/resources

- Photocopy and cut up the ‘Find your room’ cards for Activity 1. Cocoa Club — see Resource 1.1.
- Write five ‘getting to know you’ questions on the board that students will ask one another in Activity 1. Cocoa Club, e.g. ‘What is your favourite activity in your spare time?’ or, ‘What is your favourite music/TV program/book?’
Purpose of *beyondblue*

*beyondblue* — the organisation

*beyondblue* is a national organisation that has been set up to look at ways to improve people’s emotional well-being. It also aims to increase our understanding of depression and to reduce the stigma of mental health problems. It has funded a number of research activities, including this school project.

*beyondblue* Schools Research Initiative

The *beyondblue* Schools Research Initiative has a number of different parts. As well as this classroom program, the school project is also looking at ways of improving the school social environment, providing better access to help for students experiencing difficulties, and informing the community about mental health issues.

Life experiences

The project recognises that people of all ages face a range of life experiences. Some of these can be positive, fun and challenging, while others can be negative and difficult to deal with. Life may not always go the way we think it should. In fact, some people find it difficult to cope with all the experiences and changes that occur in their lives. However, other people seem to be able to bounce back from sad or bad times, and look forward to good times ahead.

Resilience and the five resilient ‘senses’

Those people who cope well with problems and bounce back are said to be resilient. The good news is that researchers have found that you can learn skills and develop characteristics that help you build resilience. Resilient people value themselves (have a good sense of self-worth), have a realistic idea of their control over themselves and situations (a sense of control), have good relationships with others and feel part of a community or group (a sense of belonging), have a driving force (a sense of purpose), and are optimistic and enthusiastic about their future (a sense of future). The *beyondblue* classroom program will focus on skills that help to build these five resilient senses.

*beyondblue* classroom program

The *beyondblue* classroom program aims to help you to understand how you think and feel about events in your life and yourself, the changes and challenges that happen to you, and learn the skills that help you face and cope with them. The program will also identify who can help and where to go for help if you (or a friend) need to, even if it is just finding someone to talk to.

*Being part of a research project means that have you a say in what happens and play a part in how future programs are developed to help other young people in the future.*
Introduction to the program [2–3 mins]

Process

1. Briefly explain to students what is expected of them in this program. For example:
   - Over the next 10 weeks you will be working in groups, as a whole class and on your own to learn about and practise ways of building emotional health and well-being.
   - To do this we will be deciding what we can do to make our classroom a place where each person is respected, listened to and has the opportunity to contribute if they want to.
   - You will be given a Student Workbook which contains information and activities for the program.
   - There will be small home tasks each week.
   - You will also be asked to think about and make note of a couple of key points from each session which you will then collect and use to develop a plan of coping strategies for yourself in a later session.
   - There will be a larger assessment task that will be completed in groups. You will be given some time at the end of the program to work on this larger task in your groups and will display or present this in the last session.

2. Hand out Student Workbooks. Walk the students through the user guide in the front of the workbook.

Purpose

Students will understand what they will be doing over the next 10 weeks and what they will be expected to complete by the end of the program.

Hint

Teachers could provide some more information about the purpose of beyondblue (based on the outline provided on the previous page) at this point or after Activity 1. Students have a copy of the Purpose of beyondblue in their workbooks.
Activity 1. Cocoa Club [10–15 mins]

Preparation

Write five ‘getting to know you’ questions on the board that students will ask one another in this activity, e.g. ‘What is your favourite activity in your spare time?’ or, ‘What is your favourite music/TV program/book?’

Process

1. Divide the class into two groups of equal numbers.
2. Have one of the groups form a circle, with students facing outwards. Now have the second group of students form a circle on the outside of the first circle, facing inwards. Each student in the inside circle should now be paired with and facing a student in the outside circle.
3. Have the partners introduce themselves. Explain that as partners they will have one minute to ask each other Question 1. The student in the inside circle asks the question first.
4. Now have the students in the outside circle move one step in a clockwise direction, so that they are now facing a new partner in the inside circle. Repeat Step 3, this time having the student in the outside circle asking the question (Question 2).
5. Now have the students in the inside circle move one step in an anti-clockwise direction. Repeat Step 3, this time having the student in the inside circle asking the question (Question 3).
6. Continue as above until each question has been answered.
7. While students are still standing in their circles, randomly hand out the ‘Find your room’ cards (see Resource 1.1). Have students circulate to find their other ‘room mates’.
8. Explain that these are the groups that the students will be working in for the duration of the program.

Purpose

To raise the energy of the class and enhance class cohesion. The students will also form random groups that they will remain in for the duration of the program.

If the groups that are formed are not heterogeneous in nature, i.e. mixed ability, gender and culture, you may like to make changes to ensure more appropriate groupings.
Activity 2. Resilient role models [15–20 mins]

Process

1. Have students think of someone they admire who has had a lot to deal with in life, and has been able to cope and ‘bounce back’. This may be someone they know (a family member or a friend) or someone they have heard or read about (e.g. Daniel Johns, of silverchair).

2. Have students refer to page 11 and consider the following things about this person:
   a. What did they have to cope with?
   b. What characteristics or qualities did this person have?
   c. What skills did they use to overcome their problems?
   d. What sources of social support did they use?

3. Ask students to then work in their groups to develop a list of resilient characteristics and skills.

4. Have groups report back their ideas.

5. As a class, discuss the meaning of the word ‘resilience’. Discuss some of the common characteristics groups identified.

Points to make

- Resilience refers to an ability to cope in the face of challenges — it’s about being able to cope well and bounce back after difficulties.

- People who are resilient believe that they will be able to cope with most things that happen to them. It’s not that they think bad things will never happen, rather they have a positive view of themselves and their world and their own ability to deal with things.

- Just like we may go the doctor for a checkup, take vitamins or medicine if we need to, and do exercise to look after our physical health, resilient people also take care of their emotional health.

- People who are resilient use strategies to keep themselves feeling good, like planning to do things they enjoy regularly.

- Resilient people have good support systems or know other people to talk to or to get some help from in difficult times.

Purpose

Students will reflect on what it means to be resilient.

Examples of qualities and skills of resilience:

- determination
- believing in yourself
- a strong goal
- ‘I can do it’ thinking
- not giving up
- persistence — keep trying
- hopeful
- accepting support from others

Resilience helps you cope and bounce back from life’s difficulties.

It is possible to learn skills to build resilience.
Activity 3. Class rules [5–10 mins]

Process
1. Refer students to page 13 of the Student Workbook.
2. In groups, have students brainstorm the sort of rules for the classroom that they think would be useful when working on the beyondblue classroom program.
3. Each group feeds back one rule.
4. Discuss the pros and cons of the suggested rules.
5. As a class, agree on a set of rules.
6. Have students write down the agreed class rules on page 13 of the Student Workbook and sign the classroom agreement.

Purpose
Students will develop a set of class rules that ensures a respectful class environment.

Having students develop the rules should assist with relevance and a sense of ownership.

Some examples of appropriate rules are:
• allow others to speak
• take turns
• use active listening
• be respectful of others’ ideas
• use affirmations — no put downs
• what is talked about in the class or group is confidential — it should not be discussed outside the room.

Alternative activity
Depending on time and existing classroom practice, one of the following options may be more appropriate for agreeing on class rules:

1. Audit existing class rules — take each rule and discuss or rate how well it will help students to feel safe in working on a resilience building program. Brainstorm any new rules that might be needed.

2. Have students brainstorm rules in groups, and write each new rule on a sticky note. Collect all the sticky notes/rules from the groups and, as a class, work on sorting these into groups before agreeing on a common set of rules.
### Reflection [3–5 mins]

Refer students to page 14 in the Student Workbook. Ask students to complete the following tasks:

- What does ‘resilient’ mean to you?
- Write down two or three of the skills or characteristics you think are the most important in becoming resilient.
- What resilient characteristics or skills would you like to have (or improve)?

The reflection activity, which usually occurs at the end of each session, aims to promote individual reflection and encourages students to internalise personally relevant information. Their reflections will be used in Session 8 to inform a personal plan for health.

### Home tasks [1–2 mins]

Refer students to page 15 in the Student Workbook. The home tasks this week are:

1. Think some more about what characteristics and skills help someone to be resilient. Do some research — look for real life examples.
   - You might like to talk to an adult you know.
     - Ask them if they can give an example of a time when they were able to bounce back from a difficult life problem.
     - What helped them to cope and what skills do they think are important for coping?
   OR
   - Look for stories or articles in newspapers, magazines or on the Web about people who have been able to bounce back after difficult times.
     - Read about their experiences. Look for the things that they thought helped them cope.
     - What characteristics or skills did they use to help them through?
2. Students are also to collect some items for next week.
   - In the next session, you will be asked to consider ways in which adolescents are portrayed in society. You need to bring in an image or images of adolescents. This could be pictures or articles from magazines or newspapers, song lyrics, a description of characters in a TV show or any other portrayal of adolescents.

Home tasks are outlined for students at the end of each section in the Student Workbook. You may want to photocopy the home task page as a handout if you do not want students taking their workbooks home.
activity 1  Find your room

Photocopy this page and cut out the cards below and hand out randomly to students.