

## Introducing SenseAbility-Building Resilience in our Students

Students in Years 7-10 will be participating in a new program during 2011. Called SenseAbility, the program is aimed at building resilience in young people, to help them manage the life challenges that are an inevitable part of growing up.

The program is part of our college's commitment to the understanding that teachers, in partnership with parents, have a significant role in promoting good mental health in their students. SenseAbility will be delivered to students by our teachers and will provide a range of skills to empower students to care for their own wellbeing.

The program takes a strengths-based approach. Instead of focusing on negatives and things that don't work, it assists young people to focus on the unique characteristics and qualities they have, but are inclined to ignore or downplay. How often do your children comment on the things they can't do? A strengths-based approach does not require individuals to excel or perform in particular areas, rather it encourages them to acknowledge and appreciate the small things they do in their everyday lives - such as being a good friend, being responsible and demonstrating small acts of kindness that reflect underlying valuable qualities. The program also encourages young people to develop good help-seeking skills for themselves and others, so they can obtain assistance if challenges are too difficult for them to manage alone.

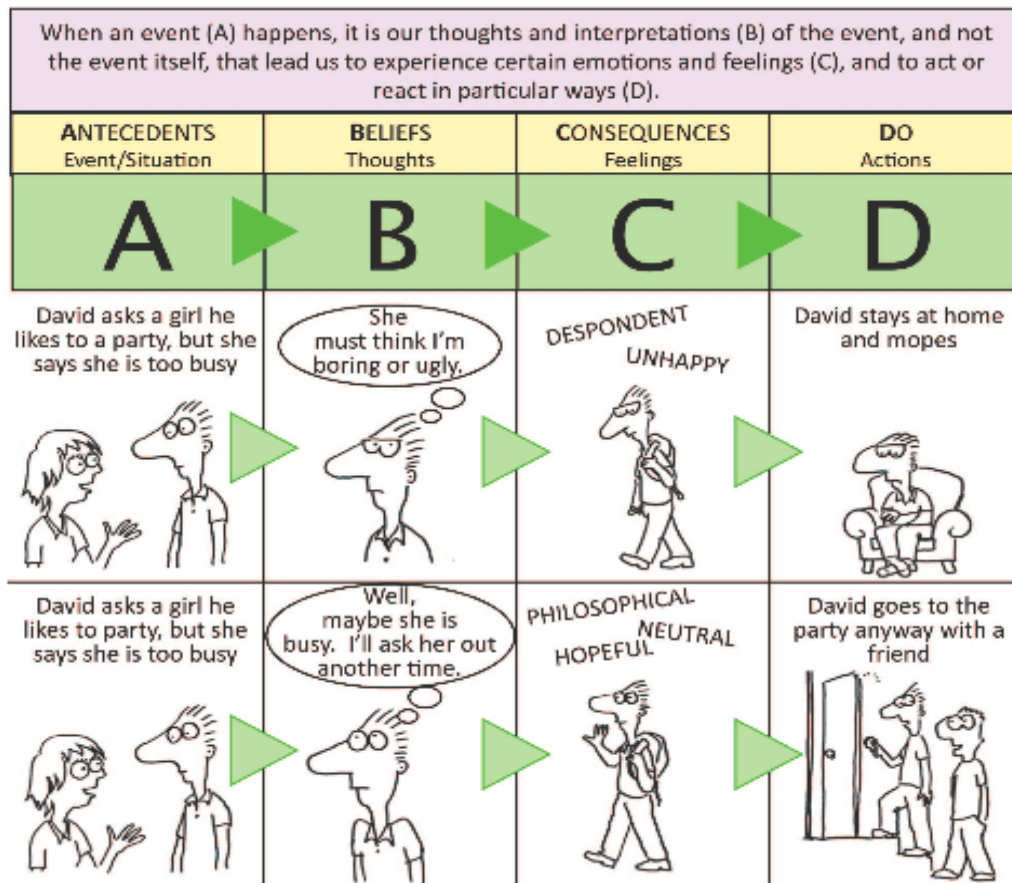
SenseAbility consists of seven modules focusing on the development of key 'life senses' and essential 'life skills':

- Self-worth - knowledge of and belief in strengths, skills and abilities – an acceptance of their inherent value
- Belonging - feeling valued, needed and accepted – being meaningfully connected to a social network
- Control - belief that they have the skills and ability to cope with life challenges and to manage their own emotions
- Purpose - capacity to make sense of the world and to perceive some meaning in their life
- Future - hope about the future enabling us to act positively and with purpose
- Humour - being able to see the lighter and 'funnier' side of life – including their own foibles
- Essential Skills - helpful thinking and self talk, emotion recognition and regulation, life problem solving, communication, planning and time management and keeping well.

So, what will the SenseAbility lessons look like?

During these lessons, your children will be encouraged to provide reflections on their lives as well as undertake core and class activities. For example, when working on 'Sense of Belonging', they may be asked to reflect on the number of groups they think they belong to; or to develop their 'Sense of Future', they may be asked to plan their speech for their 70th birthday. The Essential Skills DVD, which accompanies the program, will teach students to identify thinking styles that are helpful and unhelpful, and encourage students to develop thinking skills that will help them manage life challenges. The whole program employs

cognitive-behavioural principles, so students will learn how ‘thinking about a particular event’ strongly influences what they feel and do. Many of the activities will give students the opportunity to practice breaking down their thoughts in the following way:



The program will also allow students to work individually and cooperatively with their peers, thus developing their ability to build relationships and enhance their connection to school. These are vital elements to improving your child’s sense of self and belonging. Parents and guardians are encouraged to discuss the SenseAbility lessons at home with their children so that all students understand that the significant people in their lives have an important part to play in their wellbeing.

Parents and guardians are welcome to look at the materials in this program by visiting [www.beyondblue.org.au/senseability](http://www.beyondblue.org.au/senseability)

Please contact the following year level coordinators if you have questions about the program:

Your child’s SenseAbility teacher for 2011:

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