

OUR CONTEMPORARY MOMENT

PRE-VISIT LESSON PLAN: RESILIENCE

Grades: 7-12

Duration: 45 minutes

Essential Question: *How can you increase your resiliency?*

Learning Objectives

- Students will be able to define resilience.
- Students will be able to describe at least one way in which they can increase their resiliency.

Materials

- Image (either projected or color copies for students to view)
- Handout: What is Resilience?

Resources

- Meadowsweet Dairy article: <https://www.landviews.org/la2003/spirit-md.html>
- [Psychology Today Skills and Attitudes That Can Increase Resilience: https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-face-adversity/201201/the-eleven-skills-and-attitudes-can-increase-resilience](https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-face-adversity/201201/the-eleven-skills-and-attitudes-can-increase-resilience)

About the Artwork/Artist:

Meadowsweet Dairy is a collaborative group of sculptors who create work using found natural materials. Over the years, members have included Sam Bower, Henry Corning, Glenda Griffith, Alan Leavitt, Dan Ustin, and others. Their studio is at an old dairy farm in Corte Madera, in Marin County, which inspired their name. A 2002 artist statement from the group declared, "The less we do to a naturally beautiful piece the better. The entire process, from collecting material, working it, to finding a name for the piece, is a collaborative effort."

Djinn, or jinn are supernatural creatures in early pre-Islamic Arabian and later Islamic mythology and theology, also known as genies.¹

Talk about *Djinn* (10 min.) With the whole class, look at *Djinn*. Before students make initial comments, ask them to silently LOOK for about 30 seconds. ASK: What are some things that they thought about as they looked silently? Use the student comments to engage in a discussion, neutrally paraphrasing and linking comments. Pepper in some of the above information where it fits. Questions you might ask include: *Can you tell what materials make up this sculpture by looking at the photograph? Has the redwood been altered in any way? If so, how? Why do you think the artists selected that piece of wood? Why do you think the artists selected the name Djinn for the work?* When timing feels right, let students know that you are going to switch to an activity that will further explore the idea of resilience.

¹ See <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/djinni>

Activity

1. In small groups, have students read and discuss the “What is Resilience” handout. (15 min.)
2. As a whole group / class, ask each group to share out their key thoughts. (5 min.)
3. Revisit the image of Djinn. (10 min.)

Ask:

- *What is resilient about this sculpture?*
- *What lessons can we learn about resilience from nature?*
- *What does art have to teach us about resilience?*

Debriefing (5 min.)

Facilitate a group discussion about the activity, letting students do most of the talking. Let students know that this lesson will be incorporated into the Our Contemporary Moment Visit at di Rosa, where they will be able to see Djinn in person.

Extensions

- Invite students to practice the skills mentioned in the handout and notice if or how they make a difference.
- Encourage students to collaborate on a collective art project, preferably made from natural materials.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Adversity is a fact of life. Resilience is that ineffable quality that allows some people to be knocked down by life and come back at least as strong as before. Rather than letting difficulties or failure overcome them and drain their resolve, they find a way to rise from the ashes.

Psychologists have identified some of the factors that make a person resilient, such as a positive attitude, optimism, the ability to regulate emotions, and the ability to see failure as a form of helpful feedback. Research shows that optimism helps blunt the impact of stress on the mind and body in the wake of disturbing experiences. And that gives people access to their own cognitive resources, enabling cool-headed analysis of what might have gone wrong and consideration of behavioral paths that might be more productive.

Resilience is not some magical quality; it takes real mental work to transcend hardship. But even after misfortune, resilient people are able to change course and move toward achieving their goals. There's growing evidence that the elements of resilience can be cultivated.²

Think: *When was a time that you were resilient?*

ELEVEN SKILLS THAT HELP INCREASE RESILIENCY³

1. CONNECTION.

Being connected to others. Relationships that can provide support and caring are one of the primary factors in resilience. Having a number of these relationships, both within and outside of the family, that offer love, encouragement and reassurance can build and support resilience, e.g., developing new friendships.

2. FLEXIBILITY

Being flexible. By definition it is a key component of resilience and one of the primary factors in emotional adjustment and maturity. This requires that an individual be flexible in his thinking and his actions, e.g., trying something new.

3. REALISM & REALISTIC ACTION

Being able to make realistic plans and take action to carry them out. Being able to see what is, rather than what you would like is a part of this skill. Being proactive rather than reactive, assertive rather than aggressive or passive are all components of this skill, e.g., taking a Red Cross course in CPR and First Aid.

4. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Being able to communicate well with others and problem-solve both individually and with others. This includes basic communication, listening and problem-solving skills, e.g., working as a team member within your community.

² Source: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/basics/resilience>

³ Source: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/in-the-face-adversity/201201/the-eleven-skills-and-attitudes-can-increase-resilience>

5. SELF REGULATION

Being able to manage strong feelings. This requires being able to take action without being impulsive and responding out of emotion and being able to put emotions to the side when clear thinking and action are required. Being able to use thinking as a way of managing one's emotions is a key component of this skill, e.g., when you're angry or hurt, thinking before acting.

6. SELF CONFIDENCE

Being self-confident. Having a positive self-image is critical if a person is to be able to confront and manage fear and anxiety in his/her life, e.g., helping someone else.

7. SELF PURPOSE

Being able to find purpose and meaning. Being able to make sense out of what is happening and to find meaning in it is critical if one is to be able to manage the feelings that are aroused in a crisis. Spiritual and religious practices are often a component of this factor, e.g., acting on your values.

8. SEEING THE BIG PICTURE

Seeing the big picture requires optimism. Optimists are more likely to see good and bad events occurring in their life being temporary rather than permanent. They are also more likely to see events having a specific impact on certain areas of their life rather than having a pervasive impact on their entire life or their future. And last of all, they are less likely to blame themselves or someone else for hard times. Optimists avoid the blame game, e.g., hold yourself and others accountable without the emotional dose of blame.

9. HUMOR

Being able to appreciate and use humor appropriately. Whether humor is "sick" or "dark" often depends on the setting. Laughter may have healing powers, e.g., if you're not feeling well; watch a funny movie.

10. SELF CARE

Being able to take care of yourself, e.g., diet, exercise, etc.

11. EMPATHY

Being able to care for others physically and emotionally.

Think: *Which of these skills do you use the most often? Which would you like to practice using?*



Meadowsweet Dairy, *Djinn*, 1997
Charred redwood and granite