



# University of Melbourne Research

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 the behavioral changes achieved in relation to gratitude, empathy and mindfulness.

## Why was this important?

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



**1 in 4 adolescents** will experience **mental health problems** this year and nearly  $\frac{2}{3}$  of them **will not seek help**.



The prevalence of **mental health issues** is **increasing**. The **age** at which those issues are experienced is **decreasing**.



**1 in 7 primary** aged children will experience **mental health problems** this year.



Our **national suicide rates** are amongst the **highest** in the OECD.



Our young people are increasingly responding to mental distress with self-harm. **5600 hospital admissions** due to self-harm in the 12 months to **September 2021**.



The World Health Organisation (WHO) predicts that in **2030** the **most common illness** will be **depression**, and the most common **cause of death** above the age of 15 will be **suicide**.

**There needs to be a greater focus on prevention to help people 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 research was conducted by researchers from the Melbourne School of Population and Global Health at The University of Melbourne. The research team includes Professor Lisa Gibbs, Dr Karen Block, Ms Hannah Morrice, Ms Elena Swift and Ms Lauren Carpenter. The University of Melbourne recruitment and data collection team includes: Dr Anna Barrett, Ms Kathryn Young, Dr Dakhina Mitra, Ms Kate Burke, and Ms Molly Harrington. It was a mixed-methods study, including surveys, interviews and focus groups. N= 1046 students in grade 4-6 (median age 10.6years), 12 schools in Victoria (6 using the program, 6 not using the program)

## What the research concluded

### Gratitude

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


 *"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:**


**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 reported 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:**

**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 experienced the benefits of practicing mindfulness regularly.


 *"...it [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:**

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

### Emotional Literacy

Teachers and students reported a compelling shift in students being able to articulate their own emotions and recognising emotions in others.

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

**The evidence behind emotional literacy:**

**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 concluded that the program benefits arose from both the program content and the style of delivery. The program provided variety which altered the ways in which children engaged with lessons and each other, contributing to overall improved social and emotional skills. The key changes experienced, were:

- Improved student wellbeing
- Improved confidence and self esteem
- Improved knowledge and ability to express emotions
- Improved relationships at school and home
- More 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