#ResilienceInYouth: Presenting an App for Youth Experiencing Challenge

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Dr. Christine Wekerle, Department of Pediatrics, McMaster University

Savanah Smith, Department of Pediatrics, McMaster University

Resilience: Legal and Rights Frameworks

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Calls for countries to develop legislation and implement services to protect the rights of children
- Prevent violence and promote wellbeing (resilience)
- Canada is a signatory country

- The reporting of child abuse and neglect is mandated in all provinces and territories within Canada (Child, Youth, and Family Services Act)
- In Ontario, Age of Protection: Raised to include 16 and 17 year olds
- Yet, 1/3 of Canadians report experiencing abuse before age 16 (physical, sexual, and exposure to Intimate Partner Violence)
- The majority of victims (67%) report not speaking to anyone about the abuse (i.e., family, friends, authorities)
Positive Psychology

- Moves beyond disorder to optimal human functioning\(^6\)
- Positive experiences, states and personal traits all contribute to wellbeing
- Emphasizes the improvement of the individual\(^7\)
- Asks the question: What allows for resilience?
Could a mobile-app intervention bolster resilience in youth?

- Reports show that one quarter of Grade Four students have a smartphone—with increasing numbers by grade until Grade Eleven, with 85% owning a smartphone.
- Youth typically spend 6-9 hours online per day.
- 54% of teens report that they spend “too much” time on their cellphones.
- What if they were using even a fraction of this time to focus on the positives and learn tools to increase resilience?
The JoyPop App

Goals:

1. Promote positive emotionality and activity
2. Promote safe social connectedness
3. Provide support with day-to-day stressors and periods of transition

Psychological processes targeted:

Executive Functioning: A set of higher-order processes in the brain that allow an individual to respond to external stimuli with goal-oriented action

Emotion Regulation (ER): A set of processes that enable an individual to organize, manage, or modify their emotions (to positively adapt to internal or external cues)

Recommended Usage: Minimum of twice daily (Once in the morning and once at night)

Support is always available: Call for help button allows the user to access three helplines (i.e., Kids Help Phone, LGBT, Indigenous) should they feel distressed at any point in the day
When the App is first opened daily: (1) the Guide to Diaphragmatic Breathing; (2) Breathing Activity – Prompts Choice of Balanced or Relaxation Breathing; (3) Happy Mood Rating

Preparation for Relaxation:

- Assume your most noble posture
- Relax your forehead
- Release any tension in your neck
- Let go of any gripping feelings
- Loosen your jaw
- Drop your shoulders and lift your chest
- Unclench your glutes

Take a breather! Pick an activity to start:

- Shape Shifter
- Breathing Exercises
- Art
Controlled Breathing Exercises

- Teach user diaphragmatic breathing techniques to decrease stress and restore body to a resting state
- Two Options: Balanced and Relaxation breathing
- Preset timing and rounds of breathing with text prompt and visual tracking diagram
- Some evidence that focused breathing exercises may have positive effects on the utilization of ER strategies\(^1\_)
Landing Page and Calendar

- Focus is on the positives
- Landing page allows the user to access all of the app features of Calendar; Mood Rating; Journaling; Activities [Art, Breathing, ShapeShifter Game]; Circle of Trust
- Calendar keeps journal entries
Expressing Resilience via Journaling

- Express thoughts, feelings, and emotions through words (and emojis)

- User is able to journal free flowing thoughts, or respond to a pre-populated question, prompts or quote related to resilience

- Research has demonstrated positive health and behavioral outcomes after participating expressive journaling interventions including improvements in physical and mental health, higher grades, elevated mood, and reductions in distress symptoms\textsuperscript{19-23}
From Mood Ratings to Actions

- User is first asked to rate happiness by sliding colour up or down with their finger.
- If rating is under 50% happy, user is asked to rate how sad, angry, or ‘meh’ they feel.
- JoyPop will provide a prompt for an activity to increase mood.
- Consistent mood imbalance and emotional suppression can lead to poor mental health, negative mindset, resulting behavioral issues\(^{35}\).
- Teaches the user to be better aware of their emotions, identify and differentiate emotions, and create positive strategies to improve mood (ER)\(^{24}\).
Gaming for Focus: ShapeShifter

- Strategy games have been linked to self-regulation when played consistently over time.\textsuperscript{25}

- Tetris has been shown to decrease traumatic memory flashbacks.\textsuperscript{26,27}

- There is evidence that playing Tetris may have positive effects on spatial working memory.\textsuperscript{28}
Safe Social Connecting: Circle of Trust

- Allows user to input up to six contacts to call when they are in need of support

- May contain family, peers, social workers, mental health professionals, and mentors

- Establishing positive relationships has been shown to decrease stress symptoms and increase relational learning\(^\text{29}\)

- Adult mentors help to shape “resilient identity” of at-risk youth\(^\text{30}\)

- Youth need to know that they are trusted to make decisions, but help is always available when they need it
Next Steps

- The app is currently being studied on populations of youth transitioning from high school to university.
- Canadian child welfare foundation has partnered with communication firm, Telus, to provide 2 year data plan free to youth exiting system.
- Adaptation of the app to fit the resilience needs of Indigenous communities (i.e., holistic features, “water tool”, language).
FUTURUM Articles:

**Man Box:** [https://futurumcareers.com/thinking-outside-the-manbox](https://futurumcareers.com/thinking-outside-the-manbox)


**Resilience Activity Sheet:** [https://futurumcareers.com/activity-sheets](https://futurumcareers.com/activity-sheets)
References


2) http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/childrensaid/reportingabuse/abuseandneglect.aspx


