

My Turn: Teach coping skills for well-adjusted kids

Shelby Pedersen, AZ | See It 4:01 p.m. MT Jan. 26, 2017



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ICAN works every day with nearly 300 youth who come from backgrounds of disadvantage.

These kids deal with poverty, crime, family loss and so many situations that most of us will never face.

We focus on helping to build their self-confidence, teach them social-emotional skills and give them the tools to build their resiliency so they can break the cycle of poverty. These "prevention" skills, as we call them, are the core program ICAN provides. It helps our youth avoid substance abuse, gang involvement and juvenile delinquency.

But these skills are practical for all kids, regardless of their family circumstances or economic means, as all children can fall prey to risky behavior.

Raising resilient kids will not only help youth transition through the awkward teenage years, but it will make them more responsible and well-adjusted adults.

Did you know that two of the top three reasons teens report turning to drugs and alcohol (according to the [2016 Arizona Youth Survey](#)) is to "deal with stress" and to "not feel sad"?

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Important coping skills

Teens who cannot cope with the ups and downs in their life will often turn to drugs and alcohol. If we equip youth at an early age with resiliency skills, we will help them deal with those hurdles as they grow.



Author Lynn Lyons shared her top 10 tips for raising resilient kids from her book, "Anxious Kids, Anxious

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Shelby Pedersen (Photo: Shelby Pedersen)

resilient kids from her book, "Anxious Kids, Anxious Parents: 7 Ways to Stop the Worry Cycle and Raise Courageous and Independent Children" (HCI Books, 2013). For more examples to go along with these tips, visit our blog at icanaz.org.

- Don't accommodate every need.
- Avoid eliminating all risk.
- Teach them to problem-solve.
- Teach your kids concrete skills.
- Avoid "why" questions.
- Don't provide all the answers.
- Avoid talking in catastrophic terms.
- Let your kids make mistakes.

- Help them manage their emotions.
- Model resiliency.

Ted Huntington is ICAN's community programs coordinator, and he frequently visits students at Chandler high schools — he recently spent a week with students at Basha High. Ted talks with teens about the "BIG three" reasons that teens engage in risky behavior:

They feel like they are not connected to a group or that no one cares about them; they are dealing with the stresses of life and don't know how to cope; and they are bored and have no way of expressing their talent.

Ted talks with teens about how they can develop their own coping mechanisms — channeling ways to express themselves by doing things they enjoy.



Shamers on Instagram 1:00



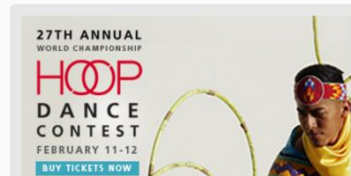
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Ted talks with teens about how they can develop their own coping mechanisms — channeling ways to express themselves by doing things they enjoy.

That can be something very different for each teen — for some it's sports, for others it's music and for some it is just reading a book.

They also talk through being yourself and having a positive self-image, learning the techniques of self-talk.

Healthy behaviors

They talk about four coping skills: name the feelings; accept what you are feeling; express your feelings; pick a healthy way to take care of yourself. Feeling sad, mad or frustrated is all OK — kids just need to be able to recognize those feelings and develop the coping mechanisms to deal with them, instead of turning to risky behaviors.



Coping and resilience skills are just as important to youth development as reading and writing.

Resiliency helps kids navigate the roller-coaster ride of childhood and adolescence.

In "The Resiliency Advantage" (Three Rivers Press, 1997), the late Al Siebert, Ph.D., writes that "highly resilient people are flexible, adapt to new circumstances quickly, and thrive in constant change. Most important, they expect to bounce back and feel confident that they will. They have a knack for creating good luck out of circumstances that many others see as bad luck."

Resilient kids also become resilient adults, able to survive and thrive in the face of life's unavoidable stressors.

Do you have a group of teens or adults who might be interesting in hearing one of Ted's presentations? Feel free to contact him directly at 480-821-4207 or ted@icanaz.org. He would be happy to share this valuable information with your group.

Shelby Pedersen is CEO of ICAN: Positive Programs for Youth.

