



Chesterton Primary School

Wellbeing Newsletter

Resilience, Independence & Challenge

MAY 2026 EDITION #01

"We would do anything for our children, but we shouldn't do everything for them."

There is obviously a huge amount that could be written on this topic, but here are some key points that may be of interest.

[BBC News Article on Resilience](#)



Adrian Bethune Training

- **The Stretch Zone.** For those of you who attended Adrian Bethune's parent workshop back in the Autumn, you may remember his section on 'The Stretch Zone'. The Stretch Zone will feel hard and challenging and children might find it uncomfortable. They will make mistakes and potentially feel like giving up, but it can also feel exciting. Over time, their comfort zone grows and something that once felt challenging, now feels comfortable. Adrian used the example of a child learning to ride a bike (something many of you will have experienced. It rarely goes smoothly to begin with, but is immensely satisfying when mastered.

We need some stress to grow

"We shouldn't design our lives (or our children's lives) to avoid stress altogether. In fact, the evidence suggests a certain level of stress is better than no stress at all." Dr Lucy Foulkes.

- By exposing children to an appropriate level of stress, we provide them with 'stress inoculation'.

"Stress inoculation" (more commonly called stress inoculation training, or SIT) is the idea of building resilience to stress by gradually exposing yourself to manageable challenges, a bit like how a vaccine exposes the body to a small, safe version of a germ so it can cope better later.

Instead of avoiding stress completely, you practise dealing with it in controlled, low-stakes situations, so when bigger challenges come along, you feel more prepared and less overwhelmed.

Comfort zone

- Easy, simple, familiar
- Restful, relaxed, confident
- Static, fixed, protected
- Boring, understimulating
- Claustrophobic

Stretch zone

- New, different, challenging
- Active, demanding, uncertain
- Developing, learning
- Engaging, absorbing
- Tiring, satisfying

Panic zone

- Overwhelming
- Stressful, scary, too much
- Can't learn effectively
- Urge to retreat

In simple terms:

You get better at handling stress by facing small amounts of it and learning how to cope.



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How it works

Stress inoculation usually involves three stages:

1. Understanding stress – learning what stress feels like in your body and mind
2. Learning coping skills – such as breathing techniques, positive self-talk, or problem-solving
3. Practising in real situations – gradually facing more challenging tasks using those skills

Example (for a pupil)

A child who gets nervous about speaking in class might:

Start by answering questions in a small group.

Practise calming breathing and positive thoughts.

Then build up to speaking in front of the whole class.

Over time, their confidence grows and the stress feels more manageable.

Key idea

Stress isn't always harmful – the right amount, handled well, can actually help you grow stronger and become more confident.

Watch this video and consider how Steve Backshall helps a child conquer their fear, rather than avoiding it.

[Steve Backshall Bungee Jumping Video](#)



What a Growth Mindset is

[Growth Mindset Explanation Ted Talk](#)



A growth mindset means believing your brain can grow and get stronger when you learn new things.

It's okay to make mistakes because mistakes help you learn and improve.

When something feels hard, you keep trying instead of giving up.

You understand that practice helps you get better at skills over time.

You are willing to try new things, even if you're not sure you'll succeed right away.

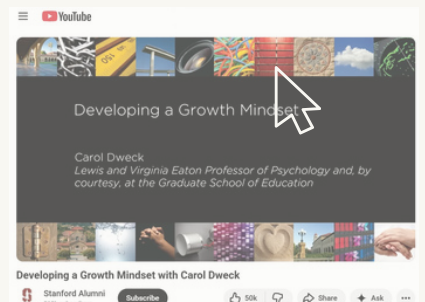
You listen to feedback and use it to improve your work.

You don't compare yourself to others—you focus on your own progress.

You use positive self-talk, like "I can't do this yet, but I will with practice."

You learn from challenges instead of avoiding them.

You celebrate effort and progress, not just getting the right answer.





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What do we do in school to model resilience and a Growth Mindset?



What you may want to try at home

- Using a catchphrase such as 'You can do hard things' when things become tricky.
- Use the power of 'yet'. When a child says 'I can't!', encourage them to say 'I can't do it yet'. It's a subtle difference, but emphasises the possibility for growth.
- Model/talk about how you keep trying at something even though it is difficult.
- Normalise discomfort. Talk about how we feel when things are stressful/challenging/worrying and how things like 'butterflies in your tummy' are normal.
- Try to reframe nerves as excitement.
- Try to avoid passing on fears / worries to children. Be as positive as you can about something that makes you uncomfortable (I have to do this with heights and spiders!).

"Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new."

Albert Einstein.