Building resilience around young people

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WELCOME!

AIM of the session:

To understand

- what resilience is;
- why it is important; and
- what we, as professionals, can do to develop and support children and young people to begin to master this complex mutli-faceted skill.

ICEBREAKER

In the chat, can you share when the last time your resilience was tested?

What happened?

How did you resolve things?

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Understanding resilience

Academic Buoyancy

The everyday capacity to deal with typical setbacks and challenges in school life—managing deadlines, handling mild anxiety about tests, navigating social dynamics, or coping with disappointment over grades.

Think of it as the ability to stay afloat during normal school pressures. Most young people develop this naturally with appropriate support.

Resilience

The capacity to adapt and recover from significant adversity, trauma, or chronic stress—experiences such as bereavement, family breakdown, serious illness, bullying, or systemic disadvantage.

Resilience involves deeper psychological processes and often requires intentional support from caring adults. It's not about "toughening up"—it's about developing genuine coping strategies and having reliable support networks.

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Safety → Belonging → Regulation → Learning

Maslow's hierarchy of needs

A classic psychological framework from Abraham Maslow.

BiteSize Learning

Self-actualization — Finally, now our core needs are met, we're ready to pursue our deepest desire for **self-actualisation** - to become the most complete and authentic version of ourselves. With the fundamentals taken care of, we're free to act as we choose, aligned with our values and higher purpose.

Self esteem — Once we're secure in our social needs, our primal desires for **status and self esteem** come into play. We want to feel not only 'part of the group' – but an admired and respected part.

Social — If we feel safe, then our **social needs for love and belonging** come into play. We feel secure when we're part of a tribe we can trust and unworried about rejection or alienation.

Safety — If we feel OK in this exact moment, we then also want to **feel safe**: confident we can avoid pain, hunger and other dangers for the immediate future.

Physiological — At the very least, we don't want to be hungry, thirsty, exhausted, freezing, overheating, sick, or in pain.

Maslow's Hierarchy reminds us that resilience cannot be built on shaky foundations. Before we can expect young people to develop resilience, we must ensure their basic needs are met:

- **Physiological needs: Are they fed, warm, and rested? A hungry child cannot focus on emotional regulation.**
- **Safety needs: Do they feel physically and emotionally safe at home and school? Trauma responses override resilience-building.**
- **Belonging needs: Are they connected to peers, staff, and their community? Isolation undermines resilience.**
- **Esteem needs: Do they experience success and recognition? Self-worth is essential for taking risks.**

Only when these foundations are secure can we meaningfully support self-actualisation and resilience.

This hierarchy also applies to us as professionals—we cannot pour from an empty cup!

Early signs & protective factors

Early Signs of Dysregulation:

Physical: fidgeting, withdrawal, sudden fatigue, changes in posture.

Emotional: irritability, tearfulness, heightened sensitivity to feedback.

Behavioural patterns: frequent lateness, avoidance of tasks, escalating conflicts.

Academic indicators: drop in engagement, incomplete work, perfectionism or giving up quickly.

Protective factors that buffer stress:

Trusted adult(s): consistent, non-judgmental relationships that offer emotional safety.

Peer connection: friendships or group belonging that reduce isolation.

Successful experiences: opportunities for mastery and recognition—celebrating effort as much as achievement.

Predictable routines: clear expectations and calm transitions reduce uncertainty.

Safe spaces: designated areas for sensory breaks or emotional regulation.

Voice and choice: allowing young people to influence decisions builds agency and resilience.

Our role as adults in building resilience

Standardise Calm Space Access
- **Create a Calm Space Menu (visual, simple language).**
- **Teach it like any classroom routine—model, rehearse, and normalise.**

Embed Micro-Check-Ins
- **Assign responsibility: *Who does the 60-second check-in and when?***
- **Use quick prompts: *"How's your energy?"* or emoji scales for emotional state.**

Shared Emotion Vocabulary
- **Develop age-appropriate versions (EYFS, Primary, Secondary).**
- **Display in classrooms and use consistently across staff.**

Light-Touch Record Keeping
- **Focus on patterns, not paperwork: brief notes → trend spotting → quick adaptations.**
- **Use simple codes or digital tools for efficiency.**

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Dynamics of Co-regulation

Regulated Adult + Regulated Child = Regulated Child

Regulated Adult + Dysregulated Child = Regulated Child

Dysregulated Adult + Dysregulated Child = Dysregulated Child

Dysregulated Adult + Regulated Child = Dysregulated Child
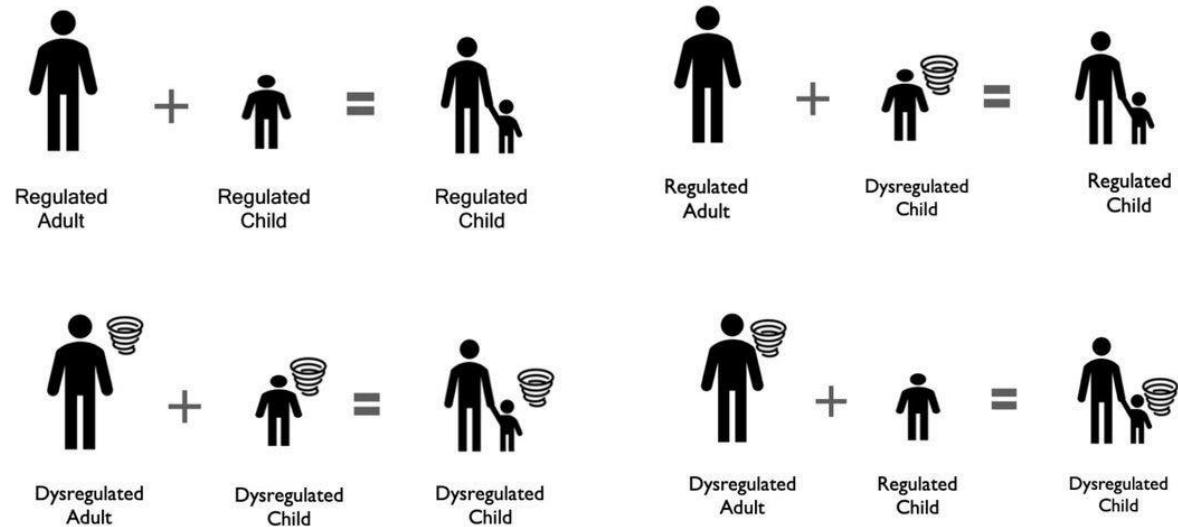
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What is already in place?

Before introducing new strategies, let's take stock of what's already happening in your settings. Most schools and services already have resilience-building practices in place—though they may not be labelled as such. Identifying these creates a foundation for development rather than wholesale change.

Consider programmes, relationships, or structures that genuinely support young people's wellbeing and coping.

This might include:

- **Trusted adult schemes or mentoring relationships**
- **Consistent pastoral support systems**
- **Peer support or buddy programmes**
- **Clear routines and predictable environments**
- **Celebration of effort, not just achievement**
- **Restorative approaches to behaviour**

Keep	Tweak	Try
Weekly celebration of achievements	Environments – check low-arousal spaces Consistent visual timetables	Buddy programmes

Practice sharing: What has worked well for you?

Core elements of Resilience

- Coping with pressure
- Learning and Adapting
- Positive outlook
- Self-awareness
- Strong connections
- Practicing the skills
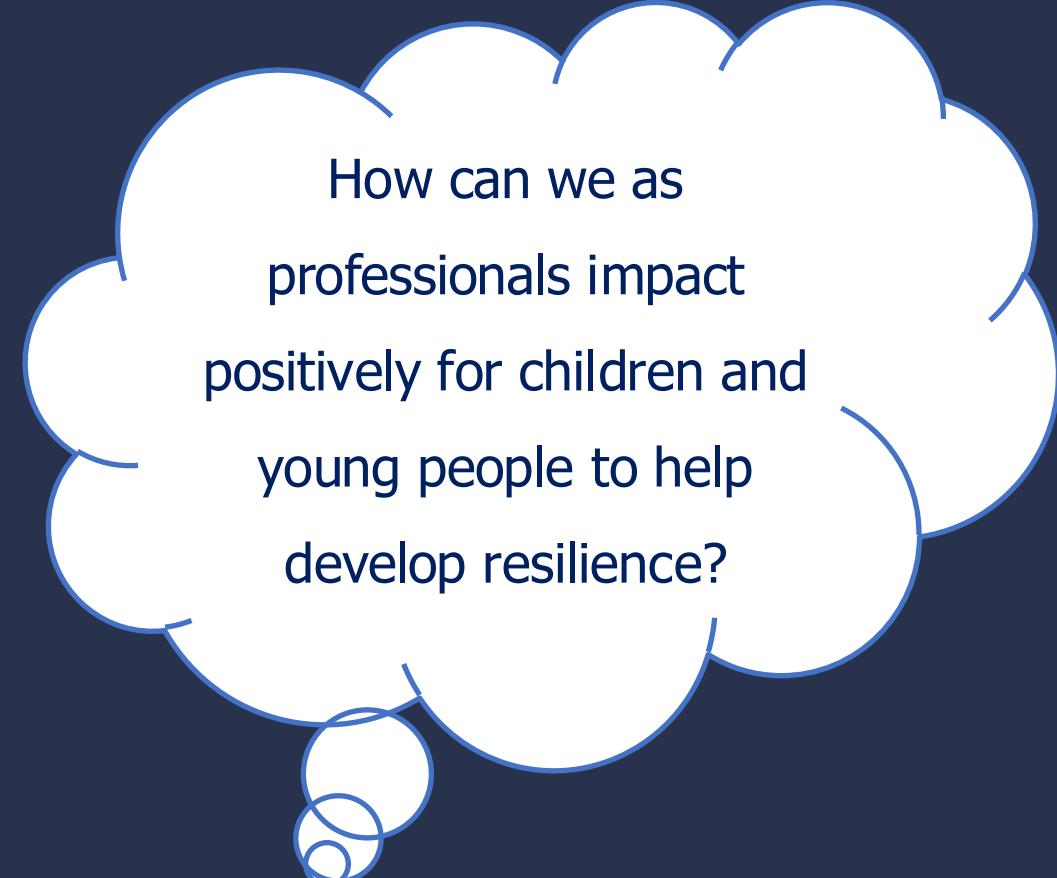
How can we as professionals impact positively for children and young people to help develop resilience?

Emotional Regulation is the ability to manage and respond to your emotions in healthy and adaptive ways.

Key aspects of emotional regulation:

Understanding our emotions

Using strategies

Managing reactions

Practicing the skills

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Co-Regulation is the process where one person helps another person contain and respond appropriately to their emotions.

- Being contained

- Being calm

- Being responsive to the child/ young person's needs

- Offer strategies that work for the child/ young person.

How can we as professionals impact positively for children and young people to help develop regulation strategies?

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Triggers are situations, people pr things that can elicit an intense emotional response – often disproportionate to the event – because they are linked to past experience or trauma.

- Identify the trigger

- Recognise patterns

- Separate past and present

- Redirect thoughts

- Practice self-regulation through co-regulation

What strategies do you have in your tool kit to help manage your triggers?

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Key questions when thinking about a child/ young person's emotional regulation.

- Can the child/ young person correctly identify their emotions?

- Does the child/ young person have the language to communicate their emotions effectively?

- Does the child/ young person have a 'tool kit' of strategies to help them cope when things get tricky?

- Is there an available adult to practice self-regulation through co-regulation?

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Co-Production and Culture

Why it matters:
Builds ownership and agency for young people.
•Moves from "doing to" → "doing with."
•Creates trust and shared responsibility for resilience strategies.

Goal Setting with Young People
•Start with their voice: Ask *"What matters most to you right now?"*
•Use SMART goals: Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, Time-bound.
•Break it down: Turn big aspirations into small, achievable steps.
•Visual tools: Use goal maps, progress trackers, or digital dashboards.
•Celebrate progress: Recognise effort and milestones, not just outcomes.

Practical Prompts for Staff
• *"What would make school feel safer for you?"*
• *"If things go wrong, what helps you reset?"*
• *"Who do you want in your support circle?"*

Culture Shift
•Embed resilience language in everyday practice.
•Model vulnerability and problem-solving as adults.
•Normalise conversations about coping and emotional regulation.

Practical strategies

Mentoring

Purpose: Provide consistent, trusted relationships that offer emotional and academic support.
Best Practice:
- Schedule regular sessions with clear goals.
- Include reflective conversations, not just task completion.
- Link mentoring to resilience-building (e.g., coping strategies, problem-solving).

Emotion Coaching

Why It Matters: Helps young people name, understand, and manage emotions.

Core Steps:
- Notice and validate feelings – "I can see you're frustrated."
- Guide problem-solving – "What could help you feel calmer?"

Impact: Builds emotional literacy and self-regulation.

Relationship-Based Practice

Principles:
- Prioritise trust and psychological safety before academic demands.
- Use restorative approaches to repair ruptures.
- Model vulnerability and resilience as adults.

Practical Actions:
- Greet every student by name.
- Maintain predictable routines and calm spaces.
- Offer micro-check-ins during transitions.

Transference & Honest Communication

Recognise emotional spillover from home or previous experiences.
Respond with empathy and curiosity, not judgment.
Use phrases like: *"Help me understand what's happening for you right now."*

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Growth Mindset and Relational Safety

Honest Communication & Human Connection

•Build trust through transparency and empathy.

•Validate feelings before problem-solving:
 "It's okay to feel frustrated—let's work through it together."

•Prioritise relationships over compliance.

Normalising Dysregulation

•Sharing openly: *"No one is regulated all the time—that's normal."*

•Explain that emotional ups and downs are part of being human.

•Avoid creating unrealistic expectations that lead to masking.

•Provide safe spaces and coping strategies instead of demanding constant calm.

Growth Mindset

•Emphasise effort and progress over perfection.

•Model vulnerability: share your own learning and coping strategies.

•Use language that frames mistakes as opportunities for growth.

Practice sharing: What has worked well for you?

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Why Systems Matter

- Consistency across settings creates predictability and safety.
- Shared language and routines reduce anxiety for young people.
- Aligns staff responses, preventing mixed messages and escalation.

Norfolk Steps

Universal Approach:
- Provides a common framework for all professionals.
- Focuses on relational safety and co-regulation before compliance.

Empowering Practice:
- Encourages positive handling plans that prioritise dignity and choice.
- Builds confidence in staff to respond calmly and effectively.

Practical Actions
- Embed Norfolk Steps principles in daily routines.
- Use de-escalation scripts and calm spaces proactively.
- Train all staff for consistency and confidence.

Impact on Resilience

For Young People: Predictable responses reduce fear and promote trust.

For Families: Shared strategies create continuity between home and school.

For Professionals: Clear systems reduce stress and decision fatigue.

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How do we balance consistency with flexibility to support resilience?

Communication and expectations to build resilience

All behaviour sends a message—often about unmet needs or emotional states.

Ask: *"What is this behaviour telling us?"* rather than *"How do we stop it?"*

Look beyond compliance: consider stress triggers, sensory load, and relational safety.

Respond with curiosity, not judgment:
"Help me understand what's happening for you right now."

Expectations should create predictability and safety, not fear.

Ask: *"Whose needs are these expectations meeting—ours or theirs?"*

Align expectations with developmental stage and emotional capacity.

Flexibility matters: rigid rules can escalate stress and undermine resilience.

Co-create expectations with young people to build ownership and agency.

School and Community Team cover the whole of Norfolk and offer support to children and young people, parent carers and schools.

1:1 work with children/ young people and families.

Group work with children/ young people.

Group work with parent carers

Team Around the School

CPD and support in schools

SCT also works with the Family Hub and ECFS in the community to support children and families.

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School and Community Team have a range of interventions and workshops that can help support development of resilience and emotional regulation strategies and you can find all the information on this link:

https://www.schools.norfolk.gov.uk/article/70001/School-and-Community-Teams-SCT
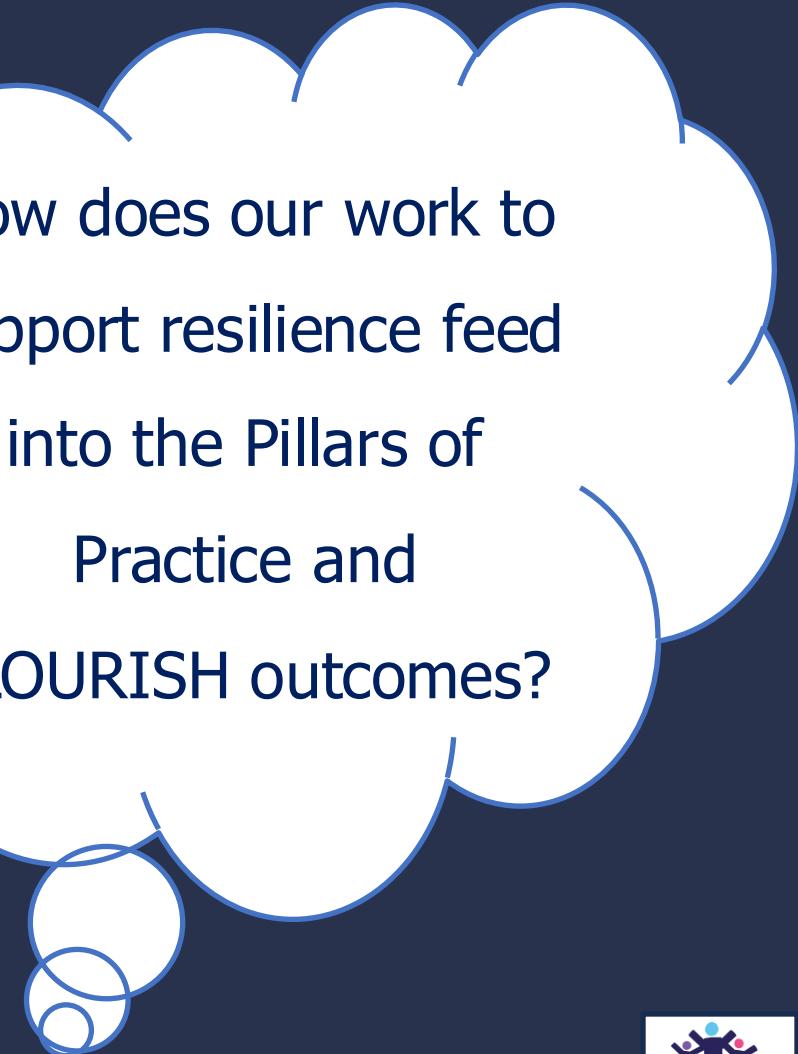
Resilience is vital at all levels.

1:1 work

Family level

School level

Community level

Wider Societal level
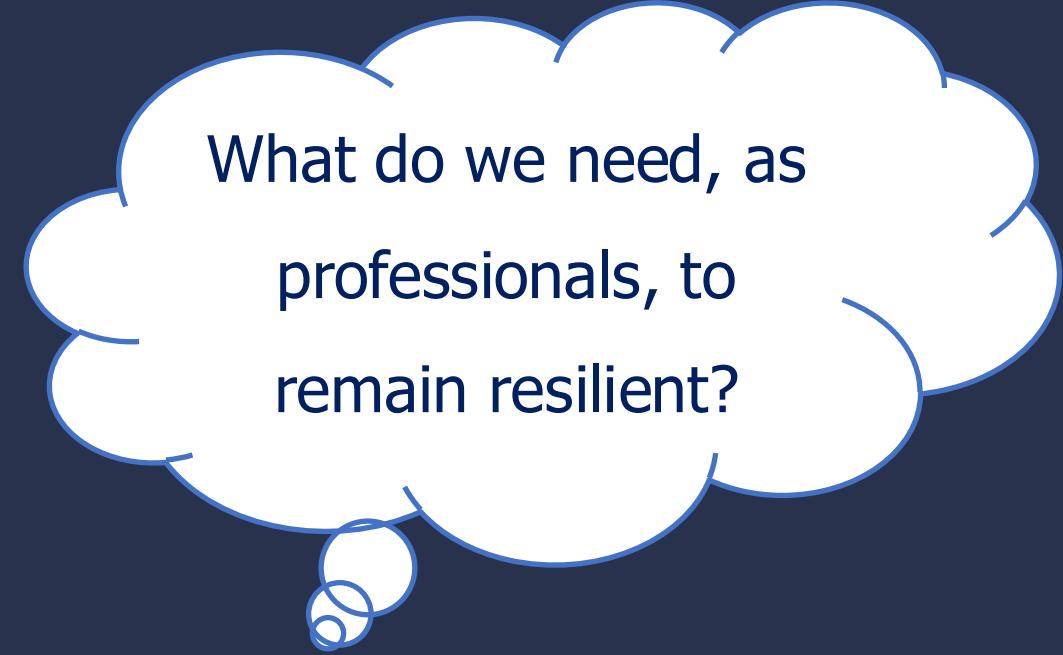
What do we need, as professionals, to remain resilient?

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To help support you we are leaving you with:

The slide deck
An easy read – one minute guide
The link to the School and Community Offer.
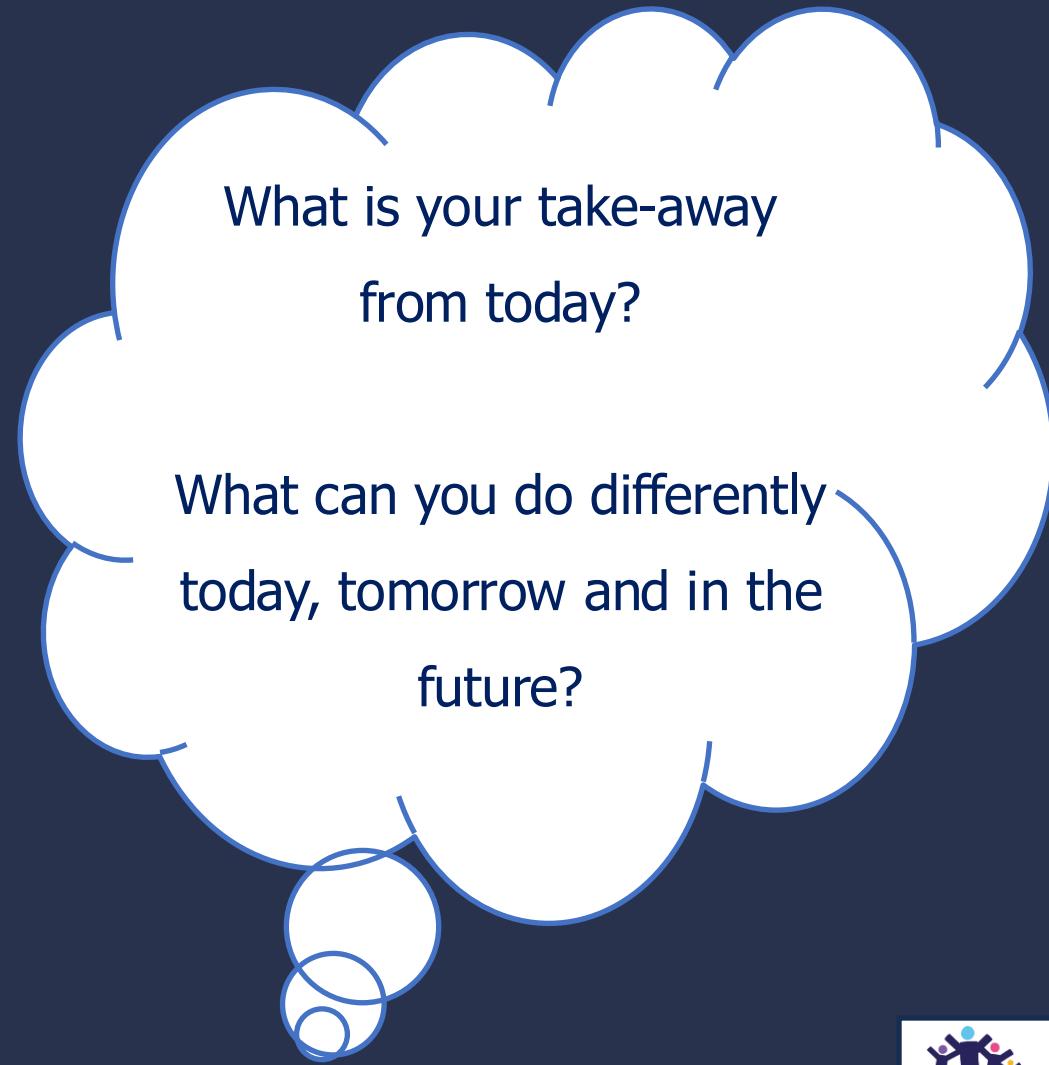
What is your take-away from today?

What can you do differently today, tomorrow and in the future?

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