

# FROM THE DEAN OF BOYS' EDUCATION

## PASTORAL CARE FOCUS – LIFE SKILLS AT TRINITY

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The educational justification for the integration of pastoral care and education has never been stronger. Recent evidence from the 2011 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report - The Health of Young Australians- shows that 9% of young people aged 16–24 years have high or very high levels of psychological distress, and one in four have experienced at least one mental disorder.

The Life Skills Programme at Trinity is part of a whole School approach to health and well-being. It is the goal of the Life Skills Programme, in conjunction with the development of ethical, moral and religious values, to enhance boys' capacity to be emotionally resilient and socially competent. Such outcomes are arguably the most important skills we can all learn in life, and perhaps the most inadequately learned in our society.

Resilience is a concept first popularised in the early 1970s, and focuses on young people who, against long odds, succeed. Resilience is the ability to rebound or spring back after adversity or hard times. Research shows that resilient young people know how to solve problems, have some sense of mastery of their own lives and learn from mistakes. The development of resilience, emotional intelligence and social competencies in young people is not only linked to long term occupational and life success, but is also associated with the prevention of substance abuse, violence and suicide.

Resilience depends largely on a sense of connectedness, belonging to and empathy with others. Belonging implies being part of a group, which in turn requires the development of moral actions such as honesty, altruism and caring. Research indicates that the factors that promote resilience in young people include:

- > Family connectedness
- > Peer connectedness
- > School connectedness

A sense of connectedness to school can be the most significant protective factor. The School aims to enhance belonging and self-worth (connectedness) by:

- > Building caring relationships - offering support, compassion and trust
- > Setting high and achievable expectations - offering respect, guidance, affirmation and acknowledgement, building on the strengths of each boy
- > Providing opportunities for participation and contribution - responsibilities, decision-making opportunities, building ownership, interaction and fun.

The School currently runs a number of formal and informal programmes, interventions and activities that contribute to this sense of connectiveness and the positive pastoral care of our boys. In reflecting beyond the formal 'Life Skills Programme', a number of the other major initiatives include:

- > Peer Support Programme
- > Discipline system based on 'Stages of Discipline' and 'Rights and Responsibilities'
- > Primary Camps
- > Year 7 Swap Day
- > Year 7 Field Studies Camp
- > Year 9 Pine Bluff
- > Year 10 Conference
- > Year 11 Conference
- > Sport and Co-curricular Activities
- > Service Week
- > PD/H/PE Curriculum
- > Christian Studies Curriculum
- > House Chapel
- > Career Education Programme
- > Individual Housemaster and Middle School Housemaster Interviews
- > Pastoral Care Week
- > Year 8 'Brain Day'
- > Year 7 'Head Master' Survey
- > Gatehouse Survey (Year 8 & 9)



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- > Year 11 Well-Being Survey
- > School Counselling Service (TESS)
- > Peer Mediation Programme (Primary and Secondary)
- > Primary 'Buddy' Programme
- > Year 6 Anti-Bullying Programme
- > Year 12 Interviews with the Head Master
- > 'E-Care' and Pastoral Care Resource Web Site
- > Parenting Programmes
- > Parent Information Evenings (Pre-K to 12)
- > Primary Parent Morning Teas (Raising Boys – Conversations with the Counsellors)

Through student-centred learning models, the Life Skills Programme aims to foster a supportive and connective environment which encourages students to learn from their experiences and the experiences of others. The Programme exposes students to real life situations and issues, developing important inter-personal and intra-personal emotional, cognitive and behavioural skills.

The central challenge for the Life Skills Programme is to achieve an effective balance between informal support on the one hand and teaching appropriate skills on the other. Because this balance will gradually change as students reach different stages of development, the Life Skills Programme is flexible in nature, changing and adapting constantly. Generally, the Life Skills Programme moves gradually from being Tutor directed at the early stages and for younger year groups, to participant directed as students develop within and across year levels.

Tutor group and Life Skills sessions are not formal lessons though they play a vitally important role in students' all-round development. It is their informality that allows for the openness and strength of the relations between Tutors and students. The Life Skills model is one that seeks to promote core skills associated with developing resilience in a social and emotional well-being context. The sessions provide opportunities for students to interact and develop these skills. That is, they promote integration and development of understanding, values clarification and skill development - especially in areas associated with fostering resilience.

A number of schools are now adopting positive psychology interventions. Positive psychology is a relatively new branch of psychology that seeks to scientifically evaluate positive emotions (such as joy, optimism and contentment) as well as strengths and virtues and to understand how these aspects can help individuals and communities thrive and flourish. Positive psychology is intended to complement, not replace, previous psychological approaches. When reviewing the literature and research attached to this new area, we have been pleased to note that our Life Skills programme has been addressing and reinforcing the central concepts of positive psychology, including social connectedness, engagement, meaning and gratitude, since its inception many years ago and we will continue to ensure we update and review our programmes to best meet the needs of our boys.