

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Building Resilience for Back to School and Beyond

Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada's new Zen Garden App and Resiliency Quiz helps teens handle life's ups and downs

TORONTO, September 2022 - Back to School is long known to be an especially stressful time of transition for teens. And this year, in light of living through the pandemic, teen worries about lagging academically or reconnecting with friends may be heightened even more as they head back to class. Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada (SMSKPC), a national charity dedicated to helping children and teens become more resilient, has developed two new interactive evidence-based resilience tools to help teens aged 13-17 build the mental strength to handle these stressors and any other curves that life throws.

"Our new **Zen Garden App** and **Resiliency Quiz** deliver proven psychology-based strategies and resources to help teens learn about and deal with stress, and build their resilience. This will help them to develop a solid foundation of mental health before problems or issues begin," says Anne Lovegrove, President and Executive Director of Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada.

Co-created with youth across the country, the Zen Garden App and Resiliency Quiz complement SMSKPC's vast range of evidence and psychology-based programs, tools, and resources designed to help children and teens thrive. Users explore the Zen Garden App by interacting with guided questions, prompts, and stress management strategies and resources along the garden path. SMSKPC's Resiliency Quiz shows teens how resilient they are today, and gives them evidence-based strategies to adopt for tomorrow. SMSKPC's Zen Garden App was created in partnership with mindyourmind, an organization that develops interactive tools for youth. The resiliency quiz was developed with support from clinical psychologist and SMSKPC Trustee Dr. Diana Brecher. Both were developed with support from RBC Foundation in collaboration with RBC Future Launch.

This September, SMSKPC is launching a social media campaign with teen influencers to help raise widespread awareness of its Zen Garden App and Resiliency Quiz to students across the country.

The Zen Garden App and Resiliency Quiz can be downloaded @ www.strongmindstrongkids.org

Back to School Zen for Parents and Caregivers

According to Dr. Robin Alter, a child psychologist and SMSKPC Board of Trustee who consulted to ensure the integrity of the Zen Garden App content, parents and caregivers can play a key role in helping to alleviate Back to School anxiety in their children by adopting some of the app's stress-reducing strategies to manage this transition themselves.

"Children feed off our energy and model our behaviours," says Dr. Alter. "So if parents and caregivers can manage their own anxieties around this time, not only will they set a great example for their teen, they'll be healthier and more resilient to tackle anything that comes."

Taking strategies from SMSKPC's Zen Garden App and Resiliency Quiz, Dr. Alter shares **Five Tips for Parents and Caregivers to find their Back to School Zen:**

Forgive Yourself: Letting go of the past and offering yourself forgiveness can help boost your feelings of wellness and improve your self-image. Numerous studies have demonstrated that when people practice self-forgiveness, they experience lower levels of depression and anxiety.

Share your Stress: Share your stress with a friend, partner, spouse, or other parent. Talking about your stress makes it more manageable and you may find some great resilience advice and inspiration. Journaling about your stressors can also lessen the power they hold.

Create a Joy Kit: Joy kits are like coping kits, designed to be used when your spirit or mood needs an uplift. Collect photos, music, scents, letters, and/or any reminders of things that have brought you joy in the past and can serve as reminders that the future awaits with further joys.

Reframe the meaning of Mistake: Form a new understanding that Mistakes = Means I Start To Acquire Knowledge, Experience, and Skills. Build resilience by not letting parenting setbacks or unfortunate events affect other unrelated areas of your life. For instance, say “I’m still learning” rather than “I’m no good at anything.” This will also help you have empathy for your children who are constantly facing the challenge of being a beginner.

Set Achievable Goals: Set some achievable parenting goals for yourself for the Back to School period (or even the whole year) and stick to them. Studies show goal setting restructures the brain to make it more effective. And then celebrate in some small way when you achieve them. And if you should fall short, then go back to tip #1– Forgive yourself!

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About Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada: Strong Minds Strong Kids, Psychology Canada (a new brand from The Psychology Foundation of Canada) is a registered charity with a mission to nurture resilience in children by providing infants, children, and youth with the psychological well-being to thrive emotionally. A small, national staff, along with support from many volunteers, make it possible to develop and deliver several psychology-based proven programs and resources to local communities across Canada. The organization is led by a volunteer board of prominent psychologists, and business and community leaders.

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