

Women Strong: Fostering a Resilient Spirit Through Sport

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Resilience can be defined as “the combination of skills and positive attributes that people gain from their life experiences and relationships. These attributes help them solve problems, cope with challenges, bounce back from disappointments” and engage in new opportunities (Carney, 2015, p. 137).

Research on girls’ education and their personal experiences emphasizes that developing multiple forms of resilience is an essential aspect of positive development in girls. At Branksome Hall, our students are encouraged to develop resilience while taking healthy risks. We endeavour to teach them to see risk and adversity as positive forces in their lives. Developing resilience also requires teaching girls to engage in “productive struggles” — a mindset that persists rather than resists.

Fostering Resilience

Yet, questions remain on how to best foster these skills within our students so that they are empowered to face the challenges they will encounter as students, as well as later in life. Resilience in girls connects to a variety of abilities such as positive decision-making, self-encouragement, self-esteem, commitment and knowledge about the consequences of an action.

Recent research from the Resilience Research Centre in Halifax, Nova Scotia, has found that activities such as sport and music can be critical in helping students with resilience and, furthermore, aids in the development of a network, motivation, and an outlet that serves youth through celebratory and challenging times.

Resilience at Branksome Hall

The conversation about how to foster resilience is not a one-time event, but an on-going commitment. Within our school, there are opportunities for these conversations to take place in many spaces, such as Girls’ Circles, with coaches, and in Advisor. There are also several tools available to help students and parents begin conversations about resilience, both in sport and daily activity. Branksome Hall’s Learning Commons on the Portal contains many useful resources, such as athletes’ stories, handbooks and more.

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