

Transcript: Meet Rick

Hi there and welcome to the Community Resilience section of our Thriving in the Classroom toolkit.

My name is Dr. Rick Ezekiel and I'm the director of Equitable Learning, Health and Wellness at Centennial College, and background training in applied psychology and developmental cognitive neuroscience. And I do work in sort of interdisciplinary developmental sciences.

We're excited that you've joined us in the toolkit, and particularly the Community Resilience section of the toolkit.

When we talk about the idea of resilience, we know that resilience relies upon students, individuals, humans having supportive connections, relationships and communities that support their individual ability to be resilient in the face of stress or in the face of adversity. This is especially important for students who might have different developmental vulnerabilities, including childhood adversity, or for students who might be navigating additional barriers in our institutions or in our communities more broadly, including disability-related barriers, barriers associated with discrimination, minority stress impacting different minority communities. And that's what this section of our toolkit is all about. It's talking about how we can see our classroom as a supportive community that enhances individual students' ability to be resilient.

Within this section, we'll explore strategies that can support sense of belonging within the classroom, where students feel like they can connect with their peers, where they feel like they can connect with their professor, yourself, in ways that are supportive and that really meet that human need for connection and relationship, and that are also empathetic and understanding of the unique circumstances that a student might be facing.

We'll also explore a lot of concepts related to marginalization or barriers that might prevent students from feeling included or forming a sense of belonging within the classroom or within our broader institutional community. So these include explorations of different types of identity factors that might drive marginalization, whether students are experiencing racism or experiencing homophobia, transphobia, disability related barriers, et cetera, et cetera, while navigating the classroom environment. All of these really impact whether students will experience our community within the classroom as a supportive one.

The other thing we always need to be mindful of is that students bring a lot of resilience with them into the classroom, and in many instances, their communities themselves are sources of resilience. I think particularly, Indigenous communities and the sense of collectivist values and connection to community, to land, to language, to culture. So those are really significant sources of community resilience. And there's also been lots of research done in racialized communities, in queer communities, that shows when students and individuals have an opportunity to connect with individuals who share identity, who share experiences that can be a really great source of collective meaning-making. And when students can access those communities or can bring their identities and experiences with them into the classroom, that's another tool that we can use to really ensure that students can form that sense of belonging to feel seen, to feel heard, to bring their whole humanness into the classroom.

So I wish you well in exploring the resources within this section and thank you for your interest and stay well and thanks for all the work that you're doing to support student resilience.