



## Talking Resilience with Allan Sparkes activity sheet

Every morning we are born again. What we do today is what matters most. Buddha

There is no doubt that the pandemic has significantly disrupted individuals and families in Australia. From drastic changes of home-schooling and working from home, to cancelled holidays and sudden loneliness this crisis has certainly caused and exacerbated a whole range of mental health challenges.

Tom Williams sat down with former Deputy Commissioner of the Mental Health Commission, Allan Sparkes, to discuss how to build resilience as we return to normal life. Allan openly chats about his experience with mental illness and shares his proactive approach to coping with the crisis through his life philosophy – the Six Foundation Stones:

1. **Sleep:** Resting your mind and body, allows for clarity and energy throughout the day. Quality sleep enhances physical and psychological health.
2. **Nutrition:** Food is fuel for the body. A healthy diet, coupled with movement and exercise can help reduce your risk of health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and some types of cancers.
3. **Movement:** Movement allows for the blood to flow. This does not need to be intense exercise, simply a walk will allow for endorphins to be released that trigger positivity within the body.
4. **Diaphragmatic breathing:** A cyclical style of breathing where you use the diaphragm to breathe instead of your chest. This type of breathing overcomes our fight or flight instincts and calms the nervous systems to enhance positivity.
5. **Using technology for positive purpose:** Technology is amazing and has given us a range of wonderful tools that can help us improve our wellbeing. We can use technology to track our heart rate or food intake to help us become healthier individuals.
6. **Social connection:** Positive engagement with friends and family is linked with lower rates of anxiety and depression. So, with restrictions easing, make sure to book in some quality time with your loved ones.

Allan encourages families and individuals to design their own unique list of foundation stones that resonate with their personal needs. Think about what's important to you and what set of foundational requirements you need to feel your very best.

We all experience mental strain at some point within our lives and unfortunately a crisis is inevitable. By taking some time out to reflect on the things that make you feel your most resilient you'll be able to design your very own cheat sheet to help pick yourself up when times get tough.