



MEDIA RELEASE

ONE GOOD FRIEND CAN MAKE TEENS MORE RESILIENT

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A national study of 16-17 year-olds has found that having even one good friend can make all the difference when it comes to adolescents' resilience.

Average resilience scores were 4 points higher for young people who had at least one good friend, compared to those who were friendless, according to the *Growing Up In Australia* Longitudinal Study of Australian Children.

Australian Institute of Family Studies Director, Anne Hollonds said the study, which asked adolescents to rate their own resilience, highlights the vulnerability of those who do not have a close friend.

"Typically, 16-17 year-olds want more autonomy from their parents and increasingly turn to their friends for advice and support," she said.

"Resilience really declines among young people without a friend that they feel they can trust to talk to about any difficulties they may be facing.

"Even the harmful experience of being bullied is not as potentially damaging to adolescents' resilience, as the experience of not having a close friend to confide in.

"The average resilience scores of those who had been the victim of bullying in the previous 12 months were almost 2 points lower, than for those who had not been bullied. However, not having a single close friend had twice that impact.

"Not having had a very close relationship with one or both parents during early and mid-adolescence also was associated with lower resilience rates among 16-17 year-olds by 3 points."

Institute Researcher Dr Tracy Evans-Whipp said that on average girls reported lower levels of resilience than boys, in line with higher rates of mental health issues among girls.

"For example, 51 per cent of boys but only 37 per cent of girls said they were not easily discouraged by failure," she said.

"While it is possible that when answering the survey questions boys may be more likely to want to appear strong in the face of stress than girls, other studies have also shown significantly higher levels of resilience in boys.

"Personality traits also shape how well young people think they cope with stressful life events. The findings confirm previous research showing that the main elements of resilience are a higher level of self-control and motivation towards accomplishments; higher levels of positive emotions and social engagement; and a higher level of emotional stability.

"A strong sense of belonging at school was linked to greater resilience. This indicates that the school environment, including good relationships with teachers, can provide an important bolster for resilience for all adolescents and especially those from unstable families and other young people who may be at risk of lower resilience."

To access a copy of the AIFS' *Growing Up in Australia* Longitudinal Study of Australian Children 2018 Annual Statistical Report [Adolescents resilience](#).

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