

Before implementing UPRIGHT at school

1. Why increase resilience in adolescents?



According to the **World Health Organisation (WHO)**, adolescence ranges between the ages of 10 and 19. During this period, many biological, psychological and social changes take place. Facing these changes is associated with a risk of mental disorders, such as depression or anxiety. In fact, 50% of adult mental disorders begin during adolescence but intervening at this early stage might change adolescents' future.

Life experiences and the quality of social relationships greatly influence the mental health and wellbeing of adolescents. It is important to nurture their social resources, such as good family connections, unconditional support from at least one adult and peer support, to protect their mental wellbeing.

Negative experiences and relationships, such as bullying, lack of peer acceptance or inadequate support from parents and teachers, lead to poor

mental health and wellbeing. Recurrent or sustained stress leads to emotional and physiological strain, which results in frequent health complaints.

Resilience skills are key assets for adolescents, allowing them to adapt positively to changes and deal with concerns associated with growing up in a complex environment.

Resilience is the ability of an individual or community to cope with, adapt to and recover quickly from stress and shocks caused by adversity. In early studies of resilience, it has been considered a fixed personality trait because some people are naturally very strong and thrive in the face of adversity. However, it is now accepted that resilience can be learned as it is composed of trainable skills. Resilience develops best if the individual has a support network, receives support from friends, family, teachers and the whole community. **Psychoeducational programmes** such as **UPRIGHT** provide the right conditions to increase the resilience of individuals and communities.



Resilience is a key component of mental wellbeing. Feeling mentally well (maintaining mental wellbeing) means not just the absence of mental illness but also fulfilling a range of high-level personal needs. The WHO defines mental wellbeing as "a state in which each individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community".

High levels of resilience and wellbeing prevent mental disorders or reduce their severity. The level of wellbeing changes within a continuum, from low to high, depending on our personality, where we are and what happens to us. If we focus on resilience under difficult circumstances it will be easier to move quickly and effectively towards higher levels of wellbeing. To do this, we need to concentrate on the key skills necessary to cope with problems and difficulties, maintain positive interpersonal relationships and set realistic goals. These achievements have an impact on the self-regulation ability of adolescents, allowing them to act appropriately and contribute meaningfully to everyday life.

2. What is UPRIGHT?



UPRIGHT is a scientifically tested psychoeducational resilience-based intervention based in schools, designed to promote the mental wellbeing and prevent mental disorders of adolescents. It uses a whole-school approach, involving adolescents, their families and the entire school community. For a short presentation of UPRIGHT visit <https://youtu.be/vEqFLWFp8qk>

The **UPRIGHT** intervention has its roots in a scientific research project. In this project, a multidisciplinary team of European mental health and wellbeing experts (psychologists, educational psychologists and psychiatrists) from seven European institutions in Spain, Italy, Poland, Norway, Denmark and Iceland, have worked together to develop an effective intervention—now named UPRIGHT intervention—to increase individual and collective resilience of 12–14-year-old adolescents.



The **UPRIGHT** scientific project lasted 4 years (2018–2021) and was funded by the European Union Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement n° 754919). The **UPRIGHT programme** has scientifically demonstrated its effectiveness and cost-effectiveness in promoting resilience. Overall, 39 schools from five countries participated in the evaluation. The research was designed as a controlled, randomized trial; the results obtained in schools participating in the UPRIGHT intervention were compared with those following their usual course (control schools, not involved in UPRIGHT).

UPRIGHT resilience-based programme

The **UPRIGHT** theoretical model is based on an extensive review of the literature on resilience. It goes beyond the state of the art, using the results of previous resilience interventions to improve comprehensively the theoretical content, its assimilation and the implementation procedures in the schools.

The **UPRIGHT model of resilience consists of 4 components and 18 skills**. Acquiring and practicing these skills increases the level of resilience of the individual and the community.

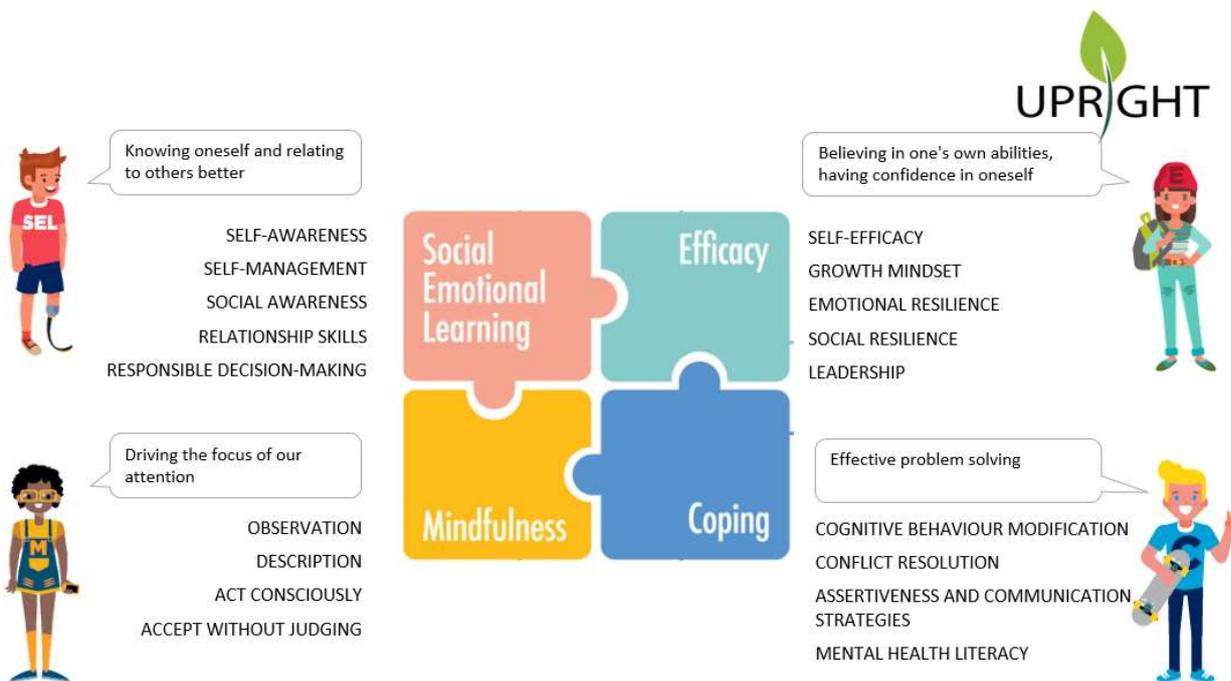


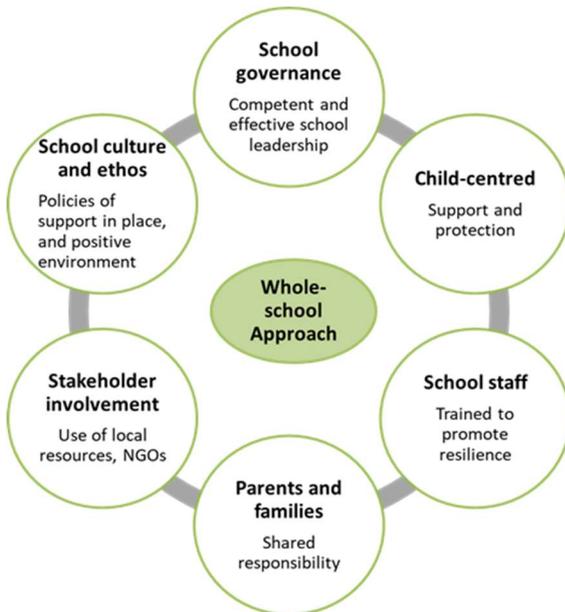
Figure 1. UPRIGHT resilience model including 4 main competences and 18 skills.

Two complementary **UPRIGHT programmes** convey these components and skills to participants. The programme "WELLBEING FOR US" promotes personal resilience. The second programme, "WELLBEING FOR ALL", promotes social resilience and a culture of mental wellbeing at school.



3. How is UPRIGHT delivered?

UPRIGHT takes a whole-school approach to promote resilience and a culture of wellbeing. A "whole-school approach" uses the internal (i.e., school staff, school buildings, school funding) and external (school contacts, community services, other departments, families) resources



to create a culture of wellbeing in the school. This approach takes an ecological point of view; the school becomes a place that offers education to the school community (i.e., school staff, students and families) and asks the external institutions aligned with mental health promotion to contribute to the creation of mental health culture in schools.

All members of the school community (principals, middle management, teaching and non-teaching staff, students, parents and families) feel responsible and play an active role in promoting the goal. To achieve this goal together, the individuals involved require specific training or specific resources. To succeed, the needs of students, staff and the wider community must be met.

Figure 2. Actors involved in the whole-school approach and their activities to promote resilience and culture of wellbeing.

In UPRIGHT, everyone in the school community has an active role to play:

- **Teachers** are introduced to the UPRIGHT programmes and receive training to carry out the intervention. They become familiar with the skills of the programme and present them to the students.
- The **school board** works to create a culture of wellbeing in the school by promoting rules, norms and resources that increase a sense of belonging, positive interactions among school personnel, plural participation in the decision-making process and social inclusion.
- **Community members** visit the school to collaborate in activities that promote wellbeing.
- **Families** participate in the intervention and are committed to keep it alive at home, take part in school activities and serve as role models for their children.
- **School policies and organisational culture** promote the importance of caring for mental health and contributing to wellbeing.



4. What are the strengths of UPRIGHT?

- **UPRIGHT programme in numbers:**
 - ✚ 17 schools in Europe (Spain, Italy, Poland, Denmark and Iceland) implemented UPRIGHT from 2018 to 2021; 22 served as controls
 - ✚ 2,845 students took part in the programme
 - ✚ 2,430 families participated in the programme
 - ✚ 396 teachers were trained to teach the programme
- The UPRIGHT programme proved to be effective in increasing resilience.
- UPRIGHT experts and final end-users (students, families and teachers) co-created the UPRIGHT programme.
- The programme is sensitive to regional particularities.
- The skills learned in UPRIGHT are considered very useful by students, teachers and families.
- It is available in seven languages: English, Spanish, Basque, Italian, Polish, Danish and Icelandic.
- It is free!

Adolescents say: "It helps to know what to do in difficult moments".

Teachers say: "Resilience is very needed these days. Many students do not know how to deal with adversity".

Families say: "The mental health of adolescents is taken into account".

