



# Why Try

How do you **boost achievement** from the  
**front row to the back row?**



***“The culture has transformed** from pessimism to optimism, from stuck and decaying to flowing peacefully, from resistance to acceptance, and from no hope to a renewed feeling of power and new ideas.”*

*-Lyndsay Morris, School Counselor, Washington*



## **What is WhyTry?**

The WhyTry Program was created to provide simple, hands-on solutions for dropout prevention, violence prevention, truancy reduction, and increased academic success.

The idea is straightforward: Teach social and emotional principles to youth in a way they can understand and remember. WhyTry is based on sound empirical principles, including solution-focused brief therapy, social and emotional intelligence, and multi-sensory learning.

The WhyTry curriculum utilizes a series of ten visual analogies that teach important life skills (e.g., decisions have consequences; dealing with peer pressure; obeying laws and rules; plugging in to support systems).

The visual analogies are reinforced through creative use of music, hands-on activities, and multimedia. WhyTry curriculum engages all major learning styles (visual, auditory, and body-kinesthetic).

WhyTry programs are generally grant-funded through local community grants and federal funds like Title 1, Title 4, and Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. WhyTry is often used for RTI and PBIS.



## **Our Mission:**

To help people achieve opportunity, freedom, and self-respect using education and interventions that motivate and create positive change. We offer hope and an answer to the question “Why Try in life?”

To achieve its mission, WhyTry counts on the support of professionals who share our commitment to helping youth reach their potential. The key to the WhyTry program’s success in changing lives is the power in the relationship between someone who cares and a youth who needs help.

## **Who uses WhyTry?**

WhyTry is currently at work in over 16,000 organizations in all 50 of the United States, as well as Canada, the UK, and Australia. WhyTry is used one-on-one and in groups at K–12 schools, alternative education programs, mental health organizations, and correctional facilities.

WhyTry programs are led by thousands of professionals around the world:

- Teachers
- Administrators
- Special ed instructors
- School counselors
- School psychologists
- Social workers
- Mental health professionals
- Probation officers
- Corrections staff
- After-school workers

## You can build resilience in K-12 youth by focusing on “3 R’s.”



Relationship  
+ Relevance  
Resilience

There are three keys that can help teachers and administrators boost achievement across the board, from the attentive, prepared student in the front row of every class to the struggling student in the back row without a paper or pen. These three keys are the NEW “3 R’s” to student success.

While reading, writing, and arithmetic are still highly important, they won’t get students very far unless they understand how to achieve long-term success and balance.

**The first “R” is relationship.** We believe that the key to creating positive change in a child’s life doesn’t lie in interventions alone, but in the relationship you establish with the child. The WhyTry Program asserts that lasting change and motivation is directly linked to a supporting and trusting relationship between facilitator and student. The WhyTry Program utilizes several strategies that allow facilitators to show the student that s/he has value and worth as a human being and that the facilitator believes in them and their potential.

**The second “R” is relevance.** A student cannot internalize the concepts being taught unless s/he can see how these concepts translate into their everyday experience. The WhyTry Program uses a variety of multisensory learning tools to cater to students of every learning style and background. These include the use of hip-hop music, videos, stories, journaling, art, and activities to create a relevant classroom atmosphere. This same principle applies in a one-on-one or family intervention setting.

When you combine a positive and trusting relationship with relevance and direct application, you achieve **the third “R” and ultimate goal – resilience**. The idea is that when staff members are trained in a common language surrounding positive relationships, and when students are engaged in relevant, multisensory learning, resilience in all environments is the result. Students and staff learn that day-to-day challenges and adversity can actually be transformed into motivation to succeed in school and in life. This can mean increased engagement and academic performance in school, despite numerous moves and transitions; a decrease in social, emotional, and behavioral problems in school and at home; and an overall clearer roadmap for reaching goals and dreams in life. In fact, these desired results and many others are rooted in third-party research of the program.



# 1. Relationship



The key to creating change doesn't lie in interventions alone, but in the relationship you establish with students. One major barrier to facilitating a motivational and supportive relationship with students is the presence of a "one-up" relationship.

What is the "one-up" relationship? You may have observed in your own conversations and relationships that one person is often "one-up" on the other or predominantly in control. For example, have you ever had a conversation with a teacher, a mentor, or someone who is an expert at a subject that you are just beginning to learn? When you discuss that subject, you feel that they have the advantage because of their expertise and knowledge, whereas you are just beginning to learn the basics. They are "one-up" on you and are often in control of the conversation.

Students often find themselves "one-down" in relationships with adults who have control in their lives. Often, when a student sees an

adult as "one-up" (or in control) of the relationship, then they feel unimportant, or that what they want or think doesn't matter. Students feel that their ability to act for themselves is taken away. As a result, they have little motivation to make a change and are less likely to establish a trusting relationship with that person.

When you as a counselor, teacher or therapist surrender the "one-up" relationship, you are showing to students that they have great value and worth as human beings. You show them that what they think is important. You give up the role of the authority figure and share it with students. You help them to see that they are the authority on themselves. You let them know that you believe in them and their potential. You demonstrate that you merely want to help them, but ultimately they are in control of their own lives. Remember the goal here is not solely to teach but to tap into motivation. We have found that the most effective thing you can do to motivate students and build a trusting relationship is to surrender the "one-up."

## 10 Strategies to Surrender the One-Up in the Classroom:

### 1. "I know your name."

Greet each student as they enter or leave your class by name. Shake their hand or give them a "high-five."

This is a great way to make each student feel important when they are called and recognized by name. It really sends a message that they are important to you and that you care about them.

## **2. They are all A and B students.**

Make a comment like, "All I see in this class are A and B students," and then treat them accordingly until they prove otherwise.

This is kind of like a self-fulfilling prophecy. Often when we give them expectations and treat them accordingly, they rise to the occasion. Sometimes students are labeled negatively so often that they feel like they are already failing before the semester begins. It can be refreshing to a student to be labeled in a positive way.

## **3. Show and tell**

Share personal stories and information about yourself, so that students can get to know and feel that you are approachable.

When you share information about yourself, you are inviting them into your world. This often makes it easier for them to let you into their world.

## **4. Have I got something for you!**

Give them a personal token or gift. It can be a positive quote or an object that serves as a reminder of some idea that you have been teaching them.

This can be a very simple way to give them a symbolic reminder that you value and care about them. It can also be a great way to reinforce something that you have taught them or would like to emphasize.

## **5. Random act of service**

Perform a random act of service or appreciation for a student with an encouraging note to pay it forward.

This can be an excellent way to change a student's negative attitude towards the class and can help create a more caring and nurturing environment. One of the greatest ways to increase self-esteem is to serve or express appreciation to another person. This is true whether they are the recipient or the giver of the service.

## **6. You are the teacher and I am the student**

Give assignments or projects where the student can be the expert or teacher. Give them the opportunity to instruct you and the other students in the class.

This is a great way to help students leave their comfort zone, improve social skills, build leadership skills, and gain self-confidence. Teaching something can be one of the best ways to learn and retain difficult concepts and information.

### **7. You give the grade**

Allow students the opportunity on an assignment to grade themselves. You may want to tell them what criteria you would use for grading them, but ultimately let them decide.

This sends a message to students that you trust and value their judgment. We have found that when we do this, often students will be more fair in their judgment than if you were grading them yourself.

### **8. You make the call**

Give students several options on a project or assignment and allow them to choose which one they would like to do.

Students are so used to being told what to do. When you give them the freedom to choose their assignment, this often empowers and motivates them to put forth a greater effort.

### **9. Come together**

Create a class competition against another class. Instead of competing against each other, this allows the students to work together with a common goal. Create a reward for the winning class.

This can be a great way to get students to work together, support each other, and create class unity. There seems to be more energy and focus when there is a shared purpose among the group of students. Even a very simple reward in this case can serve as a great motivator.

### **10. Dress it up**

As the instructor or teacher, at some point or for a special lesson, dress up for the class.

Wear a tuxedo, a costume, a suit, a dress, or some formal or different attire that shows that this class is important and worth the extra effort on your part. This can also be a great way to add variety to a lesson and help to keep students' attention.

## 2. Relevance



Think back on that college algebra class that we all had to take to graduate. Did you enjoy it? If you're answering yes, you were probably a math major... or just a cut above the rest of us. Many of us just survived college math. Perhaps we couldn't understand the teacher, couldn't make sense of the subject, or didn't like math in the first place. Quite likely, the majority of us simply couldn't relate to it. We couldn't see how college algebra had any application in our life whatsoever.

Kids in our classrooms often feel the same way about a broad range of subjects. Maybe it would have made a difference to us if our college math teacher explained how the building we were learning in, the desks we were sitting at, and the chairs we were sitting in, were all created using math.

If we want our students to value their education and stay engaged with whatever subject we're teaching, we've got to keep it relevant. We've got to apply it to the lives they're leading today, which often means stepping away from the chalkboard and entering their world. Here are some ideas for getting started:

**1. Use Video and other Multimedia.** Sites like YouTube can be a great resource to engage students. James Sanders, a middle school history teacher at KIPP San Francisco Bay Academy, says YouTube has become the most useful tool for engaging his students. He recently wrote in the official YouTube blog: "I've used YouTube in my classroom in countless different ways. I use videos to spark classroom discussions, increase instructional time by assigning videos as homework, and create playlists for each lesson so students can dive deeper into specific areas that interest them. I also found countless educational videos on YouTube that energize and excite students about a number of topics..."

For a list of recommended videos to teach specific social-emotional concepts, visit [www.whytry.org/video](http://www.whytry.org/video).

**2. Use Music.** Nursery rhymes are out, and some new sounds, like the ever-growing genre of hip-hop, are in. Gavin Sheppard is the founder of the "Remix Project," a program that helps troubled youth develop their creative gifts. In a recent interview with the TED organization, Sheppard said, "Hip-hop [music] can be that gift, that Trojan Horse, that gives you the ability to get past the defenses [youth] put up. Once you've gotten past that, and you give them that gift and they're engaged, that's when you can start to hit them with life skills. That means helping them develop everything

from business etiquette to refining the natural raw talents they have. Whether it's in graphic design — maybe they are really cool graffiti artists. Or maybe it's as a music producer or an engineer, or something else.”

Finding it difficult to sift through the hundreds of songs that give off negative messages for a few inspiring tunes? Your best source is the youth themselves. After teaching them the motivational principles found in the WhyTry curriculum, have them share the songs that motivate them or remind them of these principles. Have them explain why. They'll remember your lesson every time they listen to that song.

The WhyTry Program has teamed up with some talented music artists to create an inspiring mix of hip-hop and other genres. To learn more, visit [www.whytry.org](http://www.whytry.org), click on “Resources,” then select “Music Resources.”

**4. Cater to Every Learning Style.** The WhyTry Program uses a multisensory approach to helping students grasp important concepts related to social-emotional education. This includes the use of video and music, as mentioned above, along with a range of activities, journaling, art projects, and other visual components. To learn more, visit [www.whytry.org](http://www.whytry.org) or contact us at (866) 949-8791.



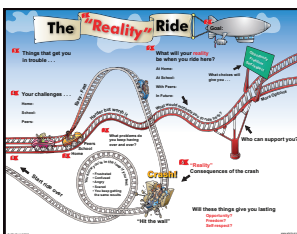
### 3. Resilience

When you combine a positive and trusting relationship with relevance and direct application, you achieve **the third “R” and ultimate goal – resilience**. The idea is that when staff members are trained in a common language surrounding positive relationships, and when students are engaged in relevant, multisensory learning, resilience in all environments is the result. Students and staff learn that day-to-day challenges and adversity can actually be transformed into motivation to succeed in school and in life. This can mean increased engagement and academic performance in school, despite numerous moves and transitions; a decrease in social, emotional, and behavioral problems in school and at home; and an overall clearer roadmap for reaching goals and dreams in life. In fact, these desired results and many others are rooted in third-party research of the program.

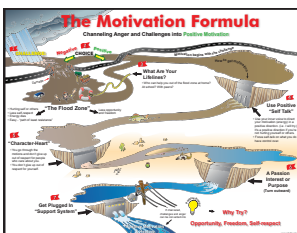
Resilience is the ability to bounce back when you have every reason to shut down -- but you fight on! Resilient people have both tapped and untapped reserves, enabling them to overcome and thrive as they face the setbacks, challenges, and fears of daily life. This vital skill can be accessed by every student in our classrooms.

Little has been done to standardize resilience education in schools, but the WhyTry Program can provide a stabilizing force that can help students of all learning styles successfully navigate childhood and become successful, functional adults. The program has been proven to help children view their problems differently and improve academically in all areas.

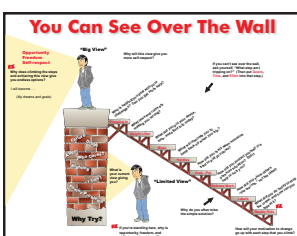
The WhyTry Program helps students see the “big picture” – using problems as fuel and viewing them as short-term obstacles. The following are examples of WhyTry units that shape students’ view of the world and the future, enabling them to improve academically and better cope with the unique challenges of growing up in a military family.



- **The Reality Ride:** This picture of a rollercoaster uses a steadily inclining track juxtaposed against a “fast-easy” loop. It demonstrates that while it may take time and effort to make positive choices and very little effort to make negative ones, taking the “harder but worth it track” helps us reach our goals and achieve opportunity, freedom, and self-respect in the long run.

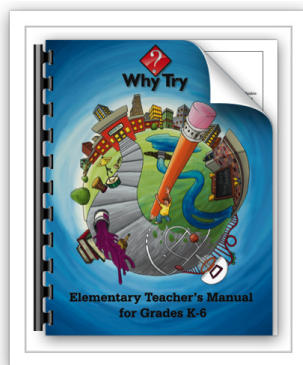


- **The Motivation Formula:** This picture of a river flowing through dams teaches that every challenge comes with a choice: Do I channel my challenge in a negative direction and place myself in a dead-end, metaphorical “flood zone”? Or do I channel my challenge in a positive direction and use a series of motivational tools to give myself control over my life and my future?

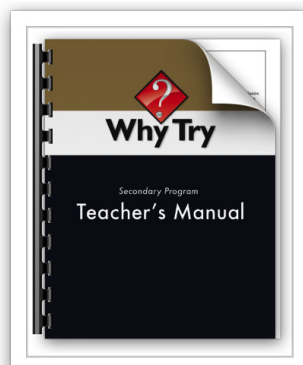


- **Seeing Over The Wall:** The wall in this picture represents the everyday obstacles that military kids are facing – anxiety, uncertainty, academic struggles, difficulty making friends, and others. The stairs leading to the top of the wall show that by living by a certain set of principles, a person will be able to view today’s problems with a “big picture” in mind – one that clearly recognizes goals, dreams, and opportunities in the future – not just a future full of the same challenges and problems.

# WhyTry Program Materials



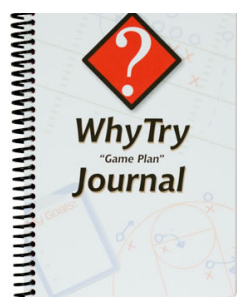
**The WhyTry Elementary Curriculum Set** provides you with everything you need to teach WhyTry to elementary students. The complete set includes a teacher's manual, WhyTry Music CD, WhyTry Poster Set, and the WhyTry PowerPoint, all geared toward the teaching needs of a younger audience.



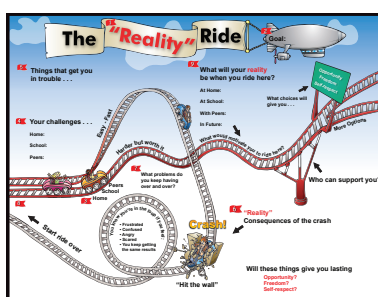
**The WhyTry Secondary Curriculum Set** provides you with everything you need to teach WhyTry to secondary age students. The complete set includes a teacher's manual, WhyTry Music CD, WhyTry Poster Set, and the WhyTry PowerPoint, all geared toward the teaching needs of a middle to secondary audience.



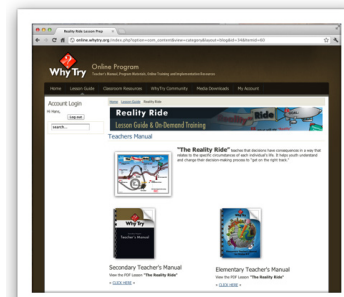
**The WhyTry Learning Activity Expansion Pack** includes over 150 learning activities for students K-12. Includes diagrams, picture illustrations, and online resources to make it as simple as possible for you to implement the WhyTry learning activities with your youth.



**The WhyTry Student Journal** is a book of activities and personal reflections for use by youth going through the WhyTry Program. The journals provide students with something tangible from their WhyTry experience that they can refer back to again and again.



**The WhyTry Poster Set** contains an 18" x 24" copy of each visual analogy contained in the curriculum sets. Each poster has been beautifully printed and sprayed with a special water-resistant laminate coating.



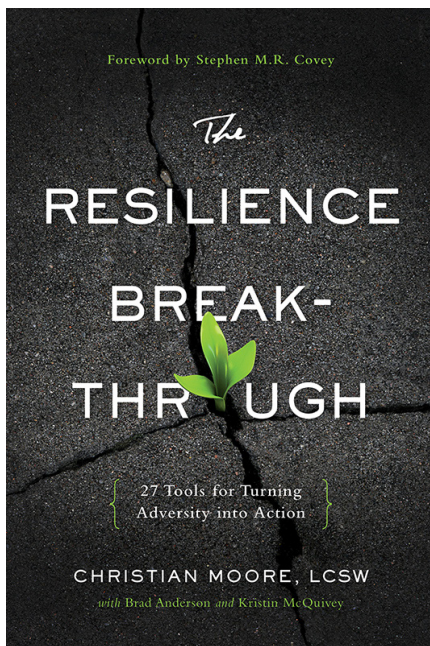
**The WhyTry Online Curriculum** provides you with instant access to all of WhyTry's favorite products, including journals, elementary and secondary curriculum materials, learning activities, video tutorials, music downloads, access to the WhyTry Professional Learning Community, and other online resources.

To order these products or see the other items in the WhyTry catalog, visit [whytry.org/products](http://whytry.org/products).

# The Resilience Breakthrough:



## 27 Tools for Turning Adversity into Action



### A Guide to Resilience: How to Bounce Back from Life's Inevitable Problems

In *The Resilience Breakthrough*, WhyTry Founder Christian Moore delivers a primer on how you can become more resilient in a world of instability and narrowing opportunity, whether you're facing financial troubles, health setbacks, challenges on the job, or any other problem. We can *all* have our own resilience breakthrough, and can each learn how to use adverse circumstances as potent fuel for overcoming life's hardships.

As he share engaging real-life stories and brutally honest analysis of his own experiences, Moore equips you with twenty-seven resilience-building tools that you can start using today -- in your personal life or in your organization.

**“There is not a topic of greater urgency for the future than resilience. And there is not an author more qualified to teach it than Christian Moore.”**

-Joseph Grenny, New York Times bestselling coauthor of *Crucial Conversations* and *Influencer: The New Science of Leading Change*

**Have your breakthrough today.**

**[www.whytry.org/book](http://www.whytry.org/book)**



# Try it Free

We appreciate the great work you do to serve youth in your area. As a special thank you for attending this workshop, WhyTry offers you a free sample lesson complete with a video demonstration, music, and experiential activities. On the back of this page, you'll see an image of The Reality Ride visual metaphor to use with the lesson. Access the entire lesson content online by downloading a free copy of this chapter of our Teacher's Manual at [whytry.org/overview](http://whytry.org/overview), or use the QR code at right.



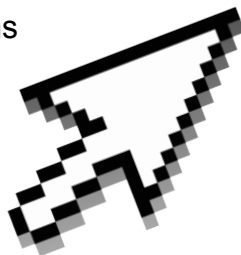
*"Since incorporating WhyTry, our graduation rate has tripled, our state scores on California Star Tests have gone up, our API scores – that's our annual index of performance – have gone up double digits in all four years. We had a 60-point gain this year. Part of it is because we have a great staff who really believe in our kids, and we have tools like WhyTry to motivate our kids and to help build resiliency in them and motivate them to have goals."*

**Regina Awtry, Principal, California**

## Try it today!

The WhyTry website also includes:

- Assessment tools
- Teacher helps
- Video and music resources
- Images of the visual metaphors
- Learning activities
- Reading suggestions
- Grant-writing tips



**www.whytry.org**

Try WhyTry Free

WhyTry In Your Setting

**How WhyTry Fits**

See how WhyTry fits in your setting

Whether you're a teacher, counselor, corrections professional, or youth mentor, the WhyTry Program has proven effective in your setting. See research, testimonials, and alignment with PTL, PBIS, and ASCA.

Video Resources

WhyTry Blog

WhyTry Trainings

WhyTry's multisensory approach has built resilience in millions of youth in schools worldwide.

Watch a brief introduction video to learn more.

Classroom Management

School Climate

Academic Success

**Academic Success**

Help students see the relevance in everyday education

"You give these kids... the tools to know and believe that they can be world changers. That no matter the situation, they can rise above and make the decision to become better than their circumstances." -Allishia Edmonds, ONE by ONE Outreach Coordinator

Read More

Bullying Prevention

Dropout Prevention



