

A21 Academic



Athletic Academy

EMOTIONAL AGILITY A PREDICTOR OF FUTURE SUCCESS

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The landscape of education is vastly changing. In my 20 years of experience in teaching and administrating in an elementary school system, I have been a witness to the increase of curricular expectations placed on students coupled with the rapid decrease in internal motivation, drive, or desire by students to learn. Why is this happening? What can we do to change this movement? The answer lies in *emotional agility*. Emotional agility is a predictor for future mental wellness, achievement and general happiness in life. In speaking with many educators and parents, children are encountering increasingly more emotional difficulties at home, socially, and at school. More students are showing signs of anxiety and depression at earlier ages

A21 Academic and Athletic Private Academy, in Windsor, Ontario is changing this trend. Designated as Canada's first Positive Education School by the Positive Education School's Association, A21 Academy has emotional wellness built into every aspect of the curriculum. A21 Academy has weekly leadership lessons founded on character development, understanding feelings, and how to make decisions based on personal strengths. Each student at A21 Academy takes the VIA character strengths assessment each year. The VIA Institute on Character is a global leader in the science and practice of character. Staff use this information to work with each student building on their strengths and tailoring their assignments and projects to what they do best. As a result, students feel good about who they are and what they do.

and they seemingly do not have the resources to solve their frustrations independently. What's more, this comes at a time where specialized supports for students in school, and in the community, are exceptionally low.

SUCCESS IS NOT FINAL, FAILURE IS
NOT FATAL: IT IS THE COURAGE TO
CONTINUE THAT COUNTS.

~Winston Churchill~

Currently, I work for A21 Academy. Certified as a Professional Executive Coach by the Institute of Professional Excellence in Coaching (accredited by the International Coaching Federation), my job is to work with the student body on how leadership is shaped by thoughts, emotions, experiences and perceptions (Energy Leadership). Essentially students learn that positivity, confidence, strength of character and authenticity ultimately lead to a form of personal and professional leadership that results in true happiness. The aim is to build resilience, strengthen collaboration, acceptance of others, and develop confidence and personal values such that they can handle whatever life offers to them. In addition to working with the student body, I coach individual students and parents who require further support. The staff at A21 Academy, has fully embraced Energy Leadership and use it in

conjunction with the VIA character assessment to support students in daily curriculum.

Teachers in any school can help students to develop their emotional agility. Dr. Susan David (2016), PH.D., the author of Wall Street Journal Best Seller “Emotional Agility,” offers four practical steps for helping a child go through, rather than around, a negative emotion and emerge ready to keep going — 1) **feel it**; 2) **show it**; 3) **label it**; and 4) **watch it go**. Children need the opportunity to experience real emotion. Often as parents/teachers, we try and shut down the emotions, save them from hurt, and get to the problem-solving too quickly. Children need to be able to label or verbally state their feelings regardless of what they are. Feelings aren’t good or bad. They are not meant to be judged. They just are. Children need to be taught to accept the feeling for what it is without judgment, anger, or shame and then be encouraged to watch the feeling go. When this happens, children see that emotions don’t last forever. Emotions can change like the weather. It validates a child’s current feeling while building their confidence to know that things will and do get better.

Positive Education and Energy Leadership combined offer a very unique approach to student learning. The emphasis is more on strengths with the idea that the more momentum students gain around what they are good at, the more likely they are to also strengthen the things they need to work on. Positive education and energy leadership coaching *does not* ignore or make believe that human weaknesses do not exist. Rather, both approaches encourage students to acknowledge weaknesses, teach students to accept the fullness of who they are, and model for students how to manage life/learning challenges from a strengths-based position. *This is emotional agility*. Listening to the speeches of soon-to-be Grade 8 graduates, one student stated, “We have weekly leadership lessons to help prepare us for the real world...and helps us to be leaders. When you work with passionate people, you become one.” Another student said, “I’ve learned so many new things here like entrepreneurship and leadership. A21 Academy is all about passion, doing what you love, and changing your life.” These students are learning how to become emotionally agile leaders of the future. Positive education and energy leadership is an exciting new approach to education. It works!

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