

Tony Ryan

AUTHOR

TONY Ryan is a Queensland-based education futurist. He explores educational and training possibilities for the 2020s and the 2030s. In the past two decades, he has directly worked with more than 1000 schools, colleges, TAFEs and universities in 10 countries around the world.

Ryan is the founder of School2School, a foundation that encourages 1st world schools to support schools in less developed countries. One such example is Samford State School north of Brisbane, which consistently supports a school community in an isolated mountain region of Nepal.

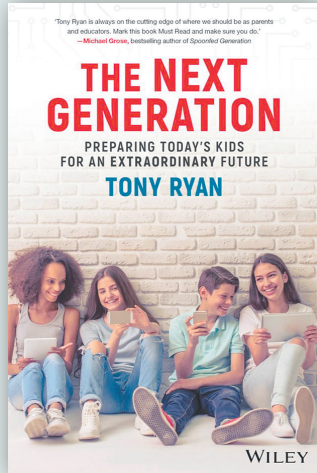
He is an ambassador (and the former Chair) for SchoolAid Trust, a for-purpose organisation that has fundraised over \$5 million in the past 18 years. It seeks to develop more resilient Australian youth by helping them support causes locally and in disaster-affected regions of the world. Founded by former principal, Sean Gordon, it has been extensively supported by over 6000 schools across Australia, and has the Governor-General as its patron.

Ryan is the author of the *Thinkers Keys*, *The Ripple Effect*, *Mindlinks*, *Wrapped In Living* and a series of manuals and workbooks that stimulate innovative thinking in classrooms.

His latest book is *The Next Generation: Preparing Today's Kids For An Extraordinary Future*.

His core message is that the future is meant to be a promise rather than a threat to our children. To fulfill that promise, they will need capabilities such as adaptive agility, empathy and initiative, which will future-prepare them for whatever occurs ahead. These capabilities must then be translated into practical action through philanthropy and entrepreneurialism.

In his book, Ryan maintains that we are living in the best time in human history. This is contrary to the many pessimistic messages we are giving our children about the world today, let alone about the future. Yet we are collectively wealthier, healthier, and even safer than ever before, and most



indicators suggest further improvements ahead.

In the past month, he has promoted this message of "realistic optimism" on radio in Brisbane, Canberra, Melbourne and Hobart, and was recently featured nationwide on Channel 7's *The Daily Edition*.

LEARN MORE:
www.tonyryan.com.au
www.school2.school
schoolaidtrust.com



EXTRACT

TOO many children today are not persisting with problem-solving in particular, although this lack of commitment is sometimes culturally specific. When children in many Asian countries are given a difficult maths problem in class, they view it as a challenge that needs to be resolved. Even when it is something they have not been taught, many will spend whatever time it takes to find a solution.

In stark contrast, one US study found that American children spend 34 seconds on a difficult task before they begin avoiding it. "We haven't done this before" or "How can you expect us to do this?" are common responses. American children are not the only ones who respond in this way. So why are they giving up so quickly?

In a *Huffington Post* article, Tim Elmore offered four reasons why children do not persevere with a task:

- Adults make life as convenient as possible for children, so they remove obstacles rather than welcoming them.
- Children have an unbalanced view of how to achieve great results. Accustomed to seeing fast-action video highlights of top performers, they rarely get an insight into the countless hours of practice required.
- They google an answer for any problem, rather than thinking it through for themselves.
- They are too quickly rescued by well-meaning adults, rather than being left to fend for themselves.

Time constraints and the endless rush they generate contribute to this lack of perseverance in children.

In some families, there is the daily pressure to get everyone ready to leave for school or other events. Teachers are desperate to complete a crowded curriculum, which results in a sense of rushing through the learning. We are creating a generation of children subjected to constant multiple pressures on their time. This often means they have less opportunity to focus and reflect on an experience in any detail. Whenever we can, we need to offer them the time to do so.

So what else can we do to encourage perseverance in children? Here are seven consistent actions worth considering:

- Point out some behavioural models around them, such as the classmate in a wheelchair who persists with a task, or a friend who patiently masters a new

skill, or other family members who are tenacious in different aspects of their lives. Tell the stories over and over.

- Refer to movie characters who demonstrate perseverance. Many children's movies focus strongly on this theme. Think of examples such as *The Karate Kid*, which shows how relentless practice eventually pays off.
- Find books and stories about perseverance that are age appropriate, such as *The Tortoise and the Hare* for pre-schoolers.
- Help them to set specific goals. When they first write them down, encourage them to start with "I will...", and include a completion date. Then celebrate each success.
- Brainstorm a metaphor that represents perseverance for each child. This may include an animal or insect

that struggles daily to survive, or an explorer who fought against the odds, or a plant that can thrive in the middle of a desert.

■ Connect anything they accomplish to the practice they put in. "Congratulations," you might say. "This is because of all those times you kept practising."

■ Children need at least one highly trusted adult who will support them through the difficult times when they want to give in. This may be a parent, a teacher, a coach or another reliable person who wants to see the best possible outcomes for the child.

EXTRACT from *The Next Generation: Preparing Today's Kids For An Extraordinary Future*.
 Permission: Wiley (bit.ly/2zPYOqQ)

EdTOOLS

Thinkers Keys

"IF YOU want to prepare children for an unknown future, then explicitly teach them to think. The benefits include: greater self-awareness, more self-responsible behaviour, and the ability to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances" says Tony Ryan, creator of Thinkers Keys.

Thinkers Keys, designed to boost cognitive reasoning

and innovative thought in 8 to 14 year olds, can be used to stimulate, consolidate, evaluate and extend learning in the classroom.

Ryan's creative and critical thinking strategies are being used worldwide and a free download of the *Thinkers Keys* booklet is available at thinkerskeys.com

The stand-out program for teaching young people to think critically and creatively

