Lord Robert Baden-Powell, the founder of Scouting, was once asked about the Scouting motto of “Be Prepared.” They asked, be prepared for what? He replied “Well, for any old thing.” This has been a guiding principle of Scouting since its founding; however, it is unlikely that Baden-Powell could have anticipated how modern life has changed over the years. The stresses and challenges for adolescents today include such things as teen suicide, cyberbullying, sexual predators, violence in school, increasing academic pressure for grades and to get into the right colleges, strains in family life, etc. While Scouting in the past has provided some guidance in these areas, it has become increasingly important to provide as much training, guidance, and resources to Scouts, Scout leaders, and parents as possible.

Toward that end, the BSA National Council launched a healthy living initiative called SCOUTStrong™ to focus on two of the principles that we find in the Scout Oath: “physically strong and mentally awake.” This Web portal, SCOUTStrong.org, supports this initiative by presenting interesting and relevant health-related information and resources that can better prepare Scouts and those around them to meet the increasing challenges facing youth in modern life.

In the area of emotional fitness, there will be articles, references, and other resources identified to help leaders provide a more nurturing and growth-promoting environment for Scouts with special needs such as those with ADHD and autism spectrum disorder. Because teen suicide is such a major component of death in young people, guidelines will be provided to help inoculate youth from considering this as an option for dealing with life stresses. It will also enable them to identify warning signs in their peers and to respond appropriately. There will also be components that allow parents and adult leaders to address these issues.

The topics will grow and expand in response to the utilization of the resources. An example of one area of focus is building resilience. This is the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress. It does not mean that young people won’t experience stress, but it provides a way for them to bounce back from this in as positive a manner as possible.
Steps for building resilience in children and teenagers include the following:

1. **Make Connections.** Teach a child how to make friends, including how to empathize with others. Encourage them to be a friend in order to make friends.

2. **Help Your Child by Having Them Help Others.** Children who feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. Encourage them to engage in age-appropriate volunteer work.

3. **Maintain a Daily Routine.** In times of stress, sticking to a routine can be particularly comforting to children. Encourage them to develop their own routines as well.

4. **Take a Break.** While it is important to stick to a routine, endlessly worrying can be counterproductive. Teach a child how to focus on something besides what may be worrying them at that time.

5. **Teach a Child Self-Care.** Make sure you are a good example, and model to your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise adequately, and get sufficient rest.

6. **Move Toward Your Goals.** Teach a child how to set reasonable goals and then how to obtain them one step at a time. Even a tiny step in a positive direction, especially when given recognition by the parent or other adult for doing so, will help your child focus on what they have accomplished rather than what they have not accomplished.

7. **Nurture a Positive Self-View.** Help your child remember ways that they have successfully handled hardships in the past and then help them understand that these past challenges help them build the strength to handle future ones. Encourage them to learn and trust themselves to solve problems and make appropriate decisions.

8. **Keep Things in Perspective and Maintain a Hopeful Outlook.** Encourage your child to look at a situation within the broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Help them realize there is a future beyond the current situation and that it can be good. An optimistic and positive outlook encourages your child to see the good things in life and keep going even when times are hard.

9. **Look for Opportunities for Self-Discovery.** Tough times often give us the opportunity to learn the most about ourselves. Help your child take a look at how whatever they are facing can teach them what they are made of.

10. **Accept That Change Is Part of Living.** While change is scary to all of us, help them see that change is part of life, and new goals can replace goals that had become unattainable.

Further assistance on other elements of dealing with challenges in life will soon be available on SCOUTStrong.org. Keep on the lookout for announcements pertaining to these elements in the next few months.