

Building Resilient Children

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What is Resilience?

- Resilience is the ability to steer through serious life challenges and find ways to bounce back and to thrive.
- We are born with the capacity for resilience. But resilience is not something we have or don't have.
- We work on it throughout our lives.
- And we need to start as early as possible.
- Parents are the most important people to help build their children's resilience. Children learn a lot by watching their parents.
- When parents cope well with everyday stress, they are showing their children how to do the same.

- “The world breaks everyone and afterward many are strong at the broken places.”
Ernest Hemingway



Why do Children need Resilience

- Challenges and trauma occur in life – we encounter some sort of minor obstacle almost on a daily basis – no one is exempt from facing some adversity
- We need to be able to face and overcome struggles in life
- It is important that children and adults are able to rise above crises in life
- Resilience is the ability to overcome and triumph



Tips for building caring relationships

- o Give attention and affection
- o Play with your children.
- o Comfort your children.
- o Listen with interest to your children's feelings, thoughts and ideas.
- o Show empathy.
- o Help your children identify and express their feelings
- o Reduce TV time
- o Read or tell your children stories



Being a Positive Role Model

- Young children copy what others say and do.
- Parents and other adults can learn to be positive role models by handling difficult situations with resilience.
- When parents stay calm and flexible in dealing with life's challenges, they are teaching their children positive ways to handle stress.

Tips for being a positive role model

- Take care of your health
- Show understanding, compassion and kindness.
- Take three deep breaths when you're stressed
- Be in charge of your emotions
- Be patient
- Let go of being perfect
- Stop and re-think
- Take responsibility for your own feelings and actions in front of your children
- Use humour
- Stay positive
- Reach out for support



Developing a Positive Outlook

- Looking for the positives in life is one of the most important strengths for building resilience.
- Why? A positive outlook can change a challenging situation into a manageable one.
- It makes us feel better and builds hope. It also protects us from depression and poor health. Young children copy the adults around them.
- If they see their parents showing a positive outlook, it is more likely they will develop a positive outlook, too. Helping children develop a positive outlook is best done in a caring relationship and is an important part of self-regulation.

Tips for helping children develop a positive outlook

- See the positives. You can help your children bounce back from disappointment by teaching them to look for the positives in their daily life.
- Express gratitude and appreciation for what you have big or small. Children can learn to look for and enjoy the simple pleasures of life such as reading a book together, playing in the park with a friend, or eating a favourite meal.
- Look for beauty in nature. Point out a fragrant flower, the feel of a warm breeze or a beautiful sunset. A walk in nature or visit to the park is a great way for children to have positive family time and develop appreciation and respect for their natural world
- Have a little laugh. Humour helps brighten our outlook and is a natural way to connect with others.
- Help children develop “realistic” optimism. Positive things happen because of planning, problem solving and effort
- Read or tell children stories about others who look for and appreciate the positives in everyday life

Encouraging Responsibility and Participation

- Giving young children responsibility for small things gives them a way to contribute to family life and feel good about themselves.
- Supporting children to participate in community activities also builds their resilience.
- Why? It builds positive relationships, provides them with direction in their lives, and gives them opportunities to develop their strengths and talents.
- Encouraging children to take responsibility and actively participate makes them less likely to misbehave due to boredom or to gain attention.
- It builds self-regulation and increases their self-esteem and confidence.

Tips for encouraging children's responsibility and participation

- Encourage your children to take responsibility by helping with daily chores.
- Encourage your children to think of small ways to help others.
- Involve your children when you help others.
- Participate in community projects
- Help your children learn about and value their own culture
- Encourage participation in community activities that build your children's talents and interests (like sports, music, art, etc
- Read or tell children stories about others who help out and get involved in community activities

Developing Thinking Skills

- Why are thinking skills important?
- The way we react to things has a lot to do with the way we think about the situation. That is why thinking skills play a big part in our ability to regulate our emotions and behaviour.



Tips for helping children 3 years and older develop thinking skills

- **Help your children talk about their thoughts.**
- **Show empathy for your children's thoughts and feelings.**
- **Gently challenge your children's negative thinking.**
- **Play thinking games together.**
- **Encourage children to imagine another way to do something – like a different way to join others at the playground, play with toys or tidy up.**
- **Read or tell children stories about how others overcome obstacles, get along with others or turn a difficult situation around.**

Building Confidence

- When we have confidence in our abilities, it helps us to respond to problems with resilience. This “I can do it” attitude motivates us to keep trying even when things are difficult. If we keep trying, our efforts are more likely to pay off and we feel a sense of accomplishment



Tips for building your children's confidence

- Encourage your children to keep on trying even when the task is hard or frustrating. Give children the courage to keep going.
- Show your children that "Mistakes are OK"
- Be a "Strengths Detective"
- Give your children lots of time to just play.
- Set children up for success.
- Offer choices.
- Help your children be assertive.
- Teach your children ways to solve problems and resolve conflicts.
- Read or tell children stories about how others develop their strengths and confidence.



Emotional reactivity

- Children vary in the way they react emotionally – some are more intense than others or more sensitive.
- Others have a wider window of tolerance and recovery whilst some will react more quickly or take longer to regain balance.
- Recovering from being upset and being able to moderate emotional reactivity are necessary for personal resiliency.

Positive Emotional Responses

- Helping your child with relaxation and self-talk that assists to settle their reactions along with breathing and other techniques so that they learn to “self sooth”.
- Educating your child or young person in how having a high level of emotional reaction leaves them vulnerable. They may think less clearly, or upset others who may then avoid them. Or they may even hurt others who may retaliate back so that relationships breakdown.
- Helping them to realise that the longer it takes to recover the longer they will feel upset and uncomfortable.
- Child counsellors/psychologists can assist children and young people develop techniques for identifying triggers, anticipating them and then managing their responses.
- Discussing an upsetting event and helping them to identify what triggered their emotional reactivity. Getting them to work out some other ways they could have managed the situation will assist them with emotional flexibility and self-regulation.

- Encourage your child to use positive thinking: Teach them to say “I think I can” when something difficult comes up. Read stories and watch shows that model children demonstrating positive expectations in the face of difficulty.
- Introduce the idea of breaking tasks into smaller steps and tackling them one at a time.
- Encourage them to praise themselves for their achievements of the day each night before they go to sleep.
- Talk with them about their strengths and give them a chance to elaborate, enhance and generalise these strengths. Demonstrate how a strength used in one context can be used in another.
- Specifically praise their practice and effort to achieve mastery.

Three Resources of Resilience

- To overcome adversities, children draw from three sources of resilience :
- **I HAVE**
- **I AM**
- **I CAN**

I AM

The resilient child is...

- Is likeable and loveable
- Likes to do good and nice things for others to show that they care
- Someone who takes responsibility for their actions
- Is sure that everything will be okay
- Respectful for both themselves and others

I HAVE...

- The resilient child has:
 - People in their life whom they trust – they love the child unconditionally
 - People who set limits and boundaries so they will know how to avoid danger
 - People who will assist them if they are in trouble, sick, or in need of help/guidance
 - People who want them to learn to be independent and self-sufficient as able
 - People who will guide them and lead by a positive example

I CAN...

The resilient child can...

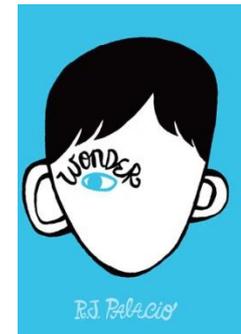
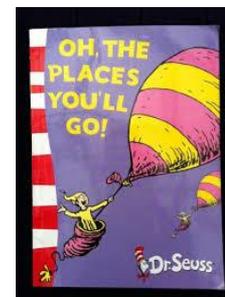
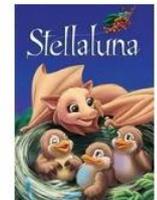
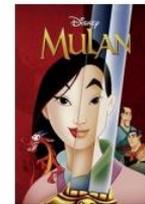
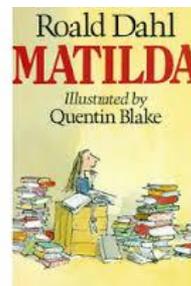
- Talk to others about things that bother or frighten them.
- Find ways to solve problems that they face
- Control themselves when they feel like doing something not right or dangerous
- Figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action
- Find someone to help me when I need it

Signs of a Resilient Child

- The capacity to have courage
- The motivation to move forward
- The power to stay centered
- The awareness of knowing themselves
- The gift of laughter
- The ability to bounce back
- The potential of showing promise
- The capacity to ask for help
- The tenacity to accomplish goals
- The willingness to share feelings
- The capability to connect with others
- The inspiration to give back

Building Resilience at Home

- Define Resiliency
- Create a dialogue (books, quotes, movies)
- Share a resilient role model.
- Create a resilient book or coping book
- Discuss the resilience inventory
- Draw resiliency: Draw a representation of what resiliency looks like/feels like inside of you



Resilience Inventory

- Identify a difficult time where they used strength and courage to make it through. Explain that is an example of resiliency. Help them identify these attributes and relate them to present and future uses.
- Discuss a time in your life when you felt you were resilient.
- How did people respond? What did they say?
- How did that make you feel?
- How does it feel now?
- Is there anything you wish others had done?
- Can you use what you learned from this experience now?