

Access

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Building resilience in children



What is resilience?

Why is it important for children?

As children grow, they encounter stresses and challenges along the way. Conflicts may occur within friendships or in school. Stresses and challenges also happen within family relationships. Young people need to develop strengths, acquire the skills to cope, learn how to recover from hardships and be prepared for future challenges. In order to thrive, they need to become resilient.

Resilience is not automatic. It's a learned behavior that becomes internalized and applied during stressful times. It enables individuals to rebound following disappointments or tough times. The ability to overcome hardships and challenges is something we can strengthen at any age.

For children, the deep roots of resilience begin in the home. By providing a loving, supportive environment

— based on open communication and effective parenting practices — children have a huge head start in terms of building their resilience.

Building resilience requires supportive relationships that extend beyond parental involvement. Coaches, teachers, caregivers and other adults can have a positive impact, too. Having responsive interactions with supportive adults can help children build the skills they need to become resilient.

Learning how to navigate life's challenges

When children are struggling or feel disappointed, a parent's first impulse may be to swoop in to solve the problem at hand. Here are suggestions on how to help your children feel capable enough to handle some challenges on their own.

- **Don't get upset about mistakes**

Help kids understand that everyone makes mistakes. The important thing is to learn from them, not dwell on them. You might talk about your own mistakes or failures. Show them that these moments are simply part of life. Things don't always go our way.

- **Allow kids to fail**

Trial and error is how most children learn best. Make failing a teachable moment. When your child is ready, talk about what went wrong and how they might do things differently next time. Teaching kids how to fail gracefully (and encouraging them to bounce back!) makes them stronger and more prepared to face life's challenges.



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Fostering strength, hope and optimism in children

Because resilient children possess the emotional buoyancy to thrive in the face of adversity, the concept of resilience is important in their overall development. Encourage children to try new things and expand their horizons. Attaining new skills makes them feel capable and confident. By building resilience, children develop independence and problem-solving skills. They are more likely to cultivate and maintain positive interpersonal relationships. These personal characteristics enhance self-esteem and foster strength, hope and optimism.

Resilient children are inquisitive, brave and trust their own instincts, knowing they can tackle future challenges on their own. They are more likely to take healthy risks because they don't fear falling short of expectations.

Tips for Building Resilience in Children

In their book *Raising Resilient Children*, child psychologists Robert Brooks and Sam Goldstein offer these suggestions for parents who wish to build resilience in their children:

Do-overs: Make sure your child knows that mistakes along the way are okay. Present them as learning experiences and areas where he/she can try to do better next time.

Develop responsibility: Give your child opportunities for developing both mastery and responsibility. Over time this will encourage self-esteem and independence.



Offer meaningful participation: Offer your child opportunities to engage in activities he/she really cares about. However, avoid pushing your child too hard in a direction he/she doesn't want to go. Instead, celebrate the unique person he/she is becoming.

Teach problem-solving: Show your child ways to deal with day-to-day problems, by providing good role modeling and encouragement.

Identify a "go-to" person: Make sure your child has a close and supportive adult (parent, teacher, family friend) he/she feels comfortable confiding in.

Listen: Ensure that your child feels like you aren't simply hearing them, but are truly tuned-in to what he/she has to say.



Your EAP offers resources to help build strong families

Did you know that Aurora EAP offers these free services that help build strong, resilient families?

- EAP support for parents
- Adoption information services
- K-12 and higher education resources
- Child care referral services
- Legal consultations
- Financial consultations
- Mediation consultations
- Eldercare referral services



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