



Tips For Building Resilience In Children

By Erin Caskey, Ph.D. Assistant Professor, Licensed Clinical Psychologist at RNBC

All parents want their children to be happy, successful, and satisfied with their lives. One vital component in achieving these goals is resilience. Resilience is the capacity to cope with adversity, manage difficult situations, and learn from disappointments. While early research focused on children who overcame great stress and hardship (such as poverty, natural disasters, or chronic illness), experts now recognize that resilience is important for everyone. Even if your child is lucky enough to never experience significant adversity or trauma, it is inevitable that he or she will encounter stress and hardships that need to be overcome in order to grow and thrive. Research has found that resilient children do better in school, have more positive social experiences and achieve high levels of personal and professional success.

Developing Resilience

As an integral part of fostering resilience, parents are often told to allow their child to make mistakes and to not overprotect them from negative life events. When parents overprotect their child, he or she misses out on opportunities to learn how to cope with life's inevitable frustrations and situations beyond the child's control. However, it can be challenging to strike the right balance between keeping your children safe and allowing them the freedom to grow. While parents should protect their children from errors that could lead to serious harm, small mistakes and failures help children discover the connection between behavior and results, as well as develop tools necessary to handle challenging situations. In general, parents should allow their child to engage in and complete tasks that he or she is capable, or almost capable of doing, without intervention. Parents should be present, available, and encouraging, but stand back and allow their child to accomplish tasks and make decisions on his or her own.

A child's unique temperament affects how easily he or she is able to cultivate resilience. Some children seem to develop resilience skills naturally, while others struggle to cope with even minor challenges and disappointments. The good news is that these skills can be learned and parents play a critical role in their child's development of resilience. While the path to resilience is different for each child, below are some suggestions for parents to help foster resilience:

Tips for Building Resilience

1. Cultivate meaningful relationships

Teach your child how to make friends, foster the development of empathy (the ability to put yourself in another person's place), and build strong family bonds. Connecting with others provides social support and strengthens resilience

2. Provide opportunities to help others

Children need opportunities to make a positive difference in their world. Involving them in a charitable work, such as walks for hunger or food drives, or even asking for their help around the house, promotes self-esteem and a social conscience. ... *continue to page 2.*



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3. Have high (yet realistic) expectations

Accept your children for who they are and help them set realistic expectations and goals. Encourage your child to try things and do things on his or her own with minimal adult help.

4. Nurture a positive self-view and an optimistic perspective

Remind your child of times when he or she has successfully handled challenging situations and how these situations help him or her build the strength to handle future challenges. Help your child develop the ability to think positively and keep things in perspective.

5. Teach self-care

Set a good example and teach your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise, rest, and have fun. Caring for oneself will help your child stay balanced and be better able to cope with stressful times.

6. Discipline in ways that promote self-discipline and self-worth.

Be consistent, but not rigid; rely when possible on natural, logical consequences. Praise and encouragement of positive behaviors is far more effective than discipline of negative behaviors.

7. Foster problem-solving and decision-making skills

Teach your child to set realistic goals and to move toward them one step at a time. Offer praise for progress-however small-towards goals. Try not to always tell children what to do but rather try to engage them in thinking about possible solutions.

8. Help children learn from their mistakes.

Help your child learn to view mistakes as opportunities for learning instead of failures. Emphasize that mistakes are an expected part of life and communicate that your child is accepted and loved even when he or she makes mistakes.

All children develop resilience in different ways and some children have more difficulty than others. For example, children with socio-emotional, neurobehavioral, and learning difficulties tend to have greater trouble developing resilience. If you have concerns about your child's social or emotional functioning, school-based or outpatient psychotherapy may help.

RNBC offers individual therapy to children and adolescents. Please call 847-933-9339 to schedule an appointment. Reaching out for help when needed may help your child strengthen resilience and persevere during times of stress.