

10 tips for building resilience in childhood

We all can develop resilience, and we can help our children develop it as well. It involves behaviours, thoughts and actions that can be learned over time.

1. **Make connections**

Teach your child how to make friends, including the skill of empathy, or feeling another's pain. Encourage your child to be a friend in order to get friends. Build a strong family network to support your child through his or her inevitable disappointments and hurts. At school, watch to make sure that one child is not being isolated. Connecting with people provides social support and strengthens resilience.

2. **Help your child by encouraging them to help others**

Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. Involve your child in age-appropriate volunteer work, or ask for help yourself with a task that they can master. At school, brainstorm with children about ways they can help others.

3. **Maintain a daily routine**

Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives. Encourage your child to develop their own routines.

4. **Take a break**

While it is important to stick to routines, endlessly worrying about them and putting yourself under pressure to achieve them can be counter-productive. In addition, teach your child how to focus on something besides what's worrying them, whilst acknowledging their worry. Be aware of what your child is exposed to that can be troubling, whether it be news, the Internet and /or social media, games or overheard conversations, and make sure your child takes a break from those things if they trouble them. Although schools are being held accountable for performance on standardized tests, build in unstructured time during the school day to allow children to be creative.

5. **Teach your child self-care**

Make yourself a good example, and teach your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise and rest. Make sure your child has time to create their own fun; that your child hasn't scheduled every moment of their life with no "down time" to relax. Caring for oneself and even having fun will help your child stay balanced and better deal with stressful times.

6. **Move toward your goals**

Teach your child to set reasonable goals and then to move toward them one step at a time. Moving toward that goal — even if it's a tiny step — and receiving recognition for doing so will focus your child on what they have accomplished rather than on what hasn't been accomplished. This builds the resilience to move forward in the face of challenges. At school, break down large assignments into small, achievable goals for younger children, and for older children, acknowledge accomplishments on the way to larger goals.

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 challenges. Help your child learn to trust them self to solve problems and make appropriate decisions. Teach your child to see the humour in life, and the ability to laugh at one's self. At school, help children see how their individual accomplishments contribute to the wellbeing of the class as a whole.

8. **Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook**

Even when your child is facing very painful events, help them look at the situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Although your child may be too young to consider a long-term look on their own, help them see that there is a future beyond the current situation and that the future can be good. An optimistic and positive outlook enables your child to see the good things in life and keep going even in the hardest times. In school, use history to show that life moves on after bad events.

9. **Look for opportunities for self-discovery**

Tough times are often the times when children learn the most about themselves. Help your child take a look at how whatever they are facing can teach them "what they are made of." At school, consider leading discussions of what each student has learned after facing down a tough situation.

10. **Accept that change is part of living**

Change often can be scary for children and teens. Help your child see that change is part of life and new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable. In school, point out to pupils how they have changed as they have moved up through the school years and discuss how that change has had an impact on them.