

HOW CAN WE BUILD RESILIENCE IN OUR CHILDREN?

Whilst there are many troubled children, vast numbers seem to manage the minefield of growing up. Resilient children have a sense of being “able to cope” with setbacks and failures that are faced through life, irrespective of the circumstances.

Here are some building blocks to resilience:



1. Build a child's self esteem by allowing them to **attempt, and be successful at age –appropriate tasks**. Allow the child to experience independence.

2. Ensure your child has set himself **realistic goals and expectations** when attempting homework. Doing it for them sends a message that “I can't do it well enough” and it also sets the goals to adult standards. Encourage children to take risks and try. After all mistakes are not bad – they're human!

3. Encourage **problem solving** when obstacles occur. Children can learn to process problems, organize themselves for a task and plan actions. If the first plan doesn't work encourage children to look for an alternative –there is more than one way.

4. Ask the child to **evaluate their own efforts**, help the child view himself realistically as a person with strengths and weaknesses. Acknowledge what they have achieved and the efforts made. Make criticism constructive – always focus on behaviours or actions rather than the person.

5. **Hear and acknowledge your child's feelings** – even if you don't understand. For example “I understand that you are unhappy about ...” rather than “Don't cry ...”

6. Encourage **assertive behaviour**. Show and teach your child to say what they want, rather than use aggressive actions. Remember children learn conflict resolution by watching how parents do it!

7. **Develop external support structures** by encouraging and facilitating friendships, good education, talents and hobbies. Find time to **listen** to your child's “news of the day.”

8. If your child is experiencing problems with **anxiety, bullying, depression** and difficult behaviour seek professional help.

9. **Establish routines**. This makes children feel safe. Children know what to expect and will begin taking responsibility for their part in the routines e.g. having a regular shower time, setting the table at dinnertime, choosing the bedtime story.

10. **Rules** provide a framework for appropriate behaviour for both the child and adult. Make sure the rules are **flexible** and **consistent** for all. This provides children with security.

Remember **children learn from their primary caretakers**. They will watch how you respond to the environment and each other. If you can create an environment where they can develop a **sense of worth, belonging and competency**, growing up may become an easier process and children will get the message “I can cope.”

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