

Quick guide – building resilience

What does 'resilience' mean?

Resilience is the capacity to recover from difficulties. Being resilient doesn't mean not finding things challenging or not getting upset – we want our children to be able to openly express their emotions and 'big' feelings.



Why is it so important to help build a child's resilience?

When children are resilient, they are going to be more confident, curious and adaptable to the world around them.

How can we help build a child's resilience?

Allowing a child to 'struggle'

No parent wants to see their child, 'fail', however set-backs and disappointments are a part of life. When children don't experience what it's like to fail, they miss the opportunity to learn from their mistakes and don't learn how to improve for the future. Furthermore, they'll begin to lack the confidence to take risks and won't courageously face their problems head-on. When we 'rescue' our kids, they may come to believe things always work out—and we all know that's simply not true.

Help them switch on their 'Growth Mindset.'

We all have beliefs about our own abilities and potential- these beliefs are part of our mindset. A willingness to confront challenges, a passion for learning, and viewing failure as a springboard for growth are all characteristics associated with a growth mindset. Mistakes are part of the learning process.

Mistakes are a chance to learn and will help us adapt to new and difficult situations as we encounter them throughout life.

Q. Do we talk about our mistakes?

Q. Do we model repair?

Q. Do we ask our children for their advice?

Developing independence

How do you feel when you have accomplished something for yourself? Cooked a new meal? Achieved a new skill? Solved a problem? We want this for our children. We can provide opportunities for children to have responsibility and feel that sense of accomplishment and success through providing ample opportunities for them to develop their independence.

Goal setting

Goal setting can be a very powerful motivator and can increase their self-efficacy. By breaking down a goal into small, manageable chunks, we can then praise the progress made. We can also remind them of times where they have overcome challenges and been resilient – this will usually be linked to something they are passionate about. "I know you can reach your goals; do you remember when you learnt to ride a skateboard? That was really tricky but you showed perseverance. How did it feel when you reached your goal?"

Building their frustration tolerance

We all can feel annoyed when things don't go to plan but, through experiencing this frustration, we can learn to recognise the build up and act appropriately. If a child is struggling, it is incredibly tempting to dive in and help. However, we can pause and perhaps try another way.

Acknowledge:

Often, our instinct is to say, *"Oh, it's not a big deal!"* or to distract. The fact remains that this may feel like a very big deal to our child.

Validate, empathise and be the 'calm in their storm':

"I can see you are really sad. You were working so hard on this..."

Collaborate:

First, quick pit stop - is our child overstimulated (sensory overload), tired or hungry? We can then allow them time to decide if they want to try again, or if they want to do something else. Pointing out the choices that they do have is empowering and gives them back some control.

Problem solve:

"What could do differently next time? What do you need to help you? Would you like to hear my suggestions?"

Here we are teaching and modelling how to ask for help – which isn't always easy to do!

Use their own evidence

We can remind our children of times they have been resilient....because they have been!

Children show resilience all the time and it is usually linked to something they are passionate about. We can remind them about that feeling of achievement.

"You already know how to be resilient when you build that Lego set without the instructions!"

Show me the tricky part...

It can feel completely overwhelming when we are struggling with something and it can feel as if the best way forward is to give up. If our child is struggling with something like their Maths homework, we can say, "Show me the tricky part."

This strategy:

- Establishes connection, promotes empathy and curiosity
- Breaks the challenge down into manageable chunks
- Provides a chance to problem solve
- Highlights what they *can* already do

Share our own experiences

We can connect with our child and share challenging times we have faced. We can remind them that, although we cannot necessarily control everything that happens to us, we can control how we respond. We can model to our children strategies we use to self-regulate when we feel annoyed, upset, disappointed. When faced with a challenge, we can show our children the steps we ourselves take to manage these – take a break, ask for help, change the approach, try another strategy.

Modelling optimism and gratitude

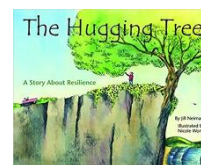
Having a balanced and accurate understanding of a world, whilst continuing to find the positives takes work! Optimism correlates with resilience. Help your child feel positive by nurturing gratitude, practicing self-care, and finding the "silver linings" even when life isn't going well.

Modelling optimism and explicitly explaining what we are thankful for and why we are thankful – how could this become part of your daily routine?

Books:

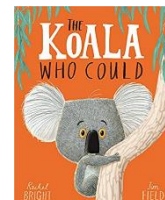
'The Hugging Tree' by Jill Neimark

The Hugging Tree tells the story of a little tree growing all alone on a cliff, by a vast and mighty sea. Through thundering storms and the cold of winter, the tree holds fast. Sustained by the natural world and the kindness and compassion of one little boy, eventually the tree grows until it can hold and shelter others.



'The Koala who could' by Rachel Bright

Meet Kevin. A koala who likes to keep things the same. Exactly the same. But sometimes change comes along whether we like it or not... And, as Kevin discovers, if you step outside your comfort zone and try new things, you might just surprise yourself!



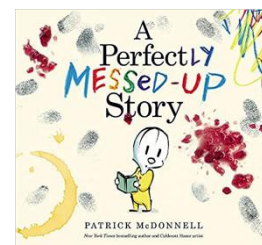
'The most magnificent thing' by Ashley Spires

Ashley Spires has created a charming picture book about an unnamed girl and her very best friend, who happens to be a dog. The girl has a wonderful idea. She is going to make the most MAGNIFICENT thing! She knows just how it will look. She knows just how it will work. All she has to do is make it, and she makes things all the time. Easy-peasy! But making her magnificent thing is anything but easy, and the girl tries and fails, repeatedly. Eventually, the girl gets really, really mad. She is so mad, in fact, that she quits. But after her dog convinces her to take a walk, she comes back to her project with renewed enthusiasm and manages to get it just right.



'A perfectly messed up story' by Patrick McDonnell

Little Louie's story keeps getting messed up, and he's not happy about it! What's the point of telling his tale if he can't tell it perfectly? But when he stops and takes a deep breath, he realises that everything is actually just fine, and his story is a good one - imperfections and all.



'Ish' by Peter H Reynolds

Drawing is what Ramon does. It's what makes him happy. But in one split second, all that changes. A single remark by Ramon's older brother, Leon, turns Ramon's carefree sketches into joyless struggles. Luckily for Ramon, though, his little sister, Marisol, sees the world differently and she opens his eyes to something a lot more valuable than getting things exactly right...

