

Building Resilient Kids

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Some kids are resilient by nature – their temperament helps them to be mentally and psychologically tough. You know those kids. They get straight back up after a setback or disappointment. Rejection in the playground doesn't faze them. Unfortunately, not every child has such natural resilience. The good news is that most of the research shows that resilience can be nurtured and developed, particularly when parents themselves are resilient and they actively foster it in their kids.

Resilient kids share four basic skill sets: **Independence, problem-solving, optimism and social connection.**

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From a resilience perspective parents need to coach kids through some of their more challenging moments and reviewing what they may have learned for next time. Avoid solving all their problems for them. You can promote a lasting sense of resilience in your kids by:

1. **Having a positive attitude yourself.** Your attitude as a parent impacts on their ability to bounce back from some of the difficulties they face. Make sure you model a 'you can do it' attitude for your child when he meets some of life's curve balls.
2. **Look for teachable moments.** Many kids' learning opportunities are disguised as problems. Make the most of these opportunities so that kids can grow and learn from some of the challenges they face. For example, if your child doesn't get chosen as a part of the safety patrol or the school play or for the Allstar team, a response that can help might be, "I'm sorry honey. I know you were counting on and expecting that to happen. Maybe you will get chosen next time. Remember you did get chosen for Select Choir. You can try again. A response that sounds like, "What! You didn't get picked?! That's so unfair. You worked hard for that. I'm going to call the teacher (coach) to discuss this." That response will send the message that mom or dad can fix EVERYTHING and you can't. You will not be able to get them into the college that they want or to get them their first job, no matter how much you think they earned it or deserved it. Sometimes the criteria and reasons for certain decisions that are made are just not within your control or immediately understandable.
3. **Make kids active participants in the family.** Active participation in a family develops the self-help, problem-solving and independence skills of kids that are necessary for resilience.
4. **Build kids coping skills.** There are plenty of strategies you can pass on to kids to help them cope when life doesn't go their way, including acceptance, getting away for a while, and normalization.

Promoting resilience in kids is not a single event but a continuous process that requires adults to be supportive and empathetic when things don't go their way. It also requires you as a parent to have an understanding of resilience, so you have faith in you yourself, and your child's ability to cope.