

Building Resilience in Children



What is Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to recover quickly from difficulties you may face. Resilience is important for people of all ages for all situations you may face in your lifetime.

Resilience in Children

It's not possible to protect our children from the ups and downs of life. Raising resilient children, however, is possible and can provide them with the tools they need to respond to the challenges of adolescence and young adulthood, and to navigate successfully in adulthood.

In today's environment, children and teens need to develop strengths, acquire skills to cope, recover from hardships, and be prepared for future challenges. They need to be resilient in order to succeed in life. That is why Kenneth Ginsburg, M.D., MS Ed, FAAP, a pediatrician specializing in adolescent medicine at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, joined forces with the American Academy of Pediatrics to author *A Parent's Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings*.

In this book, Dr. Ginsburg identified the seven "C's" of resilience:

- Competence
- Confidence
- Connection
- Character
- Contribution
- Coping
- Control

Let us celebrate our Cancer Caregivers this Month

Unfortunately, care giving is an under-appreciated task.

Combine that with the typical traits of a caregiver (highly energetic, competent, idealistic, dedicated, self-sufficient, accomplished), and suddenly the risk for burnout increases. Here's our wisdom to share with friends and family members who are providing support to a loved one with cancer:

•**Know your limits.** Our feelings give us warning signs that we've exceeded our limits and pushed the boundaries. Take a break when you need one.

•**Form appropriate expectations.** Give yourself permission to do what you can, without bending over backwards.

•**Give yourself affirmations.** Learn how to rely on yourself for approval, especially when compliments aren't received.

•**Nurture yourself.** Practice stress reduction techniques. Acknowledge your emotions and use coping strategies to regain a sense of control.

Need help? Good news ... you don't have to do this alone. Join our Friend/Family weekly support group for caregivers, Mindful Self-Compassion, Carpe Diem and Reiki and Meditation for more tools. You can also join us every Monday in November between 5-6:30pm for some self-care tips and pampering during Caregiver Café.

Call us for more information 610-861-7555





Competence – Competence describes the feeling of knowing that you can handle a situation effectively. Help the development of competence by:

- Helping children focus on individual strengths.
- Focusing any identified mistakes on specific incidents
- Empowering children to make decisions.
- Being careful that your desire to protect your child doesn't mistakenly send a message that you don't think he or she is competent to handle things.
- Recognizing the competencies of siblings individually and avoiding comparisons.

Confidence – A child's belief in their own abilities is derived from competence. Build confidence by:

- Focusing on the best in each child so that he or she can see that, as well.
- Clearly expressing the best qualities, such as fairness, integrity, persistence, and kindness.
- Recognizing when he or she has done well.
- Praising honestly about specific achievements; not diffusing praise that may lack authenticity.
- Not pushing the child to take on more than he or she can realistically handle.

Connection – Developing close ties to family and community creates a solid sense of security that helps lead to strong values and prevents alternative destructive paths to love and attention. Help your child connect with others by:

- Building a sense of physical safety and emotional security within your home.
- Allowing the expression of all emotions, so that kids will feel comfortable reaching out during difficult times.
- Addressing conflict openly in the family to resolve issues.
- Creating a common area where the family can share time (not necessarily TV time).
- Fostering healthy relationships that will reinforce positive messages.

Character – Children need to develop a solid set of morals and values to determine right from wrong, and to demonstrate a caring attitude toward others. Strengthen your child's character by:

- Demonstrating how behaviors affect others.
- Helping your child recognize himself or herself as a caring person.
- Demonstrating the importance of community.
- Encouraging the development of spirituality.
- Avoiding racist or hateful statements or stereotypes.

Contribution – Children need to realize that the world is a better place because they are in it. Understanding the importance of personal contribution can serve as a source of purpose and motivation. Teach your child how to contribute by:

- Communicating to children that many people in the world do not have what they need.
- Stressing the importance of serving others by modeling generosity.
- Creating opportunities for each child to contribute in some specific way.

Coping – Learning to cope effectively with stress will help your child be better prepared to overcome life's challenges. Positive coping lessons include:

- Modeling positive coping strategies on a consistent basis.
- Guiding your child to develop positive and effective coping strategies.

Control – Children who realize that they can control the outcomes of their decisions are more likely to realize that they have the ability to bounce back. You can try to empower your child by:

- Helping your child to understand that life's events are not purely random, and that most things that happen are the result of another individual's choices and actions.
- Learning that discipline is about teaching, not punishing or controlling; using discipline to help your child to understand that his actions produce certain consequences.

In Summary

In addition to the seven C's of resilience, Dr. Ginsburg also points out that:

- Children need to know that there is an adult in their life who believes in them and loves them unconditionally.
- Kids will live "up" or "down" to our expectations.

There is no simple answer to guarantee resilience in every situation. But we can challenge ourselves to help our children develop the ability to negotiate their own challenges and to be more resilient, more capable, and happier.