



SEL PARENT RESOURCE

RESILIENCE

Nurturing RESILIENCE in children.

Resilience is a key building block of growth mindset and an important social emotional learning competency we want our students to have. For children to be able to bounce back from stress, challenges, tragedy, trauma, and adversity, it is important that they are intentionally placed in situations and given opportunities where they can discover their own ability to solve problems. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, more adaptable, and more able to extend their reach into the world. The great news is that resilience is something that can be nurtured in all children.



TEACH RESILIENCE THROUGH LITERATURE

The Hugging Tree: A Story About Resilience This story is about a tree that, in spite of harsh circumstances, grows until it can hold and shelter others. The resilience of the Hugging Tree calls to mind the potential in all of us: to thrive, despite times of struggle and difficulty; to nurture the little spark of hope and resolve; and to dream and to grow, just where we are. This book includes a "Note to Parents" by Elizabeth McCallum, Ph.D.

Don't Sweat the Small Stuff for Teens: Simple Ways to Keep Your Cool in Stressful Times This candid guide to adolescence examines the contradictions and challenges unique to teenage life and offers students (and their parents) tools for learning not to stress about homework, peer pressure, dating, and other potentially difficult areas. The book authored by Richard Carlson addresses such issues as: do not sweat the breakups, get out of the emergency lane, be OK with your bad hair day, and drop the drama.

My Strong Mind: A Story About Developing Mental Strength This story by Niels van Hove is about a sporty and happy girl who uses her strong mind to tackle her daily challenges with a positive attitude. She faces several situations your children will face too, and applies a positive attitude to deal with challenges.

I Am Not Afraid To Fail Failure does not have to be scary for kids. Parents, guardians, and mentors play a crucial role in teaching children that failure is just one step towards success. With the help of author Daniel Kenney, you and your child can work together to learn that failure is a normal and natural part of life. This book teaches how to build the confidence to take chances and go for it without fear of failure.

RESILIENCE NEEDS RELATIONSHIPS

Spend one-on-one time with your children. The reliable presence of at least one unconditionally loving and supportive adult relationship provides the opportunity for developing vital coping skills. Children feel empowered to seek guidance and make attempts to work through difficult situations. A responsive adult can reverse the psychological changes that are activated by stress.

MODEL RESILIENCY

Model how to handle stressful situations. Imitation is a powerful way to learn. Show your child how to deal with disappointment and difficult situations by using coping and calming strategies such as deep breathing and labeling emotions. Talking about our emotions can normalize these experiences and teach children how to respond.

ENCOURAGE RISK TAKING

Allow children to take age-appropriate risks, even if you think it may be "too hard" for them. Having the courage to do something difficult is more important than the outcome. Allow children to think about decisions in order to teach them that they can cope when things go wrong.

RESIST RESCUING

Resist the urge to run to your child's rescue immediately. Giving children exposure to challenges they can manage during childhood will help ensure they are better able to deal with stressors in adulthood. Think of it like "immunizations" – a little bit of the pathogen now, whether a virus or stress, helps to build up resistance and protect against the more severe version later on.

IT'S OKAY TO ASK FOR HELP

Being brave does not mean always having to deal with things on your own. Let your child know that being brave and strong means knowing when to ask for help. If they can do it themselves, guide them towards it but resist carrying them.



REFRAME The ability to reframe challenges in a way that feels less threatening is a valuable skill in times of difficulty or disappointment and can help children focus on what they have, rather than what they lost. To build this skill, acknowledge your child's disappointment, then gently guide them away from looking at what the problem has cost them and toward the opportunities it may have brought them. Fostering optimism can literally help rewire the brain to be more optimistic through the experiences they are exposed to. Acknowledge their view of the world and show them the positive side. For example, "It is disappointing when your game gets rained out, what else can we do to make this a great rainy day?"

BUILD BETTER BRAIN FUNCTION Strengthening your child's prefrontal lobe will help them manage their own behaviors and feelings, and increase their ability to develop coping skills. This can be reinforced by doing the following:

- Establish routines and model healthy social behaviors
- Provide opportunities for their own social connections
- Engage in creative play
- Provide an opportunity for independent thinking and decision-making



FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (2014 - rated PG) Gum stuck in his hair signals the start of a disastrous day for 11-year old Alexander. One calamity follows another, but when he tells his family about his misadventures, he finds little sympathy. Alexander begins to wonder if bad things happen only to him, but he soon learns that others in his family are living through their own calamitous days. Alexander's family manages to support each other and ends up even stronger than they were before.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick (2011 - rated PG) Back in middle school after summer vacation, Greg and his older brother Rodrick don't get along and must deal with their parents' attempts to have them bond. But, that is not the only problem they have to deal with as Greg navigates numerous conflicts and embarrassing situations.

Finding Nemo (2003 - rated G) Marlin, a clown fish, is overly cautious with his son, Nemo, who has a foreshortened fin. When Nemo swims too close to the surface to prove himself, he is caught by a diver and horrified Marlin must set out to find him. A blue reef fish named Dory, who has a really short memory, joins Marlin and complicates the encounters with sharks, jellyfish, and a host of ocean dangers.

Finding Forrester (2001 - rated PG-13) In the film, a young African American teenager and a reclusive Pulitzer Prize-winning author find themselves by reaching out to each other and forming a bond of friendship across age, suspicion, and race. This inspiring movie is about how some people "Walk away from their dreams afraid they may fail or worse yet, afraid they may succeed."

Freedom Writers (2007 - rated PG-13) A young teacher inspires her class of "unteachable, at-risk" students to set out on life-changing, eye-opening experiences and learn how to overcome ignorance, misunderstanding, and the negative forces in their own lives to develop tolerance, apply themselves and pursue education beyond high school.

The Karate Kid (1984 - rated PG-13) A kid is being bullied and wants to learn about martial arts in order to defend himself. The Master, Mr. Miyagi, teaches him that martial arts are about much more than "fighting." Life happens and tough things happen sometimes. The lesson behind this movie is that when tough things happen, it's how a person chooses to deal with those things that determine their destiny.

EXERCISE Exercise, especially outdoor activities that occur regularly, actually helps strengthen the brain and make it more resilient to stress by increasing the neurochemicals that can calm the brain during times of stress. If team sports do not appeal to your child, encourage bicycling, walking, throwing a frisbee, hula-hoop spinning, kicking a ball or playing tag.

ACKNOWLEDGE EFFORT When children have a sense of mastery they are less likely to be reactive to future stress and more likely to handle future challenges. Remind children that they can do difficult things by pointing out their efforts in trying something, their strengths, the brave things they do, and encouraging them to make their own decisions.

BUILD PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS Give children the language to learn to solve problems on their own rather than solving their problems for them. Some suggestions: How can we fix this? What has worked before? How can we break this big problem into little pieces? What are some pros and cons of each solution?

DEVELOP GRATITUDE Gratitude is tied to happiness and resilience and can be developed with practice. It can rebuild neural pathways to fight negativity, remain realistic, identify what is controllable, maintain hope and confidence, and improve relationships. Some strategies you can use to build gratitude are:

- Have your child write thank you letters to people who have a meaningful and positive impact on their lives
- Talk with your child daily about the small things or people you appreciated that day
- Keep a gratitude journal and write things you received that day (a smile from a friend, a sunny day, a high five from a teacher)