



Building Resilience in children

What is resilience? Resilience is knowing how to stay calm, being able to stop yourself from getting extremely angry, down or worried when something bad happens. It also means being able to control your behaviour when you are upset so you can bounce back from difficulty.

Teaching your child to be resilient

A vital element of teaching children to build resilience is teaching children that what they THINK affects the way they FEEL. Usually it is not what happens that makes us feel negative emotions, it's the perception and understanding around the situation that creates our feelings. Two children in the exact same situation can perceive a situation differently and therefore one crumbles and gets down and the other is able to control her emotions and bounce back from a minor setback. This is most often because of the child's thinking skills and habits.

Discuss Ways to Think as well as Coping Skills that will Help Your Child to Be Resilient

Introduce your child to the idea of an Emotional Thermometer and explain that feelings like physical temperatures can go from being very low/weak in intensity to very high/strong: You could explain it something like "When something happens to you that you think is bad like someone doesn't say hello or you get a bad mark, you can feel extremely upset, medium upset or just a little upset. A resilient person tries to manage her emotions so that she stays in the medium range of upset and when she gets to the top of the thermometer, she calms down quickly." When you are talking with your child about something that happened at school or home where they were upset, explain that there are some helpful ways they can think about what happened that can strengthen their resilience. One way, is not to let your thinking get the better of you by blowing the badness of what happened out of proportion (making mountains out of molehills).

Things that happen can be truly awful and terrible and other events are just "a bit bad" like being late for an appointment, a bad mark on a test, someone laughs at what you say in class or forgetting to do something. When you are thinking about something bad that happened, it's good to think: "This is bad but it could be worse. It's not a catastrophe, the worst thing in the world." Thinking this way helps you to be calmer and more resilient to a difficult situation.

Habits of Mind that lead to poor emotional resilience:

There is a range of thinking habits that don't help children to be resilient. If we can identify these unhelpful habits, then it's easier to help our child think about a situation in a more healthy way. These are some common negative habits:

- **Self-Downing** – means thinking that I am useless or a total failure when I have been rejected or have not achieved a good result.
- **Needing to be perfect** – means thinking that I have to be successful or perfect in everything important I do
- **I Can't Do It** – means thinking that, when I have not been successful at something important, I am not good at anything and never will be
- **I Can't Be Bothered** – means thinking that life should always be fun and exciting and that I can't stand it when things are frustrating or boring
- **Being Intolerant of Others** – means thinking that people should always treat me fairly, considerately, and the way I want and if they don't then I will get really angry and frustrated