

Top Tips for Fostering Resilience in Children!

What is resilience and how does it promote positive mental health? Can it be taught?

Resilience has been described as the ability to bounce back from adversity. More recently the definition has expanded to include the ability to bounce forward or take on new opportunities or challenges. Both of these are critical life skills and have a big impact on how we live. Interestingly, resilience can be nurtured in children and young people. As a parent, teacher, carer, or person working with young people, we have set out some practical things you can do to help build up resilience in children in your day to day activities.

1. Have confidence in children's ability to solve problems. Never dismiss a problem or make little of it even if you do not think it is that serious. Rather than rushing in to solve all their problems, support them in finding solutions. Never underestimate their ability to solve their own problems.

2. Encourage children from a young age to make small choices. This builds up their confidence and allows them to trust their own decisions, which will help them when they have to make bigger decisions later on.

3. Separate out the child from the behaviour. I love you but I like/don't like your behaviour. So when a child misbehaves, talk about the behaviour as being not good and discuss why they shouldn't behave like that. Similarly, when they perform well or achieve something focus on the performance or the achievement. I love you regardless of whether you are an A student or regardless of whether you misbehave.

4. Practise listening without commenting. Listen for the hidden meaning in what is being said and reflect back emotions and feeling so that the child feels you understand. Be empathetic. Never dismiss an emotion – "you are not crying or you don't feel worried". Help them understand that feelings are a transient state – things will get better.

5. Encourage children to do things for others. Model this but also specifically request they help out. This gives them a sense of belonging.

6. Encourage children to find ways to relax – participating in sport, listening to music, taking a bath, engaging in a creative activity.

7. Model appropriate coping strategies – take time out for yourself, talk through minor stresses and events with them and work on finding solutions.

8. Let them know you will support them no matter what – they can tell you anything no matter what and you will stand by them.

9. Persistence is everything – failure results from giving up. If you sign up you finish out the course of lesson. If you keep trying you will get there. Let them realise that every mistake is an opportunity to learn. Allow them to evaluate their own performance by asking how do you think you did? What can you learn from this?

10. **Enjoy the present** – model taking pleasure in the small things in life and acknowledging what you have – teach children to be grateful for what they have. Most of all have fun.