

BUILDING RESILIENCE IN YOUR CHILD...



A short guide to helping kids develop the skills to manage through tough times. While it may not be possible to raise our children in a world free from hardship and adversity, it is possible to provide them with a foundation that will help them to respond to and recover from life's challenges in an effective way.

IN THIS RESOURCE:

- What is resilience?
- How can you teach resilience to children
- 10 steps to nurturing resilience

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

The American Psychological Association defines resilience as “the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or even significant sources of stress”.

It does not mean that children will not experience feelings of distress or emotional upset; these are a normal part of life. What it does mean, is that kids with higher resilience, will be able to manage these emotions more effectively.



HOW CAN I TEACH MY CHILD TO BE MORE RESILIENT?

One of the most important things that tamariki need to build resilience is a strong foundation of support and connection. Teaching kids from a young age the importance of engaging with others and maintaining family connections has been shown to aid in the development of empathy and building resilience.

“Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi engari he toa takimano”
“My strength is not that of the individual, but that of the collective”

The family unit serves as a security blanket for children during the early years of development. It provides comfort and safety for children as they learn to make sense of the world around them. Key figures in a child's life, particularly parents, caregivers and close family members, hold the greatest influence over the way children will develop their understanding of the world. Tamariki who receive ongoing care, support and security from key attachment figures are more likely to view the world through a more positive lens and develop a stronger sense of resilience.

10 STEPS FOR NURTURING RESILIENT CHILDREN...

1. STRUCTURE

For young children, maintaining a routine is especially important for developing resilience.

Children crave structure and having a sense of consistency can provide comfort, especially in times of distress.

A predictable routine allows children to feel safe and to develop a sense of capability in handling their lives. As this sense of capability is strengthened, they can begin to tackle larger changes and challenges in their lives.



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2. MAINTAINING CONNECTIONS

Teach tamariki the importance of making and maintaining social and whānau connections. Encourage your children to engage, to listen and to support others. Strong social connections will ensure your child has a strong support system, which will strengthen their resilience.



3. SELF CARE

Teach your child the importance of taking care of themselves. Basic self-care forms the foundation for a child's ability to adapt, to grow and to endure through tough times. Healthy eating, exercise, plenty of sleep and engaging in spiritual or cultural practices are all examples of self-care which can strengthen a child's resilience.



4. PROMOTE COMPETENCE

We can help our children to feel more competent by focusing on their individual strengths, empowering them to make their own decisions and by focusing on mistakes as individual instances rather than as reflections of our children's character.



5. BUILDING CONFIDENCE

We can build up our children's confidence by providing plenty of praise and encouragement and by acknowledging their successes and achievements. Be careful to only offer praise when it is genuine.



6. CONTRIBUTION

Encouraging contribution around the home and out and about will help your child to see themselves as a valuable part of the world. It provides children with a sense of purpose and motivation.

7. SET GOALS

Help your children to set achievable goals. Talk to them about things they might like to achieve and work together to make a plan about how your child might reach those goals. Guide and support your child as they work towards their goal. Having set goals helps children give something to focus on and work towards, especially through adversity.

8. POSITIVE SELF VIEW

A child's view of self influences the lens through which they interpret their interactions and experiences in their social world and vice versa. Fostering a positive view of self and experience through use of praise, affirmation and a focus on strengths, will help to shape your child's self view in a positive way.



9. MODEL RESILIENCE

Ensure you share your own positive outlook with your child and allow them to see you demonstrating resilience in times of adversity. Develop your own effective coping strategies and model these to your child.



10. MORALS AND VALUES

Instilling your child with a strong sense of morals and values will provide them a foundation from which to draw strength in times of hardship. Teach your child the values that are important to your whānau. Community, spirituality, kindness and compassion are all examples of values which can help grow your child's resilience.

REFERENCES:

KidsLink. (2021). Building Resilience in Children. <https://kidslink.co.nz/building-resilience-in-children-2/>
American Psychological Association. (2021). Resilience Guide for Parents and Teachers. <https://www.apa.org/topics/resilience/guide-parents-teachers>