

RESILIENCE: OVERVIEW FOR PARENTS & CAREGIVERS

IS MY CHILD LACKING RESILIENCE?

We have a belief in our world that happiness is "good" and sadness is "bad" and this is perpetuated everywhere we turn. There is always something telling us how we can be happier, or what we can buy that will make us more vibrant or positive. Kids are growing up in a world where there is an underlying assumption that sadness is scary and should be avoided, so it's easy for kids to start thinking that their own difficult emotions are bad or wrong. This causes them to reject themselves when they are experiencing these emotions, which is why they struggle to cope when things are hard.

HOW CAN I BOOST MY CHILD'S RESILIENCE?

As a parent, the best thing you can do for your child is to teach them that all feelings are normal, and that they can relate to their feelings in a healthy way. We want to help them see that sadness and disappointment are useful because they tell us what we care about, and that it is normal to feel scared or lonely as a result of the pandemic and self-isolation. This will help them get out of cycles like shutting down, becoming aggressive, or having a meltdown when they are upset. Below is a step-by-step process for responding to your child's emotions when they are overwhelmed or acting out.

TIPS FOR BOOSTING YOUR CHILD'S RESILIENCE:

1. SOOTHE THE FEELING, DON'T FIX THE PROBLEM

You can say: "I understand you're upset, it's normal to feel frustrated and sad when we are struggling with something! What does it make you feel like? How can we soothe your emotion?" Focus on things like taking long slow deep breaths, or going outside for a bit and then coming back to the task at hand.

2. HELP THEM LOCATE THE EMOTION IN THEIR BODY

You can say: "Where do you feel that sensation in your body? What does it feel like? Can you draw it for me?" This technique brings them out of a sense of overwhelm and helps them relate to their feeling directly, which allows it to pass more quickly and less dramatically.

3. NORMALISE STRUGGLE

You can give examples of people who have gone through hard things and reflect on the hard things you have faced – always showing them that people move through these things and that all hard experiences pass. For example you can say: "Life can be challenging for all of us – even people that you think might lead perfect lives will be struggling in their own way, it's part of everyone's life".

4. SHOW THEM A PATHWAY FOR GROWTH

Help them reflect on the hard things they have faced in the past and what they gained from them. For example you can say: "Remember when that person was mean to you last year, and how you got through it and learned how strong you are, and what makes a good friend?" Use that to lead into their current situation: "What is the lesson you can learn from what you are facing now?"