

# Resilience: Helping Your Children Rise Above the Challenges of Life

Every parent's dream is to raise perfect children who have no worries and lead charmed, happy lives free of pain and hurt. We dream that we can keep our children safe from loss, heartache, and danger. But even if we could, would it really help them?

If we want our children to experience the world as fully as possible—with all its pain and, thankfully, with all its joy—our goal will have to be *resilience*. Resilience is the ability to rise above challenges and live in this less-than-perfect world while moving forward with hope and confidence.

Here is information from the American Academy of Pediatrics about how you can help your children be more resilient.

## Seven Cs of Resilience

All children have abilities and strengths that can help them cope with everyday life. As parents, you can develop your children's resilience by paying attention to their strengths and building on them. But what are the ingredients of resilience? There are 7 essential components, all interrelated, called the 7 Crucial Cs.

- **Competence**—the ability to handle situations effectively.
- **Confidence**—the solid belief in one's own abilities.
- **Connection**—close ties to family, friends, school, and community give children a sense of security and values that prevent them from seeking destructive alternatives to love and attention.
- **Character**—a fundamental sense of right and wrong that helps children make wise choices, contribute to the world, and become stable adults.
- **Contribution**—when children realize that the world is a better place *because they are in it*, they will take actions and make choices that improve the world. They will also develop a sense of purpose to carry them through future challenges.
- **Coping**—children who learn to cope effectively with stress are better prepared to overcome life's challenges.
- **Control**—when children realize they can control their decisions and actions, they're more likely to know they have what it takes to bounce back.

## Building Resilience

Parents are the most important source of love, support, and guidance for their children and, therefore, have the greatest effect on children's resilience. Here's how you can make a difference.

- **Love.** To be strong, your children need love, absolute security, and a deep connection to at least one adult.
- **Let go.** Sometimes the best thing you can do to help your children learn is get out of their way while allowing them to figure things out on their own.
- **Expect the best.** Your children will live up or down to your expectations of them, so expect them to be kind, caring individuals who will give their best effort.
- **Listen.** Listening to your children attentively is more important than any words you can say. This applies to routine situations as well as times of crisis.

- **Set a good example.** Nothing you say is as important as what your children see you doing on a daily basis.
- **Encourage.** Your children can only take positive steps when they have the confidence to do so. They gain that confidence when they have solid reasons to believe they are competent.
- **Teach.** If your children are to develop the strength to overcome challenges, they need to know they can control what happens to them. Helping your children develop a wide range of positive coping strategies will prepare them to overcome many challenges and make them far less likely to try many of the risk behaviors we all fear.

If you feel your children need more help than you can give them, be assured that mental health professionals who work with children have the training to ensure a safe, even enjoyable experience. Ask your children's pediatrician, school counselor, or trained professional at your place of worship for recommendations and then speak to the professional to feel confident you have found the right match for your children.

## For More Information

American Academy of Pediatrics  
[www.aap.org](http://www.aap.org) and [www.HealthyChildren.org](http://www.HealthyChildren.org)

Center for Parent and Teen Communication  
[www.parentandteen.com](http://www.parentandteen.com)

Adapted from *Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings* by Kenneth R. Ginsburg, MD, MS Ed, FAAP.

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