Building Resilience in Young Children

Booklet for parents of children from birth to six years

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What is this booklet about?

Building Resilience in Young Children is a resource to help you boost your child's ability to bounce back from life's challenges and thrive. It is filled with:

- up-to-date information
- helpful tips
- parent stories
- links to other resources

The ideas and resources are based on research and have been tested by parents.

The stories were provided by parents of young children. These parents hope that their experiences will help you and your family get through life's ups and downs.

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet is for parents of children from birth to six years. Many of the ideas will also help families with older children. Some of the tips in this booklet apply to all children from birth through six years. Other tips have been given an age range that refers to general stages of child development. Please note that the age range is only a guideline. Every child develops at his or her own rate.

While we refer to "parents" in this booklet, it will help anyone who cares for children – like grandparents, relatives, foster parents and other adults.

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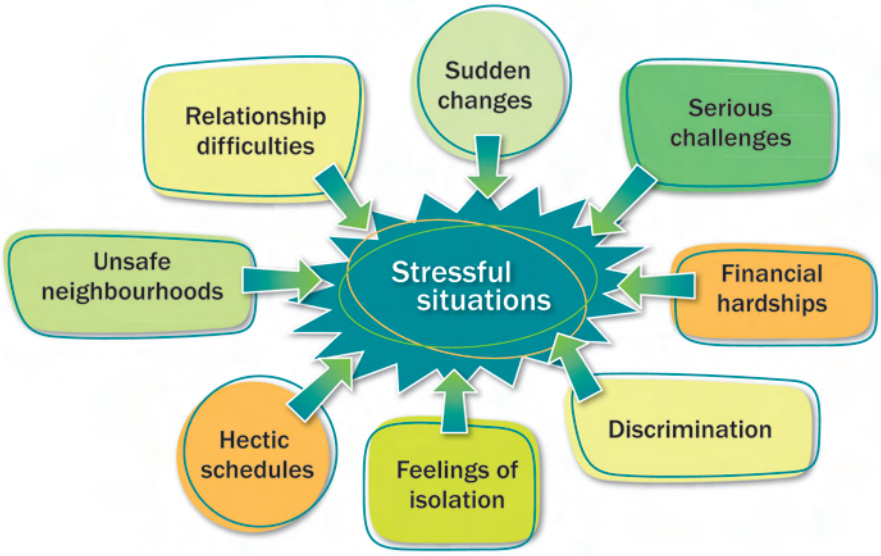
1. Introduction to Resilience

Are you looking for ways to help your child become more confident? Handle everyday frustrations better? Bounce back from life's challenges? This booklet offers tips and resources to build your child's resilience.

What is resilience?

Life can be challenging and may include many stressful situations. Parents and children can feel overwhelmed by different things at different times like:



Resilience is the ability to steer through serious life challenges and find ways to bounce back and to thrive.

We are born with the capacity for resilience. But resilience is not something we have or don't have. We work on it throughout our lives. And we need to start as early as possible. Parents are the most important people to help build their children's resilience.

Children learn a lot by watching their parents. When parents cope well with everyday stress, they are showing their children how to do the same.

Why is it important to develop resilience?

Resilience makes a big difference in people's lives. People who respond to hardships with resilience are:

- healthier and live longer
- happier in their relationships
- more successful in school and work
- less likely to get depressed

What builds resilience?

Many of the things that support healthy development in young children also help build their resilience. These things include:

- a secure bond with a caring adult
- relationships with positive role models
- opportunities to learn skills
- opportunities to participate in meaningful activities

In the next section, you will learn how you can help your child develop strengths and gather supports that build resilience.

"One of the keystones for me about resilience is that it is very hopeful – that building it is an ongoing process and you're never too old to learn new tricks. This is a very hopeful message for any parent."

– PARENT

2. What Do We Need to Know to Build Resilience?

Why are both inner strengths and outside supports important?

We need both outside supports and inner strengths to build our resilience.

Outside supports include:

- caring relationships
- positive role models in families and communities
- community resources such as community centres, parent-child drop-in centers, faith groups, or support programs for children with special needs

Inner strengths include:

- self-control
- thinking skills
- confidence
- positive outlook
- responsibility and participation

Outside supports and inner strengths work together to develop our resilience.

Refer to page 19 to learn more about outside supports and inner strengths.

3. Building Caring Relationships

Why are caring relationships important?

"I have two older children in hockey and so we're quite busy with that. I am also busy with school because I am taking a course and I am working. So, I am really trying to balance everything. Last week I was busy doing some homework before we went to hockey; and I think my youngest child was feeling left out. She said, 'I want to play a game with you. We never play games together anymore.' So, I spent some time playing a game with her. It wasn't a long time, maybe 20 minutes or so. And I could see she felt better. It made her feel that I was listening to her, too. A lot of times kids know when you're not really listening. So being able to really listen and spend time with them makes a big difference with your relationship."

– PARENT

Building a close, loving relationship with your children is the most important thing you can do to support their resilience. Why? Children do best when they feel loved, understood and accepted, and are protected from harm. Feeling wanted and loved helps us get through the hard times in life.

Children learn to feel safe and secure through a close attachment with at least one caring person. They also learn that their needs will be met. All of this gives them the confidence to explore their world.

Caring relationships provide accepting places where children can learn to regulate their:

- bodies
- feelings
- attention
- thoughts
- behaviour

Positive daily interactions with parents teach children how to have caring relationships with other important people in their lives. And it makes it easier for them to reach out to others when they need help.

Tips for building caring relationships

- **Give attention and affection – lots of smiles and hugs.** This makes your children feel secure, loved and accepted.
- **Play with your children.** Playing together is a great way for you to connect, get to know them better and have fun. It's also a great way for children to develop physical, imagination and social skills.
- **Comfort your children.** When children are hurt or frightened, sad or angry, being comforted helps them feel as if they're not alone with their big feelings. They will feel closer to you and learn healthy ways to comfort themselves and others as they get older.
- **Listen with interest** to your children's feelings, thoughts and ideas. This lets them know you think what they have to say is important.
- **Show empathy.** Empathy means seeing things from other people's point of view. This doesn't mean you have to agree with them. It just means that you are letting them know you understand how they feel. When children feel understood, it's easier for them to try to understand others. Empathy is the foundation for developing caring relationships with other people.
- **Help your children identify and express their feelings** (glad, sad, mad, scared, etc.). Point out that other people have these feelings, too.
- **Reduce TV time.** Experts recommend that children under 2 years should not watch any TV. Children between 2-4 years should watch less than 1 hour per day. Instead, find things to do that build your relationship, like reading together or going to the park.
- **Read or tell your children stories** about people who show compassion, kindness and understanding for others.

4. Being a Positive Role Model

Why is being a positive role model important?

"If we're strong, our children will learn that from us. For example, if something goes wrong and I'm just sitting there crying, this is what he is going to do if something goes wrong in his life later. But if I show him that I can take a situation and move forward from it, then he will know, 'Hey, I can get out of this.' I think the best way for him to learn is by watching us be a certain way in difficult situations, so he can be that way when he grows up."

– PARENT

Young children copy what others say and do. Parents and other adults can learn to be positive role models by handling difficult situations with resilience.

When parents stay calm and flexible in dealing with life's challenges, they are teaching their children positive ways to handle stress.

Tips for being a positive role model

- **Take care of your health.** Show children that it is important to eat healthy foods, get enough sleep and exercise regularly. These reduce daily stress. They give us the mental and physical strength to deal with more serious challenges.
- **Show understanding, compassion and kindness.** Imagine what it is like to walk in other people's shoes.
- **Take three deep breaths when you're stressed.** *Breathe in slowly* to the count of three and then *breathe out slowly* to the count of three. *Repeat three times* to relax your body and get control of your emotions.
- **Be in charge of your emotions.** It is OK to have all kinds of feelings. It is healthy to express them in constructive ways.
- **Be patient.** Keep on trying even when things are frustrating. Show patience with your children when they are trying.
- **Let go of being perfect.** Remember mistakes are just part of learning.
- **Stop and re-think.** When things go wrong, try not to jump to conclusions. Ask yourself: *"How else can I think about this?" "What parts can I control?" "What else can I do?"* Take a moment before you respond.
- **Take responsibility for your own feelings and actions** in front of your children: *"Oops, I just made a mistake on this, but I can make up for it by doing…"* or *"I'm sorry I yelled at you. Next time, I'm going to stop and calm down before I speak."*
- **Use humour.** It reduces stress and helps us look at challenging situations with a positive outlook.
- **Stay positive.** Enjoy simple pleasures. Look for the upside to challenges. This encourages us to keep trying. It also helps us learn from these experiences.
- **Reach out for support.** Everyone needs help sometimes.
- **Reach out to help others** who are going through difficult times.

Role Modelling for Resilience

When parents...

Kids Learn to...

When parents...	Kids Learn to...	
SHOW AFFECTION & ATTENTION	• Feel loved & connected	• Have a sense of worth
LISTEN/UNDERSTAND	• Feel understood & accepted	• Understand others
STAY CALM	• Calm themselves	• Handle stressful situations
SHOW PATIENCE	• Wait	• Develop patience
STOP & RE-THINK	• Stop and think	• Be creative problem-solvers
SHOW POSITIVE OUTLOOK	• Appreciate the positives in life	• Be hopeful (optimistic)
VIEW MISTAKES as OK	• See mistakes as part of learning	• Try new things
KEEP TRYING	• Keep trying	• Achieve goals
SEE STRENGTHS	• See their own strengths	• Feel confidence
TAKE RESPONSIBILITY & BE INVOLVED	• Be responsible & involved	• Feel they belong

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5. Gathering Community Resources

Why is reaching out to community resources important?

Reaching out for help is part of building resilience.

Sometimes it is hard to ask for help because we think it makes us look weak or incompetent. The truth is, asking for help is a sign of strength and mental health. We can teach our children that everyone needs help sometimes.

There are many ways to get through the tough times. One way is to ask for support from family, friends and faith or cultural groups.

Another important way to handle hard times is to reach out to groups in your community that help families with young children. These groups may offer programs to help parents learn to reduce stress, handle children's challenging behaviours, or support their special needs.

Building a network of people that you can count on is very important. And it helps build your resilience at the same time.

"I entered this world of having a child with special needs thinking, 'Things like that don't happen to people like me.' But once I was in it, I felt so isolated. I felt I had no one who was similar to me because none of my friends or family had been through anything like this. For the first year and a half, it was just me and my son pretty much. I would go to all his therapy and appointments, and I felt like if this was going to work, I had to do it. But then I found the organization for children with special needs in my community. My son started to go to the baby group and I talked to the staff and other parents, and I just felt so supported. I couldn't believe I actually found these people who knew what I was going through and had helped other families. It was a huge, huge relief and I am so grateful to the organization for helping me."

– PARENT

Tips for teaching children how to reach out

- **Tell your children it is OK to ask for help.** Sit with them and think of all of the people they could reach out to for help, if necessary.
- **Create a 'Help Signal' with your children.** Let them know that some problems need adult help. Choose a code word or signal that they can use to alert you (or another caring adult).
- **Read or tell stories** about how others reach out to give or get a helping hand.

6. Developing Self-Control and building self-regulation

"My son was having trouble at kindergarten. He was hitting others and running around the class and he got suspended. So, I started modeling some of the things I learned in the 'Bounce Back & Thrive!' group for parents. I taught him how to calm down by using deep breathing, blowing imaginary bubbles and counting to 10. When he returned to school, I wrote a note to his teacher to let her know how useful these techniques were for calming him. A few days later the teacher wrote back saying they were using the techniques in the class and found them very useful for everyone! My son has been less frustrated and is now having better days."

– PARENT

Why is self-control important?

Self-control is an inner strength that plays an important part in developing self-regulation.

Self-regulation is how we adjust our *feelings, actions, attention, thoughts and bodies* so that we can handle different situations without getting overwhelmed. We need to "regulate" ourselves to make sure we have enough energy, alertness or calmness to deal with every-day life or extra stress. Children learn to self-regulate through their daily interactions with caring adults.

Self-regulation helps us handle life's disappointments, worries and frustrations. It makes it easier to focus on goals, finish what we start and wait for things we want. These are all important to building resilience.

Self-control skills help us develop our ability to self-regulate. There are simple ways that you can help your children develop self-control skills.

Tips for helping children develop self-control to build self-regulation

- **Make sure your children get enough sleep and eat healthy food.** When children are tired or hungry, it is very hard for them to practice self-control skills and regulate their behaviour.
- **Practice deep breathing to calm yourself down and focus your attention.** You can use any of the following ideas to help children 3 years and older learn deep breathing, too:
  - **Pretend to blow up a balloon** in their bellies ("belly balloons"). When they take a slow, deep breath "in", their belly inflates like a balloon. When they let their breath "out", their belly deflates just like letting the air out of a balloon.
  - **Imagine breathing in their favourite smell** (like chocolate) and then slowly blowing out an imaginary candle. *"Breathe in chocolate, blow out the candle."*
  - **Blow bubbles together** (just mix liquid dish soap and a little water or check the Internet for other "bubble recipes").

– **Hold younger children "belly-to-belly" and do deep breathing –** this is a wonderful way to calm yourself and your infant or toddler at the same time!

It's important for children to practice using deep breaths when they are not upset so that they can do it easily when they are upset. You can practice anytime, anywhere – waiting in lines, at a red light, after reading a book together, etc.

- **Help your children picture something pleasant** (like a favourite animal or a special place). This helps them to focus on something soothing and calming when they are feeling upset or afraid.
- **Help your children practice waiting.** Learning to develop the patience to wait for things is an essential life skill. There are many ways you can help children 2-1/2 years and older practice waiting:
  - **Teach them little rhymes** like *"Count to eight, it helps me wait: 1-2-3-4-5-6-7-8!"* Ask them to say it with you. Rhymes, chants and songs help children focus their attention on something else while they are waiting.
  - **Put routines into place that help your children practice waiting.** For example, give them something regular to look forward to like seeing their cousin. Waiting all week for this treat teaches children that it is possible for them to wait.
  - **Praise your children for waiting.** *"It's hard to wait to play with your cousin, but you did it! You are learning how to wait calmly for things you want!"*
  - **Play waiting games** with them like "Red light-Green light" or "Freeze."
- **Encourage your children to keep on trying even when it is hard or frustrating.** *"You can do it! Keep on trying… it just takes a little practice."*

- **Let your children know it's OK to have strong feelings, but not OK to hurt others.** You can teach your children how to express their feelings with words when they're upset. For example, you can say, *"We don't hit. Hitting hurts Jeffery's body. You can tell him you feel mad. Tell him you want a turn when he is finished playing with the truck."*
- **Tell your children that you are there to help calm their strong feelings, if they need you.**
- **Help your children learn to stop and think before they act.** Children 3 years and older can begin to learn that their actions have an effect on others. For example, if they are rough or grab toys, other children may not want to play with them.
- **Read or tell children stories** about how others use self-control.

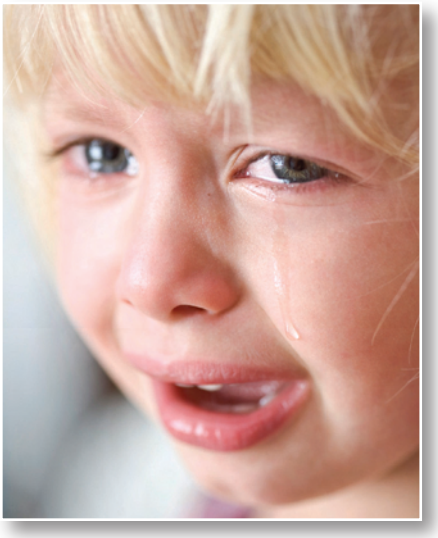
7. Developing Thinking Skills

Why are thinking skills important?

The way we react to things has a lot to do with the way we think about the situation. That is why thinking skills play a big part in our ability to regulate our emotions and behaviour. Here's an example:

Crystal, Katrina's two-year-old daughter, has a tantrum in the shopping mall. Katrina thinks to herself, *"This is embarrassing. Everyone thinks I am a terrible mother. And it's all her father's fault for always giving in to her. He spoils her rotten."*

These thoughts make Katrina feel embarrassed about the situation and angry at her partner and child. She grits her teeth, grabs Crystal's hand and pulls her out of the mall. Crystal wails even louder and everyone stares as they go by. Both Katrina and her daughter are terribly upset. Katrina's anger grows and she can't wait to yell at her partner for spoiling Crystal.



We all jump to conclusions about *why* difficult situations happen in our lives. When we're looking at what *caused* the situation, we often blame someone. We blame ourselves or others for our problems.

Instead of jumping to conclusions, it's very useful to follow three easy steps. These steps help us respond to stressful situations effectively instead of simply reacting. Let's look at how these steps could help Katrina handle her daughter's tantrum differently.

Step 1: **Stop and catch your thoughts**

"This is embarrassing. Everyone thinks I am a terrible mother. And it's all her father's fault for always giving in to her. He spoils her rotten."

Step 2: **Take three deep breaths**

"Wait a minute, this isn't helpful. I need to take some deep breaths so I can be calm enough to calm her down."

Step 3: **"Re-think" the situation by asking yourself –** *How else can I think about this?*

"It's really hot and crowded in here. And it's almost nap time. Crystal is probably just trying to tell me this is too much for her. After all, she's only two."

So, Katrina picks up Crystal, and in a soothing voice says, *"It's OK. I know you are hot and tired. Let's go home and have a cuddle and a nap."* Although Crystal doesn't stop crying immediately, she has calmed down by the time they leave the mall. Mother and daughter feel connected and Katrina decides she won't take Crystal to the mall again so close to nap time.

Katrina used "flexible" thinking to respond to the situation instead of reacting to her first thoughts. She realized blaming her daughter or partner was not going to help the situation.

Instead, she was able to:

- calm herself down and calm Crystal, too
- realize Crystal was tired and hot, but too young to express this with words
- plan for future trips to the mall
- avoid an unnecessary argument with her partner

Helping children develop thinking skills is best done in a caring relationship. This is an important part of self-regulation.

Tips for helping children 3 years and older develop thinking skills

- **Help your children talk about their thoughts.** Often when we ask children to tell us what they are thinking, they shrug their shoulders and say, *"I don't know."* However, questions like, "*What are you saying to yourself inside your head?*" or "*What is your head telling you?*" often helps children to express thoughts that cause their feelings and behaviours.

  For example, a child who refuses to get dressed in the morning may be able to tell us what is actually causing this behaviour. *"I hate daycare! Everyone takes my toys. No one wants to play with me. I hate daycare!!!"*

- **Show empathy for your children's thoughts and feelings.** *"I understand. You're feeling sad and mad about what happens in daycare."* Then, think together about ways to make the situation better.

  "Let's talk with your teacher about helping you enjoy your time at daycare.

  Yesterday, when I picked you up, you were eating snack and laughing with Sanjay. Maybe you and Sanjay could play together today."

- **Gently challenge your children's negative thinking.**
  - **"Always"** thinking like *"Jack always wants to play with someone else"* can be turned around by pointing out the times your child played with Jack.
  - **"Everything"** thinking like *"Now everything is ruined"* can be changed by helping your child see that if one thing goes wrong, it doesn't mean that everything is ruined. Or, if one person doesn't want to play, it doesn't mean that no one wants to play.
- **Play thinking games together.** Children can benefit from playing games that help them think about *"What would happen if…?"* Games like these help children think about their actions and how to handle situations in a positive way.
- **Encourage children to imagine another way to do something –** like a different way to join others at the playground, play with toys or tidy up. This helps them learn there is usually more than one way to do things.
- **Read or tell children stories** about how others overcome obstacles, get along with others or turn a difficult situation around. You could use puppets or stuffed animals to help bring the story alive.

8. Building Confidence

Why is confidence important?

"I think I build my kids' confidence by being there for them. They need support and encouragement. I tell them that I am proud of them, but I also say 'You must be proud of yourself for doing this!' That brings a big smile to their faces. I also support them by telling them not to worry about making mistakes because mistakes are how we learn."

– PARENT

When we have confidence in our abilities, it helps us to respond to problems with resilience. This "I can do it" attitude motivates us to keep trying even when things are difficult. If we keep trying, our efforts are more likely to pay off and we feel a sense of accomplishment.

We start to develop confidence in our ability to make things happen very early in life. When babies cry and their parents respond, they begin to learn they have some control over their environment. They develop a sense of security and learn to trust that their parents will take care of their needs. As they grow, this security and trust allows children to feel safe enough to explore their environment.

The enjoyment children get from exploring their world motivates them to "master" the tasks that come with their age and stage. These accomplishments help children develop confidence in their ability to handle challenges and frustrating situations throughout their lives.

Helping children gain confidence is best done in a caring relationship and is an important part of self-regulation.

Tips for building your children's confidence

- **Encourage your children to keep on trying** even when the task is hard or frustrating. Give children the courage to keep going. *"That's it! You almost did it. Keep going… Good for you. You kept trying and you did it!*
- **Show your children that "Mistakes are OK".** People who believe that mistakes are a natural part of learning are more confident about trying new things. *"That's OK. We all make mistakes. It's how we learn. Now you know to do it differently the next time."*
- **Be a "Strengths Detective".** Pointing out your children's strengths is a much better confidence-builder than focusing on their limitations.

Sometimes, if their behaviour is challenging, it is hard to see their strengths. But all children have them. If we encourage activities that build on their strengths, it motivates them to develop interests they enjoy. When this happens, we often see an improvement in their behaviour.

- **Give your children lots of time to just play.** When children play they can take the time they need to master activities that interest them. This builds confidence and motivation to try new things. Playing also promotes development of flexible thinking and creative problem-solving skills.
- **Set children up for success.** Encourage them to do a task one step at a time. This helps children see their progress step-by-step and motivates them to keep trying. Give them things to do that they are capable of, but also challenge them to learn something new.

  Activities that gently stretch your children's abilities help them tolerate small amounts of "healthy" stress. This shows them that effort is needed to learn new things and solve problems. It also helps them learn to deal with frustrations in daily life.
- **Offer choices.** Simple choices build children's confidence by giving them the chance to make decisions and have some control.
  - **Keep it simple.** Offer only 2 or 3 choices so your children don't feel overwhelmed. *"Do you want to have a banana or a yogurt for snack?" or "It's cold outside. Do you want to wear your hat or pull up your hood?"*
  - **Encourage cooperation.** Offer choices that encourage your children to do what you need them to do. Cooperation is more likely if they feel they have some control in the situation. For example, you can say *"Dinner is ready. Do you want to wash your hands yourself? Or do you want my help?" or "It's time for bed, do you want to walk up the stairs or do you want Daddy to carry you?"*
  - **Keep safety in mind.** For example, we don't give children a choice about wearing a seat belt, bike helmet or holding hands when we cross a busy street.
  - **Encourage your children's positive choices.** *"You made a good choice to put on your mittens. Now you can really play in the snow!" or "You're getting along so well with your sister! It was a great choice to share the blocks."*

- **Help your children be assertive.** Children who stand up for themselves are less likely to be bullied. You can help your children set limits with their brothers, sisters, and friends by practicing how to say *"No!"* or *"I don't like that!"* using an assertive voice and body language.
- **Teach your children ways to solve problems and resolve conflicts.** Help children 3 years and older identify the problem and think of positive solutions. *"There is a problem here because you both want to play with the yellow car. That's making you feel pretty frustrated. Let's think of some ideas to solve the problem."* Then step back and let them try the solutions for themselves.
- **Read or tell children stories** about how others develop their strengths and confidence.

9. Developing a Positive Outlook

Why is a positive outlook important?

"What gives me hope is looking at the situation and counting my blessings. Just being grateful for what I have, and realizing that things are not as bad as they seem. I used to think things are so bad and I was really hard on myself. And now I just think, "Well, things happen..." And I try to be grateful for what I have, like my family and our health. I might not like some of the things they do, but I see that we are healthy and we are a family who loves each other. This gives me hope."

– PARENT

Looking for the positives in life is one of the most important strengths for building resilience. Why? A positive outlook can change a challenging situation into a manageable one. It makes us feel better and builds hope. It also protects us from depression and poor health.

Young children copy the adults around them. If they see their parents showing a positive outlook, it is more likely they will develop a positive outlook, too.

Helping children develop a positive outlook is best done in a caring relationship and is an important part of self-regulation.

Tips for helping children develop a positive outlook

- **See the positives.** You can help your children bounce back from disappointment by teaching them to look for the positives in their daily life. *"It was rainy outside and the picnic was cancelled. So, we had an indoor picnic instead. We didn't let the rain stop our fun!"*
- **Express gratitude and appreciation** for what you have big or small. Children can learn to look for and enjoy the simple pleasures of life such as reading a book together, playing in the park with a friend, or eating a favourite meal.

  At dinner or bedtime, try sharing stories with each other about the simple pleasures of your day. You can also try creating a family "gratitude book" together by gluing pictures from magazines or drawing things you are grateful for. Activities like these build close relationships and create a positive atmosphere in your home.
- **Look for beauty in nature.** Point out a fragrant flower, the feel of a warm breeze or a beautiful sunset. A walk in nature or visit to the park is a great way for children to have positive family time and develop appreciation and respect for their natural world. Being in nature supports well-being at all ages. And it can help children become calm and focused.

"Connecting with nature is very healthy. Being out there – the air, the water, fishing, and gardening. People's healing begins with their spirituality. That's where everything starts. That's where you started. So if you go back to nature you will find your strength there. For Aboriginal people, a lot of strength comes from your traditional way of life."

– GRANDPARENT

- **Have a little laugh.** Humour helps brighten our outlook and is a natural way to connect with others. Children love being silly and are delighted when parents join in with a funny voice or facial expression. They also like it when adults enjoy jokes or funny stories or music with them.
- **Nurture your spirituality to find meaning in things that happen.** This can help us gain a sense of direction and hope during difficult times. There are many ways to develop spirituality in family life:
  - spend time in nature
  - schedule quiet times together
  - participate in a faith group
  - create something together (art, craft, music, stories)
  - help others in need
- **Help children develop "realistic" optimism.** Positive things happen because of planning, problem solving and effort. Help your children be on the lookout for things they can control, like using humour to lighten the situation. Teach them to find ways to turn challenges into opportunities to learn and grow.
- **Read or tell children stories** about others who look for and appreciate the positives in everyday life.

10. Encouraging Responsibility and Participation

Why are responsibility and participation important?

"I find that little children want to help with everything. As a parent, it can be frustrating, especially when you are on a timeline. It feels like 'I don't have time to let him mix the scrambled egg for breakfast' or whatever it is. But I think it's important to let children help when you can, because I have seen how this makes my son's confidence grow, 'I can mix my own egg!' And I hope that allowing him to help out when I can that he will feel like he can help others later on. Or he can ask for help if he needs it. This whole sense of helping others is good for him to develop empathy and gain a sense of responsibility over himself and his life."

– PARENT

Giving young children responsibility for small things gives them a way to contribute to family life and feel good about themselves.

Supporting children to participate in community activities also builds their resilience. Why? It builds positive relationships, provides them with direction in their lives, and gives them opportunities to develop their strengths and talents.

Encouraging children to take responsibility and actively participate makes them less likely to misbehave due to boredom or to gain attention. It builds self-regulation and increases their self-esteem and confidence.

Tips for encouraging children's responsibility and participation

- **Encourage your children to take responsibility** by helping with daily chores. It's often easier to do things yourself, but children benefit when you let them help out. It gives them a chance to cooperate, learn new skills and feel a sense of accomplishment.
- **Encourage your children to think of small ways to help others.** Perhaps they could get a toy, a diaper to help you with a younger child. Or they could make a card for someone who isn't feeling well.
- **Involve your children when you help others.** Let them pitch in when you help an elderly neighbour rake leaves or take out their garbage. This helps children practice kindness, compassion and empathy.
- **Participate in community projects.** Let your children help prepare a community meal or plant and harvest food in the community garden. This kind of participation can be another way for you and your children to meet people, help your community and stretch your food dollars.
- **Help your children learn about and value their own culture.** Involve them in family traditions to celebrate their heritage. Tell them stories about the people they came from. This helps your children feel good about their own identity and connects them to a larger community.
- **Encourage participation** in community activities that build your children's talents and interests (like sports, music, art, etc.). This helps identify their strengths and gives direction, purpose and enjoyment.
- **Read or tell children stories** about others who help out and get involved in community activities.

11. Summary

Resilience *is the ability to get through serious life challenges and find ways to bounce back and to thrive!*

Everyone has the capacity for resilience. Building resilience is something we work on throughout our lives. Parents are the most important people in their children's lives. They have the biggest role to play in helping their children develop resilience.

Together, with the support of other caring family and community members, you can boost your children's resilience through your everyday interactions and modeling. The chart below highlights the **outside supports** and **inner strengths** that work together to build children's resilience.

OUTSIDE SUPPORTS	
Caring Relationships	Helps us feel loved, understood and accepted, and protected from harm. Feeling wanted and loved helps us get through the hard times in life.
Positive Role Models	Helps us see how others persevere, and stay calm and flexible, in dealing with life's challenges. Children learn these life skills by watching and copying adults.
Community Resources	Helps us when we need extra assistance in dealing with hard times. Asking for help is a sign of strength – everyone needs help sometimes.
INNER STRENGTHS	
Self-Control	Helps us handle life's disappointments, worries and frustrations. It makes it easier to focus on goals, finish what we start and wait for things we want.
Thinking Skills	Helps us check our assumptions and find new ways to view challenges, solve problems and get along better with others.
Confidence	Helps us believe in our ability to overcome obstacles and gather the courage to try new things.
Positive Outlook	Helps us manage challenges with optimism and hope.
Responsibility/Participation	Helps give us a sense of purpose that strengthens and motivates us to steer through difficulties and painful experiences.

12. Resources for Parents

To find resources and services for parents in your community, contact:

- Your health care provider
- Your community library
- Your public health unit
- Your Friendship Centre or Band Council
- Your Ontario Early Years Centre

Go to: http://www.reachinginreachingout.com/resources-parents-moreinfo.htm
to view a list of internet resources for parents including:

- child development information
- tip sheets, posters, activities
- children's storybook lists
- books for parents
- videos of parents and young children building resilience
- organizations offering free online parenting resources

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