



Teaching Resilience

Step 1. Have Conversations with Your Child About What it Means to Be Resilient

1. It will be important to select a suitable time to discuss with your child what it means to be resilient. Sometimes, it can be after an event where your child is upset such as not getting invited to a party, or having been chastised by a teacher (or parent or sibling) or before an event such as having to take a test. The conversation can also occur at more restful times such as when your child is getting ready for bed, in the car on the way to school, or on a walk. It could also take place after both of you have seen a movie and are discussing the emotions of the characters and how the characters dealt with difficult situations. Say: "You know, one of the things that make us human is that we feel very strongly about negative things that happen to us and others, like when someone treats us badly or we have something really hard to do. We can get very angry, or worried or down about different things. How we handle our feelings and behaviours at these times is very important. The thing inside us that helps us to cope with these sorts of situations and our emotions is called "Resilience." Resilience means that when we are faced with a challenging or difficult situation or person, we are aware of how we feel and we try to stay as calm as we can be. When we do get very upset, we don't let it get to us by fighting or staying away too long, we calm down within a reasonable amount of time and we bounce back to our work and our friends."
2. After reading a book or watching a movie, discuss with your child the aspects of the character's behavior that showed they were or were not resilient. For example, you can ask: "When the character was separated from his family, how did he feel and behave? Was there a time when he was not resilient and got very angry and depressed and acted in an un-helpful way? Later on, did the character display greater resilience by calming down and bouncing back?"
3. Indicate to your child that resilience is something that everyone can learn (adults included) as they grow up. Say: "From time to time, I'd like to discuss with you ways to think and things to do that can help you learn how to be resilient. Every young person growing up today needs lots of resilience to cope with life at school and home so that they can be as successful and happy as they can be."
4. Have a discussion about the pros and cons of being resilient. Say: "Do you think being calm and being able to calm down and bounce back is a good thing? What are the consequences for someone who gets extremely furious, upset or worried?" See if you can gain agreement with your child that extreme upset, while normal and natural in the face of disagreeable events, is not helpful and is counter-productive and that resilience is the 'way to go.'

Step 2. Describe Examples of Resilience to Practice

Select two or three examples of resilient behavior that you want your child to practice.

Say: "Here are some examples of resilient behaviour that are good to practice to strengthen your resilience (select two or three from the following list): not getting extremely angry and fighting when someone is mean or acts unfairly; not worrying too much about taking a test; not feeling anxious and avoiding meeting someone new; not get extremely down after receiving a bad mark or if someone is mean or excludes you; calming down quickly when upset; bouncing back to work or play after having been very upset.

Step 3. Discuss Ways to Think as well as Coping Skills that will Help Your Child to Be Resilient

1. Introduce your child to the idea of an Emotional Thermometer and explain that feelings like physical temperatures can go from being very low/weak in intensity to very high/strong: "When something happens to you that you think is bad like someone doesn't say hello or you get a bad mark, you can feel extremely upset, medium upset or just a little upset. A resilient person tries to manage his/her emotions so that he/she stays in the medium range of upset and when he/she gets to the top of the thermometer, he/she calms down quickly."
2. When you are talking with your child about something that happened at school or home where they were upset, say: "Honey (or son), there are some helpful ways you can think about what happened that