Mental Health and Wellbeing Spring 2022

Resilience

In this letter I want to talk to you about the importance of resilience.

‘All children are capable of working through challenges and coping with stress. Resilience is the ability to bounce back from stress, adversity, failure, challenges, or even trauma. It’s not something that kids either have or don’t have; it’s a skill that kids develop as they grow.

Resilient children are more likely to take healthy risks because they don’t fear falling short of expectations. They are curious, brave, and trusting of their instincts. They know their limits and they push themselves to step outside of their comfort zones. This helps them reach for their long-term goals and it helps them solve problems independently.

**Stress and Resilience**

All children encounter stress of varying degrees as they grow. Despite their best efforts, parents can’t protect children from obstacles. Children may be ill, move house, encounter [bullies and cyberbullies](https://www.psycom.net/effects-of-bullying), [take tests](https://www.psycom.net/managing-test-anxiety/), [cope with grief](https://www.psycom.net/helping-children-grieve), lose friends, and [deal with divorce](https://www.psycom.net/kids-and-divorce), to name a few. Some of these obstacles might seem small in the eyes of an adult, but they feel large and all-consuming to children.

Resilience helps kids navigate these stressful situations. When children have the skills and the confidence to confront and work through their problems, they learn that they have what it takes to confront difficult issues. The more they bounce back on their own, the more they internalize the message that they are strong and capable.

**Strategies to Build Resilience**

Parents can help children build resilience and confront uncertainty by teaching them to solve problems independently. While the gut reaction of the parent might be to jump in and help so that the child avoids dealing with discomfort, this actually weakens resilience. In experiencing challenges, they can learn to work through them and develop their own problem-solving skills. Without this skill-set in place, children will experience anxiety and shut down in the face of adversity.

**How to help your child: Some thoughts and ideas that might help!**

1. **Build a Strong Emotional Connection**

Spend one-on-one time with your children: children develop coping skills within the context of caring relationships, so it’s important to spend one-on-one time with them. This means no smart phone or devices and focus on your child with no distractions. When children know they have the unconditional support of a parent, family member, or even a teacher, they feel empowered to seek guidance and make attempts to work through difficult situations. Positive connections allow adults to model coping and problem-solving skills to children

1. **Promote Healthy Risk-Taking**

It’s important to encourage children to take healthy risks. What’s a healthy risk? Something that pushes a child to go outside of their comfort zone, but results in very little harm if they are unsuccessful. Examples include trying a new sport, participating in the school play, or striking up a conversation with a shy peer. When children avoid risk, they internalize the message that they aren’t strong enough to handle challenges. When children embrace risks, they learn to push themselves.

1. **Resist the Urge to Fix It and Ask Questions Instead**

When children come to parents to solve their problems, the natural response is to lecture or explain. A better strategy is to ask questions. By bouncing the problem back to the child with questions, the parent helps the child think through the issue and come up with solutions.

1. **Teach Problem-Solving Skills**

The goal is not to promote rugged self-reliance. We all need help sometimes, and it’s important for kids to know they have help. By brainstorming solutions ***with*** children, parents engage in the process of solving problems. Encourage children to come up with a list of ideas and weigh the pros and cons of each one.

1. **Label Emotions**

When stress kicks in, emotions run hot. Teach your children that all feelings are important and that labelling their feelings can help them make sense of what they’re experiencing. Tell them it’s okay to feel anxious, sad, jealous, etc. and reassure them that bad feelings will pass.

1. **Demonstrate Coping Skills**

Deep breathing exercises help children relax and calm themselves when they experience stress or frustration. This enables them to remain calm and process the situation clearly. Other activities to try alongside breathing exercises might be mindfulness colouring or Lego building.

1. **Embrace Mistakes—Theirs and Yours**

Failure avoiders lack resilience. In fact, failure avoiders tend to be highly anxious children. When parents focus on end results, children get caught up in the pass/fail cycle. They either succeed or they don’t. This causes risk avoidance. Embracing mistakes (your own included) helps promote a growth mindset and gives children the message that mistakes help them learn. It can be helpful to talk about a mistake you made and how you recovered from it.

1. **Promote the Bright Side—Every Experience Has One**

Optimism and resiliency go hand in hand. Some children may appear more naturally optimistic than others, but optimism can be nurtured. If you have a mini pessimist on your hands, acknowledge the feelings that lead to pessimistic thinking and teach your child to reframe their thoughts to find the positive.

1. **Model Resiliency**

The best way to teach resilience is to model it. We all encounter stressful situations. Use coping and calming strategies. Deep breathing can be an effective way to work through stress. Always label your emotions and talk through your problem-solving process.

1. **Go Outside**

Exercise helps strengthen the brain and make it more resilient to stress and adversity. While team sports are the most popular method of consistent exercise for children, all they really need is time spent outdoors engaging in a physical activity. If team sports don’t appeal to your child, encourage them or introduce them to bicycling, playing tag, or even just swinging at the playground. These are all great ways for children to engage in free play that also builds resilience.

Resilience helps children navigate the obstacles they encounter as they grow. It’s not possible to avoid stress, but being resilient is one of the best ways to cope with it.

The information provided on this letter has been taken from PSYCOM, the website is shown below. It is well worth a visit.

https://www.psycom.net/build-resilience-children

Helpful charities and organisations

<https://www.mind.org.uk/>



<https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/>



 <https://www.samaritans.org/>

As always, we are here for you, please contact the school by the methods shown below if you need our help and support.

Contact details:

Email your child’s class teacher: teachersname@stjohns.worcs.sch.uk, speak to a member of staff on the playground in the morning at drop off or after school at pick up, phone the office and ask to speak to your child’s teacher, Mrs Lowe, Mrs Taylor or Mrs Love on 01562 745558.

Mrs R. Taylor

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