



## Resilience guide for parents and teachers

Children's problems include adapting to a new classroom, bullying by classmates, or abuse at home, but resilience is the ability to thrive despite these challenges.

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We tend to idealize childhood as a carefree time, but youth alone offers no shield against the emotional hurts, challenges, and traumas many children face. Children can be asked to deal with problems ranging from adapting to a new classroom or online schooling to bullying by peers or even struggles at home. Add to that the uncertainties that are part of growing up in a complex world, and childhood can be anything but carefree. The ability to thrive despite these challenges arises from the skills of resilience.

### **The good news is that resilience skills can be learned.**

Building resilience—the ability to adapt well to adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats, or even significant sources of stress—can help our children manage stress and feelings of anxiety and uncertainty. However, being resilient does not mean that children won't experience difficulty or distress. Emotional pain, sadness, and anxiety are common when we have suffered major trauma or personal loss, or even when we hear of someone else's loss or trauma.

## 10 tips for building resilience in children and teens

### 1. **Make connections**

Teach your child the importance of engaging and connecting with their peers, including the skill of empathy and listening to others. Find ways to help children foster connectivity by suggesting they connect to peers in-person or through phone, video chats, and texts. It's also important to build a strong family network. Connecting with others provides social support and strengthens resilience.

### 2. **Help your child by having them help others**

Children who may feel helpless can feel empowered by helping others. Engage your child in age-appropriate volunteer work or ask for assistance yourself with tasks that they can master. At school, brainstorm with children about ways they can help others in their class or in grades below.

### 3. **Maintain a daily routine**

Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives. Work with your child to develop a routine, and highlight times that are for school work and play. Particularly during times of distress or transition, you might need to be flexible with some routines. At the same time, schedules and consistency are important to maintain.

### 4. **Take a break**

While some anxiety can motivate us to take positive action, we also need to validate all feelings. Teach your child how to focus on something that they can control or can act on. Help by challenging unrealistic thinking by asking them to examine the chances of the worst case scenario and what they might tell a

friend who has those worries. Be aware of what your child is exposed to that can be troubling, whether it's through the news, online, or overheard conversations. Although schools are being held accountable for performance or required to provide certain instruction, build in unstructured time during the school day to allow children to be creative.

**5. Teach your child self-care**

Teach your child the importance of basic self-care. This may be making more time to eat properly, exercise, and get sufficient sleep. Make sure your child has time to have fun, and participate in activities they enjoy. Caring for oneself and even having fun will help children stay balanced and better deal with stressful times.

**6. Move toward your goals**

Teach your child to set reasonable goals and help them to move toward them one step at a time. Establishing goals will help children focus on a specific task and can help build the resilience to move forward in the face of challenges. At school, break down large assignments into small, achievable goals for younger children, and for older children, acknowledge accomplishments on the way to larger goals.

**7. Nurture a positive self-view**

Help your child remember ways they have successfully handled hardships in the past and help them understand that these past challenges help build the strength to handle future challenges. Help your child learn to trust themselves to solve problems and make appropriate decisions. At school, help children see how their individual accomplishments contribute to the wellbeing of the class as a whole.

**8. Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook**

Even when your child is facing very painful events, help them look at the situation in a broader context and keep a long-term perspective. Although your child may be too young to consider a long-term look on their own, help them see that there is a future beyond the current situation and that the future can be good. An optimistic and positive outlook can enable children to see the good things in life and keep going even in the hardest times. In school, use history to show that life moves forward after bad events, and the worst things are specific and temporary.

**9. Look for opportunities for self-discovery**

Tough times are often when children learn the most about themselves. Help your child take a look at how whatever they're facing can teach them "what am I made of." At school, consider leading discussions of what each student has learned after facing a tough situation.

**10. Accept change**

Change often can be scary for children and teens. Help your child see that change is part of life and new goals can replace goals that have become unattainable. It is important to examine what is going well, and to have a plan of action for what is not going well. In school, point out how students have changed as they moved up in grade levels and discuss how that change has had an impact on the students.

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