



FIRST YEAR AT SCHOOL

RESILIENCE

What is resilience and how do we get it?

Everyone's life has ups and downs and to have resilience is to be able to recover and get on with living after 'downs'. Some children have a tough start in life due to things like illness, disability or family troubles. Resilience is what helps children, no matter what their start, to make the most of their education, get employment, make friends and contribute to the community.

Building resilience

Resilient children have three main assets:

- **They feel that they are okay people.** They know that they are loved by their family and by other relatives and friends. They know they are loved because people enjoy their company, are pleased when they do well and take time to help them when they need it.

They know they are lovable because of who they are, not what they do! We show they are lovable when we give them a hug, laugh with them, hold them when they are frightened or sad and teach them when we want to help them learn, not punish them.

Try asking your children how they know that they are loved.
- **They feel that they belong.** Everyone needs a sense of belonging. Children need to feel they belong at home, in the extended family, at school and in their community and culture. Going to family or cultural celebrations says 'We belong'. When children start school they work hard to understand what the rules are and how things are done, so they can belong. If children have a different language or background it can be harder to feel they belong. Other children and families help these children to belong by including them. Just saying 'I missed you' when someone is away gives a sense of belonging. Where do your children feel they belong?
- **They feel that they are capable.** Feeling capable is sometimes called a sense of agency. It means to know you can do things for yourself. We help children with this when we don't just answer their questions, but help them to find an answer when we let them do things for themselves, like dressing and packing their back pack, and when we give them opportunities to try new things for themselves. We support them to solve problems and sometimes we ask them to help us to do something, e.g. a computer skill. If children say 'I can't', we say 'Maybe you can't yet, but you are learning'. We help them see mistakes as a way to learn.

Children don't need all of these things to be resilient, but one is not enough. Children need to be loved, to belong and to feel capable in order to be resilient. These things are called protective factors and the more protective factors children have, the better off they are.

Resilience checklist

If you would like to see how your child is doing with protective factors, the below Resilience checklist, is an extract from Grotberg's *A guide to promoting resilience in children: Strengthening the human spirit* (1995, p. 39), developed by the World Resilience Project:

- ☐ The child has someone who loves him/her totally (unconditionally).
- ☐ The child has an older person outside the home she/he can tell about problems and feelings.
- ☐ The child is praised for doing things on his/her own.
- ☐ The child can count on her/his family being there when needed.
- ☐ The child knows someone he/she wants to be like.
- ☐ The child believes things will turn out all right.
- ☐ The child does endearing things that make people like her/him.
- ☐ The child believes in a power greater than seen.
- ☐ The child is willing to try new things.
- ☐ The child likes to achieve in what he/she does.
- ☐ The child feels that what she/he does makes a difference in how things come out.
- ☐ The child likes himself/herself.
- ☐ The child can focus on a task and stay with it.
- ☐ The child has a sense of humour.
- ☐ The child makes plans to do things.

Remember: Children don't have to have all of these qualities, but the more they have the more likely they are to be resilient in times of trouble.



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