

EVERYDAY RESILIENCY™

PARENTING EDITION

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How to raise resilient, brave, & adaptable children & teens

Dr. Robyne's Everyday Resiliency work invites you to reframe how you think about resiliency. Raising resilient children is not a destination, it's a journey. A journey of learning how to best equip your child to meet life's inevitable challenges. When children are resilient, they are braver, more curious, more adaptable, and able to extend their reach into the world. In the ever-changing landscape of our world, it is crucial for children to develop their personal capacity for resiliency.

What is Everyday Resiliency?TM

Resiliency by definition is the capacity to rally. It is the ability to bounce back and recover from a set-back or difficult experience. It is how we dust ourselves off and get back up when we fall. Thankfully, there is significant evidence to support the idea that resiliency can be taught, fostered, and cultivated. The difference between someone who gives up versus someone who gets up when life hits, has more to do with their upbringing than biology. This understanding is extremely important for parents and supporters as it shows that we have the potential to positively impact our child's capacity to persist despite difficult experiences.

Why does Resiliency Matter?

Resiliency matters because it helps promote social and emotional wellbeing. Children who are resilient are able to successfully navigate their emotions. They can trust themselves and believe that they can likely figure out what they need to. Resilient children also know when to ask for help. Benard's (2004)² research concluded that children who are resilient excel in four key areas of development:

- Social competence (can interact with others)
- Problem solving (just-in-time ability to think and act)
- Self-efficacy (personal confidence in their capacity to deal with difficult challenges)
- Sense of purpose, hope and meaning (optimistic about the future)

Rethinking Resiliency

Life will inevitably provide situations for children to experience challenges and difficulty. The goal as parents is not to eliminate these challenges for our children, but to prepare our children to deal with difficulties effectively. The truth is, parents will not always be there to protect our children from any and all danger or harm, but we can teach them the skills of how to think and act so that they can protect themselves. My scholarly understanding combined with my experience as a mother leads me to believe that our goal should be to ensure our children learn how to cope and thrive in the midst of difficulties so they can bravely grow into their future.

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The 5 Key Pillars of Everyday Resiliency™

The ultimate goal of Everyday Resiliency is to foster a deep and personal sense of being okay, no matter what. We want you to discover what you already have in your head and heart – the skills, talents and gifts - that makes you capable of meeting any obstacle and rising to any challenge. With this steadfast self-awareness, you will live with the conviction that you are okay, and you will be okay. Rather than collapsing under the weight of your world, needing to be perfect all the time, you'll realize that being okay is truly enough.

It starts with the five pillars, and it is never too late to start:

BELONGING, PERSPECTIVE, ACCEPTANCE, HOPE, AND HUMOUR.

BELONGING

We need a home team. Every person needs one champion in their corner to believe in them and protect them. It is the foundation of psychological and physical safety.

PERSPECTIVE

Being able to align your head and heart by operating from your value systems. Learning and knowing how to make what matter most, matter most.

ACCEPTANCE

Honouring that life does not conform to just-world beliefs. That co-existing with parts of our lives outside of our control involves daily practices.

HOPE

Choosing to stay hopeful and living in hope with others is the most powerful place to meet the challenges in our lives. We must protect our morale and trust that our futures are possible.

HUMOUR

In the darkest moments, being able to still hold love, joy, merriment, appreciation, and even reverence while not taking ourselves too seriously is a precious skill set that helps carry the weight of our worlds.

Age Appropriate Resiliency Goals

Resiliency across a child's life span looks different. What it means to be resilient at 5 years old is different than what it means at 15 years old. Hopefully, when children are little, they will only require 'little bounce backs'. The challenges our children face often grow as they do and might require more of a 'comeback'. Learning how to navigate manageable and age-appropriate threats is critical for the development of resiliency. A helpful framework for conceptualizing age appropriate resiliency goals comes to us through the renowned scholar, Erik Erikson and his works:

Stage	Psychological Crisis/Task	What Happens at This Stage
Preschool 3-5 Years	Initiative vs. Guilt	Preschoolers learn to initiate tasks and carry out plans, or they feel guilty about efforts to be independent.
School Age 6-11 Years	Industry vs. Inferiority	Children learn the pleasure of applying themselves to tasks, or they feel inferior.
Adolescence 12+	Identity vs. Confusion	Teenagers work at refining a sense of self by testing roles and then integrating them to form a single identity, or they become confused about who they are.

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3–5 years: initiative vs. guilt

The goal of this age group is to build on the trust and autonomy from their toddlerhood by exploring their Initiative. This means that children start to explore their world in more depth but are not necessarily expected to experience completion or mastery. Exploring their initiative can look like children emptying every toy shelf and starting every book, but not finishing any of these tasks. This can be frustrating for parents who want their child to 'finish what they start', but that is not the purpose of this stage of development. If this natural initiative is too often thwarted, children can begin to develop guilt. We definitely want to minimize this emotional state as it corrodes our children's willingness to take risks, and thus their resiliency. This stage is all about trying! We want to encourage our children to just start. We want them to be curious and to feel free to explore.

What can parents and supporters do?

- Provide unconditional love and safety within the home.
- Teach self-soothing. When children fall down, teach them how to hold their own knee, apply pressure, and rock. Model this behaviour on your own knee. Practice parroting speech (E.g., 'This hurts right now but I am going to be okay. I need to breathe slowly. I am okay.')
- Model behaviour that communicates optimism and confidence. Avoid catastrophic or all-or-nothing language (E.g., 'This is the worst thing ever; This is impossible; or Grade 1 is the most important year of your life!')
- Praise effort and exploration, not mastery or completion. Acknowledge effort, not the end product.
- Help children learn how to acknowledge and label their feelings.
- Help children learn to accept responsibility for their own behavior and understand that their actions have consequences.
- Establish that errors and failures are part of learning as is feedback and guidance toward improvement.
- Incorporate resilient vocabulary (I.e., 'I know you can do hard things'. 'You will figure this one out' — encourages autonomy and reinforces their personal belief and capacity for problem solving). And use language that assures (I.e., 'I am here' — comforts and prompts support and safety if needed).

6–11 years: industry vs. inferiority

The goal for this age group is to think about Industry. This is when children aim to learn how to finish what they start! At this developmental stage, we want to start mastering some fundamental skills. The opposite end of Industry is Inferiority. According to Erikson's work, this developmental stage is when the child starts to develop their own beliefs about their capacity and efficacy, which is essentially their confidence in themselves that they can perform. As parents, we want to encourage children to see that they can do things they previously could not do.

What can parents and supporters do?

- Provide unconditional love and safety within the home.
- Use reminders to help children manage and navigate feelings and experiences.
- Explain and promote behaviours that align with values, rules and expectations.
- Acknowledge follow-through and sticking with harder tasks.
- Balance children's autonomy with your available help.
- Normalize setbacks, challenges, and failures as part of the learning process.
- Encourage children to accept responsibility for their actions and understand consequences.
- Encourage open discussion and negotiation for increasing responsibilities (age appropriate).
- Encourage flexible thinking and self-reflection.
- Teach children about the importance of self-care and self-compassion.

12+ adolescence: identity vs. confusion

During preadolescence and adolescence there is a significant shift in development, moving to an outside the family system focus. The task is for the teenager to determine a sense of self. Questions like 'Who Am I?'; "How do I fit into society?"; "What will I do?"; and "What will my future be like?" are asked. The goal is for the teenager to safely explore their identity by taking risks and trying new ways of being. Through these practices of self-discovery, the teenager can emerge into adulthood with a solid sense of who they are while having the ability to make decisions and problem solve based on their values, ideals, principles, and beliefs.

What can parents and supporters do?

- Understand that young people are trying to figure out the world all over again.
- Listen with the intention of really hearing them not correcting or solving.
- Still make time for one another and include them in family life.
- Engage in their world as a supporter not a rescuer.
- Show respect for them as people.
- Encourage their sense of exploration, play and fun.
- Model health and wellness practices.
- Stay hopeful that their future will be bright and that your teenager is well equipped to problem solve issues both big and small.

