

RESILIENCE: Finding the Silver Lining

Southeast Health Group

Children face many of the same hardships as adults. They experience the divorce of parents, loss of a pet or a grandparent, life-threatening illnesses and the stress and frustrations of poverty. Why is it that some people get beaten down by these experiences and others seem to find the dark cloud's silver lining and rise above them with ease? The answer is resilience.



Resilience is a person's ability to properly adapt to stress and adversity. It is not a rare ability, but a process that can be learned and developed by anyone. Helping children develop resilience is one of the greatest gifts we can give them. Here are 10 tips:

1. **Make connections.** Teach your child how to make friends, including the skill of empathy, or feeling another's pain. Encourage your child to be a friend in order to get friends. Build a strong family network to support your child through his or her inevitable disappointments and hurts.
2. **Help your child by having him or her help others.** Children who may feel helpless can be empowered by helping others. Engage your child in age-appropriate volunteer work, or ask for assistance yourself with some task that he or she can master.
3. **Maintain a daily routine.** Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives.
4. **Take a break.** Endlessly worrying can be counter-productive. Teach your child how to focus on something besides what's worrying him. Be aware of what your child is exposed to that can be troubling, whether it be news, the Internet or overheard conversations, and make sure your child takes a break from those things if they trouble her.
5. **Teach your child self-care.** Make yourself a good example, and teach your child the importance of making time to eat properly, exercise, rest and have fun.
6. **Move toward your goals.** Teach your child to set reasonable goals and then to move toward them one step at a time. Receiving praise for doing so will focus your child on what he or she has accomplished rather than on what hasn't been accomplished, and can help build the resilience to move forward in the face of challenges.
7. **Nurture a positive self-view.** Help your child remember ways that he or she has successfully handled hardships in the past. Help your child learn to trust himself to solve problems and make appropriate decisions. Teach your child to see the humor in life, and to laugh at one's self.
8. **Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook.** Even when your child is facing very painful events, help him keep a long-term perspective, and see that there is a future beyond the current situation that can be good. An optimistic and positive outlook enables your child to see the good things in life and keep going even in the hardest times.
9. **Look for opportunities for self-discovery.** Tough times are often the times when children learn the most about themselves. Help your child take a look at how whatever he is facing can teach him "what he is made of."
10. **Accept that change is part of living.** 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.