

## Problem-Solving

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. Children need to experience discomfort so that they can learn to work through it 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.

## Teach Problem-Solving Skills

The goal is not to promote rugged self-resilience. We all need help sometimes, and it's important for children 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.

## Label Emotions

When stress kicks in, emotions run hot. Teach your children that all 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 usually pass.

## 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 his thoughts to find the positive.

## 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 is important to spend one-to-one time with them. This means you need to put down your smart phone and focus on your child. 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.

## Demonstrating 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.

## Promote Healthy Risk-Taking

In a world where playgrounds are made "safe" with bouncy floor materials and helicopter parenting, it is important to encourage children to take healthy risks. What is 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 a new 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.

## 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 (you or 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.

## Go Outdoors

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 children need is time spent outdoors engaging in a physical activity. If team sports don't appeal to your child, encourage them to introduce them to bicycling, playing tag, or even just swinging at the playground. These are all ways to engage in free play that also builds resilience.

## 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.

## Resist the Urge to Fix and Ask Questions

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 issues and come up with solutions.

## Practical Strategies to Help Children Build Resilience

