



Building Resilience in Children and Teens

Ten Tips for Building Resilience in Children and Teens

1. Make Connections. When we connect with people we get and give support and we strengthen resilience.

- Stay connected with your children by having one-on-one time with them as well as family time.
- Teach your children how to make friends.
- Teach your children the skill of **empathy**. Empathy is the ability to experience and appreciate another person's feelings. You can teach this by talking about it and by showing your children that you understand their feelings.
- Encourage your children to **be a friend in order to have friends**.
- Build a strong family network to support your children through their inevitable disappointments and hurts.
- If you are helping at your children's school (*or you are a teacher*), watch to make sure that no child is being isolated.
- Some families find comfort in connecting with a higher power, whether through organized religion or privately. You may wish to introduce your children to your own traditions of worship.

2. Have your children help others. Children who feel helpless (*especially after the family has moved or a parent has been deployed*) can feel empowered when they help others.

- Engage your children in age-appropriate volunteer work.
- Ask your child to help you with some task she or he will be good at.
- If you are helping at your children's school (*or if you're a teacher*), brainstorm with children about ways they can help others.

3. Stick to a daily routine. Sticking to a routine can be comforting to children, especially younger children who crave structure in their lives. Encourage your children to develop their own routines.



TOP 10 TIPS

1. **Make connections**
2. **Have your kids help others**
3. **Stick to a daily routine**
4. **Take a break**
5. **Teach children self-care**
6. **Move toward goals**
7. **Encourage kids to see themselves in a positive light**
8. **Keep things in perspective**
9. **Look for self-discovery opportunities**
10. **Accept that change is part of life**



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4. Take a break. Try to have some fun and not focus too much on worry and anxiety.

- Teach your children how to focus on something besides what's worrying them.
- Make sure you're alert to anything troubling your children that may come from being exposed to the news, things they might come across on the Internet, or conversations they might have overheard. Gently help your children take a break from these things if they find them upsetting.
- If you're helping at your children's school or you are a teacher, build in unstructured time during the school day to allow children to be creative. Art projects (painting, drawing, sculpture, puppets) are a great way for kids to creatively express their feelings. You can do this at home, too.



5. Teach your child self care. Teach by example. The best way for your children to learn the importance of self care is for you yourself to eat properly, exercise, and get the right amount of sleep.

- Make sure your children have time for fun.
- Make sure that your children haven't scheduled every moment of their lives with no "down time" to relax.
- Caring for themselves and having fun will help your children stay balanced and better able to deal with stress.



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6. Move toward your goals. Teach your children to set reasonable / goals and then to move toward them one step at a time. This can help build the resilience to move forward in the face of challenges.

- Moving toward goals. Give your children praise for moving toward their goals (even if the steps are small). Doing this will focus your children on what they have accomplished rather than on what they haven't (or haven't yet) accomplished.
- If you're helping at your children's school or with their homework:
 - For young children: Break down large assignments into small, achievable goals
 - For older children: Acknowledge accomplishments on the way to larger goals.

Create a goals project. Have your children write one goal and create a form that keeps track of their progress. Post this form on the refrigerator or another place where they will see it.

For example:

Goal: To make a book of poems and pictures for Dad while he is in Iraq.

Poem # & Title Date Completed In Binder?

Poem #1- Sunshine October 15, 2010 Yes

Poem #2- Hope October 20, 2010 Still coloring it.

Poem #3

7. Encourage your children to see themselves positively. Help your children remember ways that they have successfully handled hard times in the past and then help them understand that these past challenges helped them build the strength to handle future challenges.

- Help your children learn to trust themselves to solve problems and make positive decisions.
- Share with your children the benefits of seeing the humor in life, and the ability to laugh at themselves.
- If you're helping at your children's school (or if you're a teacher), help children see how their individual accomplishments contribute to the well-being of the class as a whole. You can also do this at home.



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

Even when your children face very painful events and the absence of a parent, help them look at the situation in a broader way and keep a long-term perspective. Although your children may be too young to maintain a long-term outlook on their own, help them to see that there is a future beyond the current situation and that the future can be good.

- An optimistic and positive outlook not only helps children see the good things in life, it also helps them to keep going through even the hardest times.
- If you're helping at your children's school or if you're a teacher, use history to show that life moves on after bad events.
- Read age-appropriate books and watch age-appropriate movies together that focus on children coping with a tough experience and getting through it. Talk about these books or movies with your children.

9. Look for opportunities for self-discovery. Tough times are often the times when children learn the most about themselves.

- Help your children see that what they are facing can teach them "what they are made of."
- If you're helping at your children's school or if you're a teacher, consider leading discussions focused on what each student has learned after facing a tough situation.

10. Accept that change is part of living. Change can often be scary for children and teens.

- Help your children see that change is part of life.
- Talk with your children about the ways change can be positive.
- If you're helping at your children's school or if you're a teacher, remind students of the ways they've changed as they've come up through the grades and discuss how these changes have affected them.



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