Building Resilience through Relationships

Institute for Early Learning
12011 Government Center Parkway, Suite 920
Fairfax, VA 22035

Photo courtesy of K. Quist

Fairfax County Office for Children

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Resilience
The ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.
Everyone is Resilient

Think about a time when you had to cope with a serious problem or endure an extremely stressful situation.

What strategies or resources did you use to help you get through the situation?
What can a rubber band teach us about resilience?

Photo courtesy of K. Quist
Why is it important to develop resilience?

People who respond to hardships and stress with resilience are:

- Happier in their relationships.
- Much less likely to suffer from depression.
- More successful at school and work.
- Healthier and live longer.
Stress

Stress is an unavoidable part of every child’s life.
Where does children’s stress come from?
• Internal.
• Environmental.
• Familial.
What are some common causes of **internal stress** that a child might experience?
What are some common causes of stress that come from the environments children are exposed to?
What are some common sources of stress that come from the family?
Common stressors at various stages of development:

- Infants (birth – 16 months).
- Toddlers (16 months - 3 years).
- Preschool (3 – 5 years).
- School-age.
Common Causes of Infant Stress

- The birth experience.
- Introduction to group care.
- Separation anxiety.
- Stranger anxiety.
- Working to reach developmental milestones.
- Illness/chronic condition.
Common Causes of Toddler Stress

- A new sibling.
- Toilet learning.
- Social expectations.
- Refining physical skills.
- Independence.
- Developing language.
Common Causes of Preschool Stress

- Larger child care group sizes.
- Developing peer relationships.
- Adult expectations.
- Over-scheduled day.
- Lack of physical activity.
Common Causes of School-Age Stress

- School work.
- Lack of fit between school and the child’s learning style.
- Bullying.
- Peer relationships.
Factors That Influence Resilience

A child is more likely to have a **positive outcome** when **protective factors outweigh** (are greater than) risk factors.

A child is **more vulnerable** when **risk factors outweigh** (are greater than) protective factors.

Stress as illustrated on a balance scale: protective factors outweigh risk factors, protecting a child from stress.
Internal Protective Factors for Infants and Toddlers

- Attachment/Relationships.
- Self-Regulation.
- Initiative.
Strong Attachments - Strong Relationships

Infants and toddlers with strong attachments/strong relationships:

- Respond positively to adult attention.
- Show affection for familiar adults.
- Seek comfort from familiar adults.
- Express a variety of emotions.
- Calm down with help from a familiar adult.
- Make and keep eye contact.
Self-Regulation

Infants and toddlers who are developing self-regulation:

- Handle frustration well.
- Accept another choice when the first choice is not available.
- Adjust to changes in routine.
- Have regular sleeping and eating patterns.
- Easily transition from one activity to another.
Initiative

Infants and toddlers who exhibit initiative:

- Imitate the actions of others.
- Keep trying when unsuccessful.
- Explore surroundings.
- Try to do things for themselves.
- Show interest in what others are doing.
- Play with other children.
- Act in ways that encourage others to show interest in them.
Internal Protective Factors for Preschool and School-Age Children

- Having a flexible temperament.
- Being affectionate.
- Exhibiting empathy.
- Being persistent.
Internal Protective Factors for Preschool and School-Age Children

- Accepting responsibility.
- Being hopeful and trustful.
- Communicating well.
- Using positive self-talk.
- Seeking help from trusted adults.
Strategies to Support Children in Building Resilience

- Build trusting and loving relationships with children.
- Set clear and consistent rules and routines.
- Be a positive role model.
- Use encouragement instead of praise.
Strategies to Support Children in Building Resilience

- Make social and emotional health a major goal of your program.
- Provide nutritious food and adequate rest.
- Encourage connections to nature and the outdoors.
- Teach children relaxation skills.
Relaxation Skills for Children

Belly Breathing

Muscle Relaxation
How full is your bucket?

It is important that we take care of our own needs in order to be able to provide support to children.

Only when we have taken care of our own needs can we be fully present and available to support children and their families.
How does adult stress influence your ability to support children?

- Difficulty forming attachments and relationships with children.
- Struggles with the ability to model social and emotional competence.
- Direct negative effects on children.
Be a Positive Role Model for Resilience

- Take care of your health.
- Show understanding, compassion and kindness.
- Take three deep breaths when you’re stressed.
- Use humor.
- Stay positive.
- Take responsibility for your feelings and actions.
- Reach out for support.
Closing Thought

When we help children build resilience, it is like providing an umbrella in a storm.

It may not stop the rain, but it will protect them from its effects.
Resources

- Center for Resilient Children.
- Center for Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation.
- Reaching In, Reaching Out.