



# Resilience Summary

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## Why Resilience?

Your child's openness to engage in manageable challenges and recover from difficult experiences are essential to developing lifelong resilience. You can begin by exposing your child to challenges that are just the right size for them, offer just enough support for them to know they can trust you, and help them recognize and feel a sense of success and empowerment when they master the experience.

**Tip** These steps are best done when you and your child are not tired or in a rush.

**Tip** Intentional communication and actively building a healthy parent relationship will support these steps.

## Step 1. Get Your Child Thinking by Getting Their **Input**

- Help your child notice their own cues so they can develop self-awareness and learn to trust their own feelings. This includes describing and naming the pride they may feel when they have gotten through a challenging situation. Pointing out the resilience that they demonstrate will help them notice it and know it is there when the next challenge arises.
- Each time your child expresses any big feeling, be sure and name it: *"You seem angry"* or *"You seem happy."* This builds their feelings vocabulary adding to their self-awareness and ability to manage their feelings.
- When reading books, look at the images of children or animals and guess the feelings. You could say, *"I think the little bear is happy to see his friends. He has a smile on his face."*
- If your child is feeling unsure about how others are feeling -- or buried in their own feelings -- help them by sharing what you think others are feeling. You could say: *"I wonder if she feels happy because her friend shared the toys. Do you think she feels happy?"* Or, *"I think that person might be feeling angry because their face is red and their eyebrows are scrunched up. Do you think they feel angry?"*
- Practicing naming feelings will enable your child to identify their own feelings as well as others and seek support when they need it.

**Tip** Grow your own resilience by creating a plan for calming down. Research shows that children cry less when their caregiver is less stressed. Secure your child's safety, then close your eyes, and breathe deeply. Crying creates stress in adults so be sure and take breaks when you need them.

## Step 2. Teach New Skills by Interactive Modeling

- Use your tone of voice and facial expression to help your child celebrate when they have gotten through a change such as a new child care arrangement, sleeping in a new place, trying a new food, and so on.
- Model resilience while interacting with your child. Modeling resilience can be one of the greatest teaching tools.
  - Share the focus. As you spend time with your child, follow their lead.
  - Notice gestures and listen for thought and feeling. Attempt to figure out what your child is trying to tell you through their sounds, gestures, and facial expressions: *"I noticed your face is red and your mouth is frowning. You look angry."*
  - Children require your attention to thrive. So, why not build a special time into your routine when you are fully present to listen to what your child has to tell you? Turn off your phone. Set a timer if needed. Then, notice your body language. Ask yourself, "What is my body communicating, and how am I demonstrating that I'm listening?"
- Read and "pretend play" together.
  - During reading time, select a book of faces to help your child learn to identify the different feelings of other children. Point out what you notice and how you can tell what each child is feeling. Be sure to point out moments that children successfully overcome difficulties.
  - After reading a story together, act out what feelings look like together. *"First she looked sad (make a sad face) and then she got help and looked happier (make a happy face)."*
- Share your thoughts and feelings: *"I did not expect this room to be so messy. I don't know how we are going to be able to clean it up before our friends arrive. This big mess is making me feel very worried. Maybe I will start to feel better after we put your blocks into the bin. Can you help too? I am sure we can handle this big mess if we work together."*
- Talk aloud about the ways in which you respond to your own big feelings: *"It made me feel so much better to tell you how I was feeling and to ask for help."*

**Tip** Establish a routine for both you and your child to calm down when frustrations or upset arise. What will you say? For example, *"I need to calm down."* What will you do? Keep tools at hand such as a calming app, gentle music, a sound machine, stuffed friends, and soft blankets.

### Step 3. **Practice** to Grow Skills and Develop Habits

- Your child will thrive with a predictable daily routine. Calmly managing interruptions to that routine will build resilience. Help your child learn their daily routine and point out moments when the routine will change. *“Tomorrow, we will be traveling! We will be traveling during your nap time, but you can sleep in the car when you are tired.”*
- Retell your story of overcoming a change in routine. *“Do you remember when we traveled to grandma’s house last weekend? Traveling during nap time was different for us, and we did it!”*
- Narrate your day as you go about your household chores or run errands.
- Use your child’s dolls or stuffed animals to act out moments of resilience-building. This is a good way to practice facing really big challenges that your child might be experiencing or about to experience, such as a move, a new baby in the family, or a major medical situation. You can name the feelings that the doll might feel and come up with some strategies to help the doll feel stronger to face the challenge. Should the doll take a breath and ask for help? Should the doll bring something that will make them feel better? Does the doll have special skills that can help them in this moment?

### Step 4. **Support** Your Child’s Development and Success

- Learn about your child’s development. Each new age presents different challenges. Being informed about your child’s developmental milestones offers you guidance on appropriate challenges.
- Recognize effort by using “I notice...” statements like: *“I noticed that you were nervous about having to nap in a different room, but you did it. I love seeing that.”*
- On days with extra challenges when you can see your child is scared of new people or situations, offer confidence in your child’s ability to face the new. In a gentle, non-public way, you can say, *“You tried something like this before, and it was fun. It’s OK to try this.”*
- Actively reflect on how your child is feeling when approaching challenges. You can offer reflections like: *“You seem worried. I will hold your hand and we can do it together.”*
  - You can also offer comfort items to help your child face new challenges. *“Would your bear help you feel better?”* Bring a comfort item with you as you face new challenges.

**Trap** Don’t move on quickly if your child shows interest in a new person. Children often need more time to adjust with new individuals. Be sure to wait long enough for your child to warm up to the new person. Your waiting could make all the difference in whether they are able to gain relationship skills over time.

## Step 5. **Recognize** and Celebrate

- Smile at your child.
- Make eye contact.
- Use caring facial expressions.
- Be physically gentle and caring with your child.
- Use words to celebrate and encourage: *“I noticed you faced that challenge even though it was hard. I like seeking that!”*
- Notice when your child tries something new or recovers smoothly from a challenging situation. These conversations might start happening naturally during your bedtime routine or when snuggling up to read stories together.
- Build celebrations into your everyday routines. Promote joy and happiness by laughing, singing, dancing, hugging, and snuggling to appreciate one another.

**Tip** This year is filled with amazing changes -- and not just for your child. Don't forget to recognize and celebrate your own development and milestones as a parent.

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