

Building Resilience

What do we mean by Resilience?

Resilience is the ability to be able to cope with stressful situations and be able to bounce back when things have settled down. Resilience is not something children and young people have or don't have, it is a skill that can develop as they grow.



Why is Resilience important now and in the future?

Current events relating to the COVID 19 virus will be stressful and confusing for everyone within a family but for children and young people, who are still developing their resilience skills, they will need a little more support to cope with the situation so that they can bounce back when it is all over.

This current situation can also provide opportunity for children and young people to develop and build up resilience so that they can navigate further obstacles they might encounter as they grow. They will not be able to avoid stress as they get older but being resilient is one of the best ways to cope with it.

How can I help my child or young person being resilient during these times?

Spend Quality Time Together

The most important thing that you can do is ensure that you make your child or young person feel safe, created through spending regular quality time with them. Time when you complete an activity together, when you are able to give your full attention. So remember to turn the television off and put your phone to one side! Spending this time together lets your child know that you are there for them and they are not alone, giving them a sense of safety. When a child or young person feels that they have got this unconditional support, it empowers them to seek help and work through difficult situations.



Label Emotions

When your child or young person is struggling, label the emotions for them e.g. *I can see you are worried, I can see you are nervous, I can see you are angry.* It is important that they understand what they are feeling, that someone else gets it, that it is normal to feel like they do and reassure them that the uncomfortable feelings will pass.

Demonstrate Coping Skills – Deep Breathing

When they are beginning to struggle and perhaps get worked up and stressed, teach them to take some deep breaths. Deep breathing can help everyone, including children and young people, to relax and calm themselves. This then enables them to remain calm and process the situation clearly. There are some ideas for different breathing exercises at the end of this fact sheet.

Create an environment where they can ask for help.

It is important that children and young people know that they can seek out others when they are struggling and that it is a sign of strength and not weakness. Encourage your child or young person to ask for help, including asking questions. Don't worry that you might not have the answer, working through the problem together to find the answer is just, if not more important, demonstrating vital problem-solving skills.

Encouraging Independence

It is important that children and young people are encouraged to solve problems themselves and be as independent as possible. During times like this it can be easy to do too much for children and young people. However, the sense

of achievement that they will get from working through a problem independently will show them they are strong and that they can cope through stressful times, like the one we are all experiencing.

Ensure that they get enough Sleep

In order to have the energy to deal with stressful situations we need to all have had enough sleep and this is the same for children and young people. This includes limiting screen time an hour before bed. The blue light emitted by digital devices suppresses production of melatonin, a hormone that signals to the body it's time for sleep. Also looking at screens before bed keeps us emotionally wired and stimulated, making it harder for us to switch off.



Regular Physical Activity

Regular physical activity is vital in building resilience and strengthening the brain. Exercise reduces the levels of the body's stress hormones and creates the production of feel good chemicals, making us feel more relaxed and calmer. If it is possible go out for exercise once per day. If it is not possible to go out, then provide some inside physical activity opportunities which could include dancing around the kitchen, doing your own work out.

Being a Role Model

It is important that as adults we show that we are in control and can cope as this will make your child or young person feel safe. You also learn that they can get through stressful situations and manage their own worries more appropriately. In order to do this it is important that you also look after yourself so you can support your children and young people. Please think about your own mental health and wellbeing.

Breathing Techniques to Try at Home

Simple repetitive breathing: Taking a long breath in through your nose, pausing, then letting it out through your nose has a calming effect on the body. However, the following are some other more interesting ways to engage children and young people in using deep breaths to feel calmer.

High Five Breath <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sh79w9pn9Cg>

Starting at the outside edge of your thumb, breathe in and use your index finger to trace up to the top. When you breathe out, slowly trace down the other side. Keep breathing in and out, tracing up and down for a total of five breaths until you reach the other side of your hand.



Rainbow Breath <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=70X2yvXG76I>

Stand tall and still. Let your shoulders relax and your arms hang by your sides. Breathe in as you raise your arms wide. Then reach high and let your palms turn to face each other. Let your hands float down as you breathe out. Keep your arms straight and imagine you are drawing a rainbow above you.



Belly Breath <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oFlKuSCw7ag>

Put your hands on your stomach, breathe in, letting your hands lift off your tummy as if they are on the surface of a balloon that is being blown up. As you breathe out, let your hands return to your stomach, as if the balloon is deflating.

Lift Breath

Sit tall, like a building. Stack your hands in front of you – the one below is the ground floor and the other is a lift that can go up and down. As you breathe in, raise the top hand up. Keep moving it until you finish breathing in. As you breathe out, bring the lift down again. Try to get your hands to meet just as you run out of air.

