

Parenting 22

Series

Riding the Storm Together Building Resilience in Your Child (Preschoolers)



Online Version



Department of Health

Difficulties and setbacks are inevitable in life. Parents hope their children can endure, overcome and even grow through these challenges. **Resilience** is the **ability to adapt to adversity**; this is crucial for different aspects of a child's development and long-term health. But what is the foundation of resilience? How can parents and caregivers develop resilience in their children?

Building the foundation of resilience

It is often believed that only those born with tough or gritty personalities can triumph over adversities. However, research has shown that children who could adaptively navigate challenges tend to have **reliable adults around them, offering guidance and support during difficult times**. Children who feel safe, loved, and accepted gain greater confidence to cope with difficulties and the emotions that come with them (such as distress, confusion, and sadness). Despite setbacks, they continue to believe in their own worth and readily take on new challenges.



In addition, children's personal attributes, like self-image and self-regulation, i.e. the ability to understand and manage one's thoughts, feelings and behaviours to achieve goals, are also linked to resilience. Children with a **positive self-image** are more confident in improving and getting out of their difficult situations, and thus are more resilient. **Self-regulation** is associated with better resilience.



Self-regulation is not an inborn skill; it is an important ability that children develop from birth as they practice and learn through daily routines with the support and guidance of adults.

In conclusion, **reliable, stable and secure parent-child relationships** form an essential foundation for resilience and play a vital part in fostering a **positive self-image** and **self-regulation**.

Given the crucial role of parents, how can you nurture your child's resilience in daily life?

Connection lays the groundwork

Parents and caregivers can strengthen a child's resilience by being attentive to their thoughts and feelings, recognising their worth and abilities when spending time with them. To support your child's development and deepen your bond, you can:

- ★ Try to **spend some time with your child intently** every day, and express your **care** through smiles, hugs, kisses, gentle touches, or simply saying, "I love you so much!"



- ★ In everyday life, observe what interests your child and seize the opportunity to **interact** with them more. For example, while eating, bathing or getting dressed with your child, talk with them as much as they like. When your child shows you



a toy or a game they are playing or something they have created, sit down with them, listen to their stories, and

let your child take the lead as much as possible. These parent-child interactions can support development in various areas, including language, cognition, and self-regulation.

- ★ Carefully observe and listen to your child's thoughts and feelings, respond positively with **emotion coaching** and express acceptance, can support their gradual learning in coping with emotions and foster their self-regulation skills. To better understand emotion coaching, watch '5 Steps of "Emotion Coaching" for Preschoolers' and read 'Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Preschooler – Tips on "Emotion Coaching" Children of 3 to 5 Years Old'.



5 Steps of
"Emotion Coaching"
for Preschoolers



Raising an Emotionally
Intelligent Preschooler -
Tips on "Emotion Coaching"
Children of 3 to 5 Years Old

- ★ Take every opportunity to show your child **appreciation** by giving **clear and immediate praise** for good behaviour or the timely completion of a task, such as:

"You did a great job putting the toys away!"



When praising your child, link their good behaviour to positive character traits, for example:

"It took you a long time to complete the puzzle, but I appreciate your grit in not giving up so easily."



"You went to comfort that child after he'd fallen down—you're such a kind and thoughtful helper!"



Even for seemingly small matters, parents can take time to review with their child on what they have done and acknowledge their efforts.

- ★ When addressing your child's wrongdoing, focus on their **misbehavior** rather than on the child themselves. For example, "Tell me what you need, but don't hit me!" instead of "You're really naughty!"



- ★ Consider your own **words and actions**. Are they helping your child believe in their ability to overcome difficulties and achieve their goals? Some parents often use phrases like, “You are still young, you can’t...”, “It’s too dangerous, don’t go...”, “You can’t do it, let me help you!” to restrict their child’s opportunities to explore, try new things, or make mistakes. Over time, children who are overprotected may come to believe that they are incapable of facing challenges.



Guiding and Learning in Daily Life

Encourage your child to take on tasks in daily routines, participate in different activities, and practise goal-setting according to their **abilities** and **interests** from an early age.

Appreciate more and **intervene less** throughout the process. Through repeated experiences, they will realise that they can overcome challenges and achieve goals on their own, gradually learning to be independent and self-reliant.



- ★ Encourage your child to participate in **self-care routines** like eating and dressing, even if they are not yet skilled at it.



★ Offer your child **choices** within reasonable limits, such as choosing their clothes, afternoon snacks, books, and toys.

★ Guide your child to set clear and achievable **goals**. **Encourage** them to **work towards these goals** while providing **step by step** support. For example, “Let’s finish the picture together before we have snacks”. As they draw, ask, “What do you want to draw next to the puppy?” “Do you want to add more colours?”. Use **praise** to support their efforts in reaching their goals: “You are almost done, the colours are so rich and beautiful!”



★ To help your child learn to follow rules and cooperate, and develop their self-regulation skills, watch the videos “Your Encouragement Counts” and “Your Guidance Counts” to learn more about providing encouragement and praise, as well as appropriate and assertive guidance.



“Your Encouragement Counts”
Video



“Your Guidance Counts”
Video

Growing through fun and play

- ★ Engage your child in **interactive play** (e.g. passing the ball, mimicking each other, or freeze dance, role-playing, Simon Says, or simple table games with preschoolers) or other family activities tailored to their development and preferences. These help them practice **focused**



attention, following instructions, waiting, planning, and problem-solving skills.

- ★ Give your child the opportunity to explore different activities and discover their **interests** and **strengths**, such as playing football, singing, telling stories, or demonstrating helpfulness, bravery, a passion for learning... and so on.
- ★ When your child begins to develop a new skill, start with what they are capable of and set a **reasonable** and **attainable** goal. For example, if your three-year-old loves to sing, avoid rushing to correct their pitch and pronunciation. Instead, show appreciation and agree to learn a new song with them each month. This will naturally foster their interest in learning music.

In sum, parents can foster resilience in their children by establishing a reliable, stable and secure relationship from an early age, promoting self-regulation, and helping them build a positive self-image in daily life. For more information on how parents can support their children in overcoming challenges, continue reading “Riding the Storm Together – Supporting Your Child to Overcome Adversity (Preschoolers)”.