

Parenting 23

Series

Riding the Storm Together

Supporting Your Child to Overcome Adversity (Preschoolers)



Online Version



Department of Health

As introduced in “Parenting Series 22”, establishing a reliable and intimate parent-child relationship from an early age—where children feel secure and loved—lays a foundation for resilience. When children face difficulties, how can parents support and guide them in overcoming adversity?

Empathy before problem-solving

Parental emotional support is crucial for children when they face difficulties. Your encouragement and help in expressing their feelings will not only allow them to **release emotions** but also help them learn to **regulate their feelings** and develop **self-control**.

When a child is upset or frustrated, parents can:

- ★ Offer a hug or a simple word of concern and understanding, rather than rushing to ask questions or give advice, such as “**You’re disappointed**” instead of “**Why are you upset?**”.



- ★ Avoid trying to downplay or dismiss your child’s feelings. For example, if they cry because the blocks they carefully built have fallen over,



don't say, “**Why are you crying? Stop crying or stop playing!**” Or if your child is upset after an argument with a friend at school, don't say, “**It's no big deal, don't be upset!**”

- ★ Take the opportunity to respond to your child's feelings. Parents can refer to 'Raising an Emotionally Intelligent Preschooler – Tips on "Emotion Coaching" Children of 3 to 5 Years Old' or watch the video '5 Steps of "Emotion Coaching" for Preschoolers' to learn more about emotion coaching your child.



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



**5 Steps of
"Emotion Coaching"
for Preschoolers**

- ★ When a child or the whole family experiences major changes (e.g. starting school, moving house, separation from friends, loss of pets, parental separation, or the illness or passing of a loved one), the stressed child may display emotional and uncooperative behaviour. Parents can provide understanding and empathy by paying attention to changes in the child's behaviour and emotions, spending more quality time together, and engaging in more relaxing and enjoyable parent-child activities such as playing and reading.



Nurture an optimistic mindset

An **optimistic** attitude helps children cope with difficulties in a positive way and reduces the negative impact of adversity. Parents can also discuss setbacks and challenges with their child to help them view adversity as:



★ **Temporary:** Difficulties do not last forever; things will always get better. You can say to your child, "You couldn't stack all the blocks this time, but try again next time! You can do it!"; "It's raining today, so we can't go to the park, let's go when the weather clears up!"

★ **Specific:** similar problems will not happen all the time. You can say, "It's a pity that you accidentally dropped your snacks!" Instead of, "You are dropping things again. Why are you always so careless?"

★ **Related to external factors** e.g. "No kids play with you in the park—maybe they all happen to be with friends they already know"; "This activity is too difficult, which is why you're not doing well!"

Face problems positively

Once your child has calmed down, encourage them to approach challenges with a positive mindset and guide them in finding solutions. If your child makes a mistake or fails to achieve a goal, guide them to identify areas for improvement and help them learn to solve problems, turning adversity into an opportunity for growth.



★ Encourage your child to come up with a solution on their own before offering guidance when they face a problem. If your child finds it difficult to find one, parents can suggest a few options and let them choose the solution.

★ If your child experiences a setback, such as saying, "I never get the stickers from my teacher...", you can first address his emotions by saying, "You feel so disappointed." Then ask, "What do you think you can do next time to earn a reward from your teacher?"



Promoting parent-school partnership

Research suggests that school support along with stable relationships with teachers and peers, can help children cope with adversity. Parents can:

- ★ Encourage your child to actively participate in extracurricular activities at school to strengthen their trust in teachers and sense of belonging. When they need support, they will seek help from the school;
- ★ Actively participate in school events and activities such as parent seminars, parent volunteer programmes, family-school events, etc. This deepens your understanding of the school and sets a positive example for your child to follow;
- ★ If your child faces a significant challenge, actively discuss their adjustment at home and at school with teachers, maintain good communication, and seek support from teachers or school counsellors (e.g., social workers) if needed to help your child cope.



As children face different challenges in life, parental support and presence can strengthen trust and deepen the bond between parent and child. Every experience of overcoming difficulties builds a child's confidence and enhance their ability to cope with future challenges.

Resilience is cultivated over time, not overnight. Support your child with care, patience and acceptance, allowing them to face setbacks and try to solve problems on their own, so they can navigate life's ups and downs and ride out the storms on their journey.



