

resilient family

A Booklet from Parent Help Line at HSHS St. John's Children's Hospital

resilience re·sil·ience \ri-zil-yen(t)s

*The ability to become strong, healthy, or successful again
after something bad happens.*

Resilience: A Needed Family Trait

Families face setbacks and difficulties. These include illness, disabilities, death, divorce, money problems and natural disasters. Why do some people handle these stresses and crises better than others? Resiliency is the key, and a trait parents must teach their kids.

Some people just have a resilient nature — they bounce back. However, most families must learn resiliency. *Everyone* can build needed skills and develop strengths.

Why should parents build resiliency in themselves and each

child? Parents have a natural instinct to protect – to stay one step ahead of problems. However, parents cannot shield a child from all of life's challenges. Resiliency taught at any age helps ensure success in school and in life.

Parents who are resilient are better problem solvers.

When faced with adversity, they maintain a positive attitude. Their children see and learn positive methods to handle stress. Resilient people do not see the world through rose-colored glasses or ignore challenges. Like everyone else, they face problems and stress. However, during adversity, a resilient person:

- Keeps his cool,
- Addresses the specific problem at hand, and
- Performs daily functions without falling apart.

Given the stress that today's families face, children need parents and adults to model coping skills. This teaches them that *it is possible* to bounce back from change and disappointment.

Start building resiliency in your family:

- Discuss reasons to be grateful.
- Recognize the strengths of each family member.
- Send positive messages: "You can do it." "I have faith in you."
"You gave it a good try."
- Teach your child about actions and consequences.
- Find examples of resiliency in real life and in the media.



Apps to Help You Manage a Healthy Lifestyle

- **My Fitness Pal** - iPhone, Android
- **Map My Run** - iPhone, Android
- **Endomondo** - iPhone, Android
- **Fooducate** - iPhone, Android
- **My Diet Coach** - iPhone, Android
- **Healthy Out** - iPhone, Android
- **Zipongo** - iPhone, Android
- **Spring** - iPhone, Android
- **Noom Coach** - iPhone, Android

Babies Need Resilient Parents

From the moment you bring your newborn home from the hospital, you have a change in your daily routine.

For the first few months, this new baby-care routine can overwhelm you. You

- Deal with emotions – ups and downs.
- Adjust your schedule to your baby's.
- Endure the healing process and lack of sleep.
- Drag through routines – at home and work.
- Worry about mastering childcare skills.

To survive and thrive, you need resilience. Some parents have more resilience than others. However, *all* parents can learn skills and adopt behaviors that help them handle the unexpected.

Focus on your personal strengths that help you cope. What inner strengths and skills will help you parent? What support can family and friends provide? What new skills will help you – right now – to find success and joy in parenting?

Resiliency involves a change in thinking. Take these steps to build your resilience.

- 1. Assess and resolve problems.** What are your current needs? Who can help you meet those needs? Do you need change in your routine?
- 2. Become a flexible parent.** Explore more than one solution to a problem. Try each solution until you find one that works for you.
- 3. Find humor.** Laughter reduces tension.
- 4. Practice a daily routine.** This helps reduce the stress of daily planning. If older children are at home, stay as close to their routine as possible.
- 5. Emphasize the positive!** Do not dwell on “what went wrong.”
- 6. Practice self-care.** Eat regular, healthy meals and exercise.
- 7. Find moments to relax.** Meditate. Pray. Play calming music.

Resilient parents raise resilient children. Your successful efforts at change will give you life-long benefits, especially in your role as a parent. As your child grows, your words and actions will teach your child skills and develop his strengths.

Use Positive Words and I-messages to Express Your Needs

- 1. Step 1** – Express your feelings and needs using I-messages. *“I have had a bad day. I am tired. Could you give the baby a bath tonight?”*
- 2. Step 2** – Express your gratitude. *“Thanks, that really helps.”*



Teach Skills to Be Resilient

It is a natural instinct for parents to protect their children from stress and emotional hurt. Does this instinct offer the best help to the child? We all face daily challenges. Parents cannot always shield their child from these hardships.

All parents can prepare their kids to handle life's ups and downs. Resilience is the ability to "bounce back" from pain, trauma and hardship. It enables people to recover and move forward – to thrive and survive.

Parents help their child build resilience through daily life lessons. Resilient kids learn this skill by watching and listening to parents. When parents handle stress well, they teach by example.

Resilient kids are more likely to:

- Make and keep friends.
- Find success in school.
- Be better problem solvers.
- Have increased self-confidence.
- Be less sad and depressed.



Instill resilience in your child.

1. **Develop a loving relationship.**
Let her hear positive words. Show her love and affection.
2. **Teach empathy.**
Use words and actions to let him know you understand how he *and others* feel. Show him how to care for others – to make friends.
3. **Admit your mistakes when something goes wrong.** Calmly and simply explain your actions to correct your mistake – do it better.
4. **Help her develop self-control.** Use deep breaths when upset. Teach games to play while having to wait.
5. **Avoid overprotective behaviors.** If your child falls, help him bounce back up and try the activity again.
6. **Allow mistakes.** Encourage her to try again. Mistakes teach.
7. **Teach problem solving skills.** When he confronts a problem, ask, "*What else can you do?*"
8. **Praise efforts – not results.** Whether the outcome was a success or a failure, praise her hard work.
9. **Keep daily routines.** They make him feel safe - give him comfort. He will learn to develop his own routines.



Confront Adversity with a Positive Attitude

Stephen Covey writes, *“The way we see the problem is the problem.”*

Resilient people view difficulty as a challenge, not a hopeless situation. With each hardship, they increase their skills that enable them to cope and recover. This prepares them to face future struggles.

A good first step in building resilience is to adjust how you view adversity. While still feeling pain, anger or grief, you also believe *you will feel better*. Whether you face small trials or a life changing event, your positive attitude will guide you and your family toward recovery.

Empower your children to meet life’s challenges with a positive attitude.

- **Resist the urge to fall back into negative thinking during a hardship.** Instead of imagining the worst, face each hardship with optimism. Tell your kids, *“We can make it.”*
- **Avoid negative comments during a crisis.** *“Why do bad things always happen to us!”*
- **Use positive words and actions to convey a feeling of hope.** *“We have faced tough times before. We will be OK.”*

- **Help each child focus on individual strengths.** Discuss what strength each child plans to use. Shared strengths help the family cope during difficult times.
- **Emphasize the goodness of others.** As you see and hear news reports of terrible events or natural disasters, stress the importance of community. What does it mean to rally together? What tools or skills will people use to cope and recover?
- **Assist family, friends and your community in times of trouble.** Let your child see that others also face hardships. Helping others develops self-confidence, a strength needed in times of trouble.
- **Discuss the difference between a real crisis and a situation that just feels like a crisis.** Emotions can overwhelm a child, and she can lose sight of what is really happening.

Parents often shield their children from hardship. Helping them develop a positive attitude in times of trouble is a better strategy. This positive attitude will help them face future problems and stress.



Problem Solving - A Resiliency Skill

Every day we make decisions - some big, some small. Those who have the ability to control the outcomes of their decisions are good problem solvers.

To be resilient and succeed in life, your teen needs the skills to assess situations and solve problems. Usually, a problem does not just go away. A tough problem can paralyze a person, and he takes no action. Or, he may take action without thought, and he will make his situation worse.

In a few short years, your teen will live an independent life. She most likely will not ask your advice. Can your teen handle conflicts and take positive steps to solve problems?

Since we are not born with problem solving skills, parents must teach them. Take an active role in this skill-building process. Teach and practice problem-solving steps to help your teen learn to make good decisions. Let him make the decision even if you know failure will be the outcome. With each decision, your teen will gain confidence and wisdom.

Problem-solving steps to help your teen learn to make good decisions.

- 1. Identify the problem.**
Use “I” words. “Tomorrow I have a test, but **I** want to go out and party with the guys tonight.”
- 2. Focus on the real issue – not the emotion.** The issue is passing or failing a test.
- 3. Brainstorm your options.**
Try to find more than 2 or 3 solutions to your problem. Write them down.
 - a. Go out and not study.
 - b. Study and not go out.
 - c. Study, go out for an hour, and come back home to study.
 - d. Go out for 40 minutes and come home and study.
- 4. Evaluate your solutions.**
List pros and cons. If the solution has more cons than pros, cross it off your list.
- 5. Make an honest decision.**
As you evaluate your decision, you must use empathy – consider other’s feelings. If your plan will hurt you or others, do not choose that plan.
- 6. Take Action.** Carry out your decision.
- 7. Evaluate the outcome.**
This is a crucial step. Did it work? If yes, you feel successful. If it failed, and sometimes it will, did you learn a lesson from the failure?
If needed, repeat steps 3 to 6 to solve your problem.



A Healthy Lifestyle Increases Resiliency

Life – for everyone – includes stress and negative events. Over long periods of time, too much stress can cause serious health problems. Resilient people make life style changes that help relieve daily stress and hardship.

Most Americans report feelings of moderate to high stress. Money and job concerns are a major factor in those feelings. Healthy habits help keep daily stress levels low.

Begin your new healthy life style plan by taking *baby steps*. Set realistic personal and family goals. As you improve your lifestyle, add new goals.

A chart can help you on your resiliency journey. Download a chart from parenthelpline.org. Fill in your goals and action plan, and start your road to resiliency.

Exercise

- Take stairs.
- Add more steps to your day.
- Enjoy a weekly family exercise activity.



Adjust your diet.

- Eat 5 fresh fruits and vegetables daily.
- Eliminate processed and junk foods - gradually.
- Drink water instead of soda.

Get plenty of sleep.

- Adults need at least 7 hours of sleep every night.
- 1-3 year olds need 12 hours every night.
- 3-11 year olds need 10-12 hours every night.
- 12-18 year olds need 8-10 hours every night.

Limit unhealthy behaviors

- Stop smoking.
- Reduce alcohol intake.



Take time to relax.

- Try yoga, meditation or prayer.
- Learn a new sport and play with friends.
- Find a hobby.

Build strong friendships.

- Seek support from family and friends, especially in times of trouble.

Learn your stress warning signs. Upon the warning, take a mental time-out.

- Close your eyes, and take some deep breaths.
- Think positive thought. Stop negative thoughts.

Your new healthy lifestyle will become a habit for both you and your children.



The Road to Resiliency

Resilient people make lifestyle changes that help relieve daily stress and hardship.

Suggested goals and action plans to start your road to resiliency.

For the Week of: _____

Goal	Action Plan / Completed on	<input type="checkbox"/> S <input type="checkbox"/> M <input type="checkbox"/> T <input type="checkbox"/> W <input type="checkbox"/> Th <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> S
Exercise	<input type="checkbox"/> Take stairs.	<i>Other</i> _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Add more steps to your day.	_____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Enjoy a weekly family exercise activity.	_____

Eat Healthy	<input type="checkbox"/> Eat 5 fresh fruits and vegetables daily.	<i>Other</i> _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Eliminate processed and junk foods - gradually.	_____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Drink water instead of soda.	_____

Limit Unhealthy Behaviors	<input type="checkbox"/> Stop smoking.	<i>Other</i> _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Reduce alcohol intake.	_____

Relax	<input type="checkbox"/> Try yoga, meditation or prayer.	<i>Other</i> _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Learn a new sport and play with friends.	_____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Find a hobby.	_____

Build Strong Friendships	<input type="checkbox"/> Meet a friend - for lunch, dinner, a movie, or simply to "catch up."	<i>Other</i> _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Seek support from friends and friends, especially in times of trouble.	_____

Sleep	<i>Recommended amount of sleep per night</i>	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Adults need at least 7 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 3-11 year olds need 10-12 hours
	<input type="checkbox"/> 1-3 year olds need 12 hours	<input type="checkbox"/> 12-18 year olds need 8-10 hours

Focus on the Positive

Do you pay more attention to negative events than positive ones? Negative incidents take us by surprise. They give us a jolt.

If we log our daily events, usually the positive outweigh the negative. Even during hard times, positive events fill our life, even if we do not notice them.

We need at least three positive experiences to one negative experience in order to thrive and enjoy life. Emphasizing the positive might take some practice. Parents must help their children focus on the “good things in life.”

- **Practice positive thinking.**
“I hope it does not rain for our picnic today. Let’s think of some fun things to do if it does rain.”

- **Establish nightly gratitude time.** Every night before going to sleep, name one thing for which you are grateful.
- **Create positive, fun events during times of stress.** Plan a game night. Eat a healthy treat. Spend some time outdoors in nature.
- **Celebrate special events** - holidays, birthdays, good grades, *high-five* moments.
- **Give praise and positive reinforcement.** Use words like “I believe in you.”
“I know you can do it.”

Your child is not the only one to benefit from “finding the positive”. Your optimism will also help you overcome obstacles that come your way. *Everyone needs at least one positive and supportive person in their life.*



Parent Help Line

Parenting tips New ideas Referrals

We welcome all parenting concerns - big or small.

Call **(217) 544-5808** or **(888) 727-5889.**

10 a.m. to 10 p.m. – 7 days a week – 365 days a year

Visit our web page at www.parenthelpline.org.

We continue to add new Parenting Tips, including:

What Makes a Family Strong?
Choosing a Sport for Your Child
Staying Home Alone - Is Your Child Ready?
Teach Your Child Bike Safety Rules
Bike Helmets Keep Kids Safe

Backyard Trampolines – Know the Risks
Reduce Household Waste
Summer Safety Tips
Tips for Traveling with Children
Stay Safe During Tornado Season

Find us on Facebook at [Parent Help Line at St. John’s Children’s Hospital](https://www.facebook.com/ParentHelpLine).

