



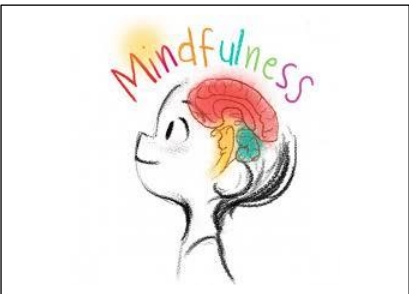
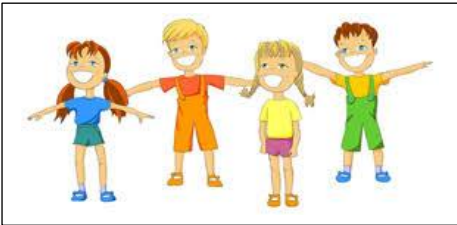

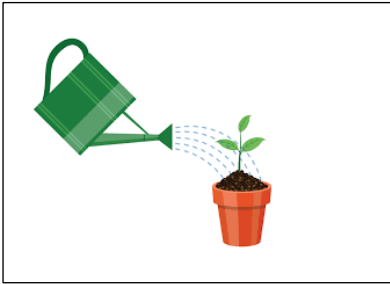



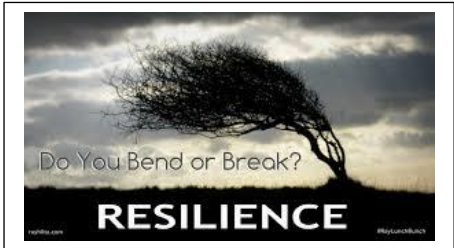
## The 'Science' of Building Resilience in Children:

Building resilience in children is not about clearing adversity out of their way as this is not real life. It is about nurturing the skills to make them flourish.

Main Theme	What does this mean/ look like?
1. Resilience needs relationships, not uncompromising independence. 	<p>Research tells us that it's not rugged self-reliance, determination or inner strength that leads kids through adversity, but the reliable presence of at least one supportive relationship. In the context of a loving relationship with a caring adult, children have the opportunity to develop vital coping skills. The presence of a responsive adult can also help to reverse the physiological changes that are activated by stress. This will ensure that the developing brain, body and immune system are protected from the damaging effects of these physiological changes. Anyone in the life of a child can make a difference - family, teachers, coaches - anyone.</p>
2. Increase their exposure to people who care about them. 	<p>Social support is associated with higher positive emotions, a sense of personal control and predictability, self-esteem, motivation, optimism, a resilience. Kids won't always notice the people who are in their corner cheering them on, so when you can, let them know about the people in their fan club. Anything you can do to build their connection with the people who love them will strengthen them.</p>

<p>3. Let them know that it is okay to ask for help.</p> 	<p>Children will often have the idea that being brave is about dealing with things by themselves. Let them know that being brave and strong means knowing when to ask for help. If there is anything they can do themselves, guide them towards that but resist carrying them there.</p>
<p>4. Find ways to build their executive functioning.</p> 	<p>Strengthening their executive functioning will strengthen the prefrontal cortex. This will help them manage their own behaviour and feelings and increase their capacity to develop coping strategies. Some powerful ways to build their executive functioning are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>*Establishing routines;</li> <li>*Modelling healthy social behaviour;</li> <li>*Creating and maintaining supportive reliable relationships around them;</li> <li>*Providing opportunities for their own social connections such as board games, memory games;</li> <li>*Exercise;</li> <li>*Giving them opportunities to think and act independently (if they disagree with you and tell you why you're wrong, there's a plus side - their executive functioning is flourishing!);</li> <li>*Providing opportunities for them to make their own decisions.</li> </ul>

<p>5. Encourage regular, mindful practice - 'Living in the now.'</p> 	<p>Mindfulness creates structural and functional changes in the brain that support a healthy response to stress. It strengthens the calming, rational prefrontal cortex and reduces activity in the instinctive, impulsive amygdala. It also strengthens the connections between the prefrontal cortex and the amygdala. When this connection is strong, the calming prefrontal cortex will have more of a hand in decisions and behaviour.</p>
<p>6. Promote regular exercise.</p> 	<p>Exercise strengthens and re-organises the brain to make it more resilient to stress. One of the ways it does this is by <b>increasing the neurochemicals</b> that can calm the brain in times of stress.</p>
<p>7. Build feelings of competence and a sense of mastery.</p> 	<p>Nurture that feeling in them - that one that reminds them they can do hard things. You'll be doing this every time you acknowledge their strengths, the brave things they do, their effort when they do something difficult; and when you encourage them to make their own decisions. When they have a sense of mastery, they are less likely to be reactive to future stress and more likely to handle future challenges.</p>
<p>8. Nurture Optimism.</p> 	<p>Optimism has been found to be one of the key characteristics of resilient people. The brain can be rewired to be more optimistic through the experiences it is exposed to. If you have a small human who tends to look at the glass as being half empty, show them a different view. This doesn't mean invalidating how they feel. Acknowledge their view of the world and introduce them to a different one.</p>

	<p><i>'It's disappointing when it rains on a sports day isn't it. Let's make the most of this. What's something we can do on a rainy day that we probably wouldn't do if it was sunny?'</i> The idea is to focus on what is left, rather than what has been lost.</p>
<p>9. Teach them how to reframe.</p> 	<p>The ability to reframe challenges in ways that feel less threatening is <b>linked to resilience</b>. Reframing is such a valuable skill to have. In times of difficulty or disappointment, it will help them to focus on what they have, rather than what they've lost. To build this skill, acknowledge their disappointment, then gently steer them away from looking at what the problem has cost them, towards the opportunities it might have brought them.</p>
<p>10. Model Resiliency.</p> 	<p>Imitation is such a powerful way to learn. The small humans in your life will want to be just like you, and they'll be watching everything. Without pitching it above what they can cope with, let them see how you deal with disappointment. Bringing them into your emotional world at appropriate times will help them to see that sadness, stuckness, disappointment are all very normal human experiences. When experiences are normalised, there will be a safety and security that will open the way for them to explore what those experiences mean for them, and experiment with ways to respond.</p> <p><i>'I'm disappointed that I didn't get the job, but that's because it was important to me. It's nice to have things that are important to you, even if they don't end the way you want them to. I did my very best in the interview and I know I'll be okay. That one wasn't the job for me, but I know there is going to be one that is perfect. I just have to keep trying and be patient.'</i></p>

11. Facing fear with support.



Facing fear is so empowering (within the limits of self-preservation of course - staying alive is also empowering) but to do this, they need the right support - as we all do. Kids can be fairly black and white about things so when they are faced with something difficult, the choices can seem like only two - face it head on or avoid it at all costs. But there is a third option, and that is to move gradually towards it, while feeling supported and with a certain amount of control.

12. Encourage them to take safe, considered risks.



Let them know that the courage they show in doing something brave and difficult is more important than the outcome. Age-appropriate freedom lets them learn where their edges are, encourages them to think about their decisions, and teaches them that they can cope with the things that go wrong. When they take risks they start to open up to the world and realise their capacity to shape it. There's magic in that for them and for us.

*'I love how brave you are. When you try harder and harder things, they might not always work out, but it means you're getting stronger, smarter, braver and you'll be closer to getting it next time.'*

13. Don't rush to their rescue/ be a 'Helicopter Parent.'

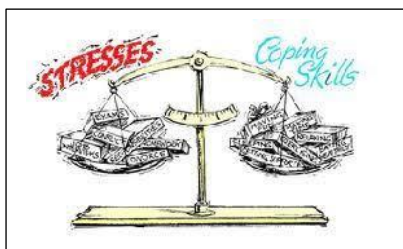


It is in the precious space between falling and standing back up again that they learn how to find their feet. Of course, sometimes scooping them up and giving them a steady place to be is exactly what they need to find the strength to move forward. The main thing is not to do it every time. Exposure to stressors and challenges that they can manage during childhood will help to ensure that they are more able to deal with stress during adulthood. There is evidence that these early experiences cause positive changes in the prefrontal cortex (the 'calm down, you've got this' part of the brain), that will protect against the negative effects of future stress. Think



	<p>of it like immunisation - a little bit of the pathogen, whether it's a virus or something stressful, helps to build up resistance or protect against the more severe version.</p>
<p>14. Meet them where they are.</p> 	<p>Resilience isn't about never falling down. It's about getting back up again, and there's no hurry for this to happen. All of us experience emotional pain, setback, grief and sadness sometimes. Feelings always have a good reason for being there, even if they can feel a little pushy at times. The key for kids is to learn to respect those feelings (even the bad ones), but not let them take charge and steer towards trouble. Sadness and grief, for example, can make us want to withdraw for a little while. It is during the withdrawal that information is reflected upon, assimilated and processed so that balance can be found again. If this is rushed, even if it is in the name of resilience, it can stay as a gentle rumble and show up through behaviour, sometimes at wildly unexpected times.</p>
<p>15. Nurture a Growth Mindset.</p> 	<p>Research has found that children who have a growth mindset - the belief that people have the potential to change - are more likely to show resilience when things get tough. Compared to kids who believe that bullies will always be bullies and victims will always be victims, kids who believe that people can change report less stress and anxiety, better feelings about themselves in response to social exclusion, and better physical health.</p>

16. Let them know that you trust their capacity to 'cope.'



Fear of failure isn't so much about the loss but about the fear that they (or you) won't be able to cope with the loss. What you think matters - it really does. You're the one they will look to as a gauge for how they're going. If you believe they have it in them to cope with the stumbles along the way, they will believe this too. This isn't always easy. We will often feel every bump, bruise, fall or fail. It can be heartbreaking when they struggle or miss out on something they want, not because of what it means for us, but because of what we know it means for them. But - they'll be okay. However long it takes, they'll be okay. When you decide, they'll decide.

17. Build their 'Problem Solving Toolbox.'







Self-talk is such an important part of problem-solving. Your words are powerful because they are the foundation on which they build their own self-talk. Rather than solving their problems for them, start to give them the language to solve their own. Some ideas:

- + What would [someone who they see as capable] do?
- + What has worked before?
- + Say as many ideas as you can in two minutes, even the silly ones? Lay them on me.
- + How can we break this big problem into little pieces?

18. Make time for creativity and play.



Problem-solving is a creative process. Anything that strengthens their problem-solving skills will nurture their resilience. Children are naturally curious, inquisitive and creative. Give them the space and the time to play and get creative, and they'll do the rest.

<p>19. Shh... let them talk.</p> 	<p>Try to resist solving their problems for them. (Oh but so tempting, I know!) Instead, be the sounding board as they take themselves to wherever they need to be. As they talk, their mind is processing and strengthening. The sparks that are flying up there could shine a light bright enough to read by. Guide them, but wherever you can, let them talk and try to come up with their own solutions. You are the safest place in the world for them to experiment and try new things. Problem-solving is a wonderful skill to have, and their time talking to you, and coming up with ideas, will build it beautifully. Give them the opportunity to explore and wander around their own great potential.</p>
<p>20. Try 'How?' not 'Why?'</p> 	<p>When things go wrong - as they will - asking kids 'why' will often end in 'don't know'. Who knows why any of us do silly things or make decisions that aren't great ones. The only certainty is that we all do them.</p>
<p>21. Let them know that they are unconditionally loved.</p> 	

Strategies taken from an Internet blog by Karen Young.