

Age-Appropriate Interventions for Building **RESILIENCE**



Building resilience in children helps them learn to manage stressful and traumatic times, which all children experience in their lives. Parents can help their children gain resilience skills by supporting and teaching them age-appropriate behaviors and attitudes.

PRESCHOOL CHILDREN

- **Play**: Most of preschool children's learning is through play behavior. How you help them learn about feelings and relationships will be through time you spend playing and the "stories" you act out in play behavior. Learning to "name" their feelings in play is an important step in learning to have and regulate their feelings as they interact with others.
- **Read**: Children also learn about feelings and how to handle them through the stories they have read to them. Many childhood books are written with the stories of challenges that the characters overcome and the importance of believing in yourself and not giving up.
- **Challenge**: In their play behavior challenges can be created that have to be confronted and overcome which teaches kids not to quit and to feel good about overcoming difficulties.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE

- **Teach Social Skills**: Building resilience at this age is through building social skills and learning how to have friends. Having social support from friends and family is a core skill in resilience and leads to greater confidence and self-esteem.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL AGE (continued)



- **Encourage:** Helping kids to feel good about themselves while learning about relationships and school behavior is important. Adult support and encouragement helps to build confidence and also continues to teach them about how to have healthy relationships.
- **Safety:** Having a safe home environment where they can talk about feelings and get feedback is important. Parents need to help them to understand their world in a realistic and positive framework.
- **Modeling:** Demonstrating emotional regulation (“not losing your cool”) helps kids understand how to behave when they are angry or disappointed. Seeing adults who can have “big feelings” and still handle conflicts well is a powerful lesson for young children.

MIDDLE SCHOOL AGE

- **Support:** Relationships get more complicated, and kids need more guidance about how to handle strong emotions in school, sports, and with friends. Puberty begins and with it comes new and powerful feelings that can create anxiety and confusion.
- **Supervise:** School work gets harder, and kids need to have structure about how to handle homework. The guidance you provide in middle school will give them the tools for successful education in high school and beyond.
- **Praise:** Let kids know when they are doing well. Your praise about how they are handling conflicts and problems will really add to their self-esteem and confidence.

HIGH SCHOOL AGE

- **Support:** At this age your kids may value their friends’ opinions and support more than yours, but know that your support will still be very important to them. In High School It may be more important to support their successes than it is to correct their failures. As confident as they may act, teens are often anxious about their identities, relationships and futures, and will appreciate your guidance.
- **Encourage:** Talk to them about choices and options in their lives and how they are weighing the options and making decisions. They are facing new issues in their relationships, education and jobs and your willingness to help them look at the choices will help them learn to make good decisions.
- **Involve:** Getting your teens to get involved in community service, religious activities, or cultural activities will help them develop their identity and learn how they fit in the world. Helping other people develops empathy and understanding of how other people live and the benefits are both to the helper and recipient.

It doesn't take much extra time to help your children learn to be more resilient and just changing small ways of relating to your children can make a big difference in their self-esteem and confidence in life.