

Building Resilience: EIGHT TIPS FOR PARENTS

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Research shows that a supportive, nurturing relationship with an adult is a strong predictor of resilience in children.¹ The suggestions below will help you cultivate that kind of warm and helpful relationship as you seek to build your children's resilience and prepare them for the challenges of life. Is there an idea here that you could begin working on now?



1. Model good coping skills.

Teach by example. When your own emotions are high, say things like, "I can tell I'm getting frustrated. So, I'm going to take a deep breath (or pray, or take a little walk, etc.) before I try again." Or, "I'm sorry I got angry. I need to try again."

2. Praise effort, not just success.

Children should understand that success is a product of hard work and sacrifice. But even when they try hard, sometimes they'll fail. Commend your children for trying, then encourage them to figure out what's going wrong and to try another approach or practice more. Celebrate small steps in the right direction.



3. Praise more than you correct.

Do you find yourself constantly scolding? Make an effort to point out small daily victories. "You're ready on time. Nice job!" "Thank you for being so reverent during the prayer." Sincere praise helps children feel encouraged, understand more clearly what is expected, and be more willing to take on challenges.

4. Teach that mistakes and failure are part of life. Emphasize that your child's worth does not depend on success or winning. You and God will always love them.

This will help your child feel comfortable discussing their mistakes and problems with you. As they grow to understand that mistakes are temporary and an opportunity to learn and grow, their self-worth will be attached to their eternal potential instead of to momentary success or failure.



5. Ask questions to help children solve their own problems.

Rather than give your child the answers, ask questions that help them solve their own problems—specifically questions that help the child (1) recognize what happened, (2) identify options that might have led to greater success, and (3) figure out ways to fix the problem or avoid it next time.



6. Allow children to experience natural and logical consequences to their choices. Discuss rules about related behaviors and set reasonable consequences that are respectful of both parent and child. Resist the temptation to let consequences slide. Consistency is crucial here. Resilient children are accountable and take responsibility.



7. Help children stay positive during trials. It's hard to stay happy during tough times, partially because our brains are on high alert searching for additional threats or problems. Humans are just wired that way. Parents can help rewire children's brains to search for the good even during hard times by regularly asking:

- What are three new things you're grateful for today?
- When did you see God's hand in your life today?
- What was hard today? What did you learn from it? How might you try again?



8. Give them opportunities to do hard things. Children must learn that they don't have to *want* to do hard things; they just have to *do* them. You are a resource to help, but they can do a lot on their own. Calmly offer guidance and clarify expectations, then problem-solve with them to complete hard tasks. ■



NOTE

1. See Emmy E. Werner, "Risk, Resilience, and Recovery: Perspectives from the Kauai Longitudinal Study," *Development and Psychopathology*, vol. 5, no. 4 (Fall 1993), 503–15.

For more on this topic, see Lyle J. Burrup, "Raising Resilient Children," *Ensign*, Mar. 2013, 12–17.