



The following is an excerpt from “Building Resilience in Children,” at [healthychildren.org](https://www.healthychildren.org)

The world can be a frightening place. As a parent, I am constantly aware of choices that I make to minimize my perception of fear and uncertainty. Death, illness, divorce, crime, war, child abductions, tsunamis, and terrorism — both here and abroad — have defined an evolving landscape for raising our families. How do we manage to parent from a place of love and understanding, not fear and paranoia?

It’s not possible to protect our children from the ups and downs of life. Raising resilient children, however, is possible and can provide them with the tools they need to respond to the challenges of adolescence and young adulthood and to navigate successfully in adulthood. Despite our best efforts, we cannot prevent adversity and daily stress; but we can learn to be more resilient by changing how we think about challenges and adversities.

Today’s families, especially our children, are under tremendous stress with the potential to damage both physical health and psychological well-being.

The stress comes from families who are always on the go, who are overscheduled with extracurricular activities, and ever-present peer pressure. In the teen years, the anxiety and pressure are related to getting into “the” college.

In today’s environment, children and teens need to develop strengths, acquire skills to cope, recover from hardships, and be prepared for future challenges. They need to be resilient in order to succeed in life.

That is why Kenneth Ginsburg, M.D., MS Ed, FAAP, a pediatrician specializing in adolescent medicine at The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP), has joined forces with the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to author “A Parent’s Guide to Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Your Child Roots and Wings.” The book provides a dynamic resource to help parents and caregivers build resilience in children, teens, and young adults.

Dr. Ginsburg has identified seven “Cs” of resilience, recognizing that “resilience isn’t a simple, one-part entity.” Parents can use these guidelines to help their children recognize their abilities and inner resources.

Competence

Competence describes the feeling of knowing that you can handle a situation effectively. We can help the development of competence by:

- Helping children focus on individual strengths
- Focusing any identified mistakes on specific incidents
- Empowering children to make decisions
- Being careful that your desire to protect your child doesn’t mistakenly send a message that you don’t think he or she is competent to handle things.
- Recognizing the competencies of siblings individually and avoiding comparisons

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Confidence

A child's belief in his own abilities is derived from competence. Build confidence by:

- Focusing on the best in each child so that he or she can see that, as well
- Clearly expressing the best qualities, such as fairness, integrity, persistence, and kindness
- Recognizing when he or she has done well
- Praising honestly about specific achievements; not diffusing praise that may lack authenticity
- Not pushing the child to take on more than he or she can realistically handle

Connection

Developing close ties to family and community creates a solid sense of security that helps lead to strong values and prevents alternative destructive paths to love and attention. You can help your child connect with others by:

- Building a sense of physical safety and emotional security within your home
- Allowing the expression of all emotions, so that kids will feel comfortable reaching out during difficult times
- Addressing conflict openly in the family to resolve problems
- Creating a common area where the family can share time (not necessarily TV time)
- Fostering healthy relationships that will reinforce positive messages

Character

Children need to develop a solid set of morals and values to determine right from wrong and to demonstrate a caring attitude toward others. To strengthen your child's character, start by:

- Demonstrating how behaviors affect others
- Helping your child recognize himself or herself as a caring person
- Demonstrating the importance of community
- Encouraging the development of spirituality
- Avoiding racist or hateful statements or stereotypes

Contribution

Children need to realize that the world is a better place because they are in it. Understanding the importance of personal contribution can serve as a source of purpose and motivation. Teach your children how to contribute by:

- Communicating to children that many people in the world do not have what they need
- Stressing the importance of serving others by modeling generosity
- Creating opportunities for each child to contribute in some specific way

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Coping

Learning to cope effectively with stress will help your child be better prepared to overcome life's challenges. Positive coping lessons include:

- Modeling positive coping strategies on a consistent basis
- Guiding your child to develop positive and effective coping strategies
- Realizing that telling him or her to stop the negative behavior will not be effective
- Understanding that many risky behaviors are attempts to alleviate the stress and pain in kids' daily lives
- Not condemning your child for negative behaviors and, potentially, increasing his or her sense of shame

Control

Children who realize that they can control the outcomes of their decisions are more likely to realize that they have the ability to bounce back. Your child's understanding that he or she can make a difference further promotes competence and confidence. You can try to empower your child by:

- Helping your child to understand that life's events are not purely random and that most things that happen are the result of another individual's choices and actions
- Learning that discipline is about teaching, not punishing or controlling; using discipline to help your child to understand that his actions produce certain consequences

Dr. Ginsburg summarizes what we know for sure about the development of resilience in kids by the following:

- Children need to know that there is an adult in their life who believes in them and loves them unconditionally.
- Kids will live "up" or "down" to our expectations.

There is no simple answer to guarantee resilience in every situation. But we can challenge ourselves to help our children develop the ability to negotiate their own challenges and to be more resilient, more capable, and happier.



Overview of Stress

- There will always be stress in our lives.
- Stress is an important tool that can aid in our survival.
- Our body's reaction to stress is mediated through a complex interplay of sensory input—sights and sounds—as well as the brain and nervous system, hormones, and the body's cells and organs.
- Emotions play an important role in how we experience stress because the brain is the conductor of this system. The way we think about stress and what we choose to do about it can affect the impact of a stressful event.

For more information, check Building Resilience in Children by Bonny McClain, Healthy Children Magazine. <https://forum.psychlinks.ca/threads/building-resilience-in-children.22561/> and <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/emotional-wellness/Building-Resilience/Pages/Building-Resilience-in-Children.aspx>

Coping Strategies—HALT



One thing to consider is **H.A.L.T.**

It is very difficult to work through a problem when you are Hungry, Angry, Lonely or Tired.

Help your children monitor this and teach them to put aside problems and emotions until they have assessed these things. Just think of a preschooler who is at the end of their rope and have gotten uncharacteristically angry at their sibling and then you realize that they skipped lunch or snack.

As adults, don't we sometimes feel angry or frustrated and then we remember that we were up half the night and also got rushed so we did not eat.

A key coping strategy is being tuned in to your own body and emotions..... Wait to problem solve and make decisions until you can think clearly about a specific issue.

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Current as of June 1, 2021



Positive Coping Strategies for Children

Taking Action (on the problem or stressor)

Taking Care of Your Body

Taking Care of Emotions

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Parent by Example

Nothing we say is as important as what our children see us doing each and every day.

Remember, you are the expert on your own child. You understand their strengths, challenges, and their history. As you are guiding your child and teaching them to be resilient, also remember these ideas:

To be strong, children need unconditional love, absolute security and a deep connection to at least one adult.

Children live up or down to the expectations of the adult's in their lives.

Children with a wide range of coping strategies will be prepared to overcome almost anything and far less likely to try many of the risk behaviors that parents fear.

Most importantly, nothing a parent says is more important than what the child sees them doing on a daily basis. Therefore, it is vital that you incorporate the 7 Cs of Resilience into your own tool kit so that children not only hear you talking about them, but also see these things in action.

MCEC[®] Resources

- *SchoolQuest™* is an interactive tool, specially designed to support highly mobile military-connected parents & students: <https://schoolquest.militarychild.org>
- Military Student Consultants: This program is the portal for all questions student and parent related. You can submit your specific questions concerning transition barriers and receive specialized support. To contact a Military Student Consultant, email msc@militarychild.org
- The MCEC[®] podcast series covers an array of informative and important topics with guests from all walks of life. Visit [Podbean](#), [Google Playstore](#), or [iTunes](#)
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MCEC[®] Parent Support Resources

- Find other MCEC[®] Parent Support [webinars](#) related to this topic on our official website MilitaryChild.org
- Contact your local Parent Support team for workshops offered in your community: <https://www.militarychild.org/programs/parent-to-parent>
- If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to reach out to: Parents@MilitaryChild.org

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Fostering Resilience During Deployment: Activities Notes

Communication Command Center

- Envelopes, pens, paper, colors _____
- Research kids in location _____
- Maps, country info _____
- Mementos of daddy _____
- Things sent by daddy _____

Ongoing Art Project

- Joint Project _____
- Child Starts and Sends Supplies _____
- Parent Adds Something _____
- Returns to Child _____
- Continue until complete _____

Security Blankets

- Swap something _____
- Family traditions book _____
- Treasure boxes, love pouch _____
- Personal Picture books (zero to 3) _____
- Flat Mommy/Daddy _____

Creative "Writing"

- Voice recordings _____
- Puzzle or encoded messages _____
- Notebook back and forth _____
- Library videos – reading _____
- School work, clippings _____

Time Markers

- Kisses, m&ms in a jar _____
- Chain link _____
- Height string _____
- Jar of daily events _____
- Set one clock to Iraq time _____

Thinking Ahead

- Mail cards to pre-write _____
- Pages for traditions/ scrap book _____
- Send things for command center _____
- Deployment books _____

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Deployment-Related Children's Books

AUTHOR

Ballard, Robin
Bunting, Eve
Crary, Elizabeth
Ehrmantraut, Brenda
Decker, Tim
Duble, Kathleen Benner
Ferguson-Cohen, Michelle
Ferguson-Cohen, Michelle
Fowler, Susi L.
Hilbrecht, Kirk
Hilbrecht, Kirk
Hoff, Syd
McElroy, Lisa Tucker
McKinley, Robin
Mead, Alice
Meriowsky, Anissa
National Inst. for Building
Long Distance Relationships

Pelton, Mindy L.
Penn, Audrey
Simon, Norma
Spinelli, Eileen
Sportelli-Rehak, Angela
Tomp, Sarah Wones
Yolen, Jane
Zolotow, Charlotte

TITLE

My Father Is Far Away
My Red Balloon
Mommy Don't Go
Night Catch
The Letter Home
Pilot Mom
Daddy, You're My Hero!
Mommy, You're My Hero!
I'll See You When the Moon Is Full
My Daddy Is a Guardsman
My Daddy Is a Soldier
Captain Cat
Love, Lizzie: Letters to a Military Mom
My Father Is in the Navy
Soldier Mom
A Yellow Ribbon for Daddy

Moms Over Miles: An Activities Handbook for
Strengthening Long Distance Relationships
When Dad's at Sea
The Kissing Hand
All Kinds of Families
While You Are Away
Uncle Sam's Kids: When Duty Calls
Red, White, and Blue Good-bye
All Those Secrets of the World
If You Listen