

# Building Resilience in These Uncertain Times

During this uncertain time, we, as parents, are full of wishes.

We wish to protect our children from witnessing the fear and uncertainty permeating the world. We wish we could take away the disruption and inconvenience young people are experiencing, such as physical distancing from education, activities, and relationships. And we wish they did not have to be exposed to and witness illness or suffering.

Our desire to protect our children is embedded in our parental bone marrow. The harsh reality, however, is that we cannot control any of these circumstances. The best way to protect our children is to shape the lessons gained during this difficult time, and build the resilience skills they will benefit from throughout their lives. This chapter highlights the feelings many of us are experiencing and pairs them with the opportunity they offer to model and teach lifelong resilience skills in our children.

## “I feel like I am failing”: Learning Self-forgiveness

You are not alone. Join most parents in America.

These times are profoundly stressful, and you are likely way past juggling those balls; you're probably dropping some of them. Who knew that you would have to work from home *while* keeping your family entertained, *while* staying on top of your kids' education, *while* managing everyone else's emotions, *while* worrying about finances, *while* worrying about yourself, or your relatives' or neighbors' well-being, *while* simultaneously being told to stay put.

Here's the good news—**Perfection is not an option here.**

We know that the best way to influence your child is to be a model. Know that if you forgive yourself and are genuinely intentional about seeing the good in yourself now through self-compassion, your child or adolescent will learn

more from you than words could ever teach. She will learn that when times get toughest, we give ourselves a break. She will understand that when we care for ourselves, we are in a better position to care for others.

There is an even larger lesson. Young people thrive when they know that they are loved without condition and that their parents will stand by them through thick and thin. Too many young people choose not to fully include their parents in their lives for fear of disappointing them or driving them away. Your children, however, will forever feel safer including you in the details of their lives because they know they can do so without fear of losing you. Without question you will not be driven away. Your presence is reliable. They have seen you forgive yourself of your human frailty, reassuring them that you would offer them the same compassion. When young people are bathed in this level of security, they launch into adulthood knowing that they are worthy of being loved, even when they have made mistakes. They learn to be a bit gentler with themselves. That is lifelong protection.

### **“My kids are frustrated, and so am I”: Learning to Empathize**

One of the most respectful things we can do is to genuinely understand another’s point of view. This powerful life lesson prepares young people to foster healthier relationships in adulthood. The best way for them to gain this perspective is to learn firsthand. In other words, you build a major element of resilience in your child—empathy for others—by working to understand his thoughts, feelings, and behaviors.

Young people have had so much taken away from them. They are separated from their friends. They are being asked to learn in a whole new way. Their activities, including sports and extracurricular activities, have been curtailed. Major rites of passage—graduations, proms, religious coming-of-age ceremonies—have been postponed or cancelled. Those getting ready to move away have had those last precious memory-building months with family and friends taken away. Their frustration is well-earned.

It is not just the loss of events; it is also the loss of freedoms and privileges. Young people who earned the right to walk or drive around the neighborhood are now home being treated like children. They are told where they can go and what they can do. They have returned to a level of supervision they long ago moved past. Some, however, have taken on extra child-care responsibilities while parents work from home. In these cases, although they benefit from the trust given to them, they may be frustrated by their own needs becoming secondary to those of a younger sibling.

Frustration and loss drives acting-out behaviors. Feelings over the loss of independence can drive some youth to forcefully assert that independence. Each of us is experiencing disappointment and acclimating to uncomfortable restrictions and uncertainty for the future. To understand how deeply this is affecting your child, it is important to grasp how often these issues interfere with her development. If we consider these challenges in the context of development, it is easier to be empathetic, even if you find your child's behavior unacceptable. It also allows us to better address our child's needs.

You may find it easier to support younger children through these disappointments than adolescents. They know something is worrisome but will draw their comfort from you. They are less likely to ask the unsettling questions that have no answers. When they do, we can keep our responses simple yet reassuring. They need to know they are safe and protected and that the adults in their lives are okay. Because they don't have as much independence as an older sibling may, they will more likely accept their caregivers' limitations.

Adolescents, however, are more on edge because they understand what we adults are worried about. The restrictions placed on them directly challenge their developmental needs and, therefore, they may react strongly. Adolescence is the time of answering the hardest question life throws at us, "Who am I? independent of my parents." This means that stretching limits and testing boundaries are a critical element of the adolescent years. Tweens and teens experience thrills as they venture a bit further than their previous comfort zones. Generally, we should encourage growth while carefully setting boundaries to make sure they don't stretch into dangerous territory. But coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) hasn't created thoughtful boundaries. It has created restrictions. In many ways, adolescents are being treated as captives. These restrictions fly in the face of adolescents' needs to be exploring and gaining independence. So, we should expect them to push back harder. **This is a reminder to give them as much freedom as possible, as much choice as is safe, and as much independence as our confines allow.**

For adolescents, this isolation can be felt much more painfully. First, the emotional centers of the brain are developing rapidly during adolescence. This leads to heightened emotions, including the ability to connect with others and to read people. Second, the brain's reward centers are wired to encourage adolescents to seek peer interactions. These "reward centers" drive behavior because they create intense pleasure when activated. And I don't think you'll be surprised to know adolescents' reward centers become activated in the presence of peers. This makes sense in practical terms. Adolescence is about preparing to launch from the family nest and to enter the adult world of work

and relationships. The brain is designed to promote those relationships. Peer relationships are the prep work needed to have fulfilling and satisfying adult relationships later. Knowing this helps us understand why being separated from peers is so profoundly difficult for adolescents. It also helps us understand why we must do everything we can to support their ability to connect with friends virtually.

Third, adolescence is the second age of “whys.” Your 2- and 3-year-old wanted to understand how everything worked, including why the sky was blue. You celebrated his curiosity. Your adolescent also wants to understand the “whys,” but on a much deeper level. His questions include the large unanswerable questions of humankind, like “Why do we allow people to go hungry if there is enough food for everyone?” This pandemic is full of questions nobody can yet answer. It is understandable, therefore, that adolescents in particular will struggle with all of these unknowns. Knowing this, we are reminded that, even as we grow weary, we need to participate actively in deep, thoughtful discussions with our tweens and teens. You’ll get to know your adolescent better, strengthen your connection, and encourage his inquisitive nature.

## **“I don’t have it as bad as someone else”: Understanding Is a 2-Way Street**

We all have a right to live in our own worlds. **And it is a mistake to suggest that another person does not have the right to experience her own feelings and frustrations just because someone else has it worse.** Such an approach only increases frustration and resentment. Perhaps worse, it can lead to shame or guilt about having emotions and that can cause feelings to be suppressed, which can result in psychological distress.

The previous section focused on understanding our children’s perspective to build empathy, which fosters security. Here, I want to underscore that for people to be able to thrive, they need to understand that understanding is a 2-way street. That means that it’s important that our children and teens also understand what we are going through. Just as we provide room to be frustrated, they need to understand that we also deserve their empathy. It is important that everyone acknowledges that we are *all* going through something and deserve to be forgiven for our less-than-stellar performances.

## “I don’t know how to handle how I feel”: Acknowledging, Processing, and Releasing Emotions

**A time of uncertainty with heightened emotions is the exact time to demonstrate to our children that emotions are not to be ignored.** Too many young people receive messages that strong people contain their emotions and that genuinely experiencing feelings is a sign of weakness. The truth is, bottling up emotions allows them to fester and leads to unresolved feelings. We should encourage emotions to be felt and demonstrate *healthy* verbal and nonverbal ways to express them.

The word *healthy* is critical here. There are ways to express emotions that are harmful to yourself and others. This means you should discourage outbursts and instant fixes (such as mind-altering substances) at the same time that you encourage talking, writing, artistic expression, prayer and reflection, meditation, and physical exercise. Further, as you model expressing emotions, it is important to demonstrate when to engage others and when to create your own space. Sometimes in cramped living situations, as many of us are experiencing now, people can first get to their “calm place” privately and then join with others to talk things through or share and express their frustrations.

**Our children must learn from us that having emotions is good, talking about them is necessary, and being honest with them is healing.** We want to use the right language when supporting resilience development. With our words, we express whether we see youth as vulnerable, fragile, or incapable. Or, safe, strong, or capable. When we say, “Let me help you with that,” we communicate, “I don’t think you can do it on your own.” When we say, “It’s not that bad. Let me give you a hug,” we belittle the situation and imply that comfort is dependent on us. Rather, we want young people to know the problem is real and that they’ll be able to handle it...with our support. When we jump in quickly with solutions, we deny space for our children to arrive at their own solutions. On the other hand, when we listen to them and act as a sounding board, we give them the opportunity to be thoughtful and become confident in their choices.

<b>Say This (when engaging a young person’s thoughtfulness)</b>	<b>Not That</b>
What do you think? I’m here to listen.	I think...
Tell me what you understand.	You’re too young to understand.

<b>Say This (about a bad experience)</b>	<b>Not That</b>
This must feel awful to you. Really awful. In time, it will hurt less. And you'll be stronger for the experience.	It's not that bad.
You'll get through this.	I'll handle this for you.
This is temporary. It hurts now, but you'll feel better over time.	This is terrible.
Let's think through together what you could do to feel better about this.	I don't know what to tell you.

<b>Say This (about emotional distress)</b>	<b>Not That</b>
Help me understand what you are going through.	I understand.
The best thing about you is how much you care. Your challenge in life will be to learn how to care without hurting too much inside.	You are too sensitive.
It is great to think as much as you do. Your challenge is to remind yourself you'll be able to handle this; you just have to think through a solution. It also might help to remind yourself you'll get through it.	You worry too much.

<b>Say This (about seeking help)</b>	<b>Not That</b>
A strong person learns how to reach out to others.	A strong person handles tough times.
It'll take time. But your own strength and the support you'll get from those who care about you will help you heal.	Just get past it.
Sometimes the strongest thing a person can do is to seek professional help.	Strong people move on.
You deserve to feel better.	You need help!

## “I want to pull my hair out”: Creating a Safe Haven Within Our Homes

Parenting can be really tough, and made tougher through challenging times. Sometimes precisely because children feel most comfortable within our homes, they also express their frustrations loudest right in our living rooms and their anger right to our faces. Now, events outside of our homes are seeping through our walls and we are all together, (crowded) within those walls, in a way we’ve never before experienced.

You can be crazy in love with your child and still sometimes want to tear your hair out. It is the fact that we get through these times that adds an even deeper layer of security to our relationships. Children learn that you can have conflict and recover. They learn there is a place where you can temporarily be your worst self, and you’ll still be cared about. They learn that love is not only about praise, it is also about active, even firm, guidance.

We all have bad days. These are most likely to happen when stress load is high, and it’s high now. Our children are most likely to display the behaviors that push us away precisely when they need us the most as calming forces in their lives. Remember that sometimes the security we offer is exactly what enables them to lose it with us.

Resilience is about taking control of what you can. **We cannot control the outside world, but we can be intentional about creating sanctuaries within our homes.** It is natural and expected to be stressed now. It is normal to express frustrations and to “vent” most loudly to the people with whom you feel most secure. This crisis, however, poses a particular challenge, one in which it is harder to create the space we all need to clear our heads and regroup. But, when modeling how to get through these stressful times, we have to deal with the hand we are dealt. We have to speak frankly within our homes and say, “The world feels frightening right now. Therefore, we are going to make our home a safe haven. We’re going to choose to be kinder and gentler. We’re going to gain our strength from each other. We’re going to speak openly about how we love and care about each other. There still will be little things about each other that get on our nerves. But we are going to do our best to let them go. **We are going to get through this together because we will create peace in our house.**”

A haven is not a place to tuck away or ignore emotions. To the contrary, it must be a place where heightened emotions are processed in a healthy way. Home also has to be a place where people can safely unplug. In this age of 24-hour news cycles, homes cannot become peaceful places with the ever-present tension of news reports. Check in routinely with credible sources to know what to do to remain safe and healthy. But create a place where people can study, reflect, and enjoy time together.

## “I need a time-out”: Being a Calming Presence for Others

**In moments of uncertainty, when our minds begin racing toward worst-case scenarios, the presence of a reassuring voice makes all of the difference.** You learned this when your toddler looked to you after falling down to decide whether to cry or get back up. There’s a fancy name for this—*co-regulation*. It means that we communicate spoken and unspoken signals that lend our calm presence to another person.

Being a calming presence has value in the moment, but, to build resilience in your children and teens, it is more important to share that it takes work and intention to get there. It is about modeling being human, not creating a false notion that suggests it comes naturally. This is an opportunity to help your children learn that taking the steps to self-regulate not only allows you to co-regulate, it also improves your clarity of thought, provides relaxation, and, ultimately, improves your health.

To reach a calm state, you have to get there first, and that starts with a “time-out.” Yes, time-outs work for 3-year-olds and they can work for you. In your time-out, you might do nothing at all, or you might find a prayerful or reflective space. Afterward, you might reach out to a trusted friend to think things through or express your feelings through written or artistic expression. You might just scream into the darkness. This will look differently for everyone, but the point is that you do what you need to do for you *first*. As mentioned earlier, one of your priorities has to include *your* health. Convey this to your children in open communication. You might say, “You need all of me. And I’m not at my best right now, so I need a time-out to get there.” Then, tell them exactly what you’ll do—go for a run, read a book, call a friend, take a shower. The following are some ways you can transform your body into a relaxed state:

- ✱ **Outrun the Threat.** One of the best ways of getting to calm is to feel that you’ve outrun the threat. Exercise is a powerful way of using up the stress hormones that activate our emergency systems. It literally communicates to your body that you’ve escaped the danger.
- ✱ **Activate the Calm Nervous System.** The calm and emergency systems run in parallel. In other words, one is basically active while the other stands in waiting. If we only had a switch to turn on our calm system, the emergency system would dial down and our higher brain functions would dominate, allowing our thoughtful, reflective selves to win the day. We do have that switch! Deep, slow breathing is the magic switch that restores you to calm.



Sometimes you may feel like that you've got it all together, but I'll bet that more often (especially now) you feel like a duck on the water, appearing to be gliding effortlessly along the stream, but all the while your little legs are paddling like crazy beneath the surface. In the short run, during moments of crisis, try to look to your child like that elegant gliding duck. In the long term, however, you do more good in building your child or teen's resilience skills by helping him understand how much work it takes beneath the surface to glide through life.

### **“I don't know how to respond”: Being Clear and Honest With Yourself and Others**

The last thing you want to do in a time of uncertainty is to pretend you are certain. Calm, yes. Thoughtful, yes. Hopeful, always. Certain? Only if you want to lose the trust of those who are relying on your judgment. Instead, **say what you do know. Admit what you don't.** And model how you are planning on getting credible information.

- \* “You're asking the right questions. I don't know all the answers. But I trust that there are wise people trying to figure out the best things to do right now. Let's search for the answers together, and make sure we are looking in the places we can trust.”
- \* “You want to know the kind of experts I trust? The ones who have the training to get to the answers. But also the ones who are clear about what they know and what they are still working to figure out. It makes me know that I can believe what they are telling me.”

### **“My mind feels out of control”: Maintaining Physical Health Strengthens Emotional Health**

**We cannot control all that happens to us, but we can control how our bodies support our minds to best navigate the circumstances we confront.**

We optimize our mental dexterity and emotional capacity when we maintain an exercise routine, prioritize sleep, and eat nourishing food. To build your children's resilience, say out loud: “I can't just sit on the couch all day. Taking naps just makes me more tired. I'm going to get up, get dressed, and do normal things. I'm also going to exercise. The gym is closed, but I'm going to find an at-home workout. If I don't take care of my body, I can't focus as well.”

## “I keep thinking about the worst-case scenario”: Stay Present and Live in the Reality

Uncertainty can sometimes make our minds race to the worst possible outcome. This catastrophic thinking then becomes our perceived reality and our stress responses are activated as if the worst circumstances occurred. This interferes with our ability to think and plan. After all, when a tiger is chasing you, you are not supposed to be working out a solution. Panicking is exactly what helps you run faster to escape. But if the tiger only exists within your thoughts, you undermine your ability to problem-solve.

So catch those thoughts. Stop yourself and say, “I am imagining the worst.” Take a few deep breaths. Then ask, “What is happening *right now*? What is the worst-case scenario? What is the best-case scenario?” The truth is probably somewhere in between. Notice that what I am calling for is *realistic*, not optimistic, thinking. **Realistic thinking generates hope and empowerment because it enables you to thoughtfully plan out solutions. It doesn’t sugar-coat or belittle real problems.** Rather, it allows you to return to the present moment, where a realistic assessment allows you to problem-solve.

Resilient people can realistically distinguish when they have control over a situation and when they do not. They gather their resources for situations in which they do have control and conserve their resources when they do not. They can assess when something will pass easily and quickly; they’re able to talk themselves down when they start to magnify events in their story lines to catastrophic proportions. All of this reduces their stress levels.

If you can model how thinking patterns affect one’s ability to deal with difficulties, you can build your children’s resilience. Talking out loud can help them see the connections between inaccurate thoughts and uncomfortable feelings. For example, if you become unnerved while watching the news, you might say out loud, “Wow, my imagination just took me for a scary ride. I was listening to the news and I suddenly began feeling panicky, like this would never end. Then I began realizing those thoughts were all in my head. I took a deep breath, caught the panicky thoughts, and put them away! I replaced them with the hopeful ones I have when I hear how much work the scientists are doing. And then I focused on all of the things we are doing to stay safe.”

Finally, remember that young people can naturally assume the worst because they have not *yet* had the experience to know that crises come and go. Amid a crisis, it is usually hard to see past it. We can remember to say what so many of our grandparents said to us: “This too shall pass.” Add the following line, “And I know you’ll get through this with me by your side.”

## “I feel helpless”: Finding What You *Can* Do

Few things create discomfort more than feeling like there is too much to do...or nothing you can do at all. And few things restore comfort more than tackling what you can. As long as you view a problem as insurmountable, it will feel like a mountain you could never climb. Remember, each mountain can be thought of as a few hills on top of each other. This is the first step to choosing that first hill you can conquer.

You have an opportunity to model the importance of one of the most calming words in the English Language: “Yet.” It serves as a reminder that the current reality does not prevent us from getting to the next step. “I’ll NEVER \_\_\_\_\_!” transforms into “I haven’t \_\_\_\_\_ yet.” **We want our children to possess a mindset that doesn’t accept failure or disappointment as permanent, but instead views setbacks as opportunities to try yet again.** We want to guide them to view their limitations as challenges they have not *yet* learned to overcome or work around. Words, even simple ones, can make us feel differently about our capacity to succeed in the best of times and to recover from tough times.

Say This (about problem solving or solution building)	Not That
How do you think you could solve this problem?	Let me help you with that.
You haven’t <i>yet</i> been able to...	You can’t...
What do you think is the best way to handle this? How can I support your plan?	I’ll handle this for you.
Take one step at a time. When you’ve accomplished something small, you’ll prove you can succeed and feel less overwhelmed.	Just get started.

## “I can’t do everything”: Learning to Let Go

**Remember those balls we’ve dropped on the ground? Leave some of them there. You can wait to pick them up.** We are all adjusting to a new type of normal. Things that may have felt very important to you before may not matter as much now. When this is over, you can get back to them. Right now, stay healthy, strong, and compassionate. Take care of those around you who are vulnerable. Let your family members know they are precious to you. Do what it takes to keep a roof over your head and food on the table. Everything else can wait.

## **“I am so disappointed”: Find Joy, Give Service, and Maintain Purpose**

Life is full of disappointments. It is okay to feel them fully. But, in the toughest of times, we must find space for joy. Sometimes that comes naturally simply by opening our eyes to the loving presence of those around us. Other times it takes effort, such as choosing to play a game or cook a favorite recipe. Sometimes it is simply finding solitude. But we must be intentional about including joy in each day.

We also must fill our lives with reminders that we matter. It is this sense of meaning and purpose that can bring us joy every day and get us through the toughest times. This moment grants us all an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of others who are isolated or vulnerable. Help your children see how much of a difference they can make in others' lives and how good it feels to give service. This may enhance their own resilience because they learn the joy of giving. More important, they learn that there is no pity in receiving. In times of their own need, they will know there is nothing more powerful or protective than human connection.

## **“I had so many plans that aren't working out”: When You Can't Change Things, Adapt**

So many of our plans are not working out. How we react to these changing circumstances makes a difference to our well-being. Resilient people know when they have the power to change something by doubling down on their efforts and when they should conserve their energy. At some level, anxiety results from the confusion about what we can and can't control. Like all emotions, anxiety can be helpful, but when it's out of control, it can be paralyzing. Isn't it better to know what we can handle, know our confidence is well earned, and have the good sense to recognize what *not* to worry about?

In life, we sometimes reach an impasse. There are disappointments that we can't resolve. Some things are simply beyond our control, for grown-ups and children alike, and the only thing we can really control is how we choose to react. Often, the best thing we can do in these situations is conserve our energy and move ahead without tearing ourselves apart. It's in these moments that you give your children a hug and remind them that when life gets tough, at least they can always rely on your unwavering presence.

If, on the other hand, a disappointment is about something you had planned that won't happen, something you wanted to do that you can't, or something you had wanted to buy that is no longer feasible, you adapt. First, feel the disappointment. It's ok. Belittling the feelings sends the wrong message. But then focus on what you *can* make a reality, what you *can* do, and what you *can* get.

## **“I miss my family and friends”: Relationships Strengthen Us**

Every commercial now seems to end with “We’re in this together!” **Uncertainty is frightening, but knowing that we are not alone to figure it out brings comfort. Any individual alone is vulnerable, but joined together we are stronger than the combination of each of our individual strengths.** People together can take turns between drawing strength from others and being a source of strength. Young people should see that wise adults actively reach to others during stressful times.

It would be wonderful if the key lesson drawn from these times is how much relationships matter. This generation will understand and appreciate the simple joy of being with grandparents, extended family, friends, and community.

Relationships are at the forefront of every aspect of this pandemic, for better or worse. Social distancing is a way to protect yourself and a way to demonstrate that you care for and about others. It can be maddening. It can create separation from friends, activities, and even family. But it also can bring out the best in us. *As we are told to be apart, it reminds us how much we are driven to be near.* As we create physical space between us, our creativity generates ways to maintain contact. Imagine how much meaning things previously taken for granted will hold when this is over—being in a classroom to soak in knowledge, cheering on our teams at sporting events, and worshipping together with our families and community. Imagine how grateful our children will be to hug their grandparents.

**This is a generational defining moment. We can’t control entirely how our teens perceive what is happening, nor can we know how long this “moment” will last or how deeply or nearly it will touch us. We can, however, influence the big lessons they walk away with.** These lessons will make a difference in how they parent, and even how they grandparent. We can hope teens of this generation gain a deep-seated understanding of the power of relationships. If they do, it will enhance their ability to get the most out of good times and their resilience through life’s inevitable tough times.

I am reminded of one of Aesop’s’ fables. Please allow me to adapt his work so we might consider today how to build our collective resilience and shape the life lessons our children and teens draw from these times.

A young person was feeling frustrated, angry, and powerless, close to her breaking point. Sometimes this showed through words spoken (or screamed!), sometimes through flowing tears, and most often through silence. A loving adult approached and said, “I know these moments are frightening and sometimes it feels as if we have no control over our lives. Sometimes it even feels as though we will break, like a stick about to snap.” The adult then challenges the youth to break a stick lying on the ground. The young person easily breaks the stick in two, relating to its fragil-

ity. The caring adult gathers several sticks, ties them together, and hands them to the child. “Go ahead and try to break the sticks now.” The young person tries and can barely even get them to bend. The adult kindly explains, “Each of those sticks by themselves can easily break, but when they are joined with others, they become stronger than if we added all of their individual strengths together. We are like this bundle of sticks. Each of us can be fragile at any moment, but together we are stronger. In moments where we feel most vulnerable, we gather people around us to draw from their strengths. In time, you will take this lesson and lend your strength to others.”

When we think of building resilience, we do not deny difficulty. We do not pretend that nothing is wrong or tell others to put aside their frustrations. We mustn't suggest they should “just get past it.” The language of resilience does not create optimism through cheerful words or sugarcoating realities. It guides others to create hope and generates a sense of control through actions. It helps others express their emotions in healthy ways and learn that buried emotions only lead to a loss of the ability to feel. Above all, it illustrates that “as tough as circumstances are, we're not alone, and we are stronger for it.”

If our children and teens appreciate togetherness just a bit more, and cherish relationships just a bit more deeply, they will forever reap the benefits. **If this generation learns that when times get tough, people unify, it will be the generation that can lead us into a better shared future—one in which we hold those we love nearer and offer those who are vulnerable the extra support they deserve.**

### **“Will things ever be the same?”: Hope**

Resilience is about more than surviving, bouncing back, or recovering. It is about adapting. Growing. Becoming stronger. Being ready for the next challenge, but also being prepared to savor all the good life has to offer. I hope that by the time you read this, the most difficult times will have passed. But I also hope that the lessons endure. Imagine if this generation does hold a newfound appreciation for relationships. Imagine if this nation moves away from divisiveness and returns to its sense of shared mission. Imagine if this world views problems previously seen as insurmountable differently and learns that if we join together with resolve, even the toughest issues can be addressed.

Imagine if this moment of hardship serves as an awakening.

## Resilience Takeaways for Parents

- \* “This is a generational defining moment. We can’t control entirely how our teens perceive what is happening, nor can we know how long this ‘moment’ will last or how deeply or nearly it will touch us. We can, however, influence the big lessons they walk away with.”
- \* “Perfection is not an option here.”
- \* “... give them [adolescents] as much freedom as possible, as much choice as is safe, and as much independence as our confines allow.”
- \* “It is a mistake to suggest that another person does not have the right to experience her own feelings and frustrations, just because someone else has it worse.”
- \* “Our children must learn from us that having emotions is good, talking about them is necessary, and being honest with them is healing.”
- \* “A time of uncertainty with heightened emotions is the exact time to demonstrate to our children that emotions are not to be ignored.”
- \* “We cannot control the outside world, but we can be intentional about creating sanctuaries within our homes. We are going to get through this together because we will create peace in our house.”
- \* “In moments of uncertainty when our minds begin racing toward worst-case scenarios, the presence of a reassuring voice makes all of the difference.”
- \* “Say what you do know. Admit what you don’t.”
- \* “We cannot control all that happens to us, but we can control how our bodies support our minds to best navigate the circumstances we confront.”
- \* “Realistic thinking generates hope and empowerment because it enables you to thoughtfully plan out solutions. It doesn’t sugarcoat or belittle real problems.”
- \* “We want our children to possess a mindset that doesn’t accept failure or disappointment as permanent, but instead views setbacks as opportunities to try yet again.”

- ❄ **“Remember those balls we’ve dropped on the ground? Leave some of them there. You can wait to pick them up.”**
- ❄ **“Uncertainty is frightening, but knowing that we are not alone to figure it out brings comfort. Any individual alone is vulnerable, but joined together we are stronger than the combination of each of our individual strengths.”**
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*Some of these concepts are adapted from content Dr Ginsburg has developed for The Center for Parent & Teen Communication ([parentandteen.com](http://parentandteen.com)).*

*A deeper dive into these ideas can be found in the newly released fourth edition of Building Resilience in Children and Teens: Giving Kids Roots and Wings.*



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