



Top 10 Tips for Creating Resilient Families

When a family promotes behaviours which build resilience, the whole family and each individual member benefits and become more resilient.

Building a family that can bounce back

Resilience is the knack of being able to bungee jump through life. When the inevitable pitfalls and setbacks of life occur, it's as if you're connected to an elastic rope that helps you bounce back from hard times.

Developing resilience helps us manage many situations, and minimise the negative effects of various factors such as mental health, alcohol and other drugs, self-esteem, friendships and domestic violence. When a family promotes behaviours which build resilience, the whole family benefits: everyone from the youngest to the oldest family members become more resilient.

Top Tips

Promote belonging

A sense of belonging is a strong protective factor against self-harm, depression, and drug issues.

Children are most resilient when they have three types of belonging:

1. A sense of being part of a family
2. Having different friendships to belong to
3. Having an adult outside their family who connects with them.

Have some downtime

We live in a hectic, stimulating world. We rush from activity to activity, from lesson to lesson and from one organised event to another.

We get so used to all this activity that when there is a lull we hear 'I'm bored'. Find time each week to just be at home without anything structured happening. Quiet times allow children to develop creativity, resourcefulness and innovation.

Rediscover some family rituals

Family rituals strongly promote resilience. It doesn't matter whether it's Friday night pizza or the Sunday morning clean up, rituals and routines are protective factors and the best rituals often cost nothing. These are the activities that your children will look back on and say, "*After dinner we had to wash up*" or "*On Sunday Dad always made sure we did...*"

Teach the skills of Self-esteem

Families that work well praise one another a lot. Compliments are made, and positive efforts are commented on. Optimism is in the air! Even in these families, teenagers might still shrug and say, “*yeah Mum*” or “*whatever Dad*” when a compliment is made, but it doesn’t mean they haven’t heard it!

Teaching the skills of self-praise is useful. One way of doing this is to ask questions about an achievement or accomplishment like “*How did you do that?*”, “*How come you did so well at that test?*” “*What did you do?*”

Love kids for their differences

Each child is different and everyone has a different brain. You can discover your and your children’s learning strengths at www.mylearningstrengths.com

When families function well people are allowed to be different and be loved for those differences. We all know that children take on different roles. A father of three said, “It’s as if they have a planning meeting once a year and say ‘you be the good kid, I’ll be the sick kid and the other one can be the trouble-maker’! *And then just when you think you’ve got it figured out they change roles again*”.

Having children who are strongly individual, and who have a sense of who they are, is a sign of good parenting.

Provide consistency

Consistency is the ideal. Having parents who agree on rules and standards and who convey the same sorts of messages, who value compassion over coercion have the best outcome in terms of children’s wellbeing.

It is also important that parents are not open to manipulation and work together as a team.

Life however is not always so simple, and we know from our own experiences that parents cannot always be consistent. Sometimes parents have different values, or have trouble finding a consistent way to handle particular areas. If this happens, one solution is for one parent to take charge of a particular area and vice versa. It is best if parents can agree, but this type of shared leadership is better than constant conflict or undermining each other. This also applies to single-parent or separated families.

Be clear about who is in charge

It is widely acknowledged in current research that families do not work well as democracies. In fact, they seem to work best as benevolent dictatorships with parents who set appropriate rules and boundaries with warmth and understanding.

Some parents fear by taking charge they will lose the friendship of their children, but often the reverse is true. Balanced and authoritative parenting allows children to feel safe, have clear boundaries and flourish.

Parents should feel confident to be in charge and make decisions, and to talk about these decisions with their children.

Embrace spontaneity and curiosity

Spontaneity and curiosity are the building blocks of good mental health. You cannot tell someone how to have better mental health and you can't give it to them by getting them to read a book... but you can show them how it looks. So, the key message here is if you want to raise your children to live happy and healthy lives, the best tool in your belt is to get out there and have a good time yourself.

Know how to argue

Families that work well know how to argue. It seems strange to say this because it looks like families that work well don't have conflicts: but they do!

The family unit is where we learn to resolve disputes fairly. The way that parents teach children to resolve differences of opinion with their siblings provides the basis for sharing, negotiating and problem solving in the world beyond the family. While expressing differences of opinion should be allowed, children also need to learn that they can't always win arguments and that sometimes they are wrong.

Parents are reliably unpredictable

With young children it is important to provide consistency and predictability as this allows them to feel sure of you. After a while though, a bit of unpredictability can go a long way, to many children, most parents are as predictable as a clock. Yes, it is important to provide that structure, but a little spontaneity can go a long way! It's useful to act in ways that your children might not expect, which keeps them interested in learning from you.

The most important advice for parents is to realise that these tips are all desirable, but not always possible. Look at ways to promote good functioning, and try not to use your energy blaming yourself for the times when things don't quite work out as planned.

Top 10 Tips – Quick List

- Promote Belonging
- Have some downtime
- Rediscover some family rituals
- Teach the skills of self-esteem
- Love kids for their differences
- Provide consistency
- Be clear who is in charge
- Embrace spontaneity and curiosity
- Know how to argue
- Be reliably unpredictable

Perhaps the most important feature of parents in healthy families is that they realise that whilst all of the above is desirable it's not always possible and so they look at how to promote good functioning while not wasting energy on blaming themselves for the times when things don't quite work out as they had planned.

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