# Resilience

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Resilience is easy to spot. It's the feel good success story of a runner returning to finish the Boston Marathon after losing a leg in the bombing. It's the child rising from impoverishment to become a successful entrepreneur. It's the little league pitcher remaining calm and striking out a batter after giving up a home run with bases loaded. Lack of resilience is also easily identified, the refusal to try again after falling off the balance beam, upending the board game when you lose at Chutes and Ladders, and the child afraid to attend school after being picked on at recess. Resilience is the ability to cope successfully with demands, disappointment and challenges. These demands are things like common stressors (e.g. math problems, missed field goals etc.) or could be more significant traumas (e.g. losing a loved one, food insecurity).

Resilience is important because it allows us to be, feel and do well in the face of common stressors and serious hardship. We cannot avoid all adversity or prevent daily stress; but we can learn to be more resilient by changing how we think about challenges and adversities. Resilience is based on a few core competencies including the ability to plan, monitor and regulate behavior (Center of the Developing Child, Harvard University, n.d.).

Scientific research has demonstrated that some individuals are biologically predisposed to be more resilient than others, however it is always possible, in any life-stage to develop the skills that allow for increased resilience. Resilience is developed through a combination of biological factors, life experiences and supportive relationships (Center of the Developing Child, Harvard University, n.d.).

Guidelines for raising more resilient children: (adapted from Brooks and Goldstein, 2001)

- Build an adult-child relationship that is responsive and committed.
- Provide opportunities to teach self-regulation skills such as exercise, mindfulness, emotional expression and containment.
- Increase self-efficacy by letting kids solve their own (age appropriate) problems. Teach problem solving skills by thinking through a situation together and allow children to use the skills.
- Increase perceived control by allowing kids to make choices and to tolerate the consequences.
- Allow children to experience failure, disappointment, uncertainty and discomfort.
- Raise your own resilience and model that resilience!
  Acknowledge your mistakes and talk about how you might handle that differently in the future. Demonstrate your own stress management skills such as taking time for 5 deep breaths, going for a walk, or playing music. Acknowledge risks you take (that first 5K, volunteering, new job) and the bravery needed to encounter the uncertain!

To read more about resilience check out the following resources:

- Brooks, R. and Goldstein, S. (2001). *Raising resilient children: Fostering strength, hope, and optimism in your child*.
- https://www.stress.org/building-resilience-in-kids/
- https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/resilience/

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