

15 Ways to Raise Kids Who Bounce Back: No Fluff, Just Grit

Here are two propositions that matter when it comes to understanding resilience.

i. Life is hard. Full stop. End of story. Despite what Instagram promises, it rains when you need sunshine, the kids will be “too tired” when you’re running late...and the potty-training toddler, who’s been dry for a week, will save a truly epic nappy blowout for the moment you strap them into their car seat for a four-hour road trip. Oh, and don’t forget the inevitable chorus of “I’m hungry!” that erupts precisely three minutes after you’ve finally cleaned up the hurricane of a meal they just declared they “didn’t like.”

ii. People are resilient. It’s in our nature. We are designed that way. Unfortunately, we are fed a lie. We are told that challenges break us. And so we try to make life comfortable. We try to avoid the hardships that are guaranteed to hit us. And we do the same with our kids, scooping them up out of harm’s way so we can “protect” them.

But what if I told you that resilience is a muscle built through experiences and relationships? What if I told you that you can’t be resilient unless you face those hardships?

If you want kids who face life’s curveballs with their heads held high, here’s the blueprint:

- 1. Forge Unbreakable Bonds:** Kids need to know they’ve got a corner in this crazy world where they’re safe, loved, and unconditionally accepted. That’s the foundation for everything else. The best research tells us that this is numero uno. They need to know you’re there for them no matter what. (But that doesn’t mean you’ll do everything for them!)
- 2. Give ‘Em the Reins (Sometimes):** Let them make choices, even small ones, so they learn to trust their gut.
- 3. Feelings Aren’t the Enemy:** Teach them that it’s okay to feel ALL the feels. But also give them the tools to navigate those emotions without getting swept away. Emotions come and go, just like waves on the beach. Help them learn to recognise and ride those waves... the good ones and the not so good ones.
- 4. Celebrate the Climb, Not Just the Summit:** My eldest daughter and I hiked a huge hill in the Rocky Mountains. It was exhausting. After an hour of climbing I stopped and stared at the summit. She started to tell me it was too far. I spun her around and asked her what she could see. “We’ve come a long way huh? That view is amazing.” She turned to face the mountain and kept walking up it.

5. **Self-Care Isn't Selfish:** A well-rested, nourished kid is better equipped to handle stress. Teach them healthy habits, and model them yourself. And remember, no health habit supports resilience better than getting enough sleep.
6. **Asking for Help is a Superpower:** Create an environment where they feel safe expressing their needs. Make it clear that asking for help isn't a weakness, it's a smart move.
7. **Set the Bar... But Keep It Reachable:** Break down big goals into bite-sized chunks. Celebrate progress, and help them see that even small steps matter.
8. **Be Their Resilience Role Model:** Share your own stories of overcoming challenges. Let them see that setbacks are part of life, and bouncing back is possible. The dinner table is the best place for these chats. Or the car. Or walking the dog. Or on the trampoline. Or anywhere! Just have the conversations.
9. **Laughter is the Best Medicine:** Inject some fun and silliness into everyday life. Teach them to find the humour in situations, even tough ones.
10. **Let Them Explore Their Passions:** Encourage curiosity and support their interests, even if they seem quirky or unusual. It's about finding their spark.
11. **Roll with the Punches:** Life throws curveballs. Help them see change as an opportunity, not a threat.
12. **Find Their "Why":** Help them discover what matters to them, what lights their fire. A sense of purpose fuels resilience. This will be most helpful for older kids.
13. **Turn Problems into Puzzles:** Teach them to approach challenges with curiosity and creativity. Brainstorm solutions together, and let them take the lead when possible.
14. **Build Them Up, Brick by Brick:** Focus on their strengths, their unique qualities. Remind them of their wins, big and small. A strong self-image is a powerful shield.
15. **Routine Creates a Safety Net:** Predictability provides a sense of control, especially during turbulent times. Establish healthy routines, but allow for flexibility when needed.

Remember, building resilience is an ongoing process. It's about nurturing a mindset, not checking off a list. Be patient, be present, and most importantly, be the safe harbour your child needs to navigate life's choppy waters.



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