parenting ideas

insights



Developing a resilience mindset

by Michael Grose

If you want your child or young person to be resilient enough to cope with the hardships that come his or her way, and in doing so build strengths for the future, consider fostering your own resilience first. Parents are in the best position to influence their children's resilience. Children watch our reactions to adverse events and view first hand how we look after – or neglect – our own mental health and wellbeing.

Focusing on our own resilience is not as difficult as it may seem. If you adapt a resilience mindset you'll find that resilient behaviour follows. Want to get fitter physically? You could take up a new fitness regime or you could simply adopt a fitness mindset. Adopt the former and there's a reasonable chance that you'll start off gung ho and run out of steam after a month. Adopt the latter and you'll more likely take small, sustainable steps such as walking or riding to work, taking stairs instead of escalators and playing active games rather than sitting on the couch on weekends.

The mindset approach works well with resilience. Take the sustainable approach of looking after your mental health, becoming conscious of the messages you send yourself and developing coping skills that allow you to respond rather than react to adverse events. These simple ideas will help:

Watch your self-talk

The little voice inside your head can have a catastrophic impact when you allow it to. It can talk you into the blues, lower your confidence and build mountainous problems out of molehills. Once you're aware of its impact, you can switch it off or change its negative chatter to something more positive and realistic. It takes practice but it's worth it. When you have a resilience mindset you'll start to check that chatter in your head.

Park the bad stuff

Ever had an argument with a family member at breakfast only to find it messed up your whole day? A common trait with resilient people is that they can compartmentalise their lives so that difficult experiences in one domain won't interfere with their effectiveness elsewhere. When you have a resilience mindset you'll consciously park the negative stuff while you get on with the rest of the day, only revisiting it on your own terms.

Stay flexible in your thinking

People who lack resilience pepper their language with absolute, imperative statements such as 'I must always be on time,' 'They never do anything to help,' or 'They should always use good manners'. This shows inflexible,

unrealistic thinking that leads to stress and anxiousness. When you have a resilience mindset you'll use more moderate language reflecting a flexible approach to life. The above statements become 'I'll always try to be on time but sometimes it's impossible,' 'They are sometimes helpful but they can be forgetful,' and 'I'd like it if they were well-mannered but sometimes they aren't'.

Make sleep a priority

We are only beginning to make solid links between sleep and resilience. Mothers of newborns know how debilitating sleep deprivation can be. They can't function effectively and depression is close at hand. Many people spend much of their lives experiencing some form of sleep deprivation, compensating by taking regular caffeine hits, self-medicating with alcohol and using other ineffective remedies. When you develop a resilience mindset, you make sleep a high priority, taking the necessary lifestyle steps to make sleep easy to attain.

Create a pressure valve

In a society that views busyness as a status symbol, it's tempting to keep working until you drop, neglecting to enjoy some downtime that releases the pressures of work. When you have a resilience mindset you value down-time and relaxation and understand the positive impact these have on your mental health and the wellbeing of people around you.

When you have a resilience mindset you have a greater understanding of what resilience is about and you're in a better position to develop a lasting sense of resilience in your kids. Developing resilience in kids is like jumping off a pier with some friends on a cold winter's day. In both instances you need to go first.



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