



RESILIENCE

Raising mentally strong children

Why resilience?

At Greenwith, our staff have identified resilience as a key area where many students are struggling. Resilience—the ability to recover from setbacks, cope with challenges and navigate life's ups and downs—is foundational for emotional wellbeing, academic success and lifelong growth.

Research and practical strategies developed by renowned psychiatrist Dr. Daniel Amen offer valuable insight into how we, as educators and caregivers, can work together to help children build this vital skill.



Key insights from Dr. Daniel Amen

- 1. Be Comfortable with Your Child Being Uncomfortable**
Discomfort is part of learning and growing. If we constantly rescue or smooth the path for our children, we rob them of the opportunities to build self-esteem, independence, and emotional strength.
- 2. Raise Big-Picture Thinkers**
Teach your children to zoom out. Life isn't just about now – it's about who they are becoming. Building resilience requires the long view.
- 3. Connection Before Correction**
Children are more likely to adopt your values when they feel connected to you. Relationship is the bridge to influence.
- 4. Practice “Special Time”**
Set aside 20 minutes a day (Dr. Amen's recommendation) to do something your child chooses. During this time:
 - No instructions, no questions, no commands.
 - Simply listen, reflect their words back, and tune into their emotions.
 - This deepens connection and helps children feel seen and valued.



Boundaries = Safety

5.

A major study from the University of Oregon shows children raised with LOVING/PERMISSIVE parenting behaved far worse than those raised with FIRM YET LOVING styles. Children need boundaries and caregivers are there to do that until their frontal lobes are developed.

Kill the A.N.T.s (Automatic Negative Thoughts)

6.

Teach children to challenge their “stinking thinking,” which can present in different forms. 1. Mind reading (“They hate me”) 2. Fortune-telling (“This will go wrong”) and 3. Focusing only on problems. Help them learn to question these thoughts.

Break the Guilt Cycle

7.

Reacting harshly and then overcompensating with no boundaries teaches inconsistency. Try: “You win or you learn.” Be curious, not furious. Kind and firm discipline builds emotional strength.

Reframe Common Phrases

8.

A lot of phrases adults use in a children’s life often do more harm than good. For example: “You’re so smart.” If a child tries to complete a similar task next time and fails they may no longer see themselves as smart. Instead praise the effort – “You are such a hard worker, well done.” Further examples may be “Don’t play with them” – “Who could you play with instead?”. “I will take care of it” – “I am here to help you work this out.”

Watch for Self-Esteem Entanglement

9.

Be mindful not to tie your self-worth to your child’s achievements. This can add pressure and undermine their internal motivation.

The Brain Creates the Mind

10.

Brain health matters! Support your child’s mental strength through; sleep, nutritious food, movement, connection and purpose.

Technology & Social Media: Delay and Set Limits

11.

Technology overstimulates the brain’s reward system (dopamine), leading to numbness and dependency. Delay social media use and set realistic, healthy boundaries. Boredom and calm are essential for brain development and self-regulation.



Model Healthy Relationships

12.

It can be difficult to shelter our children from personal relationships, conflicts, and issues; however, chronic conflict can be tough on children of all ages. Try to avoid speaking negatively about other adults in their lives, as children absorb this. Showcase kindness, focusing on positives and setting healthy goals/boundaries.

SIT STILL AND CALM DOWN

13.

Children who can't sit still through long periods of time don't necessarily have ADHD, but maybe their nervous system isn't fully myelinated (myelinated neurons work 10 - 100 x faster than an unmyelinated one). This finishes in the frontal cortex when you are 25!! This means you can't expect children to sit still for long periods of time like some adults can, but you can teach them soothing techniques from the age of 4. Slow and big breath, being present in the moment, sparking curiosity in nature, and moving their body.

What Real Love Look Like

14.

Real love means spending time together without distractions, making hard but necessary decisions, enforcing boundaries consistently and seeing the big picture not just the now.

Next Steps

- Try "Special Time" this week - 20 minutes of uninterrupted connection.
- Reframe one common phrase using the suggestions above.
- Reflect: Are there boundaries in your home that could be clarified or reinforced?
- Be kind to yourself - parenting is not about perfection, but about being present, curious, and committed to growth.

We're In This Together

At Greenwith, we are committed to nurturing resilient, respectful, and curious children. If you have any questions or want to discuss these ideas further, our leadership and wellbeing staff are here to help.

Further Resources

If you really enjoyed this information sheet and want to know more. Some recommendations are

- Book - Raising Mentally Strong Kids - Dr. Daniel Amen
 - Podcast / Interview - How to Raise Mentally Resilient Children - Jay Shetty Podcast
 - Website - The Resilience Project Wellbeing hub resources and articles.
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