

INSIGHTS

Everyday resilience lessons for kids



Muscles need to be exercised daily if they're to remain strong, flexible and do their jobs. Resilience is no different. If it's not exercised regularly our resilience will waste away.

Resilience is developed through regular daily use. Here are some simple ways you can encourage a child or young person of any age to flex their resilience muscles every day.

Wait until mealtime

Discourage them from random snacking when they are hungry. Encourage them to wait until mealtime. By tolerating minor discomforts such as hunger, thirst or even some worries, kids get the practice needed to help them manage bigger future hurdles that may come their way. You can build your child's tolerance of discomfort by encouraging them to delay gratification even just for a few moments.

Do more than expected

Great sportspeople routinely train more than others and push through mental and physical boundaries. Encourage your child to push through boundaries and do more than expected in small ways. Perhaps they don't just clean their bedroom but tidy the living room as well. They may aim to shoot 10 goals in a row at basketball practice but keep going until they reach fifteen. Going past the finish line is wonderful resilience practice. What else can you do that would encourage your child to do more than expected on a regular basis?

Save pocket money

Did you know that when you encourage your child to save some of their pocket money rather than spend it immediately you are teaching them to delay gratification, an acknowledged resilience attribute? Asking a child to set aside some pocket money for saving, some for charity and some for spending will help develop a balanced use of pocket money. It helps if a child can develop their own savings goal, and parental suggestions can assist. The delay of an immediate reward to achieve a greater or later reward needs to be practiced if it's to become part of a child's pattern of behaviour.

Make the bed

Resilience comes from doing things that we don't feel like doing and making a bed is one thing few people enjoy. The daily habit of making a bed (to the best of a child's or teen's ability) is a brilliant discipline to develop, which has the bonus of setting kids up well for a productive day at school. What other simple habits that fit into the "don't-like-to-do" basket that benefits either your child or others in the family?

Help when you don't feel like it

It's easy to help at home when they've had a good day at school or the weather is fine. It's much more difficult to step up and help set the table, put out the rubbish or hear a sibling read when they've had a bad day at school or the weather is stinking hot. The seemingly small act of sticking to commitments even though they help develop discipline and conscientiousness that contributes to a sense of resilience

Smile when you don't feel happy

Feelings may be difficult to manage, but behaviour is a choice. Encourage kids to choose happy, or at least act happy by smiling rather than putting on a grumpy face. The brilliant thing about this strategy is that smiling changes their mood so that they begin to experience pleasant emotions.

It's the small, everyday behaviours we encourage in kids that have the greatest impact on their behaviour, wellbeing and resilience.



Michael Grose

Michael Grose, founder of Parenting Ideas, is one of Australia's leading parenting educators. He's an award-winning speaker and the author of 12 books for parents including *Spoonfed Generation*, and the bestselling *Why First Borns Rule the World and Last Borns Want to Change It*. Michael is a former teacher with 15 years experience, and has 30 years experience in parenting education. He also holds a Master of Educational Studies from Monash University specialising in parenting education.