

As the Division Social Worker, I have the honor of working in each school within Northern Gateway Public Schools. January seems to be a month where we hear about “Blue Monday” and the “Saddest Week of the Year”. Days are shorter and dark, the weather is foul, people feel stuck indoors more than they would like, there may be family stress, or worries about midterms, finals and diplomas. Whatever the reason, I think all of us can use a little reminder on how to help children be more resilient in stressful times.

5 HABITS OF RESILIENT KIDS

By SOS Magazine
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Every child has the capacity for greatness. There is no gene that can determine whether they will be successful or happy. They all have the ability to do extraordinary things. Despite our best efforts, however, they will encounter difficulties on the way. There is nothing we can do to change that. All we can do is help equip them with the skills they need to remain unbroken by these trials.

We need to teach them resilience.

All children have different natural levels of resilience. They also have different ways of showing when they can no longer cope with the stress. They may express this through anger, resentment, withdrawal or emotional outbursts. Children with lower resilience will display these behaviors more often.

Don't despair! Resilience is not a fixed trait. It can grow with the child or be strengthened at any age. The way to do this is not to clear the path ahead for them, but rather, to teach them to cope with the stress and to deal with it; instead of covering it up.

1. Resilient kids need relationships.

It's not the kids that “don't need anyone” who are the most resilient; it's the kids who have a reliable presence of support. Knowing people support and care for them increases a child's positive emotions and their confidence. However, kids aren't always so great at noticing that the people around them care, so make sure to remind them on a regular basis.

2. Resilient kids know they can ask for help.

Kids will often believe that they need to figure things out for themselves – and while that is partly true, they need to know they are not alone. They need guidance. Try to help them, without carrying them.

3. Resilient kids foster optimism.

Optimism is not about having a Pollyanna-esque outlook on life, it is more about allowing feelings of sadness to exist alongside feelings of gratitude. Optimistic kids are also able to view a situation from a different viewpoint and figure out how to make the best of things.

4. Resilient kids face their fears.

There is something about conquering that will give a rush of confidence and empowerment. Self-preservation is important too, so healthy fears are OK to maintain. When children discover something that challenges them or frightens them, they often approach it in one of two ways: a) *Face it* OR b) *Avoid it*. What you can help them see is a third option: *Gradually move towards it with people to support you*. This can gently push them towards mastering the things that challenge them, and the morale boost that comes with it.

5. Resilient kids ask “How?” not “Why?”

“How can I fix this? Or What can I learn from this?” Not, *“Why is this happening to me?”* This kind of thinking encourages problem-solving. You can model this when your child misbehaves (i.e. colors on the wall). Don’t ask your child why they colored on the wall – ask them how they will fix it.

Above all else, ***resilient kids are loved unconditionally***. This is their solid foundation that they can rely on when their world is falling apart. One of the most important factors in their resilience is their ability to believe in themselves. ***And if you believe in them, they’ll believe in themselves too.***

This article was submitted by Tammy Charko BA, BSW, RSW with permission given by sossafetymagazine.com. Tammy is Northern Gateway Public School’s Division Social Worker. She is a support for schools, students, parents and caregivers to encourage success in school. Tammy advocates for students and provides a link between the student and other supports within the community. Tammy has been a social worker for nearly 20 years and is a mother to 4 children, 3 of which are teenagers.