

Resiliency

“If you can’t fly then run, if you can’t run then walk, if you can’t walk then crawl, but whatever you do, you have to keep moving forward”. Martin Luther King Jr.

The dictionary definition of the word **Resilience** is: ***the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties***. Over the years, psychologists and scientists have been trying to discover the trait or gene that is linked to higher levels of resiliency in humans. While this is an ongoing search, some research indicates that resilience is not a passive act. People who are resilient experience struggles and negative emotions to the same extent as less resilient humans. Humans (and other animals) under stress who demonstrate a high level of resiliency not only demonstrate coping skills, but their brains develop new pathways to help problem solve, think outside the box, and flexibly change their approach. It appears that adaptability may be the key to resiliency.

One hope we likely have for our children is that as they are experiencing the hardships associated with continued stress and difficulties associated with Covid-19, that they may emerge more resilient to life’s struggles. We hope that they emerge with the knowledge that they can persevere through difficult times.

A way we can help our children foster feelings of resilience is through some simple steps, outlined in an article entitled *7 Steps to Teach Kids/Students to be Resilient*, by Diana Maroney. She recommends the following.

1. **Self-Care:** Make sure your children find something enjoyable to do each day, engage in play as well as quiet reflection.
2. **Socialization:** Connection so important, and even more so in this time of extended stress around gathering and being close to others. It is always good to be creative in ways to gather safely.
3. **Giving Back:** Children get a great deal out of helping others in need. There are many opportunities currently to give back, including making cards for elderly people, cleaning up areas like neighborhood parks, etc.
4. **Proper sleeping and eating habits:** Eating healthy foods, and getting at least 9 hours of sleep (or more) will facilitate clear minds and active bodies. This makes it easier to handle both physical and emotional stress.
5. **Talk about feelings:** Yes! Talking about feelings is so important, and easy to do. Children don’t need a long drawn out talk, a brief conversation can help children process and move through hard emotions.
6. **Positivity:** Research tells us that there is power in positive thinking. Even while reflecting on difficult things, it helps to find a positive spin. Model for your children how to find “silver linings” in difficult situations.
7. **Imagining new possibilities:** Teach your child to imagine and define their goals, or imagine new strategies to socialize and learn during this time when all regular routines have been challenged.

Resiliency is a goal for both children and adults. Allow yourself and your child the time and space to process difficult things, and through that processing, show them how to find strength in moving forward with grace and perseverance.

Michelle Flannery, School Psychologist