

The Behavioral Health Administration, Child and Adolescent Resilience, Wellness and Prevention Committee has defined resilience as: “an innate capacity to rebound from adversity and change through a process of positive adaptation. For youth, resilience is a fluid, dynamic process that is influenced over time by life events, temperament, insight, skill sets, and the primary ability of caregivers and the social environment to nurture and provide them a sense of safety, competency, and secure attachments.” For adults as well, resilience is an ability to adapt and grow in times of disappointment, stress and uncertainty. This can be learned and practiced through using skills that lead to a sense of competency, optimism, caring for others, and being balanced in one’s attitude toward life. To nurture a sense of well-being, that can help you rebound even in the face of life’s sorrows and setbacks, is to be resilient.

Parents, caregivers, extended family members and other adults in children’s lives have both the responsibility and opportunity to model ways to feel safe, connected, valued, capable and respected. There are instances which, for a variety of reasons, may be more challenging due to adversity, trauma or unsafe living conditions. On the other hand, children may grow up in nurturing environments and still because of genetics, brain chemistry or a developmental or learning disability, have an emotional, mental health or behavioral disorder. Whether the reason is nature, nurture or some combination of both, the result is that family systems are often over taxed and the child’s overall sense of wellbeing and security can be compromised. While risk is a contributing factor for poor outcomes, it is not a given because parents and caregivers, with the support of others, can help all children gain and maintain a sense of their own strengths and abilities. Below are some suggestions that parents and caregivers can use to help children be more resilient, while also understanding the importance of taking care of themselves in ways that promote positive family interactions, relationships and personal growth.

What are ways that parents and caregivers can support resilience in children?

- Model ways to have everyday resilience and to manage stress and change
- Have high, but realistic expectations based on the child’s age and developmental stage
- See the world through your child’s age and the joy that can create for you both
- Encourage exploration, self-reliance and healthy risk taking
- Provide comfort in times of distress
- Promote a sense of safety and trust Establish limits, rules and structure that are fair and consistent
- Promote a love of learning and curiosity
- Show by example how to admit and learn from mistakes
- Teach and model for children the importance of personal responsibility
- Promote a sense of humor, playfulness and delight in their imagination
- Instill a sense of pride in your family as well as your cultural traditions and rituals
- Model ways to be determined even when frustrated or disappointed
- Encourage, within limits, a child’s need for autonomy and expression of freewill
- Try to have consistent and relaxing meals and bedtimes
- Teach ways to negotiate that are respectful and allow your child to feel heard
- Instill in children a sense of values while respecting other viewpoints

- Help children enjoy times of peace and quiet
- Encourage good nutrition, exercise, diet and physical fitness
- Promote a sense of awe and wonder for nature and the universe
- Teach gratitude and a recognition of blessings in life
- Be optimistic and promote a sense of hope in your child for their future
- Provide opportunities for friendships and a social support system to develop
- Try to encourage your child's ability to figure out life through trials and error and success
- Be your child's biggest advocate while teaching them to advocate for themselves
- Be mindful of how your thinking is helping or hurting your situation
- Develop and stay in touch with friends and a support system
- Be okay with asking for help and provide it to others when you can
- Find quiet moments every day that you can use for relaxation and reflection
- If important to you, nurture your need for intimacy and closeness with a partner
- Stress can have its benefits, but know also how to prevent and limit its harmful effects
- Maintain a sense of autonomy outside your role as parent and spouse
- Be a lifelong learner, find enjoyment through learning new ideas
- Have realistic expectations of yourself and others
- Seek out resources needed to support family growth and development
- Find/develop the confidence to speak up for the best interest of your child and family
- Promote ways to feel competent, connected, and to have life satisfaction

What can parents or caregivers do for self-care?

It is important to take care of you too!

- Find ways to take care of yourself based on what you enjoy doing
- Have a creative outlet/hobby for self-enrichment
- Find comfort in the small things and gratitude in your own accomplishments and contributions

Resource Links

Mind Resilience

www.mindresilience.org

National Resilience Resource Center

www.nationalresilienceresource.com

Strengthening Families: Center for Study of Social Policy

www.cssp.org

National Family Resiliency Center

www.nfrchelp.org

Science of Resilience: Harvard Graduate School of Education

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/15/03/science-resilience>

Center for Child and Family Well-Being

<http://depts.washington.edu/ccfw/content/home>

American Academy of Pediatrics – Building Resilience in Children

www.healthychildren.org

Changing Brains – University of Oregon Brain Development Lab

www.changingbrains.org

Neuroscience for Kids

<http://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/neurok.html>



an initiative of



The Children's Mental Health Matters Campaign, an initiative of the Mental Health Association of Maryland (MHAMD), receives funding from the Maryland Department of Health – Behavioral Health Administration, the Maryland Family Network, and community sponsors. Together with the Maryland Coalition of Families, National Center for School Mental Health, MANSEF, and hundreds of community champions, we work to raise public awareness and acceptance of the importance of children's mental health to overall child and family wellbeing. We are grateful to the National Center for School Mental Health for their collaboration in creating these resources for families.