

# resiliency

## a guide for parents and youth



Resiliency is the ability to believe in yourself, to cope to the best of your abilities, and to adapt well in difficult circumstances

### Why Is Resiliency Important?

Parents often think that it's easy to be a kid or a teenager. The way they see it, there might be homework to do, but there's also a lot of play time, video gaming, surfing the internet, and hanging out with friends in between!

The media also seems to make life look easy for young people. Teens on some TV shows and in ads always appear to have perfect skin and their hair styled without a single strand out of place. Their bodies always look good in the latest fashion trends, and they are always really popular with lots of friends on their telephone speed dial. But the reality is that it doesn't matter if you are 8 or 18 years old, life can be tough, and it takes a lot of self-confidence and resiliency skills to get through the bad times and bounce back.

Even when you are young, you can face many different sources of stress. It can come from starting a new school and not knowing anyone or from the pressure and expectation that you have from parents to get the best grades or to score the winning goal in the championship hockey game. Sometimes kids and teens get really stressed if a parent loses their job or gets sick, or if someone close to them has died, or if their parents get divorced. It can also happen if you or someone you know has

been sexually, emotionally or physically abused. Stress can bring about disordered eating and body image issues when kids and teens are unable to cope with it in a healthy way.

Whatever the challenge may be, whether it involves stress, emotional pain, trauma, tragedy or some kind of threat, resiliency is the ability to believe in yourself, to cope to the best of your abilities, and to adapt well in difficult circumstances. Resiliency isn't something that you're either lucky to be born with or not. Resiliency is learned, and it's what makes some young people seem like they can do anything and get through even the toughest times to survive, and maybe even thrive.

While others may feel worn down, depressed, and too frustrated to see just how they're going to be able to cope with the problem or stress that they have, kids and teens that have resiliency skills have a stronger sense of self that allows them to manage their stress and anxiety so that they can deal with all kinds of adversity.

If you are a parent, building resiliency and a “can do” attitude in your child can begin at an early age. Whenever a kid takes on a new challenge, whether it’s learning to tie a shoe, reading their first book on their own, or hitting their first baseball, they gain a huge sense of confidence in their abilities when they see that the effort they put forward achieves something - no matter how big or small.

This increasing self-confidence is what kids tap into when taking on future challenges. Over time, with each mistake or setback that they overcome, and each new skill that they learn, kids come to understand the whole idea behind “I can do it!” and, “Where there’s a will, there’s a way!”

Parents can help by allowing their kids to have lots of opportunities to take on and master new skills and experiences. Be patient, allow kids to make mistakes and persevere. Be there to cheer them on so they don’t stop trying to achieve their goal. Over time, when other challenges and setbacks present themselves, these kids will grow up to be resilient teens and adults with the kind of attitude and determination that will enable them to trust in themselves to be able to handle almost any kind of difficult situation, no matter how tough the problem may appear to be.

## What can I do?

To help prevent disordered eating issues and body image disturbances, we can all learn to develop resiliency skills to help deal with life stressors in a healthy way. These “top 5” tips involve behaviours,

thoughts and actions which can be learned over time to help build resiliency.

1. Connect with people that you care about: building a strong network of social support strengthens resiliency. Your social network can include friends, family members, classmates, work colleagues etc. Get connected in your community with a church group, by playing on a sports team, or getting together with a group of people who share your interests and hobbies.
2. Maintain a daily routine: with so much stress in our daily lives, having a routine and sticking to it provides constancy. Routine activities can be comforting, and can include taking a hot bath before bedtime, reading a book, talking to friends on the telephone etc.
3. Know the importance of self-care: self care means making sure that you take the time to eat properly, exercise, have fun and get enough rest so that you stay balanced and better able to deal with times of stress.
4. Keep things in perspective and maintain a hopeful outlook: during times when you find yourself feeling stressed and overwhelmed, remember that eventually things will change and the difficult time that you are going through will come to an end. Know that you have made it through tough times in the past, and that you have what it takes to get through your current challenges to get to the future beyond.

## how do I know if I am a resilient person?

- You have a positive outlook.
  - You have goals and aspirations.
  - You tend to see problems as windows of opportunity.
  - You can live with uncertainty.
  - You have the ability to persevere when things become difficult.
  - You have the ability to “bounce back” and overcome almost any kind of obstacle or problem.
  - You feel connected to others including close friends and family.
  - You know how to communicate how you feel.
  - You feel comfortable in all kinds of different situations.
  - You are assertive and able to resist various kinds of peer pressure.
  - You are comfortable in your body.
  - Your self-worth is not dependent on the way you look.
  - You don’t abuse alcohol or drugs.
  - You are self-aware and have empathy for others.
5. Set goals and move towards the path of self-discovery: setting goals can often mean taking on new experiences, dealing with change, and getting out of your comfort zone in order to accomplish what you want. Managing these kinds of tough situations helps to build resiliency as it is times like these when we learn the most about ourselves and what we are capable of.



heretohelp

Mental health and substance use information you can trust

HeretoHelp is a project of the BC Partners For Mental Health and Addictions Information. The BC Partners are a group of nonprofit agencies working together to help individuals and families manage mental health and substance use problems, with the help of good quality information. We represent Anxiety Disorders Association of BC, BC Schizophrenia Society, Canadian Mental Health Association’s BC Division, Centre for Addiction Research of BC, FORCE Society for Kids’ Mental Health, Jessie’s Legacy—a program of Family Services North Shore, and Mood Disorders Association of BC. The BC Partners are funded by BC Mental Health and Addiction Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.