

Tips to build caregiver and family well-being

Caregiver TIP 1

1

Authentic and meaningful connections

Stressful events and challenges can feel isolating. Solving problems without any support is difficult. Connecting with others brings support and encourages children to learn how to ask for the right help when they need it.

Practical examples:

Reach out to trusted people. This could include friends, family, religious community members and healthcare workers (doctors, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, nurses and others).



Caregiver TIP 2

2

Taking care of yourself

In stressful times, it can be difficult to put yourself first as a parent or caregiver. Making the choice to do things that are good for your well-being is an important strategy for managing difficult times. Seeking support for yourself is not just key for your own resilience, it will also build your own capacity to parent.

Practical examples:

Eat healthy food, get enough sleep, practise light exercise like walking and do positive and fun things together as a family. But also take a little time to participate in activities or hobbies *you* enjoy, like listening to music for instance.

Sticking to a routine can help – it reduces stress and frees up time to enjoy other activities.

Keep a journal (reflect on your worries, break them down, describe your feelings). Being aware of personal feelings and thoughts is an important starting point in dealing with stress and helps you feel more in control.



Tips to build caregiver and family well-being

Caregiver TIP 3

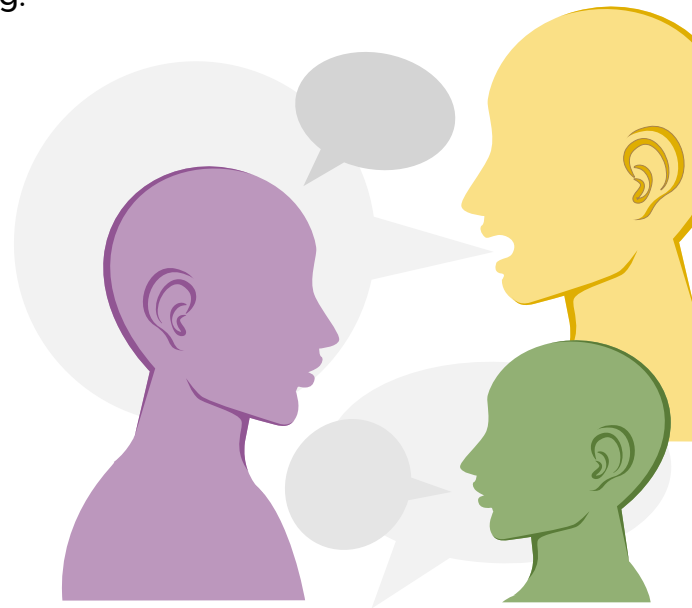
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Good communication

Good communication between family members is a great foundation for managing problems and stress. It allows problems to be discussed without unnecessary conflict and it teaches children positive ways of communicating.

Practical examples:

Discuss problems regularly within the family, actively listen to others (listen especially to the feeling behind the words being used) encourage routines that promote communication, like eating dinner together.



**“If you want a child to be functioning well,
tend to the person who’s tending the child.”**

Luthar, S.S. and Eisenberg, N. (2017) Resilient adaptation among at-risk children: Harnessing science toward maximizing salutary environments. Child Development. 88, 337-349.

We encourage you to share these tips with other caregivers and families.



Tips to build resilience in children

Child TIP 1

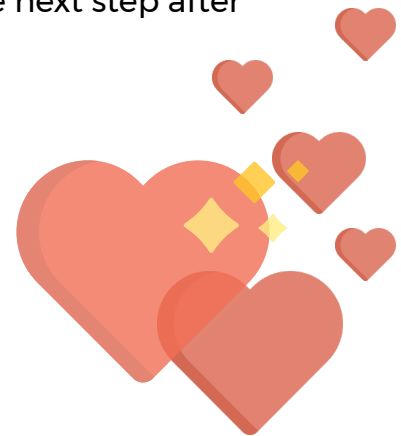
1

Stable and committed relationships with caregivers

The most important factor for children to develop resilience is to form stable and committed relationships with caregivers. Caregivers can be primary caregivers like parents, but also include relationships with other caregivers like teachers, coaches, family members, elders, etc. The more challenges a child experiences, the more important a relationship with a supportive caregiver becomes. These relationships protect children from the difficulties life throws at them. The combination of supportive relationships, adaptive skill-building (for example coaching children how to plan and solve problems) and positive experiences, form the foundation of resilience. Building other supportive adult-child relationships is the next step after building the primary adult relationship.

Practical examples:

Spending dedicated special time, even 5 minutes, with your child every day; talking to your child; listening to their worries, fears and delights; accepting them unconditionally.



Child TIP 2

2

Building a sense of self-efficacy and perceived control

Growing a feeling in children that they can change the world around them and influence events positively is important and will help develop their resilience. Giving them a sense of control, even over small areas, will allow them to gain confidence and become more independent.

Practical examples:

Help them build connections with others; help your child by having them help others; teach them self-care skills appropriate to their age (e.g. brushing their teeth, exercising, eating properly, getting enough sleep). Having fun while teaching is a great way to learn. Praise them when they solve a problem, overcome an obstacle, or make good decisions; help them set reasonable goals for themselves; listen actively to your child rather than immediately trying to solve their problems; do not protect them from all stress and adversity, but allow them, with your support, to overcome small stressors that are within their ability to manage - this balance of challenge and support allows them to thrive, and will look different at different ages.



Tips to build resilience in children

Child TIP 3

3

Providing opportunities to strengthen adaptive skills and self-regulatory capacities

Giving children opportunities to manage their thoughts and feelings is another way of building resilience. Support them so that they can learn to regulate their emotions on their own. This changes with age but is an important skill to have throughout life.

Practical examples:

Help children identify and label their feelings and encourage ways of managing the challenging ones; encourage them to use strategies to deal with difficult feelings, for example controlled breathing, talking it through, having some alone time. Modeling your own expression of feelings and how you manage will also encourage them to use appropriate strategies; teach them to judge the level of threat in situations appropriately, for example writing a test might make your body feel as scared as when bumping into a tiger, but the test will not eat you!



Self-regulatory capacity is an ability to exert control over their thoughts, feelings and actions.



Tips to build resilience in children

Child TIP 4

4

Enabling cultural values, faith and hope

Cultural traditions are also foundational for resilience. They give communities a shared understanding of accepted strategies in expressing loss and stress and coping with adversity. Social and moral expectations provide a sense of identity, belonging and security.

Practical examples:

Children can identify with positive role models from their community. Caregivers can model contributing to their community and having expectations of children based on good social and moral norms. Show them that you value the kind of person they are becoming, rather than how successful they are; provide family routines for everyday living and family traditions and celebrations, for example having family meals together.



We encourage you to share these tips with other caregivers and families.

For further information about SA-ACAPAP please see our website or contact us.

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