

# Ideas for Building Resilience

*St Joseph's Catholic Primary School*



## What is Resilience?

The term 'Resilience' has been used to explain differences in how well individuals cope with adversity. It's used in thinking on disaster relief, planning community development initiatives, and in school settings, improving children's ability to bounce back.

## How to build Resilience

The following I HAVE, I AM and I CAN categories are drawn from the findings of the International Resilience Project which identified 36 qualitative factors that contribute to resilience. These can be divided into three major categories, each consisting of five parts.

### **I HAVE**

The I HAVE factors are the external supports and resources that promote resilience. Before the child is aware of who she is ('I AM') or what she can do ('I CAN'), she needs external supports and resources to develop the feelings of safety and security that lay the foundation, that are the core, for developing resilience. These supports continue to be important throughout childhood. The resilient child says ...

### **I HAVE**

#### **Trusting relationships**

Parents, other family members, teachers, and friends who love and accept the child. Children of all ages need unconditional love from their parents and primary care givers, but they need love and emotional support from other adults as well. Love and support from others can sometimes compensate for a lack of unconditional love from parents and care givers.

#### **Structure and rules at home**

Parents who provide clear rules and routines, expect the child to follow them, and can rely on the child to do so. Rules and routines include tasks the child is expected to perform. The limits and consequences of behaviour are clearly stated and understood. When rules are broken, the child is helped to understand what he or she did wrong, is encouraged to tell his or her side of what happened, is punished when needed, and is then forgiven and reconciled with the adult. When the child follows the rules and routines, he or she is praised and thanked. The parents do not harm the child in punishment, and no one else is allowed to harm the child.

#### **Role models**

Parents, other adults, older siblings, and peers who act in ways which show the

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child desired and acceptable behaviour, both within the family and toward outsiders. These people demonstrate how to do things, such as dress or ask for information, and encourage the child to imitate them. They are also models of morality and may introduce the child to the customs of their religion.



## **Encouragement to be autonomous**

Adults, especially parents, who encourage the child to do things on her own and to seek help as needed, help the child to be autonomous. They praise the child when he or she shows initiative and autonomy, and help the child, perhaps through practice or conversation, to do things independently. Adults are aware of the child's temperament, as well as their own, so they can adjust the speed and degree to which they encourage autonomy in their child.

## **Access to health, education, welfare, and security services**

The child, independently or through the family, can rely on consistent services to meet the needs the family cannot fulfil – hospitals and doctors, schools and teachers, social services and police and fire protection, or the equivalent of these services.

## **I AM**

The I AM factors are the child's internal, personal strengths. These are feelings, attitudes, and beliefs within the child. The resilient child says ...

I AM

### **Lovable and my temperament is appealing**

The child is aware that people like and love him or her. The child does endearing things for others that help make him or her lovable. The child is sensitive to the moods of others and knows what to expect from them. The child strikes an appropriate balance between exuberance and quietness when responding to others.

### **Loving, empathic, and altruistic**

The child loves other people and expresses that love in many ways. He or she cares about what happens to others and expresses that caring through actions and words. The child feels the discomfort and suffering of others and wants to do something to stop or share the suffering or to give comfort.

### **Proud of myself**

The child knows he or she is an important person and feels proud of who he or she is and what he or she can do and achieve. The child does not let others belittle or degrade him or her. When the child has problems in life, confidence and self-

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esteem help sustain him or her.



## **Autonomous and responsible**

The child can do things on his or her own and accept the consequences of the behaviour. There is the feeling that what he or she does makes a difference in how things develop and the child accepts that responsibility. The child understands the limits of his or her control over events and recognizes when others are responsible.

## **Filled with hope, faith, and trust**

The child believes that there is hope for him or her and that there are people and institutions that can be trusted. The child feels a sense of right and wrong, believes right will win, and wants to contribute to this. The child has confidence and faith in morality and goodness, and may express this as a belief in God or higher spiritual being.

## **I CAN**

The I CAN factors are the child's social and interpersonal skills. Children learn these skills by interacting with others and from those who teach them. The resilient child says ...

I CAN

### **Communicate**

The child is able to express thoughts and feelings to others. He or she can listen to what others are saying and be aware of what they are feeling. The child can reconcile differences and is able to understand and act on the results of the communication.

### **Problem solve**

The child can assess the nature and scope of a problem, what he or she needs to do to resolve it, and what help is needed from others. The child can negotiate solutions with others and may find creative or humorous solutions. He or she has the persistence to stay with a problem until it is indeed solved.

### **Manage my feelings and impulses**

The child can recognize his or her feelings, give the emotions names, and express them in words and behaviour that do not violate the feelings and rights of others or of himself or herself. The child can also manage the impulse to hit, run away, damage property, or behave otherwise in a harmful manner.

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## **Gauge the temperament of myself and others**

The child has insight into his or her own temperament (how active, impulsive, and risk-taking or quiet, reflective, and cautious he or she is, for example) and, also, into the temperament of others. This helps the child know how fast to move into action, how much time is needed to communicate, and how much he or she can accomplish in various situations.

## **Seek trusting relationships**

The child can find someone – a parent, teacher, other adult, or same-age friend – to ask for help, to share feelings and concerns, to explore ways to solve personal and interpersonal problems, or to discuss conflicts in the family.

Each of the I HAVE, I AM, and I CAN factors suggests numerous actions children and their care givers can take to promote resilience. No one child or parent will use the entire pool of resilience factors, nor need they. Some use many; others use few. However, the larger the pool of possibilities before them, the more options children, parents, and care givers have and the more flexible they can be in selecting appropriate responses to a given situation.

## **Checklist For Children**

The following items were used in the International Resilience Project as a checklist for perceptions of resilience in children.

- The child has someone who loves him/her totally (unconditionally).
- The child has an older person outside the home she/he can tell about problems and feelings.
- The child is praised for doing things on his/her own.
- The child can count on her/his family being there when needed.
- The child knows someone he/she wants to be like.
- The child believes things will turn out all right.
- The child does endearing things that make people like her/him.
- The child believes in a power greater than seen.
- The child is willing to try new things.
- The child likes to achieve in what he/she does.
- The child feels that what she/he does makes a difference in how things come out.
- The child likes himself/herself.
- The child can focus on a task and stay with it.
- The child has a sense of humour.
- The child makes plans to do thing

The above has been taken from the International Resilience Project. For further

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information the full report can be found at:

<http://www.bibalex.org/search4dev/files/283337/115519.pdf>

Also see Boing Boing:

<http://www.boingboing.org.uk/>



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