

## RAISING RESILIENT CHILDREN

Our expert coach Lena Engel explains how to work towards achieving this holy grail of parenting

We all want our children to be resilient because, as parents, most of us have realised through our own life experiences that getting on in the world requires this very specific human skill.

However, it's not possible to simply tell our children to be resilient the last moment before they face the various stages and trials of growing up when they might need it most - such as starting school, getting through exams, enjoying friendships and relationships or leaving for university.

Children need to develop resilience through their ongoing interaction with parents, family, nursery, school, and their community. It is how we treat our children and how we respond to their behaviour that will enable them, over time, to develop the life skills that they will need.

So what can we do as working parents to help our children on their life's journey to become resilient?

### The Principles

If we take a positive parenting approach to life it will enable us to become aware of the outcome of our actions and to approach the job of being a parent as an opportunity to develop ongoing skills within ourselves.

As working people we are used to facing the challenges that the working life brings, whether it be:

- Learning new ways of behaving with colleagues
- Managing a variety of difficult tasks
- Surviving redundancy
- Applying for new work

We are used to identifying the range of skills needed in any or all of these contexts and can appreciate how our motivation to achieve a good outcome, as well as our ability to focus on creating constructive relationships with others, are the main skills we need to develop and use every day.

**Positive parenting** is understanding that the children we raise at home need to be shown similar attention, motivation, respect, and energies as we show our colleagues at work. In this way, we will be growing our children, just as we grow our fellow workers and ourselves.

- What it comes down to is that we are used to being a good role model at work, and we can transfer this to the home to be the best role model we can for our children.

### The Strategies From Babies

Create a routine that works for you and encourages your baby to feel supported by talking through the daily routines as you do them. Talking with your child - even from a very young age - and giving them an opportunity to respond by gurgling and smiling, creates the expectation for interactive communication.

As your baby grows develop an environment to enable him/her to make choices from two options. 'Do you want Daddy to wipe your face, or do you want to do it?' This delegation of tasks engages you in an interaction at the simplest level and creates the opportunity for your baby to feel empowered. It is through these ongoing approaches that you will see a reduction in the likelihood of your baby or toddler having tantrums as it reduces anxiety and frustration.

### Young Children

As your children develop physical independence, continue to involve them in decision making by:

- Creating your **own family rules together** and permitting them to remind you and each other to comply with the rules
- Developing an **agreed list of chores** that you will each do regularly
- Giving and expecting **descriptive praise** that praises what each of you does well to show you appreciate each other's efforts
- Teaching **life skills** such as cooking, gardening, and managing their own unconditional pocket money
- Giving children their **own spaces** in a shared room or their own rooms where they can enjoy reading, playing and doing homework
- Providing them with **additional stimulus** to engage in research of topics they are learning at school, as well as extra-curricular activities that interest them
- Taking **one to one walks** with each of your children in the evenings or at weekends so that you can both value each other's company
- Not searching for reasons to blame your children because negative energy and responses will only lower self-esteem
- **Empowering children** through discussion to seek their own solutions to their problems

### What Does This Approach Feel Like for Parents?

To begin with, it will feel like you are giving away the control you have always tried to maintain at home. This can be scary!

However, what you are really doing is reducing the likelihood of stress in your home, because children thrive where there are less authoritarian regimes and they feel that they can practice social and emotional skills within the safe boundaries of the family.

They will role model your behaviour over time and become more able to cope. This is exactly the resilience you were looking for from the start!