

# Better Parenting: Raising Resilient Children Prepared to Succeed In Life

By Sonia Spackman MA, MFT

## WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the capacity to rise above difficult circumstances, the trait that allows us to move forward with confidence and hope in spite of problems.

## WHY DO PEOPLE BECOME RESILIENT?

Resilient people are more successful because they push their limits and learn from their mistakes.

## WHAT CAUSES A LACK OF RESILIENCE?

Christi had a mom and dad that wanted to be good, committed parents. However, they argued loudly and struck each other at times. During conflicts Christi's parents often heaped blame, judgment and criticism on each other. When she fails to get the grade she wants on a test, Christi throws a tantrum. She blames her teacher or accuses classmates of cheating if they do better. *Christi learned from her parents' behaviors.*

In another family, Sandy controlled and over protected the children, focusing on work while her husband was aloof and uninvolved. Each of the children developed anxiety, anger and excessive fears that became disabling during adolescence and in adulthood. *These parents modeled the opposite of healthy communication and problem solving choices.*

## WHAT CAN BE DONE?

These are examples of two families who live in pain and need help- not just the children, but the entire family. Someone outside the family, often a professional counselor, is needed to treat the exact issues. It is well worth the effort to find and use such resources.

**a. A Neurological Evaluation** is needed if you suspect your child's behaviors are caused by abnormal neurological conditions.

**b. Mental Illness** in the family may be inherited. The best option is to work with your doctor who will work with a psychiatrist for an assessment and/or medication that can be very helpful for your child.

**c. Developmental Roots** where there has been neglect or abuse from caregivers in infancy. When love has been missing - a parenting specialist therapist can help with skills to put the child's emotions in balance.

**d. Unhealthy Parenting** The above mentioned families are an example. Sometimes there are problems with children of permissive parenting as well. A good parenting training program can

be helpful.

## WHEN DO WE START BUILDING RESILIENCE IN OUR CHILDREN?

The best starting point is infancy or as early as possible in a child's life. The actions parents take in the years before adolescence can make a difference in the success of their teen or adult child. Regardless of your child's age, however, it is never too late to begin new approaches to building resilience.

## HOW DO WE STRENGTHEN RESILIENCE IN OUR KIDS?

### 1. Live a balanced life

If our goal is to build happy, resilient kids who are prepared to thrive in good times and bad it is very important that we model how to take care of ourselves in a good way. The greatest gift you can give your child is to live a balanced life. If you see you are having money, marriage, alcohol or emotional problems it is your adult responsibility to deal with these problems in a responsible way. Your kids will learn and benefit from your efforts.

### 2. Take Action Steps

Nothing we tell our kids is as impacting as what they see us doing. We are their examples. When problems come up and we look at our problems as a chance to improve and do better we are encouraging a resilient mindset in our kids. Our kids need to see us being positive and taking the "bull by the horns." Involve them in age appropriate problems the family is having. For example, the car breaks down and there isn't enough money in the budget to get it fixed, brainstorm as a family ways to save or shift money to get the car fixed. They might learn to make needed sacrifices.

### 3. Be Real, Don't Try To Be Perfect

When we acknowledge and address problems, we say no to the shame or disgrace of not being perfect. Our kids will have less stress and more confidence being who they are when they see us admitting our faults and our mistakes to them. They learn to feel comfortable being honest with themselves and others about their own weaknesses, hurts and insecurities.

### 4. When You Reach Your Limit - Reach Out

It may seem impossible to find this kind of help when you are under stress. Allow someone to help you find and use community resources. When you do this, you are a good example that strong people seek help and guidance. So take care of yourself in the way you want your kids to if they get in a similar

situation.

## 5. Lead The Way - Show Your Kids How

Healthy strategies are what give you the energy to take care of yourself and to give to others. Have interests, hobbies and healthy ways to relieve your stress and chances are your kids will too.

In closing I would like us to ask ourselves: if we could protect our kids from stress and disappointment, do you think they would experience the satisfaction of overcoming problems, and learn that they are capable of handling the hard situations in life?

Would our kids be able to celebrate success or have joy and pleasure if they never faced some struggle, failure or rejection?

Our goal must be to raise children who can handle the ups and downs

the world has in store for everyone. We need to prepare them to cope with difficult challenges and bounce back. We must help them find happiness even when things are not going their way.

*Resources: Grace Ketterman, M.D., Ginsburg, KR, Jablow MM. Building Resilience in Children and Teens, Giving Kids Roots and Wings, Elks Grove, IL; American Academy of Pediatrics, 2011.*

**PLEASE NOTE: A hand out for kids on how to develop their own personal stress plan, which strengthens resiliency, is available for parents and students at the Vernonia Library.**

**If you are interested in a parenting training please call me at 503-429-6540 or e-mail me at soniaspackman@msn.com.**



## Consider all of the conditions before you drive this winter.

Winter weather in Oregon can make driving downright hazardous at times. But weather isn't the only condition that leads to safe winter driving. Here are a few things to consider before you hit the road.

**Weather conditions** Check a weather web site, such as [www.weather.gov/forecasts/graphical/sectors/pacnorthwest.php](http://www.weather.gov/forecasts/graphical/sectors/pacnorthwest.php), for driving conditions to help you decide when and if to hit the road, or across the mountains and into the city.

**Road conditions** Oregon Department of Transportation continually updates [www.tripcheck.org](http://www.tripcheck.org) with road and weather conditions, construction zones and road camera views.

**Your car's condition** How are your tires? Do you have chains? You should also be prepared

with emergency supplies, a full tank of gas and a charged cell phone so you can call 9-1-1 in an emergency. We hope you never need us, but if you do, we're here to help you arrive safely at your destination.

**Your own condition** Have you had enough rest? Or a few drinks? Honestly assess your own ability to drive safely before you get behind the wheel in winter's more challenging driving conditions.



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