

## Building your child's or teen's resilience

A child or young person's world can be shaken by any number of difficult life issues, from the real shaking of an earthquake, to illness, injury, bereavement, parental break up, accidents, crime, or broken relationships. Whatever has happened, parents or other caring adults can play a key part in helping and encouraging them build their resilience and to move forward. Showing them kindness, caring, compassion and understanding is important, and so is teaching – and showing them – key life skills.

***Waiho i te toipoto, kua i te toiroa.***

***Let us keep close together, not wide apart.***

Research confirms that there are key factors that adults can encourage in their child's or teen's life that will build their emotional resilience to life's knock backs. They can all be built up in everyone – whatever their age. Everyone is different, with differing strengths and vulnerabilities, so as you look through these you may see straight away that some of them sound like your child and some just do not!

1. Knowing it's ok to ask for help and support in difficult times, and knowing how to.
2. Having a support circle of positive relationships with supportive family, whanau, other caring adults, friends, workmates.
3. Having easy access to health and counselling support (including for mental health and/or addiction).
4. Knowing others appreciate and care about them – having others believe in them and their potential.
5. Feeling connected to their school – sensing they belong there, willing to be involved.
6. Feeling connected to their community – sensing they belong, willing to be involved.
7. Having key life skills, including knowing how to problem solve, make choices and decisions, communicate well with others, set goals, find information, put positive values into action in their everyday life, resolve conflicts, how to apologise and set things right, ask for support/help when it's needed and care well for their day to day, personal needs.
8. Having a sense of self worth and self respect – believing they are good at something and that they have skills and abilities.
9. Having respect for the worth and value of others – recognising everyone has strengths, weaknesses and things to offer – having empathy – considering others' needs.

**The right help at the right time in the right way**

10. Being flexible at times and able to adjust as situations change – realising that changes and challenges are part of life for everyone – giving things a go.

11. Thinking creatively – willing to try some new things and to look at things with fresh eyes, or from different angles.

12. Persevering – willing to give things a go and keeping on trying, understanding that set backs are often part of the territory.

13. Having a sense of humour – able to laugh at things, to see things in a different way and to relieve tension.

14. Having a hopeful outlook – able to look to a more positive future – understanding things can get better – having cultural, faith and life beliefs that promote their own wellbeing – having a sense of purpose – having things to look forward to.

15. Having anti-bullying policies and programmes used in their schools and workplaces – or in any group they're involved in e.g. youth groups, teams, clubs.

### **SO TAKE A MOMENT TO THINK...**

Developing a child or young person's internal strength starts at home, with their family or those caring for them. Our young people watch us and learn from adults – from our words and our actions, and from what we don't say and don't do as well.

- Think about how you learned to cope with tough times as a young person. What's helped you the most since then? Who has cared for you and supported you?
- Which of the 15 factors listed above can you see in your own life now?
- Think about your child or young person. Which of these 15 factors can you see in their lives? Which ones need to be strengthened or added?
- Think about some ways that you could help your young person to build up these factors in their lives, so they can better cope with life's tough times.

Get practical. They can't be nagged into developing them. Are there other adults who could help too? Young people need to learn skills that they can practice and improve on – and expect mistakes from time to time. They're human, after all!

**Kids may forget what you said,  
but they will never forget how you made them feel.**

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