



6 THINGS PARENTS AND TEACHERS CAN DO TO RAISE RESILIENT CHILDREN

ROLE MODELLING

Children need models more than they need critics. Be the best role models we can be.

In the end what will matter most is not what we have said or taught, but what we have modelled.

Letting children see us “hanging in there” when confronted by problems and challenges and “bouncing back” from emotional discomfort and failure will help them to do likewise.

Talk in a way that lets children respond and not resist. Behave in a way that allows children to accept and not defend.

Model rational control over often irrational emotions.

TALK STRAIGHT

If children deserve anything, they deserve the truth. The truth must be delivered without the intent to harm. Never be brutal or harsh and remember there is a place for tact.

Tact is honesty that helps more than it hurts, but it is honesty never-the-less.

INFORMATIVE PRAISE

Let praise be specific and focused. Avoid “one size fits all” praise e.g., good boy, good girl, you’re fantastic. Instead, refer to the skills and/or qualities used to achieve the praise-worthy outcome.

Children will feel good when they have done good and feel even better when they know how they did it. Save superlatives for exceptional moments and even then use them sparingly.

Think of praise (and attention) as you would food. No child should starve from a lack of it, just as no child should become obese from too much.



HIGH EXPECTATIONS

Expectation is a powerful motivator. Expecting children to face their fears and requiring them to meet challenges with resolve and commitment, is to honour their strength of character.

We insult our children by believing the only way we can motivate them is to make things fun. Children can labour in the pursuit of noble causes. They can toil to reach a higher goal. They can suffer for the sake of self-betterment. And when they do, they transcend the fleeting experience of fun and reach the promised land of lasting self-respect.

CREATING DISCOMFORT

To elevate the self-esteem of children let them work on their strengths. To improve their resilience and character, urge them to work on their weaknesses. Doing so creates emotional discomfort. How well children cope with discomfort determines their rate of progress.

A regular part of growing up is facing challenges that require considerable effort and unavoidable failure as the steps to success.

Ask for courage and point out that failure is not because of who they are, but because of what they are or are not doing.

NO FALSE RESCUES

By falsely rescuing children from the unpleasant feelings created by mistakes and failure we have taught them to be fearful of both.

Children can learn to see failure and disappointment in a positive light. They both buckle our knees but in so doing, allow us to jump to even greater heights.

We must not offer sympathy when firm guidance is needed and refrain from the constant encouragement that prevents children learning to encourage themselves.

By not accepting less from children we show faith in their ability to overcome and do more.