

Building Children's Positive Self Esteem and Resilience

Self-esteem and resilience are best promoted in the early years of development through an integrated approach with opportunities related to real life situations. Discreet programs that are offered as a separate part of the day are not appropriate for young children and have limited effectiveness. Early Life Foundations are increasingly being asked to talk about resilience paradoxically however there is less and less opportunity for children of today to become resilient.

Research tells us that those people who are most likely to be intrinsically happy and successful in life will possess a positive self-concept (self esteem + self competence) and reflect resilience.

Self Concept

An individual's self-concept is developed from their self-esteem and their self-competence.

Self-esteem is how we believe ourselves to be most of the time. That we have a sense that we are okay people, we are lovable, respected and worthwhile. A realistic view of who we are.

That we have a realistic view of who we are:

- To feel good about who you are, intrinsic worth
- Feelings about self

Self Competence is related to our confidence to undertake tasks and understanding of our strengths and challenges - what we can do, what we need to work toward. Self-competence is related to our ability to affirm ourselves for our strengths and challenges.

Strategies for Self Concept Enhancement

- Separate the child from their behaviour
 - Never label the child as bad, but the behaviour as inappropriate
- Always look for a moment of 'goodness' – gentle affirming – don't over do it
- Affirm your child and how much you like them and love them
- Affirm children for who they are, not just what they do
- Be aware of your own attitudes, biases, non verbal and verbal messages – think before you think; don't project your own anxiousness or worries
- Provide opportunities for child to assume some level of responsibility
- Encourage some democratic decision making
- Be encouraging – not praise not everything is brilliant!! Acknowledge and affirm the attempt and the process (the outcome is what you want to focus on).

Resilience

Resilience is related to a child's personal capacity not only to manage stress but also to come out of a difficult situation positively. To come out 'on top'. To bounce back.

Resiliency is not being happy all the time, not about being brave and not about always being strong.

Resilience has a genetic component - some individuals are naturally more resilient than others (eg glass half full vs glass half empty). Even though some are more naturally resilient than others resilience is mostly a learned approach and influenced by experiences and relationships. Individuals who are not naturally resilient are the ones who need opportunities to practice being resilient the most.

Strategies to Build Resilience

- Secure relationships and predictable home life
 - Regular bed times
 - Regular routines
 - Regular meal times shared together
 - Consistent disciplining techniques
 - Accepting some aspects of sibling rivalry don't become the referee. Take 5, give prompt
 - Don't solve problems..... "how would e..."
 - Ask questions that avoid yes and no
- Providing opportunities for children to take some risks, make some decisions
 - 2 wheeler
 - Climbing tree
 - Ladder /slide
- Conversation: the Adult must model resilient thinking
 - Sharing feelings
 - Sharing optimism
 - Reflective listening
 - Acknowledging emotions
 - Allowing children to feel how they feel
 - Not always saving them
 - Acknowledge feelings and emotions



- Encouragement of exploration - don't always solve everything for them, try using questions such as:
 - How might we solve this?
 - What do you think?
 - Is there another way?
- Try not to save your children – you won't always be around to save or fix things
- Allow expression of views and frustrations