

The Seven “Cs” of Resilience

From the work of Kenneth Ginsberg, M.D., MS Ed, FAAP.

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Competence

Competence describes the feeling of knowing that you can handle a situation effectively. We can help the development of competence by:

- *Helping children focus on individual strengths*
- *Focusing any identified mistakes on specific incidents*
- *Empowering children to make decisions*
- *Being careful that your desire to protect your child doesn't mistakenly send a message that you don't think he or she is competent to handle things*
- *Recognising the competencies of siblings individually and avoiding comparisons*

Confidence

A child's belief in his or her own abilities is derived from competence. Build confidence by:

- *Focusing on the best in each child so that he or she can see that, as well*
- *Clearly expressing the best qualities, such as fairness, integrity, persistence, and kindness*
- *Recognizing when he or she has done well*
- *Praising honestly about specific achievements; not diffusing praise that may lack authenticity*
- *Not pushing the child to take on more than he or she can realistically handle*

Connection

Developing close ties to family and community creates a solid sense of security that helps lead to strong values and prevents alternative destructive paths to love and attention. You can help your child connect with others by:

- *Building a sense of physical safety and emotional security within your home*
- *Allowing the expression of all emotions, so that kids will feel comfortable reaching out during difficult times*
- *Addressing conflict openly in the family to resolve problems*
- *Creating a common area where the family can share time (not necessarily TV time)*
- *Fostering healthy relationships that will reinforce positive messages*

Character

Children need to develop a solid set of morals and values to determine right from wrong and to demonstrate a caring attitude toward others. To strengthen your child's character, start by:

- *Demonstrating how behaviours affect others*
- *Helping your child recognize himself or herself as a caring person*

- *Demonstrating the importance of community*
- *Encouraging the development of spirituality*
- *Avoiding racist or hateful statements or stereotypes*

Contribution

Children need to realise that the world is a better place because they are in it. Understanding the importance of personal contribution can serve as a source of purpose and motivation. Teach your children how to contribute by:

- *Communicating to children that many people in the world do not have what they need*
- *Stressing the importance of serving others by modelling generosity*
- *Creating opportunities for each child to contribute in some specific way*

Coping

Learning to cope effectively with stress will help your child be better prepared to overcome life's challenges. Positive coping lessons include:

- *Modelling positive coping strategies on a consistent basis*
- *Guiding your child to develop positive and effective coping strategies*
- *Realizing that telling him or her to stop the negative behaviour will not be effective*
- *Understanding that many risky behaviours are attempts to alleviate the stress and pain in kids' daily lives*
- *Not condemning your child for negative behaviours and, potentially, increasing his or her sense of shame*

Control

Children who realize that they can control the outcomes of their decisions are more likely to realize that they have the ability to bounce back. Your child's understanding that he or she can make a difference further promotes competence and confidence. You can try to empower your child by:

- *Helping your child to understand that life's events are not purely random and that most things that happen are the result of another individual's choices and actions*
- *Learning that discipline is about teaching, not punishing or controlling; using discipline to help your child to understand that his actions produce certain consequences*

Dr. Ginsburg summarises what we know for sure about the development of resilience in kids by the following:

- *Children need to know that there is an adult in their life who believes in them and loves them unconditionally.*
- *Kids will live "up" or "down" to our expectations.*

There is no simple answer to guarantee resilience in every situation. But we can challenge ourselves to help our children develop the ability to negotiate their own challenges and to be more resilient, more capable, and happier.