

Resiliency in Children

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In recent years with Martin Seligman's *Learned Optimism* on the best seller list, we have heard a lot about developing resiliency in children. At a Family Service Canada symposium for Family Educators I learned about the work of Resiliency Canada. Below are ways to nurture resiliency in children, which not only helps them develop capabilities to cope with life adversity and stress but also, as research indicates, results in their increased abilities and feelings of confidence.

Note: *Intrinsic* refers to internal processes while *Extrinsic* refers to the environment.

Intrinsic Components or Assets

- 1. Empowerment** involves the safety to be and express who they are.
- 2. Self concept** has to do with feeling capable and valued with a sense of purpose. It includes healthy self-esteem and self-efficiency.
- 3. Self control** is about restraining themselves for a long term and healthy outcome. It means resisting temptation, being able to say "no" and demonstrating self discipline.
- 4. Social sensitivity** is shown through care, empathy, support, equality and justice.
- 5. Cultural Sensitivity** is an ability to accept diversity in spirituality, race and background of others.

Parents can encourage internal resiliency by teaching and acknowledging feelings; supporting children's gifts and passions; asking for children's opinions; avoiding rescuing and over nurturing; teaching empathy, care and manners; turning mistakes into learning; acknowledging success; teaching problem solving; following through with consequences; really listening; participating in spiritual and/or religious activities; inviting different kinds of people into family life; and teaching traditions, beliefs & values.

Extrinsic Components or Assets

- 1. Families** make a positive difference when they care, provide positive role models, support, have high expectations and are involved in the schools.
- 2. Peers** can have a positive influence if they act responsibly.
- 3. Learning** at school happens when children work at achieving, attend regularly and diligently do their homework.
- 4. School staff** makes a positive difference when they set clear rules and boundaries while providing a caring atmosphere with high expectations of behaviour.
- 5. Communities** make a positive difference when rules and clear boundaries are known and followed through, when healthy adults are available as role models and neighbourhoods demonstrate care.

Parents can influence their children's environment by making their love & limits known; apologizing when in error; doing what they love; becoming as healthy as they know how; choosing healthy friends; having time available to BE THERE; volunteering at their children's school; supporting appropriate school consequences; expecting success and responsible choices and behaviour; knowing their children's friends; making their children's friends welcome; teaching consistent study habits; providing a quiet place to do homework; setting a specific time for homework; insuring children know school rules;

working as a team with the school; knowing the principal & teachers; knowing the teachers' expectations; explaining and supporting civil laws & their consequences; choosing a caring community with healthy values; and coaching or participating in some way with other people's children.

Note: Adapted from the work of Dr. **Tyrone Donnon** and Dr. **Wayne Hammond**, Resiliency Canada. For more information go to <http://www.resiliencycanada>.

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