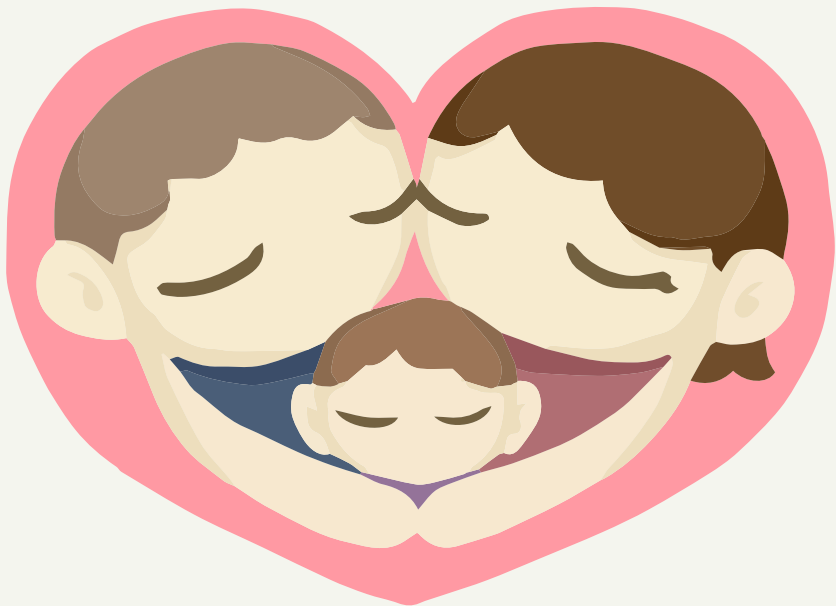


# RAISING A RESILIENT CHILD



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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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# THE SINGAPORE YOUTH RESILIENCE SCALE ( SYRESS)

SYRESS was developed and validated as a resilience scale that incorporates the contextual and cultural aspects unique to the adolescent population in Singapore.

The following 10 factors were found to reflect universal mechanisms and determinants of resilience. They were:

1. Emotional Regulation
2. Personal Control
3. Personal Confidence/  
Responsibility
4. Flexibility
5. Perseverance
6. Optimism/Positive Self-image
7. Positive Coping
8. Humour/Positive Thinking
9. Relationship/Social Support
10. Spirituality/Faith

## PARENTING AND RESILIENCE

Research has found that good parenting is often the most significant factor for boosting resilience. Parental warmth, responsiveness and sensitivity foster the development of self-regulation, and can buffer the effects of other stressors.

*“The thing that makes the biggest difference, over and above one’s genes, is the relationship a child has with a primary caregiver;”*

*Philip Fisher, PhD*

The rest of this booklet will explain what each factor involves, explain some commonly asked questions that parents have and most importantly, provide strategies on how parents can encourage and build resilience in their children.

# WHY ARE THESE 10 FACTORS IMPORTANT TO BUILD RESILIENCE?

- Children who were raised by parents who encouraged their independence and helped them to learn the connection between actions and their consequences tended to have better control and decision-making skills.
- Being resilient helps to build positive emotions and a sense of purpose which protects individuals from mental health conditions.



## WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

Resilience is the process, or achievement of positive adaptation despite adversities or challenging life conditions.

Resilience is conceptualised as:

- A set of personality traits that buffers the negative effects of stress.
- The ability to cope with change/stressors.
- A set of personal resources that can be tapped into to moderate the effects of stressors when the need arises.



# 1) EMOTIONAL REGULATION



Emotional regulation refers to the ability to manage one's own emotions and other's emotions effectively, while reacting to them in an appropriate manner.

## WHY DOES YOUR CHILD STRUGGLE WITH EMOTIONAL REGULATION?

- Your child may be aware of the basic emotions of happy, sad or angry but they may not understand the link between their actions or behaviours that may have resulted in those feelings.
- Emotional outbursts often occur when your child struggles to find appropriate ways to express their emotions, especially when they feel overwhelmed.

## STRATEGIES

1. Help your child to identify the emotions that they are currently feeling by reflecting how they are feeling to them.
  - E.g. "I can see that you are feeling angry right now."
2. Give your child time to calm down.
  - E.g. "Let us talk after you have calmed down."
3. Listen to what your child has to say without judgement.
4. It is important for parents to model appropriate emotional regulation themselves as your child would be observing how you react to situations.
5. After an outburst has occurred, it would be good to process the situation with the child in a non-threatening manner after the child has calmed down. This may help the child to be more aware of what may have been a trigger for the reaction so that better control can be exercised in the future.
  - E.g. "I can see that you have calmed down. Let us talk about what you are angry about."

## 2) PERSONAL CONTROL



Personal control is a person's belief of whether his/her behaviours and emotions are within their own control.

### WHY CAN 'T YOUR CHILD CONTROL HIS / HER BEHAVIOURS?

- When a child does not understand the connection between his actions and consequences, he/she may not be able to stop himself from repeating his misbehaviours.
- A child may not be able to express his needs and wants effectively, and he/she may also have poor problem-solving skills, which leads to difficulties in finding effective ways to manage the situation.
- When parents punish their children too harshly on their mistakes, they would try to avoid the punishment by blaming others or lying.

### STRATEGIES

1. It is important to emphasise the importance of taking responsibility for one's actions. Help your child understand how his/her actions may have affected other people.
2. When your child has made a mistake, explain the connection between the misbehavior and its consequences using examples.
3. Parents should admit to mistakes and role-model how to rectify those mistakes.
4. Teach your child how to use words to communicate intentions and ask for help when faced with difficulties.



# 3) PERSONAL CONFIDENCE / RESPONSIBILITY



Personal confidence/responsibility refers to a person's belief in their competence and ability to deal with situations effectively.

## WHY DOES YOUR CHILD HAVE LOW CONFIDENCE IN HIMSELF / HERSELF?

- Your child may not have experienced success and positive achievements.
- Your child may have attributed his/her success to other factors.
- Your child may have innate weaknesses.
- Your child may have grown up in an environment with a lot of critical and negative comments and may have internalised some of the comments.

## STRATEGIES

1. Pay special attention to your child who has learnt to do something new on his/her own. This helps your child to have more confidence in his/her ability to learn.
  - Regardless of the outcome, praise the effort that your child makes as he/she tries to acquire new skills independently.
2. During family time, encourage your child to talk about his/her strengths and unique qualities.
  - E.g. Performing well in soccer CCA.



## 4) FLEXIBILITY



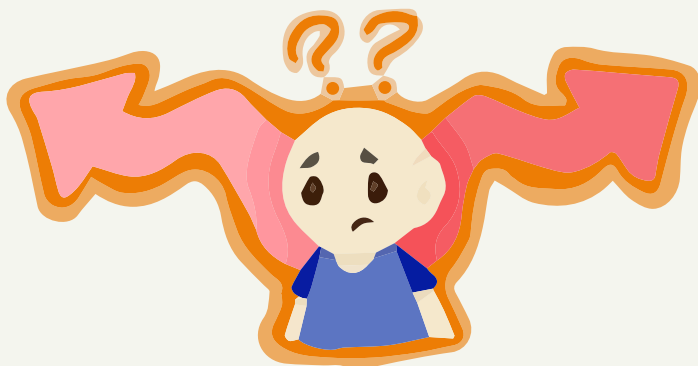
Flexibility involves the ability of a child to shift their response to different situational demands in life appropriately.

### WHY IS MY CHILD SO STUBBORN?

- Your child may have difficulties seeing things from a different perspective and may find comfort in doing things the same way that he/she is familiar with.
- Your child is likely to feel stressed or pressured if he/she is unable to manage new situations, and thus insist on only doing what he/she is comfortable with.

### STRATEGIES

1. Try to introduce changes to a normal routine and talk your child through the situation and explain how it is okay to do things in different ways.
2. When doing an activity with your child, introduce new rules or different ways of doing the activity that they are already familiar with.
  - While there may be some resistance at first, encourage your child to also think of their own rules that they would like to introduce to make the activity more fun or challenging.
3. Set small challenges for your child and ask them to think of possible solutions to solve the problem. If possible, let them try out the solutions to see what may or may not work.





# 5) PERSEVERANCE



Perseverance refers to being persistent even when faced with obstacles and adversity.

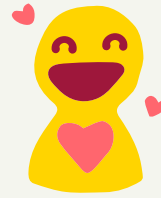
## WHY DOES YOUR CHILD GIVE UP?

- As parents, it is often easy to swoop in and help your child when we see him/her struggling with a task. When your child is used to getting help without trying, he/she would give up when things get too difficult.

## STRATEGIES

1. Allow your child to complete the tasks on their own, and provide some coaching and validations along the way if they appear to have reached a roadblock.
2. Use the power of “yet” when your child complains that he/she is unable to get something done. Add the word “yet” to his/her complaints and provide hope that with enough practice and perseverance, he/she will be able to do the task eventually.
  - E.g. “You are unable to solve this yet, but keep looking for different ways to approach it and you will eventually get it”.
3. It is important for your child to have opportunities to experience struggles and the resulting success when he/she completes something difficult.
4. While the end goal is important, it is the learning that occurs in the process of getting to the goal that is equally important. Even if your child was unable to reach the end goal, remember to recognise the effort in the process.
5. Let your child read books or biographies of people who have gone through struggles and challenges, and later experienced success. Remind them that everyone has their own struggles and through hard work and perseverance, there is hope that they can experience success as well.

# 6) OPTIMISM / POSITIVE SELF-IMAGE



Optimism refers to the hopeful orientation of a person's future while a positive self-image refers to a healthy perception of his/her own self.

## WHY DOES MY CHILD ALWAYS SAY THEY ARE NOT GOOD AT ANYTHING?

- It is human nature to be embarrassed about having weaknesses and difficulties. When your child often hears criticism, he/she may think negatively.

## STRATEGIES

1. Help your child understand that everyone has weaknesses and experiences setbacks, help them to understand that it is only temporary.
  - E.g. "This setback is an opportunity for you to learn how to improve next time."
2. Identify your child's strengths and praise him/her positive behaviours.
3. Be genuine and specific in telling or praising what he/she did well.
4. Encourage your child to feel proud of his/her accomplishments and help to praise himself/herself.
  - E.g. "This activity was difficult and you completed it, you should be really proud of yourself."

# 7) POSITIVE COPING



Positive coping refers to coming up with strategies to manage stressful situations effectively.

## WHY CAN 'T MY CHILD THINK OF WAYS TO SOLVE THEIR PROBLEM?

- They may not be developmentally ready or have the skills and capability to manage the problem.

## STRATEGIES

1. Teach your child problem solving steps such as “Stop, Think, Do”.
  - E.g. Encourage your child to stop and think about what the problem is, come up with a few solutions for the problem and carry out the best solution.
2. Parents can share their experiences about appropriate problems and how they coped with and overcame their problems.



## 8) HUMOUR / POSITIVE THINKING



Humour and positive thinking is having a positive and cheerful outlook on the world and the ability to enjoy entertaining materials.

### WHY IS YOUR CHILD SO PESSIMISTIC ABOUT EVERYTHING?

- Your child may have been exposed to an environment with a lot of negativity and has come to expect that bad things happen all the time.
- Your child's personality may play a part in how they think about the world.

### STRATEGIES

1. Be silly with your child at times and share jokes with them. Be sensitive about the jokes, it should not be about their weaknesses.
2. Role model a positive outlook and mindset by talking through how even though circumstances may seem bleak at times, there is still hope that things can be improved.
3. Even when things go wrong, help your child to see one good thing about the situation.
  - For example, if they missed a bus stop, they could take it as an opportunity to exercise more when walking back.
4. Introduce your child to inspirational books with positive affirmations and optimistic quotes where they can draw encouragement from.

# 9) RELATIONSHIP/ SOCIAL SUPPORT



Relationship/social support refers to the emotional, instrumental and informational assistance and support from friends, family and significant others.

## WHY DOES YOUR CHILD NOT TELL YOU ABOUT THEIR PROBLEMS?

- Your child may feel judged and may fear getting scolded for having different views.
- Your child may feel like he/she is not being listened to and understood.
- Parents may be quick to offer solutions that may not be what is needed.

## STRATEGIES

1. Spend quality time with your child through experiences together without devices and screen time.
  - For example, have picnics together or join a class together to learn a new skill.
2. Listen and show interest to your child when he/she is talking. Ask follow up questions that show that you are thinking about what he/she has said, and show that you take their thoughts seriously.
3. Engage in conversations to get to know your child, ask a variety of questions
  - E.g. “What did you do with your friend today that made you happy?”
4. Invite your child to ask you questions about your day or things that you did.
5. Have mutual sharing with your child and share small problems or situations that you may have experienced in your day.

# 10) SPIRITUALITY / FAITH



Spirituality/Faith refers to a person's connection to a higher being and/or the search for their meaning and purpose in life.

## WHY IS SPIRITUALITY / FAITH IMPORTANT FOR MY CHILD?

- Spirituality can be seen as a particular way of perceiving and interpreting the world to help individuals make sense of their purpose and experience connectedness to other things of importance to them.
- Spirituality can be explored outside of religion, where parents can help children to explore ideas such as their meaning and purpose in life, as well as where they draw their strength from when they go through hard times.

## STRATEGIES

1. Be open to exploring your child's thoughts and understand what is important in his/her life.
2. Expose your child to a range of activities to help identify various ways they can feel peaceful or calm.
  - E.g. Hiking, yoga, rock climbing.
3. Help your child to feel connected with others through practicing acts of kindness or volunteerism. Practice looking outside of his/her own immediate life and helping to improve the lives of others instead.

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## An Undefeated Mind

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