



BUILDING RESILIENCE IN CHILDREN DURING A PANDEMIC

This is a time of uncertainty, fear and anxiety for many children. Daily routines have been upended, families are confined at home, and the news is dominated by stories about increasing infection rates and deaths. Our role as parents at this scary time is to help build resilience in our children to face all sorts of adversity in their lives. This responsibility requires a paradigm shift from a culture that thinks our job as parents is to protect our children to a culture that empowers our children to engage in the realities of life. This tip sheet and the [accompanying webinar](#) provide some of the essential ingredients to assist parents in the work of building resilience in children and strengthening families.

1. ENGAGE

Start the conversation. As adults, we spend a lot of time telling kids how to see the world and respond to it. When you engage difficult subjects with children, you can support them by taking the time to listen and understand them. When we help a child see and experience that they “matter,” their sense of self emerges and they feel empowered to share their feelings.

2. BE HONEST

Kids need honesty. In this time of fear and uncertainty, honesty is not about having every answer. Answering questions as honestly as possible is important to how a child processes and understands this pandemic and what it means for them and for their family.

3. SHARE FACTS

Kids need facts as they face adversities like COVID-19. Facts help us process what is happening. A child does not need to know every detail, but the main points will help their understanding. When a child has the facts, they can begin understanding a new reality.

4. PROVIDE EMOTIONAL SAFETY

Safety is not just about physical safety. Children need an *environment* where their emotional safety is preserved. When they feel safe, they can be more vulnerable by sharing fears and asking big questions knowing the adult in their life is going to catch them if the thing they are exploring becomes too big and scary.



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5. DO NOT MAKE ASSUMPTIONS

It is hard to know what a child has heard, what they are thinking, or what they are feeling until they tell you. By creating a safe and nurturing environment, a child will likely share more. By asking instead of making assumptions, a child welcomes us into their rich inner life where we see the world through their eyes.

6. TRY TO UNDERSTAND

Approach your conversations with children in the spirit of trying to understand their thoughts and perspective. When we engage a child by seeking to understand what they think and how they feel, we do not feel the pressure of having to have all the answers. When we attempt to understand, we also affirm for children that their thoughts and feelings matter.

7. EMPOWER

Empower a child to make choices at a time when they have little control. Give a child a say in everyday decisions like what they will have for breakfast or when to make their bed. Maintain their ability to play with favorite toys or watch their favorite shows. Simple choices like these give a sense control at a time when there is much that cannot be controlled.

8. MONITOR MEDIA CONSUMPTION

News and online platforms impact a child's perspective, so monitoring their media consumption is important. Prepare children with facts and context on media stories so they are not confused by misinformation. By checking in with a child daily, we show empathy and also learn what a child is picking up from other information sources.