



Godalming Junior School

Promoting resilience in children - Parent Head Space Monday 4th October 2021

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Key points:

Resilience IS:

- The ability to bounce back after adversity
- Doing well during or after a difficult time or a period of adversity
- A skill that can be developed and that everyone can learn
- Strengthened through healthy, positive relationships
- Something that changes over time

Resilience IS NOT:

- An inherent quality that is either present in a child or not
- Only dependent on a child's skills and abilities
- Freedom from all difficult feelings

Research suggests children draw their resilience from three sources, which can be described as "I have," "I am" and "I can". (Handout 2)

- "I have" refers to the people around the child who promote resilience (eg people who listen and encourage but also set boundaries)
- "I am" refers to the inner characteristics of a child (eg optimistic, willing to take responsibility for their actions)
- "I can" refers to skills they can learn (eg manage their emotions, know when to ask for help.)

Children need to possess qualities from more than one source to be resilient.

How can we help build children's resilience at home and at school?

Modelling

Let your child know (at appropriate times) when you're finding something tough, and what you're going to do to get through. Let them see you using healthy coping strategies and asking for help/support when you need it. Eg "I'm feeling a bit grumpy - I'm going for a run to make myself feel better" "I don't know how to do this - let's ask Auntie Jen for some help."

Acknowledging the emotion but stressing it will pass

Try to work out what they are feeling and reflect it back to them - naming a feeling helps to understand and manage it. Empathise and normalise it "You look really frustrated with those questions. I feel like that too when I get stuck."

Stress that feelings come and go - they won't last forever. "I know you're disappointed you didn't get House Captain. It's hard when we try our best and things don't work out. Disappointment feels horrible, but it won't last forever."

Learning to manage emotions

We use the Emotion Coaching method at GJS to help children identify and understand their feelings and learn ways to manage them and “self-regulate.” This involves:

- Being aware of your child’s emotions
- Listening with empathy and validating your child’s feelings
- Helping your child learn to label their emotions with words
- Setting limits when you are helping your child to solve problems or deal with upsetting situations appropriately

The power of Yet!

“Yet” is Mrs Farrow’s favourite word! It changes everything when you add it to the end of a statement. “I don’t understand fractions” becomes “I don’t understand fractions YET”. It emphasises the potential for change and growth.

Talk about it.

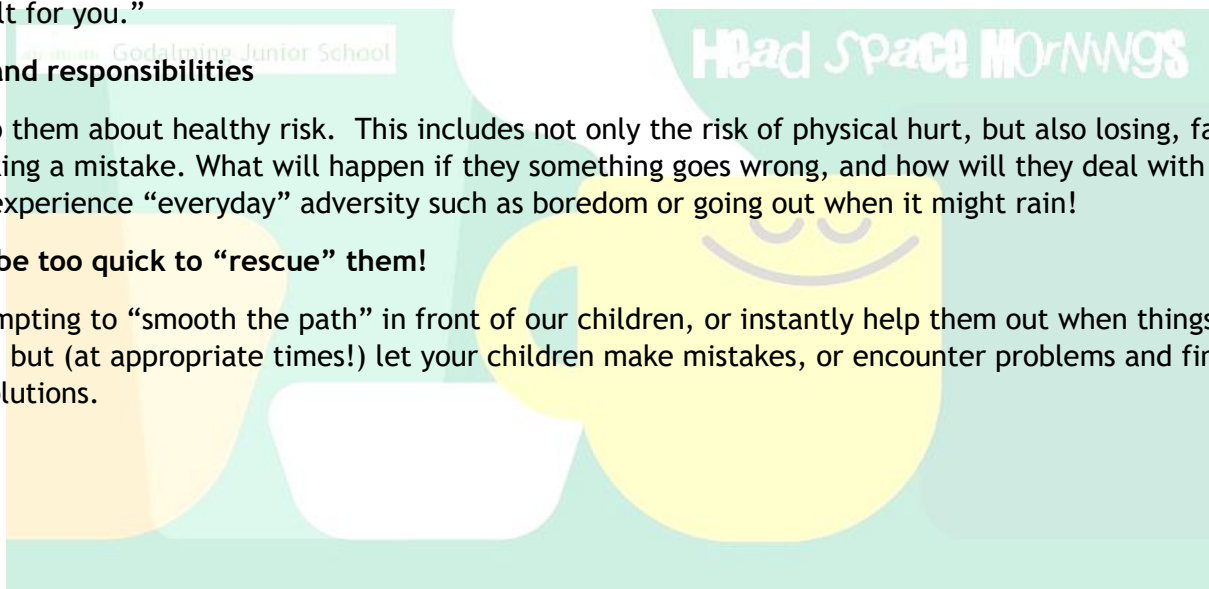
Let your child know it’s ok to talk about things that they are finding tough, or when they are feeling down. Don’t assume you know what your child is struggling with - try phrases like “Tell me about what’s difficult for you.”

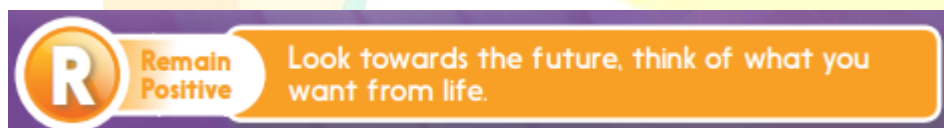
Risks and responsibilities

Talk to them about healthy risk. This includes not only the risk of physical hurt, but also losing, failing or making a mistake. What will happen if they something goes wrong, and how will they deal with it? Let them experience “everyday” adversity such as boredom or going out when it might rain!

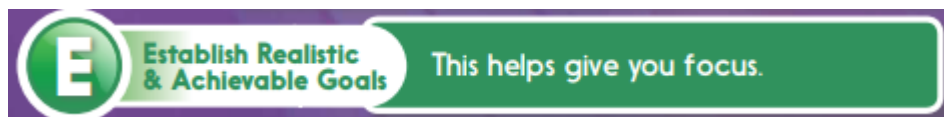
Don’t be too quick to “rescue” them!

It’s tempting to “smooth the path” in front of our children, or instantly help them out when things go wrong, but (at appropriate times!) let your children make mistakes, or encounter problems and find their own solutions.



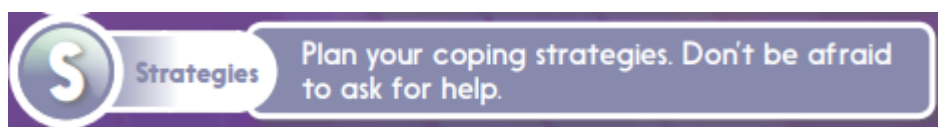


This could be short term - thinking about something positive when they've overcome the challenge, or longer term. Things are tough at the moment, but they won't always be that way.



Help your child set attainable goals - what do they need to do to achieve them?

Celebrate when they do! Encourage them to notice how they feel when they do. If it doesn't work out, help them to work out why. What can they change?

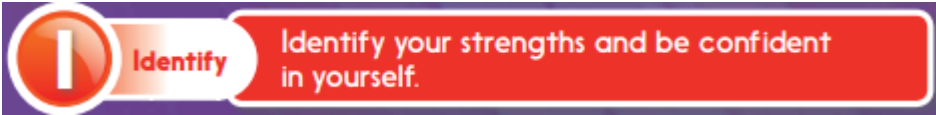


General coping strategies - calming breathing, relaxation, distraction. Doing this alongside them initially ("co-regulating") will help them learn to self-regulate.

Strategies for dealing with a particular challenge (eg getting stuck, falling out with a friend, not getting picked) - talk about it/practise/role play/write a plan! Explore how they'll feel when it happens but stress that feeling might be uncomfortable but won't last forever.

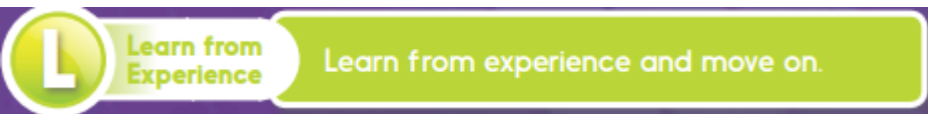
Positive self-talk - what can they repeat to themselves when things are tough?

Who can they ask for help and how would they do this?



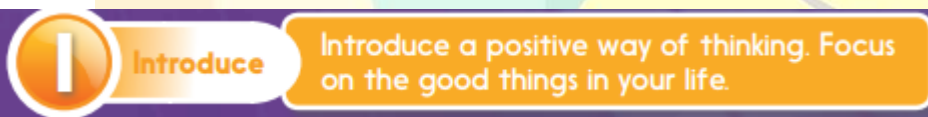
What is your child good at? What qualities do they have that will help them get “unstuck”? Qualities that can be seen as “difficult” can actually be helpful here, eg “stubborn-ness”

Be specific with praise and praise effort as well as the result. Saying “Well done, I know you worked hard on that even though it was tough” builds resilience more than saying “Well done, I knew you were good at maths.”

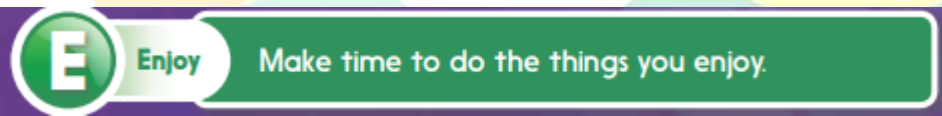


(Pick your moment - wait until emotions have cooled down!).

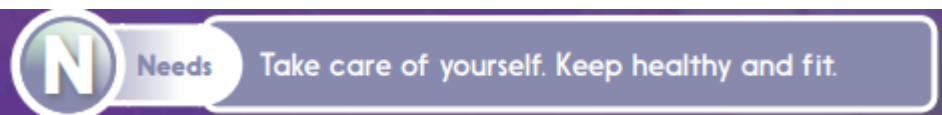
If things have gone wrong, help your child think what they could do differently next time, or how they will cope if they feel that difficult emotion again. What went well and how could they use that next time? “Did you notice that when you were finding your homework really hard, it helped when you went on the trampoline for 5 minutes?”



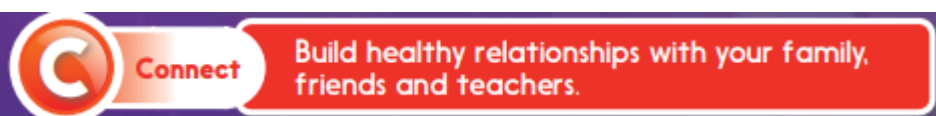
Remember the hummingbird and vulture illustration - one looks for the bad, and one looks for the sweet and good. They both find what they are looking for! If you look for the bad in life you'll find it, but concentrating on the things you can be grateful for gives life a more positive focus.



Encourage your child to think of the things that make them feel good - make a list if necessary, so that when they are struggling they can refer to it. Note how they feel afterwards: “Do you remember last time you felt like this, going out on your skateboard for a bit made you feel better?”

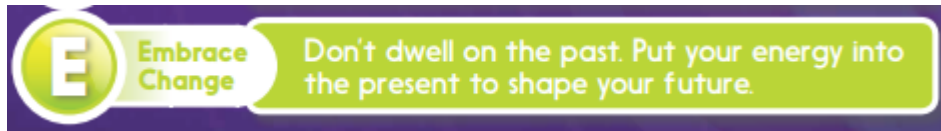


Physical well-being has a big impact on our mental resilience. Healthy food, enough sleep and regular exercise all play an important role.



Encourage your children to spend time with friends and family and to join community groups and clubs. Who could they talk to if things are tough, or how can they ask for help?

Routines and boundaries help build resilient children as they provide security and guidance.



Change can be unsettling, but reassure them that they will be able to adapt. Look how quickly they learn new games! Who do they have around them if they need support, and when do they remember dealing successfully with a change before?

GJS contacts:

Mrs Karen Sutton, GJS Home School Link Worker
Working Hours Monday 9-4.30, Tuesday 1.30 to 3.30, Wednesday 9-4.30.
School Number 01483 421 597
Email ksutton@godalming-surrey.sch.uk

Jackie Farrow, ELSA - jfarrow@godalming-junior.surrey.sch.uk

Useful links and resources

Books

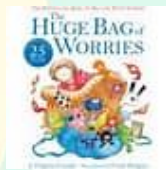
My Strong Mind (Niels Van Hove)



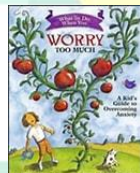
The You Are Awesome Journal (Matthew Syed)



The Huge Bag of Worries



What to do when you worry too much



Stories

Lion (Saroo Brierley)

The Dark (Lemony Snicket)

So few of me (Peter Reynolds)

Emmanuel's Dream (Laurie Ann Thompson)

Websites

MindEd for families - Helping your child bounce back - <https://bit.ly/3ok4nJ2>

What is resilience? The resilience framework : <https://www.boingboing.org.uk/resilience/resilient-therapy-resilience-framework/>

The benefits of calming breathing explained (for the military!) <https://www.hprc-online.org/mental-fitness/sleep-stress/tactical-breathing-military->

Emotion coaching - tips for parents <https://www.parentingcounts.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/information-for-parents-emotion-coaching.pdf>

If you have concerns about your child:

Mindworks Surrey: Children and Young People's Emotional wellbeing and mental health service
<https://www.mindworks-surrey.org/>

Family lives (formerly parentline) confidential helpline: <https://www.familylives.org.uk/how-we-can-help/confidential-helpline/>

Surrey Family Information Services

Telephone **0300 200 1004** (Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm) SMS 07860 053 465.

